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The topic particle

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Abstract

The Japanese postposition which in this paper is to be referred to as the topic particle *wa*, is said to be possessing functions which have been thoroughly debated and analyzed by numerous linguists. It has as a result brought upon us a number of distinguishable theories concerning the qualities of this particle, providing us with different analyses to comprehend. Depending on which theory one is referred to, the particle seems to possess different, or a different quantity of qualities. This paper attempts to outline a description of different theories concerning the particle in order to reveal the different qualities it is said to be possessing, and if it is possible to claim there are different kinds of *wa*.

Keywords: Japanese particles, topic prominence, semantics

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Conventions

Romanization

For the romanization of the Japanese words the Hepburn modified version will be used, with the exception being that macrons are not used. Long vowels will be written using kana spelling (*Tōkyō* = *Toukyou*), and the syllabic *n* is written without a macron.

Glossing

For the glossing of the Japanese words the standard set of conventions of the Leipzig Glossing Rules will be referred to. Minor conventions may be modified or added.

Abbreviations

TOP	topic
NOM	nominative
SBJ	subject
OBJ	object
PAST	past
NPAST	nonpast
NEG	negative
NPAST	nonpast
DAT	dative
LOC	location
GEN	genitive
GER	gerund

1. Introduction

1.1 The topic

The motif of this paper is to acknowledge the complexity of a certain Japanese postposition which is referred to as the topic particle *wa*. Through an outline describing the theories concerning the particle, we may discover a numerous different qualities of *wa*. One of the qualities it is said to be possessing is the 'marking of the topic' within a statement. This construction is often referred to as 'thematization' or 'the topic construction'.

- (1) Tarou *wa* gakusei da
Taro TOP student COP
'Taro is a student.' (lit.) '(Speaking of) Taro, he is a student.'

However, serving as a marker of the topic is said not to be the only quality of the topic particle. This paper attempts to outline a description of different theories, providing a possibility to distinguish different qualities of the topic marker *wa*, and eventually a possibility to judge whether different kinds of *wa* exist.

1.2 Outline, methodology, and data

As an entry to the main topic, the properties of the topic particle will be described in contrast to particles of a different category, in order to clarify the reason why the topic particle does not belong to this postposition category.

The presentation of the main topic consists of formerly analyzed theories describing the qualities of the topic particle *wa* alone, which will be categorically organized to reveal the differences among the analyses in a comprehensible way. The different theories will be described and analyzed separately, to subsequently be compared and lastly connected to one

common particle. By the notion of the analyses discussed using example sentences, we may come to comprehend the different qualities the particle is said to be possessing, which provides a possibility to discuss whether distinguished kinds of *wa* exist.

Each theory presented will refer to relevant scholars, and the example sentences by which the theories are described will be created by me, if no other work is referred to.

2. Wa and case particles

2.1 Introduction

The difference between a topic construction and a construction modified by a case particle¹ is often referred to when giving a basic description of the topic particle and its qualities. In order to comprehend the qualities of the topic particle *wa* alone, this section outlines an overview of the differences between the usage of the case particles and the topic particle.

2.2 Two different constructions

The two different constructions differ syntactically due to the usage of different particles. In order to distinguish the two constructions semantically, we may need to consider the contexts in which the constructions appear.

The construction using case particles is frequently used as contrast when describing the topic construction, referred to as an unmarked sentence.² The construction is generally used when creating a neutral statement, with no implicature.

(2) Toukyou de kare ni at-ta
Tokyo in he DAT meet-PAST
'(I) met him in Tokyo.'

(3) a. Getsuyoubi ni Toukyou e ik-u
Monday on Tokyo to go-NPAST
'(I) go to Tokyo on Monday.'

The case particles used in (2) and (3a) marking the clause elements roughly corresponds

¹ The case particles consist of postpositions marking clause elements to which the topic particle is said not belong.

² An unmarked sentence is not marked by the topic particle *wa*.

to the prepositions of the English language.

The above constructions are referred to as neutral descriptions when compared to a topic construction, similar to (3b).

(3) b. Getsuyoubi ni-*wa* Toukyou e ik-u
Monday on-TOP Tokyo to go-NPAST
'(I) go to Tokyo on Monday.'

Despite the identical translations given for (3a) and (3b), a semantic difference between the two sentences is perceivable. The contents of the two sentences consist of equivalent propositions, with the distinction being that the topic particle *wa* has been affixed to 'Getsuyoubi-ni' of (3b).

However, the difference will become evident when put into context. For example, (3a) is typically used when giving a neutral description of "What I will be doing", or when providing an answer for the question "What will you be doing?" Hence, a construction using case particles similar to (3a) is focusing on the what the subject will be doing (with every clause element equally significant).

(3b) is, on the other hand, generally used when giving an explanation about 'Monday'. The context in which (3b) appears may be when answering the question "What will you do on *Monday*?" Hence 'Monday' becomes the entity of interest. This kind of sentence occasionally implies that 'Monday' has been mentioned earlier in the conversation, and has been brought up as a topic of the current sentence. Thus, the appropriate translation for (3b) is to apply the implicature which is not seen in the simple translation of (3b), namely "Speaking of *Monday*, I am going to Tokyo."

