Information Flow and Particle Selection in Japanese Copular Sentences

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1. Introduction

1.1. Aim of this study

The notions of presupposition and focus have long been recognised as valid notions for describing the opposition between *wa* and *ga*, post-nominal particles marking the subject nominal in Japanese sentences. However, there are some previous studies, even among major ones, that apply the notions to phenomena that ought not to be discussed from this viewpoint in an attempt to explain *wa*-*ga* selection in Japanese copular sentences. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that Japanese copular sentences with the form ‘subject nominal + *ga* + predicate nominal’ which hitherto in the majority of earlier research have been analysed as sentences with a focus phrase + *ga* + presupposition phrase structure include sentences that do not have this type of semantic structure and then to present an alternative analysis which appropriately accounts for the particle selection in such copular sentences.

1.2. Definition of terms

Set out below are those terms that need to be clearly defined before proceeding with the study.

(i) a) Presupposition

b) Presupposition phrase
c) Focus phrase

(ii) a) Specifical sentence

b) Ga-specificational sentence
c) Wa-specificational sentence

(iii) Descriptive sentence

(i ) Presupposition, presupposition phrase and focus phrase

The proposition including a variable, which is assumed to be understood or understandable by the listener before interpreting a sentence, will be called the presupposition. The noun phrase that encodes the part of the proposition excluding the variable will be called the presupposition phrase. The constituent that assigns the value to the variable or the *wh*-phrase that encodes the variable will be called the focus phrase.

In (1) and (2) below, the elements underlined with a solid line are the presupposition phrases and those underlined with a wavy line are the focus phrases. (3) and (4) are the presuppositions of (1) and (2) respectively.

(1)A: Dare ga hoko no sekininsha ?

who SB here LK manager

Who is the manager here?

B: Kare ga hoko no sekininsha (da).

he SB here LK manager (COP)

He is the manager here.

(2)A: Koko no sekininsha wa dare ?

here LK manager TM who
Who is the manager here?

B: *Koko no sekininsha wa kanojo (da).*  
her LK manager she (COP)

She is the manager here.

(3) *X ga koko no sekininsha (da).*  
SB here LK manager (COP)

X is the manager here.

(4) *X ga koko no sekininsha (da).*  
SB here LK manager (COP)

X is the manager here.

(ii) *Specificational sentence, ga-specificational sentence and wa-specificational sentence*

Copular sentences with the form ‘focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase’ like (1) above and those with the structure ‘presupposition phrase + wa + focus phrase’ like (2) above will both be called *specificational sentences*. When we need to distinguish the two, the former will be called *ga-specificational sentences* and the latter *wa-specificational sentences* respectively. Broadly, the term *specificational sentence* employed in this study corresponds to the term *specificational sentence* generally used in previous studies on English copular sentences (Higgins (1979) and Declerck (1988) among others).

(5) *Descriptive sentence*

Copular sentences with the form ‘A wa B,’ whose function is to attribute the information expressed by B to the referent of A as in (5) below, will be called *descriptive sentences*.

(5) a) *Kare wa *gakusei desu.*  
he TM student COP

He is a student.

b) *Are wa Higuchi-kun janai ka?*  
that TM COP: NEG Q

Isn’t that Higuchi?

Broadly, the term *descriptive sentence* adopted in this study corresponds to the term *predicational sentence* generally used in previous studies on English copular sentences (Higgins (1979) and Declerck (1988) among others).

1.3. Organization

The organization of this paper is as follows. Following the introductory section, section 2 examines sentences of the type underlined in (6) to (8) below.

(6) (Unexpectedly/ out of the blue)  
a) *Wasureteta wa, Kore ga sankooshō to mondaishū.*  
forget: PST FP this SB reference-book and collection-of-problems
Oh, I forgot. This is the reference book and the collection of problems.

b) Hai, *hore ga yakusoku no okane.*

Here you are. This is the money I promised.

(7) ‘Hora, Shiina, *are ga garaa da,* unten seki no Maarii ga

INT those SB gala COP driver seat LK SB

*haneagaru yoon a koe de itta.* Tookyoo no boku-no

jump like voice with say: PST Tokyo LK my (LK)

*shigoto-ba de yoku Maarii ni oshiete-moratteita* work-place at often by inform: GER-receive: GER: RSC: PST

Oosutoraria ni yatarani takusan iru shiroi oomu no mure Australia in excessively many exist white parrot LK herd

*ga me no mae no dooro suresureni tondeiku no ga* SB eye LK in-front LK road very-close-to go-flying NOM SB

*mieta.* see-can: PST

‘Look, Shiina, they’re galas,’ said Marie in an excited voice in the driver’s seat. I saw a group of the white parrots that are everywhere in Australia skimming over the road right ahead, which Marie had told me a lot about

The sentences underlined in (6) to (8) are copular sentences where the subject nominal is marked by *ga*. Sentences of this type are semantically characterised by the fact that they entail that the referent of the predicate nominal has been mentioned previously in some way or other. As typified by the statement in Teramura (1989), quoted in [1] below, the majority of earlier research has hitherto regarded sentences of this type as those with a focus phrase + *ga* + presupposition phrase structure.


