

## A Study of the Topic of Sentences

TANIMORI Masahiro\*

Key words: **topic, comment, Saucer, *wa*, *ga***

Although many studies have been made on the topic of Japanese sentences, there is room for further consideration. This paper is an attempt at giving a new position to the topic in Japanese sentences. It may be said that the particle *wa* used for marking a topic acts as proxy for various case particles by noting the relation between the topic and a comment. And the difference between the *wa* and especially the particle *ga* which, in general, indicates the nominative case seems to be revealed by reconsidering the relation between a comment sentence and a phenomenon-describing sentence.

In this paper, it is tentatively shown, quite differently from the traditional way of considering the sentence structure, that the *wa*-marked topic can be connected with a comment by the medium of a new concept, "Saucer." This concept may help us identify a topic. A topic marked by *wa* and a Saucer have a tendency to require the Saucer after a comment and *da*; therefore the comment, for example, beginning with a *ga*-marked word, may be said to be subordinated to the Saucer, and also to be separated from the topic. It may be concluded that the [*……wa……da*] construction, which seems to be valid in many sentences, is one of the prototypical structures of Japanese sentences, although the number of example sentences considered here is small and many problems still confront us.

### INTRODUCTION

Although a number of studies have been made on the topic of Japanese sentences, there seems to be some room to reconsider it. The purpose of this paper is to reveal a somewhat different function of the topic and to give it a quite new position in Japanese sentences. The topic, which has been differentiated from the subject, sometimes appears and sometimes does not. Even if there may not always be definite phenomena that explains the topic, it seems meaningful to attempt to make a general explanation of the

---

\* 谷守正寛: Graduate School of Letters, Osaka University.

topic in terms of its structural function, making clear the difference between the characteristics of the *wa*-marked topic and of the *ga*-marked word. Indeed, the *wa* which marks, in many cases, the topic, can be said to have an extremely peculiar function. The difference between *wa* and *ga* possibly puzzles many foreign learners of the Japanese language, so this paper will attempt to build up a new category of the topic, and to contribute to making clearer the structure of Japanese sentences.

### Topic, Subject, Agent . . .

As pointed out by Tsunoda (1991), there will be four levels that should be differentiated for a grammatical analysis of the subject. First, whether or not the subject can be determined by semantic roles, such as agent, doer, or be-er. Secondly, whether or not the subject corresponds to the word marked by cases, especially, the nominative case. Thirdly, whether or not the subject is the topic at the beginning of a sentence, preceding the comment. Finally, whether or not the subject can be determined by syntactic functions. At any rate, it does not necessarily mean that the word marked by *wa* indicates the subject, while the word marked by *ga* cannot express the topic.

Observe the following sentences:

- (1) a. *Jon wa kono uta wo tsukutta.*  
 b. *Jon ga kono uta wo tsukutta.*  
 c. *Kono uta wa Jon ga tsukutta.*  
 (John composed this song.)

In (1a), the *Jon* (John) marked by *wa* is the topic, indicates the agent, and seems to be the subject. In (1b), the *Jon* marked by *ga* indicates the agent and seems to be the subject, but is not the topic. In (1c), the *kono uta* (this song) marked by *wa* is the topic, and it does not seem to be the subject but seems to be the object, and the agent seems to be *Jon*. The above sentences (1a)–(1c) can be usually translated into English simply as in the parenthesis; though the emphasis may be somewhat different. If the author changes the translations of them to show the differences, (1a)–(1c) will become (2a)–(2c), respectively.

- (2) a. John is the person who composed this song.  
 b. It is John who composed this song.  
 c. This song is the one that John composed.

### Comment Sentence and Phenomenon-Describing Sentence

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to explain what a topic is in general, and to show the function of the topic in a somewhat different way. In order to do that, it will be necessary at first to understand the difference between *wa* and *ga*. The word marked by *wa* generally indicates the topic, though it may also function as the contrast indicator. *Wa* is called *kakari joshi* in Japanese, the correlative particle that correlates the preceding word with the statement at the end of a sentence, while *ga* merely precedes a verb, an adjective, or a noun (+*da*) in order to refer to the person or thing that does the ac-

tion expressed by the verb, or that has the attribute expressed by the adjective, or to what or who the thing or person is. Some of the *kakari joshi* once required a specific ending form of verbs and adjectives in old Japanese, and *wa* requires an explanatory statement in the predicate at the end of a sentence in modern Japanese. It may even cause the following sentence in succession to have another explanatory statement concerning the *wa*-marked topic, while *ga* is a case particle that simply connects the preceding word with the directly following predicate [adjective / verb / noun (+*da*)]. A topic may be presented not only by *wa* but also by some other phrases; however, only *wa* is taken up as the representative topic marker for convenience in this paper, because it seems to be most generally used.