With the above understanding, we may distinguish the two constructions, supposing that the topic construction involves an implicature which can not be seen in an unmarked sentence. In the case of (3b), the implicature explains that 'Monday' has already been mentioned in the conversation.

2.3 Two different categories

The postpositions of the Japanese language belong to different categories, depending on what kind of clause element they mark. The case particles and the topic particle, obviously, belong to different categories. The case particles belong to the category simply referred to as 'the case particles', and the topic particle belongs to a category which can roughly be translated as 'the binding particles'.¹ However, the topic particle is generally described separately, and there is no need to consider the category in this section.

Within a Japanese clause, elements are marked by case particles depending on the element, context and the predicate. The topic particle *wa*, on the other hand, can mark almost any element in order to indicate a topic, and the use of the particle is generally determined by the context rather than the element and predicate.

However, the focus of this paper is closely related to the fact that the use of *wa* is determined by context, but also to consider that the particle may indicate other elements than topic depending on the context.

¹ The category of the binding particles is commonly referred to as 'adverbial particles', and consists of postpositions such as 'even', 'too', 'only', et al.

3. The qualities of *wa*

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the properties of the qualities of the particle *wa* alone, focusing on the differences between the usage of the qualities. Each quality is described and analyzed separately, to subsequently be compared and put into question of whether the distinguished qualities are different types of *wa*. The outlined qualities are separated into different subsections determined by the use of the particle.

3.2 *Wa* as topic marker

Wa as a topic marker indicates an element referred to as topic or theme, which is perceivable in statements of topic prominent languages coequal to Japanese and Korean. A topic of a Japanese statement is often positioned in the preceding part of a clause, comparable to the position of a subject in an English subject-predicate construction. The succeeding part of the clause is 'the comment', which on occasion correspond to the direct-object, predicate, and other clause elements, describing the topic.

- (4) Kanojo *wa* toukyou ni it-ta
She TOP Tokyo to go-PAST
'She went to Tokyo.' (lit.) 'Speaking of her, she went to Tokyo.'

As mentioned in the previous section, using *wa* may imply that the *wa*-marked element has been mentioned earlier in the conversation. This may be accurate in many cases, but *wa* may occasionally mark an element introduced for the first time in the conversation, but is claimed by Kuno (1972:270), among other scholars, to be generic in these cases.

- (5) Yuki *wa* shiro-i
Snow TOP white
'Snow is white.' (lit.) 'Snow is such that it is white.'

Example (5) corresponds to the implicature function of introducing a generic element, rather than focusing on an earlier mentioned topic. To determine whether the topic is generic, or if it has been mentioned earlier in the conversation, we may need to consider the context.

(6) Chichi *wa* bengoshi da
Father TOP lawyer COP-NPAST
'My father is (such that he is) a lawyer.'

(7) Kare *wa* sakana o tabe-ta
He TOP fish OBJ eat-PAST
'Speaking of him, he ate fish.'

Example (6) may correspond to the function of introducing a generic element, assuming that 'Chichi' has not been mentioned earlier, as it applies to the rules stated by Kuroda (1972:160): "I call a sentence generic if a statement made by it is a statement about a general, habitual, or constant state of affair of some sort [...]." Within example (7), however, the *wa*-marked element corresponds to an earlier mentioned topic, as it does not apply to the rules regarding the generic properties.

With the above understanding, we may distinguish two topic marking functions of *wa*, namely to introduce generic topic and to refer to an earlier mentioned topic of the conversation. However, as seen in the above examples of this subsection, the topic occasionally corresponds to the subject, but as seen in example (3b) of the previous section, the topic may correspond to time and place as well.

3.3 *Wa* as subject marker

Wa is not referred to as a subject marker, but in cases where topic corresponds to subject, the proper subject marker *ga* is replaced by *wa*. However, in earlier research on *wa*, scholars frequently refer to the differences between a sentence constructed by *ga* and a sentence constructed by *wa*, claiming that explaining the differences has not been an easy task. As Shibatani (1990:262) starts his chapter 'The topic construction' by pointing out this fact, he is

referring to the theory of Kuno, regarding the qualities of *wa*.

Kuno (1972) attempts to reanalyze the differences between *wa* and *ga*, introducing his theory by referring to his previous work: "The theme (i.e. marked by *wa*) must be either anaphoric (i.e. previously mentioned) or generic [...]." *Ga* on the other hand, he refers to as a marker of a neutral description, similar to the case particles described in the previous section. Hence, where the subject is a part of a neutral description, *ga* should be used, and where the subject is anaphoric or generic, *wa* should be used.

(8) a. Watashi *ga* tenchou da
I SBJ manager COP-NPAST
'I am the manager.'

(8) b. Watashi *wa* tenchou da
I TOP manager COP-NPAST
'I am the manager.'

