

Polyglot Introductory Japanese ver1.0

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In English

**Written by FUKUI Tetsuya
Supervised by INOURA Michio
proofread by TOMIDA Yoshihisa**

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■ On this manual

Thank you for choosing us!

This manual is designed to provide a comprehensive outlook of Japanese language structure for introductory level learners. We also plan to publish a series of grammatical guide books focusing on intermediate and advanced learners (level in ascending order): Intermediate Japanese Grammar, Advanced Japanese Grammar and Translator Level Japanese Grammar.

We strongly urge you to thoroughly study this manual before beginning any training including exercise of basic conversations in order to acquire precise and applicable Japanese communicative skills. Since enormous differences exist between Japanese and other languages, especially between Western languages, it is crucial to understand the grammatical structure in the beginning to acquire thorough comprehension of Japanese at the introductory level. Learning a new language is like a journey of life; it is beautiful but sometimes tough. You should know how to advance and continue, and realize how wonderful it is to be able to reach in to the completely different concepts and world in human mind. People tend to start from simple conversations, but as times go by, this is exactly why people do not advance to the level where they wish to be. We would like to sincerely state to you that in such method, it would only cause you to waste your time in the long-run unfortunately.

Just after finishing this manual, we hope you immediately start to master Japanese phonograms (Hiragana and Katakana) and basic vocabulary of Chinese-Japanese characters (Kanji) which is extremely important, especially for reading Japanese. We also plan to provide the materials in order to master Japanese writing as well.

We really hope you enjoy studying Japanese. Learning Japanese will widen your perspective in the way you have never imagined, and deepen your understanding of Japan.

Now you are off to the exciting intellectual adventure! We hope you continue your journey with us, and share your experience to people around you, too. We wish there would be more individuals like you in the 21st century. We would like you and important people around you to be part of us to make this century a better one..

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■ Lesson 1

- Introduction to the Japanese Language and Japanese Pronunciation

□ Introduction to the Japanese Language

○ General Information

Japanese language is spoken by over 130 million people around the world, by not only in Japan, but also in countries and communities in Hawaii and Brazil and others, where many Japanese have emigrated. Economic bubble in the 1980s and the global interest of Japanese pop culture have triggered the mass increase of the population of Japanese language learners. Today, over three million people study Japanese across the world.

Surprisingly, no conclusion is yet to be made as to which family Japanese language belongs to. This is partially why learning Japanese needs to be approached differently for Western languages speakers. In some aspect we can observe similarities between the languages of the Altaic family, which includes Turkish, Korean and Mongolian. Also, there are similarities with South Pacific languages. Furthermore, as many of you know, Japanese has introduced Chinese characters and adopted many vocabularies from Chinese. However, ordinary people do not know that Japanese and Chinese do not belong to the same language family.

What makes Japanese language rich and diverse is that it has many dialectal variations. In the late 1800s, Meiji government selected Tokyo dialect as the common language. Since then, the Tokyo dialect has spread across the country by school education and mass media; however, when you visit Japan you can still enjoy variety of Japanese language vocabularies and tones by traveling across the country.

○ Vocabulary

It is useful to know that there are three categories in Japanese vocabularies, which makes Japanese extremely unique and enjoyable as well. Learning historical background of the language will help you understand why such language has

transformed the way it is today. First category is the normal communication between your friends or families; these are mainly conducted in original Japanese languages. This category is the largest, and has different dialects and variations across the country. The second category is vocabularies imported from Chinese; these are usually vocabularies to describe abstract concepts in humanities such as art and science. This is similar to Romanic languages how they usually express similar ideas in English. The third category is vocabularies imported mainly from Western languages, such as English, Portuguese and Dutch. Especially English vocabularies are imported in modern days, whereas Portuguese and Dutch was imported in 16th century.

○Fundamental Differences between English and Japanese Grammar

Sentence structure

In Japanese, a predicate (verb, be-verb, adjective, etc) comes at the end of the sentence; this rule is strictly applied to Japanese verbs. This is an enormous difference compared with the case of English which it typically comes right after the subject.

Strictly speaking, there is no exact concept of “subject” in Japanese as in western languages; concept of “topic” indicated by the particle “*wa* (わ)” is used. The most basic and essential Japanese sentence structure is composed of the part presenting a topic and the part of predicate depicted by the speaker. Although this concept is crucial to understand Japanese, you may be very confused at the beginning of your study. At this point, we expect you to comprehend that Japanese particle “*wa*” is not the subject marker but is used to convey the topic of sentence. If you keep this grammatical idea in your mind, as you proceed with your study, this would strongly facilitate you to master advanced level Japanese. We will intensively discuss this topic in the intermediate grammar textbook.

On the other hand, the particle “*ga* (が)” conveys an idea almost similar to the one of subject in western languages; therefore, we expediently use the word “subject” in this manual especially in the case of particle “*ga*”.