(9) a) *Watashi wa Tai kara hita gakusei de...*

I TM Thailand from come: PST student COP: GER


(8) A: *Ano hito wa dare?*

that person TM who

Who’s that person?

B: *Ano hito ga Suzuki-sensei da yo.* that person SB -teacher COP FP

That’s Mr. Suzuki.

A: *Ano hito ga Suzuki-sensei ka. Hajimete mita.* that person SB -teacher FP for-the-first-time see: PST

Oh, that’s Mr. Suzuki. This is the first time I have actually seen him.
I’m a student from Thailand and ...

b) *Koko wa gakusei no jishū-shitsu desu.*

This TM student LK self-study-room COP

This is students’ self-study room.

Ueno ‘wa’ no tohoro ni ‘ga’ ga tsukawareru no wa ‘Tai kara no ryū-gakusei,’ ‘gakusei no jishū shitsu’ ga maemotte nanraka no jijoo de wadai ni natteite (Mikami no indai), sono kotoe tosite ‘watashi’ ‘koko’ ga, fukusu no kōhosha no naka kara erabareru baaai dake dearu. Ippan ni, jutsugo ga ‘meishi-da/desu’ no katachi ni natteiru baaai, ‘X ga’ to suru to, ueno yoona, jutsugo ga indai to natteiru, haita (sooki) no bun ni naru.

In the examples above, *ga* can be used in place of *wa* only if *Tai kara no gakusei* or *gakusei no jishū-shitsu* has somehow been discussed previously and *watashi* or *koko* is chosen as the answer from more than one candidate (Mikami’s *indai* [lit. hidden topic, Mikami(1953)]). Generally, if ‘X ga’ is used when the predicate takes the form ‘noun + da/desu,’ the sentence is read as *haita* [lit. exclusion] or *sooki* [exhaustive listing (Kuroda(1965))], where the predicate is the *indai* as above.

Section 2 argues against the generally held view, typified by the statement in Teramura (1989), which regards sentences of the type underlined in (6) to (8) as having a *focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure.* Section 3 proposes an alternative analysis which suggests that the *wa-ga* opposition between sentences of this type and *descriptive sentences* as in (10) and

(10) a) *Kore wa rei-no sankoosho to mondaishuu yo.*

this TM the reference-book and collection-of-problems COP FP

This is the reference book and collection of problems.

b) *Kore wa yakuosoku no okane yo.*

this TM promise LK money COP FP

This is the money I promised.

(11) a) *Are wa garaa da.*

that TM gala COP

They are galas.

b) *Ano hito wa Suzuki-sensei da yo.*

that person TM -teacher COP FP

That is Mr. Suzuki.

Section 4 demonstrates that the analysis proposed in Section 3 appropriately accounts for the particle selection in another two types of Japanese copular sentence, and shows the advantages of the proposed analysis.


This section presents two grounds against the analysis that reduces the particle selection in sentences of the type underlined in (6) to (8) to the
notion of presupposition and focus. First, let us consider the following example.

(12) A: *Ano hito wa dare?*  
that person TM who  

Who’s that person?

B: *Ano hito ga Tanaka-sensei da yo.*  
that person SB -teacher COP FP  

That’s Mr. Tanaka.

A: *Ano hito ga Tanaka-sensei ka.*  
that person SB -teacher FP  

Oh, that’s Mr. Tanaka.

The sentence underlined with a solid line in (12) is a sentence that is recognised as the same type as the sentences underlined in (6) to (8). As shown with a wavy line in (12), this type of sentence can be used as an answer to a descriptive sentence asking for information about the referent of the subject nominal (*Ano hito*). If the utterance underlined with a solid line in (12) has a focus phrase + *ga* + presupposition phrase structure, the utterance ought to be an unnatural utterance based on the wrong presupposition. However, this is contrary to the fact. In this connection, let us consider the following examples.

(13) A: *Meron tte donna kudamono?*  
melon TM what-kind-of fruit  

What kind of fruit is a melon?

B: *Kono-mae obaachan no tokoro de oishii kudamono*  
not-long-ago grandmother LK place at delicious fruit  

*tabeta daroo. Are ga meron da yo.*  
eat: PST didn’t-you that SB melon COP FP  

Not long ago, you ate some nice fruit at your grandmother’s place, didn’t you? That’s a melon.

A: *Are ga meron ka. Shiranakatta.*  
that SB melon FP know: NEG: PST  

Oh, I see, that is a melon. I didn’t know that.

