Contrastiveness of the Japanese Particle *Wa*
Following Relational Elements

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**Abstract**

Japanese post-relational *wa* constructions are considered from the viewpoint of cognitive grammar and the usage-based model of language. The method used in this study is two-fold. First, two of the most prominent previous research works on the structure of Japanese *wa*, Kuno (1973) and Shibatani (1990) were reviewed and it was argued, based on reflection upon the defects residing in these works, that multiple meanings of *wa*, including its contrastive meaning, are in fact “immanent” in the central schema of the particle even though they are not necessarily prominent and appreciable in certain contextual environments. Second, a corpus-based experiment was carried out and it was shown that actual data supports the above argument. Certain post-relational *wa* constructions are fairly entrenched with the contrastive aspect of *wa*, suggesting that the contrastive meaning of the particle is not just an epiphenomenon but a fundamental semantic feature of the particle.
1. Introduction

The nature of the Japanese particle wa has been discussed by many scholars. Not much attention, however, has been given to the fact that this particle can be preceded not only by nominal elements, but also by relational elements such as verb phrases and adverbial phrases.

(1) a. Taro wa gengogaku o benkyoo siteiru.
    Taro TOP linguistics ACC study doing
    ‘Taro is studying linguistics.’

b. ninjin wa amari suki de nai.
    carrot TOP very-much like COP not
    ‘Carrots, I do not like them very much.’

(2) a. yabure wa sita ga, yoku tatakatta.
    lose TOP did though well fought
    ‘Though (they) lost, (they) fought hard.’

b. umaku wa nai ga, mondai naku taberareru.
    delicious TOP not though problem without eat-able
    ‘Though (it) is not delicious, (it) is perfectly edible.’

The present paper examines types of wa that topicalize elements of a relational nature as those in examples (2a) and (2b). By closely looking at these non-prototypical uses of wa, which I refer to as post-relational uses of wa, in the framework of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, 1999), it becomes clear that the previously dominant view toward the particle wa does not fully describe a complete picture, and only deals with prototypical constructions such as (1a) and (1b) and therefore a more comprehensive account of wa is called for. Also in this paper, a corpus-based approach toward the problem is presented. Instances of post-relational wa
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Constructions are collected and examined from a large-scale written Japanese text dataset. This analysis reveals interesting features of constructions containing post-relational *wa* and these features support arguments about the central schema of the particle *wa* from the viewpoint of Cognitive Grammar.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In the next section (section 2), two conspicuous analyses of *wa* in the literature, Kuno (1973) and Shibatani (1990) are reviewed in order to establish a foundation upon which we raise a question that needs to be solved making a special reference to post-relational *wa* constructions. In section 3, an analysis of *wa* in the framework of Cognitive Grammar is proposed. We assume that there is a central schema for various instances of *wa* and therefore do not find Kuno’s mere distinction between ‘thematic’ *wa* and ‘contrastive’ *wa* theoretically appealing. Shibatani’s argument is not supported where he asserts that the contrastive meaning of *wa* is just an epiphenomenon of one and only one central function of *wa*, described as thematic or emphatic. Instead, we argue that the central schema of *wa*, which is best considered using a reference-point model, already contains a conceptual potential to be interpreted as contrastive and can be foregrounded only if contextual conditions are all met.

In section 4, the results of a corpus-based investigation of post-relational *wa* constructions is presented. A Japanese Wikipedia database dump file, which consists of more than four million Japanese sentences, was analyzed first computationally and then manually examined to obtain a dataset for each of five subtypes of the post-relational *wa* construction. These datasets are shown to have notable features that not only support the arguments of the present research but also imply the necessity of regarding these constructions as forming rather autonomous conceptual units although they are apparently developed upon the central schema.
2. Past analyses of *wa*

This section briefly reviews two preceding analyses of the Japanese particle *wa* to lay a basis for our version of analysis and the discussions that follow. There are numerous studies regarding the syntactic and semantic structures of *wa* from various viewpoints. Here we take up two of the most important studies in the literature, one from Kuno (1973) and another from Shibatani (1990).¹

2.1 Kuno (1973)

Kuno (1973: 44-49) proposed a distinction of two separate types of usages of *wa*, a thematic use and a contrastive use.

(3) a. *John wa gakusei desu.* [thematic]
    John TOP student COP
    ‘Speaking of John, he is a student.’

    b. *John wa kimasu ga Mary wa kimasen.* [contrastive]
    John TOP come but Mary TOP come-not
    ‘Speaking of John, he will come; speaking of Mary, she won’t.’

