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Pragmatic Particles

Findings from Asian Languages

Jieun Kiaer

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Pragmatic Particles

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BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA

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First published in Great Britain 2021
Paperback edition published 2022

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kiaer, Jieun, author.

Title: Pragmatic particles: findings from Asian languages / Jieun Kiaer.

Description: London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. | Series: Bloomsbury
studies in theoretical linguistics | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020031003 (print) | LCCN 2020031004 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781350118461 (hardback) | ISBN 9781350191655 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781350118478 (ebook) | ISBN 9781350118485 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Grammar, Comparative and general--Particles. | East Asia--Languages--
Particles. | Southeast Asia--Languages--Particles. | Middle East--Languages--Particles.

Classification: LCC P283 .K53 2020 (print) | LCC P283 (ebook) | DDC 415/.5--dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020031003>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020031004>

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3501-1846-1

PB: 978-1-3501-9165-5

ePDF: 978-1-3501-1847-8

eBook: 978-1-3501-1848-5

Series: Bloomsbury Studies in Theoretical Linguistics

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

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Contents

List of illustrations	vi
Preface	ix
Acknowledgements	xi
Abbreviations and conventions	xii
1 Introduction	1
2 Modelling flexible word orders	23
3 Efficiency grammar	43
4 Multidimensional meanings	65
5 Socio-pragmatic meanings	83
6 Particles as a meaning complex	113
7 Pragmatic syntax	133
8 Constructive particles and syntactic fluidity	165
9 Expressive and attitudinal particles	177
Epilogue	211
Notes	215
Bibliography	225
Index	237

Illustrations

Figures

1.1	Syntactic structure of Japanese sentence	6
2.1	Lengthened connective particle as utterance-final particle	30
2.2	Overt verb raising: Ensuring IO DO constituency	35
2.3	<i>Hon-o Mary-ni</i> as a constituent via oblique movement	36
2.4	Baldrige's derivation of a long-distance scrambling in Turkish	41
3.1	Incremental constituency	47
3.2	Grammaticality check in a local domain	50
3.3	Structure for <i>Jessica rang up the boy</i>	56
3.4	Articulation rate (s/second) by number of syllables for both interveners and non-intervenors	57
3.5	Gap in the matrix clause	59
3.6	Gap in the embedded clause	60
3.7	Syntactic structure of Korean sentence	62
3.8	Syntactic structure for dative NP versus accusative NP	63
3.9	Syntactic structure for Chinese: Ternary structure	63
4.1a	Approval with emoticon	70
4.1b	Approval without any emoticon	70
4.2a	Approval without any emoticon	71
4.2b	Approval with emoticon	71
4.3	Layers of expressive meanings	77
5.1	Hand gesture	90
5.2	Prayer or thank you	91
6.1	Subjectiveness and objectiveness scale	125
7.1	Pre-determined type-raising	138
7.2	Binary, functor-argument relation	141
7.3	Partial structure projected by the verb <i>iki</i> 'beat'	142
7.4	Persian verb ending updates the subject	144
7.5	Lao verbs: Fo(U) and Fo(V) will be updated from the context	145
7.6	Local structure building via case particle <i>-ka</i>	148
7.7	Routinized update via the accusative particle <i>-lul</i>	149

7.8	Pre-verbal constructions	153
7.9	Parsing who in (19c)	157
7.10	Anaphoric copy	158
7.11	Updating the implicit arguments from the context	159
7.12	Three motives: Efficiency, expressivity and empathy	161
8.1	Lexical macros via case particles	167
8.2	Building a sequence of LINKed structures	173
9.1	Greeting in Thai and Lao	201
9.2	Single LINK application	207
9.3	Multiple LINK application	208

