JAPANESE SYNTAX:
A BRIEF OVERVIEW

1. Phrase structure rules
2. Case and government
3. Question formation

BASIC CONSTITUENT ORDER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Verb</td>
<td>Subject Object Verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses [drink water]</td>
<td>horses [water drink]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules:</td>
<td>Rules:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S ( \rightarrow ) NP VP</td>
<td>S ( \rightarrow ) NP VP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VP ( \rightarrow ) V.Transitive NP</td>
<td>VP ( \rightarrow ) NP V.Transitive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More generally...

English: VP \( \rightarrow \) V NP
Japanese: VP \( \rightarrow \) NP V

SIMILARLY FOR OTHER CATEGORIES

English: at home

Japanese: home -at

books [John reads]
(...are always good ones!)

PP rule:
- PP \( \rightarrow \) P NP

NP rule:
- NP \( \rightarrow \) N S

Japanese: [John read] books

[John-ga yómu] hón

PP rule:
- PP \( \rightarrow \) NP P

NP rule:
- NP \( \rightarrow \) S N
Text your knowledge!

(Kids think horses [drink water])

Kids horses water drink think

Kodomo-ga omóu

[umá-ga mizu-o nómu-to]

- Evidence for a new rule: VP -> S V.clausal
- Parallels our earlier rule: VP -> NP V.Transitive

Noticing a pattern?

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<td>VP -&gt; V NP</td>
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- The head of any given phrase is the **first** constituent inside it.
  `head-initial' language
- The head of any given phrase is the **last** constituent inside it.
  `head-final' language

Case in English

- Recall definition of case:
  - The grammatical function a noun or pronoun has within a phrase, sentence, etc.

- Generally no ‘marking of case’ on nouns:
  - Dogs chase **cats**.
  - **Cats** chase mice.

- Case only marked in English pronouns:
  - She chases **him**.
  - **He** chases it.
  - *She chases he.*
  - *Him chases it.*
CASE IN JAPANESE

- Japanese has a set of postpositions to explicitly mark the case of the nouns in a sentence

- "Dogs chase cats."
  dogs -SUBJECT cats -OBJECT chase
  inú -ga néko -o oikakéru

  Compare:

- "Cats chase mice."
  cats -SUBJECT mice -OBJECT chase
  néko -ga nezumi -o oikakéru

SCRAMBLING

- {Noun + case postposition} units can move freely
  - Only restriction: verb must be at end of sentence

- For 'Kids eat sushi at home', all of these possible:
  - kids-SUBJECT home-at sushi-OBJECT eat
  - kids-SUBJECT sushi-OBJECT home-at eat
  - home-at kids-SUBJECT sushi-OBJECT eat
  - sushi-OBJECT kids-SUBJECT home-at eat
  - home-at sushi-OBJECT kids-SUBJECT eat
  - sushi-OBJECT home-at kids-SUBJECT eat

- Basic meaning is same; only focus is different
- Problem for a Phrase Structure Grammar model

GOVERNMENT IN HONORIFICS

- "The CEO waits for the employee."
  shachō-ga shain-o omachi-nináru
  CEO-SUBJECT employee-OBJECT wait-RESPECTFUL

- "The employee waits for the CEO."
  shain-ga shachō-o omachi-suru
  employee-SUBJECT CEO-OBJECT wait-HUMBLE

QUESTION FORMATION
**YES/NO QUESTIONS**

- Add sentence-final ‘particle’ to change to question

> “Horses drink water.”

horses-SUBJECT water-OBJECT drink

umá-ga mizu-o nómu

> “Do horses drink water?” (*Note complicated syntax*)

horses-SUBJECT water-OBJECT drink-QUESTION

umá-ga mizu-o nómu-no→

- c.f. deshō→ ‘right?’, kana→ ‘I wonder…’, etc.

**‘WH-QUESTIONS’**

- ‘Wh-words’: who, what, where, when, why, etc.
- Just replace the word in question with Wh-word

> “What drinks water?”

what-SUBJECT water-OBJECT drink-QUESTION

náni-ga mizu-o nómu-no→

> “What do horses drink?” (*Note complicated syntax*)

horses-SUBJECT what-OBJECT drink-QUESTION

umá-ga náni-o nómu-no→

**WHAT WE’VE JUST SEEN**

- Three main topics today:
  1. Phrase structure rules
  2. Case and government
  3. Question formation
- Why it’s important:
  - See how different Phrase Structure Rules can be according to the language
  - See how explicit morphological case marking works
  - See an example of government sensitive to a parameters not active in English - honorifics
  - Examine how questions are expressed in ways other than syntax like English