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
   \textit{Taroo-nom} \textit{Hon-store at book-acc buy-past}
   ‘Taroo bought (a) book at (the) store.’

(2) hon-o Taroo-ga o-mise de kat-ta
   \textit{Book-acc Taroo-nom hon-store at buy-past}

(3) o-mise de Taroo-ga hon-o kat-ta
   \textit{Hon-store at Taroo-nom book-acc buy-past}

(4) hon-o o-mise de Taroo-ga kat-ta
   \textit{Book-acc hon-store at Taroo-nom buy-past}

(5) Taroo-ga hon-o o-mise de kat-ta
   \textit{Taroo-nom book-acc hon-store at buy-past}

(6) o-mise de hon-o Taroo-ga kat-ta
   \textit{Hon-store at book-acc Taroo-nom buy-past}

• Which of these Japanese sentences are easy to draw X-bar trees for? Which raise problems?

Now consider the following English sentences.

(7) Pat has devoured the burrito.

(8) * Pat has devoured. \textit{(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.)