

Describing Space as an Intersubjective Activity:

Examples from Ishigaki



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Language and space

Spatial frames of reference (Pederson et al. 1998, Levinson 2003, etc.)

- Relative: Human body, ego-based
“The man stands on my right.”
- Absolute: Fixed bearings (e.g. compass)
“Okinawa is to the south of Tokyo.”

My questions:

- 1) In Japanese, the relative system is believed to be dominant...
Really? (cf. Counter-examples from Inoue 2002, 2005)
- 2) Is there a one-to-one correspondence between a language and a particular FoR, especially when the language has a two-way system?
Is the FoR static or dynamic?
- 3) Do people use a FoR for their own convenience?

Theoretical background

Indexicality

- an indexical sign stands for the object by contiguity with it
- Indexical signs -- linguistic structures point to or “index” aspects of the communicative context such as social positionings (cf. Silverstein 1976)
- *origo*: the interactional center = the ‘here-now’ moment of interaction

The reciprocity of perspectives (Schutz 1973; Hanks 1996)

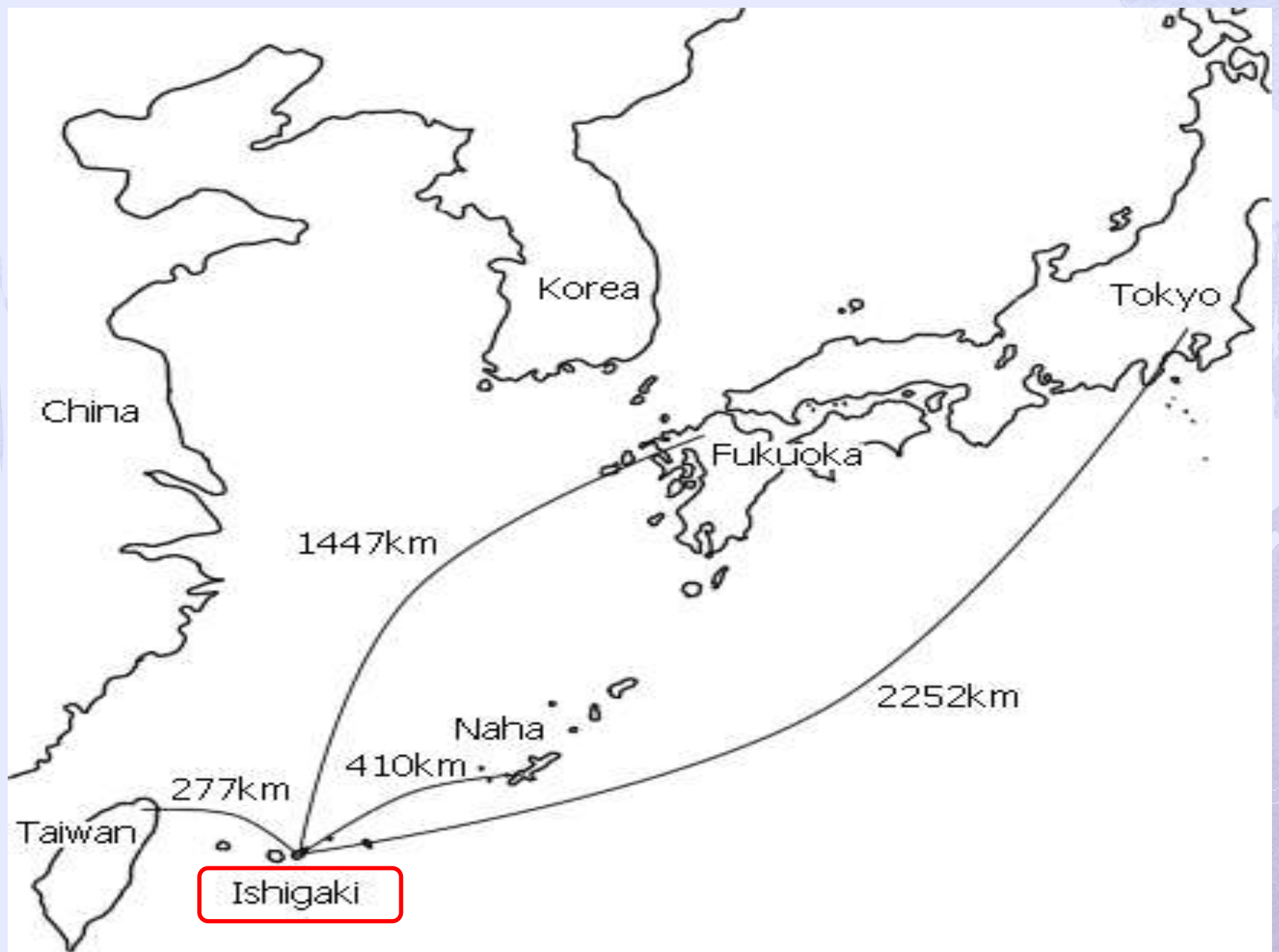
- a subtle form of common ground beyond the sameness
- the capacity to take on another’s point of view