Kuno considers the central function of *wa* as an expression of the givenness of the referent in terms of the notion of ‘given/new’ distinction discussed in Chafe (1970). This is in accordance with the fact that another Japanese particle *ga* is used to mark a nominal expression when the nominal is considered new, in other words, when it is not activated in the addressee’s present discourse space. In (4), where speaker A asks a WH question and speaker B gives an answer to that question bringing up the name of *John* presumably for the first time in the discourse, the particle *ga* is used to express the newness of the information. In (5), on the other hand, speaker B uses *wa* instead of *ga* because the question asked by speaker A already
contains the name of the person John in the sentence.

(4) A: *dare ga paatii ni kimasita ka?*  
who NOM party to came QU  
‘Who came to the party?’  
B: *John ga kimasita.*  
John NOM came  
‘John did.’

(5) A: *John to Mary wa paaty ni kimasu ka?*  
John and Mary TOP party to come QU  
‘Do John and Mary come to the party?’  
B: *John wa kimasen.*  
John TOP come-not  
‘John won’t.’

Kuno’s account of *wa* created a large amount of discussion about the syntax and semantics of this particle and a great number of arguments have been submitted since then even if we limit our attention here only to those published in the English language. For instance, McGloin (1987) investigated the behavior of *wa* phrases when they are used with a negative predicate, and Miyagawa (1987) considered the syntax of *wa* in a WH question, just to name two. One of the most important works on the nature of *wa*, however, is that by Shibatani (1990).

2.2 Shibatani (1990)

Shibatani (1990) argues that *wa*’s central meaning resides in its effect of emphasizing the element that it attaches to. Kuno’s distinction of thematic use and contrastive use of *wa* is thus reduced to one single function. The amount of this emphasizing effect depends on the discourse context. When
the referent of the wa-marked element is already registered in the memory through the previous conversation and thus activated in the discourse space, or at least semi-activated as part of shared knowledge, the wa expression can be recognized as thematic, with a minimum emphasis upon the referent. If the contextual background provides concepts that one can reasonably compare to the referent in question, then the emphasizing effect of wa can be maximized and the overall structure is now recognized as being contrastive. Thus Shibatani suggests that wa’s default semantic structure is thematic in Kuno’s terminology and the so-called contrastive use is derived from it as an epiphenomenon when the necessary conditions are met.

(6) a. Taroo wa tosyokan ni itta ga, hon wa yomanakatta.
Taro TOP library to went but book TOP read-not
‘Taro went to the library but did not read a book.’
(Shibatani 1990: 265)

In (6) the contrastive meaning of the second wa phrase (hon wa) it is not necessarily clear but rather implicit; the degree to which it is perceived as contrastive can vary according to the context of the discourse. It is, therefore, necessary to suppose that there is a certain gradience between the two ends. Kuno’s dichotomy of thematic and contrastive uses of wa does not appropriately capture the above fact.

Shibatani (1990) also goes on to define the nature of topicality, which is quite often associated with wa as its primary function. To Shibatani, wa as a topic marker, whether thematic or contrastive, needs to be one like (7a). The wa expression in (7b), on the other hand, does not have a genuine topic; it is rather what Shibatani calls a stylistic topic.

(7) a. kyoo wa tenki ga ii.
today TOP weather NOM good
‘Today is such that the weather is good.’

b. kyoo wa boku ga ryoori siyoo.
today TOP I NOM cook will
‘Today, I will cook.’

(Shibatani 1990: 277)

Structurally, (7a) and (7b) do not seem very different. In the former, however, the wa phrase (kyoo wa) takes the role as subject of the sentence, whereas in the latter, the same expression only modifies the sentence as if it was just an adverbial phrase with the subject status taken by another nominal expression boku marked with a nominative marker ga.

(8) a. hayaku wa hasirenai.
  fast TOP run-can-not
  ‘(I) can’t run fast.’

b. hatizi made wa matu.
  8 o’clock up-to TOP wait
  ‘(I will) wait until eight o’clock.’

(Shibatani 1990: 277)

Shibatani offers another set of examples of wa expression like those in (8a) and (8b), which are not topical either. In (8a), the element marked with wa is an adjective, hayaku, and in (8b) it is a postpositional phrase, hatizi made. These are non-prototypical not only because the wa phrase does not function as a true topic but also because the referent of the preceding element is not nominal but rather relational.

