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Japanese *A Story of Language* *and People*

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INTRODUCTION

Japan, located in the northwestern corner of the Pacific Ocean, is an island country consisting of four major islands, *Honshuu*, *Kyuushuu*, *Shikoku* and *Hokkaidoo*, and numerous minor islands. In area it is smaller than France but larger than the British Isles—Honshuu alone is slightly larger than England, Wales, and Scotland combined. It has a long coastline extending from north to south. Compared with the east coast of the North American continent, the northern tip of Hokkaidoo is at about the latitude of Montreal, Canada, and the southern tip of Kyuushuu is at about that of Savannah, Georgia. The southernmost Ryuukyuu Islands extend as far south as the southern tip of Florida.

Japan is a mountainous country with great stretches of volcanic ranges. The mountains are lush with vegetation, and rivers come down from the mountains forming cascades. Rugged coastlines, towering volcanoes and lush vegetation make Japan's landscape varied and beautiful.

Japanese is spoken by over one hundred ten million people almost all of whom are Japanese citizens. Among the world's languages it ranks

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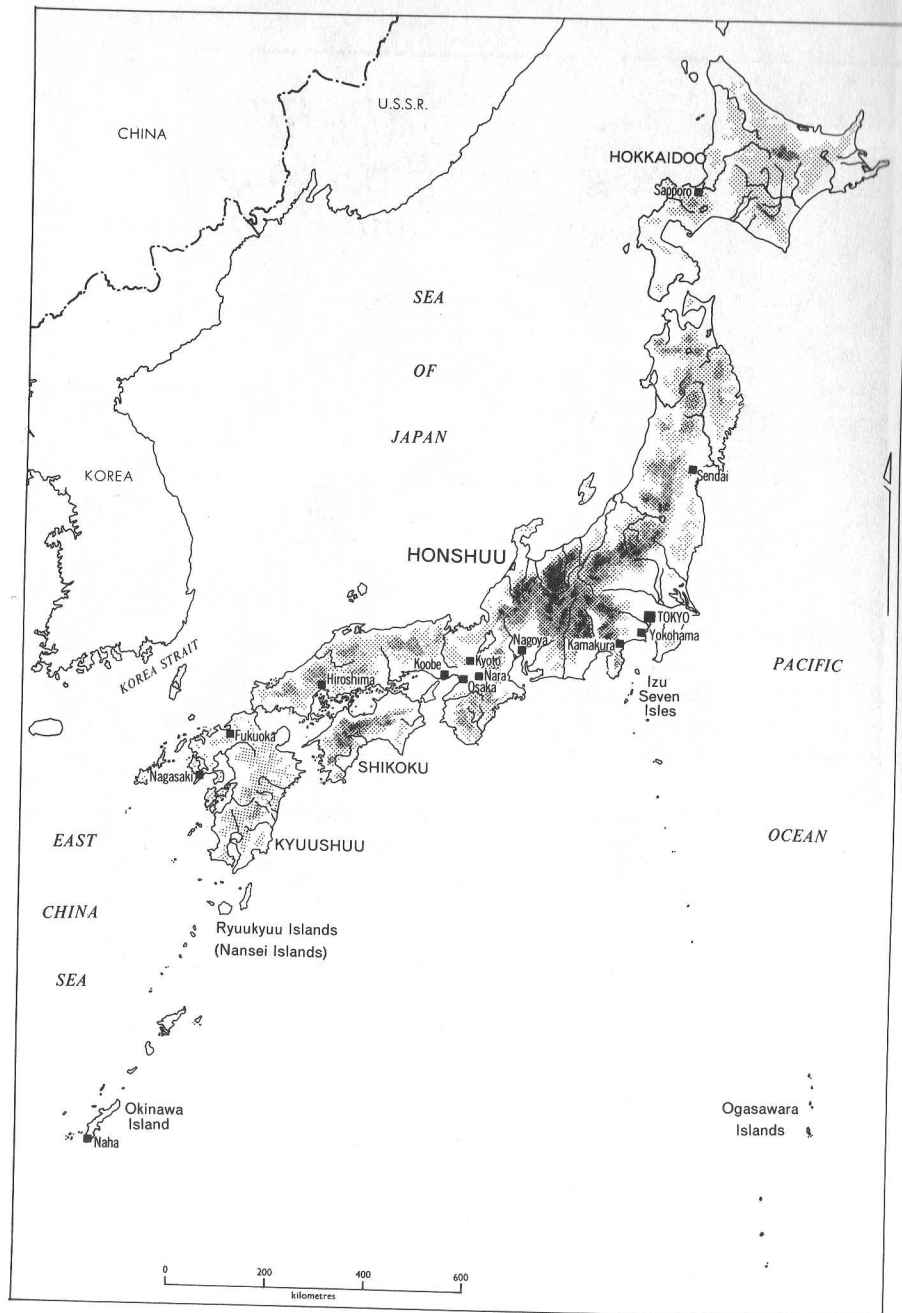


FIGURE 5.1 Japan

eighth in number of speakers. It has a written tradition of nearly two thousand years.

The structure and use of a language grows out of the experience and innovation of the people who speak it. The discussion that follows is threefold: it presents an outline of the cultural history of Japan, a discussion of the structure of the Japanese language, and a consideration of its relation to cultural and natural environment. Its purpose is to help the reader gain an understanding of the ongoing cultural experience of which the language and its writing system are a part.¹

1 A HISTORY OF JAPAN

1.1 The Early Years—Contact with China and the Evolution of the Writing System

It is believed that the islands of Japan were inhabited as far back as ten thousand years ago. The first grain-raising agricultural revolution occurred in western Japan during the *Yayoi* period, 200 B.C.–300 A.D. The Yayoi people are believed to have been Mongoloid in race, related to their neighbors in Korea and China. However, it is speculated that during or after the Yayoi period there were several waves of people migrating to the islands of Japan, contributing to the variety of facial types found among the present-day Japanese, among them the *Ainu*, a Caucasoid people with light skin color, wavy hair, and heavy body hair.

At the end of the Yayoi period and throughout the Tomb period, which followed it, there were tribal communities competing for power and military dominance. By the beginning of the fifth century A.D. a group known as the *Yamato* had gained a position of supremacy in central Japan. Legend has it that the leader of the Yamato court descended from the Sun Goddess and was in turn the ancestor to the imperial family of Japan. Nature and ancestor worship of the Yamato comprised the roots of the Japanese religion *Shintoism*.

The early influence of Chinese civilization, including that in the Japanese writing system, is a legacy of ancient Japan that has had a profound effect throughout history. Interest in things Chinese took root in the first century A.D. when the scholars from Korea first taught

¹Japanese utterances are analyzed in terms of moras. Each mora consists of either consonant plus vowel, or vowel alone, or mora nasal, or mora obstruent, and it functions as the unit of length in the language. *Honshuu* is four moras, *ho-n-shu-u*, and *Hokkaidoo* is six moras, *ho-k-ka-i-do-o*. Pronounce them rather evenly so that each mora will receive approximately the same duration. It should be noted, however, that there are four proper nouns appearing in this discussion which are given in the conventional spelling, although it does not adequately reflect the number of moras they have in their widely known usages. These are "Tokyo," which is pronounced *To-o-kyo-o*; "Kyoto," pronounced *Kyo-o-to*; "Osaka," pronounced *O-o-sa-ka*; and "Shinto," pronounced *Shi-n-to-o*.

Confucianism to the Japanese. Then in 552 A.D., as it is officially dated, Buddhism was introduced to the Yamato court, located in the vicinity of Nara, thus initiating three hundred years of active cultural exchange between China and Japan.

From this time on Japanese borrowed much vocabulary from Chinese, not only in the Buddhist terminology (some of which came directly from Sanskrit and Pali), but also in the areas of governmental bureaucracy, arts and architecture, music, medicine, agriculture, the system of weights and measurements, animals, plants, clothing and foods—indeed throughout the entire language. Although it is difficult to distinguish many of those loanwords, which have become completely assimilated into Japanese over centuries, nearly one-half of the contemporary Japanese vocabulary is Sino-Japanese, including many words that have been created by the Japanese based on the old Chinese etymologies. Table 5-1 shows a few attested examples from ancient times.

The Japanese writing system today is a hybrid system of several thousand Chinese characters and two syllabaries, *Katakana* and *Hiragana*. Katakana and Hiragana are two different versions of simplified characters, some of them deriving from the same character and others from different ones. There are forty-six symbols in each syllabary.

In trying to adopt Chinese characters to write Japanese, the ancient Chinese and Korean scholars were faced with the fact that Chinese and

TABLE 5.1 Vocabulary Borrowed from Chinese

Chinese	Japanese	Meaning
hak	<i>haka</i>	“grave”
kin	<i>kinu</i>	“silk”
kun	<i>kuni</i>	“state”
ma	<i>uma</i>	“horse”
muk	<i>mugi</i>	“wheat”
sung	<i>sugi</i>	“cryptomeria”
tak	<i>togu</i>	“to sharpen”
we	<i>e</i>	“picture”
ambā	<i>ama</i>	“nun”
pâtra	<i>hachi</i>	“bowl”
sâkya	<i>Shaka</i>	“Buddha”
thera	<i>tera</i>	“temple”



FIGURE 5.2 A Calligraphy Lesson at Primary School

Japanese are fundamentally different languages. Chinese is an isolating language, while Japanese is agglutinating. That is, in Chinese each word tends to have an immutable form, but in Japanese a word can have a number of shapes and be made of various morphemes that combine to represent different meanings. For instance, in Chinese, the verb “to eat” is /chī/, the same word irrespective of time reference. Chinese has no tense marking on verbs. In Japanese, *taberu* “(I) eat” is a composite of two morphemes, *tabe-* “to eat” and *-ru*, the nonpast tense marker; *tabeta* “(I) ate” is a composite of *tabe-* “to eat” and *-ta*, the past tense marker; and *tabehajimeta* “(I) began to eat” is a composite of *tabe-* “to eat,” *hajime-* “to begin,” and *-ta*, the past tense marker. This presented a problem for the scholars trying to write Japanese accurately with Chinese characters.

They adopted the characters representing the content words—nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs—and simply assigned them

Japanese readings. For example, they took the character which meant “man” and which was pronounced /jen/ in Chinese and assigned to it the Japanese word for “man,” /hito/. This was straightforward enough, but in addition they borrowed characters strictly for their sounds to represent various grammatical functions that were not in the grammar of Chinese. For example, an important small Japanese word, the topicalizer *ha*, was represented by 波, which means “wave” in Chinese but has the sound /ha/.

To demonstrate this process, we shall see how one might conceivably write an English sentence using Chinese characters. Here is an example:

- (1) The students are drinking beer.

First, we shall take all the words which have equivalents in Chinese, and arrange them according to the English word order.

- (2) 學生 是 飲 麥酒
 sywé sheng shì yǐn mài jyou
 student are drink beer

This, however, is highly unsatisfactory, for there is no definite article, *the*, nor the plural *s* of “students,” nor the *-ing* of “drinking.”

One way to correct these deficiencies is to find the characters that are similar in sound to the missing elements. We will introduce the Chinese characters for /de/ “the one . . . that,” /sì/ “stream,” and /yíng/ “welcome,” not for their meaning but because they sound like the English elements not yet represented:

- (3) 的 學生 汜 是 飲 迎 麥酒
 DE sywé sheng SÌ shì yǐn YÍNG mài jyou
 The student s are drink- ing beer

Notice, sentence (3) no longer makes any sense in Chinese.

There is a minor problem here. Chinese has an immutable form of copula “to be” pronounced /shì/ and written 是. What we have done here is to simply take it and match it with “are.” But what about the other forms of the copula in English (*am*, *is*, *was*, *were*, etc.)? One conceivable solution might be to always use 是 and hope that the reader would read it appropriately in each context. Another solution

might be to combine it with characters that would correspond to the sounds of the respective form, for example adding 兒 /êrh/ “son” for its sound value only, so that the representation of “are” would be 是兒. And the third alternative is to simply disregard 是, and use a different character for each copula, e.g., only 兒 would stand for “are.”

The first important Japanese literary work, called *Man'yooshuu*, which is a collection of over four thousand poems compiled around the year 760 A.D., is written entirely in Chinese characters using a conglomeration of these various orthographic devices. What makes it particularly difficult to read them today is the fact that the ancient system, especially of adopting characters for their sounds, was in no way unified. Reading those poems is rather like trying to solve a series of rebuses.