Ba Theory (Shimizu 2003)

- Merging of “Self” and “Other”
- *Ba* (context/field) is dynamic by definition.

The aims of this study

- To analyze spatial descriptions in Ishigaki between locals and outsiders.
- To reveal indexical meanings beyond their referential practice of giving directions --- the ways in which speakers establish a sphere of intersubjectivity (In other words, acknowledge and express their co-presence in *BA*).
- To cast doubt to the idea that spatial cognition can be reduced to an individual's mind.



Okinawa and Ishigaki dialects

English	Standard Japanese	Okinawa (Naha)	Ishigaki (Yaeyama)
‘east’	<i>higashi</i> 東	<i>agari</i> (e.g. the sun rises (<i>agaru</i> ‘to go up’))	<i>aaru</i>
‘west’	<i>nishi</i> 西	<i>iri</i> (e.g. the sun sets (<i>iru</i> - ‘to enter’))	<i>iiru</i>
‘south’	<i>minami</i> 南		<i>hai / pai</i>
‘north’	<i>kita</i> 北		<i>nisu</i>
‘right’	<i>migi</i> 右		<i>migi</i>
<hr/>			
‘left’	<i>hidari</i> 左	<i>(hijayaa ?</i>	<i>hidari</i> <i>Hidarimun ?</i>

Compass in speech

[Surroundings]

- (1) Explaining where the scissors are:

<i>jibun</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>kita</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>aru</i>	<i>sa</i>
self	NOM	north	LOC	exist	SFP

‘(The scissors) are north of you.’

- (2) Talking to the cat / neighbors:

<i>iri</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>mawatte</i>
west	NOM	go around

‘Go around (the house) to the west.’

[Neighborhood]

- (3) *soko* *magatte* *nishi* *sangenme*
there turn west third one

‘Turn there and (it is) the third one on the west.’



agaru

‘to go up’



oriru

‘to go down’

‘to descend’

