**ABSTRACT:** The goal of the analysis is to examine the function of the expressiveness of intonation from the viewpoint of three metafunctions of Systemic Grammar. One of the findings in this paper is that the Ideational metafunction in tone languages is functionally limited because of the pitch movement reserved for lexical distinction. In the Textual metafunction, especially for certain phenomena such as low and high paratones, on the other hand, tone languages are similar to non-tone languages, e.g. English and Japanese. The situation with those aspects related to the Interpersonal metafunction seems to be between those of the Ideational and Textual metafunctions; in tone languages sentence intonation is phonetically restricted, hence connoting interpersonal nuances will depend on other phonological aspects such as tone of voice, loudness, and/or tempo.

We will focus on the function of paratone as a discourse marker. It will be shown that high paratone is a marker of the change of topics, and that this may be universal even among the tone languages such as Chinese.