

COMMON TERMS DEFINED – BEGINNER LEVEL

This mini-guide is intended to explain in basic terms the common terminology for language and grammar that is used regularly in class. It would be to your advantage to study these terms and know them well early in the year, so we have a common language (in English) to use in discussing the meaning and use of Japanese words in context.

SUBJECT - The topic of the sentence; it is the noun that does something or is something. In Japanese, the subject is usually indicated by adding the particle "wa" behind it. Example: *Watashi wa seito desu.* [I am a student.] - "Watashi" is the subject of this sentence.

PREDICATES - In Japanese, the simplest sentences; they are the essential words that give the sentence its meaning. **There are four kinds of predicates in Japanese, including: ① nouns, ② verbs, ③ I- adjectives and ④ NA-adjectives.** Examples: *Hon desu.* [It is a book.] This expresses a complete thought (noun predicate). Also: *Wakarimasu.* [I understand.] (verb predicate).

SET PHRASES or IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS - These are expressions that are used with particular meaning in specific contexts. Examples: *Konnichi wa* (only use this in the afternoon), *Hajimemashite* (only use this when you meet someone for the first time). They often cannot, and should not, be translated literally.

NOUN - Person(s), place(s), thing(s), or idea(s). English examples: I, book, party; Japanese examples: *watashi, hon, paatii*

VERB - A word or set of words that represents the action in a sentence. English example: to go; Japanese example: *ikimasu* (verbs in polite Japanese end with *-masu.*)

ADJECTIVE - A word that describes a noun. English examples: hot, cold, sick, durable; Japanese examples: *atsui, samui* (*i-adjectives*); *byouki, joubu* (*na-adjective*)

ADVERB - A word that modifies/clarifies/describes a verb. English examples: lively, quickly, slowly; Japanese examples: *genki ni, hayaku, yukkuri*

MORA - Japanese "syllables"; represented by hiragana & katakana characters.

PARTICLES - In Japanese, they are mora which are added to a word or phrase to denote its relationship to the predicate. Examples: "wa" which indicates the subject, or "ka" which indicates that which comes before is a question.

PREPOSITIONS - In Japanese, words or word combinations that indicate the relationship of the preceding word or phrase to the predicate. They are more often than not a particle or collection of particles using a placement word. English examples: by, in, from, to, with; Japanese examples: *ni, kara, to, no ato de, no soba ni, etc.*

CONJUNCTIONS - Words that are used to connect two complete ideas/sentences. English examples: and, but, or; Japanese examples: *soshite, de mo, sore to mo* (the conjunctions noted here are used at the beginning of the second sentence)