Particle

Particles have an important role in constructing sentences. This is some what similar to English prepositions. However, Japanese position in the sentence is different.

Whereas in English prepositions come before the words they refer to, Japanese particles come immediately after.(could be called “post-positions.”)

Interestingly, particles describe whether a word or phrase is a subject (topic), object, or other parts of the sentence, whereas word order performs this function in English.

Word order does not change the basic meaning of the Japanese sentence although it will affect the emphasis.

Noun

There are no words corresponding to the articles: a, an, or the. Nouns do not have special plural forms; they remain the same whether they indicate one object or many. No gender system exists like French or German.

Verb

Japanese verbs are uniquely different from other languages. In English, verb form changes depending on the subject, based on whether it is singular or plural, first person or third person. However Japanese verbs do not change depending on the subject, and they come at the end of the sentence. Verb endings do change to describe tense, negation, aspect and mood; many important information and shades of speech are expressed there. Therefore, you should listen carefully to the end of the sentences; change your brain circuit differently from English speaking situations! This is one reason why Western language speakers struggle to understand emotions and feelings of Japanese people.

Modifiers

In Japanese sentences, all modifiers- word modifiers, phrase modifiers, or sentence modifiers- precede the word they modify. This is also applied to relative clauses as well.

Tense

Japanese has only two real tenses: present and past. Future tense is expressed by present form. (For example, Japanese would say like “**Tomorrow, I am** there” instead

of saying “I **will be** there **tomorrow**.”)

It is more appropriate to define Japanese present and past tenses as subjectively non-perfect or subjectively perfect tense. Meaning, in Japanese, if you want to say “Oh! a bus is coming!” when from your perspective(subjective), if you were waiting for a bus for long time, Japanese native speaker would say:

• A bus came (has come)!

→ Basu ga kita! (basu=bus, ga=subject marker, kita=came(past form))

バス が きた!

We will intensively discuss how to use tenses in the more advanced level textbooks.

Omission

Japanese language frequently omits many elements in the sentence if it is thought to be understood from the context or the situation. This is another reason why Japanese is difficult for Western language speakers. (Perhaps you have seen Japanese TV shows and had no idea even with scripts) See the conversation below.

A: Kinou terebi-o mimashita-ka? →(Did you) watch TV yesterday?

きのう テレビを みましたか。

(Yesterday TV watched?)

B: Hi mimashita.

→Yes, (I) watched (TV).

はい、 みました。

(Yes, watched)

Writing System

Traditionally Japanese is written vertically from right to left. However, it is just as normal to write horizontally like English.

Three types of scripts are used to write Japanese: *Hiragana*, *Katakana* and *Kanji* (Chinese characters). In written Japanese today, *Hiragana* and *Kanji* are usually

used and *Katakana* is mainly to describe that vocabulary was imported from foreign language. Young people also use Katakana to draw attention or to add unique meanings but they are less frequent, and are not the functions Katakana was originally for. In addition, *Romaji* (Romanization) is used to represent the sounds in Roman letter system; this is mainly to help foreign language speakers to be able to pronounce Japanese.

The Language of Courtesy (Keigo けいご or 敬語)

Japanese is highly developed in special forms to indicate shades of courtesy, respect, and formality that often are impossible to express in English. This is called “Keigo (けいご or 敬語)” in Japanese. It is even difficult for adult native speakers to learn; however, the degree of politeness or formality, and to be able to control them is extremely important for Japanese daily social life.

We will discuss the language of courtesy intensively in advanced levels since you should realize socio-lingual situations enough to utilize Keigo. In this introductory manual, we will mainly examine basic expressions like polite predicate forms (-*desu*, *masu*) and honorific nouns, which is more than enough for you to avoid communication problems at this level.

□ Japanese Pronunciation

Although Japanese pronunciation is phonetically different from English, Japanese is relatively easy for an English-speaker to pronounce, because there are very few sounds that do not appear in English, and Japanese sound combinations are simple. The combinations are shown in the tables below:

Table 1

	a (Rōmaji) あ ア (Hiragana)(Katakana)	i い イ	u う ウ	e え エ	o お オ
k	ka か カ	ki き キ	ku く ク	ke け ケ	ko こ コ

s/sh	sa さ サ	shi し シ	su す ス	se せ セ	so そ ソ
t/ch/ts	ta た タ	chi ち チ	tsu っ ツ	te て テ	to と ト
n	na な ナ	ni に ニ	nu ぬ ヌ	ne ね ネ	no の ノ
h/f	ha は ハ	hi ひ ヒ	fu ふ フ	he へ ヘ	ho ほ ホ
m	ma ま マ	mi み ミ	mu む ム	me め メ	mo も モ
r	ra ら ラ	ri り リ	ru る ル	re れ レ	ro ろ ロ
g	ga が ガ	gi ぎ ギ	gu ぐ グ	ge げ ゲ	go ご ゴ
z/j	za ざ ザ	ji じ ジ	zu ず ズ	ze ぜ ゼ	zo ぞ ゾ
d/j/z	da だ ダ	ji ぢ チ	zu づ ヅ	de で デ	do ど ド
b	ba ば バ	bi び ビ	bu ぶ ブ	be べ ベ	bo ぼ ボ
p	pa ぱ パ	pi ぴ ピ	pu ぷ プ	pe ぺ ペ	po ぽ ポ
w	wa わ ワ				wo を ヲ
	n ん ン				