Over a period of time, when writing characters to represent various functional elements, the Japanese people began to use the ones that were simpler in shape. These characters were then abbreviated into forms that were no longer recognizable as characters. For example, the topicalizer 波 /ha/ was simplified into 波, 法, and finally to the present shape は. The topicalizer is now pronounced /wa/ instead of /ha/. The character 波 remained in the Japanese writing system representing the word “wave” pronounced /nami/. It also occurs in compound expressions such as “wave length” 波長 and retains its Chinese pronunciation /ha/ (the full expression is pronounced /hachoo/). Another important small word, the genitive marker 乃 /no/ gradually changed into 乃, 刀, and finally to the present shape の. Thus a set of symbols were developed, which we now call Hiragana.

A second syllabary which is called Katakana comes from the Buddhist monks' practice while reading Chinese script of making marks alongside the text to aid in understanding the sentence construction and memorizing new words. They devised a shorthand system to mark word-order differences between Chinese and Japanese and also used characters and the newly developed Hiragana for glosses (translations). Eventually, they began to devise their own angular and more simplified symbols. Take, for example, the character 阿 which is pronounced /a/—one element or radical of this character 𠂔 was taken to represent the sound /a/. This was simplified into 𠂔, 𠂔, and finally, to the

present shape 𠃵. Another example would be the symbol for /ku/ which comes from 久, changed to 𠃵, 𠃵, and finally to the present shape, 𠃵.

In the contemporary writing system, the two syllabaries serve different functions. Hiragana is used to write various function words and verbal endings so that a Japanese sentence typically has both characters and Hiragana. Katakana is used to write western loanwords and is also used for emphasis in a way similar to the use of italics in English.

We might add that in recent years, various proposals have been made to improve this cumbersome writing system—from the most radical proposal to abolish characters completely and use only *kana* (syllabary writing) or adopt the Roman alphabet, to a more moderate proposal to limit the number of characters in use. The former approach would have the disadvantage of failing to distinguish the many homophones of contemporary Japanese, words with different meanings that sound exactly the same.

A moderate reform has been undertaken since World War II. Today, there is a list authorized by the Ministry of Education that includes 1,850 characters to be used in newspapers and popular reading materials. Furthermore, many of them have been simplified to a considerable degree. It is interesting to note that the People's Republic of China has also been engaged recently in a similar reform. But since no effort has been made at coordination, many of the characters in Chinese and Japanese now look very different. For instance, the traditional character

發 “to dispatch” (pronounced /hatsu/ in Japanese) is 発 in Japanese, and 发 in Chinese. The traditional character 勞 “to toil” (pronounced /roo/ in Japanese) is 勞 in Japanese, and 劳 in Chinese. The two

writing systems have been slowly drifting apart during the past fifteen hundred years, and this recent reform is a decisive step toward making them distinctly different.

Beginning in the ninth century A.D., Japan gradually withdrew from heavy reliance on the Chinese culture, although the prestige of all things Chinese remained great. In 838, she sent her twelfth and last embassy to the T'ang Dynasty of China, and for the next three hundred years, the Japanese concentrated on assimilating their borrowings from China—the political system of bureaucratic central government, the religious and ethical concepts of Buddhism and Confucianism, and the writing system—to fit their own tastes and way of life. Instead of the bureaucratic civil servants of a central government overseeing the country, the Japanese gradually developed strong provincial aristocrats

in the tradition of family loyalty and hereditary rights. They also syncretized Buddhism and Shintoism and created a uniquely Japanese religious tradition, which continues in modern times.

Among the court aristocrats of the Fujiwara family in Kyoto, the capital of Japan, there was a flowering of the first distinctly Japanese literary tradition, especially among the court ladies. The most famous work is a lengthy novel called *The Tale of Genji*, the love adventures of an imaginary figure, Prince Genji, written by Lady Murasaki in the early eleventh century. As it was customary for the court ladies not to be allowed to learn Chinese or Chinese characters, Lady Murasaki wrote in Hiragana, called then *onna-de* “woman's hand.” During this period various levels of speech, and the distinction between men's and women's speech began to develop.

1.2 The Middle Ages—The Rise and Fall of a Feudal Society

Japan's Middle Ages began in the twelfth century and continued until the middle of the nineteenth century. During the first half of this period, the “dark ages,” several military dictatorships rose and fell. The first was the *Kamakura Bakufu* (*bakufu* means “military headquarters”), established by the Minamoto family in Kamakura, two hundred miles east of Kyoto, after they defeated the Taira family of the western part of Japan in 1185. Then came the *Ashikaga Bakufu*, founded by Ashikaga Takauji, who defeated the imperial army, forced the emperor to flee, enthroned a new emperor in Kyoto in 1336, and established a rule which lasted two hundred years until new political struggles brought another period of flux.

The dark ages of political confusion and turbulence was a richly rewarding period of Japanese culture. The tastes of the new ruling class, *bushi* (the warriors, commonly known as *samurai* in the West), produced sophisticated poetry and a whole new style of prose writing—heroic tales of battles marked by chivalry. A marvelous technique of scroll painting developed portraying the famous battles of the day. There was once again new influence from Chinese Buddhism. The sects that emphasized salvation through faith found appeal among townsfolk and peasantry; and Zen Buddhism, with its emphasis on meditation and self-discipline, found appeal among the warrior class. In fact, under the patronage of the feudal lords, Zen monks made a major contribution in developing the arts. *Noo* drama, a highly stylized theatrical art, monochrome brush painting, flower arrangement, and the tea ceremony—the arts that Japan was to be identified with in later years—were all developed by Zen monks during the Ashikaga period.

The fourteenth through sixteenth centuries are noteworthy in one other respect. Japan engaged actively in international trade, first import-

ing and exporting goods from China and Southeast Asia, and eventually meeting with the European merchant-adventurers who had entered East Asian waters. In 1542, Portuguese traders arrived on Kyushuu with firearms. Seven years later, St. Francis Xavier, a Portuguese Jesuit, arrived; thus began the first Christian missionary movement in Japan. Sakai, the modern Osaka, became the commercial and industrial center, free from the tight control of feudal lords. There came about a money economy of considerable strength.

There are also some noteworthy developments pertaining to the Japanese language. For instance, there was a proliferation of personal pronouns of the first and second persons representing various levels of speech, which reflected the complex social stratification of the emerging feudal society. The Portuguese missionaries compiled various dictionaries and grammars of Japanese using the Roman alphabet and thus recorded more accurately than ever before the pronunciation of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century spoken Japanese. The Portuguese traders and missionaries also introduced hundreds of new words into Japanese, half of them ecclesiastical. Table 5.2 gives some examples.

In 1603, Tokugawa Ieyasu gained control of all Japan and assumed the title of *shoogun* "commander," and established the *Edo Bakufu* in Edo, the modern Tokyo. This began the second half of Japan's feudal

TABLE 5.2 Vocabulary Borrowed from Portuguese

Portuguese	Japanese	Meaning
Christão	<i>Kirishitan</i>	"Christian"
confissão	<i>konhisan</i>	"confession"
graça	<i>garasa</i>	"grace"
oratio (Latin)	<i>orasho</i>	"prayer"
padre	<i>bateren</i>	"priest"
batão	<i>botan</i>	"button"
carta	<i>karuta</i>	"playing cards"
copo	<i>koppu</i>	"cup, tumbler"
raxa	<i>rasha</i>	"woolen cloth"
sabão	<i>shabon</i>	"soap"
tempero	<i>tenpura</i>	"deep-fried batter-coated fish and vegetables"
tutanaga	<i>totan</i>	"zinc"

era of political stability and national unity, which lasted for the next two and a half centuries.

Tokugawa Ieyasu, having witnessed the succession of political disruptions that could be caused by the death of a leader, was obsessed with the idea of building a political system that would survive after his passing. To accomplish this, he developed a highly bureaucratic central administration emphasizing collective responsibility rather than personalized leadership; collective responsibility allowed for the continuation of generations of Tokugawa dominance and is still an important characteristic of Japanese society. He continued to maintain the facade of the imperial rule from Kyoto, while he gained the control of the entire country from Edo by maneuvering to keep the power of the feudal lords in check. The emperor of Japan remained a figurehead until the end of the Tokugawa regime. He also adopted the social theories of Confucianism and created and maintained a hierarchy of four hereditary social classes—the warrior-administrator, the peasant, the artisan, and the merchant. This was a significant step backward from the first half of the feudal period when people of the middle and lower classes could rise to political power.

From the mid-seventeenth century, the government rejected Christianity and trade with European nations and ruthlessly persecuted Japanese converts and expelled all foreigners, except for a handful of Dutch traders on a small island off the coast of Kyushuu. Japan was virtually isolated from the rest of the world. The majority of the Portuguese loanwords of ecclesiastical origin eventually disappeared, although a surprisingly large number of other Portuguese loanwords survived.

The Tokugawa government, powerful as it was, was not able to stop change from taking place within Japanese society. Commercial economy continued to grow, and by the eighteenth century the merchants, though nominally at the bottom of the social hierarchy, were making a decisive contribution toward creating a sophisticated urban culture. *Kabuki*, a new dramatic form which depicted the life of the townsfolk as well as historical tales; *Haiku*, the short poem; and woodblock printing were all developed during this period.

There was also a class of intellectuals developing out of the once largely illiterate warrior class. The feudal lords established schools to educate the warriors; and the warriors, along with the Buddhist monks and the Shinto priests, taught the townsmen and peasants at small private academies called "temple schools." It is estimated that by the end of the Tokugawa period, literacy among males was about 45 percent, and among females, 15 percent.

By the early eighteenth century, books on the western sciences became available to a small group of students interested in the West known as students of "Dutch learning." They became versed in fields

TABLE 5.3 Vocabulary Borrowed from Dutch

Dutch	Japanese	Meaning
bier	<i>biiru</i>	“beer”
blik	<i>buriki</i>	“tin plate”
brandpunt	<i>pinto</i>	“focus”
flanel	<i>neru</i>	“flannel”
glas	<i>garasu</i>	“glass”
gom	<i>gomu</i>	“rubber”
koffie	<i>koohii</i>	“coffee”
mes	<i>mesu</i>	“scalpel”
pek	<i>penki</i>	“paint”
ransel	<i>randoseru</i>	“knapsack used by school children”
rheumatisch	<i>ryuumachi</i>	“rheumatism”
sput	<i>supoito</i>	“squirt”

such as gunnery, smelting, shipbuilding, cartography, astronomy, and medicine. They also contributed to introducing a considerable amount of Dutch vocabulary into Japanese. Many of these loanwords were replaced by German, French, and English terminologies in later years, but many others still remain in contemporary Japanese. Table 5.3 gives a few examples of loanwords from Dutch that are still in use.

Political stability, a nationwide commercial economy, widespread literacy, a small but important group of intellectuals who were familiar with the western sciences, and a strong sense of national identity of the late Tokugawa period served to prepare the people of Japan to face their next drastic encounter with the West in the middle of the nineteenth century.

1.3 Modern Times—The Meiji Restoration and the Road to Modernization

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the American whaling vessels and clipper ships crossing the Pacific to China desired permission to enter Japanese ports to replenish water and supplies. In July 1853, Commodore Matthew C. Perry steamed into Tokyo Bay with a letter from the President of the United States demanding the inauguration of trade relations. This sudden intrusion of foreigners produced consternation in the already weakened Tokugawa government.

The nation was split into two factions—conservatives who advocated the expulsion of the foreigners, and realists, the students of “Dutch learning,” who saw the inevitable new tide and advocated the opening of Japan. In the winter of 1854, when Perry returned, the Tokugawa government could do nothing but to sign a treaty permitting the opening of two ports: one in Honshuu, near Edo, and another in Hokkaidoo.

The situation thereafter deteriorated rapidly until the Tokugawa regime finally collapsed in January 1868. The imperial family was moved from Kyoto to Edo, to the great castle where the Tokugawas had ruled the nation during the previous two and a half centuries. It was announced that the “restoration” of imperial rule had been accomplished.

From 1868 to the turn of the century, Japan hastened to transform herself into a modern nation. This was accomplished under the rule of Emperor Meiji, but still following the old line of collective leadership by able young politicians who were from the lower strata of the warrior class. The first important task was the abolition of the outward vestiges of feudalism. The new leaders persuaded the large number of autonomous feudal lords to offer their domains to the emperor as tokens of their allegiance, for which they were compensated with large payments in the form of government bonds. In 1871, the government decreed legal equality for all Japanese. In 1873, the government established universal military service—a revolutionary reform diminishing the privileged position of the warrior-administrator class, which at that time constituted about 6 percent of the total population.

The next task was the development of modern political institutions, a new social order, and a new economic system to build a modern industrialized nation. The government hired experts in Western technology, sent Japanese students abroad to study the latest European technology and institutions—to Britain to study the navy and merchant marine, to Germany to study the army and medicine, to France to study local government and legal systems, and to the United States to study business methods. The United States also sent to Japan a large number of Protestant missionaries who provided instruction in English and also founded many pioneering schools.

