

Title:

Notes on taxonomic kind-reference and indefiniteness of bare nouns in Japanese:
Examination of multiple-object readings of relative clauses

Abstract:

This talk aims to give an empirical investigation of nominal reference in Japanese through examination of relative clauses which, especially in interaction with clause-internal quantified expressions, seem to express more than one object individual described by relative head nouns. It is shown that one type of such readings is possible when relative head nouns lend themselves to *taxonomic* interpretations, which I argue are *concepts* qualified in the kind domain in a (Neo-)Carlsonian sense. A nuanced picture is given of a set of nouns unable to have taxonomic readings for certain semantico-pragmatic reasons. When such nouns appear as relative heads, the multiple-object readings are still available on condition that the entire noun phrases are put in a context which licenses noun phrases denoting concepts not necessarily qualified as kinds, and that the associated, clause-internal gaps are within the domain of existential closure. The cases of non-taxonomic nouns fall within the scope of the ambiguity approach to indefinites, under the view of semantic identity between the gaps and relative heads. If this argument is on the right track, then Japanese bare nouns are not uniform in reference but, at least in certain restricted cases, are ambiguous between (Neo-)Carlsonian kinds and Heimian indefinites.