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Senko K. Maynard
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Principles of Japanese discourse

Principles of Japanese discourse offers the first detailed description, in English, of the structure and rhetorical effects observed in various genres of Japanese discourse. Drawing on Japanese *bunshooron* and incorporating results of Western discourse studies, the book covers principles of overall rhetorical organization including *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu*, topic structure, *danraku*, and sentence chaining, and presents a variety of rhetorical strategies frequently used in contemporary Japanese texts.

After presenting these principles in thirty compact entries, Professor Maynard invites the reader to apply the knowledge gained to the comprehension of contemporary authentic Japanese text. Seven selected readings (an essay, narrative, print advertising, a comic, newspaper columns, and a philosophical essay) are presented with vocabulary lists, discourse notes, and other tasks. English translations of Japanese examples/readings, and the readings reproduced in the original format, appear in the appendices.

In this book Professor Maynard has created a new category in the area of Japanese language learning and provided an excellent reference source not only for students but for instructors of the Japanese language worldwide.

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Principles of Japanese discourse

A handbook

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Rutgers University

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More information

Contents

Preface vii
Introduction 1
To the instructors 6

Part I **Preliminaries** *9*

1. **Beyond the sentence: discourse and *bunshoo*** *11*
2. **Rhetoric and culture** *12*
3. **Written, spoken, and in-between** *14*
4. **Style distinction: *da, desu/masu*, and *dearu*** *17*

Part II **Principles** *21*

5. **Rhetorical organization** *23*
   Prelude: cohesion and coherence *23*
   Entry 1. Three-part organization *24*
   Entry 2. Five-part organization *27*
   Entry 3. *Ki-shoo-ten-ketsu* *33*
   Entry 4. Topic structure *39*
   Entry 5. Organizational markers *50*
   Entry 6. *Bunmyaku* – threads of discourse *54*
   Entry 7. Connectives *62*
   Entry 8. Narrative structure *69*
   Entry 9. Narrative point of view *77*
   Entry 10. *Danraku* as a discourse unit *81*
   Entry 11. Sentence chaining *85*
   Entry 12. The central message *91*
   Entry 13. On letters and newspapers *92*
6. **Rhetorical strategies** *99*
   Prelude: co-reference and implicit cohesion *99*
   Entry 14. Mixture of styles *101*
   Entry 15. Pronouns and demonstratives *105*
   Entry 16. Repetition *109*
   Entry 17. Deletion *113*
   Entry 18. Sentence-final strategies *117*
   Entry 19. Nominal and commentary predicate *122*
   Entry 20. Ordering and post-posing *125*
   Entry 21. Tense marking *127*
   Entry 22. *Yojoo* in literary discourse *132*
   Entry 23. Quotation and related expressions *136*
   Entry 24. Modification grouping *144*
   Entry 25. Complex sentences *149*
   Entry 26. Viewing position and focus of attention *151*
   Entry 27. Experiential impressionism *154*
   Entry 28. Adverb–predicate correspondence *158*

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978-0-521-59909-2 - Principles of Japanese Discourse: A Handbook
Senko K. Maynard
Frontmatter
More information

Entry 29. Homonyms and puns *161*
Entry 30. Similes, metaphors, and proverbs *164*

Part III **Selected readings** *169*
7. Prelude: on reading different genres of contemporary Japanese texts *171*
8. Reading Japanese texts *176*
9. *Tanka* and essay R1: from *Yotsuba no Essei* ("The Four-leaf Essay") by Machi Tawara *177*
10. Narrative R2: *Ari to Kirigirisu* ("The Ant and the Grasshopper") from *Mirai Isoppu* ("Future Aesop's Fables") by Shin'ichi Hoshi *182*
11. Newspaper opinion column R3: *Kootsuu Anzen Sofuto* ("The 'Soft'-ware for Traffic Safety") from *Asahi Shimbun* *195*
12. Magazine advertisement R4: Pro-Keds shoes advertisement from *Popeye*, a young men's magazine *204*
13. Comic R5: from *Kureyon Shinchan* *209*
14. Newspaper essay: R6: *Tensei Jingo* from *Asahi Shimbun* *220*
15. Essay R7: *Sabaku e no Tabi* ("Traveling to the Desert") by Tetsuroo Morimoto *232*