In 1871, the government embarked on a program of universal education, and by the beginning of the twentieth century there was a six-year compulsory elementary school, followed by a five-year middle school and a three-year high school, with a three-year university at the top of the educational pyramid. Higher education, however, was open only to a handful of students who constituted the leadership elite of modern Japan. On February 11, 1889, a constitution was promulgated that placed absolute power in the emperor. The constitution also created a parliament with an entirely elected House of Representatives and a House of Peers. The electorate, however, was limited to men paying a

prescribed amount in direct taxes. They numbered about 6 percent of the adult male population and were largely peasants and landowners.

The new wave of Western influence also meant that a large amount of new vocabulary entered Japanese. Most of the words were from English, both American and British, but many others entered from German, French, and even Italian. Table 5.4 presents a few of the earlier loanwords.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the Japanese also began to create their own Japanese-English expressions, a practice that continues to be widely exercised in present-day Japan. For instance, *miruku hooru* "milk hall" referred to a coffee shop where milk was the main item served; *teeburu supiiichi* "table speech" referred to the after-dinner speech (this is still used); and *moga* and *mobo* denoted the fashionable young men and women who were infatuated by the Western influence in the Roaring Twenties.

Having modernized herself sufficiently to be able to compete with the Western imperialists, Japan startled the Western world by winning significant concessions from Russia in the war of 1904–5; and then she took a series of aggressive actions against China, taking control of Taiwan, Okinawa, and Korea. In World War I, Japan allied herself with Great Britain and gained some of the German colonies in the North Pacific. She also gradually expanded her power in Manchuria. In December 1940, Japan entered an all-out war against the European Allies and fought against them throughout the Pacific region, in addition

TABLE 5.4 Vocabulary Borrowed from English, French, and German

Source	Japanese	Meaning
gasoline	<i>gasorin</i>	
high collar	<i>haikara</i>	"fashionable"
inverness cape	<i>inbanesu</i>	
lemonade	<i>ramune</i>	
salary	<i>sararii</i>	
typewriter	<i>taipuraitaa</i>	
white shirt	<i>waishatsu</i>	
atelier (Fr)	<i>atorie</i>	"artist's studio"
guêtres (Fr)	<i>geetoru</i>	"puttee"
mètre (Fr)	<i>meetoru</i>	"meter"
Gaze (Ger)	<i>gaaze</i>	"surgical gauze"
Karte (Ger)	<i>karute</i>	"patient's record"

to a continued invasion of China. Japan's militaristic expansionist era of half a century closed when she unconditionally surrendered to the Allied Forces on August 14, 1945.

The recorded history of Japan prior to modern times can be divided into two periods of roughly six hundred years each. In each of these periods, she underwent a time of active cultural intercourse with the outside world, and then, a period of reflection on and assimilation of the foreign elements into her own tradition. The Japanese language was an integral part of this history. In modern times, Japan has become a highly industrialized and technologized society. She is now fully enmeshed in the global community of nations. The Japanese language, having emerged from a nearly complete boycott of all English words during World War II, seems to be barely able to keep pace with new technological terminologies. The words such as *konpyuutaa* "computer," *masu-komi* "mass communication," *terebi* "television," *suupaa-(maaketto)* "super market," *insutanto fuudo* "instant food," *rasshu awaa* "rush hour," and *purehabu juutaku* "prefabricated house" are just as much part of the household vocabulary in Japan as they are in many other parts of the world.

2 THE STRUCTURE OF JAPANESE

2.1 Sentence Formation in Japanese

Because the cultures of China and Japan have a great deal in common, many people incorrectly assume that their languages are therefore also related. In fact, except for shared vocabulary due to borrowing, they have no more in common than say English and Japanese. Chinese is a branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. As for Japanese, because of the many similarities with Korean, it is speculated that it may be distantly related to Korean, and, still more distantly, to the Altaic language family, which means it might share common ancestry with Turkish, Mongolian, and Hungarian. Indeed Japanese is far more similar to these languages than to Chinese.

2.1.1 *Japanese—A Verb-final Language* The basic word order of transitive sentences in Japanese is that of Subject–Object–Verb, with a very rigid constraint that the verb appear at the end of the sentence. As for subject and object, there is considerable freedom in their positions. For instance, we can say (4a) or (4b) (note that subjects are marked by *ga* and objects by *o*):

- (4) a. *Taroo-ga tegami-o kakimasu.*
 Subj. letter-Obj. write

Taroo writes a letter/letters.

- b. *tegami-o Taroo-ga kakimasu.*
letter-Obj. Subj. write

but, we cannot say either (4c) or (4d) (asterisks indicate ungrammaticality):

- c. **tegami-o kakimasu Taroo-ga.*
d. **kakimasu Taroo-ga tegami-o.*

or, any other alternatives in which the verb does not occur at the end.

It should also be noted at this point that in Japanese the noun phrases are often omitted when there is an understanding between the speaker and the hearer as to what they refer. Thus, to talk about what Taroo does, one might just say:

- (5) *tegami-o kakimasu.*
letter-Obj. write
(He) writes letters.

2.1.2 *Japanese Postpositions* Verb-final languages have a strong tendency to have 'postpositions' instead of 'prepositions'; Japanese follows suit with a great variety of such expressions, some seventy of them. First there are the 'case' markers: we have already seen the subject and object markers *-ga* and *-o*; another is the genitive marker *-no*, like English "'s": "Taroo's letter" is *Taroo-no tegami*. Look at the following sentence, which uses all three case particles.

- (6) *Kazuo-ga Sooseki-no shoosetsu-o yomimashita.*
Subj. Gen. novel -Obj. read
Kazuo read Sooseki's novel.

Then there are those comparable to English prepositions. For instance, "to" in:

- (7) John goes to school.

will be represented by *-e* as follows:

- Jon-ga gakkoo-e ikimasu.*
school -to go

Ni represents the location of an entity. It is comparable to "at" in:

- (8) John is at school.

In Japanese, sentence (8) would be:

- Jon-ga gakkoo-ni imasu.*
school -at be

But in Japanese, the "at" denoting the place of activity is not *-ni*, but *-de*. For instance:

- (9) *Kazuko-ga gakkoo-de eigo-o naratte imasu.*
school -at English learn be
Kazuko is learning English at school.

And, *-de* represents one other meaning, namely "by means of" in English.

- (10) *Kazuko-ga basu-de kimasu.*
bus -by come
Kazuko comes by bus.

Finally, "to/until" and "from" in English are *-made* and *-kara* in Japanese. The Japanese expressions denote both location and time just as the English ones do.

- (11) *Kazuko-ga Tokyo-kara Nagoya-made ikimasu.*
from to go
Kazuko goes from Tokyo (as far as) to Nagoya.
(12) *Kazuo-ga ichi -ji -kara san -ji -made imasu.*
one o'clock-from three o'clock-until be
Kazuo is (here) from one o'clock to three o'clock.

A third group of postpositions are called 'sentence particles.' There are six frequently used ones, *-ne*, *-yo*, *-wa*, *-zo*, *-na*, and *-sa*, which represent the speaker's attitude. *Ne* is comparable to the tag-question in English which represents the speaker's lack of assertiveness.

- (13) *kore-ga anata-no hon desu ne.*
this you 's book be
This is your book, isn't it?

Yo represents the speaker's insistence.

- (14) *kore-ga anata-no hon desu yo.*
I'm telling you—this is your book.

2.1.3 *Question Formation* Questions are signaled by an interrogative particle *-ka* at the end of the sentence. For instance:

- (15) *Tokyo-ga Nihon-no shuto desu.*
 Japan 's capital be

Tokyo is the capital of Japan.

is turned into a yes-no question, as follows:

- (16) *Tokyo-ga Nihon-no shuto desu ka.*
 Is Tokyo the capital of Japan?

So also for information questions, those formed with interrogative words such as “what” and “who.” The phrase that represents the thing in question is simply replaced by an appropriate question word. The *-ka* question marker is retained at the end of the sentence. Japanese has the following nine question words:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| (a) <i>nani/nan</i> | what |
| (b) <i>dare</i> | who |
| (c) <i>doko</i> | where |
| (d) <i>dore</i> | which one |
| (e) <i>dono</i> + Noun | which + Noun |
| (f) <i>donna</i> | what kind |
| (g) <i>doo</i> | how |
| (h) <i>itsu</i> | when |
| (i) <i>dooshite</i> | why |

Let us form some WH-questions using sentence (17) below:

- (17) *Masuda-ga shiai -ni kachimashita.*
 match-in won

Masuda won a match.

First, the who-question—repace *Masuda* with *dare*:

- (18) *dare-ga shiai-ni kachimashita ka.*
Who won the match?

Second, the what-question—replace *shiai* with *nani*:

- (19) *Masuda-ga nani-ni kachimashita ka.*
What did Masuda win?

Third, the which-question—add *dono* in front of *shiai*:

- (20) *Masuda-ga dono-shiai-ni kachimashita ka.*
Which match did Masuda win?

We can combine (18) and (20), and add the *where-* and *when-* questions as well. We will have:

- (21) *dare-ga doko-de itsu dono-shiai-ni*
 who where-at when which-match-at
kachimashita ka.
 won

Who won which match, where and when?

and the answer will be:

- (22) *Masuda-ga Hakone-de shi-gatsu too-ka -ni*
 in four-month ten-day on
shoogi-no meijin-sen -ni kachimashita.
 chess 's championship-in won

Masuda won the Japanese chess championship in Hakone on April 10th.

2.1.4 *Japanese—A Left-branching Language* One of the important characteristics of human language is ‘recursion’, the way in which sentences, for example, can show up within larger sentences, which in turn can be part of still larger sentences. A consequence of recursion is that there is no such thing as the longest sentence of a language—an already long sentence can be expanded and made still longer. One of the ways that a sentence is expanded and made longer is by what is called ‘embedding’. English uses the mechanism known as ‘right-branching embedding’, e.g., a relative clause that modifies the head-noun comes to the right of it. For instance, take the familiar nursery rhyme “The house that Jack built.” The first sentence begins with:

- (23) This is the house

which is expanded by a *that*-clause to its right.

- (24) This is the house that Jack built.

The very final sentence which begins with:

- (25) This is the farmer sowing his corn, that fed the cock that crowed in the morn, that . . .

has altogether ten *that*-clauses, each one of which modifies the noun to its left.

In Japanese, branching goes in the opposite direction from English, i.e., to the left of the head-noun. Thus the translation of "The house that Jack built" would begin with:

- (26) *kore-ga uchi desu.*
this house be

This will be expanded into:

- (27) *kore-ga Jakku-ga tateta uchi desu.*
this built house be

Note that Japanese has no relative pronoun: *Jakku-ga tateta* "Jack built" simply goes to the left of *uchi* "(the) house." And the final sentence would be something like:

- (28) *kore-ga ... o-boo-san-o okoshita ondori-ni esa-o*
this priest awakened cock -to food
yatta noofu desu.
gave farmer be

This is the farmer that fed the cock that awakened the priest....

Each one of the remaining relative clauses with the head-noun would precede the other and would fit in the space left in sentence (28).

2.1.5 *Backward Gapping* One final point regarding word order in Japanese is the direction of verb phrase deletion. In English, for instance, there is a process of deleting all but the first one of a series of identical verbs or verb phrases in coordinate sentences. Thus a sentence such as:

- (29) a. John ate an apple, Jack ate a pear, and Bill ate a peach.

can be simplified to:

- b. John ate an apple, Jack a pear, and Bill a peach.

We call this operation "gapping," and the way it operates in English is "forward gapping."

In Japanese, gapping works in the opposite direction and is called "backward gapping." In other words, all but the last of the identical verbs is deleted. Look at the Japanese version of sentence (29).

- (30) a. *Jon-ga ringo-o tabemashita, Jakku-ga nashi-o*
John apple ate Jack pear
tabemashita, soshite, Biru-ga momo-o tabemashita.
ate and Bill peach ate

can be simplified to:

- b. *Jon-ga ringo-o, Jakku-ga nashi-o, soshite, Biru-ga*
John apple Jack pear and Bill
momo-o tabemashita.
peach ate

The same holds true of the next sentence:

- (31) a. *Kyaroru-ga koohii-o nomimasu, Arisu-ga koocha-o*
Carol coffee drink Alice black tea
nomimasu, soshite, Pegii-ga Nihon-cha-o nomimasu.
drink and Peggy Japan-tea drink

can be simplified to:

- b. *Kyaroru-ga koohii-o, Arisu-ga koocha-o, soshite,*
Carol coffee Alice black tea and
Pegii-ga Nihon-cha-o nomimasu.
Peggy Japan-tea drink
Carol drinks coffee, Alice black tea, and Peggy
Japanese tea.