Tables

1.1	Common European framework for language proficiency	3
2.1	Constructive case particles	25
4.1	Interrogative particles in Lao grammar	70
5.1	Urdu expressions sensitive to social hierarchy between speaker and hearer	100
5.2	Hindi expressions sensitive to social hierarchy between speaker and hearer	101
5.3	Bengali expressions sensitive to social hierarchy between speaker and hearer	101
5.4	Bengali verbal conjugations based on person pronouns	102
5.5	Japanese expressions sensitive to social hierarchy	102
5.6	Bengali: Pronominal	104
5.7	Second-person pronouns and address terms in Japanese	109
5.8	Second-person pronouns and address terms in Korean	110
7.1	Types in dynamic syntax	140
8.1	Constructive particles in Japanese	168
8.2	Constructive particles in Bengali	168
8.3	Constructive particles in Hindi	168
8.4	Constructive particles in Urdu	169
8.5	Constructive particles in Turkish	169
8.6	Constructive particles in Persian	169
8.7	Constructive particles in Mongolian	169
8.8	Constructive particles in Tagalog	170
8.9	Constructive particles in Tibet	170

9.1	Expressive particles in Bengali	198
9.2	Expressive particles in Hindi	198
9.3	Expressive particles in Urdu	199
9.4	Expressive particles in Vietnamese	199
9.5	Expressive particles in Lao	200
9.6	Expressive particles in Burmese	200
9.7	Expressive particles in Khmer	200
9.8	Meanings of boundary tones	202

Preface

Particles are not peripheral categories, nor are their behaviours arbitrary or accidental. They play a crucial role in unfolding structural skeletons and making syntax predictable, yet at the same time enriching socio-pragmatic, interactional meanings. Particles are observed cross-linguistically as a complex of syntactic, semantic and pragmatic primitives. However, particles, although widely observed in the languages of the world, are largely unexplored in theoretical linguistics.

Particle researchers often concentrate on only one aspect of particles, rather than grappling with their complex, multifaceted nature. Hence, some particles are called a case marker in one setting, but a discourse marker in another when it is in fact the same particle operating with dual or multiple functions. Such a fragmented view is at times unavoidable in contemporary linguistics which is, in principle, approached from a non-holistic standpoint. From an Anglo- or Euro-centric perspective, the general linguistic properties of particles are often marginalized as their roles are less crucial in English and other European languages. For instance, in English, orders and verbs provide the main combinatory information, and auxiliaries present modal meanings, although the repertoire of meanings available is much more limited than what we find in Asian languages. The starting point of this book is to observe, describe and explain particles in a logical manner, and from a position that is divorced from the traditional Euro-centric perspective. By observing the characteristics and behaviours of particles – which have so often been overlooked – I aim to show how socio-pragmatic motivations shape morphosyntactic variations through case studies of Asian languages. In doing so, I shall also show that contemporary Anglo-centric grammar formalisms are inadequate to properly observe, describe and explain the constructive roles and socio-pragmatically rich meanings that the particles in these languages project.

This book draws on data from a host of non-Western European languages. Without delving into detailed descriptions of every language, I aim to demonstrate what the commonalities shared by these languages can contribute to linguistic theory. I will also show that the paradigms set up for English and

other European languages are largely inadequate for explaining phenomena seen in these Asian languages.

In this book, I highlight the necessity of researching (i) the constructive role of particles in languages which exhibit flexible word orders and (ii) the rich array of expressive and attitudinal meanings exhibited by particles, which are sensitive to sociocultural factors. I adopt Dynamic Syntax as a formal model to explain particle behaviours, which have been traditionally difficult to capture within a static linguistic framework. I also draw on Potts' expressive semantics (2005) to show how complex interpersonal relations are manifested in the morphosyntactic realization of particles and other elements of language. In formal linguistics, the effect of speaker-hearer interpersonal dynamics such as intimacy, status and kinship is considered peripheral. I take the view that these are crucial driving forces for linguistic behaviours.

Acknowledgements

This book would not have happened without inspiration from colleagues, teachers and my own students. If I had not studied Dynamic Syntax for my doctorate, I would never have pursued many of the questions discussed in this book; surrounded by wonderful specialists in Asian languages and culture at the Oriental Studies Faculty at Oxford University gave me a real appreciation and care for languages I had not previously encountered. This work is written out of a conviction that the diverse, fine-grained socio-pragmatic meanings of Asian languages deserve much more attention in contemporary linguistics.