Despite the identical translation provided, the two different sentences appear in different contexts, and a semantic difference is perceivable. (8b) may be properly used when, either providing an answer for 'Talking about you, what do you do?', as 'you' corresponds to 'I', which makes 'I' anaphoric (or when considering the statement generic, see p.7). (8a) on the other hand would rather properly answer the question 'Who is the manager?', as Kuno claims that *ga* possesses an 'exhaustive listing' quality additional to the neutral description quality.¹

However, as stated by Ueyama (1991:85), providing an answer for 'Who is the manager' is possible using either *wa* or *ga*, by rearranging the word order. (The following examples have been modified, originally created by Ueyama).

(9) a. Tenchou *wa* dare
Manager TOP who
'Who is the manager?' (lit.) 'The manager is who?'

(9) b. Watashi *ga* tenchou da
I SBJ manager COP-NPAST
'I am the manager.'

¹ "Ga as subject case marker is either for *neutral description* or for *exhaustive listing*. When the predicate represents a state (but not existence) or a habitual-generic action, only the exhaustive-listing interpretation is obtained." (Kuno, 1972:270).

- (9) c. TENCHOU wa watashi da
 Manager TOP I COP-NPAST
 'I am the manager.' (lit.) 'The manager is me.'

The subjects of (9a) and (9c) are identical; the topic. The topic of (9a) corresponds to the generic topic, and the topic of (9c) corresponds to either the anaphoric or generic topic. The subject of (9b) on the other hand corresponds to the exhaustive-listing function of *ga*, conveying the *new information* 'I', regarding the identity of the manager, which was unknown. (Reflecting upon a feedback asserting that 9b implies a feeling of straightforwardness, the 'exhaustive listing *ga*' appears to occasionally bring higher importance to the subject. I came to the conclusion that, since *ga* singles out a subject from other possible ones, conveying a generic statement using 'exhaustive listing *ga*' may appear 'frank' when the subject is the speaker.)

Kuno (1972:272) refers to conveying of new information as 'unpredictable information', and generic or anaphoric topic as 'predictable information', and distinguishes the semantic difference between *wa* (marking predictable) and *ga* (marking unpredictable) by comparing the constructions to English: "Among John, Mary, and Tom, who is the oldest?" Answering this question will require *ga* to mark the chosen element: "*Tom* is the oldest." He claims that, despite to have mentioned Tom earlier, it conveys unpredictable (new) information, and thus is restricted to be marked by *ga*.

However, similar to the statement of Ueyama, providing an answer is possible using either *wa* or *ga*, but as seen within (9b-c), placing the predictable information before *wa* is required.

- (10) a. Among John, Mary, and Tom, who is the oldest?
 (10) b. Tom is the oldest
 (10) c. The oldest (one) is Tom

Rearranging the word order is possible in both Japanese and English. As the only predictable information is 'ichiban toshi-ue [the oldest]', the proper translation for (10b-c) would be 'Tom *ga* ichiban toshi-ue', respectively 'Ichiban toshi-ue no *wa* Tom'.

A similar phenomenon to what Kuno refers to as 'predictable' and 'unpredictable', is 'old/given' information, and is frequently used when explaining the difference between *wa* and *ga*. Kuno (1972:272), on the other hand, refers to the importance of 'anaphoric/nonanaphoric', as he

claims: "[...] the concept of anaphoricity plays a very important role in the use of *wa* and *ga*."

There are, however, several constructions which expose obvious differences between old/given (anaphoric) and new (nonanaphoric) information. One pattern, which determines the use of *wa*, contains predictable/anaphoric information, which in turn may be *omitted*, as it is predictable. (11) conveys predictable information marked by *wa*, and is compared to unpredictable information within (12), marked by *ga*.

- (11) (Anaphoric *wa*)
- a. Tarou *wa*?
Taro TOP
'What about Taro?' (lit.) 'Speaking of Taro?.'

 - b. [Tarou *wa*] sakana [o tabe-ta]
Taro TOP fish OBJ eat-PAST
'(Taro ate) fish.'

Assuming that the members of the conversation are aware of 'Taro eating', but not aware of what dish, 'Taro ate' corresponds to predictable and old information, while 'fish' alone corresponds to unpredictable and new information. This pattern allows the predictable information to be omitted (in either English or Japanese). A pattern where information can not be omitted, we assume that the information is restricted to be marked by *ga* (in cases where the unpredictable information is the subject.)

- (12) (New information/wh-question *ga*)
- a. Dare *ga* [sakana o tabe-ta]?
Who SBJ fish OBJ eat-PAST
'Who (ate fish)?'

 - b. (New information, [exhaustive listing] *ga*)
Tarou *ga* [sakana o tabe-ta]
Taro SBJ fish OBJ eat-PAST
'(Only) Taro (ate fish/did).'

This pattern explains wherefore *ga* should in most cases be marking 'wh-questions' (e.g. what, who, when, where). If we assume that the members of the conversation are aware of the action 'eating fish', but not aware of 'Who/Taro' who corresponds to the unpredictable information, the predictable information (generally marked by *wa*) may be omitted. This use of *ga*, (singling

out the subject from other possible ones), is what Kuno (1972:272) refers to as 'exhaustive listing', as he claims that: "What is common between the *ga* for neutral description and the *ga* for exhaustive listing is that, in both cases, the subject conveys new information."

