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The Personal Statement for the linguistics department at University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

One of the most prominent reasons why I am interested in generative linguistics is that it always provides the joy of discovery. The knowledge of language is fundamentally tacit and generative linguistics, since its birth, has been consistently trying to give an adequate account of the basis of this ability. From studying linguistics I have come to realize that my native language, Japanese, has a rich structure in terms of both phonology and syntax. Prior to studying linguistics this fact is not known to me. How natural languages work still remains mystery, but it is exciting to explore, and I believe it is worth an academic pursuit.

One of my primary interests is the structure of Japanese since it is the language I know tacitly. Equally important to me, however, is the universality of human languages: the similarities and differences Japanese has with other languages. Before encountering generative linguistics, I used to hold the naïve view that Japanese is totally different from other languages. Studying linguistics, however, has taught me that this view is too unsophisticated. For instance, soon after being introduced to McCarthy's templatic analysis of Arabic word formation, I found that a similar phenomenon is actually present in Japanese: there is a rather productive word formation whose template can be represented as (C)VCCV (i.e., a heavy syllable followed by a light syllable) in child-directed-speech; e.g., *oki-ru* => *okki* 'to get up' and *neru* => *nenne*¹. To me it is almost unbelievable that Japanese shares a parallel phenomenon with Arabic, and because it is unbelievable, it is very exciting.

In Japan generative linguistics is not as widespread as in the United States, so I took a chance to study linguistics at University of California, Santa Cruz for one year. There I studied linguistics as widely as possible since each sub-area is equally fascinating. However, I most extensively studied phonology and conducted a research of my own in the end. The result is submitted as one of the sample works (the longer one). I point out in this work that opacity is often found in the context of free variation and I argue within Optimality Theory that this is a result of correspondence established between variant forms.

Meanwhile I have noticed that studying the mechanism of variants provides us with many important questions. First, how more than one output is generated out of one input is itself a very difficult and interesting question, especially within OT. Secondly, as I point out in the sample work, variants often exhibit anti-faithfulness and anti-markedness effects. To figure out how these effects are attained in OT has profound theoretical significance. Though I propose a tentative theory on these issues, I would like to further pursue them in the graduate study. Thirdly, the study of variation is closely connected to the study of phonology-phonetic interface. To give one example, variants generated by way of syncope are abundant in natural languages. The question that should be addressed then is this: is a vowel phonologically gone?

More concretely, for example, in the sample work I pointed out that in the context of variation English exhibits otherwise prohibited consonant clusters e.g., [knekt] 'connect' or

¹ I am not sure how this morphological operation can be analyzed in Generalized Template Theory, which precludes the notion of a morphological template itself but tries to derive the effect from the interaction of ranked constraints. This is one of the topics that I want to pursue in my graduate study, one important question being that how come it generates a heavy syllable, which is generally avoided in Japanese?

[tmeito] 'tomato'. Concerning this observation, it is incumbent on me to see the vowel is actually deleted phonologically. I believe that the phonetic lab in your university can provide enough equipment to, even if partially, answer this question.

Though I have studied slightly more phonology than syntax or semantics thus far, I do not intend to solely concentrate on phonology in graduate school. For one thing, each sub-discipline is equally interesting. Also, to the extent that they constitute a part of the human linguistic ability, it should be the case that there is a parallel among these areas. In other words, if we want to look at the fundamental property of natural languages solely looking at one aspect should not suffice. On these grounds, I took several classes on semantics and syntax at UCSC.

In a semantics class I investigated the property of *until* (see the other sample work). The work involves many important semantic topics such as verbal aspectual classifications, the interaction of negation with aspectual properties, scope relations between *until* and negation and so forth. Since I did not have enough time to read the past literature so much, the work is not as developed as I would like it to be. To further develop this work is one of my many goals in the graduate study.

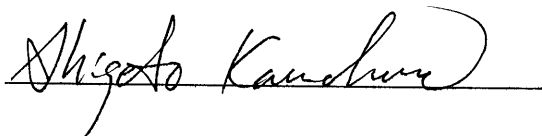
Syntax is no less intriguing. I am especially interested in the phonology-syntax interface. In past syntactic literature on the analysis of Japanese syntax, intonation is disregarded from analyses on the ground that it is "irrelevant" or outside the realm of competence. I do not think it is true. The grammatical judgments in syntactic papers often ignore how intonation interacts with the grammatical status of given sentences. That is, some sentences labeled as ungrammatical can be saved by a specific intonation. Similarly, sentences that are judged grammatical sometimes need a specific sentential intonation. This point is systematically ignored from consideration. Yet intonation is a part of our linguistic knowledge. Thus we definitely need to take intonation into account.

Japanese is replete with interesting topics for syntactic investigation. It exhibits scrambling, overt case realization by way of particle attached to a noun phrase, an active topicalization process, a productive formation of complex verbs and so forth. Though I am not familiar with the past work on Japanese syntax so much, exploring my intuition about Japanese syntax is my favorite academic habit.

If I am admitted to your department I would like to explore the issues I have presented above. There are a lot of other issues which I could not write here due to space limitation. I will bear in mind that linguistics is a study for our language faculty. Nobody has figured out what the basis of natural languages might be, and I do not think I can find an answer to the question within five years of study. Still I would like to stimulate and brush up my scientific thinking so that I can conduct my own research after graduating from your department.

Date October 29th, 2001.

Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shigeto Kanoh", written over a horizontal line.