2.1.6 *Temporal Expressions* Japanese has two so-called basic tense markers, namely *-u/ru*, the nonpast, and *-ta/da*, the past. The nonpast marker *-u* is suffixed to the verb stems which end in a consonant, and *-ru* to the ones which end in a vowel. The past marker *-ta* is suffixed to all but the ones which end in a voiced consonant, and those take *-da*. (There are some irregularities which will be explained later.)

When the nonpast marker is added to a verb which represents some kind of activity (an activity or an accomplishment verb), or event which occurs instantaneously (an achievement verb), it represents either habitual or future occurrence. That is:

- (32) *Akio-ga shinbun-o yomimas-u.*
newspaper read -Nonpast

means, either (a) or (b).

- (a) Akio reads a/the newspaper(s) (regularly).
(b) Akio will read a/the newspaper(s).

and:

- (33) *Akiko-ga kimas-u.*
come -Nonpast

means, either (a) or (b).

- (a) Akiko comes (regularly).
(b) Akiko will come.

On the other hand, when *-u* is part of an expression that describes a location, a quality or a state (a stative verb), it can be used in contexts where in English we would use either the simple present, the present perfect, or the future.

- (34) *Jiroo-ga uchi-ni imas-u.*
home-at be -Nonpast

- (a) Jiroo is at home (regularly).
(b) Jiroo is/has been at home.
(c) Jiroo will be at home.

As for *-ta*, when it is added to an activity verb, it corresponds to either the past or the present perfect in English. For instance:

- (35) *Akio-ga repooto-o yomimashi-ta.*
report read -Past

- (a) Akio read the report.
(b) Akio has read the report.

When it is added to an achievement verb, it corresponds to any one of the three readings as shown below.

- (36) *Akiko-ga kimashi-ta.*
come -Past

- (a) Akiko came.
(b) Akiko has come (on some occasion).
(c) Akiko has come (and is here now).

When it is added to a stative verb, it normally conveys the straightforward past tense reading.

- (37) *Jiroo-ga uchi-ni imashi-ta.*
home-at be -Past

Jiroo was at home.

Up until now we have been using 'polite' verb forms, with a special morpheme for 'polite'; without this special morpheme, verbs have a neutral or informal stylistic value. The 'polite' morpheme alternates its shape according to tense. The tense endings alternate as well, according to the sound that precedes them. Japanese has two types of regular verbs and a handful of irregular verbs. The first type of regular verbs ends in a vowel *-i* and *-e*, and the second type of verbs ends in a consonant (there are nine different consonants). Table 5.5 is a list of representative examples.

In addition to the tense markers, Japanese has a basic aspectual marker, *-te/de* ('progressive') which works in combination with *i-*, the same verb "be" that we saw in example (34). Its basic meaning is that the activity or state continues at the designated time. (The shape of the stem for this form is the same as the one for 'neutral-past'.)

- (38) *Jiroo-ga tegami-o kai-te i-mas-u.*
letter write-Prog. be-Polite-Nonpast

Jiroo is writing/has been writing a letter.

- (39) *Jiroo-ga tegami-o kai-te i-mashi-ta.*
letter write-Prog. be-Polite-Nonpast

Jiroo was writing/had been writing a letter.

Notice we have a very similar construction in English except that the order of elements is reversed.

Jiroo was at home.

Jiroo was write-ing.

Jiroo-ga uchi-ni **i-mashi-ta.**

Jiroo-ga kai-te **i-mashi-ta.**

The same verb "be" works as the pivot for both a locative and a progressive verb construction, and this same verb carries the tense marking. In Japanese tense-bearing forms always occur at the end of the verb phrase.

2.1.7. *Negation in Japanese* The basic negative sentences in Japanese are formed by adding a negative morpheme *-na/ana* to the stem of the verb in the nonpast, and *-na/ana* plus *-kat* in the past. *Na* follows the verbs that end in a vowel, and *-ana*, the ones that end in a consonant. An interesting feature of negative sentences is that subjects

TABLE 5.5 Neutral and Polite Verb Forms

TYPE I				
Neutral		Polite		
Nonpast	Past	Nonpast	Past	
"see"	mi-ru	mi-ta	mi-mas-u	mi-mashi-ta
"be"	i-ru	i-ta	i-mas-u	i-mashi-ta
"get up"	oki-ru	oki-ta	oki-mas-u	oki-mashi-ta
"sleep"	ne-ru	ne-ta	ne-mas-u	ne-mashi-ta
"eat"	tabe-ru	tabe-ta	tabe-mas-u	tabe-mashi-ta
"leave"	de-ru	de-ta	de-mas-u	de-mashi-ta
.....				
TYPE II				
Neutral		Polite		
Nonpast	Past	Nonpast	Past	
"write"	kak-u	kai-ta	kaki-mas-u	kaki-mashi-ta
"swim"	oyog-u	oyoi-da	oyogi-mas-u	oyogi-mashi-ta
"read"	yom-u	yon-da	yomi-mas-u	yomi-mashi-ta
"die"	shin-u	shin-da	shini-mas-u	shini-mashi-ta
"call"	yob-u	yon-da	yobi-mas-u	yobi-mashi-ta
"win"	kats-u	kat-ta	kachi-mas-u	kachi-mashi-ta
"lend"	kas-u	kashi-ta	kashi-mas-u	kashi-mashi-ta
"exist"	ar-u	at-ta	ari-mas-u	ari-mashi-ta
"think"	omo(w)-u	omot-ta	omoi-mas-u	omoi-mashi-ta
.....				
TYPE III (Irregular)				
Neutral		Polite		
Nonpast	Past	Nonpast	Past	
"do"	su-ru	shi-ta	shi-mas-u	shi-mashi-ta
"come"	ku-ru	ki-ta	ki-mas-u	ki-mashi-ta
"be" (Copula)	da	dat-ta	des-u	deshi-ta

are normally marked as 'topics', with *-wa* instead of with *-ga*. Knowing when to use *-wa* is one of the central problems in learning to speak Japanese. We will look at negation first with the 'neutral' verb forms.

- (40) *Eiji-ga suteeki-o* {a. *tabe-ru*}
steak {b. *tabe-ta*}.
Eiji {a. eats } steak.
 {b. ate }

changes to:

- (41) *Eiji-wa suteeki-o* {a. *tabe-na-i*}
 {b. *tabe-na-kat-ta*}.
Eiji {a. does not eat } steak.
 {b. did not eat }

- (42) *Eiko-ga eki -made* {a. *aruk-u*}
station-to {b. *arui-ta*}.
Eiko {a. walks } to the station.
 {b. walked }

changes to:

- (43) *Eiko-wa eki-made* {a. *aruk-ana-i*}
 {b. *aruk-ana-kat-ta*}.
Eiko {a. does not walk } to the station.
 {b. did not walk }

Up until now we have been using 'polite' verb forms, with *-mas-u* for the nonpast, and *-mashi-ta* for the past. These forms take a different inflection for negation. The nonpast *-mas-u* changes to *-mas-en*, and the past *-mashi-ta* changes to *-mas-en deshi-ta*. Therefore, sentence (40) in the *-mas-* form would be:

- (44) *Eiji-ga suteeki-o* {a. *tabe-mas-u*}
 {b. *tabe-mashi-ta*}.
Eiji {a. eats } steak.
 {b. ate }

and, its negative counterpart would be:

- (45) *Eiji-wa suteeki-o* {a. *tabe-mas-en*}
 {b. *tabe-mas-en deshi-ta*}.
Eiji {a. does not eat } steak.
 {b. did not eat }

Speaker A is reporting the fact that Mr. Sakai came for a visit—it is new information to Speaker B, therefore, *-ga* is being used. In Speaker B's response to A, he is referring to the Mr. Sakai that Speaker A brought up—it is shared information between the two, therefore, *-wa* is used.

The speaker also uses *-wa* when he is talking generically. For instance:

- (51) *kujira-wa honyuu -ru i des-u.*
 whale mammal-kind be -Nonpast
 Whales are mammals.

The sentence is about whales in general, which are considered to be in the 'permanent registry' shared by all speakers. When a Japanese goes shopping and asks for something, he also uses *-wa* as in:

- (52) *suihanki-wa ari -mas -u ka.*
 rice cooker exist-Polite-Nonpast Ques.

Are there rice cookers = Do you have rice cookers?

The person is interested in buying only one rice cooker, but he does not have a particular one in mind; *suihanki* is a generic term for all models of rice cookers.

There is one other case where the distinction is based on the same principle. When Speaker B responds to Speaker A's question such as:

- (53) *dare-ga mado-o ake -mashi-ta ka.*
 window open-Polite-Past Ques.

Who opened the window?

he would use *-ga*:

- (54) *Suzuki-san-ga ake-mashi-ta.*
 open

Mr. Suzuki opened (it).

because the speaker has chosen one person, namely Mr. Suzuki, out of all the possibilities, and it is new information to the hearer. In contrast, when the speaker is comparing two persons, or things, he would use *-wa*. He would say, for instance:

- (55) *Suzuki-san-wa mai -asa roku-ji -ni oki*
 every morning six o'clock-at get up
-mas -u. ga, Satoo-san-wa hachi-ji-ni oki-mas-u.
 -Polite-Nonpast but eight

Mr. Suzuki gets up at six every morning, but Mr. Satoo gets up at eight.

Lastly, the use of *-wa* is not restricted to the subject noun phrase. The speaker can talk about anything he wants to talk about; therefore, he can use *-wa* with any other element in the sentence. For instance:

- (56) *Nihon-de-wa Kyuushuu-to Hokkaidoo-kara sekitan-ga*
 Japan -in and from coal
tor -e -mas -u. Shikoku-kara-wa
 take-Potential-Polite-Nonpast from
tor-e-mas-en.
 not

In Japan, coal can be gotten (can be obtained) from Kyuushuu and Hokkaidoo. Speaking of Shikoku, (coal) cannot be obtained from there.

And, as seen here, the thing that is being talked about does tend to be brought to the front of the sentence.

2.2.2 How Japanese Represents Psychological Distance The speaker's perspective can also be described in terms of the psychological distance that he feels exists between himself and the event he talks about.

The Objective-Reportative Sense of the Progressive with -te i-ru A progressive sentence in the nonpast can, in appropriate contexts, have a variety of interpretations, e.g.:

- (57) *Masao-ga Hakata-ni it -te i -ru.*
 to go-Prog. be-Nonpast

- (a) Masao is going to Hakata.
 (b) Masao went/has gone to Hakata (and is there now).
 (c) Masao will go to Hakata.

But there is a further meaning, for which English does not have a convenient equivalent, possible for sentence (57) or in an example such as the following with the verb *de-* "leave/graduate":

- (58) *Naomi-wa juu-nen mae-ni daigaku-o*
 Topic ten-year ago -in college

- { a. *de -mashi -ta*
 leave-Polite -Past
 b. *de -te i -mas -u*
 leave-Prog. be-Polite-Nonpast }

Naomi graduated from college ten years ago.

Version (a) of the sentence is a straightforward reporting of a past event,

while (b) conveys the feeling that the speaker is making the statement from a particularly detached and objective point of view, in this case probably on the basis of recorded evidence. Thus, the next sentence becomes rather awkward.

- (59) ?**watashi-mo juu-nen mae-ni daigaku-o de -te*
 I -too year ago-in college leave-Prog.
i -mas -u.
 be-Polite-Nonpast
 I, too, graduated from college ten years ago.

It is awkward because a speaker would not ordinarily be detached in talking about his graduation from college and would certainly not need recorded evidence—memory would suffice.

There is a group of exclamatory phrases that express the physical or psychological state of the speaker and do not take the progressive nonpast *-te i-ru*, for example ones involving the expressions *tsukare-* “become tired,” *o-naka-ga suk-* “stomach become empty” (with the respectful prefix *o-*, which will be commented on later) and *komar-* “be in trouble”:

- (60) **aa, tsukare-te i-ru!* Oh, am I tired!
 (61) **aa, o-naka-ga sui-te i-ru!* Oh, am I hungry!
 (62) **aa, komat-te i-ru!* Oh, am I in trouble!

They take the past *-ta* without the progressive as shown below:

- (63) *aa, tsukare-ta!*
 (64) *aa, o-naka-ga sui-ta!*
 (65) *aa, komat-ta!*

All three sentences express the speaker’s physical or psychological state in which he is deeply involved. They are not objective-reportative remarks. It should follow, then, that if the speaker were to make an objective statement about his condition rather than cry out in despair, he should be able to use the progressive *-te i-ru* appropriately. And indeed he will:

- (66) *kyoo- wa tsukare-te i -mas -u no de,*
 today-Topic tired -Prog. be-Polite-Nonpast since
hayaku ne -mas -u.
 early go sleep-Polite-Nonpast
 Since I am tired today, I will go to bed early.

