

EALL TALK SERIES

“Distributional Patterns of GA and NO in Four Varieties of the Japonic Languages”

by Shoichi Iwasaki (Professor of Japanese, UCLA)

Thursday, March 7, 2013, 3:00-4:00 PM

Moore 258

One common grammatical feature found among different varieties within the Japonic language family is the use of case particles. Among them, GA and NO/NU show particularly interesting distributional patterns. They mark attributive and subject noun phrases syntactically on the one hand, and focused constituents pragmatically on the other. The exact match between the form (GA or NO/NU) and the function, however, is not consistent across different varieties. This paper takes the current usage patterns of these particles in Tokyo Japanese, Kumamoto-Yatsushiro Japanese, Naha Ryukyuan and Miyako-Ikema Ryukyuan and puts them into a historical perspective with an aim to understand the diverse developmental paths that were followed in this language family. It will become clear that the domains of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics are dynamically involved to exhibit intricate networks among forms and functions.

Through the discussion the paper makes two specific proposals. The first is a proposal that the current different distributional patterns all started with the distinction in the animacy feature associated with the noun phrase that the particles are attached to. The second is a proposal that the current pattern of focus marking in different varieties can be better understood if we take into account the designated focus marker ZO in classical Japanese and DU in Ryukyuan in the discussion.

Light refreshments will be served.

For further information, please contact Mee-Jeong Park (meejeong@hawaii.edu) or Saeko Shibayama (sshiba@hawaii.edu).

The talk is open to the public and funded by the EALL Enrichment Fund.