I am very grateful to those who have provided invaluable help at the different stages of the project. Especially, I have consulted the following people for the data included in this book: Jing Yan (Chinese), Amena Nebres (Tagalog), Bihani Sarkar and Ranjamrittika Bhowmik (Bengali), Aayush Srivastava (Hindi, Urdu), Justin Watson (Burmese), Jakob Fjeldsted and Orranand Sukhasvasti (Thai and Lao), Nhung Nguyen (Vietnamese), Saera Kwak and Sahba Shaya (Persian), Lama Jabb (Tibetan), Junko Hagiwara (Japanese), Nadia Christopher (Kazakh), Nadia Jamil (Arabic) and Emine Cakir (Turkish).

Derek Driggs, Niamh Calway, Alex Kimmons and Edward Voet have also provided me with wonderful editorial help. I am also thankful to Andrew Wardell and Becky Holland from Bloomsbury for their patience and encouragement throughout this project.

I would not have begun this trajectory without the love and support of my family and friends. I would like to dedicate this book to my father, Taehoon Joe, and father-in-law, Stanley Kiaer, both of whom I dearly miss.

Abbreviations and conventions

Glossing conventions¹

Most of the available glossing conventions are not sufficient to capture the complex and diverse nature of Asian languages' morphosyntactic and pragmatic characteristics projected by particles.² In this book, I propose the lexical matrix to describe and explain particles' diverse constructive, attitudinal and expressive meanings. However, for the readers' convenience, I shall provide some conventional glossing in other places.

Glossing abbreviations

ACC	accusative
ADJ	adjective
ADN	adnominal
ADV	adverb(ial)
AFTH	afterthought marker
AUX	auxiliary
CAUS	causative
CL	classifier
COM	comitative
COMP	complementizer
COND	conditional
CONJ	conjunct

COP	copula
DAT	dative
DECL	declarative
DEF	definite
EMP	empathizer
EMPH	emphatic particle added to a noun expressing empathy for the referent ('poor X')
FOC	focus
FORMAL	formal
FUT	future
GEN	genitive
HON	honorific
I	intimate
IMP	imperative
INT	interjective
INTRG	interrogative
LOC	locative
NEG	negative
NMLZ	nominalizer/nominalization
NOM	nominative
OBJ	object
OBL	oblique
ORD	ordinary
PASS	passive
PST	past
PERF	perfective

PL	plural
POL	polite
POSS	possessive
PRF	perfect
PRES	present
Q	question
REFL	reflexive
REL	relative
RETRO	retrospect
ROY	Royal suffix added to noun phrases to indicate royal referents; today also used with non-royal referents of high standing
SIP/UIP	sentence/utterance initial particle
SMP/UMP	sentence/utterance medial particle
SFP/UFP	sentence/utterance-final particle
TOP	topic
VOC	vocative
VOL	volitional

Romanization and orthography conventions

For most occasions I strive for phonetically intuitive romanization. Since many particles have homophones, whenever necessary I shall also provide the local orthography. For morphosyntactic characterizations I follow morphosyntactically suitable romanization, such as the Yale system.³

Introduction

In this chapter, I shall provide a brief overview of the status quo of research into Asian languages (1.1) and particles (1.2) and the challenges that these languages could bring to contemporary theories in linguistics. I shall introduce the target languages under discussion (1.3) and their key features (1.4) which I aim to explain in this book. I also introduce target languages (1.5).

1.1. Researching Asian languages

Modern linguistics was greatly influenced and inspired by the works of Asian linguists' grammar, such as Pāṇini's. Aṣṭādhyāyī by Pāṇini (dated *c.* fourth to fifth centuries BC) is the very earliest extant systematic grammar of human languages. It has inspired many pioneers of the modern linguistic science – Ferdinand de Saussure, Leonard Bloomfield and Roman Jakobson, all Sanskrit scholars. Staal (1967) notes that Pāṇini's grammar provided the formal foundation for contemporary linguistics due to its influence on Saussure and Noam Chomsky.

However, in the course of its development, the Asian touch within linguistics has been lost. Throughout the history of contemporary linguistics, in accordance with the Chomskian tradition of generative grammars, theoretical linguists have aimed to unravel universal grammars that would be applicable to all human languages. However, this search has been conducted with data taken mainly from European languages. That said, in the process of searching out and crystallizing the linguistic categories and features of world languages, mainstream Western linguists often construct their approach through the looking glass of English-like languages, implicitly assuming that the linguistic consistencies found in these languages will be applicable to all other languages with little parametric variation. This often unsaid, yet implicitly assumed, idea is prevalent in every part of contemporary linguistics.