Ga for neutral description is on the other hand rather compared to generic *wa*, as an obvious contrast is perceivable between the two constructions.

- (13) ('Generic *wa*)
Yuki *wa* fuyu ni mie-ru
Snow TOP winter on see-PAST
'Snow is visible in the winter.'
- (14) (New information, 'neutral description *ga*')
Yuki *ga* fur-i- dashi-ta
Snow SBJ begin to rain-PAST
'It began to snow.' (lit.) 'Snow began to fall'

Cases of generic *wa* is not restricted to contain an anaphoric topic, as we assume that it is generic (i.e. general, habitual, or constant state of affair). Example (14), on the other hand, conveys new information throughout the entire statement, as we assume that the listener is not aware of either the subject or predicate, and is typically used when describing a witnessed action. Kuno (1972:273) refers to his first hypothesis: "*Ga* as subject marker in the matrix sentence always signals that the subject conveys new, unpredictable information."¹

The difference between 'generic' and 'conveying of new information' has been researched from different points of view, for example the restriction of using *ga* within 'an action grasped as a whole',² which leads us to *the difference between the categorical and thethetic judgement*. The two types of judgements were presented by Kuroda (1972:154), and apply to the rules of 'generic *wa*' respectively 'neutral description *ga*'.

- (15) (Thetic judgement)
Oya Tarou *ga* ki-ta
Oh Taro SBJ come-PAST
'Oh look, Taro came!'

¹ A matrix sentence is a sentence in which another clause is imbedded. The case of using *ga* within a subordinate clause will be discussed in following subsection.

² An action grasped as a whole is conveying new information throughout the entire statement, with the involved clause elements, such as subject and the predicate, understood at the same moment.

The simple recognition of a witnessed action grasped as a whole, seen within (14) and (15), are thetic judgements, as Kuroda (1972:161) claims that: "[...] the difference between the sentence types with the particles *ga* and *wa* correspond to the distinction between the thetic (subjectless) judgement and the categorical judgement, i.e., the judgement that has the subject-predicate structure." That is, (15) is a simple recognition of an event, with the subject not playing a prominent role of the judgement. A categorical judgement, on the other hand, he claims to require the speaker's interest to be directed to the subject: the reason why the speaker wants to express the recognition of the happening is because the speaker wants to relate the event to the subject. Consider example (13) as it applies to the theory of a categorical judgement, while example (14) rather applies to a thetic judgement, a simple recognition: "Snow is visible in the winter" respectively "Snow began to fall". Whether the two examples apply to the categorical or the thetic judgement becomes evident in Japanese, as *wa* and *ga* make the difference visible, while the English written translation can not prove that the speaker's interest is directed to 'snow' in example (13). That is, if the discourse context of (13) appears to be "What is visible in the winter", (which is not possible in the Japanese version as 'yuki' [snow] is marked by *wa*, and hence the interest of context is directed to 'snow'), 'winter' will come to play the role of prominence instead, relating the event of 'snow is visible' to the entity of interest (winter). (This would be considered as a categorical judgement of *winter*, reversing the speaker's direction of interest, i.e., from 'snow' to 'winter').

However, Kuno attempts to compare 'generic *wa*' to the 'exhaustive listing *ga*', as an additional difference is perceivable between these two constructions as well. He refers to the unnatural construction as 'awkward', as he explains wherefore *wa* should be used in generic statements.

(16) a. (Generic *wa*, natural)

Toukyou *wa* dai-tokai da
Tokyo TOP big-city COP-NPAST
'Tokyo is a large city.'

(16) b. *(Exhaustive listing *ga*, awkward)

Toukyou *ga* dai-tokai da
Tokyo SBJ big-city COP-NPAST
'Tokyo is a large city.' (lit.) "[...] Of all cities in the world, Tokyo (and only Tokyo), is a big city." (Kuno:1972)

Assuming that one wants to explain a generic condition, for example about Tokyo, the subject (Tokyo) is restricted to be marked by *wa*. Tokyo marked by *ga*, on the other hand, would need a context in order to be natural (such as singling out Tokyo from other possible subjects), as *ga* functions as exhaustive listing. It is not possible to refer to it as a neutral description either, because the generic properties are involved. As 'exhaustive listing *ga*' implies a feeling of 'singling out', Kuno (1972:274) claims that using *ga* may be naturally used in statements like following.

- (17) Toukyou *ga* sekai-ichi no dai-tokai da
Tokyo SBJ world-first of big-city COP-NPAST
'Tokyo (and only Tokyo) is the biggest city of the world.'

If we assume that Tokyo is the biggest city of the world, (17) may be perfectly natural. (16b) would require a similar context to become natural, such as 'Which city is big among Tokyo, Nara, and Nikko?' If only Tokyo is a big city, 'Tokyo *ga* dai-tokai da' would become perfectly natural, as *ga* singles out Tokyo from the rest.

