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LING-L303  
(INTRO. TO LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS)

## JAPANESE SYNTAX: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

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

## PHRASE STRUCTURE RULES

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## BASIC CONSTITUENT ORDER

### English

- Subject Verb Object  
*Horses [drink water]*

### Japanese

- Subject Object Verb  
*Umá-ga [mizu-o nómu]*

### ○ Rules:

- $S \rightarrow NP VP$
- $VP \rightarrow V.$ Transitive NP

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More generally... English:  $VP \rightarrow V NP$   
Japanese:  $VP \rightarrow NP V$

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## SIMILARLY FOR OTHER CATEGORIES

### English

*at home*

- PP rule:
  - $PP \rightarrow P NP$

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

- NP rule:
  - $NP \rightarrow N S$

### Japanese

*home -at*  
*uchi -de*

- PP rule:
  - $PP \rightarrow NP P$

*[John read] books*  
*[Jón-ga yómu] hón*

- NP rule:
  - $NP \rightarrow S N$

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## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE!

*Kids think (horses (drink water))*

**kids horses water drink think**

*Kodomo-ga*

*[umá-ga mizu-o nómu-to]*

*omóu*

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

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## NOTICING A PATTERN?

### English

- VP → V NP
- PP → P NP
- NP → N S

- The head of any given phrase is the **first** constituent inside it  
→ 'head-initial' language

### Japanese

- VP → NP V
- PP → NP P
- NP → S N

- The head of any given phrase is the **last** constituent inside it  
→ 'head-final' language

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## CASE AND GOVERNMENT

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## 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.*      \**She chases he.*
  - *He chases it.*      \**Him chases it.*

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## 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*

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## “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

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## GOVERNMENT IN HONORIFICS

- “The CEO waits for the employee.”

*shachō-ga*    *sháin-o*            *omachi-nináru*  
CEO-SUBJECT    employee-OBJECT    wait-RESPECTFUL



- “The employee waits for the CEO.”

*sháin-ga*            *shachō-o*            *omachi-suru*  
employee-SUBJECT    CEO-OBJECT    wait-HUMBLE



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## QUESTION FORMATION

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## YES/NO QUESTIONS

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

“Horses drink water.”

horses-SUBJECT	water-OBJECT	drink
<i>umá-ga</i>	<i>mizu-o</i>	<i>nómu</i>

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

horses-SUBJECT	water-OBJECT	drink-QUESTION
<i>umá-ga</i>	<i>mizu-o</i>	<i>nómu-no↗</i>

- c.f. *deshō*↗ ‘right?’, *kana*↗ ‘I wonder...’, etc.

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## ‘WH-QUESTIONS’

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

- “What drinks water?”

<b>what-SUBJECT</b>	water-OBJECT	drink-QUESTION
<i>náni-ga</i>	<i>mizu-o</i>	<i>nómu-no↗</i>

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

horses-SUBJECT	<b>what-OBJECT</b>	drink-QUESTION
<i>umá-ga</i>	<i>náni-o</i>	<i>nómu-no↗</i>

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## WRAPPING UP

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## 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

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