Ishigaki Island 石垣島

Mt. Omoto

於茂登岳

N
4

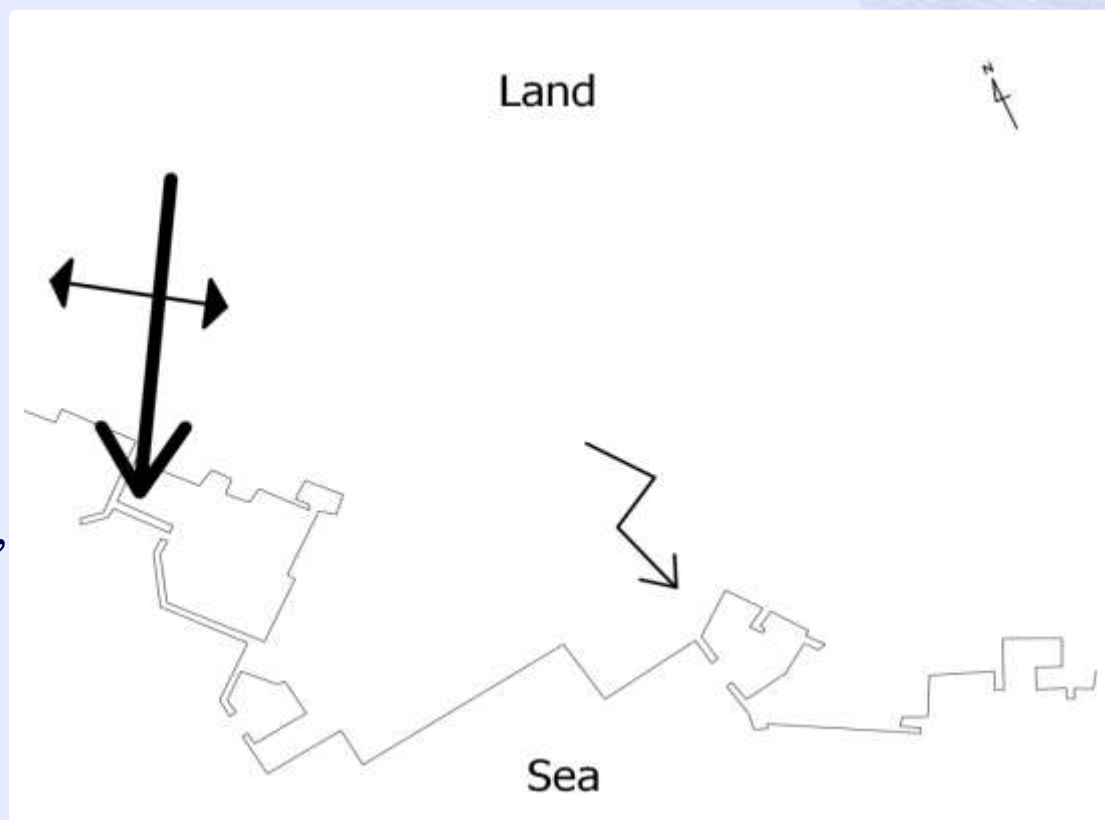
Center
市街地

Shiraho
白保



oriru ‘to go down’
 ‘to descend’

hidari / migi ‘left / right’
iri / agari ‘west / east’



To outsiders: *soko o massugu itte... hidari ni...*

‘Go straight there and turn left.’

REL: 60%
ABS: 20%
Others: 20%
(N=18)

To locals: *koko o orite ... agari sa*

‘Go down this road and go east.’

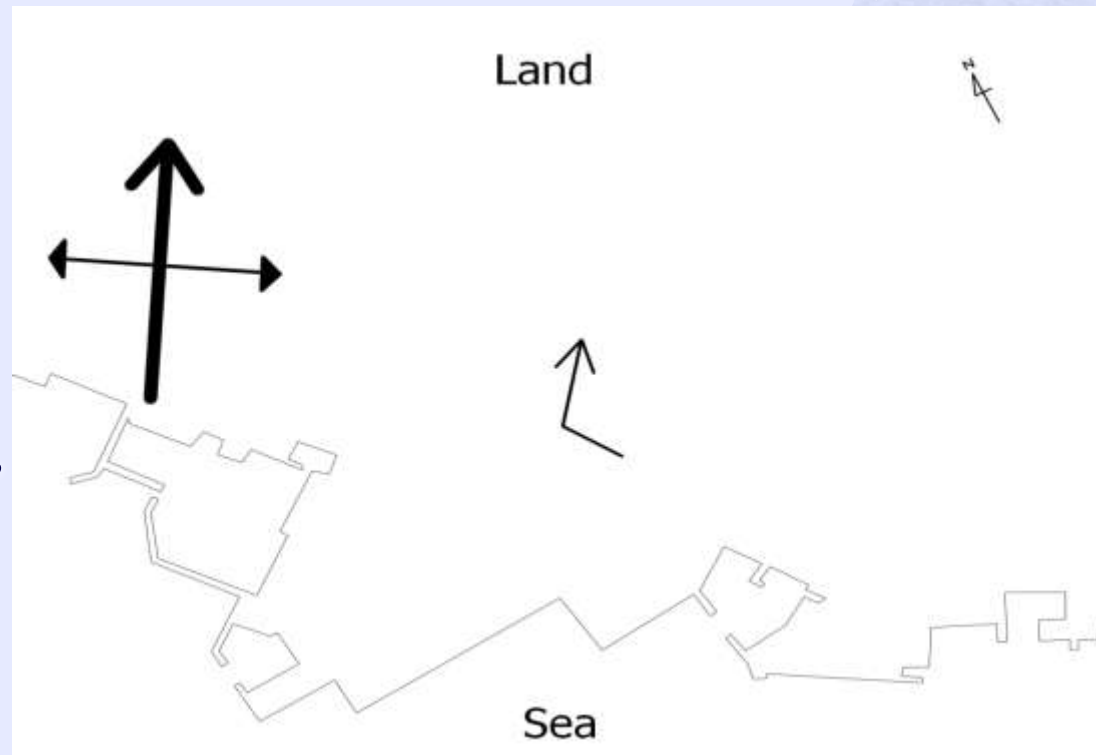
REL: 16%
ABS: 68%
Others: 16%
(N=15)