Table 2

	ya や ヤ	yu ゆ ユ	yo よ ヨ
k	kya きゃ キヤ	kyu きゅ キュ	kyo きょ キョ
s/sh	sha しゃ シヤ	shu しゅ シュ	sho しょ ショ
t/ch/ts	cha ちゃ チャ	chu ちゅ チュ	cho ちょ チョ
n	nya にゃ ニヤ	nyu にゅ ニュ	nyo にょ ニョ
h/f	hya ひゃ ヒヤ	hyu ひゅ ヒュ	hyo ひょ ヒョ

m	mya みや ミヤ	myu みゆ ミユ	myo みよ ミヨ
r	rya りゃ リヤ	ryu りゅ リュ	ryo りょ リョ
g	gya ぎゃ ギヤ	gyu ぎゅ ギユ	gyo ぎょ ギョ
z/j	ja じゃ ジャ	ju じゅ ジュ	jo じょ ジョ
d/j/z	ja ぢゃ ヂヤ	ju ぢゅ ヂュ	jo ぢょ ヂョ
b	bya びゃ ビヤ	byu びゅ ビユ	byo びょ ビョ
p	pya ぴゃ ピヤ	pyu ぴゅ ピユ	pyo ぴょ ピョ

Kanji (Chinese characters), Hiragana and Katakana are used in Japanese writing; Hiragana and Katakana are called Kana, which are Japanese phonetic characters and syllables. Above are also the tables of Kana with their representation in Rōmaji.

There are five vowels and two semi-vowels in Japanese, and most Kana are represented in Rōmaji by a consonant and a vowel. There is only one syllabic consonant: *n*.(ん、ン)

○Vowls

a: [a] as in *father*. **aki** (autumn), **asa** (morning)

i: [i] as in *heat*, but short. **isu** (chair), **inu** (dog)

u: [u] as in *put*. **umi** (sea), **usagi** (rabbit)

Do not round the corners of your mouth when you make this sound; stay them back.

e: [e] as in *bed*. **eki** (station), **eda** (branch)

o: [o] as in *horse*, but short. **otona** (adult), **otoko** (man)

Pronounce this as a single pure sound not as a diphthong; English *o* is a diphthong of *o-u*.

○Semi-vowels

y : [y] as in *year*. **yama** (mountain), **yoru** (night)

w : [w] as in *wake*, but the lips are more relaxed and are less pushed forward.

wakamono (young people), **watashi** (I)

○Consonants

k : [k] as in *kite*. **kami** (paper), **kuruma** (car)

Do not make an *h* sound after the sound *k*, as you do in English in words like *king* or *cold*: i.e. Japanese consonants are non-aspirated.

s : [s] as in *set*. **sekai** (world)

sh : [sh] as in *ship*. **shigoto** (work)

t : [t] as in *take*. **tomodachi** (friend)

Do not make an *h* sound after the sound *t*, as you do in English in words like *tin* or *ten*: i.e. Japanese consonants are non-aspirated. And when you say “t” sound, put your tongue tip at the teethridge, not the hard palate.

ch : [ch] as in *cheap*. **chikatetsu** (subway)

ts : [ts] as in *students*. **tsuki** (moon)

n : [n] as in *note*. **namae** (name), **neko** (cat)

When Japanese people pronounce “ni” sound, it is pronounced [ngi] like in French word “*signe*.”

h : [h] as in *hole*. **haru** (spring)

f : [f] as in *hoot*. (bilabial fricative) **fuku** (clothes)

unlike English *f*. Formed by bringing the lower lip up so that it almost touches the upper lip, then holding the position and trying to say an *f*. (English *f*, on the other hand, is formed by bringing the lower lip up to touch the teeth.) If you cannot manage the Japanese *f*, the English *f* will always be understandable. Its correct phonetic sign is [Φ].

m : [m] as in *map*. **michi** (road), **mori** (forest)

r : [r] as in *late*. **ringo** (apple), **rekishi** (history)

unlike English *r*. Made with a single flip of the tip of the tongue against the ridge behind your upper front teeth like Spanish or Italian *r*. It often sounds like a *d* for English speakers.

g : [g] as in *gate*. **gin** (silver), **gaikoku** (foreign country)

In the middle of words and in the particle *ga* in standard Japanese, *g* is often pronounced like *ng* in a song. But an English *g* is always understandable and correct.

z : [z] as in *zoo*. **zeikin** (tax)

In general, Japanese people pronounce [dz] at the first syllable of a word.

j : [j] as in *jeep*. **jisho** (dictionary)

In general, Japanese people pronounce [dʒ] at the first syllable of a word.

d : [d] as in *date*. **denwa** (phone), **daigaku** (university)

Do not make an *h* sound after the sound *d*, as you do in English in words like *do* or *day*: i.e. Japanese consonants are non-aspirated. And when you say “d” sound, put your tongue tip at the teeth ridge, not the hard palate.

b : [b] as in *boat*. **biru** (building), **basho** (place)

p : [p] as in *put*. **piano** (piano), **pan** (bread)

Do not make an *h* sound after the sound *p*, as you do in English in words like *pin* or *pet*: i.e. Japanese consonants are non-aspirated.

