

- **History of Japanese:  
Phonology**

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*Background preparation:*

- *(none)*

# 0. Final projects: Last steps

- See [Final project info](#) web page for
  - Info and grading criteria about presentations, slides, and the “data appendix”
  - Info and grading criteria for the revision process required for LING grad students
- About **attendance** on presentation days
  - I will take attendance Tu Dec 5 for a participation point; come out and support your classmates!
  - Attendance at the final-exam period is **required** for undergrads (and earns a participation point for all)

# 0. Today's plan

Topics for today's discussion:

- How can we study historical phonology?
- Portuguese missionary materials
- The history of the *h*-row kana sounds
- If time:
  - Man'yōgana and the Old Japanese vowel system
  - Final vowel alternations
  - Historical morphology and syntax

# 1. Studying historical phonology

- What **sources of information** do we have available about the sound system or pronunciation of older forms of a language?

# 1. Studying historical phonology

- Sometimes we have **written records**
  - But how were older forms of the language actually **pronounced**?
- Suppose English were a dead language. How would we determine the pronunciation of the word *light*?
  - Does it help if we know that Japanese borrowed this word as ライト <raito>?
  - Does it help if we know that there is a variant spelling, *lite*?

# 1. Studying historical phonology

- Other ways to **reconstruct** the history of a language
  - **Dialect comparison** — essentially, doing comparative reconstruction (see below) on dialects to reconstruct a point of origin
  - **Internal reconstruction** — trying to simplify the reconstructed older form of a language
    - This works on the assumption that morphemes which alternate today had one consistent form in an earlier stage
    - Can look a lot like phonological analysis!

# 1. Studying historical phonology

- **Comparative reconstruction** — Developing hypotheses about the ancestor of a set of related languages — what was their starting point?
  - Question: What is Japanese related to, if anything? (See [bonus handout](#))

## 2. Chronology and terminology

- Classical Japanese — 文語 *bungo* 'literary language'
  - Survived as a literary language into the modern period (19th/20th centuries)
  - Compare the role of Latin vs. Romance vernaculars in the medieval period



## 2. Chronology and terminology

- Quick summary chronology  
(other language names, etc., are also used)

	Language name	Roughly corresponding historical period	
<i>bungo</i> 文語 'classical J.'	Old J.	Nara	710-794
	Early Middle J.	Heian	794-1185
	(Late) Middle J.	Muromachi/ Kamakura	1185-1603
	Early Modern J.	Edo	1603-1868
<i>gendaigo</i> 現代語 'modern J.'	Modern J.	Meiji- present	1868-

### 3. Portuguese missionary materials

- Japanese written in romanization (based on Portuguese orthography); 16th century
- João Rodrigues and other Portuguese missionaries
  - Dictionary and grammar of Japanese
  - Collection of *Aesop's Fables*

### 3. Portuguese missionary materials

- These texts provide evidence for:
  - Dialect differences, word usage, etc.
  - Oldest attested written examples of many Japanese words
  - (Indirect) evidence for pronunciation
    - Vowel length not systematically represented (except <ô> )
    - Distinction between <o> and <ô> — evidence for the midpoint of a sound change that is not directly represented in kana | /a+u/ → [ɔ:] (later → [o:])

# 3. Portuguese missionary materials

## Group discussion

- Data set -  
[Portuguese missionary materials: ESOPO NO FABVLAS](#)
  - Try to answer the questions in the box at the top
  - What evidence can we uncover about the pronunciation of the time?

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

There are many unusual things about the "*h*-row" kana sounds 「ほひふへほ」

- **Internal reconstruction:** Look at morpheme alternations
  - Rendaku — what happens to /h/?
  - What usually happens to Sino-Japanese /h/ when it follows a nasal?

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

- The kana chart consonant order is linguistically motivated — *except for h*

(based on Sanskrit tradition)

**k s t n    “h”    m | y r w**

- What sound classes are before and after the | ?
- Within each half, what is the organizing principle (if we leave out “h”)?
- What would make “h” fit this organizing principle?

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

- Riddle from the 16th century  
(transliterated according to modern pronunciation)

*Original:*

はは (母) には 二度 あひたれども

*Transliteration(?):*

haha -ni-wa ni-do a-i.ta r-e do mo

*Gloss:*

mother -*NI*-TOP 2-times meet-*PAST*(?)-although

(continued)

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

*Original:*

ちち (父) には                      一度も                      あはず

*Transliteration(?):*

titi                      -ni-wa                      iti-do mo                      aw-az-u

*Gloss:*

father                      -*NI*-TOP                      1-time even meet-NEG-NONPAST

- Answer: \_\_\_\_\_ — Why?

*haha-ni-wa...au* would usually mean ‘meet mother’, but *ni* is ambiguous; this can also mean ‘meet in [the word] mother’



## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

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- Answer: **The lips!** — Why? | は had a **labial** consonant

*haha-ni-wa...au* would usually mean ‘meet mother’, but *ni* is ambiguous; this can also mean ‘meet in [the word] mother’

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

- How are the *h*-row kana transliterated in Portuguese missionary materials? (see above)

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

- Some case markers and postpositions are written with “irregular” kana spellings

TOPIC [wa] は <ha>

GOAL [e] へ <he>

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

- Post-WWII spelling reform changed how certain verbs are spelled in kana:

Verb 'to meet' (the character 会 is read [a] here)

"Historical" spelling      会ふ    会はない    会へば    会ひます

Post-war spelling        会う    会わない    会えば    会います

Modern pronunc.        [aw]    [awanai]    [aeba]    [aimasɯ]

- What analysis did we develop for the root-final consonant of verbs of this type?

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

- Putting it all together, what historical **sound changes** affected the consonants originally spelled by the kana in the は row?
  - What was the original consonant in the syllables spelled 「はひふへほ」?
  - What happened to this consonant in word-initial position?
  - What happened to this consonant in word-internal position (including “particles”)?

## 4. The history of the *h*-row kana sounds

- Putting it all together, what historical **sound changes** affected the consonants originally spelled by the kana in the は row?
  - What was the original consonant in the syllables spelled 「はひふへほ」? | something labial ([p]?)
  - What happened to this consonant in word-initial position? | became [h]
  - What happened to this consonant in word-internal position (including “particles”)? | became [w]

## 5. More historical linguistics (time permitting)

- Handout - [Historical linguistics: Phonology \(part 2\)](#)
  - Man'yōgana and the Old Japanese vowel system
  - Final vowel alternations
- Handout - [Classical Japanese morphology and syntax](#)