(14) A: *Otoosan, nyuudoogumo tte nani?*  
Dad thunderhead TM what  

Dad, what’s a thunderhead?

B: *(Onomuroni, sora o sashite)*  
suddenly sky DO point-to: GER  

*Are ga nyuudoogumo da yo.*  
that SB thunderhead COP FP
(Suddenly pointing to the sky)
That’s a thunderhead.

The sentences underlined with a solid line in (13) and (14) above are recognised as the same type as the sentences underlined with a solid line in (6) to (8) and (12)\(^2\). As shown in (13) and (14) above, sentences of this type can also be used as the answer to a **descriptive sentence** asking for information about the referent of the predicate nominal (eenron/ nyudoogumo). Thus, sentences of the type underlined in (6) to (8), which hitherto in the majority of prior research have been analysed as sentences with a **focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure**, can not only be used as the answer to a **descriptive sentence** asking for information about the referent of the subject nominal but also be used as the answer to a sentence asking for information about the referent of the predicate nominal. It is unnatural to analyse sentences showing such behaviour as equivalent to **ga-specification sentences**, whose function is solely to specify the value for the variable \(X\) in the proposition ‘\(X\) ga B.’

The validity of this claim is also supported by the following observation. If we closely examine the sentences underlined with a solid line in (6) to (8) and (12) to (14) without any preconceived ideas, we can see that all these sentences not only communicate who or what the referent of the predicate nominal is, but also communicate who or what the referent of the subject nominal is. For example, the sentences underlined in (6) can be construed as informing the listener that the entities before the listener are the reference book and the collection of problems and the money respectively that were mentioned previously, and at the same time they can be construed as informing the listener that the reference book and the collection of problems and the money in question are the things before the listener. Similarly, the sentences underlined in (7) and (8) can be construed as informing the listener that the things and the person before the listener are birds called galas and Mr. Suzuki respectively, and at the same time they can be construed as informing the listener that the birds called galas and the person called Mr. Suzuki are the things and the person before the listener respectively. The same applies to the sentences underlined with a solid line in (12) to (14). Thus, sentences of this type have the function of attributing the information expressed by the predicate nominal to the referent of the subject nominal and at the same time attributing the information expressed by the subject nominal to the referent of the predicate nominal. This phenomenon cannot be explained at all by the analysis that regards sentences of this type as having a **focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure**. Conversely, it will be natural to consider that it is precisely because sentences of this type do not have a **focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure** that they allow ‘the two-way passage of information,’ and that it is precisely because they allow ‘the two-way passage of information’ that sentences of this type can be used for the answer to a sentence asking for information about the referent of the predicate nominal as well as the subject nominal.

This is the first ground against the analysis that attempts to explain the particle selection in sentences of the type underlined in (6) to (8) from the viewpoint of **presupposition** and **focus**.

Moving on to the second ground, let us consider the following examples.

\[(15)\ A: \text{Ano hito wa dare?} \]
\[\text{that person TM who}\]

Who’s that person?
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B: ??Tanaka-sensei wa ano hito da yo.
   -teacher TM that person COP FP

??Mr. Tanaka is that person.

A: Ano hito ga Tanaka-sensei ka.
   that person SB -teacher FP

Oh, that’s Mr. Tanaka.

(16) A: Meron tte donna kudamonoo ?
   melon TM what-kind-of fruit

What kind of fruit is a melon?

B: Kono-mae obaachan no tokoro de, oishii kudamono
   not-long-ago grandmother LK place at delicious fruit

tabeta daroo. ??Meron (te-iu-no) wa are da yo.
   eat: PST didn’t-you melon (QT-call-NOM) TM that COP FP

Not long ago, you ate some nice fruit at your grandmother’s place, didn’t you? ??A melon is that.

A: Are ga meron ka. Shiranakatta.
   that SB melon FP know: NEG: PST

Oh, I see, that is a melon. I didn’t know that.

(17) A: Otoosan, nyuudoogumo tte nani ?
   Dad thunderhead TM what

Dad, what’s a thunderhead?

B: (Omomuroni, sora o sashite)
   suddenly sky DO point-to: GER

?Nyuddogumo (te-iu-no) wa are da yo.
   thunderhead (QT-call-NOM) TM that COP FP

(Suddenly pointing to the sky)

??A thunderhead is that.

The sentences underlined with a solid line in (15) to (17) are wa-specificational sentences occurring in the same discourse environment as the sentences underlined with a solid line in (12) to (14) respectively. Wa-specificational sentences are sentences of the type that are plausibly analysed as having a presupposition phrase + wa + focus phrase structure. If the utterances underlined with a solid line in (12) to (14) above are sentences with a focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure, in other words, if they are sentences of the type whose function is solely to specify the variable X in the proposition ‘X ga B,’ then the wa-specificational sentences occurring in the same environment as these ought to be natural utterances. However, this is contrary to the facts as shown in (15) to (17) above. This phenomenon cannot be explained at all by the analysis that regards utterances underlined with a solid line in (12) to (14) as having a focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure.