○Syllabic consonant: n

n has the following pronunciations according to its location in a word.

[m] before the sounds [m], [p] or [b]

sanmyaku (mountain range), **tempura** (tempura), **tonbo** (dragonfly)

[n] before [n], [t], [r] or [d]

minna (all), **intai** (retirement), **benri** (convenience), **hondana** (bookshelf)

[ng] before [k] or [g]

tenki (weather), **manga** (comic)

Note: When syllabic consonant *n* precedes a vowel or a semi-vowel *y* and the syllabic consonant is pronounced separately, we use an apostrophe between *n* and the vowel or semi-vowel. Phonetically it is expressed [N].

kin'en (no smoking) ki-n'e-n 4 syllables

kinen (commemoration) ki-ne-n 3 syllables

○The length of Japanese syllables

Each Kana in Table 1 is a syllable. Each consonant with ya, yu or yo, such as kya きや, kyu きゅ and kyo きょ, in Table 2 also makes one syllable. Each syllable in Japanese word should be pronounced with equal length.

Zen (Zen)	ze-n 2 syllables
tsunami (tsunami)	tsu-na-mi 3 syllables
yonhyaku (four hundred)	yo-n-hya-ku 4 syllables
okaasan (mother)	o-ka-a-sa-n 5 syllables
shinkansen (bullet train)	shi-n-ka-n-se-n 6 syllables

○Long vowels

In Rōmaji used in this manual, the mark $\bar{\quad}$ over a vowel indicates that the vowel should be pronounced as two syllables. It is rather difficult for English speakers to correctly pronounce them, so you should exercise them carefully.

The long vowel of [a]: **obāsan** おばあさん (grandmother) o-ba-a-sa-n

cf. **obasan** おばさん (aunt) o-ba-sa-n

The long vowel of [i]: **ojīsan** おじいさん (grandfather) o-ji-sa-n

cf. **ojisan** おじさん (uncle) o-ji-sa-n

The long vowel of [u]: **kūki** くうき (air) ku-u-ki

cf. **kuki** くき (stem of plant) ku-ki

The long vowel of [e]: **ēto** ええと (let me see) e-e-to

cf. **eto** えと (Chinese zodiac) e-to

The long vowel of [o]: **dōro** どうろ (road) do-o-ro

cf. **doro** どろ (mud) do-ro

In Kana, $\bar{\quad}$ is usually used to indicate a long vowel of [o]. But there are some exceptions when お is used instead. e.g. こおり $\bar{\quad}$ kōri (ice)

In normal conversation, “ei” in gakusei (student), sensei (teacher), kirei (beautiful), etc. is pronounced as a long vowel of [e]. e.g. ga-ku-se-e-, se-n-se-e, ki-re-e,

although you will never be misunderstood even if you pronounce “ei.”

○Double Consonants or Glottal Stop

In Rōmaji, when the consonant is written twice, the additional consonant is pronounced as an additional syllable. In Kana, the small Kana つ or ッ is used. This sound is phonetically expressed [q]. See the examples below.

sakka さつか (writer) sa-k-ka 3 syllables

saka さか (slope) sa-ka 2 syllables

Note that these words have totally different meanings. Listen to the real sounds carefully to distinguish the difference in sounds.

This sound can be observed also in Danish or German, and even in English (when you pronounce the word “sentences” or “mountain”, notice well that in Japanese it makes a syllable.

○Unvoiced Vowels [i] and [u]

The vowels [i] and [u] are not voiced when they come between two unvoiced consonants, such as [p], [t], [k], [s], [h], [ch] and [sh]. Also, [u] usually is not voiced after the consonant [s] at the end of a sentence. This is most notable in the Tokyo dialect. In these special cases, regardless of whether the vowel is voiced or not, no misunderstanding will occur, so there is no need to be concerned. However, you should be aware of the phenomenon.

e.g. **gakusei** (student), **hisho** (secretary), **ikimasu** (go)

○Accent

In Japanese, the accent in a word is a pitch accent, low and high. The change

always occurs between syllables, never within a vowel like in English. The first and second syllables are always different in pitch. There is always only one high pitch in a word, although that pitch may have more than one syllable.

ame	あめ (rain)	high-low
ame	あめ (candy)	low-high
tengoku	てんごく (heaven)	high-low-low-low
tomodachi	ともだち (friend)	low-high-high-high
yūbinkyoku	ゆうびんきょく (post office)	low-high-high-low-low-low

We have shown the basic points you should know about the pronunciation in the sections above. Since moderate difference of pronunciation exists between Japanese and English, let us give you more detailed information about the Japanese pronunciation when you proceed to the advanced level and be accustomed enough to the Japanese language.