Focus and the Sense of Adversity in Passivization Passivization in Japanese involves the passive morpheme *-(r)are*. Since the order of noun phrases is relatively free in Japanese, a passive may, but need not, have the two noun phrases in different positions from those they take in the active, as they do in English. So, for instance:

- (67) *Naomi-ga Seiji-o ut -ta.*
 hit-Past
 Naomi hit Seiji.

can be passivized as either (68) or (69):

- (68) *Seiji-ga Naomi-ni ut -are -ta.*
 by hit-Pass.-Past
 Seiji was hit by Naomi.
 (69) *Naomi-ni Seiji-ga ut -are -ta.*
 By Naomi, Seiji was hit.

The meanings of sentences (67), (68), and (69) however are not exactly the same. As in English, passivization in Japanese is often used to put a special focus on the element which has been passivized (the new subject); just so, sentence (68) has a focus on Seiji, and it would be appropriate as an answer to a question such as:

- (70) Who was hit by Naomi?

But sentence (69) has a focus on Naomi, and it would be appropriate as an answer to a question such as:

- (71) Who was it that Seiji was hit by?

This ordinary passive always has the object of a transitive verb promoted to subject, as in examples (67)–(69) where we see *Seiji* take on the subject marker *-ga* instead of the object marker *-o*; Japanese has another construction called the ‘adversitive passive’ which lacks exactly this characteristic, so much so that it can be used with intransitive verbs where there is no object, or with transitive verbs, in which case objects keep their *-o* case marking. It conveys the sense of someone’s being affected (most often adversely) by an event over which he has no control. For instance, take a natural phenomenon such as rain. If the speaker is simply stating the fact, he would say:

- (72) *ame-ga furi-mashi-ta.*
 rain fall -Polite-Past
 It rained.

But if the speaker were caught in the rain and became drenched, or if he had to cancel a picnic on account of it, he could express his sense of annoyance by saying:

- (73) *watashi-wa ame-ni fur-are -mashi-ta.*
 I rain -by fall-Pass.-Polite-Past
 I was subjected to it raining.

Here is another example:

- (74) *Kazuko-ga ootoo -ni atarashii-kutsu-o*
 younger brother -by new shoes
yogos-are -te, komat -te i -ru.
 dirty Pass.-Gerund distress-Prog. be-Nonpast
 Having been subjected to her younger brother's dirtying
 (her) new shoes, Kazuko is distressed.

The incident itself of Kazuko's brother dirtying her shoes had nothing to do with her directly, but she is inconvenienced by it.

Finally, because of the adversitive reading one gets with the verb "to rain" in the passive, a sentence such as (76) below becomes rather strange, whereas (75) would be quite appropriate.

- (75) *ame-ga fut-te, yokat-ta!*
 rain fall-Gerund good -Past
 It rained and was good = It was good that it rained.

- (76) *??ame-ni fur-are-te, yokat-ta!* ("??" before an
 Pass. example indicates
 questionable
 usage.)
 (I) was subjected to it raining, and it was good.

But, sometimes, the speaker would add a phrase such as *kekkyoku* which means "ultimately" and say something like:

- (77) *ame-ni fur-are-te, kekkyoku yokat -ta.*
 Pass. ultimately
 (I) was subjected to it raining, (but) it ultimately turned
 out for the best.

2.2.3 How Japanese Distinguishes Sensations of Self and Nonsself
 Another device for expressing psychological distance between the speaker and the thing which he is talking about is *-gar*, which is suffixed

to words representing the physical and emotional sensations of those other than the speaker himself.

In English, under normal circumstances, when Speaker A says:

- (78) I'm {cold}
 {hot}

or:

- (79) I'm {sad
 {lonely
 {delighted}

Speaker B has no right to say things like:

- (80) How do you know you are?

because Speaker B is not capable of making judgments on the sensations that Speaker A claims to feel. But if Speaker A says:

- (81) Susan is {cold
 {lonely
 {delighted
 {etc.

Speaker B can challenge him by saying:

- (82) How do you know she is {cold
 {lonely
 {delighted
 {etc.}?

and Speaker A can defend himself by saying something like:

- (83) I know she is because she told me so.

or:

- (84) Susan {looks
 {seems} that way.

In Japanese, when the speaker is expressing his own physical or emotional sensation, he would say:

- (85) *watashi-wa* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{samui} \\ \textit{atsui} \\ \textit{sabishii} \\ \textit{ureshii} \\ \textit{etc.} \end{array} \right\}$.
- I am $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{cold} \\ \textit{hot} \\ \textit{lonely} \\ \textit{delighted} \\ \textit{etc.} \end{array} \right\}$.

But, when the speaker is talking about someone else's sensation at the time when he is speaking, he must say, using the suffix *gar-* in the progressive (where with the suffix *-te*, *gar-* takes the shape *gat-* by a regular rule), the following:

- (86) *Suuzan-wa* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{samu-} \\ \textit{atsu-} \\ \textit{sabishi-} \\ \textit{ureshi-} \\ \textit{etc.} \end{array} \right\}$ *gat-te* *i -mas -u.*
- Susan seems $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{cold} \\ \textit{hot} \\ \textit{lonely} \\ \textit{delighted} \\ \textit{etc.} \end{array} \right\}$.
- Prog. be-Polite-Nonpast

The reader will observe that the final *-i* of the adjectives in (85) is not present here; we have *samu* instead of *samui*, *atsu* instead of *atsui*, etc. The final *-i* is in fact the nonpast marker that occurs on adjectives when they are the final word of the clause. Tense is always carried by the final word of the clause, and in (86) we see nonpast realized as *-u*. Note that in (86) the statement could be based either on his observation, or on a message from Susan herself. *Gar-* is an expression that distinguishes the psychological world of the speaker himself and those of others.

2.2.4 *How Japanese Deals with the Notions of 'Existence' and 'Possession'* Our final example dealing with the speaker's perspective is on the notions of existence and possession, which are probably two of the most important human concepts and which are related epistemologically and linguistically in interesting ways. Languages of the world express these two notions in various ways, for example, an event that is described existentially in one language may be described possessively in another.

Japanese, unlike English, has two existential verbs, namely *i-* which

is customarily said to be used for animate entities, and *ar-* which is used for inanimate entities.

- (87) There is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{a. a child} \\ \textit{b. a tree} \end{array} \right\}$ in the garden.
- niwa -ni* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{a. kodomo-ga} \\ \textit{child} \end{array} \right\}$ *i -ru*
garden-in $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{be-Nonpast} \\ \textit{b. ki-ga} \\ \textit{tree} \end{array} \right\}$ *ar-u*
 $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{be-Nonpast} \end{array} \right\}$.

The word for possession in Japanese is *mots-* ("have"). We find however that many of the *have*-sentences in English are expressed existentially in Japanese and that *i-* and *ar-* behave rather mysteriously. Let us look at some notable examples.

First, in Japanese people are not possessed—they exist alongside the person to whom they belong. Thus, while in English, one would say:

- (88) "Bill has a wife and three children."

in Japanese, the same idea is more likely to be expressed existentially, as given in (89a) rather than possessively, as in (89b).

- (89) a. *Biru(-ni)-wa tsuma-to kodomo-ga san -nin²*
to wife -and child three-Classifier
i -ru.
be-Nonpast

To Bill, there is a wife and three children.

- b. *?Biru-wa tsuma-to kodomo-o san -nin*
wife -and child three-Classifier
mot-te i -ru.
have-Prog. be-Nonpast

Bill has a wife and three children.

Second, pets are never owned, but farm animals can be owned (*kaw-* "raise/keep" is also used for both). Look at the following examples:

- (90) a. *uchi -ni-wa inu-ga ni -hiki i -ru.*
house-at dog two-Class. be-Nonpast

At (my) house, there are two dogs = I have two dogs.

²A number of languages in Asia and America, including Japanese, have what is known as the numeral classification system. In counting entities in those languages, one must use classifiers that, in one way or another, characterize the nature of entities. *Nin* used in sentence (89) is the classifier for human beings, except for "one person" and "two persons", which are *hitori* and *futari* respectively. *Hiki* used in (90) is the one for insects, fish, and small animals; and *too* used in (91) is the one for large animals.

- b. **watashi-wa inu-o ni -hiki mot-te*
 I dog two-Class. have-Prog.
i -ru.
 be-Nonpast
 I have two dogs.

- (91) a. *Sugi-san-no bokujoo-ni-wa uma -ga*
 ranch -at horse
ni-jut-too -to ushi-ga jut-too i -ru.
 twenty-Class.-and cow ten-Class. be-Nonpast
 At Mr. Sugi's ranch, there are twenty horses and ten cows.
- b. *Sugi-san-wa uma-o ni-jut -too -to ushi-o*
 horse twenty-Class.-and cow
jut-too mot-te i -ru.
 ten-Class. have-Prog. be-Nonpast
 Mr. Sugi has twenty horses and ten cows.

Notice, we can now speculate that the farm animals are part of the farmer's property and thus can be owned, whereas pets are considered part of the family—they belong to the family like the rest of its members. So when dogs, for instance, are raised by a dog breeder, one should be able to use both *mots-* and *i-*, and indeed one can:

- (92) a. *Kimura-san-no tokoro-ni-wa Akita-ken-ga*
 's place -at dog
juu-ni -too i -mas -u.
 ten-two-Class. be-Polite-Nonpast
 At Mr. Kimura's place, there are twelve Akita dogs.
 (Akita dogs are large Japanese dogs)
- b. *Kimura-san-wa Akita-ken-o juu-ni -too.*
 ten-two-Class.
mot-te i -mas -u.
 have-Prog. be-Polite-Nonpast
 Mr. Kimura has twelve Akita dogs.

Third, inanimate alienable objects can exist alongside the person, or they can be owned. For example:

- (93) a. *ano-hito (-ni)-wa* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{kane} \\ \text{kuruma} \\ \text{tochi} \end{array} \right\}$ *-ga ari-mas-u.*
 that-person -to
 To that person, there is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{money} \\ \text{a car} \\ \text{property} \end{array} \right\}$.

- b. *ano-hito -wa* $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{kane} \\ \text{kuruma} \\ \text{tochi} \end{array} \right\}$ *-o mot-te i-mas-u.*
 That person has $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{money} \\ \text{a car} \\ \text{property} \end{array} \right\}$.

Fourth, inanimate inalienable objects exist as part of the other entities but cannot be owned. For example:

- (94) a. *kono-heya (-ni)-wa ookii mado-ga ar-u.*
 this -room(-in) large window
 In this room there is a large window.
- b. ?**kono-heya-wa ookii mado-o mot-te i-ru.*
 this room large window
 This room has a large window.
- (95) a. *kono-tsukue (-ni)-wa hikidashi-ga na -i.*
 this -desk (-to) drawer not-Nonpast
 To this desk, there is no drawer.
- b. **kono-tsukue-wa hikidashi-o mot-te*
 this-desk drawer have-Prog.
i- na -i.
 be-not-Nonpast
 This desk does not have a drawer.

And lastly, expressions having to do with illnesses which, in English, normally take the form of the *have*-sentences, take various forms in Japanese. Here are a few of the expressions in English and a common way of saying them in Japanese.

- (96) I have $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{a. a headache} \\ \text{b. a cold} \\ \text{c. a fever} \\ \text{d. a stomach cancer} \end{array} \right\}$.
- (97) a. *watashi-wa atama-ga ita -i.*
 head hurt-Nonpast
 As for me, (my) head hurts.
- b. *watashi-wa kaze-o hii -te i -ru.*
 cold catch-Prog. be-Nonpast
 I am catching a cold.
- c. *watashi-wa netsu-ga ar -u.*
 fever exist-Nonpast
 As for me, there is a fever.

d. *watashi-wa* *i* *-gan* *da.* わたしは いがんだ。
 stomach-cancer be(Nonpast)

As for me, a stomach cancer is.

In addition to what we have seen here, a person learning to speak Japanese has other subtleties to master. For what will have to remain here a mystery, our example (89b) "Bill has a wife and three children" is not nearly so bad to the ears of native speakers as (90b) "I have two dogs." The preferred expression for either family or pets is nevertheless an existential one. This tempts one to think that family is somehow more similar to inanimate objects than pets are. At the same time moreover, the existential expression *ar-*, normally reserved only for inanimate objects, is fully acceptable for family: one can substitute *ar-u* for *i-ru* in example (89a) "To Bill there is a wife and three children," whereas in speaking of pets in (90a) "At my house there are two dogs," only *i-ru* would be acceptable.