A question that we are left with is, what is the requirement for wa to be a true topic expression, which Shibatani strictly distinguishes from stylistic expressions? He argues that the former, the true topic, strongly reflects what he calls “experiential judgment” of the speaker while the latter does not.
The particle *wa*, when used as a true topic marker, separates a proposition into two, one that consists of a nominal emphasized and predicated on, and the other that presents a propositional relation that is rather subjectively associated with the referent of the preceding nominal. Thus the two *wa*’s in (8) are quite different despite the formal similarity.

Shibatani’s account of *wa*, in fact, helps explain quite effectively a minimal pair such as (9) below, where the topic marker *wa* and nominative marker *ga* are respectively attached to the sentence initial nominal *hi* (‘sun’).

(9) a.  *hi  wa  noboru*
      sun  TOP  rise
     ‘The sun rises.’

b.  *hi  ga  noboru.*
      sun  NOM  rise
     ‘The sun rises.’

(Shibatani 1990: 262)

In (9a), *wa*-marked nominal *hi* is considered to be a true topic and the predicate *noboru* a propositional relation that is subjectively associated with the nominal. (9a), as a result, has a connotation that the speaker is tapping on his or her own knowledge about the world. (9b), on the other hand, with the nominative marker *ga* attached to the same nominal as in (9a), does not give such an experiential implication, but the sentence is the best suited for a situation where the speaker is looking at the sun rising and describing what he sees in front of him.

3. Structure of post-relational *wa* from the perspective of Cognitive Grammar

Shibatani’s analysis of the particle *wa* reviewed in the previous section may seem fairly adequate. There is, however, a problem in the above theory
in that it does not properly deal with what he considers non-prototypical *wa* expressions. We will come back to this shortly after introducing an analysis of *wa* in the framework of Cognitive Grammar and showing how it explains the meaning of the particle.

### 3.1 Reference point model

It has been often pointed out by Japanese cognitive linguists that the conceptual structure of the particle *wa* is largely based on the reference point model of language (Nakamura 1998; Yamanashi 2000). Langacker (1999) also analyzes a Japanese sentence of *wa* construction, which contains both the topic marker *wa* and nominative marker *ga* arranged consecutively.

(10)  *sakana wa tai ga oisii.*

fish TOP red snapper NOM delicious

‘(As for) fish, red snapper is delicious.’

(Langacker 1999: 195)

![Figure 1](image-url)

Langacker uses the above sentence from Li and Thompson (1976) as an instance of the reference-point model construction.² As seen in Figure 1, the topic *sakana* plays the role of a reference point and thanks to this reference point, the predicate part that immediately follows can be easily accessed and thus understood by the addressee in a contextually appropriate fashion.³ Arguments to the same effect have been made by other researchers as well (Nakamura 1998; Yamanashi 2000). Their analyses of *wa* have
much in common with Shibatani’s analysis described in the previous section, because they assume that the reference point, i.e. the element marked with *wa*, is considered to be subjectively associated with some kind of predicate that follows, thus paralleling Shibatani’s argument that *wa* represents the experiential judgment on the side of the speaker.

These two lines of thought are both correct despite the difference in terminology and theoretical frameworks. There is, however, one problem in Shibatani’s view, as mentioned before: it does not properly deal with non-prototypical *wa* expressions, including many instances of post-relational *wa* constructions. Let us consider next how Cognitive Grammar can handle this problem.

### 3.2 Post-relational *wa*

The post-relational *wa* considered in the rest of this paper is exemplified in (11)-(15) below. This listing here is by no means comprehensive and further investigation is definitely called for. Many past studies of this area, however, did not in fact regard these as forming a category and therefore even this preliminary attempt can be of some value.

(11) [ PROP + *wa* ]

*genzai no uryuki wa, katute hodo kootyoo de wa nai.*

present GEN sales TOP before as fine COP TOP not

‘The present sales are not as good as before.’

(12) [ V + *wa* + suru ]

*korobi wa sita ga, gooru made tadorituita*

tumble TOP did but goal to reached

‘(He) tumbled over but reached the goal.’

(13) [ ADV + *wa* ]
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*tatimati tokino-hito ni natta ga, nagaku wa tudukanakatta*
quick celebrity DAT became though long TOP persist-not

‘Not so long did (his) fame last that (he) achieved almost overnight.’

(14) [ ADJ + ni + wa ]
*genzai 102-sai rasii ga seikaku ni wa wakaranai*
now 102-years-old so-told but accurate -ly TOP not-known

‘(He) is said to be 102 now, but it is not known exactly how old he is.’

