

The University of Pittsburgh ~ Department of Linguistics

**Colloquium Series *Presents:*
Japan Speaker Series**

**“Empirical Approaches to Aspect: An Analysis of the
Language System and Learner Language of Japanese, in
Comparison with Germanic, Romance, and Arabic”**

Presented By: Christiane von Stutterheim

University of Heidelberg

Despite legions of studies on aspectual systems there remains the disturbing fact that L2 learners hardly ever acquire native-like competence in this domain. Precise descriptions of the semantics of aspectual markers do not include an important component of language competence: the principles of use of a particular form or structure.

The Heidelberg project group set out to study aspectual markers by investigating conditions determining their use (covering 13 languages) using experimental methodology. In my talk I will present findings for several typologically close as well as remote languages, focussing on progressive/ imperfective markers. Cross-linguistic comparisons were based on sets of stimuli (video clips showing short scenes) in which temporal features relevant for temporal perspective taking were varied on a systematic basis (features such as +/- potential endpoints, +/- endpoints reached, +/- homogeneity of situations, +/- iteration). The production data show how speakers differ across languages in clustering features of the respective situations depending on the aspectual means and underlying concepts. The analysis of very advanced L2 speakers - using the same material - provides evidence that these clusters are extremely hard to acquire.

Co-sponsored by the Asian Studies Center and Department of Linguistics, Funding provided by the Japan Iron and Steel Federation and Mitsubishi endowments, and by the Department of Linguistics, at the University of Pittsburgh

Friday, March 20, 2009 at 3:00p.m.

Room G8 ~ Cathedral of Learning

Talk – “Psycholinguistic Methods in L2 Acquisition Research”

Friday, March 20, 2009 at 12:00pm, 342 C.L.