# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION
*Shigeto Kawahara* .......................................................................................................................... v

## THE SYNTAX OF FOCUS-DOUBLING IN JAPANESE
*Masahiro Akiyama* ....................................................................................................................... 1

## FOOT STRUCTURE AND ANALYTIC BIAS
*Ryan Bennett* ............................................................................................................................... 13

## ADVERBIAL CONCORD MERGING ADVERBIAL CLAUSES
*Yoshio Endo and Liliane Haegeman* ............................................................................................. 25

## PERCEPTION OF JAPANESE VOWEL DURATION CONTRASTS BY L1 AND L2 LEARNERS OF JAPANESE: AN EEG STUDY
*Miwako Hisagi, Valerie L. Shafer, Shigeru Miyagawa, Hadas Kotek, Ayaka Sugawara, and Dimitrios Pantazis* .......................................................................................................................... 45

## SCRAMBLING AND STRING VACUITY REVISITED: EVIDENCE FROM CLEFT CONSTRUCTIONS IN JAPANESE
*Hajime Ikawa* .................................................................................................................................. 57

## MATCH THEORY AND THE RECURSIVITY PROBLEM
*Shinichiro Ishihara* ...................................................................................................................... 69

## ON COORDINATED MULTIPLE WH-QUESTIONS
*Toru Ishii* ......................................................................................................................................... 89

## SHARED STRUCTURAL REPRESENTATIONS FOR SHORT AND FULL PASSIVES IN JAPANESE CHILDREN AND ADULTS
*Megumi Ishikawa, Manabu Arai, and Yuki Hirose*......................................................................... 101
PROSODIC AND LEXICAL CONTEXTS AND THE PHONETIC REALIZATION OF [VOICE] IN JAPANESE
Ryo Masuda ............................................................................................................. 113

UNDERSTANDING WH-QUESTIONS IN CONTEXT
Edson T. Miyamoto .................................................................................................... 125

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY ON ADJACENCY AND NOMINATIVE/GENITIVE ALTERNATION IN JAPANESE
Satoshi Nambu and Kentaro Nakatani ........................................................................ 131

WH-MOVEMENT AS A SCOPE DETERMINATION OPERATION IN JAPANESE
Akihiko Sakamoto and Keita Ikarashi ...................................................................... 143

PHASES, ARGUMENT ELLIPSIS, AND "ANTECEDENT-CONTAINED DELETION" IN JAPANESE
Yuta Sakamoto .......................................................................................................... 155

AGREE-BASED DERIVATIONAL ACCOUNT OF VPE IN JAPANESE
Kyoko Sano ................................................................................................................ 167

EXAMINING LEXICAL AND PHONOLOGICAL FACTORS ON RENDAKU IN SPONTANEOUS SPEECH
Shin-Ichiro Sano ......................................................................................................... 179

JAPANESE REPORTED SPEECH WITHIN THE EMERGING TYPOLOGY OF SPEECH REPORTS
Uli Sauerl and Kazuko Yatsuhiro ................................................................................ 191

TWO TYPES OF RESTRUCTURING IN JAPANESE—EVIDENCE FROM SCOPE AND BINDING
Koji Shimamura and Susi Wurmbrand ....................................................................... 203

CHILDREN DO NOT ACCEPT UNAMBIGUOUS INVERSE-SCOPE READINGS: EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE FROM PROSODY AND SCRAMBLING IN JAPANESE
Ayaka Sugawara and Ken Wexler .............................................................................. 215

THE PERCEPTION OF GEMINATION IN ENGLISH WORD-INTERNAL CLUSTERS BY JAPANESE LISTENERS: A CASE FOR PHONETICALLY-DRIVENloanword ADAPTATION
Akiko Takemura, Itsue Kawagoe, and Shigeto Kawahara ....................................... 227
THE ROLE OF CONTRAST IN THE DISTRIBUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON JAPANESE PALATALIZED CONSONANTS
Yu Tanaka .......................................................................................................................... 239