Part IV **Appendices** *259*
Appendix 1. Readings (R1–R7) reproduced in the original format *261*
Appendix 2. English translations of discourse samples (DS1–DS7) *278*
Appendix 3. English translations of readings (R1–R7) *284*
Appendix 4. On Japanese graphological marks *300*

References *302*
Index *306*

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Frontmatter
More information

Preface

"I don't get it." That's what a student of Japanese said one day after reading a Japanese essay. "So, what's the point?" Another agreed. Reading Japanese can be frustrating. Even after thoroughly learning most of the basic Japanese sentence structure, one may find it difficult to understand how sentences "make sense" when arranged in discourse. Difficulty in grasping the meaning of sustained Japanese writing – such as units of paragraphs, let alone a lengthy article – is not uncommon among intermediate and advanced students of Japanese.

In reality, to appreciate even the simplest Japanese phrase, one must have a sense of the bigger picture, the discourse framework, and must be able to understand how surrounding sentences and paragraphs hang together as they forward the writer's thoughts. We are aware that even the briefest communication act contains abundant psychological, social and cultural information, some of which cannot be decoded simply by examining the language. Still, much information is expressed through language. Language provides the mechanism not only to communicate meaning but also, and as importantly, to mark connection and, in fact, to signal the very organization of discourse. Larger structural units build discourse further so as to create a cohesive whole. In order to "get it," one must understand how the interlocking strands of a text are tied together and where the critical information appears.

This book is written to provide students of Japanese a useful introduction to the principles of Japanese discourse. It is designed to illustrate how discourse comes together and how such organizational structure is signaled by using an array of strategies. Our task is complex because the rhetorical organization of discourse is based on the organization of ideas. Learning principles of Japanese discourse necessarily forces one to learn more than the meanings directly attributable to language. Given this complexity, a book like this one can provide only a basic reference guide to the principles of Japanese discourse. I have made every effort to present these principles as clearly and explicitly as possible.

Potential users of this book may be wondering about its emphasis on reading, excluding other language skills. My response is that an understanding of discourse principles is requisite to all language skills. And although spoken language is certainly important, it is in written language that we find a more complete representation of discourse structure. Besides, reading involves more than the passive integration of meaning. It requires the reader to construct the discourse anew in such a way that an interpreted

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text comes to life. Although comprehension of written words and generation of personal talk involve different cognitive and physical skills, the fundamental knowledge required for understanding discourse is identical.

Japanese discourse samples introduced in this book represent the language ordinarily used and readily accepted in Japan today, including both literary and non-literary texts. Ultimately we are interested in learning how to understand others' words, listen to stories, reach new information, expand our knowledge, and share our thoughts and feelings – in Japanese. To that end, I believe that studying the authentic Japanese writings appearing in this book used for explanatory and application purposes will prove useful.

Some of the students who inspired me to pen this book, and who I trust would have benefited from what it offers, have long since left the classroom. But I remain hopeful that they, too, may encounter this book somewhere sometime and, along with present and future students of Japanese, find it to be a useful handbook.

I express my gratitude to the authors and publishers for generously providing permission to use copyrighted materials for pedagogical purposes. My heartfelt thanks to Machi Tawara and Kawade Shoboo Shinsha for Reading 1, excerpt from *Yotsuba no Essei*; Shin'ichi Hoshi and Shinchoosha for Reading 2, *Ari to Kirigirisu*; Asahi Shinbunsha for Reading 3, the *Mado* column, and Reading 6, the *Tensei Jingo* column; Kiyoshi Uramoto and Magazine House for Reading 4, Pro-Keds shoes advertisement; Yoshito Usui and Futabasha for Reading 5, *Kureyon Shinchan* comic; and Tetsuroo Morimoto, Daiamondosha, and Sakuhinsha for Reading 7, *Sabaku e no Tabi*.

I owe Shooichi Iwasaki, Misato Tokunaga, and Kiyomi Nakamura who kindly offered helpful advice and suggestions. Linn Henderson read my manuscript and graciously offered assistance in improving my English. I thank her for spending more than a few precious Chicago summer days combing through my manuscript. I am grateful to Judith Ayling, formerly of Cambridge University Press, for her faith in me and for support and encouragement she so willingly gave at the early stage of this project. I express my deep gratitude to Kate Brett of Cambridge University Press for her constant and timely assistance in the book's editing and the production processes. I am grateful to Rutgers University and the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures for making funds available to secure the use of some of the copyrighted materials. And as always, I thank my husband, Michael, for his warm and endless support.

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