These examples remind us that for the expression of certain ideas one sometimes needs more than just an ability to construct sentences and the possession of the necessary vocabulary.

3 JAPANESE AND ITS RELATION TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Language and the style with which it is used reflects its social and natural environment. In this section, we shall discuss the effect on language of a notable psychological characteristic, of social stratification, and of how the Japanese people relate themselves to their natural environment.

3.1 The Psychology of Dependence

It has been said that if one were to point out one fundamental characteristic of the Japanese psychology, it would be dependence. A positive value is placed on dependence, and it encourages individuals to indulge themselves in loving and dependent relationships. Take, for instance, the notion of rendering assistance to others. Let us compare Japanese with members of American society. In America, there is positive value to independence, and there is a strong sense of rendering assistance on a contractual basis. That is, when a friend needs help, one should do one's best to step in and help, but only in the areas where the help has been requested, for each individual has his own territory which must be honored. The person who offers help has the responsibility to discuss the way in which he can help. Each offer is a separate contract.

The Japanese people generally lack this clear sense of contract and



FIGURE 5.3 A Family Meal

the notion of private territory. To a Japanese, helping a friend implies looking after him in an all-inclusive way. It is his responsibility to think of the things he can do to help and to go ahead with them in the manner that he thinks will benefit his friend's need. He need not present them to his friend and wait for a decision. When his friend sought his help, he totally entrusted himself to him.

An American seeking help considers it his right to choose the specific sort of help he needs. He may decline the rest, provided he does it gracefully. He has a clear sense of responsibility to look after himself. A Japanese, on the other hand, does not have the freedom to take what he wants and decline the rest; he is obliged to accept all of what is offered to him. He does not have the same sense of having to look after himself, but in fact, he does so by entrusting himself to someone else. Meanwhile, he looks after some other person who is dependent on him. Of course, there are times when a Japanese finds himself in the awkward position of accepting help that he really does not want. On the other hand, he also has the advantage of not having to spell out everything he needs; for him, this would be difficult.

There are some interesting linguistic phenomena that illustrate this

difference in the two cultures. First, to take a typical phrase that a person uses at the time of introduction, in American English, a person would say something like "How do you do? I'm pleased to meet you," or simply, "Hello." In Japanese, a typical phrase begins with *hajime-mashite* which means something like "I am meeting you for the first time." It is then followed by *doozo yoroshiku*, which is a shortened version of a phrase that implies something like "Please do whatever you consider fit for me." In other words, an introduction is an invitation, or an extension to the new acquaintance of the right to act for one's benefit. It is an act of entrusting oneself to the other person. To an American, this is clearly a separate step, which might not take place until long after initial greetings.

Let us look at another example of extending—this time not help, but hospitality. In an American home, one often hears the hostess saying to the house guest, "Make yourself at home. And help yourself to whatever you like. There is beer and soft drinks in the refrigerator—please feel free to help yourself at any time." Why? Because it is the responsibility of the hostess to see to it that the guest is offered the best choice that she can offer as well as the freedom to select whatever he would like whenever he would like it. What would a Japanese hostess do in the same situation? She would say the equivalent of "Make yourself at home." But she would not say "Help yourself." Instead, without further ado, she would offer whatever it is that she thinks the guest would most enjoy having at that time.

An American guest in an American home knows that he has been given the freedom to help himself and that it is his responsibility to look after himself. A Japanese guest in a Japanese home knows that he has placed himself in the hands of the hostess, and he accepts the thoughtful offer by the hostess, whatever it may be, unless he has a good reason not to. But what happens to a Japanese guest at an American home? Not being used to looking after himself, he may have a slight sense of being neglected. He would also be very hesitant to open someone else's refrigerator and help himself. What about an American guest at a Japanese home? If the hostess is able to accurately assess his desires, there certainly would be no problem. Otherwise, he may feel a sense of infringement upon his privacy. He might think "I know what I want, and I would appreciate it if you would consult me!"

There are countless stories of agony and laughter occasioned by cross-cultural experiences such as the ones described here. However, it is important for us to remember that they do not indicate that all Japanese people are dependent and behave and speak identically. Far from it. Some Japanese are very independent, vocal, and adamant about their freedom. But the important point is that the psychology of dependence is there as a frame of reference, whether or not a particular individual is independent or dependent.

3.2 Social Stratification and Deferential Language in Japanese

3.2.1 How Address Forms Work in Japanese

Proper Names When addressing people by their proper names, there is only one general rule in Japanese: add *-san* either to the family name as in *Suzuki-san*, or to the sequence of the family name and the given name as in *Suzuki Jiroo-san* (note that 'first' and 'last' names come in reverse order in Japanese), regardless of sex, marital, or social status. In one sense, therefore, *-san* is equivalent to all three of the English expressions, Mr., Mrs., and Miss. However, it is significantly different from those English expressions because while the English expressions denote titles representing the social status of the person referred to with or without respect on the part of the speaker, *-san* is strictly an expression of respect. Therefore, while in English one could say "I'm Mrs. Jones," or "This is Mr. Smith speaking," in Japanese one would never say **watashi-wa Mori-san des-u* ("I am Mori-san"). One introduces himself by saying *watashi-wa Mori des-u*, or simply, *Mori des-u*, regardless of one's social status.

In Japanese, the use of the given name is generally limited to the members of one's family, children, and the childhood friends whom one has always called by their given names. In most other cases, people address one another by their family names. They do not switch from calling someone by his family name to calling him by his given name, however long they have known one another. This means that in Japanese one is spared the discomfort, as it happens so often in English, of trying to determine whether to call someone by his first or last name. But it also means that *-san* gives practically no information concerning how one person is regarded by the other in social interaction.

There is one exception to the universal rule of addressing people with *-san*. Teachers and doctors (and innumerable people who are labelled as 'critics' or 'commentators' as well as politicians) are addressed, not by *-san*, but by *-sensei* "teacher," as in *Mori-sensei*. In Japan, a schoolteacher is called *sensei*, not only by his present students, but also by former students and by the public in general. The word *sensei* is a common noun, a respectful title, and it is also a vocative form.

There are variants of *-san* such as *-sama* which is more formal than *-san*, and *-chan* which is an affectionate expression, usually added to children's given names. *Kun* is a casual term used mostly by men to address people who are equal or younger. There also are others such as *-dono* (used mainly in writing) and *-shi*. All of those expressions give far greater information than the primary term, *-san*.

Kinship Terms Table 5.6 lists the major kinship terms in Japanese. Unlike English, Japanese makes a systematic distinction between

TABLE 5.6 Japanese Kinship Terms

Persons spoken about	To speak about them to outsiders	To speak about them inside the family
father	<i>chichi</i>	<i>o-too-san/papa</i>
mother	<i>haha</i>	<i>o-kaa-san/mama</i>
son	<i>musuko</i>	Name-(<i>chan/san</i>) e.g., <i>Taroo-chan</i>
daughter	<i>musume</i>	Name-(<i>chan/san</i>) e.g., <i>Yuki-chan</i>
older brother	<i>ani</i>	<i>o-nii-san</i>
older sister	<i>ane</i>	<i>o-nee-san</i>
younger brother	<i>otooto</i>	Name-(<i>chan/san</i>)
younger sister	<i>im ooto</i>	Name-(<i>chan/san</i>)
grandfather	<i>sofu</i>	<i>o-jii-san</i>
grandmother	<i>sobo</i>	<i>o-baa-san</i>
grandchild	<i>mago</i>	Name-(<i>chan/san</i>)
uncle	<i>oji</i>	<i>oji-san</i>
aunt	<i>oba</i>	<i>oba-san</i>
nephew	<i>oi</i>	Name- <i>chan/san</i>
niece	<i>mei</i>	Name- <i>chan/san</i>
cousin	<i>itoko</i>	Name- <i>san</i>

the terms used when talking about members of one's own family to people outside or inside the family. To someone not a member of the family, one simply uses the relational terms. However, within the family one normally uses the terms (sometimes different ones) with respectful affixes *o-* and *-san* or the more affectionate *-chan* for older relations, and the name with or without *-san* or *-chan* for younger ones. Generally speaking, the forms that are used to refer to them within the family are also used as vocative forms when speaking directly to them. As one would expect, a complex system of this sort is subject to a good deal of variation from social group to social group, and even from region to region. Within just one style, there are complexities that go beyond what

can be represented in a table such as Table 5.6. For example, in the author's experience, it is the case that nephews and nieces will always be named with *-chan* or *-san* when women are speaking, but male speakers will sometimes just say the names.

Notice that the terms for siblings are distinguished by their age in relation to the speaker. There are the neutral terms *kyoodai*, a Sino-Japanese compound "older brother + younger brother" for "brothers," and *shimai* "older sister + younger sister" for "sisters." The former is also used when one talks about how many siblings one has, as in *watashi-wa san-nin kyoodai-ga ari-mas-u* "As for me, there are three siblings = I have three siblings." Neither *kyoodai* nor *shimai* is used in speaking directly to brothers and sisters; in this way they are rather like the English word "sibling."

Personal (Pro)nouns The pronouns in Japanese that are commonly used today are of two kinds, the general expressions used by both men and women, and those used only by men to address either men or women. Women do not use the second variety, and men use them only in casual or rough situations. The major third-person singular forms are

TABLE 5.7 Japanese Singular Personal (Pro)nouns

		I	You
General	Formal	<i>watakushi</i>	
	Normal	<i>watashi</i>	<i>anata</i>
Male	Casual	<i>boku</i>	<i>kimi</i>
	Rough	<i>ore</i>	<i>omae</i>

Third Person

General	Formal	<i>kono-kata</i>	<i>sono-kata</i>	<i>ano-kata</i>	
	Normal	<i>kono-hito</i>	<i>sono-hito</i>	<i>ano-hito</i>	<i>kare</i> <i>kanojo</i>
Male	Casual				
	Rough	<i>koitsu</i>	<i>soitsu</i>	<i>aitsu</i>	

compounds with demonstratives *kono*- "this," *sono*- "that," and *ano*- "that over there" plus the word for person, namely *-kata* (formal) or *-hito* (normal). Japanese has a three-way distinction, *ko*-, *so*- and *a*-, which are also used for various other expressions used for indication such as *koko* "here," *soko* "there," and *asoko* "way over there." The rough expressions used only by men, namely *koitsu*, *soitsu*, and *aitsu* also come from *ko*-, *so*-, and *a*- followed by *yatsu*, the shortened version of *yatsuko*, which used to be an affectionate term for a person of lower status or a servant. *Koyatsu*, *soyatsu*, and *ayatsu* changed to *koitsu*, *soitsu*, and *aitsu*; and they now mean something like "this guy," "that guy," and "that guy over there." *Kare* and *kanojo* mean "he" and "she" respectively, and they also have a secondary meaning comparable in English to "boyfriend" and "girlfriend."

There is syntactic evidence that Japanese pronouns are more 'nouns' than 'pronouns', hence the parentheses in the title '(Pro)nouns'. One can say quite freely (and more freely than in English) things like *utsukushii anata* "beautiful you" and *genkina watashi* "healthy me," modifying pronouns in the same way as one would nouns in expressions such as *utsukushii Yoshiko* "beautiful Yoshiko" and *genkina kodomo* "healthy child."

To talk to or about more than one person in Japanese, one would use *-tachi*, a bound morpheme that means "and the others" as in *watashi-tachi* "I and the others." Because of this meaning, when *-tachi* is used with proper nouns and kinship terms as in *Sano-san-tachi* and *o-kaa-san-tachi*, they mean "Mr. or Ms. Sano and the others" and "the mother and the others." There is another suffix *-gata*, a polite form that comes from *-kata* ("person") with voicing in the initial sound. It has a rather restricted use and can appear with only some of the terms that have been discussed so far, e.g., with the respectful kinship terms such as *o-too-san-gata* ("fathers"), *o-kaa-san-gata* ("mothers") and also *sensei-gata* ("teachers") but not with a proper name as in **Mori-san-gata*.

Finally, since ellipsis of the noun phrase is the most common form of referring to people already named, pronouns when they are used convey far more information regarding the interpersonal relations than the pronouns in languages such as English. For instance, under normal circumstances, *anata* "you" is not used when speaking to a person of higher status. One would use the person's name or simply not address him directly. Should one dare to use *anata* in speaking to a person of higher status, it would convey a special message—either of a sense of camaraderie or of indignation and rebellion. *Kare* "he" and *kanojo* "she" convey a familiar and nondeferential sense and are used more often by a young or a middle-aged person in talking about friends and possibly the members of his or her own family. In similar fashion, each of the other expressions requires specific circumstances for them to be appropriate.