(15) [ PP + wa ]
*saisinsaku wa hyooronka kara wa hyooka sarenakatta.*
latest-work TOP critics from TOP praised do-not-PASSIVE

‘(Her) latest work was not highly valued by the critics.’

Sentence (11) is an example of *wa* that is preceded by a semi-clause comprising the combination of an adjectival expression plus a copula verb. Here the predication *kootyoo de* is followed by *wa* and as a result the proposition “X being fine” is working as the central element of the subjective relation that the speaker is trying to convey, that is, “it is not the case at present.” The *wa* expression in sentence (12) contains a verb having an -i ending. *Wa* in this construction is always followed by the light verb *suru* or one of its conjugated forms such as *sita*. *Korobi wa sita* here in (12) can thus be considered similar to the English emphatic construction with auxiliary *do*, “(he) did tumble over.” In (13), *wa* preceded by an adverb (with -u ending) sets the emphatic focus on the duration of the time the person in question enjoyed his fame. In (14), it is the combination of an adjective and a particle *ni*, which adds an adverbial characteristic to the preceding adjective phrase, that is followed by *wa*. The resulting expression topicalizes the nature of the predicate that in turn follows the *wa* expression, i.e. “how accurate the information is.” Finally, in (15), the *wa* expression
comprises an NP and the postpositional particle that immediately follows it. The postposition used here is similar to the English preposition *from*, thus making the literal translation from the Japanese sentence to English fairly sensible.

Now, let us recall that Shibatani (1990) did not consider such *wa* expressions as found in sentences such as (11)-(15) as true topics but as stylistic, fake, topics. In fact, as a theoretical justification of this view toward certain types of *wa* that are not prototypical in his standard, Shibatani goes so far as to propose different syntactic structures that his two varieties of *wa* expressions are based on. According to that, the true topic like (16a) is base-generated whereas a so-called stylistic topic such as the one in (16b) is generated through a transformational procedure similar to what is called ‘scrambling’ in the generative grammar framework.

(16) a. \textit{hi wa noboru} [true topic]

sun \hspace{1em} TOP \hspace{1em} rise

‘The sun rises.’

\hspace{1em} (Shibatani 1990: 262)

b. \textit{hayaku wa hasirenai} [stylistic topic]

fast \hspace{1em} TOP \hspace{1em} run-can-not

‘(I) can’t run fast.’

\hspace{1em} (Shibatani 1990: 277)

In Cognitive Grammar, there is no need to posit a structural distinction of such an artificial flavor to account for different uses of *wa*. Figure 2 and 3 below represent cognitive composite structures of examples (16a) and (16b) above. In these figures, the prototypical use of *wa* and the post-relational *wa* share a common general configuration. Moreover, the structural difference existing between them reflects truly semantic characteristics of the two, instead of just representing purely theoretical levels through which
derivation from one structure to another occurs: in the prototypical wa construction depicted in figure 2, the elaboration site, which is cross-hatched, is whatever element that is the target of the reference point model, while in the post-relational wa construction in figure 3, the elaboration site falls upon a more abstract unit representing “being fast.” In both cases, the elaboration site is expected to be filled out with whatever relational element is prominent in the other component structure and the composite structure emerges as a result.
Previous literature about Japanese *wa* has tended to focus exclusively on cases such as (16a), and post-relational *wa* such as the one in (16b) did not receive enough attention. This occurred because the configuration of (16a), Figure 2, is more prototypical than that of (16b). It is a fallacy to take a merely prototypical instance to be identical with the construction’s central schema. The central schema of a construction is a structure with all the idiosyncratic specifications abstracted away. The conceptual structure of a prototypical instance, therefore, could be extremely similar to the central schema, but there is no guarantee of that since the central schema always needs to be one that accommodates all the possible instances extended from the prototype in one way or another. Naturally, a search for the central schema calls for a detailed observation of instances that are more or less extended from the prototypical case, which was contrary to many past attempts to explain *wa*.