■ Lesson 2

-Nouns and Pronouns

□ Nouns

It might be a surprise to you that Japanese nouns have only one form. This means that their forms do not change depending on singular or plural, gender, or the role it plays in the sentence. The form always stays the same under any circumstances. Form of the nouns also encompass the ideas of articles: “the” and “a” (or an), which do not exist in a visible form in Japanese.

□ jidosha じどうしゃ an automobile, the automobile, the automobiles,
automobiles

□ tegami てがみ a letter, the letter, the letters, letters

As seen in the above example, you may find this very imprecise to you, and you may wonder how you are supposed to express your thoughts. Let us guide you, and you will realize that your thoughts can be expressed perfectly well without plural forms. Different system (combination of particles and word order) substitutes the articles and plural forms in Japanese.

In most cases, believe it or not, whether the noun is singular or plural can be understood from the context. Furthermore, if it is necessary to be specific, you can always use numbers or words to indicate the quantity, just as you do with the English nouns with no separate plural form. We will intensively discuss this in the chapter of Number and Counting Objects (p 95) later.

□ takusan no jidosha たくさん の じどうしゃ
(takusan=many, no=of,)
→many automobiles

□Pronouns

In Japanese, the personal pronouns are usually omitted if the meaning of the sentence is clear without them, just as the case in Spanish or Italian.

□Gokigen ikaga desu ka? ごきげん いかが ですか?
 (gokigen=mental mood, ikaga=how, desu=are, ka=interrogative marker)
 →How are you?

□Genki desu. げんき です。
 (genki=fine, desu=am(is))
 →I am fine.

Use the following table when it is necessary to express a pronoun, either for emphasis or for clarity

watashi わたし	I, me	Watashitachi わたしたち	we, us
anata あなた	You (SING.)	Anatatachi あなたたち	You (PL.)
kare かれ	He, him	Karera かれら	they, them(MASC.)
kanojyo かのじよ	she, her	Kanojotachi かのじよたち (kanojyora かのじよら)	they, them(FEM.)

In addition to the table above(used usually as polite forms), Japanese has very rich alternative words to convey great variety of familiarity, politeness, and formality. We will study most of these forms in intermediate and advanced levels; however, you be aware of two other important personal pronouns:

□boku ぼく →I, me □kimi きみ →you

These are less courteous and less formal than *watashi* and *anata*, and they are used in conversation between intimates and members of some social groups, such as

students. “Boku” is commonly used by a boy and up to male adults, whereas “kimi” can be used by either sex by it is less frequently used in speaking language:

Like nouns, pronouns do not change their forms according to their use within a sentence. Therefore, as the tables indicate, *watashi* can mean I or me, *boku* can mean I or me, and so on.

In Japanese, we simply add possessives, “*no*”, after the pronoun to form pronominal adjectives.

watashi no わたしの boku no ぼくの	My	watashitachi no わたしたちの bokutachi no ぼくたちの	Our
anata no あなたの	your	anatatachi no あなたたちの	Your (PL.)
kare no かれの	His	karera no かれらの	Their (MASC.)
kanojyo no かのじよの	her	kanojyotachi no かのじよたちの	Their (FEM.)

Watashi no namae wa Fukui desu.

わたし の なまえは ふくい です。

(namae=name, wa=the marker of the topic of given sentence(=speaking of), desu=is)

→My name is Fukui.

(*Fukui is a typical Japanese family name. Japanese people usually use family name except very intimate relationships like family and friends.)

Anata wa sensei desu ka?

あなたは せんせい です か？

(sensei=teacher, ka= interrogative marker, desu=are)

→Are you a teacher?

Iie. Watashi wa gakusei desu.

いいえ。 わたし は がくせい です。

(iie=No (cf. hai=Yes), wa=speaking of, gakusei=student, desu=am)

→No, I am a student.

□Kimi to boku wa tomodachi desu.

きみ と ぼく は ともだち です。

(tomodachi=friends, to=and, desu=are)

→You and I are friends.

□Karera wa watashitachi o mite imasu.

かれら は わたしたち を みて います。

(o=direct object marker, mite=watching (cf. miru=watch), imasu=are)

→They are watching us.

The impersonal pronoun “it”, in such expressions as, “It is raining.” ”It is Sunday.” is not translated into Japanese.

□Ame ga futte imasu.

あめ が ふって います。

(ame=rain, ga= subject marker, futte=falling (cf.furu=fall) imasu=is)

→It is raining.

□Nichiyō desu.

