LIN 491.2. Special Topics: Japanese Linguistics (Fall 2009)
Course materials and notices: http://www.msu.edu/course/lin/491
MW 3:00-4:20 p.m., C-311 Wells Hall

I. Content (See also “Schedule”)
This course introduces students to the linguistic study of the Japanese language; i.e. how the language is structured, used, and affected by cognitive, social and cultural factors. You will learn the basics of Japanese phonetics and phonology (sounds), morphology (word form), syntax (sentence form), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics/discourse (form, meaning, and context), and sociolinguistics/variations. Having built a sufficient linguistic database, we will read scholarly articles and book chapters in the last 2 weeks of the semester to gain further knowledge. Topics include style, gender, politeness, and language contact. We will explore what speakers actually do when they communicate in Japanese, and why.

In class, we will discuss authors’ descriptions and claims, and relevant data, problems, questions, counter-examples, and other comments regarding the assigned pages. We will also go over the homework answers to Study Questions and Exercises (see “Schedule”). Students are encouraged to read critically, drawing on their own experiences and comparing the facts for Japanese with those for English and other languages with which they are familiar.

II. Course objectives
1. To gain a basic linguistic knowledge of Japanese.
2. To learn to analyze actual data and make informed observations and discoveries.
3. To be able to read scholarly writing in linguistics and understand important points.
4. To learn how to find linguistics resources.
5. To discover the joy of doing linguistics! (The last, but not the least!)

III. Texts
REQUIRED
4. Articles to be made available.

OPTIONAL (on reserve in the Main Library):
1. Japanese/Korean linguistics, Vols. 1-. 1990-. CSLI.
IV. Grades: Your grades will be determined based on the following.

A. 15%: Class attendance and performance
   You are expected to attend every class, have done the assignments due each class, and actively participate in the discussions. If you must be absent, contact the instructor ASAP.

B. 10%: Homework (see “Schedule”)
   (1) Study Questions & Exercises
      Read assigned pages for each class and WRITE your answers to “Study Questions” (NOT to be turned in), and to “Exercises” in Tsujimura (to be turned in sometimes). We will go over the answers to both in class.

   (2) MAIL (“Interesting point” & “Important question”)
      Read assigned pages/article, and e-mail the instructor <endo@msu.edu> the following by 9:00 p.m. on the day before the class.
      1. What you found most interesting (in 1-2 sentences)
      2. One most important question: e.g. “I don’t understand c-command.”
      3. OPTIONAL: possible counterexample(s)
      These will be consolidated and used as the basis for class discussion. Late homework will NOT be accepted except for a medical reason.

C. 50%: Three tests (see “Schedule”)
   Test 1 will be on 10/05 (M), Test 2 on 10/26 (M), and Test 3 on 11/16 (M).
   All the questions will be of multiple-choice, true-or-false, and short answer types, and drawing trees.

D. 5%: Presentation -- Details to be discussed on 11/25
   Two students together will explain the main point of an article, interesting findings, evaluation of the article, and questions, if any. You may also compare facts in Japanese and English (or other languages).

E. 20%: Final paper (data analysis) -- Details to be discussed on 11/30
   Content: Examine actual conversation data, and make as many linguistically informed observations as possible; e.g. re. sentence-final particles, fillers, aizuchi, ellipsis, style, politeness, personal pronouns, conjunctions, degree adverbs. You may compare with English and/or other languages, if appropriate. You may collect your own data, but some data sets will be made available at the Dept. office. Copy examples of relevant data in your paper, and state why each item is interesting, specifying from which data set and which line they are from. English translation of Japanese is unnecessary for this paper.

   Organization: Divide the content into sections, number them, and give each a heading; e.g.
      1. Introduction; 2. Data and Analysis; 2.1. XX; 2.2. YY; 3. Conclusion; References

   Format:
      4-5 SINGLE-spaced pages, 1" margin all around, and 12 pt. Times New Roman (or equivalent) font. You may write in “bullet style.” Paginate throughout.

Due: Wednesday, December 16, 11:59 p.m.
   E-mail your paper to <endo@msu.edu> in MS Word format. Label the file 491.lastname.doc (for example, 491.smith.doc).