

English

The aim of the English Division is not only to conduct outstanding research but also to provide students with an excellent English language education program in line with the discipline of medical humanities and academic and medical English. While devoting themselves to English education, each faculty member also engages actively in various academic research projects in relation to medical humanities and/or language/linguistic studies.



Professor
Kaori Sasaki, Ph.D. in Sociology

Social studies of science and technology, sociology of health and illness, cultural studies, medical informatics, community medicine

Associate Professor

Kazuhiko Yamaguchi, Ph.D. in Literature

English linguistics, cognitive linguistics, linguistic typology, teaching English as a foreign language

Associate Professor

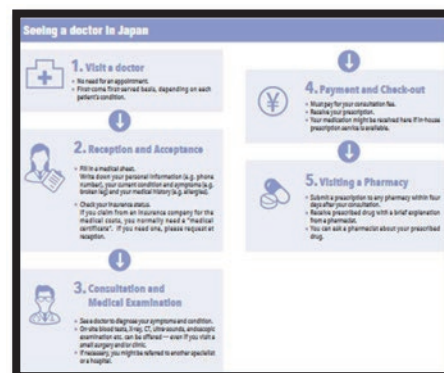
Gregory Wheeler, M.A. in East Asian Studies (focus – Japanese history)

1. Kaori Sasaki

Dr. Kaori Sasaki's research interests lie in: (i) cultural politics vis-à-vis language and power in terms of articulation processes of cultural imaginations and representations of science, technologies, and medicine; (ii) "bio-politics" and "governmentality" in Foucault's term as well as "gender politics" in Butler's term, particularly their dynamics and socio-historical development; and (iii) further consideration of theoretical frameworks in cultural studies, sociology and science and technology studies (STS).

The titles of her current major research projects are: (1) Bio-politics through usage of electronic health records (EHR) in Japan – an attempt for STS and sociological analysis on EHR; and (2) Research for enhancing secondary usage of medical big-data. She has also started an STS research project about the current development of FemTech vis-à-vis biopolitics and gender-politics. The highlight of the most recent outcome from her previous research projects is her co-edited book published by Palgrave MacMillan in 2021: *Humans and Devices in Medical Contexts*:

Case Studies from Japan. This volume explores the ways in which socio-technical settings in medical contexts find varying articulations in a specific locale.



[Section of English leaflet outlining steps when visiting a hospital in Japan]

Her outreach activity is to support the Niseko area in Hokkaido, Japan, where rapid growth in global tourism has led to a surge in foreign

residents and visitors. The local community has been struggling to provide healthcare services and medicine/drugs for foreigners. Based on course of action research to solve this problem, her research team and a non-profit organization (NPO) have provided foreign residents and visitors and Japanese stakeholders with leaflets (as seen above) and have additionally created a website including three video clips (illustration below) that (1) explain the Japanese medical system and customs, including (a) how to access medical services, (b) how to see a doctor even without an appointment, and (c) how to obtain medicine; (2) provide information on local medical facilities and drugstores, including their operating hours and locations with a map.



[Screenshot from the website]

2. Kazuhiko Yamaguchi

The research interests of Dr. Kazuhiko Yamaguchi lie in linguistics and teaching English as a foreign language. In the area of linguistics, he has conducted cognitive/functional-oriented descriptive studies of various English constructions, including emphatic DO construction, various complement clauses in English, and English capability constructions. He is interested not only in the English language but also in the diversity of language variation, i.e., linguistic typology. His typological studies include the comparative study of English and Japanese capability-constructions, particularly the cross-linguistic study of the semantic network of acquisitive verbs. He is also interested in the application of the fruits of linguistic studies to the teaching of English. His current project in this area is the linguistic refinement of so-called “linguistic distance.”

3. Gregory Wheeler

By the time students enter university, they will have had at least six (and in many cases, eight) years of English instruction during their time in secondary school. Much of this may be grammar-oriented, though it is certainly possible that some students have also received some instruction concerning more casual or “unorthodox” English. However, it is likely that there are certain forms of

what might be considered “natural” English that may not be familiar to the students. Present research is exploring a number of forms of colloquial English, including students’ understanding of such, with a goal being to determine manners in which greater “real-time” recognition and understanding of these forms can be facilitated. Examples of “non-formal” English being introduced to the students in classes include:

- Merging of words when English is spoken at natural, or near-natural, speed.
- Upspeak, the manner in which a speaker’s intonation rises at the end of a sentence or sentence clause.
- Filler words such as “like” and “you know.”
- Sentence interrupters: Words or phrases inserted into a sentence that can break (pause) the sentence’s flow.
- Omission of the subject (often, but not limited to pronouns) at the beginning of a sentence.
- Sarcasm, in which the meaning of what a speaker’s statement may be precisely the opposite of what they actually said.

Part of the attempt to make a number of these forms of speech more accessible to students is to impress upon them that it may be helpful to focus not only on the actual speech being uttered but the manner in which it is delivered. For example, sentence interrupters may be preceded by a slight pause (and the speaker may occasionally pause again at the end of the interrupter before continuing or concluding the original statement). Additionally, interrupters may often be spoken at a different pace (usually faster) than the statement it is placed in between. Moreover, when speakers use sarcasm, they may often place particular emphasis on vocabulary that is the opposite of their true meaning. (Example: “It’s rainy and windy. What a *great* day for a barbecue!”). Also concerning sarcasm, if possible, students are advised to observe the speaker’s facial expressions. It is not unusual for a person to roll their eyes when uttering a sarcastic statement.

Of course, all of the “tips” such as those from above offered to students are somewhat generalized and have their limitations. It is hoped that further study may lead to more detailed advice concerning manners in which casual/colloquial English can be better understood.

List of Publications (September 2018 to August 2023)

Kaori Sasaki

Kazuhiko Yamaguchi