3.2.2 *How Nondeferential Expressions Are Used Deferentially*
Languages of the world have two major types of expressions of deference. The first kind is one that every language appears to have: a group of grammatical devices and words whose primary function is not deferential but which nonetheless is used for such a purpose in certain contexts. Let us look at some examples in English. For instance, a tag-question is one device that can be used to make a request sound less demanding, and thus more polite. Instead of:

(98) Come in.

the speaker would say:

(99) Come in, won't you?

Another device is a statement in place of a request, particularly, an impersonal one such as:

(100) Dinner is served.

instead of:

(101) Come and eat.

Similarly, a statement with a qualifying expression such as:

(102) I wonder if you can help me move next week.

sounds more polite than:

(103) Can you help me move next week?

The same statement in the past tense sounds even more polite.

(104) I was wondering if you could help me move next week.

Euphemisms, particularly in mentioning unmentionables, is another way of expressing deference.

(105) Excuse me, I must go to the little girls' room.

And lastly, hedging is another device. Expressions such as "a little" and "somewhat" are often used to play down negative feelings in a sentence such as:

(106) That's a little unfair, isn't it?

The expression *kai-te age-mashi-ta* consists of the verb *kak-* "write/draw," which changes to *kai-* before the gerundive ending *-te*, and the verb *age-* "give," which literally means "to raise," which is followed by the polite ending in the past tense *-mashi-ta*. The speaker can also be informal with the hearer and say *kai-te age-ta*.

Third, the speaker would use a different honoring expression, *o-...-ni nar-* when he has considerably lower status than *Sakai*, for instance, if he is much younger than *Sakai*.

(112) *Sakai-san-ga Suzuki-san-ni chizu-o o- kaki -ni*
map Res.-draw-to

- | | |
|---|---|
| } | a. <i>nari -mashi-ta</i>
become-Polite -Past |
| | b. <i>nat -ta</i>
become-Past |

Mr. Sakai came to draw a map for Mr. Suzuki.
(It came about that Mr. Sakai drew a map for Mr. Suzuki.)

The verb phrase *o-kaki-ni nari-mashi-ta* consists of a respectful prefix *o-* followed by the verb *kak-* "write/draw," which is followed by *-ni nar-*, which literally means "to become" and the polite verb ending in the past tense *-mashi-ta*. The speaker can use the neutral ending if the hearer is someone with whom he can be informal.

Fourth, the speaker would use a humbling expression *o-...su-* when *Sakai*, the person who did the drawing of the map has considerably lower status than *Suzuki* who accepted it.

(113) *Sakai-san-ga Suzuki-san-ni chizu-o o- kaki-*
map Res.-draw-

- | | |
|---|--|
| } | a. <i>shi-mashi-ta</i>
do -Polite -Past |
| | b. <i>shi-ta</i>
do -Past |

The expression *o-kaki-shi-mashi-ta* consists of the respectful prefix *o-*, *kak-* "draw," and the irregular verb *su-* "do," which changes to *shi-* before *mas-* or *-ta*. The speaker is showing respect toward *Suzuki* by humbling *Sakai*, rather than honoring *Suzuki*. The same expression is used when the speaker himself did the drawing of the map for *Suzuki*. He would say:

(114) *watakushi-ga Suzuki-san-ni chizu-o*
I(Formal) map

o-kaki -shi-mashi-ta.
Res.-draw-do -Polite -Past

I did the drawing of a map for Mr. Suzuki.

Notice, the speaker is using the formal first-person pronoun *watakushi* "I" as well as the polite ending *-mashi-ta* to indicate his respect toward the hearer. If the hearer is someone with whom the speaker can be informal, he can simply say:

(115) *watashi-ga Suzuki-san-ni chizu-o o-kaki-shi-ta.*

using the normal form *watashi* and the neutral ending *-shi-ta* instead of *-shi-mashi-ta*.

Finally, the speaker has a choice of two expressions to use, one honoring and the other humbling, when *Suzuki* has lower status than *Sakai* and when the speaker has a sense of affinity with *Suzuki*. They are the compound verbs with one other verb of giving, *kudasar-*, and the verb of receiving *itadak-*, as in *kai-te kudasar-* and *kai-te itadak-*. The former honors *Sakai*, and the latter humbles *Suzuki*.

(116) *Sakai-san-ga Suzuki-san-ni chizu-o kai -te*
map draw-Gerund

- | | |
|---|--|
| } | a. <i>kudasai-mashi-ta</i>
give -Polite -Past |
| | b. <i>kudasat-ta</i>
give -Past |

Mr. Sakai gave Mr. Suzuki the drawing of a map.

(117) *Sakai-san-ni Suzuki-san-ga chizu-o kai -te*
from

- | | |
|---|--|
| } | a. <i>itadaki-mashi-ta</i>
receive-Polite -Past |
| | b. <i>itadai -ta</i>
receive-Past |

From Mr. Sakai, Mr. Suzuki received the drawing of a map.

Notice, in sentence (117) *Sakai-san* is followed by particle *-ni* instead of *-ga*, and *Suzuki-san* is followed by *-ga* because of the verb "to receive." These expressions can also be used when the speaker himself is the one who received the map. He would simply replace *Suzuki-san* with *watakushi* or *watashi* ("I") depending on the hearer.

The speakers of Japanese use the respectful prefix *o-* (*go-* for Sino-Japanese words) for objects that are close to their daily life, as well as for the kinship terms and the verbs denoting human activities. For instance, they say *o-cha* instead of *cha* "tea," *o-kashi* instead of *kashi* "candies," *go-han* "cooked rice/meal," *go-chisoo* "feast," and *o-furo* "bath." Moreover, in a very polite conversation, one would prefix *o-* to expressions having to do with the qualities of objects and entities, e.g.,

o-shizuka instead of *shizuka* “quiet” and *o-kirei* instead of *kirei* “beautiful.” For instance, the speaker would say something like:

- (118) *kono-hen-wa o-shizuka des -u ne.*
 this -area Res.-quiet be(Polite)-Nonpast Tag
 This area is quiet, isn't it?

to compliment the quiet neighborhood in which the hearer lives.

We have so far introduced the honoring expressions *o-...-ni nar, -te age* and *-te kudasar*, the humbling expressions *o-... su* and *-te itadak*, the polite ending *-mas*, the polite form of copula “be” *des*, and the prefixes *o-* and *go*. These forms are the basic ones that can be used with various other expressions.

3.2.4 *How the Japanese Decide When to Use Which Forms*
 Three-quarters of a century after the Meiji Restoration, from late summer 1945 when the country lay in ruins in the wake of World War II until the early fifties, Japan went through another period of drastic social and institutional change. It was called the ‘democratization’ of Japan, carried out by the American occupation army under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. The new constitution took effect on May 3, 1947. In the first chapter, it proclaimed the emperor of Japan to be the symbol of the State and the unity of the people but without any political powers; and in the second, it renounced war and the maintenance of land, sea, and air forces as well as other war potentials. In the third chapter, it spelled out in great detail the fundamental human rights of all citizens of Japan. Women were assured equal rights with men, which included the right to vote and equal rights in inheritance and marriage. Legislative measures were taken to break up the great concentration of wealth in the hands of the select industrialists; absentee land-ownership too was abolished, and land was distributed to the members of the farming communities.

Today, Japan is unmistakably a country of middle-class citizens. Since 1969, an annual government poll has consistently indicated that 90 percent of the Japanese people consider themselves to belong to the middle class. But just as in any other society in the world regardless of the form of the government, Japanese society has social stratification. The decision-making processes of the Japanese people regarding how to behave, what to say when, and how to say it are based on the way the society is stratified. Some factors are uniquely Japanese, but others are universal in all human societies.

There are two basic types of factors to be considered—interpersonal and personal. The interpersonal ones can be subdivided into situational and relational factors. By situational factors, we mean the various circumstances that provide one person with more power than another.

The relational factors are those that determine the relationship for an extended period of time, such as group affiliation and seniority.

Let us look at a few notable cases where the situational power factor is at work. First, let us examine the customer-salesperson relationship where the former has a decisive power over the latter. The following would be a typical conversation at a department store.

- (119) Customer: *kore-(wa)*
 this
 { a. *o- ikura des -u ka*
 Res.-how much be(Pol.)-Nonpast-Q.
 b. *ikura des-u ka*
 c. *ikura* }
 How much is this?

Salesperson: *sore-wa ichi-man -en de gozai -mas-u.*
 that ten thousand-yen be(Hum.)-Polite
 That is ten thousand yen.

- Customer: *todoke-te*
 deliver-Ger.
 { a. *itadak -e -mas-u ka*
 receive(Hum.)-Potential-Polite
 b. *kure -mas-u ka*
 receive-Polite
 c. *kure -ru*
 receive-Nonpast }
 Will you deliver (it)?

Salesperson: *hai. o -todoke itashi -mas-u.*
 Res.-deliver do(Hum.)-Polite
 Yes, (we) will delivery (it).

Notice how the difference in power influences language. While the customer has a choice of three styles of speaking—from a very courteous style to a rather rude one, a well-trained salesperson must remain courteous regardless of the customer. Here he is using *o-... itas-* with the humbling form of *su* “do” which is even more humbling than *o-... su*, the form that was introduced earlier. The same principle holds in the relationship between a doctor and a patient, thus the latter will always speak deferentially to the former. The doctor, on the other hand, may speak casually, although he normally does not use the most casual form for personal reasons that we shall discuss later.

The next case is a situation in which a person who has a higher status asks a person of lower status to do a personal favor for him. Instead of saying something like:

- (120) *kono-tegami-o dashi -te kudasa -i.*
 this -letter dispatch-Gerund give(Hon.)-Nonpast
 Please mail this letter. (lit.: "Please give the dispatching of this letter.")

which is a polite request, he would put his request in the form of a negative question such as:

- (121) *kono-tegami-o dashi -te kudasai -mas -en ka.*
 this -letter dispatch-Ger. give(Hon.)-Polite-not
 Won't you please mail this letter? (lit.: "Won't you please give the dispatching of this letter?")

which is even more polite.

The last case has to do with a social relation that has undergone a considerable change of image in postwar Japan: the relationship between government officials and the public. Until the end of the war, Japanese government officials, from the top bureaucrats to the policemen on the beat, were regarded as the keepers of the power and the authority of government. Thus, there was a strong tendency among them to speak down to the citizens of the country. Since the end of the war, the government officials have become public servants. While people speak to them using polite expressions because they receive services, the government officials are also expected to speak courteously in return. They use polite expressions, although they need not use humbling ones.

There are three major categories of relational factors: two are the distinction between ingroup versus outgroup (as with the family) and seniority, i.e., the age and the professional and/or social position that accompanies an advance in age. Sex is the other factor that plays a role.

In respect to the ingroup versus outgroup dimension, note that an adult speaker of Japanese is expected to use the humbling expressions to talk about the members of his family to anyone who is an outsider. Conversely, the same speaker is generally expected to use the honoring expressions to refer to anyone who is a member of someone else's family. This however depends, to a greater or lesser degree, on the age and status of the person to whom or about whom one is speaking. When the two factors, ingroup/outgroup and age, conflict, the former takes precedence. That is, when speaking about the members of one's own family to anyone who is not a member, age is not a factor. For instance, talking about the health of his own father, the speaker would say:

- (122) *chichi-wa genki-de ori -mas-u.*
 father healthy be(Hum.)-Polite
 (My) father is healthy.

But in asking about the health of the hearer's father, he would have to say:³

- (123) *o- too-san-wa o- genki des-u ka.*
 Res.-father Res.-health be(Pol.)

or:

- (124) *o-too-san-wa o-genki-de irasshai-mas-u ka.*
 be(Hon.)-Polite

Is (your) father healthy?

Sentence (123) can be used between two friends, and (124) would be used if the hearer is, for example, the speaker's teacher or supervisor, and/or if the speaker is a very polite person.

It is of great importance, however, to see how the notion 'ingroup' extends beyond one's immediate family. The major groups of significance for language use tend to be the following—blood relatives and in-laws, teachers and their students, university professors and their advisees, and salaried workers, blue-collar as well as white-collar, who work for business and industrial firms of all sizes. A company employee would use the humbling expressions to talk about people in his own company to a person who works for another company. A teacher or a professor would use the humbling expressions to talk about his own students to teachers from other schools or prospective employers while the students are enrolled, although he would tend not to continue humbling them after graduation. The students, on the other hand, at no time use the humbling expressions to refer to their teacher.

This means that, although the groups just mentioned undoubtedly comprise an important sector of Japanese society today, there are many other people engaged in various types of occupations who do not consider themselves as belonging to ingroups, at least regarding the use of their language. For instance, while university professors regard their students as members of their 'group', they do not consider their respective universities as part of their group in the way that employees do their corporations. Physicians who work at hospitals, although they, too, are full-time salaried employees, are not group oriented.