にちよう です。

(nichiyō=Sunday, desu=is)

→It is Sunday.

■ Lesson 3

-Basic Sentence Structure and Particles (1)

○Particles and Sentence Structure

Japanese has similar concept of subject, of sentences, direct objects, and indirect objects like other languages, but they are expressed in a different manner.

In English, you know that mostly word order is used to describe the relationships between the words in the sentence: “Mr.Fukui gave Mr.Inoura a book yesterday.” is obviously quite different in meaning from “Mr.Inoura gave Mr.Fukui a book yesterday”. Only with pronouns, English has different forms or endings to show the function of a word in a sentence: I, me, my, he, him, his, we, our, and so on.

In Japanese, however, by placing additional words after the nouns or pronoun, the sentence function is shown. These words are called particles or postpositions. They could be considered as acting in the same way as the case endings you learned if you studied German or Latin, although in Japanese these particles always remain the same.

Let us give you concrete examples of the particle functions mentioned above. Two very important particles are used in the examples presented below: *ga* (が) and *o* (を), which will be intensively discussed in the later section; at this point, we only expect you to understand that *ga* indicates the subject, and *o* indicates the direct object in a sentence.:

□(a)Kinou Fukui-san ga hon o kuremashita.

きのう ふくいさん が ほん を くれました。

(kinou=yesterday, san=Mr., hon=book, kuremashita=gave (past-polite form))

→Mr.Fukui gave me a book yesterday.

(b)Kinou hon o Fukui-san ga kuremashita.

きのう ほん を ふくいさん が くれました。

→Mr.Fukui gave me a book yesterday.

(c)Fukui-san ga kinou hon o kuremashita.

ふくいさん が きのう ほん を くれました。

→Mr.Fukui gave me a book yesterday.

(d)Fukui-san ga hon o kinou kuremahita.

ふくいさん が ほん を きのう くれました。

→Mr.Fukui gave me a book yesterday.

(e)Hon o kinou Fukui-san ga kuremashita.

ほん を きのう ふくいさん が くれました。

→Mr.Fukui gave me a book yesterday.

(f)Hon o Fukui-san ga kinou kuremasita.

ほん を ふくいさん が きのう くれました。

→Mr.Fukui gave me a book yesterday.

As you may already notice by reading the examples above, these 6 examples basically have the same meaning:” Mr.Fukui gave me a book yesterday.” although there are slight differences on emphasis. In Japanese, it is possible to take relatively free word order because particles indicate the functions in a sentence such as subject and object. Contrary to this flexibility, you should always place predicates (verbs and adjectives) at the last of the given sentence; there exists no exception for this grammatical rule even in very colloquial speeches.

○Particle wa “は” and ga “が”

It is one of the most important key points to understand the difference between particle *wa* and *ga*, both of which might be considered as the subject marker in the grammatical frameworks of western languages, in order to acquire precise Japanese communication ability; we will intensively discuss this very profound topic in the intermediate text later; however, we expect you to roughly grasp the basic concepts behind the usage of these two particles to facilitate your better understanding of Japanese even in the beginning level.

In Japanese, it is natural and necessary to first present the topic that the speaker hopes to share with the receiver at the beginning of the communication; therefore, Japanese native speakers may feel very abrupt if you set out your speech without explicitly telling the topic of sentence you want to express. Let us give you an example:

□ (a) Watashi **ga** joushi ni sono houkokusho o dashi-mashita.

わたし **が** じょうし に その ほうこくしょ を だしました。

(joushi=boss, ni=indirect object marker sono=that(the), houkokusho=report, dashi-mashita=submitted (past-polite form))

→I submitted the report to my boss.

As you see in the example above, *ga* indicates the subject and this sentence is grammatically perfect; however, if you present this sentence without any context, Japanese native speakers may feel a little abrupt. It should be better if you would say:

□ (b) Watashi **wa** joushi ni sono houkokusho o dashi-mashita.

わたし **は** じょうしに その ほうこくしょ を だしました。

This example sounds more natural to native speakers because the speaker firstly presents material one hopes to share by introducing the particle *wa* ; if we were to paraphrase this more descriptively, it would be “First, I would like to talk about the thing I did, I submitted the report to my boss.”, which reflects the nuance of the original Japanese sentence compared to the simple English translation ” I submitted the report to my boss.”

Japanese has a basic sentence structure composed of topic and comment, and can be illustrated like below:

Topic	subject	other words	object	predicate
...wa (は)	...ga (が)	o (を)。
<topic>	<comment>			

Let us apply the sentence (a) to this chart:

Topic	subject	other words	object	predicate
ϕ	Watashi ga	jyoushi ni	sono houkokusho o	dashi-mashita.
<topic>	< comment >			

You can notice the column of topic is blank(ϕ); therefore, this sentence sounds abrupt because “topic-comment” sentence structure is natural to have in Japanese. Next, let us apply the sentence (b) to the chart:

topic	subject	other words	object	predicate
Watashi wa	ϕ	jyoushi ni	sono houkokusho o	dashi-mashita.
<topic>	< comment >			

The ϕ mark indicates that the word which should be placed here is already introduced as the topic; in other words, the speaker grammatically uses the word “watashi” as the topic and semantically this is recognized as a subject.