In order to address the aforementioned lack of language diversity in linguistic discourse, this book uses data from a range of Asian languages which are relatively under-represented in theoretical linguistics. From a world languages perspective, Asian languages have never been minority languages, and their foreign speakership is growing rapidly worldwide. For instance, the 2011 UK census showed that the Asian or Asian British ethnic group category experienced one of the largest increases since 2001, comprising a third of the foreign-born population of the UK (2.4 million) (Office for National Statistics 2013). The US Census Bureau (2011) revealed that Asian and Pacific Island languages constitute a major portion of foreign languages spoken in the United States. These languages include Chinese; Korean; Japanese; Vietnamese; Hmong; Khmer; Lao; Thai; Tagalog/Filipino; the Dravidian languages of India, such as Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam; and other languages of Asia and the Pacific, including the Polynesian and Micronesian languages. Among them, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese belong to the country's top ten most widely spoken languages. The situation is similar in other English-speaking countries such as Australia and Canada which, to use Kachru's terminology (1985), belong to the inner circle of English. In Australia, the top four foreign languages are Asian: Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese and Vietnamese. Tagalog/Filipino, Hindi and Punjabi also appear in the top ten most spoken foreign languages. In Canada, Tagalog and Punjabi are the two fastest growing foreign languages. The growth of Asian languages is observable in other parts of the world as well.

Nevertheless, regardless of their global significance, Asian languages have been severely under-represented within contemporary linguistics. Even for mega languages like Mandarin, Standard Arabic, Hindi and Bengali/Bangla (all of which are among Ethnologue's 2019 top ten most spoken languages in the world), it is not easy to find an accessible descriptive grammar book or any handbook-like linguistic publication written for a global audience, compared to what is available for English and other Western European languages.¹ As I shall discuss later in this chapter (1.4) and in Chapter 2, most of the morphosyntactic characteristics of Asian languages, despite being found in the majority of world languages, have been largely overlooked or considered exceptional within the realm of contemporary linguistics.

General awareness of non-Western European languages is poor across the globe.² Asian languages in the Anglophone or Western European context have often been referred to as 'heritage' languages – implying that these are languages for Asian immigrants and their descendants only. Across universities globally, the 'Modern Languages' department frequently refers to contemporary Western

European languages: French, Italian, Spanish and German, while Asian languages are referred to as ‘East Asian’, ‘South Asian’ or ‘Near Eastern’ (Kiaer 2017a). Asian languages have often been classified as difficult-to-master languages for native speakers of English. According to the Foreign Service Institute, an organ of the US Federal Government, most Asian languages belong to (difficulty) categories III and IV.³ It is noteworthy that most Western European languages – such as French, German, Dutch, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese – are considered category I languages, which shows relative easiness of learning.

From an English speaker’s perspective, Asian languages tend to have a more complex socio-pragmatic system than Western European languages (see Chapter 5 for a detailed discussion). Asian languages are also often not as straightforward to romanize or gloss as English and most Western European languages. However, mere difference from the English language can justify neither the poor general awareness of, nor the lack of research on, these languages.

In fact, most available linguistic pedagogies are also based on the acquisition of European languages and cannot be applied easily to the study of Asian languages. Consider Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 shows the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) vocabulary profiler. Yet, even in this table, command of

Table 1.1 Common European framework for language proficiency

Level	Descriptor
C2	Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning.
C1	Has a good command of a broad lexical repertoire allowing gaps to be readily overcome with circumlocutions; little obvious searching for expressions or avoidance strategies. Good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms.
B2	Has a good range of vocabulary for matters related to his/her field and most general topics. Can vary formulation to avoid frequent repetition, but lexical gaps can still cause hesitation and circumlocution.
B1	Has a sufficient vocabulary to express himself/herself with some circumlocutions on most topics pertinent to his/her everyday life such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel and current events. Has sufficient vocabulary to conduct routine, everyday transactions involving familiar situations and topics.
A2	Has a sufficient vocabulary for the expression of basic communicative needs. Has a sufficient vocabulary for coping with simple survival needs.
A1	Has a basic vocabulary repertoire of isolated words and phrases related to particular concrete situations.

grammatical relations using particles, or the appropriate usage of sociocultural relation-sensitive speech, such as honorifics or sentence-final particles, is not included. Pragmatic proficiency is included briefly as ‘idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms’ (i.e. C2) but is a more significant concern in Asian languages in which mastering interpersonal relations is a crucial part of linguistic competence. A1-2 refers to the basic level, B1-2 refers to the intermediate level and C1-2 refers to the advanced level.

