

Word classes (syntactic categories) in Japanese

- (1) How should we answer this question? — “What is a noun?”
 - (a) Meaning-based definition: “a person, place, or thing”
 - (b) Morphology-based definition (English): A word that forms a plural by adding *-(e)s*
 - (c) Distribution-based definition (English): A word that can occur immediately following an article or *which* to form a complete phrase
 - Which of these definitions will allow us to most accurately identify the nouns in English?
- (2) Goal: To develop **morphology-based** and **distribution-based** definitions for (some of) the word classes in Japanese that allow us to unambiguously identify each class

I. Open-class categories

- (3) Open-class categories generally have “real-world” or lexical meaning
 - There are generally many, many examples in each category
 - New items can be created (loanwords, derived words, new coinages); hence “open”
 - Typical examples: noun, verb, adjective

1. Verbs (V)

- (4) *Genki* check:

(p 58 in 1st edition) “Verbs in Japanese conjugate, or take various shapes. [...] There are two kinds of verbs that follow regular conjugation patterns [...]”

 - Does anything else in Japanese conjugate?
 - If so, is that conjugation pattern the same, or different, as compared to verbs?
- (5) The best **diagnostic** for a verb in Japanese: it takes the **verb inflectional affixes** (i.e., the suffixes that produce the different conjugational forms for verbs)
 - See verb morphology data set for verb inflectional affixes

2. Adjectives (A)

- (6) *Genki* check:

(p 100 in 1st edition) “There are two types of adjectives in Japanese. One type is called ‘い<i>i</i>-adjectives,’ and the other type ‘な<i>na</i>-adjectives.’ い and な are their last syllables when they modify nouns.”

 - How similar are these two categories? (Why is *Genki* lumping them together?)
 - Does a so-called ‘*i*-adjective’ always end in *-i* when it modifies a noun?

- (7) Our analysis:
- (a) We will use the term **adjective** to refer to so-called ‘*i*-adjectives’ specifically
 - (b) For so-called ‘*na*-adjectives’, we will use the term **adjectival noun (AN)**; see below
 - In Japanese school grammar, AN are called 形容動詞 *keiyoudoosi*, or ‘adjectival verbs,’ but this isn’t a very accurate name (in Modern Japanese at least)
- (8) Our main **diagnostic** for adjectives: the ability to take the **adjective inflectional affixes**
- See adjective morphology data set for adjective inflectional affixes
- (9) See below for a direct comparison of A vs. AN vs. N

3. Nouns (N)

- (10) *Genki* check: Does not define ‘noun’; seems to assume the category is self-explanatory
- (11) Some **distributional** criteria for identifying nouns
- (a) Nouns may be directly followed by a case marker
 - Case markers include: *-ga* が NOMINATIVE, *-o* を ACCUSATIVE, *-ni* に DATIVE/LOCATIVE
 - Can any other categories be directly followed by *ga/o/ni*? Which case marker is the **best** diagnostic for nouns?
 - (b) Nouns may be directly preceded by a demonstrative
 - Demonstratives include: *kono* この ‘this’, *sono* その ‘that’, *ano* あの ‘that over there’, *dono* どの ‘which?’
 - Can any other categories be directly preceded by a demonstrative?
 - (c) A pretty good diagnostic: Nouns can appear in the **frame** DEMONSTRATIVE __ CASE MARKER
- (12) Some other **distributional** facts about nouns — but these are **not unique to nouns**
- (d) One noun may modify another like this: N-no N (*-no* の is often glossed GENITIVE)
 - (e) Nouns can occur with the **copula** in *all* of its conjugational forms (compare adjectives?)
 - **copula**: the “linking verb”; has the basic meaning ‘X = Y.’
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|-------|------------|---|------------|----------------------------|
| (i) | <i>hon</i> | <i>da</i> | (informal) | ‘(It) is a book.’ |
| | | <i>desu</i> | (formal) | |
| (ii) | <i>hon</i> | <i>zya nai</i> | | ‘(It) is not a book.’ |
| | | <i>zya nai desu / zya arimasen</i> | | |
| (iii) | <i>hon</i> | <i>datta</i> | | ‘(It) was a book.’ |
| | | <i>desita</i> | | |
| (iv) | <i>hon</i> | <i>zya nakatta</i> | | ‘(It) was not a book.’ |
| | | <i>zya nakatta desu / zya arimasen desita</i> | | |
| (v) | <i>hon</i> | <i>daroo</i> | | ‘(It) is probably a book.’ |
| | | <i>desyoo</i> | | |