3.3 Topicality and contrast

We have seen that there is no real ground to distinguish between so-called true topics and stylistic topics. Now let us turn to the problem of the distinction between “thematic” and “contrastive.” As we have seen before, Kuno (1973) distinguishes thematic *wa* and contrastive *wa*, but Shibatani (1990) argues that the contrast observed in some instances of *wa* is absolutely attributable to its contextual background; in other words, he asserts that there is no contrastive meaning in *wa* itself. I do not side with either position; rather, I propose that in the central schema of the particle *wa*, contrastive meaning is “immanent” in the relations among the elements and can possibly be invoked as such. The contrastive relation, however, is not necessarily prominent or salient in the conceptualizer’s mind if the number of comparable elements is high enough. If, on the other hand, the number of possibilities is low enough, then the probability of one element being perceived as in a sharp contrast with other elements becomes high. In
reality, though, whether the series of possible elements forms a small set or not greatly depends upon the context, and often on how the addressee interprets it, thus making a conversation like (17) possible:

(17) A: kinyoobi wa dame da.
   Friday TOP bad COP
   ‘Friday is not convenient for me.’
B: zyaa, manyoobi ga iino?
   then what-day NOM fine
   ‘What day is convenient for you then?’

In (17), speaker A may not imply that days other than Friday are fine; only intending to say that Friday is not okay. Speaker B, however, presupposes that speaker A must be available on another day despite the ambivalence of the original utterance, interpreting kinyoobi wa to be of a contrastive use, instead of thematic one.

This characteristic of wa is well predicted only if one presumes that the central meaning of this particle is based on the reference point model as shown in Figure 4 and 5.

![Figure 4](image-url)
If the dominion of the reference point has a rather definite boundary as in Figure 4, the elements inside it can be contrasted with each other to various degrees; whereas if there is no definite conceptual boundary to the dominion as in Figure 5, the reference point will be perceived just as a theme that the speaker intends to emphatically introduce into the discourse space. In the latter case, there is no requirement to see any contrastive relationship between the referent of the wa expression and other possible elements residing in the discourse context.

3.4 Contrast and post-relational wa constructions

Having said that, there are constructions in which the contrastive meaning of wa is not optional but rather highly likely to occur, or in some cases, obligatory. Instances of post-relational wa constructions discussed above are such constructions. Examples (11)-(15) are reprinted below as (18)-(22).

(18) [ ADJ + de + wa ]

genzai no ureyuki wa, katute hodo kootyoo de wa nai.
present GEN sales TOP before as fine COP TOP not
‘The present sales are not as good as before.’
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(19) \[ V + wa + suru \]

\begin{align*}
\text{koro} & \text{bi} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{sit} & \text{a} \quad \text{ga}, \quad \text{goor} & \text{u} \quad \text{made} \quad \text{tadorituit} & \text{a} \\
\text{tumble} & \quad \text{TOP} & \quad \text{did} & \quad \text{but} \quad \text{goal} & \quad \text{to} \quad \text{reached} \\
\text{‘(He) tumbled over but reached the goal.’} \\
\end{align*}

(20) \[ \text{ADV} + wa \]

\begin{align*}
\text{tatimati} \quad \text{toki} & \quad \text{n} & \quad \text{ni} \quad \text{natta} \quad \text{ga}, \quad \text{nagaku} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{tudukanakatta} \\
\text{quick} & \quad \text{celebrity} & \quad \text{DAT} & \quad \text{became} & \quad \text{though} \quad \text{long} \quad \text{TOP} & \quad \text{persist-not} \\
\text{‘Not so long did (his) fame last that (he) achieved almost overnight.’} \\
\end{align*}

(21) \[ \text{ADJ} + \text{ni} + \text{wa} \]

\begin{align*}
\text{gen} & \quad \text{zai} \quad 102\text{-sai} \quad \text{rasii} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{sei} & \quad \text{kaku} \quad \text{ni} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{wakaranai} \\
\text{now} & \quad 102\text{-years-old} & \quad \text{so-told} & \quad \text{but} \quad \text{accurate} & \quad \text{-ly} \quad \text{TOP} & \quad \text{not-known} \\
\text{‘(He) is said to be 102 now, but it is not known exactly how old he is.’} \\
\end{align*}

(22) \[ \text{PP} + wa \]

\begin{align*}
\text{saisinsaku} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{hyooronka} \quad \text{kara} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{hyooka} \quad \text{sarenakatta} \\
\text{latest-work} \quad \text{TOP} \quad \text{critics} \quad \text{from} \quad \text{TOP} \quad \text{praised} \quad \text{do-not-} \quad \text{PASSIVE} \\
\text{‘(Her) latest work was not highly valued by the critics.’} \\
\end{align*}

Examining instances of post-relational *wa* constructions, one may notice that they are likely to be accompanied with a negative expression and/or an adversative conjunction in the sentence, as implied rather casually in a few preceding works such as McGloin (1987) and Noda (1995). Both negation of a proposition and existence of adversative relations are naturally considered to have a close connection to contrastive relations. In fact, the examples in (18)-(22), which contain some kind of contrastive meaning, all have either a negative expression or an adversative conjunction.