If you want to speak about “the report”, the sentence structure can be illustrated like this:

topic	subject	other words	object	predicate
Sono houkokusho wa	watashi ga	jyoushi ni	ϕ	dashi-mashita.
<topic>	< comment >			

As you already studied, if we try to translate the sentence above descriptively, it would be like this:” First, I would like to talk about the report, I submitted it to my boss.”

■ Lesson 4

-Basic Sentence Structure and Particles (2)

○particle *o* “を”

O, which is sometimes transliterated *wo*, and spelled “を”(not お) in the Japanese *hiragana* writing, indicates that the preceding word is the direct object of the verb. Often it is used with motion verbs, which in English, it is considered incapable to take a direct object:

□Hon o kaimashita.

ほん を かいしました。

(hon=book, kaimshita=bought (past-polite form))

→ I (or you, or he, etc) bought a book.

□Osaka o shuppatushimashita.

おおさか を しゅっぱつしました。

(Osaka=a western prefecture of Japan, shuppatushimashihta=departed (past-polite form)

→We (or I, or you, or he, etc) departed from Osaka.

○particle *ka* “か” and *ne* “ね”

There are two common particles that are used to form questions: *ka* and *ne*.

Ka comes at the end of a question normally, and is equivalent to an English question mark. *ne*, which is also placed at the end of the sentence, is equivalent to the French “n’est-ce pas” or German “nicht wahr” or English “isn’t it?” *ne* often has the feeling of an exclamation.

□Kore wa nan desu ka?

これは なん です か?

(kore wa=speaking of this, nan=what, desu=is)

→What is this? (Speaking of this, what is this?)

□Kanojyo wa canada shussin desu ne?

かのじょ は カナダ しゅっしん です ね？

(kanojyo wa=speaking of her, shussin=born in, be from)

→She is from Canada, isn't she?

□Oishii ryouri desu ne!

おいしい りょうり です ね!

(oishii=delicious, good, ryouri=dish)

→It's a nice dish, isn't it? (What a nice dish it is!)

○Particles Equivalent to Prepositions, Adverbs, Conjunctions

Besides the particles we already studied, there are wide range of words in Japanese that are equivalent to the function of to the English prepositions, adverbs, and conjunctions. We will discuss only the most important of these particles here: no “の”, to”と”, ya”や”, kara”から”, made”まで”, ni,”に” e”へ”, de”で”, and mo”も”; more particles will be introduced as you proceed to more advanced levels.

particle *no* “の”

no corresponds to the English preposition “of” in various ways. It can indicate:

(1) possession, ownership, attribution.

□Kore wa boku no tsukue desu.

これは ぼく の つくえ です。

(kore wa=speaking of this, boku=I (slightly informal), tsukue=desk, desu=is)

→This is my desk.

(2) material.

□Ki no tsukue desu.

き の つくえ です。

(ki=wood)

The desk is of wood. (It is wooden desk)

(3) origin, time, place, apposition

□ Koko no wa zennbu atarashii desu.

ここ の は ぜんぶ あたらしい です。

(koko=here, zennbu=all, atarashii=new)

→Speaking of what's here, they are all new. (There is nothing here but new.)

particle *to* “と”

to can sometimes be translated “with” (meaning accompaniment) and sometimes “and.”

□ Inoura san to eiga o mi ni yukimashita.

いのうら さん と えいが を み に いきました。

(san=Mr.(Ms.), eiga=movie, mi ni=to see, yukimashita=went (past-polite form))

→I went with Mr. Inoura to see a movie. (Mr. Inoura and I went to see a movie.)

□ Miso to shoyu to shio o kaimashita.

みそ と しょうゆ と しお を かいました。

(shoyu=soybean sauce, shio=salt, kaimashita=bought (past-polite form))

→I bought miso and shoyu and salt.

However, *to* is not always equivalent to the English word “and”; *to* is used only to link series of nouns or pronouns. These cannot be used to link verbs or clauses.

to does not mean “with” in to describe what you are using, for this concept, another particle, usually *de* or *ni*, is used.

particle *ya* “や”

ya is usually equivalent to the English “and.”; however, like *to*, it can link only series of nouns or pronouns.

□ Kumiko ya Mina ya Yuriko ga Osaka e mukaimashita.

くみこ や みな や ゆりこ が おおさか へ むかいました。

(e=to, mukaimashita=went, departed for (past-polite form))

→ Kumiko and Mina and Yuriko all departed for Osaka.