agaru 'to go up'



hidari / migi 'left / right'
nishi / higashi 'west / east'



To outsiders: *gasorin sutando o migi ni agatte*

‘Turn right at the corner of the gas station and go up.’

REL: 59%
 ABS: 41%
 Others: 0%
 (N=13)

To locals: *gasorin sutando no kado o agatte...*

‘Go up at the corner of the gas station.’

REL: 14%
 ABS: 76%
 Others: 10%
 (N=10)

S: *ano x-san no otaku ---- kono atari desu yone?*

well Mr. X GEN house this around COP SFP

‘Mr. X’s house is around here, isn’t it?’

N: *sou soko soko o  hidari ni ittara ne arimasu yo*

yes there there O left LOC go SFP exist.COP.POL SFP

‘Yes, when you turn left, it’s there.’

S: *a hai  higashi desu yone (pointing )*

oh yes east COP SFP

‘Oh, OK. It is east, right?’

N: *sou... hidari desu yo hidari hidari ga higashi ne*

yes left COP SFP left left SUB east SFP

‘Yes. It’s on the left, left. Left means east.’

S: *hai higashi desu ne higashi hidari wa*

yes east COP SFP east left TOP

‘Yes. It’s to the east, east. On the left.’

A: aa ano x-ya no asoko no kado ka

‘Oh, it is located on the corner of Store X.’

G: chigau soshitara **higashi** de zutto **higashi** . arukimasu yo

‘No, farther to the **east**, more to the **east**. It’s quite a long walk.’

K: a sou desu ka

‘Oh, I see.’

N: sonna **higashi** tte wakannai yo

‘(K) would not understand (what you mean) by “**east**”.’

A: **higashi** ja wakannai, chanto setsumei shinakucha

‘(K) wouldn’t understand by hearing “east”. You need to explain it!’

G: hai hai wakatteru ((Seeing K)) ano **higashi** wa kocchi ☞ de

‘Yes, yes, I know. Well, **east** means this way ☞.’

N: **higashi** tte ttara ne ‘When you hear “**east**,” alright?’

G: maa dakara koko o **orite**

‘Well, so, you **go down** this way’

tsukiatari o kocchi ni ☞ kou ☞ **migi** ni iku n desu yo

‘At the end of the street, you go this way ☞, to the **right** ☞.’

Concluding remarks

- Speakers in Ishigaki take on interlocutors' points of view and switch their usage of spatial frames of reference.
 - = the other-oriented use of FoR
 - describing space is an intersubjective activity in BA!
- The choice of a spatial frame of reference can work as an identity or group marker.
- BA makes indexicality & intersubjectivity possible and indexicality and intersubjectivity helps to create a new BA constantly.