Thus far two grounds have been presented that challenge the analysis
that regards sentences of the type underlined in (6) to (8) and (12) to (14) as equivalent to *ga-specificational sentences*. Note that the particle selection in sentences of this type is not something that can be explained from the viewpoint of so-called *new information* and *old information* in the sense of whether or not the referent of the predicate nominal is something that has been discussed previously, or whether or not the referent of the predicate nominal is being *activated* in the consciousness of the listener. To see this, let us consider the following example.

(18) (When gossiping about A’s wife)

A: *Asoko-ni iru josei wa dare da?* 
there (in) exist woman TM who COP

Who’s that woman over there?

B: *??Are ga omae-no yome-san da yo.* 
that SB your (LK) wife COP FP

That’s your wife.

A: *Uwasa-o-sure ba, kage to wa masani kono koto da na.* 
gossip if shadow QT TM just this thing COP FP

It’s just as they say, ‘Speak of the devil and it will appear.’

In the case of the sentence underlined with a solid line in (18), the referent of the predicate nominal has been mentioned in the conversation immediately before. Therefore, the referent of the predicate is ‘something discussed previously’ and is also ‘something highly activated in the consciousness of the listener.’ If the generalization like ‘Use *ga* if the referent of the predicate nominal has been discussed previously’ or ‘Use *ga* if the referent of the predicate nominal is being activated’ were valid, then the utterance underlined with a solid line in (18) would be acceptable. However, this is contrary to the fact. This observation will make it clear that the particle selection in utterances of the type underlined in (6) to (8) cannot be explained from the viewpoint of the so-called *new information* and *old information* in the sense of *activation*.

3. Alternative proposal

The previous section presented two grounds against the analysis that regards sentences of the type underlined in (6) to (8) as sentences with a *focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure*, and also confirmed that the particle selection in sentences of this type cannot be explained from the viewpoint of *new information* and *old information* in the sense of *activation*. This section puts forward an alternative proposal to overcome the difficulties with the earlier research that was considered in the previous section.

The alternative analysis that we present is as follows.

[2] When the referent of the subject nominal and the referent of the predicate nominal are cognitively linked and as a result, information is assumed to be added or to have been added to the referent of the predicate nominal, then the subject nominal is marked by *ga*.

Based on [2] above, the phenomenon related to the particle selection in the sentences underlined with a solid line in (6) to (8) and (12) to (14) can be explained as follows. All the sentences in question are sentences of the type that reflect the initial state of the participants’ knowledge about the
referent of the predicate nominal. That is, these sentences feel natural only if the listener knows of the existence of the referent of the predicate nominal, for example, through hearing about it from someone or reading about it in a book, and the speaker presumes that the listener does not have enough knowledge of the entity to be able to perceptibly identify it as such. When the initial state of the listener’s knowledge is such a state, if a copular sentence is uttered and the referent of the predicate nominal, whose existence has already been registered in the long-term memory of the listener, and the actual thing of it, which the subject nominal indicates, are cognitively linked through the linking function of *ga*, the listener comes to understand what the referent of the predicate nominal is like. In such a case, the listener’s level of knowledge about the referent of the predicate nominal in his or her long-term memory increases to the extent that the listener is able to perceptibly identify it as such. Generalization [2] states that in such cases, the subject nominal of the copular sentence is marked with *ga*. Note that generalization [2] can also encompass in the range of its description the cases where the referent of the subject nominal and the referent of the predicate nominal are cognitively linked and as a result information is added to both the referents of predicate nominal and the subject nominal. Therefore, generalization [2] accommodates in the range of its description those sentences that allow the ‘two-way passage of information’ like those underlined with a solid line in (6) to (8) and (12) to (14).

Our analysis can also naturally account for the asymmetrical behaviour between sentences of this type and *specificational sentences* observed in the previous section, because according to this analysis, sentences of this type are, unlike *ga-specificational sentences*, not analysed as sentences with a *focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure*. In addition, adoption of our analysis has the advantage of enabling us to describe the particle selection in *descriptive sentences* from a unified point of view as in [3] below.

[3] If the referent of the subject nominal and the referent of the predicate nominal are cognitively linked and as a result information is assumed to be added or to have been added only to the referent of the subject nominal, then the subject nominal is marked by *wa*.