As I shall turn to in section 1.4 and Chapter 2, many key morphosyntactic features that are shared by a vast number of Asian languages have also been under-represented or overlooked, as they are analysed and understood mainly from an English-language perspective. This book aims to demonstrate the necessity of showcasing the often-overlooked properties of Asian languages that are in need of proper observation, description and explanation. These properties, as it happens, are not exclusively exhibited in Asian languages, but are observed cross-linguistically among world languages.

1.2. Particles on the fringe

The definition of the term ‘particle’ varies greatly, but for the purposes of this discussion, I take ‘particle’ to be an overarching term referring to a single or a sequence of (un)inflected grammatical morphemes which play a role as a single unit with a complexity of syntactic, semantic and (socio-)pragmatic meaning. The term ‘particle’ is used as an umbrella term to refer to endings, markers, suffixes, morphemes and so on in order to bring focus to the common characteristics of all these categories which fall under the wider heading of ‘particle’. Particles cannot be used as standalone words, and their use is sensitive to interlocutory registers and speakers’ perspectives (see Chapters 4 and 5). Particles are normally very light in terms of phonological weight. I assume that so-called dummies or clitic expressions are also kinds of particles.⁴ The term ‘proclitic particle’ refers to a particle whose phonetic value depends on the following word, while an enclitic particle’s phonetic value depends on the preceding word. I expand this discussion further and argue that prosodic breaks in certain languages also play the role of invisible – yet audible – particles.

As particles are agglutinative in nature, they differ from the inflectional morphemes found in most European languages, which require morphosyntactic agreement with the auxiliaries or main verbs. Although particle behaviours are quite relaxed compared to agreement-required morphemes, as we shall explore

in this book, particle behaviours are neither arbitrary nor peripheral, but systematic and consistently motivated by socio-pragmatic needs. In particular, in Chapter 5, I show how the speaker's desire to achieve *efficiency*, *expressivity* and *empathy* in social communication influences particle behaviours. This is in line with Halliday's (1978) functional grammar, where interpersonal tuning matters in human communication.

In the earlier period of generative grammars, scholars such as Kuno noted the importance of particles and their two primary roles (namely, constructive and expressive/attitudinal), which are demonstrated in the following quote:

There are two important matters that must be mentioned with respect to Japanese particles. First, particles are used not only to represent case relationships, or to represent the functions that are carried in English by prepositions and conjunctions, but also after sentence-final verbs to represent the speaker's attitude towards the content of the sentence. (Kuno 1973: 4)⁵

- (1) a. *Kore wa hon desu yo.* [Japanese]
 This TOP book be YO
 'I am telling you that this is a book.'
- b. *Kore wa hon desu ne.*
 This TOP book be NE
 'I hope you agree that this is a book.'
- c. *Kore wa hon desu ka.*
 This TOP book be KA
 'I ask you if this is a book.'
- d. *John wa baka sa.*
 John TOP fool SA
 'It goes without saying that John is a fool.' (Kuno 1973: 5)

Despite the crucial roles which particles play in both structure building and enriching meanings, Kuno's observation has not yet been followed up in later scholarship. Many theoretical linguists, particularly those who are trained within a Chomskian framework, have mainly analysed particles from an Anglo- or Euro-centric perspective. Such analyses put forward the idea that particles are largely non-existent in syntactic representations, with only a few exceptions. In the linguistics textbooks designed for learners of Chinese, Japanese and Korean, for instance, particles seem not to play any role in the configuration of a structure. In most instances, the particle somehow evades any mention.

Taroo-ga gakkoo-de atarassi hon-o katta.
 Taro-Nom school-at new book-Acc bought
 “Taro bought a new book at school.”