4. Adjectival nouns (AN)

- (13) Are these a **distinct word class** in Japanese?
- (14) Properties of N, AN, A as described by linguists (e.g., Shibatani 1990, Tsujimura 2005)
- How well are these generalizations borne out by usage frequency data?

	<i>N</i>	<i>AN</i>	<i>A</i>
<i>Has conjugation?</i>	no	no	yes
<i>Occurs with all forms of copula?</i>	yes	yes	no
<i>Form used when modifying a N?</i>	__+no N	__+na N	(various conjugated forms are used)
<i>Can be subject or object of a sentence?</i>	yes	no	no
<i>Can occur with suffix -sa?</i>	no	yes	yes
<i>Can occur with suffix -rasi-(i)?</i>	yes	no	no

- AN share some properties with N, and some with A
 - If we consider **conjugation** as the main diagnostic of V and A, then AN are more like N than they are like A — hence the name *adjectival noun*
 - But the important point is that we recognize AN as a distinct category; the name used (*na*-adjective, nominal adjective, “adjectival verb” (?!), ...) is less important
- (15) AN **diagnostics**: The best argument that a word is an AN, rather than a N, is to show that diagnostic (a) is true for that word; (b) can also be useful to test
- (a) AN are followed by *-na* when they modify a N
- (b) Most AN do not generally cooccur with case markers
- (16) Borrowed adjectives (Sino-Japanese forms or more recent loanwords) often end up as AN

5. Verbal nouns (VN)

- (17) Japanese has a common construction in which some non-inflecting words can be directly followed by the verb *suru* ‘do’ with no (accusative) case marker
- (a) The combination VN+*suru* functions as a verb
- (b) Note: *suru* is irregular; the nonpast form is /*suru*/, but for most other forms, it acts as though its root is /*si-*/: /*si-na-i*/, /*si-ta*/, /*si-mas-u*/, etc.
- (18) The non-inflecting words that follow this pattern are called **verbal nouns** (VN)
- (19) Many VN are Sino-Japanese words, but non-Chinese loans and deverbal nouns (nouns formed from verbs) can be VN too

- (20) VN (unlike AN) appear to pass *all* tests for N status (see (14)) — so these can technically be considered a **special subcase of N** rather than an independent word class
- (21) Some data to consider:
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|----------------|------------|----------------|------------------|
| <i>minna</i> | ‘everyone’ | <i>nihongo</i> | ‘Japanese lg’ |
| <i>naratta</i> | ‘learned’ | <i>benkyoo</i> | ‘study’ |
| | | <i>tanosii</i> | ‘fun, enjoyable’ |
- Minna-ga nihongo-o naratta.
 Minna-ga nihongo-o benkyoo-sita.
 Minna-ga [nihongo-no benkyoo]-o sita.
 [Nihongo-no benkyoo]-ga totemo tanosii.

6. Adverbs

- (22) Some adverbs are formed from adjectives (see adjective morphology data set)
- (23) There are also “independent” adverbs — *totemo*, *zutto*, *zenzen*, etc.
- (24) In English, adverbs can modify V, A, and other adverbs, as well as sentences. What is the case in Japanese?
- (25) To think about: Is there a consistent way of identifying when a word is an adverb in Japanese?

II. Closed-class categories

- (26) Closed-class categories generally have “grammatical” meaning
- There are generally a small number of examples in each category
 - New items can not usually be easily created; hence “closed”
 - Typical examples: prepositions/postpositions, “particles”, demonstratives...
- (27) Interesting question for Japanese:
- Is there a difference between case markers and postpositions? (Yes! → later)