Based on generalization [3] above, the phenomenon related to the particle selection in the sentence underlined with a solid line in (18), which cannot be explained from the viewpoint of *new information* and *old information* in the sense of *activation*, can be accounted for as follows. In the case of (18), participant A, of course, is considered to know his own wife to the extent that he can perceptibly identify her. Therefore, even though participant B informs participant A that the person in question is the wife of participant A, his level of knowledge about his own wife does not increase. Generalization [3] correctly predicts that in such a case the subject nominal is marked with *wa*. Thus our analysis enables us to capture the particle selection in descriptive sentences such as (18) above from a unified point of view.

4. Further advantages of our analysis

The previous section proposed generalizations [2] and [3] from the viewpoint of *information flow* as an alternative proposal to the analysis which claims that sentences of the type underlined in (6) to (8) have a *focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure*. It has also demonstrated that the proposed analysis makes it possible to explain the phenomenon observed in (18), concerning the particle selection in descriptive sentences, which cannot be explained from the viewpoint of *new information* and *old information* in the sense of *activation*. This section provides further
support for the proposed analysis by showing that generalization [2]
emphases in the range of its description another two types of Japanese
copular sentence whose particle selection cannot be explained from the
viewpoint of presupposition and focus.

4.1. Advantage 1

The first type of sentence that generalization [2] is applicable to is the
type of sentence underlined in (19) below.

   by strongly say-PASS:GER be-disappointed: PST FP

I was disappointed by Mr. Yamada’s scathing comments.

B: Nandemo hantaisuru no ga Yamada-san da.
   everything oppose NOM SB COP

Gakkarisuru koto wa nai yo.
be-disappointed NOM TM NEG FP

Mr. Yamada is a type of person who opposes everything. It’s
nothing to be disappointed about.

The sentence underlined in (19) above is a copular sentence of the type
whose subject nominal is marked by ga. Amano (1998) proposes an analysis
that reduces the particle selection in this type of sentence down to the
notion of presupposition and focus. Amano (1998) claims that the under-
lined sentence in (19) is zenkoo shooten bun (lit. preceding-argument
[= subject NP] focus sentence), sentence with a focus phrase + ga +

presupposition phrase structure, where the proposition ‘Yamada-san ga X
na hito’ (Mr. Yamada is an X-type person) exists in the listener’s mind
prior to the utterance’. She claims that the subject nominal is marked with
gu because the subject nominal is a focus phrase. However, as demonstrated
below, it is inappropriate to analyse even such a sentence as the one
underlined in (19) as having a focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase
structure. Let us first consider the following example.

(20) Amarini tsugi-kara-tsugi-e-to Nihon-gun no bankoo o
   excessively one-after-another Japanese-army LK barbaric-act DO

kik-as -areteiru uchini, jibun ga jookyaku zen’n kara
hear-CUS-PASS: PROG as oneself SB passenger all from

semer-areteiru yoona kibun ni nari, nani o to
blame-PASS: PROG like feeling RS become:GER what DO QT

hampatsushita rashii. Ippooteki-ni nanika o iw-areru to,
retort: PST I-guess one-sided something DO say-PASS when

naiyoo ga nan-de-aroo-to, hampatsusuru no ga watashi
content SB whatever-it-may-be retort NOM SB my

no shuusei na no da.
(LK) habit COP NOM COP

I was being told over and over again about the barbaric acts of the
Japanese army, so much so that I felt as if I were being blamed by all
the passengers and I retorted, thinking ‘What the hell?’ Whenever
somewhere says something without giving me a chance to talk back. I get offended and talk back. That is a habit of mine.


The sentence underlined in (20) is a sentence that a native speaker of Japanese will be sure to recognize as functionally and semantically the same type as the sentence underlined in (19). In the case of the sentence underlined in (20), however, it is altogether inconceivable, judging from the preceding context, that the proposition, ‘X ga watashi no shuusei’ (X is a habit of mine), exists in the listener’s mind prior to the utterance, and it is impossible to recognise the sentence underlined in (20) as a sentence with a focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure. Therefore, the analysis of Amano (1998) does not adequately explain the particle selection in the sentence underlined in (20) above, in spite of the fact that it is considered to be semantically and functionally the same type as the sentence underlined in (19). Our analysis from the viewpoint of information flow, on the other hand, naturally accounts for the particle selection in both the sentences, regardless of whether or not they have a focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure.

Below is another example where a similar problem with Amano’s analysis is observed.

