

LING 410 Structure of a Specific Language (CRN 3015)

TR 8:35 am - 9:55 am
PE 1085 002

Instructor: Junko Shimoyama

Office hours: Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 pm & by appointment

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(In case you use junko.shimoyama@mcgill.ca, please make sure to include "LING 410" in the subject line, otherwise I may not be able to respond to your email.)

Course Description

This course is an in-depth investigation of the structure of a language other than English. This year we will examine various aspects of the structure of Japanese within the framework of generative linguistics. Knowledge of Japanese is not required. Our main focus will be on syntax, semantics and their interface. Throughout the semester, we will bear the following questions in mind: Do linguistic theories mainly based on English and related languages successfully extend to data from Japanese, which has quite different typological features from those familiar languages? How does looking at Japanese and other East Asian languages contribute to the development of linguistic theories?

The course also includes activities that are designed for developing skills in: presenting your analysis articulately, providing and receiving constructive feedback among peers, and thinking critically (to be explained below).

Prerequisites

LING 330 (Phonetics), LING 331 (Phonology 1) and LING 371 (Syntax 1)

Course Requirements and Method of Evaluation

Contributions to class discussions (including in presentations by peers)¹: 10%

Assignments: 48% (3 x [10% - 3% - 3%])

Would you publish it? (write-up 8% & discussion 4%): 12%

Final project proposal: 5%

Final project presentation: 25%

Readings

Required readings will be made available on myCourses. The class discussions will assume that you have done the required readings. **You are expected to contribute to class discussions by bringing in your own questions and comments on the readings.**

I. Required readings

(a) Chapters:

- Tsujimura, Natsuko (2013) *An Introduction to Japanese Linguistics*, Chapters 2-3, 3rd edition, Wiley.

¹You can make contributions to class discussions by doing the reading assignment to be prepared to raise questions in class, by posting questions, data points, *etc.* on the Discussion board on myCourses, and also (indirectly) by asking questions and engaging in discussions with the instructor during the office hours.

(b) Online articles through the library website (links will be made available on myCourses):

[Subject to modification]

- Saito, Mamoru (1985) Some Asymmetries in Japanese and Their Theoretical Consequence, PhD dissertation, MIT. (pp. 20-54)
- Pesetsky, David (1987) Wh-in-situ: movement and unselective binding, in E. Reuland and A. ter Meulen (eds.) The Representation of (In)definiteness, pp. 98-129. MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. [Main focus: sections 5.1-5.3]
- Beck, Sigrid and Shin-Sook Kim (1997) On *wh*- and operator scope in Korean, Journal of East Asian Linguistics 6, 339-384. [Main focus: sections 1-4. The main data source in this article is Korean, but almost identical phenomena are found in Japanese, as we will see in class. You can understand the main claims of the article without getting a full grasp of semantic formulas such as those you see in (21), (22), etc. in the article.]
- Goodhue, Daniel and Junko Shimoyama (2024) Speech act embedding complementizer *to* in Japanese. Manuscript.
- Beck, Sigrid, Toshiko Oda and Koji Sugisaki (2004) Parametric variation in the semantics of comparison: Japanese vs. English, Journal of East Asian Linguistics 13, 289-344. [Main focus: sections 1-3]

II. These readings may be supplemented with other material where necessary.

III. Some useful books (Not all of them may be ready at the library yet):

- Kuno, Susumu (1973) The Structure of the Japanese Language, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. [Print book on physical Course Reserves]
- Miyagawa, Shigeru and Mamoru Saito (ed.) (2008) The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Linguistics, Oxford University Press, Oxford. [eBook on Course Reserves]
- Rogers, Henry (2005) Writing Systems: A Linguistic Approach, Blackwell, Oxford. [Broken link at the moment – reported to library]
- Shibatani, Masayoshi (2010) The Languages of Japan, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. [Print book on physical Course Reserves]
- Tsujimura, Natsuko (2013) An Introduction to Japanese Linguistics, 3rd edition, Wiley. [Print book 2007 2nd edition only]
- Tsujimura, Natsuko (ed.) (2002) The Handbook of Japanese Linguistics, Blackwell Reference Online, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers. [eBook on Course Reserves]

Assignments

In doing the assignments, in addition to providing a linguistic analysis to a given data set, you will practice **presenting the analysis articulately and concisely**. You will also learn how to **provide and receive constructive feedback to your peers**.

