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

- 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 has a basic constituent order, determined by the X-bar schema in a way very similar to what we motivate for English (but 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:***

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

Consequences:

- Japanese sentence trees **can have no VP node** (or I' node!) — see below for why
- The rules for building Japanese syntactic structure have to be radically different from the X-bar schema motivated for "configurational" languages like English; they have to allow for many different word orders but much less hierarchical structure

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

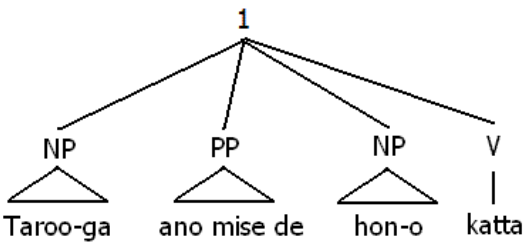
(a) distinguishes different constituents, for example subjects and objects...

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

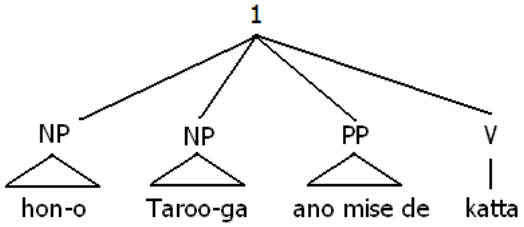
II. What kind of evidence do we need to test for configurationality?

(5) Base-generated free constituent order with *no* VP-type node — this would work

(a)

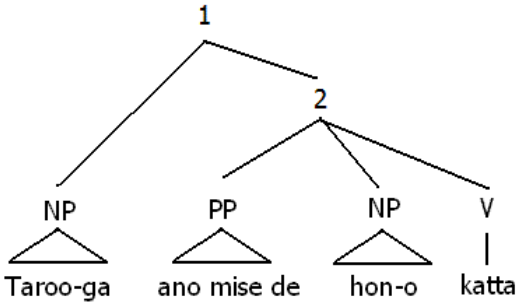


(b)

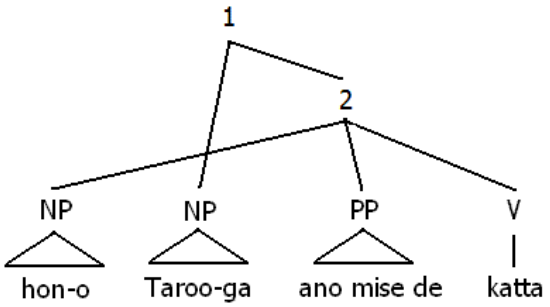


(6) Base-generated free constituent order with a VP-type node — this would *not* work

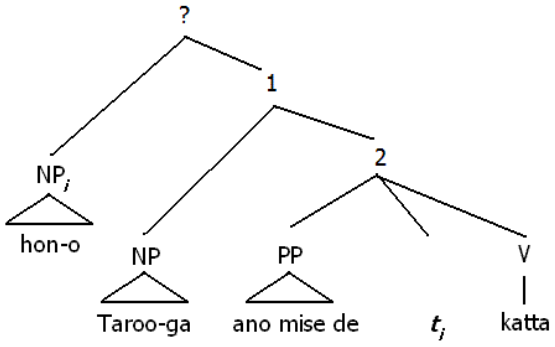
(a)



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



(7) **Movement** analysis of Japanese free word order is compatible with the presence of a VP node in the structure



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

(8) 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

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

(a) whether or not there is evidence for a node that excludes the subject

(b) whether or not there is evidence that constituents can move/have moved

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 may not be **c-commanded** by an antecedent (antecedent=coreferent 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

- Reminder: A **relative clause** is an IP that is a modifier inside an NP; the relative clause has a *pro* that is cofererent with the N head being modified

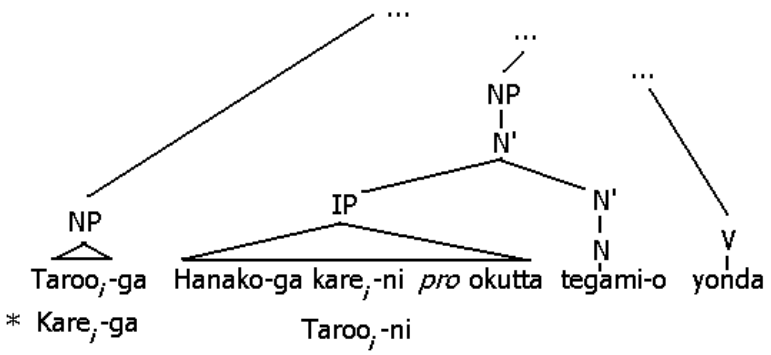
(a) Co-reference between an NP and a pronoun is grammatical here:

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*
*'He$_i$ read the letter that Hanako sent Taroo$_i$.'