However, as Kuno states that *ga* for neutral description and exhaustive listing always conveys new information, Kuroda (2005:3) has done further research and claims that there may be other possibilities. Kuroda points out his 'thesis and antithesis', which correspond to the above theories, respectively a contradiction, which will be returned to in a succeeding subsection.

An additional distinguishable function between *wa* and *ga* is the connection between the subject and a final predicate or final conclusion, which is generally constructed using *wa* marking the subject. As stated by Inoue (1989:151), in cases where the statement appears to consist of two different subjects, marked by *wa* and *ga* respectively, it may be hard to determine whether the *wa*- or *ga*-marked element is the 'actual subject' of the final predicate or conclusion.

- (18) (Generic *wa*, neutral description *ga*: describing properties)
Zou *wa* hana *ga* naga-i
Elephant TOP nose SBJ long
'An elephant is such that its nose is long.'

Shibatani (1990:274) explains this construction by putting 'Zou-*wa*' and 'hana-*ga*' into two different noun phrases. 'Hana-*ga* nagai' is as a whole connected to 'Zou-*wa*', as 'nagai' [long] is describing the properties of 'hana' [nose], while 'hana-*ga* nagai' is describing the properties of 'Zou' [elephant]. This construction does consist of two subjects, if we consider 'elephant' to be generic topic *and* subject. 'Nose' is corresponding to a subject within the comment about 'elephant', as no 'actual action' is stated.

However, a construction where the last predicate (actual action) is only connected to the *wa*-marked subject may be observed within a statement containing a relative clause.

- (19) (Anaphoric *wa*, neutral description *ga*: subordinate clause)
Tarou *wa* Yuki *ga* kai-ta hon o **yon-da**
 Taro TOP Yuki SBJ write-PAST book OBJ read-PAST
 'Taro read a/the book that Yuki wrote'

Comparable to the English translation 'Taro read', 'read' is connected to 'Taro' alone, as the subject of the subordinate clause 'Yuki' in this case does not have to be present (or even alive) when the actual action is carried out.¹ Depending on the context and phonological prominence, either 'Yuki' alone, or 'Yuki-*ga* kaita hon' as a whole correspond to new, unpredictable information.²

The above construction is closely related to the function of 'separating' which *wa* in cases is said to be possessing. The separating function will be outlined shortly in the following subsection.

With the above understanding, two distinguished functions of *wa* respectively two distinguished functions of *ga* are observable, and the use of the particles (and whether *wa* or *ga* adapt naturally) is generally determined by context. The following subsections outlines additional functions of *wa*, one (contrastive function) claimed by Kuno to be distinguishable from the generic/anaphoric *wa*, while some scholars (e.g. Shibatani) do not agree (see following subsections).

¹ The actual action is generally the final predicate in Japanese statements consisting of a subordinate clause.

² The significance of intonation and phonology within a NP will be discussed in the following subsection.

3.4 Wa with separating function

Wa as a separating particle is in cases identical to the previously mentioned functions, but additional functions may become more evident when observed from a different point of view. As we have assured the 'topic' and the 'subject' functions of *wa* (with the functions distinguishable or not), additional functions may be observable.

The separating function is similar to the construction of 'Zou-*wa* hana-*ga* nagai', in the sense that the construction may be considered as generic. As a generic statement about 'elephant', the statement is separating the qualities of 'elephant' from other possible qualities. The function of separation may become more evident when but in contrast to a relative clause.

(20) a. Watashi *ga* tabe-ru toki
I SBJ eat-NPAST time
'When i eat/ate...'

(20) b. Watashi *wa* tabe-ru toki
I TOP eat-NPAST time
'When eating, I...'

(20a) as a subordinate clause may be properly used when describing the event: 'When i ate, the telephone rang.' (20b), on the other hand, will refer to the *wa*-marked element, as it is separating 'I' from the action, and may be properly used when describing an event similar to: "When eating, I use chopsticks." This function closely corresponds to the generic function of *wa*, as 'When eating...' is describing a generic state. The function will become 'separating' as we separate the fact 'I use chopsticks' from other possible information connected to the subject marked by *wa*. Consider a complete version with the subordinate clause imbedded within a subject-predicate structure:

(20) c. Watashi *wa* [watashi *ga* tabe-ru toki] hashi o tsuka-u
I TOP I SBJ eat-NPAST time sticks OBJ use-NPAST
'[When i eat], I use chopsticks'

This construction separates 'Watashi-*wa*', similarly to the construction of 'Zou-*wa*', from the

remaining part of the statement, and creates a categorical judgement, relating the entity of interest (Watashi marked by *wa*) to the event, or in this case, a habitual occurrence which in turn makes it a generic statement as well. (Note that a subject of a relative clause is restricted to be marked by *ga* in any case, as a relative clause does not apply to any quality brought by *wa*, cf.. anaphoric, generic, separating, categorical judgement, et al.)