Assuming the above to be true, it was hoped that a quantitative investigation about the proportion of uses of these post-relational *wa* constructions co-occurring with a negative predication and/or an adversative conjunction would be a useful index of the general tendency of the semantic characteristics of post-relational *wa* constructions. This is explored in this section using a large corpus obtained from the Japanese Wikipedia database.

4.1 Method

Wikipedia, an open-source web encyclopedia project, releases data that is revised and updated regularly in the form of an archived file for each individual language. For the present research, the Japanese Wikipedia database file archived on May 29, 2007 was downloaded at the database dump file distribution site.

To decompress the file, divide the single extremely large file into files of moderate size, and remove all the tags and meta text from the raw data in order to extract the natural language text that is human-readable, I developed a computer software tool called WP2TXT, which is written in the Ruby language. This program at this moment works only with Japanese, but is easily extendable to other languages. As a result, 4,451,078 sentences were collected from approximately 220,000 articles. Since the number is quite overwhelming, it is not realistically possible to look for tokens of certain types one by one from this whole collection of text data. Another software tool, therefore, was called for to computationally extract only relevant data from text files. Thus I developed MCONC, a program also written in Ruby. This program takes Japanese text as input as well as a configuration file with specifications about conjugation and collocation that are expected to reside in the resulting dataset, sends them to a pre-existing open-source part-of-speech (POS) and morphological analyzer program called MeCab, and
outputs a CSV file with a list of sentences that fulfill the conditions specified in the configuration file.⁶

Using these computational tools, tokens of five specific constructions listed in table 1 below were collected. Each of these constructions is considered to be one of the sub-constructions of more general types of post-relational wa construction. Since the raw output data contained some irrelevant items due to imperfections in the morphological analyzer and the dictionary that the analyzer internally uses, manual inspection of the data was needed. Instead of using all the data obtained by the above computational process, only 500 instances among all the instances of each construction were sorted out, and manually checked for valid inclusion as data. Preceding this process, all the raw data were computationally shuffled in order to ensure the randomness of the selection.

Table 1 Specific constructions and their types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Specific construction investigated</th>
<th>General construction</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I    | adjective noun + de (COP) + wa   | PROP + wa            | akiraka (‘clear’) de wa  
yooi (‘easy’) de wa  
kanoo (‘possible’) de wa |
| II   | verb of e or i ending + wa + suru  | VP + wa + suru       | yabure (‘lose’) wa  
nagatuduki (‘persist’) wa  
mitome (‘admit’) wa |
| III  | adverb of u ending                | ADV + wa             | nagaku (‘long’) wa  
tadasiku (‘correct’) wa  
takaku (‘high’) wa |
| IV   | adjective noun + ni + wa         | ADJ + ni + wa        | genmitu (‘accurate’) ni wa  
kousiki (‘official’) ni wa  
houteki (‘legal’) ni wa |
| V    | kara (‘from’) + wa               | PP + wa              | eki (‘station’) kara wa  
hatigatu (‘August’) kara wa  
masukomi (‘mass media’) kara wa |
Each of the datasets was then examined as to what proportion and how much of it contained a negative predication, an adversative conjunction, or both. As to negative predication, there is one highly prominent negative morpheme in Japanese, i.e. -nai, and if a clause in a sentence that contains the construction in question also contains -nai or one of its variations, then the sentence is counted as containing a negative predication. As to adversative conjunctions, there are a variety existing in Japanese, such as ga, sikasi, and keredomo, and if one is used in a sentence and the conjunction is considered to have any effect on the interpretation of the construction in question, the sentence is counted as containing an adversative conjunction. Morphemes other than these, however, are also regarded as negative or adversative, as long as they have comparable semantic qualities and have effect on the meaning of the portion of the sentence in question.

4.2 Results

The resulting data obtained from the above procedure are shown in table 2.