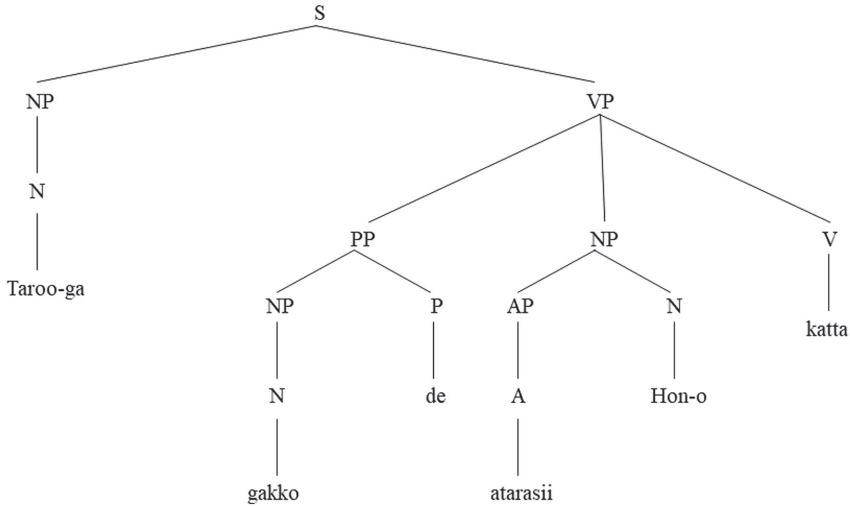


Figure 1.1 Syntactic structure of Japanese sentence.

Many basic syntax courses still provide analyses which assume that case particles do not exist, as seen in Figure 1.1. Tsujimura (2005: 164) provides a syntactic tree that features pre-X-bar schemata and pays no attention to case particles. The only notable difference between Japanese and English in this analysis appears to be word order. This approach of ignoring particles is not uncommon.

Particles are often referred to as grammatical or discourse markers based on their main roles in contributing to the given sentence or utterance.⁶ Yet, as we shall explore in this book, the meanings and functions of particles are more complex and dynamic than is often thought. Instead of observing particles, describing them and aiming to explain their function as a grammatical entity which has multiple dimensions of information (structural, semantic and pragmatic), contemporary linguists consider them to have only a single function – mostly semantic or pragmatic. Therefore, many studies on particles are largely concentrated on their pragmatic roles (such as sentence-final particles) and do not acknowledge the dual nature which allows them to be constructive and/or expressive and contributes to the making of structural as well as semantic/pragmatic meanings.

In my view, the core problem in particle research stems from the observation stage.⁷ As we shall explore in this book, the Anglo- and Euro-centric methods of

observing Asian particles has led linguists to overlook their dynamic, complex and socio-pragmatically rich nature, since such particles either do not exist in English and European languages, or do not express such diverse, fine-grained interpersonal meanings.

Discussing the reliability of grammaticality judgement tests, Phillips (2009) also points out that the problem of generative linguistics is beyond the toolkit and methodological problems. I shall return to this in Chapter 3.

I think that it would help a great deal if more linguists were to take more seriously the mentalistic commitments to which they profess. Most generative linguists would assent to the notion that their theories should be responsive to learnability considerations, yet there has been surprisingly little exploration of how to relate current understanding of cross-language variation to models of language learning. . . . In sum, I agree with many of the critics cited above that some fundamental questions must be addressed (or readdressed) if generative linguistics is to again seize the initiative in the study of language. The perception on the outside that mainstream linguistics is becoming irrelevant is unfortunately very real indeed. However, I do not think that we should be fooled into thinking that informal judgment gathering is the root of the problem or that more formalized judgment collection will solve the problem. (Phillips 2009: 13; emphasis mine)

1.3. The case of Asian languages

Although many Asian languages have never been considered minority languages, they are severely under-represented in modern linguistics. Indeed, contemporary syntactic theory focuses predominantly on evidence from English and a few other European languages. One might argue against this claim, citing numerous works by theoretical linguists who worked on Asian languages. Yet, many of their studies show how they can apply the same universal theory with only minor adaptations in explaining their own languages. Very often, the works of these scholars are not accepted by home-grown, more traditional linguists. In addition, the use of highly technical terminology encouraged in the Chomskian Minimalist Program has made it almost impossible for outsiders to participate. With these barriers, non-Chomskians can only speak up against the reliability of the data, which Chomskians can easily disregard due to the belief that the data does not matter as it belongs to the realm of performance. Consider the following quote from Thomson (2012).

