LIN 881 Study Questions: Inoue (1), "Japanese: A story of Language and People" (pp. 241-278)

- Answer the questions AS YOU READ assigned pages.
- The answers to some questions are provided following “→”; e.g. where the information in the article is outdated.
- JPN: Japanese
- For this reading, you are NOT expected to memorize any of the details. Just try to get a general idea about the language.

INTRODUCTION (Some figures in the article are outdated.)

1. (1) How many native speakers of Japanese are there?
   → Approximately 125.6 million as of 1995 (confined mainly to Japan)
(2) Where does it rank among the world's languages?
   → The 6th after Chinese, English, Russian, Spanish, & Hindi (i.e. more than German, French)
(3) Were you surprised about the answer to (2) above? Why or why not?

2. (1) Does the author suggest that a language influences the people or that people’s experience influences the language?
(2) What do you think, and why? Illustrate with examples.

1. A HISTORY OF JAPAN
1.1. The early years – Contact with China and the evolution of the writing system
3. (1) In the footnote on page 243, the author discusses the Japanese unit of timing. How many “moras” are there in each of the following: Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Shinto?
   (2) How many syllables are there in each?

4. What were the 3 important things brought in to Japan from China during or before the 6th century?
   → Chinese characters (the writing system), Confucianism, & Buddhism.

5. (1) What percentage of the contemporary JPN vocabulary is Sino-JPN?
   → 55% (Shibatani 1990:145)
(2) Why was it difficult to write JPN using Chinese characters?
   → JPN and Chinese are different types of languages: JPN is agglutinating, while Chinese is isolating. JPN, therefore, requires various inflectional endings (e.g. for tense), but not Chinese. (Also, the word order is different; JPN is SOV, while Chinese is SVO.)
(3) How did the ancient Chinese and Korean scholars solve the problem?
   → For content words (N, V, Adj, Adv), they used Chinese characters (kanji) with corresponding meanings, and read them in Japanese ways. For functional elements (P, inflectional endings), they used kanji that had similar sounds in Chinese (regardless of the meanings).

6. (1) What are the two simplified sets of symbols (syllabaries) called that were created based on kanji?
   → Hiragana and katakana.
(2) How were they developed?
   → Hiragana from the cursive style of a kanji with a similar sound, and katakana from just a part of a kanji with a similar sound.
(3) What are the three sets of symbols generally used for?
7. (1) How many kanji are authorized to be used in newspapers and popular reading materials without providing the pronunciation?
   → 1945 (The information in the article is outdated.)
(2) What would be the advantages and disadvantages of using just kana (i.e. hiragana and katakana) or just Romaji (Roman alphabet) to write JPN, instead of the current mixed system?

8. (1) When did various levels of speech (e.g. keigo ‘honorifics’) and the distinction between men’s and women’s speech begin to develop?
   → Early 11th century.
(2) What does this fact reflect?
   → Complex social stratification, and different status/treatments of men and women.

1.2. The Middle Ages – The rise and fall of a feudal society
9. When did first and second person pronouns in JPN proliferate, and why?
   → During the Middle Ages (12c-mid-19c); because the country was stratified in a complex way and the language reflected it.

10. (1) When and by whom were the first dictionaries and grammars of JPN compiled in Romaji?
    → By Portuguese missionaries in 16-17c.
(2) What are the major contributions of these works?
    → The pronunciation of JPN then was recorded more accurately than ever. (Also, linguistic analyses of JPN from Westerners’ perspectives)

11. What concept was emphasized in the Tokugawa government that is still an important characteristic of JPN society?

1.3. Modern times – The Meiji Restoration (in 1868) and the road to modernization
12. (1) From what language, in particular, have many words been borrowed into JPN recently?
    (2) From what other languages did JPN borrow words in the late 19th century?
    (3) From where else did JPN borrow words earlier in history?

2. THE STRUCTURE OF JAPANESE [You can just skim this section, if you’d like.]

2.1. Sentence Formation in Japanese
13. Is JPN related to Chinese and/or to Korean?

2.1.1. Japanese – A verb-final language
NOTE: In spoken JPN, the verb can, and often do, occur in positions other than sentence-final, contrary to the author’s claim. They are called “postposed” sentences, which we will discuss later.

2.1.2. Japanese postpositions
14. (1) What are the three types of postpositions in JPN?
    → ‘case’ particles, those comparable to English prepositions, and ‘sentence’ particles. There are actually two other types: ‘conjunctive’ particles, which connect coordinate or subordinate clauses, and ‘adverbial (or semantic)’ particles, such as mo ‘also’ and shika ‘only.’

2.1.3. Question formation
2.1.4. Japanese – A left branching language

2.1.5. Backward gapping

2.1.6. Temporal expressions

2.1.7. Negation in Japanese

2.2. Some Japanese expressions reflecting the speaker’s perspective

2.2.1. How Japanese marks topics
NOTE: It is important to distinguish the topic of ‘conversation’ from the topic of a ‘sentence,’ which the author does not seem to do. For example, you could be talking about a movie, but every other sentence in the discourse could be about a different actor or a different aspect of the movie. The sentential topic would be marked by *wa*, just like the non-topical subject of each sentence would be marked by *ga*. The mechanism of introducing/marking the topic of discourse is more complicated.

*Wa* and *ga* each has two functions (Kuno 1973):

*wa*:
1. theme (or topic); 2. contrast (usually accented)

*ga*:
1. exhaustive listing; 2. neutral description

The following rules may be useful to remember (if you are so inclined).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC-wa</th>
<th>COMMENT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shared info.</td>
<td>new info.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT-ga</th>
<th>PREDICATE.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) new info.</td>
<td>shared info. or (2) The whole sentence represents new info.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘exhaustive listing’</td>
<td>vs. ‘neutral description’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.2. How Japanese represents psychological distance

The objective-reportative sense of the progressive with *-te i-ru*
Focus and the sense of adversity in passivization

2.2.3. How Japanese distinguishes sensations of self and nonself

2.2.4. How Japanese deals with the notions of ‘existence’ and ‘possession’
NOTE: (1) p. 277: The correct (literal) translation of (97) should be ‘I caught a cold, and the result is still in effect’ (stative/resultative reading).

(2) There are many other ‘have’ sentences that do not translate into *iru/aru* ‘exist’ or *motte i-ru* ‘own, possess’; e.g.

a. Mako wa me ga ookii. ‘Mako has big eyes. (lit. As for Mako, her eyes are big.)’
   TOP eye SUB big

b. Mako wa omoshiroi kangae-kata o suru. ‘Mako has an interesting way of thinking.’
   TOP interesting thinki-way OBJ do (lit. As for Mako, she does and interesting way of thinking.)