

# 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) *Specificational 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<sup>1</sup>.

- (1)A: Dare ga koko no sekininsha ?  
           who SB here LK manager

Who is the manager here?

- B: Kare ga koko 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).  
here LK manager TM 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 the literature on English copular sentences (Higgins (1979) and Declerck (1988) among others).

(iii) *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 sankoosho to mondaishuu.  
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, kore ga yakusoku no okane.*  
here-you-are this SB promise LK money

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 yoona 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

at my work place in Tokyo. (Shiina, Makoto. *Neppuu tairiku*. Koodansha, 1991. Underlining mine.)

(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.

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*.

[1] Teramura (1989: 155)

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

I TM Thailand from come: PST student COP: GER

I'm a student from Thailand and ...

- b) *Koko wa gakusei no jishuu-shitsu desu.*  
this TM student LK self-study-room COP

This is students' self-study room.

*Ueno 'wa' no tokoro ni 'ga' ga tsukawareru no wa 'Tai kara no ryuu-gakusei,' 'gakusei no jishuu shitsu' ga maemotte nanraka no jijoo de wadai ni natteite (Mikami no indai), sono kotae tosite 'watashi' 'koko' ga, fukusuu no koohosha no naka kara erabareru baai dake dearu. Ippan ni, jutsugo ga 'meishi+da/desu' no katachi ni natteiru baai, '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 jishuu-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

(11) below can be accounted for from the viewpoint of *information flow*.

- (10) a) *Kore wa rei-no sankoosho to mondaishuu yo.*  
this TM the reference-book and collection-of-problems FP

This is the reference book and collection of problems.

- b) *Kore wa yakusoku no okane yo.*  
this TM promise LK money 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.

## 2. Problems of Teramura (1989)

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: (Omomuroni, 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)<sup>2</sup>. 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 (*meron/ nyuudoogumo*). 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-specificational 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: Ano hito wa dare?  
that person TM who

Who's that person?

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 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. ??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

?Nyuudougumo (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<sup>3</sup>. 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] encompasses 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.

(19) A: Yamada-san ni kitsuku iw-arete gakkarishita yo.  
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 underlined 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<sup>4</sup>. She claims that the subject nominal is marked with *ga* 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

somebody says something without giving me a chance to talk back,  
I get offended and talk back. That is a habit of mine.

(Fujiwara, Masahiko. *Wakaki suugakusha no Amerika*.  
Shinchoosha, 1981. Underlining 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 kokoroyoi hibiki o motsu hatsuon o,*  
TM this pleasant sound DO have pronunciation DO

*kuchi no naka de kurikaeshite kara, tsukue no ue no*  
mouth LK inside (in) repeat: GER after desk LK on LK

*memo ni kakitometa. Kentoo subeki bun’ya ga*  
notepad in write-down: PST examine have-to field SB

*ichioo sebamatta wake datta. Dewa, arukaroido*  
for-the-time-being narrow: PST NOM COP: PST then alkaloid

*o yaru toshitara, nani kara te-o-tsukeru 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 poppyLK seed on unripe

*uchini kizu-o-tsukeru to, nyuujuu 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 kigenzen*  
mystic QT also say-can anaesthesia action TM B.C.

*kara jinrui ni shir-are riyoo-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

*Kinsei ni natte kagaku ga susumi,*  
modern-times RS become: GER science SB progress: GER

*moruhine no chuushutsu ni seikooshite irai, kono yakuhin*  
morphine LK extraction in succeed: GER since this drug

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

*nari, mata shujutsu ni-yoru chiryo no hitsuyoohin*  
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. Morphine. 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*. Shinchoosha, 1978. Underlining mine.)