Modern Bengali linguistics (from about the 1970 onwards) have taken a giant leap away from the traditional, historic, Sanskrit-oriented grammar and have adopted western formal grammar models to test the structures of Bengali. This has resulted in a considerable body of impressive work on particular features of Bengali, however this work is highly technical in its language and largely inaccessible to non-linguists. (Thomson 2012: 10; emphasis mine)

This chasm is seen in other disciplines, but in linguistics as it stands now, it seems almost irrecoverable. This book aims to challenge this divide. The aim of any linguistic theory is to explain the core, innate properties of human languages. In order to achieve this, unprejudiced, theory-unbound observation and description are pre-requisite.

Since Chomsky's 1957 work *Syntactic Structures*, it has been the case that categories which exist in English and Western European languages have received much attention in contemporary linguistics. However, linguistic categories and attributes that are non-existent or less relevant in these languages have been less celebrated and explored. Particles are a representative example of this. Notably, particles have failed to attract proper attention in generative grammars, which put a heavy emphasis on word orders in syntactic architecture, as will be shown in Chapter 2. The following quotes are from Enfield (2007: 10–12).

From a modern linguistic point of view, there are a number of features of Lao not normally found in European languages which would nowadays be described on their own terms. One example is the phenomenon of serial verb constructions, a type of complex clause structure that Lao and many other languages – but not European languages like French – feature. Such structures are mentioned here and there in existing Lao grammars, but (unlike early grammars of African languages) no attention is drawn to their identity as a distinct grammatical category. (Enfield 2007: 11–12; emphasis mine)

The two French language grammars are similar to grammars written in Lao in that their analysis of Lao follows distinctions in grammatical meaning traditionally made in European languages, such as categories of conjugation, mood and inflection of the verb. But a significant difference between Lao and the average European language is that Lao lacks precisely these categories. Most points of grammatical analysis of this kind are not supported with language internal arguments along lines supplied by modern standard reference grammars. Rather, the grammarian is describing Lao in terms of the resources it has for expressing the grammatical distinctions one has in French or some other 'Standard Average European' grammar. (Enfield 2007: 10–11; emphasis mine)

Most syntactic literature is built on the discussion of word order, often at the cost of other structural characteristics of the target languages. As I shall return to in Chapter 2, Chomsky's earlier work on transformation grammar which was set up in the process of searching for universal grammar (UG) typifies this emphasis on word order. However, according to the World Atlas of Language Structures (WALS), pragmatically driven flexibility is universally observed across languages. Instead of word order, these languages often employ particles to show word function in a sentence. Languages are said to have a 'degree of synthesis', referring to the number of morphemes that can affix to a base word. According to Balthasar Bickel and Johanna Nichols (2013), among 145 languages investigated, 140 languages had more than 2 particle categories attached to the verb. Of those, 55 languages (40 per cent) show a range of 6 to 9 particles clustered together after the verb. The whole set of meanings that particles project has not been systematically studied – in fact, particles as a whole have not been properly underpinned in linguistic theories thus far. Another problem lies in the way particles are glossed based on attributes which are primarily suitable for European languages. Some meanings of a particle and its pragmatic behaviours may be hard to gloss using the existing glossing conventions due to their interpersonal properties and complexity of socio-pragmatic meanings. I shall return to this in later chapters.

In addition to these linguistic factors, there are also some fundamental, non-linguistic factors which have pushed particle research to the fringe. For instance, the misinterpretation of modernization in East Asian academic sociology, which was understood to call for the replacement of traditional disciplines and frameworks, resulted in a tendency to bring an Anglo- or Euro-centric perspective to most academic disciplines. This process pushed out many traditional perspectives and observations and rendered them old-fashioned and outdated in common conception.

