Word order: Configurationality and "scrambling"

I. Is the X-bar schema really appropriate for all languages?

(1) We have been assuming the following claims about syntactic structure:

(a) There is a fundamental distinction between a **subject** and a **predicate**

(b) This fundamental distinction is **represented structurally**

→ *Specifier of IP* vs. *complement of I,* in X-bar theory

- BUT: Is this approach appropriate for every human language? Or are these aspects of syntax subject to cross-linguistic variation?

(2) Japanese word-order variation (see data set handout)

- Side note: Why are Japanese sentences *interpretable* without fixed word order?

(3) There are two leading explanations for flexible/variable word order in Japanese:

(a) ***Hypothesis 1:*** Japanese is **configurational** (compatible with the X' schema)

Japanese has a basic constituent order, determined by the X-bar schema in a way very similar to what we motivate for English (except that Japanese phrases are head-final)

Deviations from this order are the result of **movement**

- Similar analyses have been motivated for questions/passive in English, etc.

(b) ***Hypothesis 2:*** Japanese is **non-configurational** (***not*** compatible with the X' schema)

No movement involved in Japanese constituent order; all orders are **base-generated**

- Consequence: The **rules** for building Japanese syntactic structure are **radically different** from the X-bar schema motivated for "configurational" languages like English; they must allow more word orders, but less hierarchical structure

(4) Terminology: A language is **configurational** if it

(a) distinguishes different constituents, for example subjects and objects...

(b) ...on the basis of a structural (=configurational) difference

(5) For determining which approach to Japanese word order is best, we would like to know:

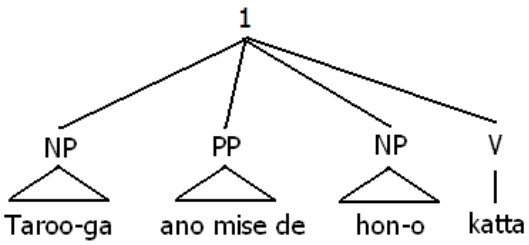
(a) whether there is evidence for a *node that excludes the subject* (excludes Hypothesis 2)

(b) whether there is evidence that *constituents have moved* (necessary for Hypothesis 1)

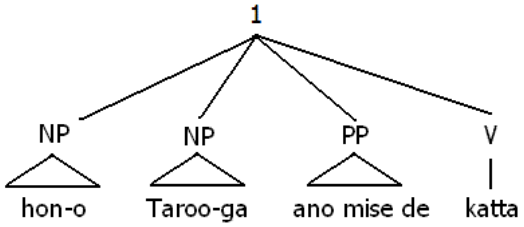
II. Why movement and a VP-type node are crucial evidence for configurationality

(6) **Base-generated** free constituent order **with *no* VP-type node** (=Hypothesis 2 above)

(a)

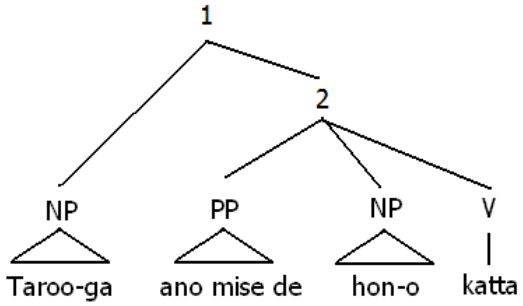


(b)

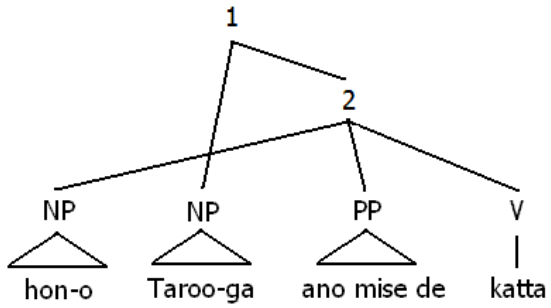


(7) **Base-generated** free constituent order **with a VP-type node** — this would *not* work

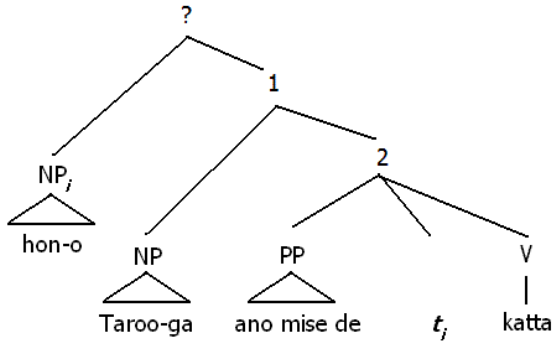
(a)



(b) *not a possible structure ("crossed lines")*



(8) **Movement** analysis of Japanese free word order is compatible with configurationality



Notes:

- *t* stands for ***trace***
- A trace shows where a moved element has moved from
- The relationship between the trace and the moved element (its ***antecedent***) is shown by a subscript index

(9) Crucial question:

Does Japanese have at *least one node* (i.e., VP, I') that *excludes the subject*?

