

☉ General guide to the Japanese language and linguistics
written in English

Japanese Linguistics (日本語学)

(The Japanese Language (英語で学ぶ日本語学) 1)

Authors

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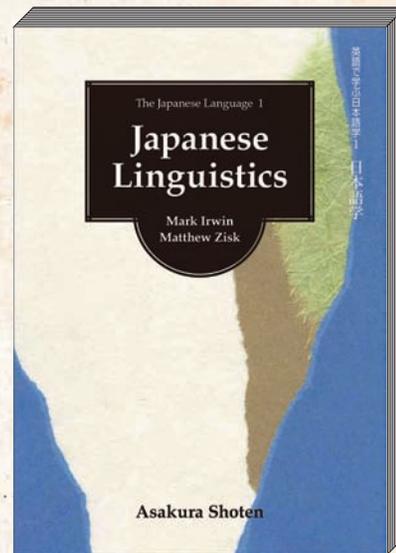
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- 欧米の言語学の傾向と日本国内での日本語学・国語学の成果をともに取り入れる
- 日本語学を学ぶ大学生や留学生, 教える教員から日本語研究の成果を英語で発信したい方まで

朝倉書店



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Recent publications:

- * *Loanwords in Japanese*. John Benjamins, 2011.
- * *Sequential Voicing in Japanese*, ed. T. Vance & M. Irwin. John Benjamins, 2016.
- * English Loanwords. In *The Handbook of Japanese Lexicon and Word Formation*, ed. by T. Kageyama & H. Kishimoto. Mouton de Gruyter, 2016.



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- * *Nihongo daijiten* [Encyclopedia of Japanese Language and Linguistics] (co-editor & English supervisor). Asakura, 2014.
- * *Gi kara mita kanji* [Kanji from the Perspective of Meaning]. In *Kanji*, ed. T. Okimori & H. Hiroyuki. Asakura, 2017.
- * Middle Chinese Loan Translations and Derivations in Japanese. *Japanese/Korean linguistics* 24, 2018.



CHAPTER I Introduction

1.1 Origins and Affiliation

Where the Japanese language comes from is one of the great questions of not just Japanese linguistics, but historical linguistics as a whole. While most languages of the world can be grouped into larger language families, such as Indo-European, Austronesian or Afroasiatic, each sharing a common ancestor, there is to this day no established theory as regards the roots of Japanese. Although for many years Japanese was considered to be a language isolate (a language without a family), more recent scholarship places Japanese in a language family together with the Ryūkyūan languages, spoken on the Amami and Ryūkyū Islands to the far south of Kyūshū, and Hachijō, spoken on Hachijō Island, approximately 300 kilometres south of Tokyo. Ryūkyūan is further broken down into Southern Ryūkyūan and Northern Ryūkyūan, the former consisting of Macro-Yaeyama (Yonaguni, or Duan, and Yaeyama) and Miyako, and the latter consisting of Okinawan and Amami. All of these Ryūkyūan languages are mutually unintelligible (§7.7). Collectively, Japanese, Ryūkyūan and Hachijō are known as the Japonic, or Japanese-Ryūkyūan, language family (Fig. 1.1).

Several dates have been proposed for the separation of Japonic into Ryūkyūan and Japanese, with the most recent scholarship placing their separation in the 7th

Fig. 1.1: Geneological tree of Japonic languages

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Fig. 7.8.1: kao-cura (ABA diffusion)

Fig. 7.8.2: fusuma-karakami (ABAB diffusion)

abandoned. Dialect diffusion is, in its essence, a reflection of the travels and interactions of people from different regions (or, in some cases, the lack thereof) throughout history.

Modern research shows us that there are two major diffusion patterns for Japanese dialects. The first is known as ABA diffusion in the Japanese tradition, contagious diffusion or the wave model in the Western. ABA diffusion describes a state in which words are dispersed outwards from the cultural centre to peripheral regions in a wave-like pattern. In other words, when a new form A is coined in the cultural centre of Japan, it is gradually dispersed outwards until it reaches the edge of the Japanese archipelago. Eventually, A is replaced with a newer form B, which in turn works its way out into the peripheral regions, followed by C, D and so on, forming a ripple-like pattern outward from the centre. ABA diffusion was originally proposed by the early 20th century ethnologist Yanagita Kunio (§8.12) when surveying the dialect forms for 'snail'. He found that the dialect forms for snail formed a five-tier system starting with *denidenmuši*, the newest form, in the Kinki region, followed by *mimai* in Chūgoku and Chūbu, *katacumuri* in Kantō and Shikoku, *cuburi* in most of Kyūshū and Tōhoku and finally *namekuji*, the oldest form, in the southernmost regions of Kyūshū and northernmost regions of Tōhoku. Yanagita gave the name *hōgenshūkenron* 'peripheral zone theory' to the phenomenon. A less complex example of ABA diffusion can be observed in the dialect forms for 'face' (Fig. 7.8.1), where the form *kao* is observed in central regions and *cura* in peripheral regions (excluding Hokkaidō, which was not colonized until relatively recently: §7.5). Both forms are used together in Kantō, southern Tōhoku and northern Kyūshū. A less common variant of ABA diffusion is ABAB diffusion in which, after the forms A and B have been dispersed to peripheral regions, A is

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