- Stage a: Submit your analysis (version 1).
- Stage b: Submit revised work reflecting class discussions (version 2).

- Stage c: Evaluate and provide constructive feedback on a classmate's version 2. (Peer review)
- Stage d: Submit revised work reflecting the feedback received (version 3).

In the preparation process for Stage a (and only Stage a), you may discuss problems with **one partner**. However, given the nature of how the assignments are set up for the course, it is very important that your responses reflect your own careful analysis of the problems, written up on your own.

If you choose to work with a partner, **write down the name of your partner**. Make sure you try to solve the problems on your own first, before you meet and discuss them with your partner. Near identical answers will be treated as probable cases of scholastic dishonesty and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.

“Would you publish it?”

As a class we will pick one paper and practice (i) evaluating it critically and (ii) providing constructive feedback to the author(s). We try to follow a model similar to a ‘peer review’ process for actual journal article publication. You will be the ‘reviewers’ who will identify strengths and weaknesses of the paper. There will be a separate handout on this later.

Presentation (10 to 15 minutes, to be determined)

In pairs, you will choose a topic of your interest for your final project that is related to the course materials. Once you have a topic, you will have two options for how to conduct your final project: (i) to find a linguistic article that addresses the research questions you have and read it **critically**; or (ii) to carry out your own project by, for example, collecting data from native speakers, the internet and so on, and providing a linguistic analysis of some aspects of the data. Students often end up combining (i) and (ii). **There will be a separate handout on this later.**

- Final project topic consultation meetings: weeks 7, 8, 9
- Final project proposal (max. 200 words + ref list): Thursday, March 20
- Final project presentation (15 to 20 min. TBD): weeks 11, 12, 13

Some examples of final project topics from the past

- The zuujago argot: prosodic restrictions on word formation
- The role of syllables and moras²
- Two approaches to loanword adaptation
- A cross-linguistic study of linking morphemes
- Possible experimental evidence for traces in scrambling
- A cross-linguistic study of negation
- Particles *ka*, *no*, and their functions
- Acquisition of the Japanese passive
- Floated numeral quantifiers
- On binding theory and *zibun*

²makudonarudo

- On comparatives
- On intervention effects
- The internal structure of DPs/NPs in Japanese
- Adjectival morphology
- Double meaning lyrics³(noone has worked on this yet.)

Course Policies

- No late work will be accepted unless you contact me with a legitimate excuse preferably before the due date or within 24 hours of the missed work, followed up with a valid written document. There will be no make-up or extra credit work or re-weighting of grades in this course.
- If you have specific questions about the course material, please try to ask them in person whenever you can to avoid unfortunate miscommunication due to the nature of e-mail communication. Limit the use of email to other purposes and trivial questions that can be handled easily. If you have no choice but to ask questions by email, I will try to answer them as quickly as I can, but please note that my response time could be around 24 to 48 hours, barring weekends.
- It is your responsibility to make sure that in each class, you have access to an electronic copy or a printed-out copy of the handout posted on myCourses. Often, one handout covers more than one class session, so if you use a printed-out copy, remember to bring your copy from a previous class if any materials are left undiscussed.

Copyright: Instructor-generated course materials

Instructor-generated course materials (e.g., slides, handouts, conference materials, assignments, quizzes, exam questions, answer keys, etc.) are protected by law and may not be copied or distributed in any form or in any medium without explicit permission of the instructor. Note that infringements of copyright can be subject to follow up by the University under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the code of student conduct and disciplinary procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Right to submit in French

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

³ryuugakusei (double meaning lyrics)

Inclusive learning environment

As the instructor of this course I endeavour to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office of Student Accessibility and Achievement, 514-398-6009.