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



(13) Now, applying this diagnostic to the question of whether there is a VP node

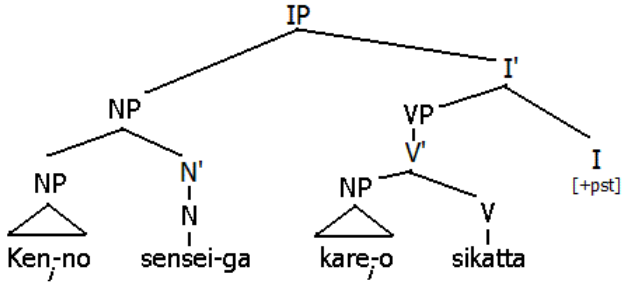
(a) This sentence is grammatical:

[NP **Ken$_i$**-no sensei-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$_i$.'

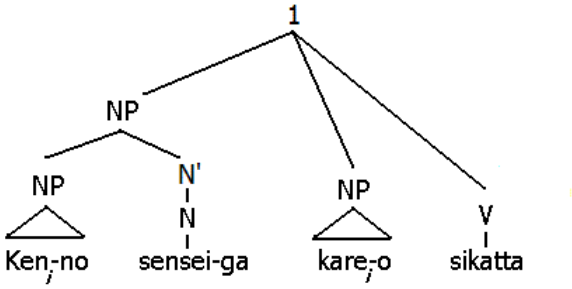
(b) Which structure **predicts** that the sentence is grammatical?

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

configurational structure:



nonconfigurational structure:



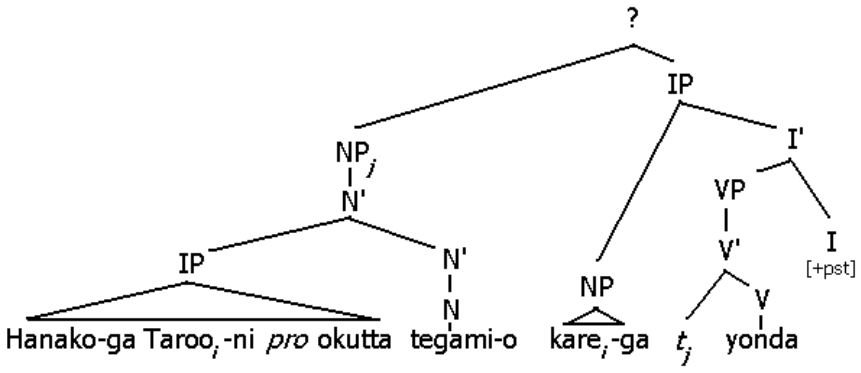
(14) We can also use c-command and NP/pronoun coreference facts to argue in favor of the movement approach to OBJECT–SUBJECT word order

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

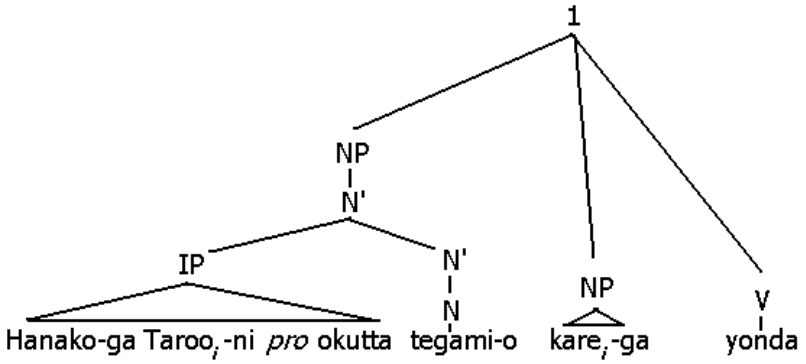
[NP [IP Hanako-ga **Taroo$_i$**-ni *pro* okutta] tegami-o]$_j$ **kare$_i$**-ga t_j yon-da.
Hanako-NOM *Taroo$_i$-DAT* *sent* *letter-ACC* *he$_i$-NOM* *read-PST*
'The letter that Hanako sent to Taroo$_i$, he$_i$ read.'

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

configurational:



nonconfigurational:



For further reading

Miyagawa, Shigeru. 1989. *Structure and Case Marking in Japanese.* [See especially chapters 1 and 2.] 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 is 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.