The theories of generic and separating *wa* compared bring us closer to whether there are different kinds of *wa*; both qualities appears to underlie the analyses of the categorical judgement, as well as they apply to the rules of 'thematic *wa*'. The following subsection will discuss the contrastive function of *wa*, and whether it is distinguishable from the 'thematic *wa*' or not.

3.5 *Wa* as contrast marker

Wa as contrast marker has been researched exceedingly, generally with a reference to Kuno (1972-1973), as he pointed out the distinguished functions of *wa*, naming them 'thematic *wa*' and 'contrastive *wa*'. The properties of 'thematic *wa*' correspond to the generic and anaphoric *wa*, which are outlined in the two preceding subsections. The 'contrastive *wa*' is argued to imply a different emphasis on the marked element.

- (22) Tarou *wa* sakana o tabe-ta
 Taro TOP fish OBJ eat-PAST
 'Taro ate fish (but someone else did not)'

This construction is occasionally referred to as the 'implicit contrastive *wa*', as the contrastive utterance of 'but someone else did not' is not visual. A construction which consist of a visual contrastive utterance is referred to as 'explicit contrast'.

- (23) Tarou *wa* sakana o tabe-ta ga, Yuki *wa* niku o tabe-ta
 Taro TOP fish OBJ eat-PAST but Yuki TOP meat OBJ eat-PAST
 'Taro ate fish, but Yuki ate meat'

Statements coequal to (23) indicates an obvious contrast between the two subjects (i.e. Taro and Yuki). If the element put into contrast consists of more than a single word, the contrast will be determined by phonological prominence (Komagata:1998). The following examples are modified, previously presented by Komagata. (Italic cursive font indicates phonological prominence).

(24) a. *Naomi*-no banana *wa* tabe-ta
 Naomi-GEN banana TOP eat-PAST
 'I ate Naomi's banana'

(24) b. Naomi-no *banana* *wa* tabe-ta
 Naomi-GEN banana TOP eat-PAST
 'I ate Naomi's banana'

The constructions of (24a) and (24b) are examples of implicit contrastive *wa*, as the contrastive part is omitted. (24a) and (24b) may correspond to the English translation with the contrastive implicature 'I ate Naomi's banana, but not Taro's', respectively 'I ate Naomi's banana, but not her apple'. An identical function is evident in English, as it is possible to put phonological prominence on 'Naomi', respectively 'banana': "I ate *Naomi's* banana (but not Taro's)/I ate Naomi's *banana* (but not her apple)."

As the above discussed functions of *wa* (i.e. generic, anaphoric, separating) would correspond to 'thematic *wa*', Kuno (1972:270) refers to his theses of 1969-1970 and separates 'thematic *wa*' from 'contrastive *wa*': "*Wa* marks either the *theme* or the *contrasted element*. [...]."

(25) a. (Thematic: generic/anaphoric *wa*)
 Yuki *wa* shiro-i
 Snow TOP white
 'Snow is white'

(25) b. (Contrastive *wa*)
 Yuki *wa* fut-te- i-ru
 Snow TOP fall-GER is-NPAST
 'It's snowing/Snow is falling'

The difference between the two constructions may be considered obvious when referring to the idea of Kuno. As 'Yuki-*wa* futte-iru' [It's snowing] would generally adapt more naturally using

'neutral description *ga*' (describing a neutral or witnessed action, cf. example 14-17, p.11-12), Kuno claims the statement to be ungrammatical. However, if 'Yuki' appear in contrast to another element, he claims the statement to be grammatical. Hence, the difference between the 'thematic *wa*' and 'contrastive *wa*' regarding this case, is that (25a) does not require a contrastive part to be grammatical.

However, it is possible to develop this theory, arguing for the previously discussed function of 'separating *wa*'. As mentioned, the separating function may sometimes, depending on point of view, become identical with other functions of *wa*, for example the functions of 'thematic *wa*'. This fact may apply to 'contrastive *wa*' as well, as Shibatani (1990: 265) claims that the separation becomes clear if a contrasting part exists: "Namely, when we make a categorical judgement such as 'The sun rises' and 'Man is mortal', we are always isolating or singling out these propositions from other possible ones, and thus the contrast is inherent in this kind of judgement, but it only becomes apparent when a parallel or contrasting proposition exists [...]."¹

With the above understanding, considering either 'thematic *wa*' or 'contrastive *wa*', one is always singling out an element from other possibilities when making a judgement using *wa*.

- (26) (Thematic/contrastive *wa*: united)
 Yuki *wa* shiro-i [ga bara *wa* aka-i]
 Snow TOP white but rose TOP red
 'Snow is white (but roses are red)'

If the part of 'roses are red' is omitted, one may consider this construction to be either generic or implicit contrastive (see p.15). Hence, Shibatani rather refers to *wa* as an emphatic particle: "That is, there aren't two distinct *wa*'s, or two different meanings associated with *wa*, as suggested by the labels 'thematic' *wa* and 'contrastive' *wa*; rather, one and the same *wa* has the effect of emphasizing the contrast when the discourse environment provides a background for contrast."