Extraordinary circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Land acknowledgement

McGill University is on land which long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose presence marks this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

Schedule
(tentative & subject to change)

Last update: Jan. 7, 2025

Wk	Date	Topic	Required readings	Notes
1	Jan. 7	Course outline, Introduction		
	Jan. 9	Phonetic inventory, allophonic alternations, moras	Chs. 2&3 sec 1&3	
2	Jan. 14	Moras continued, Sequential voicing	Ch. 3 sec. 2	
	Jan. 16	Sequential voicing continued		
3	Jan. 21	Pitch accent, prosodic targets	Ch. 3, sec 4&5	
	Jan. 23	Prosodic targets continued		Asst1 Stage a
4	Jan. 28	Phrase structure & configurationality	Saito 1985 pp. 20-54	Asst1 Stage b
	Jan. 30	Phrase structure & configurationality		Asst1 Stage c
5	Feb. 4	Catch-up		Asst1 Stage d
	Feb. 6	Wh-movement & Wh-in-situ	Pesetsky 1987	Asst2 Stage a
6	Feb. 11	Wh-movement & Wh-in-situ	[Main focus: sections 5.1-5.3]	Asst2 Stage b
	Feb. 13	Scrambling & Scope	Beck & Kim 1997	Asst2 Stage c
7	Feb. 18	Scrambling & Scope [mtg week]	[Main focus: sections 1-4]	Asst2 Stage d
	Feb. 20	Clausal complementation [mtg week]	Goodhue & Shimoyama 2024	Asst3 Stage a
8	Feb. 25	Clausal complementation [mtg week]		Asst3 Stage b
	Feb. 27	Catch-up [mtg week]		WYPI write-up
Winter Reading Break				
9	Mar. 11	<i>Would you publish it?</i> session [mtg week]		
	Mar. 13	Comparison in language [mtg week]	Beck et al. 2004	Asst3 Stage c
10	Mar. 18	Comparison in language	[Main focus: sections 1-3]	Asst3 Stage d
	Mar. 20	Comparison in language		FP proposal due
11	Mar. 25	Anaphora	no reading	
	Mar. 27	Presentations		
12	Apr. 1	Presentations		
	Apr. 3			
13	Apr. 8	Presentations		
	Apr. 10			

Last class for TTh pattern = Thursday April 10, 2025

<https://www.mcgill.ca/importantdates/key-dates>

Exercise: Some grammatical features of Japanese that are not found in English

1 Observing the sentence in (2), what aspects of the Japanese grammar seem to differ from English?

- (1) Yumi ate sushi with a student of Linguistics.
- (2) Yumi-ga gengogaku-no gakusei-to sushi-o tabeta.

2 Agglutinative (or agglutinating) nature of Japanese

- (3) Satoshi-ga tabe-sase-rare-taku-na-kat-ta
Satoshi-NOM eat-CAUS-PASS-want-not-COP-PAST
'Satoshi did not want to be made to eat.'

3 Some freedom in word order (Scrambling)

- (4) Hisao-ga Sapporo-de raamen-o tabeta.
Hisao-nom Sapporo-in noodles-acc ate
'Hisao ate noodle soup in Sapporo.'
- (5)
 - a. Sapporo-de Hisao-ga raamen-o tabeta.
 - b. Sapporo-de raamen-o Hisao-ga tabeta.
 - c. Hisao-ga raamen-o Sapporo-de tabeta.
 - d. raamen-o Hisao-ga Sapporo-de tabeta.
 - e. raamen-o Sapporo-de Hisao-ga tabeta.

4 Wh-in-situ

- (6) Hisao-ga Sapporo-de nani-o tabeta no?
Hisao-nom Sapporo-in what-acc ate Q
'What did Hisao eat in Sapporo?'

5 Quantification

- (7) Hisao-ga Sapporo-de nani-ka-o tabeta.
Hisao-nom Sapporo-in what-ka-acc ate
'Hisao ate something in Sapporo.'

cf. *somewhere* in English