Table 2  Distribution of negative/adversative cases in tokens of Type I-V constructions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>A. Token frequency of cases with negative predication</th>
<th>B. Token frequency of cases with adversative conjunction</th>
<th>C. A∩B</th>
<th>D. A∪B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>439/500 (87.8%)</td>
<td>249/500 (49.8%)</td>
<td>188/500 (37.6%)</td>
<td>500/500 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II*</td>
<td>142/375 (37.9%)</td>
<td>308/375 (82.1%)</td>
<td>75/375 (20%)</td>
<td>375/375 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III†</td>
<td>364/500 (72.8%)</td>
<td>232/500 (46.4%)</td>
<td>173/500 (34.6%)</td>
<td>423/500 (84.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>202/500 (40.4%)</td>
<td>187/500 (37.4%)</td>
<td>82/500 (16.4%)</td>
<td>307/500 (61.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>42/500 (8.4%)</td>
<td>99/500 (19.8%)</td>
<td>11/500 (2.2%)</td>
<td>130/500 (26%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The total number of tokens of this construction (after manual check) did not exceed 500.
† kuwasiku (‘detailed’) was excluded as an outlier from the population dataset. Its sheer pervasiveness (99% of the non-controlled set of tokens) is considered to be due to the nature of the original data as an encyclopedic reference.
Each row of table 2 shows the proportion of tokens of the construction in question that co-occur with either a negative or adversative expression (namely, column D) and the proportion of tokens containing both (column C).

4.3 Discussion

The results show the following points. First, four of the five post-relational wa constructions are highly selective as to the semantics of co-occurring predicates. When the element topicalized by wa is propositional or verbal, as in Type I and II constructions, this tendency becomes extreme: all the instances of these two constructions in the data co-occur with either negative or adversative expressions. When adjectival or adverbial elements are topicalized as in Type III and IV constructions, they are also highly likely (84.6% and 61.4% respectively) to co-occur with an expression of negative or adversative nature. If the topicalized element is postpositional as in Type V construction, though, the picture is quite different. Only 26% of all the instances of -kara wa construction are either negative or adversative.

Second, it can be said that as the topicalized element becomes more propositional, the construction’s meaning tends to appear as more contrastive. Type I and Type II constructions are completely limited to those cases where either a negative or adversative expression co-occurs. Conversely, the less propositional the topicalized element becomes, the less likely it seems that the element will occur with negative or adversative expressions, which implies the disappearance of a potential contrastive meaning. This observation in fact supports a hypothesis about semantic relative distance presented by Croft and Cruse (2004). They argue that the degree of semantic distance in a particular type of element in a constructional schema has much to do with the entrenchment of the construction. According to the hypothesis, the differences in predicate type
are more relevant than differences in mere alternation of the identities of the participants, thus perfectly corresponding to the fact shown above that topic elements in Type I and II constructions are far more semantically uniform than topic elements in Type V constructions.

Finally, a third point is that the above facts correspond to the conceptual structure of *wa* proposed in the previous section. In the reference point model upon which the meaning of *wa* is based, the size of extension of the dominion can vary greatly. As discussed in section 3, if the extension is rather small and the number of potential targets is limited, a contrastive meaning easily arises, and this is the case with our Type I construction. In this construction, the propositionality of a topicalized element is quite high, largely because of the copula verb *de*, which implies the assertive yet undetermined judgment of the conceptualizer. Thus the range of possible choices the conceptualizer can make when topicalizing such an element becomes extremely limited: assert the proposition or not.

A similar prediction can be made for the Type II construction. With the requirement that it is followed by the light verb *suru*, *V-wa* sequence in a Type II construction evokes a reference point model whose dominion contains only two elements that can be contrasted, i.e. those representing ‘doing V’ and ‘not doing V’. Type III construction and Type IV construction are interpreted similarly. The adjectival or adverbial topics in these constructions are likely to presuppose the existence of some kind of conceptual scale on which the predication is evaluated. With the presence of such a presupposed scalar concept, it is quite natural that the topicalized element shows itself as contrastive rather than just thematic.

The Type V construction is a little different. The topicalized element here, a postpositional phrase, is relational, but it is not highly propositional, for it only supplies an argument to the VP and thus does not affect the predicate type. This being so, it is reasonable to think that the range of potential extensions of the target accessible through the topicalized element
in this construction can be much larger than in cases of other construction types. This means that it is more difficult for the conceptualizer to find any contrastive relation in the dominion of the reference point configuration, accordingly leading to a thematic meaning being assigned to the resulting sentence.