There is a subtle difference between *ya* and *to* in such sentences. *ya* usually implies “and others”; *to* usually implies “and that is all.” Thus the sentence given under with *to*:

□ Miso to shoyu to shio o kaimshita.

implies “I bought miso and soybean sauce and salt and nothing more.” On the other hand, the sentence illustrating the use of *ya*, above, implies that besides Kumiko and Mina and Yuriko there were others who departed. English speakers are usually not aware of this distinction; however you are expected to recognize its existence in Japanese, even though you may not use it yourself.

■ Lesson 5

-Basic Sentence Structure and Particles (3)

particle *kara* “から”

kara is similar to the English preposition “from,” and indicates either space or time: *made* is similar to “until” or “as far as” or “up to.”

□ Koko kara Shinjyuku made dono kurai kakarimasu ka?

ここ から しんじゅく まで どの くらい かかります か？

(koko=here, dono=how, kurai=long, kakarimasu=does it take (=present-polite-form)
ka=interrogative marker)

→How long does it take to go to Shinjyuku?

□ ・ kore kara → after this, from now on

これ から (this from)

・ sore kara → after that, and then, next

それ から (that from)

・ kyo made → until today, up to today

きょう まで (today until)

・ osoku made → until

おそく まで (late until)

particle *ni* “に”

ni is usually translated to “in” or “to,” although it also has many cases that may be translated to “at” or “on” or by other English prepositions.

(1) indicating time or location:

□ Hikouki wa shichi-ji ni shuppatushimasu.

ひこうき は 7じ に しゅっぱつします。

(hikouki=airplane, shichi-ji=seven-o'clock, ni=at, shuppatushimasu=departs (=present-polite form))

→ The airplane departs at seven.

□ Takusan no bijyutsukann ga Kyoto ni arimasu.

た く さ ん の びじゅつかん が きょうと に あります。

(takusan no= many of, bijyutsukann=art museum, ni=in, arimasu=are (=present polite form))

→ There are many museums in Kyoto.

□ Inoura san wa getsuyoubi ni ni kimasu.

いのうら さん は げつようび に きます。

(san=Mr., getsuyoubi=Monday, ni=on, kimasu=be going to come (=present-polite form *Japanese does not have future tense))

→ Mr. Inoura is going to come on Monday.

(2) indicating an indirect object:

□ Mina ni prezento o agemashita ka?

みな に プレゼント を あげました か?

(prezento=present, ni=to, o=direct object marker, agemashita=gave (=past-polite form) ka=interrogative marker)

→ Did you give the present to Mina?

(3) with verbs meaning “to become” or “to seem”:

□ Kimi wa okaasann ni nite imasu.

きみ は おかあさん に にて います。

(kimi=you, okaasann=mother, ni=to, nite=resemble (=te-form) imasu=is)

→ You take after your mother.

□ Ryokou chuu byouki ni narimasshita.

りょこう ちゅう びょうき に なりました。

(ryokou=travel, chuu=while, byouki=sick, to, narimashita=became (=past-polite form))

→ I became sick during the trip.

particle *e* “へ” (not え)

e indicates motion, and is equivalent to English “to” or “into”:

□ Boku wa asu Nagano e yukimasu.

ぼく は あす ながの へ いきます。

(boku=I, asu=tomorrow, e=to, ikimasu=be going to go (=present-polite form

*Japanese does not have future tense.)

→ I'm going to Nagano tomorrow.

□ Mori e yukimasho.

もり へ いきましょう。

(mori=woods, e=into, ikimasho=let's go (present-polite-volitional-form))

→ Let's go into the woods.

particle *de* “で”

de conveys several concepts that are not associated in English. It can indicate:

- (1) instruments with which things are done; in this sense it is usually translatable as “with” or “by”; this “with” should not be confused with the “with” of accompaniment that is discussed under *to*.

□ Pen de kakimashita.

ペン で かきました。

(de=with, kakimashita=wrote (=past-polite form))

→ I wrote with a pen.

(2) location, usually translated as “at,” with verbs other than those meaning “to be”:

□ Daigakuin de Nihon-bungaku o kenkyuu shimashita.

だいがくいん で にほんぶんがく を けんきゅう しました。

(daigakuinn=graduate school, de=at, nihon-bunngaku=Japanese literature, kenkyuu=study, shimashita=did (=past-polite form))

→ I studied Japanese literature at the graduate school.

(3) reason or cause, translated as “because of”:

□ Watashi wa shigoto de isogashii.

わたし は しごと で いそがしい。

(shigoto=work, de=because of, isogashii=busy (=present-abrupt form))

→ I’m busy because of my works.

I’m busy with my works.

particle *mo* “も”

mo is equivalent to “also” or “too” or “ever”:

□ Watashi mo ikimasu.

わたし も いきます。

(*mo*=too, *ikimasu*=be going to (=present-polite form))

→ I’m going too!

particle working as conjunctions

There are some particles roughly equivalent to conjunctions in English when used with verbs: *ga* (が), *to*, *kara* (から), *no de* (ので), and so on. We will discuss these particles later in the chapter of Clauses and Conjunctions (p 81).