

Word-order variation

The following sentences all have approximately the same meaning. That is, technically speaking, their *truth conditions* are the same, but they emphasize different aspects of that meaning.

(Data adapted from Nemoto 1999)

- (1) Taroo-ga o-mise de hon-o kat-ta
Taroo-NOM HON-store at book-ACC buy-PAST
'Taroo bought (a) book at (the) store.'
- (2) hon-o Taroo-ga o-mise de kat-ta
book-ACC Taroo-NOM HON-store at buy-PAST
- (3) o-mise de Taroo-ga hon-o kat-ta
HON-store at Taroo-NOM book-ACC buy-PAST
- (4) hon-o o-mise de Taroo-ga kat-ta
book-ACC HON-store at Taroo-NOM buy-PAST
- (5) Taroo-ga hon-o o-mise de kat-ta
Taroo-NOM book-ACC HON-store at buy-PAST
- (6) o-mise de hon-o Taroo-ga kat-ta
HON-store at book-ACC Taroo-NOM buy-PAST

- Which *one* of these Japanese sentences is compatible with our X-bar model?
→ How can we explain the others?

A clue to the solution may come from considering the following English sentences:

- (7) Pat has devoured the burrito.
- (8) * Pat has devoured. (*ungrammatical*)
- (9) What has Pat devoured?

- Is there anything that sentence (9) might have in common with the Japanese examples above? (Linguistics majors should be able to come up with a proposal. If this is your first exposure to syntax, give it some thought and see what you can think of.)