→ **If Japanese is nonconfigurational**, and the phrases that precede the verb can be base-generated in any order, then there **cannot be a node that excludes the subject**, distinguishing it hierarchically from other phrases in the sentence

III. Evidence from c-command and NP/pronoun coreference

(10) Diagnostic we can use to investigate structural relationships

c-command: A c-commands B if neither A nor B dominates the other, and the first branching node that dominates A also dominates B

- Put differently: A c-commands B if **B is A's sister** or **B is a descendant of A's sister**

(11) C-command is relevant for **co-reference relationships**

- Nouns (as distinguished from pronouns (*him*), reflexives (*herself*)) may not be **c-commanded** by an antecedent (antecedent=co-referent NP)

- The following sentences are from Tsujimura (2007, ch 5, §3.3.2) unless otherwise noted

(12) Examples to establish the relevance of c-command in NP/pronoun coference

- Background: A **relative clause** is an IP that is a modifier inside an NP; the relative clause has an empty element (call it *pro*), cofererent with the N head being modified

(a) Co-reference between an NP and a "pronoun" is grammatical here: (note that *kare* may not actually have the syntactic properties of a pronoun, but this argument still makes the point)

Taroo$_i$-ga [NP [IP Hanako-ga	**kare$_i$**-ni	*pro*	okut-ta]	tegami-o]	yonda.
Taroo$_i$-NOM	*Hanako-NOM*	*he$_i$-DAT*	*send-PST*	*letter-ACC*	*read-PST*

'Taroo$_i$ read the letter that Hanako sent him$_i$.'

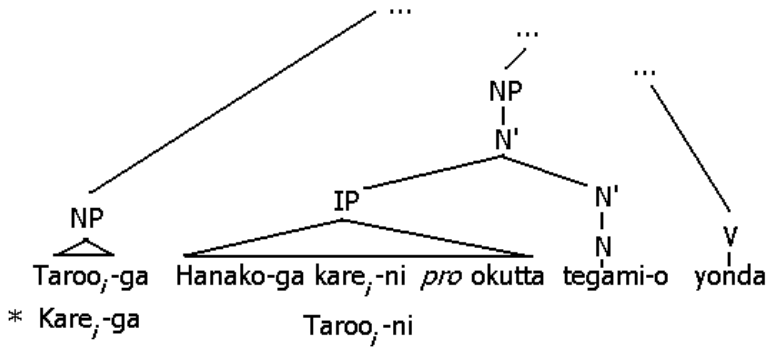
(b) Co-reference between an NP and a pronoun is not grammatical here:

* **Kare$_i$**-ga [NP [IP Hanako-ga	**Taroo$_i$**-ni	*pro*	okutta]	tegami-o]	yonda.
He$_i$-NOM	*Hanako-NOM*	*Taroo$_i$-DAT*	*send-PST*	*letter-ACC*	*read-PST*

(intended meaning: *'He$_i$ read the letter that Hanako sent Taroo$_i$.')

(c) This structure involves **c-command** (whether sentences are **configurational** or not)

• Which *can* c-command which?



(13) Now, applying this diagnostic to the question of **<u>whether there is a VP-type node</u>**

(a) This sentence is grammatical:

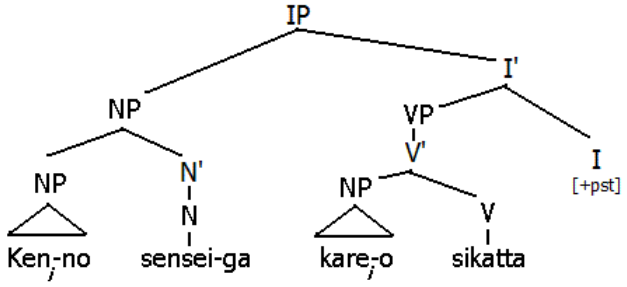
[NP **Ken$_i$**-no	sensee-ga]	**kare$_i$**-o	sikat-ta.	(Miyagawa 1989: 13)
Ken$_i$-GEN	*teacher-NOM*	*he$_i$-ACC*	*scold-PST*	

'Ken$_i$'s teacher scolded him$_i$.'