It should be now clear from the above observations that among the post-relational *wa* constructions examined, at least four types of sub-constructions have an evident inclination toward showing contrastive meaning. From the perspective of the usage-based model of language (Langacker 2000; Tomasello 2003; Bybee 2007), it is considered that these constructions are firmly entrenched in the grammar system of the Japanese language, and accordingly have their own conceptual schemas, for they fulfill the requirements for such to be the case. These constructions are not just idiosyncratic sequences of morphemes but frequently occurring patterns. They have a compositional structure in which the semantic features of component structures all contribute to the constructional meaning, and they have not lost their analyzability, nor are they completely lexicalized. Yet they also have an emerging structure that makes them different, that is, the status of a conceptually individual unit is conferred upon them. Thus, it is not appropriate to suppose that the contrastive meaning of the Japanese particle *wa* is just an epiphenomenon; in fact, it is a significant semantic feature often non-prominent but foregrounded to the surface and made appreciable either when all conditions are met or when used as part of a certain construction.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, Japanese post-relational *wa* constructions were considered from the viewpoint of Cognitive Grammar and the usage-based model of language. First, it was argued that multiple meanings of *wa* are all immanent in the central schema of this particle, even though they may not
be prominent and not appreciable in certain contextual environments. This may seem quite obvious but it has not been recognized in past literature, probably because of the predominant focus on prototypical cases of *wa* construction and a relative lack of attention to non-prototypical examples, such as post-relational *wa* constructions. Second, a corpus-based experiment was carried out, and it was shown that the resulting data support the above argument. It was also made clear that certain post-relational *wa* constructions are fairly entrenched in the contrastive aspects of *wa*. From these facts it is concluded that the previously prevalent view of the fundamental meaning of *wa* as thematic and the contrastive meaning as just an epiphenomenon, is untenable.

The present research, however, is not comprehensive. For instance, there are other post-relational *wa* constructions and related constructions that were not dealt with here. Additionally, it is not inconceivable that the corpus used in the present research and the way it was processed contain some problems and have skewed more or less the distribution and nature of the datasets. Despite these defects in the present research, it seems more than plausible that its central arguments are on the right track, considering the fact that the cognitive linguistic account of *wa* shown in section 3 fully corresponds with the data presented in section 4. A more comprehensive research project with a large-scale, balanced corpus must be utilized to obtain a truly definitive answer.

**Notes**

1. There are numerous papers and books that deal with the meaning of the Japanese particle *wa*. Some are so renowned that not mentioning these works might fail to do justice to the literature as a whole. In this section, however, we limit our attention to Kuno (1973) and Shibatani (1990), which are reasonably considered representative works of their respective approaches.
2 The reference point model is not limited to the semantic structure of expressions that mark a topical element such as the Japanese *wa*. The reference point model is pervasive in the structure of numerous constructions of various scales. See Langacker (1991, 1999) for other instances of the reference point model reflected in linguistic structures.

3 Figures used throughout this paper are based on and according to the schematizing conventions utilized in Langacker’s works (with slight alterations and extensions).

4 Wikipedia database dump files of Japanese and other languages can be acquired at http://download.wikimedia.org/.

5 At present, while a beta version of the WP2TXT program has been released, MCONC is not yet publicly available. The former can be downloaded at http://wp2txt.rubyforge.org/.

6 The MeCab version 0.95 for Win32 with IPA Dictionary was used for this project. MeCab was developed by Taku Kudo and is distributed as an open-source program at: http://mecab.sourceforge.net/.

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References


関係要素に付加された日本語助詞「は」の対比性

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日本語の係助詞「は」が形容詞句や動詞句などの関係的要素に付加された際に持ちうる対比的意味について、認知文法（Cognitive Grammar）および用法依拠モデル（the usage-based model of language）の観点から考察を行った。まず、助詞「は」に関する重要な2つの先行研究であるKuno（1973）とShibatani（1990）の論を批判的に検討した。Kuno（1973）は「は」に主題的意味と対比的意味の2種類が存在すると論じた。一方Shibatani（1990）は「は」の中心的な意味は要素の強調にあり、対比的意味はある種の文脈効果に過ぎないと論じた。これに対し本研究では、「は」の対比的意味は参照点構造において常に内在する要素間関係が顕在化したものであるという仮説を提示した。この仮説を検証するため、大規模な日本語書き言葉コーパスから関係的要素に後続する「は」の用例を一定数採択して構文タイプに基づいた分類を行い、各タイプに属する用例が対比的意味を示している割合を集計した。その結果、明確な支配領域（dominion）を持った参照点構造を展開する構文タイプほど対比的な意味を持つことが明らかになった。これは上の仮説を強く裏付けるものと考えられる。