(21) Hoshi wa kono kokoryoi hibiki o motsu katsuwon o,
     TM this pleasant sound DO have pronunciation DO
     kuchi no naka de kurihaeshite kara, tsukue no ue no
     mouth LK inside (in) repeat: GER after desk LK on LK

memo ni kakitomena. *Kentoo subeki bun’ya ga*
notepad in write-down: PST examine have-to field SB
ichioo sebamatta wake datta. *Dewe, arukaroido*
for-the-time-being narrow: PST NOM COP; PST then alkaloïd
o yaru toshitara, nani kara te-o-tsuheru beki da roo
DO do if what from start-with should COP I-wonder
ka. Sono kotae o eru ni wa amari jikan o
Q the answer DO obtain in-order-to TM much time DO
yooshinakatta. *Moruhine dearu. Keshi no kajitsu ni mijukuna*
need: NEG: PST morphine COP poppy LK seed on unripe
uchini kizu-o-tsuheru to, nyuujo no eki ga
within-the-period scratch if milky LK liquid SB
nijimidete-kuru. (a)Kore ga ahen deari, sore no motsu
ooze-out: GER-come this SB opium COP: GER it SB posses
shimpi-teki to mo ieru masui sayoo wa higenzen
mystic QT also say-can anaesthesia action TM B.C.
kara jinrui ni shir-are riyouo-arete kita.
since mankind to known-PASS use-PASS: GER come: PST

(b)Kono shu-seibun ga moruhine na no dearu.
this main-ingredient SB morphine COP NOM COP
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Kinsei ni natte kagaku ga susumi,
modern-times RS become: GER science SB progress: GER

moruhine no chuushitsu ni seikoshite irai, kono yakuhin
morphine LK extraction in succeed: GER since this drug

wa gekitsuu o tomonau byooki no suküi-no-kami to
TM acute-pain DO accompany illness LK the-saviour RS

nari, mata shujutsu ni-yoru chiryoo no hitsuyooohin
become: GER and operation by treatment LK necessity

to mo natta.
RS also become: PST

After repeating to himself the word with this pleasant sound, Hoshi wrote it down in the notepad on the desk. The field he had to examine had narrowed for the time being. ‘Now if I am going to study alkaloids, what should I start with?’ It didn’t take long to come up with an answer to that. Morphone. If you scratch an unripe poppy seed, a milk-like liquid oozes out. This is opium and its anaesthetic or mystic action was known and used by mankind before the birth of Christ. The main ingredient of opium is morphine. In modern times, since mankind’s successful extraction of morphine through scientific progress, this drug has become the saviour of acutely painful illness and a necessity for surgical operations.

(Hoshi, Shin’ichi. Jimmin wa yowashi, kanri wa tsuyoshi.

Sentences (21a) and (21b) are sentences which a native speaker of Japanese will be sure to feel are semantically and functionally the same type. However, if we analyse them from the viewpoint of presupposition and focus like Amano (1998), problems such as the following arise. Sentence (21b), on the one hand, can be analysed as zenkoo shooten bun, sentence with a focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure, because it occurs in a context explaining what kind of thing the referent of the predicate nominal (morphine) is. In the case of sentence (21a), on the other hand, it is totally inconceivable that the proposition ‘what kind of thing opium is’ exists in the listener’s mind before the utterance and therefore it is impossible to recognise sentence (21a) as a sentence with a focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure. Thus, Amano’s analysis cannot explain the particle selection in sentence (21a), which is considered to be semantically and functionally the same type as sentence (21b). Our analysis from the viewpoint of information flow, on the other hand, is able to account for the particle selection as well as the semantic and functional property that they share.

4.2. Advantage 2

The second type of sentence that generalization (2) can be applied to is the type of sentence underlined in (22) and (23) below.

(22) (Talking about the circumstances that led him into working at Ichiban Zushi)

Sooitta koo-inssho to akogare ga atta mono
such good-impression and admiration SB exist: PST NOM

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(25) - 55 -

-da kara, yakyuu to daigaku o akiramete shuushoku COP because baseball and university DO give-up-on: GER work

-o ketsuishita toki ‘hataraku nara sushi-ya da,’ to DO decide: PST when work if sushi-shop COP QT

-sugu-ni omotta. Sore-de koo-san no immediately think: PST So high-school-third-grade LK

-tannin no sensei ni, ‘Sushi-ya ni naritai n desu in-charge LK teacher ID sushi-chef RS want-to-become NOM COP

-kedo, dokoka ii mise de shugyoo-dekinai deshoo because somewhere good shop at be-trained-can: NEG COP ka,’ to soodanshita ra, ‘Chodo-ii mise ga aru. Q QT ask-for-advice: PST when just-right shop SB exist

-Boku-no oshiego ga otoosan to-issho-ni sushi-ya o my (LK) (ex)pupil SB father together-with sushi-shop DO

-yatteru n da. Shookaisuru kara ittegoran.’ Sensei do: PROG NOM COP introduce so go-check-out: IMP teacher

-ni soo iw-are osewa-ni-naru koto ni-shita no by so tell-PASS: GER be-taken-care-of NOM decide: PST NOM

-ga Ichiban Zushi da. SB No.1 Sushi COP

Since I held them in such admiration, when I gave up on baseball and university and decided to work, I immediately thought, ‘If I’m going to work, then I’ll be a sushi chef.’ And I asked my high-school third-grade homeroom teacher for advice, saying, ‘I want to be a sushi chef. Do you know of any good restaurants where I could learn the skill?’ Then my teacher said, ‘I know just the place. One of my ex-students runs a sushi restaurant with his father. I’ll introduce you, so go check it out.’ So, on the advice of my teacher, I decided to work for the restaurant. That is Ichiban Zushi.

