

Focus, Mood, and Interrogatives in Yaeyaman

Christopher Davis

This talk examines the focus particle *du* as it is used in Yaeyaman, an endangered language of the Southern Ryukyus. The particle *du* and its cognates are found throughout the Ryukyuan language family, and is thought to be historically related to the Old Japanese *kakari* particle *zo*. In Yaeyaman, the particle plays an important role in declarative clauses, where its use is crucial in marking informational focus. It is also frequently used in interrogatives, in particular *wh*-questions, where its use is frequently obligatory. In this talk, I bring together several threads of research into both syntactic and semantic dimensions of *du*, on the basis of fieldwork carried out with speakers of the Miyara dialect of Yaeyaman. I consider the sense in which *du* marks focus, and the rules that govern the positioning of the particle in relation to the material being focused. I show that the particle places restrictions on the mood marking of the verb in the clause where it takes scope, instantiating a kind *kakarimusubi* pattern. I then consider why the particle is generally required with *wh*-questions, arguing that this follows from the syntax and semantics of *wh*-words, *du*, and its associated mood marking.