¹ The categorical judgement is discussed on p. 11-12.

These words bring us to the conclusion that the 'contrastive *wa*' is a function of the 'thematic *wa*' (i.e. *wa* as a topic- and subject-marker with separating function), which becomes apparent when a contrastive part is involved. Following subsection presents the antithesis of Kuroda (2005), which argues for different qualities of the topic marker *wa*.

3.5.1 Scalar and polarity contrastive *wa*

Before turning to the arguments of Kuroda, an outline of a recently presented theory will be considered briefly, regarding the qualities observed within 'contrastive *wa*'.

As 'contrastive *wa*' is said to bring an implicature of placing the marked word into contrast to another element, the contrastive function has been researched exceedingly, and is said to possess two different implicatures of contrast: "scalar contrastive *wa* and polarity contrastive *wa*." (Sawada, To appear:1). The scalar type he claims to possess "[...] conventional implicatures that are a 'mirror image' of those of *sae/mo* 'even'." To distinguish scalar from polarity, he presents following constructions:

- (1) (Do you have a bicycle?)
Jitensha-*wa* mot-te-iru
Bicycle-TOP have-GER-NPAST
'I have a bicycle. (I don't have more expensive vehicles than a bicycle, e.g. a motor cycle).'
- (2) (Have all of the members, e.g. Taro, Hanako, Shiro, arrived at Chicago?)
Tarou-*wa* tsu-ita
Taro-TOP arrive-PAST
'Taro has arrived. (There is someone other than Taro who has not arrived at Chicago).'

(1) corresponds to scalar, and (2) to polarity, as he claims (1) to be optional. That is, if the speaker on the other hand would convey the information 'I *even* have a motor cycle', the scalar contrastive *wa* conveying 'I have a bicycle (but not more expensive vehicles)', corresponds to a 'mirror image' of the *even* version. (2), on the other hand, he claims not to be optional, as it is not possible to convey any information about the contrastive part (i.e. someone other than Taro has not arrived) that calls for 'even'.

3.6 Antithesis

As outlined throughout the paper, *wa* is the *topic marker*. The topic-, subject-, and contrast-marking *wa* with a separating function is as a whole referred to as the topic marker, whether the functions are distinguishable or not (e.g. thematic/contrastive with a separating function applying to both). Contradicting this peculiar particle are the case particles, including *ga* (the neutral description/exhaustive listing subject marker).

As mentioned above, explicating function(s) of *wa* is occasionally done in comparison to *ga*, and the differences between the two particles is said to be difficult to comprehend. But Shibatani (1990:264) claims this comparison to be unfortunate: "That is, the issues that must be addressed are those regarding the effect the particle *wa* brings to the whole sentence, rather than how the particle *wa* differs from the nominative particle *ga*." By analyzing the effect brought to the sentence by *wa*, we reached the fact that *wa* separates and isolates the marked element from other possibilities (see previous subsection).

However, Kuroda's different approach on *wa* (2005) concerns the functions of *wa* and *ga*, as he attempts to 'correct his misstep and fill the gaps' of his previous research. He presents the antitheses: "*Wa is not a topic marker*" respectively "*Ga is not a marker of new information*". As *wa* and *ga* are generally referred to topic- respectively focus-marker, he attempts to prove that *wa* on occasion may be used to mark focus.¹ As a preface, he explicates the concept of topic to be 'tied with the concept of focus' (referring to the Prague School). Focus is in turn distinguished into q-focus respectively p-focus.²

1. Who writes poetry?
2. *Bill* writes poetry (q- and p-focus)

3. Someone writes poetry
4. It is *Bill* who writes poetry (p-focus)

¹ The 'focus' function of *ga* corresponds to *ga* used in *wh*-questions and for exhaustive listing, see p. 10-11.

² "Let's call *focus* defined with reference to *wh*-questions, q-focus, and that defined with reference to presupposition p-focus." (Kuroda, 2005:5).

He claims (2) to correspond to q-focus, *and* to p-focus if the context contains presupposition: "[...] *wh*-question can or must be taken as presupposing the corresponding existential sentence, a q-focus is a p-focus. [...] (1) may be assumed to presuppose (4)."

However, as mentioned, *ga* generally adapt naturally within a matter of q-focus, (in either question or answer), as a subject marked by *ga* is said to convey new information (see p. 10-12). But as understood with the concept of 'exhaustive listing *ga*', a feeling of singling out the subject in focus may be implied. Hence, Kuroda (2005:7) claims that the subject which brings new information is not restricted to be marked by *ga*, if the subject is not to be singled out.

(27) a. (Q-focus: *ga*)

Dore *ga* dai-tokai
Which SBJ big-city

(27) b. (*Exhaustive listing *ga*/generic? *wa*)

Toukyou **ga/wa* dai-tokai da
Tokyo SBJ/TOP big-city COP-NPAST

(27a) is restricted to be marked by *ga*, while the subject in focus of (27b) marked by *ga* does not adapt naturally (if not meant to be singling out the subject). In the above subsection, the problem is explained arguing for statements coequal to (27b) to apply to the rules of 'generic *wa*', and is restricted to contain a context if marked by *ga* (see example 15b, p.11).