(Morimoto, Masaharu. No.I. Fuyoosha, 1999. Underlining mine.)

(23) (In the context of talking about the circumstances that led to Hanshin’s involvement with Tamai’s owner)

Toosho, Aki-shi ni wa ooki-na hoteru ga naku, senshu-to-begin-with -city in TM big hotel SB exist: NEG player-
tachi wa Yasu-choo ya Geisei-mura no hoteru ni shuuhaku PL TM -town or -village LK hotel at stay

-shiteita. Kore-de wa Aki no hankagai ni kane ga ochinai do: PST this-way TM LK downtown in money SB drop: NEG
toi koto de, shi-nai ni hoteru o kensetsushite wa APO NOM COP: GER city(-in) in hotel DO construct: GER TM
Information Flow and Particle Selection in Japanese Copular Sentences

\( \text{doo ka to natta. Soko-de nanori-o-agera no ga Aki} \)
how Q QT become: PST then step-forward: PST NOM SB

\( \text{shushin no Tamai no oonaa de. hensetsushita hotaru} \)
come-from LK LK owner COP: GER construct: PST hotel

\( \text{o 85-nen kara Hanshin ga tsukau yoo ni natta} \)
DO 85-year since SB use state RS become: PST

\( \text{no desu.} \)
NOM COP

To begin with, there were no big hotels in Aki-city and the players used to stay in hotels in Yasu-choo or Geisei-mura. On the grounds that this way, no money would be spent in Aki’s shopping district, it was suggested that a hotel be built in the city. Then a man stepped forward. That was Tamai’s owner, from Aki, and Hanshin began using the newly built hotel in 1985.

\( \text{(Shuukan posuto. Shoogakkan, 29 Oct. 1999. Underlining mine.)} \)

The underlined sentences in (22) and (23) are both sentences of the type that function as an immediate explanation of the proposition that includes the referent of the predicate nominal as its main element. That is, the underlined sentence in (22) functions as an immediate explanation of the proposition ‘What were the circumstances that led him into working at Ichiban-Zushi?’ while the underlined sentence in (23) functions as an immediate explanation of the proposition ‘What were the circumstances that led to Hanshin’s involvement with Tamai’s owner?’ In the past, very little research has been done on this type of sentence\(^6\). From the viewpoint of information flow, the particle selection in this type of sentence can be accounted for in the following way. When we interpret sentences of this type, we recognise the information flow as follows. In (22) and (23) above, the information expressed in the preceding context of the underlined sentence is first passed on to the subject nominal. And then by linking the subject nominal and the predicate nominal with \( ga \), the information that the subject nominal has taken over from the preceding context is passed on to the predicate nominal. And then with the help of our pragmatic inference, the sentence functions as an immediate explanation of the proposition that includes as its main participant the referent of the predicate nominal. Generalization [2] correctly predicts that in such a case, the subject nominal is marked with \( ga \).

The validity of this generalization is further supported by the following observation. Section 3 proposed generalization [3], which forms a complementary relationship with generalization [2]. As shown with a solid line in (24) and (25) below, generalization [3] correctly predicts that the subject nominal is marked with \( wa \) in the type of sentence that functions as an immediate explanation of the proposition that includes the referent of its subject nominal as its main element.

(24) A: \text{Anata wa naze Suzuki sensei o shitteru no? Doko-de you TM why -teacher DO know NOM where}

\( \text{shiriatta no?} \)
get-acquainted: PST NOM

How do you know Mr. Suzuki? Where did you meet him?
Information Flow and Particle Selection
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(29) – 59 –

B: *Suzuki-sensei wa boku-no kookoo san-nen no toki*

teacher TM my (LK) high-school third-grade LK time

no tannin no sensei datta n desu.
LK in-charge LK teacher COP: PST NOM COP

Mr. Suzuki was my homeroom teacher in the third grade at high school.

(25) A: *Kimi wa okusan to doko-de shirattaa no?*

you TM wife with where get-acquainted: PST NOM

Where did you meet your wife?

B: *Kanojo wa kookoo no dookyuuusei datta n desu.*

she TM high-school LK classmate COP: PST NOM COP

She was in the same grade at high school.

Thus, generalizations [2] and [3] have the advantage of enabling us to explain the particle selection in the two types of Japanese copular sentences with a proposition explanatory function from a unified viewpoint.