Here is an example of the difference in the language of a group-oriented person and that of a person who is not. Suppose someone calls up from outside and asks for a Mr. Mori, a department head at the corporation. The man or the woman who answers the call would say:

³The *-de* that combines with the noun "health" in (122) and (124) is a special suffix for forming what are called pseudo-adjectives from nouns in certain constructions.

- (125) { a. *buchoo-wa* } *tadaima gaishutsu shi-te*
 { b. *Mori-wa* } now go out do
ori -mas-u.
 be(Hum.)-Polite
 { a. The department head } is out at the moment.
 { b. (Mr.) Mori } }

Notice, the person does not say *buchoo-san* "Mr. department head," or *Mori-san* "Mr. Mori." He would not say it even if he were the most junior member of the company. Then the person continues with *gaishutsu shi-te ori-mas-u*, again, humbling Mr. Mori and respecting the person who is on the outside. A university professor who is answering a similar call from outside the university, in contrast, would say something like:

- (126) *Mori-sensei-wa gaishutsu shi-te irasshai -mas-u.*
 teacher go out do be(Hon.)-Polite
 Professor Mori is out.

He would call his colleague "Mori-sensei" and use *irasshai*-, the honoring expression, rather than *ir-*, the plain nonhonoring form of "be." He would not use the humbling expression even if the colleague were a junior member of the faculty.

One way to describe the ingroup versus outgroup situation in Japan would be to say that Japanese society places the family at the center of the society and a whole spectrum of family-like communities in its outer layers—the corporations lie very close to the center, and the groups of professional people such as university professors and physicians probably lie the farthest from the center. There are numerous other layers of groups that lie in between. Those groups would use the humbling, honoring, and polite expressions to varying degrees depending on how they view their groups; and the variation is considerable.

We notice in this general definition of the group in Japanese society that what is considered the "ingroup" is typically hierarchically organized—it is a pyramid structure. The cohesiveness of such a group is maintained by strong mutual dependency relationships among its members horizontally and vertically, but more noticeably vertically. This is where the second factor, namely seniority in age and rank, comes in.

Earlier, we discussed the change of image of the government officials in post-war Japan. Seniority, the respect for age and rank, is another aspect of Japanese society where there has been a considerable change in the attitudes of the people in the past thirty years, along with some substantial changes in the family structure itself. Until recently, traditional Japanese families have had a vertical structure based on the notion of seniority. A large number of family members have lived

together dependent on each other, with children relating to not only their parents, but also to grandparents and other relatives as well, and with the oldest son being the principal inheritor of family property and therefore being viewed as having a special responsibility to oversee family affairs. Today, only 25 percent of Japanese households live with grandparents and other relatives; over 60 percent are nuclear families. The average size of those nuclear families is between three and four persons and the oldest son no longer has the special privilege or responsibility of being the principal inheritor. It is interesting to note that while corporate structure which is modelled after the family retains a highly vertical structure based, primarily, on seniority, the family itself has lost much of its traditional hierarchy.

The style of speaking adopted by the younger people in speaking to their elders within the family, and to society in general, has become much less deferential and far more egalitarian in recent years. Between husband and wife, too, there is variation, but with the younger generation, they are much more equal.

And this leads to our final point about interpersonal language in Japanese: the difference between men's speech and women's speech. Women have traditionally been trained to speak more politely than men among themselves as well as toward men. However, the picture is complicated by the fact that in Japanese certain forms are used only by men, or only by women, some of which are deferential and some of which are not. Moreover, there is also one other social factor to be considered: in Japan until recently, very few women have held professional positions and positions of authority over men. In the past few years, it has been noted that the few women who are in managerial positions in corporations and government agencies experience little difference in the attitude and behavior of the men and women who work under them. Although there undoubtedly are some men who, at first, are bothered by having female bosses, they eventually show just as much respect, linguistically and otherwise, for them as they do for their male superiors.

In short, the factors that speakers of Japanese take into consideration in deciding how to say things are of two categories—situational and relational. With respect to the former, it is always the person who is seeking help and guidance who uses deferential language. With respect to the latter, the things that matter are group affiliation and seniority. As those factors indicate, deferential language in Japanese does not mark social class in any simplistic way for either the people spoken to, or the people spoken about. Everyone in Japanese society has the chance to use all of the deferential expressions in his daily life, depending on the various circumstances in which he finds himself.

It is interesting to note, however, that deferential language is perceived as a marker of the social class of speakers. Deferential

expressions are the linguistic prestige features of the Japanese society in modern times. Japanese people consider the ability to use deferential expressions 'appropriately', i.e., the ability to use them appropriately when they are called for, and not use them when they are not called for, to be the mark of good education and good upbringing. Hence, well-educated intellectuals who, otherwise, are liberal in their outlook are generally more conservative regarding the use of the deferential expressions. They tend to speak in a more polite language regardless of who they are speaking to, more as a reflection of their estimate of their own position in the society than from their respect of others.

There is a strong tendency among the learners of Japanese, and learners of languages in general, to think that all native speakers know how to use deferential expressions and how to speak appropriately. Nothing could be farther from reality. The system of deferential expressions is difficult for native speakers to learn, for those expressions convey complex messages regarding not only the interpersonal relations between the speaker and others, but also much about the speakers themselves. People often make social errors in speaking, and this is at least as much the case with a language like Japanese, which has so much social deference built into the grammar, as with other languages. Each speaker learns, or tries to learn, appropriate ways of speaking that are befitting to each stage of his life. What is more, the way of speaking that is considered appropriate for each stage of an individual's life changes as the society as a whole changes and adjusts itself to the changes in the larger world.

3.3 Some Japanese Expressions Reflecting Love of Nature

It is often said that the natural environment has a direct bearing on the vocabulary of a language. For instance, Eskimo has several words for snow, but English has only one; this is because Eskimos have great need to distinguish different kinds of snow, while most English speakers do not. At first glance, such an explanation seems reasonable. However the relationship between the natural environment and language is far more complex and mysterious. While it may be safe to assume that the speakers of one language would not have a word related to a natural phenomenon that they have never experienced, it is not safe to assume that the converse is also true. Sometimes there are important things for which they do not have names. It is a fascinating fact that among languages of the world that are spoken in similar geographical and climatic environments, each has its own unique set of vocabulary that enables the speakers of the language to describe and pay tribute to the beauty of nature in their own way.

The Japanese language has an unusually rich vocabulary of words

and expressions related to the seasons. The traditional Japanese calendar is the lunar one, which divides the four seasons into twenty-four subseasons, each of which is further divided into a beginning, a middle, and an end. For instance, the beginning of the spring is *risshun*, a Sino-Japanese morpheme *ritsu-* meaning "stand" followed by *shun* "spring." It is dated around February 4. The beginning of the summer is *rikka*, dated around May 6, the fall *risshuu*, around August 8, and the winter *rittoo*, around November 8. The beginning of the colder time of the winter is called *shookan* "little cold," the coldest time is *daikan* "big cold." The rainy season, as well as the rain of this season itself, is called either *tsuyu*, a native Japanese expression, or *baiu*, a Sino-Japanese expression. It comes to all of Japan, except for the northernmost regions, for approximately one month beginning the middle of June, at about the time when the plums ripen. The characters for *baiu* are *bai* "plum" and *u* "rain," and the same characters are also read *tsuyu*. The rainy season is followed by a hot and humid summer; the peak of this season from around July 20 to August 10 is called *doyoo*. This is when the surges called *doyoo-nami* "doyoo waves" begin to run high along the Pacific coast warning the swimmers that it is the summer's end. Both the rainy season with ample rain and a hot and humid summer are vital to rice growing.

The dates marking the beginning of the four major seasons are approximately one to one and a half months ahead of the beginning of the actual climatic season in most parts of Japan. On these days, however, the people of Japan read about it in the newspapers, hear about it on the radio and television news, and begin to look forward to the arrival of a new season, particularly the fall after a long hot summer and the spring after the snow and biting winds.

Along with the words marking seasons, there are expressions for the characteristic of different times of the year. There are words for different kinds of rain, winds, fair skies, cloudy skies, thunder, summer heat, winter cold, and so on. To name a few, *hana-gumori* ("flower-cloudy") means "cloudy weather with thin clouds covering the sky, which has a light-hearted cheerfulness" and is associated with spring, and *taka-gumori* ("high-cloudy") means "cloudy weather with clouds at an especially high altitude." *Soyo-kaze* means "the winds that blow quietly" and is also associated with the spring, *suzu-kaze* is the cool breeze of the summer, and *kogarashi*, which literally means "tree killing," denotes "the biting winds of the winter." *Harusame* is the spring rain that falls quietly, *shigure* is the sporadic rain that comes in the late fall and early winter, and *yuudachi* is the shower that comes in the early evening and is typical of the summer season. *Yuudachi* consists of *yu* "evening," and *tachi* "stand" (with voicing in the initial sound), which is the native Japanese word for *ritsu-* of *risshun*, etc., and thus it literally means "the beginning of the evening." One of the

dictionaries of seasonal words and expressions lists over eight hundred fifty of them just pertaining to the weather—many are scientific terms, but many more are traditional expressions that people still use in their daily life.

Next, there is a host of seasonally related expressions—flowers, plants, trees, birds and insects, fruit and vegetables, fish, various kinds of household goods, and the markets and festivals held at the Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in all parts of Japan. For instance, the early spring is symbolized by such things as *ume* “plum blossoms” and *uguisu* “bush warbler,” which are followed by *momo* “peach blossoms” and *sakura* “cherry blossoms.” The height of summer is symbolized by *hotaru* “fireflies,” *asagao* “morning glories,” and *doyoo-no unagi* “doyoo’s eel,” which is marinated in a special sauce and broiled. It is said that eels are good for one to eat on hot summer days when one’s appetite generally declines. The arrival of fall is symbolized by *koorogi* “cricket” and *susuki* “Japanese pampus grass”; this is followed by the season of *kiku* “chrysanthemum,” *momiji* “red maples,” and *aki-matsuri* “fall festivals.” Finally, the height of the winter is the first of January, New Year’s Day, when the entire nation celebrates with special decorations and foods that symbolize longevity, prosperity, and happiness in the new year.

Indeed, when a Japanese thinks of home, he thinks of not only his family, but also of the flowers in bloom in the family garden and the seasonal foods: fruit, vegetables, and fish that he can enjoy when he returns home. And when he writes a letter, it always begins with a remark on the weather and the season. He will say things like “It is already mid-May, and the young foliage is fresh and green . . .” The Japanese literary arts, particularly Japanese poetry, cannot exist without all those expressions about nature and changes in nature.

In recent years, advancement in technology and increasing urbanization have made the life of the Japanese people far less dependent on seasonal changes than it used to be. They have also done some serious damage to the rich ecological life of the country. Japan now is faced with the problem of accommodating both the need for natural resources demanded by increasing technologization and at the same time the need for conservation of the environment. In 1976, for the first time in thirty years, the percentage of the nuclear families slightly declined. The people, who are faced with the prohibitively high cost of properties, have begun to reassess and return to a modified version of the old way of sharing a house with parents. But modern life styles have brought various adaptations to the construction of their homes. The young people, who once flocked into cities by the millions, are now beginning to turn away from congested urban centers. This trend, which is called the *yuu-taan genshoo* “U-Turn phenomenon,” is slowly rejuvenating the rural areas, which have been on the decline for many years, and helping

to decentralize the population. No doubt the Japanese language, with its changes and innovations, is an integral part of the quest of the people of Japan.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The original studies are a logical starting point for further reading. Kuno’s *The Structure of the Japanese Language* has discussions relevant to “Sentence Formation in Japanese” (2.1), “How Japanese Marks the Topic” (2.2.1), and many other topics. Shibatani’s *Syntax and Semantics* has, among others, relevant articles for “Temporal Expressions in Japanese” (2.1.6), “Negation in Japanese” (2.1.7), “The Sense of Adversity in Passivization” (2.2.2., subsection), and “How the System of Honorifics Works in Japanese” (3.2.3). Kyoko Inoue’s “Studies in the Perfect” is the basis of “How Japanese Represents Psychological Distance” (2.2.2., subsection), and Kuroda’s “Where Epistemology, Style and Grammar Meet” is the basis of “How Japanese Distinguishes Sensations of Self and Nonself” (2.2.3). Lovins’ “Loanwords and the Phonological Structure of Japanese” is an analysis of the Western loanwords relevant to “A History of Japan” (1). Li’s *Subject and Topic* has several important articles. Alfonso’s two volumes are excellent for those who wish to learn Japanese and also as a reference work. Martin’s reference grammar is highly recommended. Doi, Miller, Reischauer, and Seward are suggested reading for a general view of Japanese history and culture.

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