What Kuno did not mention about the restriction of using *wa* (regarding generic statements), is that *wa* must be used to mark a subject in focus (answering a *wh*-question), if the statement contains no context of singling out the subject from other possible ones. Hence, the subject in focus marked by *wa*, is answering a question and conveying new information, rather than being a 'generic topic'. However, when *wa* is marking subject in focus, (coequal to 27b), Kuroda refers to the function as 'anti-exhaustive listing', and claims the subject *not* to be a topic, whether marked by *wa* or *ga*.

Observable is that, (27b) indeed does apply to the rules of 'generic *wa*', as the statement explains a generic statement about the subject in focus (Tokyo). But this fact does not conflict the antithesis '*wa* can mark focus', as the generic statement also contains a subject in focus

(when answering the question). This fact may be compared to the conflict observed in the English example presented by Kuno: "Among John, Mary, and Tom, who is the oldest?" (i.e. answering this question is restricted to mark 'Tom' with *ga*, although Tom is anaphoric which applies to the rules of *wa*. See p.9). That is, both cases applies to a rule which generally restrict the subject to be marked by a specific particle, (new information *ga* and anaphoric *wa* respectively), but determined by context, the rule becomes insignificant.

With the above understanding, rather than being restricted to rules, the use of the particles are determined by semantics and context. The most known rules of *wa* may become insignificant depending on 'which construction becomes most unnatural', determined by the discourse context.

4. Conclusion

Whether different kinds of *wa* exist or not has not become perfectly evident throughout the paper, as it has become clear that depending on point of view, *wa* functions differently. *Wa* may, on the other hand, be considered as one particle with one function, which may bring different effects to the sentence depending on context and point of view. However, the different theories seem to be entailed in one or another way, as each theory accept that *wa* may function differently determined by discourse context. Each theory also appear to accept properties of *wa* presented by different theories and previous research, as scholars periodically compare and contradict different analyses including their own.

It is possible to bring the different theories to a final conclusion connected to one particle with one function, if we consider each effect brought to the sentence by *wa* to function in each theory. That is, to bring *wa* as a topic-, subject-, separating-, contrastive-, and anti-exhaustive listing-marker to function identically. Consider the example: 'Toukyou-*wa* dai-tokai da' [Tokyo is a large city]. Which effect is brought to the sentence by *wa* is restricted to be determined by the speaker's thoughts and intention. That is, if the speaker is thinking 'Speaking of Tokyo...', some scholars may consider this statement anaphoric (part of 'thematic *wa*'). On the other hand, the thought combined with the statement may apply to rules of generic- (part of 'thematic *wa*'), separating-, contrastive- and the anti-exhaustive listing *wa* as well. That is, the thought and the statement is: 1. a generic condition stated about Tokyo, 2. separating Tokyo from other possible conditions, 3. considering Tokyo to be a large city in contrast to smaller cities, 4. not claiming Tokyo to be the only large city.

However, with every rule applying to one statement, *wa* may bring the effects of all rules to one sentence. But to distinguish the different qualities (rules), and to divide *wa* into different classifications, one must find a case where only one or some of the rules apply to the sentence. One possible difference is observable within one and the same function of *wa*, namely 'thematic *wa*': '[Speaking of him...] he had fish for dinner.' This statement, with the subject marked by *wa*, applies to the anaphoric rules, but not to the generic rules (loc.cit. the rules of Kuroda, see

p.7), as it obviously does not convey a generic message. On the other hand, if one consider 'thematic *wa*' to be one function - all rules (of all types of *wa*) apply to this statement as well as to the previous, and whether 'thematic *wa*' is dividable into anaphoric and generic, is a dilemma of its own. The 'thematic *wa* dilemma' is to be solved if we manage to assemble the statement in question to apply to the anaphoric rules simultaneously as the generic rules. An identical dilemma is whether scalar- and polarity- contrastive function of *wa* may apply to one common statement.

However, since the functions of anaphoric/generic-*wa* respectively scalar/polarity-*wa* only imply within a matter of certain context, one may claim that the effect brought by *wa* to the statement is not determined by *wa* (as obviously comprehended throughout the paper), but by discourse context. If no discourse context exists, *wa* will come to bring one effect to one statement, with no implicature, and no specific type of *wa* may be detected. This is the *wa* I refer to, with no reference to discourse context. In order to discover the effect brought by *wa* - one may have to consider the mind (thoughts and knowledge) of the speaker: 'Watashi-*wa* gakusei da' [I am a student]. *Wa* alone brings no effect more than the simple translation, if no reference to a specific context is given, and the implicature may remain within the mind of the speaker (and possibly listener). Let us simply refer to this peculiar particle as *The topic particle*. The topic particle is seen within a topic sentence, which in turn is a discourse about something or someone (i.e. the topic) - and the implicature the discourse may consist of is not exclusively brought as an effect by *wa*; rather by discourse context and speaker's intention.

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