5. Summary

In this study it was revealed that sentences with the form ‘subject nominal + ga + predicate nominal’ which hitherto in the majority of previous studies have been analysed as sentences with a focus phrase + ga + presupposition phrase structure include sentences that do not in fact have this type of semantic structure. And then an alternative analysis was proposed from the viewpoint of information flow, reiterated below, in order to overcome the problems with the generally held view.

[2] When the referent of the subject nominal and the referent of the predicate nominal are cognitively linked and as a result, information is assumed to be added or to have been added to the referent of the predicate nominal, then the subject nominal is marked by *ga*.

[3] If the referent of the subject nominal and the referent of the predicate nominal are cognitively linked and as a result information is assumed to be added or to have been added only to the referent of the subject nominal, then the subject nominal is marked by *wa*.

In addition, empirical support was provided for the proposed analysis by showing that generalization [2] above encompasses in its descriptive range another two types of Japanese copular sentence.

Notes

1. The following abbreviations are used in this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APO</th>
<th>Appositional particle</th>
<th>NOM</th>
<th>Nominalizer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Copular</td>
<td>PASS</td>
<td>Passive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUS</td>
<td>Causative</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Direct object marker</td>
<td>PROG</td>
<td>Progressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GER</td>
<td>Gerund</td>
<td>PST</td>
<td>Past tense / Perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FP</td>
<td>Final particle</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Question marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>Interjection</td>
<td>QT</td>
<td>Quotative marker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is often claimed that when sentences with the form ‘subject nominal +
*ga* + predicate nominal’ are used in cases where the referent of the subject
nominal is a subcategory of the referent of the predicate nominal, such
sentences are construed as *ga*-specification sentences (Mikami (1953)
and Saji (1973) among others). However, sentences such as those under-
lined with a solid line in (6) to (8) in the text reveal that this is not always
the case. As seen in these examples, if a copular sentence is used to show
what the referent of the predicate nominal in general is like by indicating
an actual example of the referent of the predicate, it suffices to indicate
a prototypical member of the category expressed by the predicate
nominal. In that case, the sentence is not construed as a *ga-
specification sentence.*

The generalizations in Noda (1996) quoted in [i] and [ii] below are typical
of those analyses applying the notion of this type to the explanation of
*wa-ga* selection, and the sentences in ① below are sentences of the type
most frequently quoted in this type of analysis.

[i] *Shugo ga mae ni dete-kita meishi to onaji deari, sono meishi ni tsuite
nanika o tsutaetai toki wa, shugo ni ‘wa’ o tsukeru.*

If the subject is the same as a noun that has occurred before, and you
wish to communicate something about the noun, attach ‘*wa*’ to the

If the subject is a noun such as *he, she, this, this + NP or that + NP,*
referring to the referent of a noun that has occurred before, and
you wish to communicate something about the noun, attach ‘*wa*’ to the

① (Sentence with a first person subject)

*Kinoo, ii tenki datta node, watashi (wa/? ga),
yesterday good weather COP: PST because I TM SB*
Yesterday, as it was good weather, I went to the park.

This type of new information and old information is generally applicable to the analysis of *wa-ga* selection in sentences with a verbal predicate. However, as is clear from the observation made throughout this study, this type of notion is rarely applicable to particle selection in copular sentences. Nevertheless, there are a number of analyses overlooking this fact, as typified by Noda’s (1996) generalization quoted above. Another typical example overlooking this fact is Hinds (1987). He forcefully applies the analysis proposed by Prince (1981), which is typical research applying this notion to linguistic phenomena in English, to the analysis of *wa-ga* selection in Japanese sentences without taking this fact into account. The invalidity of the factual observation in Hinds (1987) is pointed out by Sunagawa (1996).

Sentences of the type underlined in (19) are called *Dootei bun* (identification sentence) in Nishiyama (1993) and Kumamoto (1995), the definitions of which are shown in [iii] and [iv] respectively.

[iii] *Dootei bun* (Nishiyama (1993))

*A no shijī-taishō ni tsuite, sore o tano taishō kara shikibetsusuru jooken (sunawachi A no dootei jooken) o B no shijī taishō ni-yotte shiteisuru. B no shijī-taishō wa kōtai de wa naku, tokuchō no gotoki chuushō-teki na mono dearu.*

The condition that distinguishes the referent of A from other objects

(iv) *Dootei bun* (Kumamoto (1995))

*A wa B no tokuchō kijutsu o mitasu ‘mono’ dearu to noberu koto ni-yotte, A no sji-taishō o ta kara shibetsu shite ninteisuru.*

The referent of A is recognised and differentiated from other objects by stating that A is ‘something’ that meets the description of a distinctive feature of B.

Amano (1998) analyses this type of sentence as having a *presupposition phrase + ga + focus phrase structure*. See Higuchi (2002) for detailed arguments against Amano’s analysis.

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