慶應言語学コロキアム

Generative Approaches to Ergativity: Is There an Ergativity Parameter?

講師 : Professor Yuko Otsuka (University of Hawai'i)

日時 : 12 月 21 日（月）15:00-18:30

会場 : 慶應義塾大学三田キャンパス北館 3 階大会議室

参加費無料　申込不要　（使用言語 : 英語）

In recent years, there has been new and growing interest in ergativity among researchers working within the generative framework. This two-part lecture describes the basic facts about so-called ergative languages and then examines the existing approaches to ergative case assignment (Lecture 1) and syntactic ergativity (Lecture 2). Our main objective is to explore whether ergativity can be shown to result from the setting of a particular parameter of UG.

Lecture 1 (15:00-16:30): Morphological Ergativity

A language is said to be morphologically ergative if the subject of an intransitive verb (S) and the object of a transitive verb (O) receive the same case (absolutive, ABS), whereas the subject of a transitive verb (A) receives a unique case, ergative (ERG). In such a system, Case and grammatical relations do not show one-to-one correspondence. Thus, ERG-ABS case alignment poses a challenge to the following standard assumptions of generative grammar: (1) structural Cases are assigned by functional heads to the closest c-commanded DP (e.g., NOM by T, ACC by *v*); and (2) "subjects" are base generated in [Spec, *v*] and "direct objects", as V's complement. By examining various existing approaches, we discuss how ergative languages differ from accusative languages in terms of Case assignment and whether the difference between the two can be reduced to a parameter.

Lecture 2 (16:45- 18:15): Syntactic Ergativity

Some languages show an ERG-ABS pattern also at the level of syntax, treating ABS-marked arguments as syntactically prominent, e.g., only allowing S/O to relativize, but not A. Although syntactic ergativity is contingent on morphological ergativity, not all morphologically ergative languages show syntactic ergativity. Thus, some languages with ERG-ABS case alignment treat S and A as equivalent as opposed to O at the level of syntax, showing a NOM-ACC pattern. Moreover, even when a language does show syntactic ergativity, it is often restricted to particular syntactic operations. Two questions arise. First, what is the structural difference, if any, between syntactically ergative languages and those that are not? Second, why does syntactic ergativity affect only certain operations? In this lecture, we discuss approaches to syntactic ergativity, focusing on *wh*-extraction. Drawing mainly on the evidence from Tongan (Polynesian), I conclude that syntactic ergativity should be better understood as a construction-specific phenomenon rather than language-specific property.