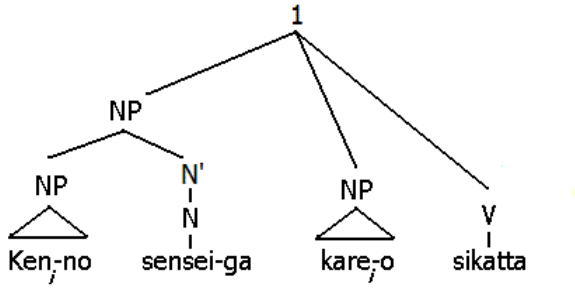
(b) Which structure correctly **predicts** that the sentence is grammatical?

- Remember: A genitive/possessive construction (*Ken-no*, 'Ken's') is a specifier of NP

configurational structure:



nonconfigurational structure:



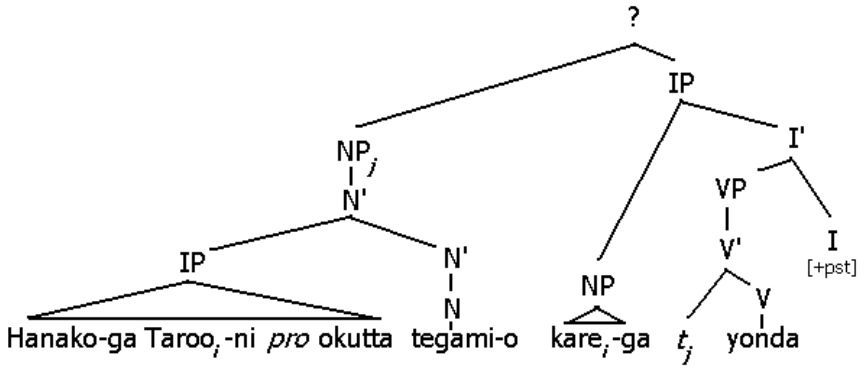
(14) We can also use c-command and NP/"pronoun" coreference facts to argue in favor of the **movement approach** to OBJECT–SUBJECT word order

(a) A reordered version of the ungrammatical sentence in (12)(b) is **grammatical**

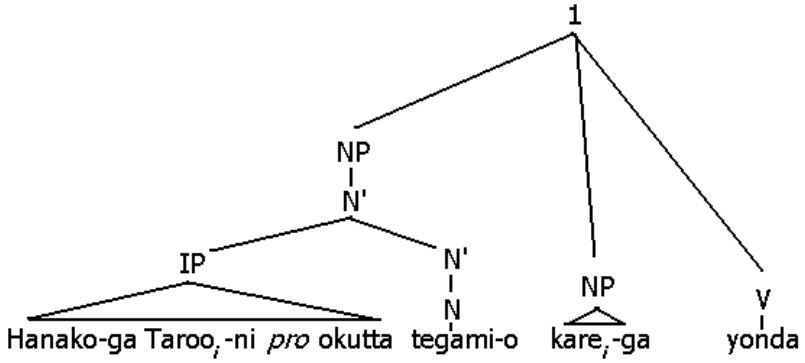
[NP [IP Hanako-ga **Taroo$_i$**-ni *pro* okutta] tegami-o]$_j$ **kare$_i$**-ga t_j yon-da.
Hanako-NOM *Taroo$_i$-DAT* *sent* *letter-ACC* *he$_i$-NOM* *read-PST*
'The letter that Hanako sent to Taroo$_i$, he$_i$ read.'

(b) Which structure **predicts** that the sentence is grammatical?

configurational structure:



nonconfigurational structure:



(15) Conclusions:

(a) There is evidence in Japanese for a **node that excludes the subject** but includes other constituents (configurationality)

(b) There is evidence that "scrambled" sentences in Japanese involve **movement**

(c) The X' model (or its newer versions) is in fact appropriate for Japanese syntax

For further reading

Miyagawa, Shigeru. 1989. *Structure and Case Marking in Japanese.* San Diego: Academic Press.

Nemoto, Naoko. 1999. "Scrambling." In Natsuko Tsujimura (ed.), *The Handbook of Japanese Linguistics,* 121-153. Oxford: Blackwell.

- This book is on reserve for the course, and also available as an e-book through the library web site.

Tsujimura, Natsuko. 2007. Ch 5, "Syntax." *An Introduction to Japanese Linguistics.* [See especially §3.3.2, "Pronominal reference".] Oxford: Blackwell.

- This book is on reserve for the course.