FLJ302 -- 2009.02.17 -- Accent in Standard Japanese (part 1)

1. Make sure you know what a *mora* is. *Moras* (or *morae*; from latin linguistics) are the basic units of pronunciation and timing in languages like Japanese (as opposed to *syllables* in languages like English). The basic types of *morae* are as follows, with examples:
   a. Consonant-vowel combinations: きたむら (this word has 4 morae)
   b. Lone vowels: おおえ (3 morae)
   c. Doubled vowels: カーター (4 morae)
   d. Doubled consonants: かっぱ (3 morae), かった(3)
   e. All variants of ん: おんな (3 morae), ハンバーガー(6), いっせん(4), etc.
   f. Also note: きょうと(3), でしょう(3). Also note しょう(2) vs. しよう(3).

2. Any entire mora can be either 'high' or 'low' *pitch*, with a difference of about a musical third.
   In the following example, L represents 'low pitch' and H represents 'high pitch.'

   お$_{L}$ は$_{H}$ よ$_{H}$ う$_{H}$ ご$_{H}$ ざ$_{H}$ い$_{H}$ ま$_{H}$ す(L: but since the vowel is silent, it doesn't matter)

3. In Standard Japanese, many words take the form L-H-H-H-H--- Such words are called *unaccented*:

   行く（いく）(L-H)
   なまえ (L-H-H)
   とうきょう (L-H-H-H)
   オーストラリア (L-H-H-H-H-H-H)

4. Words that shift back down from 'high' to 'low' at some point are called *accented*:

   おかし (L-H-L)
   ドライブ (L-H-L-L)
   美術館＝びじゅつかん (L-H-H-L-L)
   ルームメート (L-H-H-H-L-L)

5. A word is said to be *accented on the n$^{th}$ mora* if the n$^{th}$ mora is 'high' and (n+1)$^{th}$ mora is 'low.'

   おかし (L-H-L) = accented on the 2$^{nd}$ mora
   ドライブ (L-H-L-L) = 2
   美術館＝びじゅつかん (L-H-H-L-L) = 3
   ルームメート (L-H-H-H-L-L) = 4

6. When a word is *accented*, once the pitch has gone down, it can't go back up again inside the same word:

   L-H---H-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-L-------

7. It is possible for words to be *accented on the first mora*:

   うそ (H-L) = 1
   ビール (H-L-L) = 1
   将来＝しょうらい (H-L-L-L) = 1

8. Some examples to remember:
   Accented on 1$^{st}$ mora:
   「え」 (picture), 「そ」ら、「ビ」ール、「う」そ、「ね」こ、「じゅ」ぎょう、「ダ」イエット、「げ」んき、「ヤ」クザ
   Accented on 2$^{nd}$ mora:
   お「か」し (confections), な「つ」、や「ま」、あ「し」、へ「や」、だ「め」、ゴ「ミ」、は「じ」めて、お「じ」いさん
   Accented on 3$^{rd}$ mora:
   お「とこ」だ、お「んな」だ、た「くさ」ん、ア「ルバ」イト、物理学（ぶ「つり」がく）、英会話（え「いか」いわ）
   Accented on 4$^{th}$ mora:
   物理学者（ぶ「つりが」くしゃ）、物理化学（ぶ「つりか」がく）、三時頃（さ「んじご」ろ）、も「うすこ」し
   Accented on 5$^{th}$ mora:
   平安時代（へ「いあんじ」だい）、ミ「ッキーマ」ウス、バ「レンタイ」ンデー、日経新聞（に「っけいし」んぶん）
   Accented on 6$^{th}$ mora:
   ホ「ットチョコレ」ート、ウィ「リアムス姉妹（し」まい）
   Unaccented:
   と「り、く「ち、ア「ニメ、ピ「アノ、か「らて、き「もの、こ「とば、お「じさん、だ「いがく、ヴァ「イオリン

9. Assignment: The following online dictionary includes accent information: http://dictionary.goo.ne.jp/
   Using the dictionary, look up twenty of your favorite nouns (we will get to verbs and adjectives later), and sort them according to their accent, similar to #8 above. Also, prepare for a quiz on the examples from #8 above.