For instance, Korean and Japanese scholarship in formal, theoretical linguistics, particularly theoretical syntax, is keeping up with the complexity of the up-to-date generative framework. It is fair to suggest that a boom in this field resulted from the influx of Korean and Japanese students to the United States from the 1970s onwards, during which time many studied theoretical linguistics in accordance with the academic trend of the time which was heavily influenced by Chomskian generative grammars. To find highly technical papers on Korean syntax is quite easy, yet it is difficult to find any work that takes the roles of particles seriously and provides a more adequate explanatory account, either in scholarly research papers or in introductions to textbooks on Korean linguistics.

To date, in Korea and Japan, there have been two formats for the research of national languages: the local linguistics (國語學), or the more 'global' linguistics (語言學). US-educated scholars' approach to modernizing Korean linguistics, as was the case in other academic disciplines, was to interpret and apply Korean specificities within a modernized framework.⁸ This effort led them to overlook particle studies which have been emphasized by traditional Korean linguists. The tension between the two communities is ongoing, often without any cross-border communication. Even some basic terminology and definitions remain unsettled between the groups, causing unnecessary confusion. The chasm between the two groups is well known, though rarely addressed in academic circles.

In this book, I will focus on languages spoken in Asia. What we mean when we say 'Asia' is difficult to determine, however I use the term to incorporate the regions of the Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia, Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. The data used herein spans Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Cantonese, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Mongolian, Persian, Tagalog, Tibetan, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese. With the exception of a few languages such as Hindi, Japanese, Korean and Turkish, it is clear that Subject Object Verb (SOV) agglutinative Asian languages are generally significantly less studied than Western European languages within theoretical linguistics.

Based on the data I collected through consulting native speakers and descriptive grammars, I aim to shed new light on the constructive and expressive roles that particles play in natural language syntax, semantics and pragmatics. In particular, I shall show that the patterns of particles and argument realization in the target languages demonstrate that syntactic decisions are fundamentally driven by socio-pragmatic needs. I shall also show that argument and particle behaviours are neither arbitrary nor marginal, but require the consideration of multiple factors to achieve understanding.

1.4. Key features

There are a few morphosyntactic characteristics which I focus on in this book that are generally shared by every Asian language introduced in the last section. These properties have often been marginalized or under-represented in contemporary linguistics. The following key features for discussion are not shared by English and most Western European languages. The ways these key features operate are neither accidental nor arbitrary; they are systematic and

pragmatic in nature, and can be explained as (socio)-pragmatically driven syntactic patterns.

1.4.1. Flexible word orders

Word orders in most Asian languages are relatively flexible with a few exceptions (these being Vietnamese, Thai and Indonesian). As I shall explore in this book, in languages with flexible word orders, particles, prosody and context play a crucial role in unfolding syntactic structures. Contemporary linguistic theories, however, have trouble explaining syntactic fluidity (such as flexible constituent formation) and various sources of structural combination (see Chapter 2).

Notably, in both synchronic and diachronic variations, we can easily see that rigid ordering is not so common in human languages, let alone Asian languages. Goddard (2005: 7) notes that generally speaking, the languages of East and Southeast Asia tend to have a more flexible and ‘expressive’ word order than English, and almost all languages in this region allow some variation in the constituent order of a simple sentence.

Flexible ordering is indeed not a new phenomenon; it can be found in ancient languages, for instance, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit all show flexible word orders. Examples of word-order flexibility in Latin are given in (2). One thing which the ancient languages clearly demonstrate is that structural relations are not predicted by word orders, but by the case particles which are attached to the nouns. All examples in (2) show the same propositional meanings.⁹

(2) Latin flexible word order

- | | | | |
|----|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| a. | <i>puer</i> | <i>canem</i> | <i>videt.</i> |
| | boyNOM | dogACC | see3sg |
| b. | <i>puer</i> | <i>videt</i> | <i>canem.</i> |
| | boyNOM | see3sg | dogACC |
| c. | <i>canem</i> | <i>puer</i> | <i>videt.</i> |
| | dogACC | boyNOM | see3sg |
| d. | <i>canem</i> | <i>videt</i> | <i>puer.</i> |
| | dogACC | see3sg | boyNOM |
| e. | <i>videt</i> | <i>puer</i> | <i>canem.</i> |
| | see3sg | boyNOM | dogACC |
| f. | <i>videt</i> | <i>canem</i> | <i>puer.</i> |
| | see3sg | dogACC | boyNOM |

‘The boy sees the dog.’