REMARKS ON MISSING ARGUMENTS IN JAPANESE
Satoshi Tomioka .................................................................................................................. 251

JAPANESE HONORIFICATION: COMPOSITIONALITY AND EXPRESSIVITY
Narumi Watanabe, Eric McCready, and Daisuke Bekki ..................................................... 265

INNOCUOUSNESS OF \{XP, YP\} AS A ROOT CLAUSE IN JAPANESE AND ENGLISH
Miyoko Yasui ........................................................................................................................ 277
INTRODUCTION

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The 7th meeting of Formal Approaches to Japanese Linguistics (FAJL 7) was jointly hosted by NINJAL (National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics) and ICU (International Christian University) on June 27-29th, 2014. The first FAJL meeting was held at MIT in 1994, and this 7th meeting was thus held on FAJL’s 20th anniversary. This timing was particularly fitting, as FAJL 7 was organized as a part of the 60th anniversary events at ICU as well. The meeting was also held as a part of a NINJAL International Symposium.

To briefly review the history of FAJL:

FAJL 1, 1994, MIT (Cambridge, USA)
FAJL 2, 1996, Tohoku University (Sendai, Japan)
FAJL 3, 2001, MIT (Cambridge, USA)
FAJL 4, 2006, Osaka University (Osaka, Japan)
FAJL 5, 2010, University of California, Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz, USA)
FAJL 6, 2012, ZAS (Berlin, Germany)

This list makes it clear that FAJL is a series of international conferences on the Japanese language, often discussed in comparison with other languages, and that although FAJL is sometimes held in Japan, it never loses its international scope.

The organizing committee members of FAJL 7 were Junko Ito (UC, Santa Cruz), Shigeto Kawahara (Keio University), Shigeru Miyagawa (MIT/Tokyo University), and Tomoyuki Yoshida (ICU). In addition, Yurie Hara (City University of Hong Kong), Armin Mester (UC, Santa Cruz), and Satoshi Tomioka (University of Delaware) offered much needed help as abstract reviewing committee members. Haruo Kubozono and John Whitman at NINJAL took care of most of the logistic details on NINJAL’s side.

We had received a total of 74 abstracts, from which only 15 were selected for oral presentations (the competition rate was ca. 20%). Additional 8 presentations were selected as alternates. This volume contains papers that grew out of these presentations.

The invited speakers were Liliane Haegeman (Universiteit Gent), Shin Ishihara (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universitaet Frankfurt am Main), Kazuo Okanoya (The University of Tokyo), and Satoshi Tomioka (University of Delaware). The current volume includes work by these prominent invited scholars, except for, unfortunately, one by Prof. Okanoya.
The talks presented at FAJL 7, including poster presentations, covered a wide range of topics on the phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics and psycholinguistics of Japanese. The approaches taken, reflecting the current trends in the field, range from traditional theoretical analyses to various sorts of experimental approaches, both behavioral and neurological. As a key feature of FAJL, all the talks addressed issues concerning the general question of how languages work, going beyond addressing issues that are specific to Japanese—Japanese is simply used as a case study. During the three days, we had a total of 138 participants, with the following breakdown: 14 organizational members including the invited speakers, 84 faculty members, and 40 students.

During the meeting as well as during the reception, we had the pleasure of having Prof. Kazuko Inoue as our honorary guest. The picture above is Prof. Inoue giving a speech at the banquet on June 28th.

Before closing this introductory remark, I would like to take this opportunity to thank many undergraduate students at ICU, who offered their “man-power” during the meeting, which was indispensable.

Last but not least, on the behalf of the organizational committee, I would like to express our appreciation for their financial support from the following organizations: ICU Linguistics, Japan ICU Foundation (JICUF), the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, and the Department of Linguistic Theory and Structure as well as the Department of Cross-linguistic Studies at NINJAL.

Tokyo, October 2014
Shigeto Kawahara (Keio University)