



# A pragmatic account of scrambling and topicalization in Japanese

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the interactions between word orders and particles in Japanese transitive sentences in terms of information structure. To this end, a series of corpus analyses within the framework of the Givónian approach were conducted. Based on the present corpus analyses, I propose that scrambling is chosen when the scrambled object is anaphorically prominent but cataphorically non-prominent, and that topicalization is selected when the direct object is anaphorically and cataphorically prominent. Additionally, I arrive at the conclusion that word order permutations in Japanese are applied to intermediately accessible referents. In other words, word order changes are neither used with highly accessible referents, nor completely new information.  
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## 1. Introduction

In some inflecting languages such as Japanese and Korean, where syntactic and semantic functions are indicated by a rich morphological system, subject and object can change positions without affecting grammatical relations between constituents. Japanese, for example, allows not only SOV order but also OSV order, as shown in (1). Based on the morphologically marked case information, namely the nominative case marker *GA* and the accusative case marker *O*, native Japanese speakers can interpret OSV order appropriately. Moreover, the nominative case marker *GA* and the accusative case marker *O* can be replaced by the topic marker *WA* without changing the propositional content, although  $NP_{TOP}NP_{TOP}V$  can be construed only as SOV here because case information and animacy information are not useful in the sense that both the subject and the object are *WA*-marked and human nouns. Thus, the speaker must select a word order and a combination of particles in order to convey his or her intention.

- (1) a. Taro-ga/wa    Jiro-o/wa    oikake-ta.    SOV  
      Taro-NOM/TOP    Jiro-ACC/TOP    chase-PAST  
      'Taro chased Jiro.'
- b. Jiro-o/wa    Taro-ga/wa    oikake-ta    OSV  
      Jiro-ACC/TOP    Taro-NOM/TOP    chase-PAST  
      'Taro chased Jiro.'

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Why do languages allow different options to convey the same message? One explanation is that they enable speakers to choose the way information is transmitted to the hearer. The difference between (1a) and (1b) is not what is said about the world but the way it is packaged (Chafe, 1976; Lambrecht, 1996; Vallduví and Engdahl, 1996). Chafe (1976:28) uses 'the term *packaging* to refer to the kind of phenomena at issue here, with the idea that they have to do primarily with how the message is sent and only secondarily with the message itself, just as the packaging of toothpaste can affect sales in partial independence of the quality of the toothpaste inside'.

There is a general consensus that marked options are more strictly constrained by discourse contexts than unmarked options (Aissen, 1992; Imamura et al., 2014, 2016; Kuno, 1987, 1995; Koizumi et al., 2014). Since word order changes are marked options, they are considered to require specific contexts. However, it is unclear what kind of meaning word order changes have. What kind of context, then, is needed to select OSV in Japanese? Furthermore, what will happen if the case particle is substituted for the topic marker *WA*? In order to disentangle these issues, I survey the interplay between word order permutations and particles on the basis of a corpus analysis.

Why is corpus analysis selected for the present study? There are two main reasons for this. One reason is that pragmatic principles are usually proposed as general tendencies and not as predictive principles (Jucker and Taavitsainen, 2013:5). To this end, corpus analysis is a desirable choice because we can observe some tendencies on the basis of quantitative data. The other reason to select the corpus analysis is that corpus analyses can provide objective data and their results are reproducible.

Although I stated that the present study examines word order changes and particles in terms of information structure, the concept 'information structure' is a very broad concept, which includes topic, focus, contrastiveness, givenness, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to somewhat narrow down the scope of information structure. To meet this purpose, the present study employs a framework called the Givónian approach. This approach is compatible with corpus analyses because it is a quantitative approach.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 overviews previous studies regarding word orders and particles. Specifically, scrambling and topicalization are focussed here. In addition, the framework of the Givónian approach is accounted for. Section 3 lays out the methodological foundations applied for the analyses. This section gives an explanation of the balanced corpus of contemporary written Japanese and provides the explanation of search procedure to assemble relevant data. Section 4 provides a corpus analysis of scrambling and topicalization. Based on the results, I reach the generalization that scrambling is selected when the scrambled object is anaphorically prominent but cataphorically non-prominent., whereas topicalization anticipates 'continuing topic' as the referent of the object. Furthermore, it is proposed that moved elements in Japanese are apt to be intermediately accessible information. Section 5 is devoted to the conclusion and further studies.

## 2. Previous studies

### 2.1. Scrambling

It has been proposed in syntax that the direct object in  $O_{ACC}S_{NOM}V$  is moved from the VP-internal position to the beginning of the clause (Koizumi and Tamaoka, 2010; Miyagawa, 2001, 2003, 2010; Saito, 1985, 2009; Saito and Hoji, 1983). This grammatical operation is named 'scrambling'. The key point here is that scrambling does not bear upon grammatical relations between the predicate and the arguments. For example, both  $S_{NOM}O_{ACC}V$  (2a) and  $O_{ACC}S_{NOM}V$  (2b) convey the same proposition *Taro found the key*. The difference between (2a) and (2b) derives from how information is transmitted to the addresser, not the propositional meaning itself.

- (2) a.  $S_{NOM}O_{ACC}V$   
 Taro-ga kagi-o mitsuke-ta.  
 Taro-NOM key-ACC find-PAST  
 'Taro found the key.'
- b.  $O_{ACC}S_{NOM}V$   
 kagi-o Taro-ga mitsuke-ta.  
 key-ACC Taro-NOM find-PAST  
 'Taro found the key.'

In theory,  $S_{NOM}O_{ACC}V$  is reckoned as the most unmarked word order whereas  $O_{ACC}S_{NOM}V$  is regarded as the marked one because it includes a scrambling movement. It is well-known that unmarked options can be employed in many situations properly whereas marked options can be used only when supportive contexts are provided (Aissen, 1992; Imamura et al., 2014, 2016; Kuno, 1987, 1995; Koizumi et al., 2014). What is a suitable context for  $O_{ACC}S_{NOM}V$ ?

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