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-inshoo to akogare ga atta mono*  
such good-impression and admiration SB exist: PST NOM

*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, 'Choodo-ii mise ga aru.*  
Q QT ask-for-advice: PST when just-right shop SB exist

*Boku-no oshiego ga otoosan to-issyo-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.1.* 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 SBexist: NEG player-

*tachi wa Yasu-choo ya Geisei-mura no hoteru ni shukuhaku*  
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

*toiu koto de, shi-nai ni hoteru o kensetsushite wa*  
APO NOM COP: GER city(-in) in hotel DO construct: GER TM

*doo ka to natta. Soko-de nanori-o-ageta no ga Aki*  
how Q QT become: PST then step-forward: PST NOM SB

*shusshin no Tamai no oonaa de, kensetsushita hoteru*  
come-from LK LK owner COP: GER construct: PST hotel

*o 85-nen kara Hanshin ga tsukau yoo ni natta*  
DO 85-year since SB use state RS become: PST

*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.

(*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<sup>5</sup>. 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: *Anata wa naze Suzuki sensei o shitteru no? Doko-de*  
you TM why -teacher DO know NOM where

*shiriatta no?*  
get-acquainted: PST NOM

How do you know Mr. Suzuki? Where did you meet him?

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 shiriatta no?*  
you TM wife with where get-acquainted: PST NOM

Where did you meet your wife?

B: *Kanojo wa kookoo no dookyuusei 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.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this study.

APO	Appositional particle	NOM	Nominalizer
COP	Copular	PASS	Passive
CUS	Causative	PL	Plural
DO	Direct object marker	PROG	Progressive
GER	Gerund	PST	Past tense / Perfect
FP	Final particle	Q	Question marker
INT	Interjection	QT	Quotative marker

ID	Indirect object marker	RS	Resultative particle
LK	Linker	RSC	Resultative state continues
lit.	Word-by-word literal translation	SB	Subject marker
		TM	Topic marker
NEG	Negative		

<sup>2</sup> 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-specificational sentences* (Mikami (1953) and Saji (1973) among others). However, sentences such as those underlined 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-specificational sentence*.

<sup>3</sup> 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

subject.

[ii] *Shugo ga maeni detekita meishi o sasu meishi, ‘kare’ ‘kanojo’ ‘kore’ ‘kono...’ ‘sono ...’ nado deari, sono meishi ni tsuite nanika o tsutaetai toki wa shugo ni ‘wa’ o tsukeru.*

If the subject is a noun such as *he, she, this, this* + NP or *that / the* + 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 subject.

① a) *Mukashi mukashi, aru tokoro ni, ojiisan to*  
long-time-ago long-time-ago certain place in old-man and  
  
*obaasan (??wa / ga) imashita. Ojiisan (wa /??ga) yama*  
old-woman TM SB exist: PST TM SB mountain  
  
*ni shibakari ni ikimashita.*  
to bush-cutting in-order-to go: PST

Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old lady. The old man went bush-cutting in the mountain.

b) (Sentence with a first person subject)

*Kinoo, ii tenki datta node, watashi (wa/??ga),*  
yesterday good weather COP: PST because I TM SB



*kooen ni ikimashita.*

park to go: PST

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).

<sup>4</sup> Sentences of the type underlined in (19) are called *Dotei bun* (*identification sentence*) in Nishiyama (1993) and Kumamoto (1995), the definitions of which are shown in [iii] and [iv] respectively.

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

*A no shiji-taishoo ni tsuite, sore o tano taishoo kara shikibetsusuru jooen (sunawachi A no dootei jooen) o B no shiji taishoo ni-yotte shiteisuru. B no siji-taishoo wa kotai de wa naku, tokuchoo no gotoki chuushoo-teki na mono dearu.*

The condition that distinguishes the referent of A from other objects

(in other words, the identifying condition of A) is designated by the referent of B. The referent of B is something abstract like a characteristic, not an individual.

[iv] *Dotei bun* (Kumamoto (1995))

*A wa B no tokuchoo kijutsu o mitasu 'mono' dearu to noberu koto ni-yotte, A no siji-taishoo o ta kara shikibetsu 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.

<sup>5</sup> 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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