Several studies have been made concerning the classification of sentences according to whether a topic is presented or not, since Mio first classified sentences into several types. The author divides sentences roughly into two types and names them, referring to Nitta (1991), as follows:

① Comment Sentence: sentence usually with a topic.

This kind of sentence normally has a topic marked by *wa* and is the Topic-Comment construction type. The speaker (or writer) makes a comment (explanation, judgment, or opinion) as to an event, situation or person, declaring one of several or possibly countless attributes that can be extracted or deduced from the topic. It may be said that those attributes are already connoted by the topic word.

② Phenomenon-Describing Sentence: non-topic sentence.

In this type of sentence, a phenomenon, projected as it is through a sense organ, is described without the speaker's putting any different interpretation on it. There is no gap between the phenomenon and the expression (Mio, 1948: 83). However, a non-topic sentence is not always the Phenomenon-Describing Sentence.

Observe the following sentences:

- (3) a. *Watashi wa kanji da.*  
(I am a manager.)  
b. *Watashi ga kanji da.*  
(I am the manager.)
- (4) a. *Sora wa aoi.*  
(The sky has a blue color.)  
b. *Sora ga aoi.*  
(The sky is blue now.)
- (5) a. *Tori wa tobu.*  
(Birds fly.)  
b. *Tori ga tobu.*  
(A bird is about to fly.)
- (6) *Oya, ame ga futte iru.*  
(Oh, it is raining.)
- (7) *Umai n da nā, kore ga.* [From a TV commercial]  
(This is delicious.)

(3a), (4a), and (5a) have the *wa*-marked topic and the comment which is made on an

attribute or a quality chosen from among many concerning the topicalized thing. For example, in (4a), what the sky is like is explained, referring to its color, and in (5a), what birds are like is explained, referring to their ability. The predicates in those sentences are chosen and described in order to explain the topicalized word. Of course, there can always be room to describe more attributes concerning it in succession, as long as the topic is analyzed repeatedly. (3b), (4b), (5b), (6), and (7) have, to the contrary, no topic as a linguistic phenomenon, and so they seem to be the Phenomenon-Describing Sentences; however, (3b) should be regarded merely as a non-topic sentence, and (7), which will be dealt with later, may not be one. At least, the *ga* in (3b), (4b), (5b), (6), and (7) cannot be replaced by the *wa* in most situations.

### A Tentative Prototype of Japanese Sentences

#### The Saucer as a Stabilizer

Here, the author will attempt to place the Phenomenon-Describing Sentence (or non-topic sentence) in a new specific position within the tentative complete sentence. Once a phenomenon is captured by a speaker, it will promptly be involved in his/her recognition. And it will be extracted as the result of analysis. The comment is made by a human's capturing how things are or occur, always something topicalized, and the thing in which it is expressed becomes a sentence. It can be said that the phenomenon is expressed in a sentence when it appears linguistically. Some kinds of Phenomenon-Describing Sentence may express the speaker's judgment extracted from a specific situation, and there is a comment along the lines of this in (Nitta: 1991: 120-121); thus, it may be said that the Phenomenon-Describing Sentence is not always or completely differentiated from the Comment Sentence. It may also be said that the both types of sentences are linked and connected to each other. This consideration leads us to the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis: A Phenomenon-Describing Sentence (or non-topic sentence) is derived from a component within the complete sentence that prototypically has a topic and comment.

The topic marker *wa* may basically involve the function of the copula, as Onoe pointed out that the particle *wa* corresponds to the copula at the end of a sentence (1977). Supposing it is true, it will be said that the topic may necessarily tend to require a (nominal) word at the end of a sentence so that the whole sentence may be stabilized. The word required by the topic would have the concept that specifies or identifies the

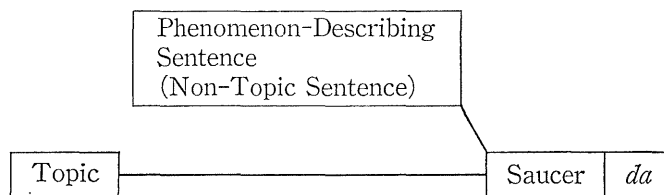
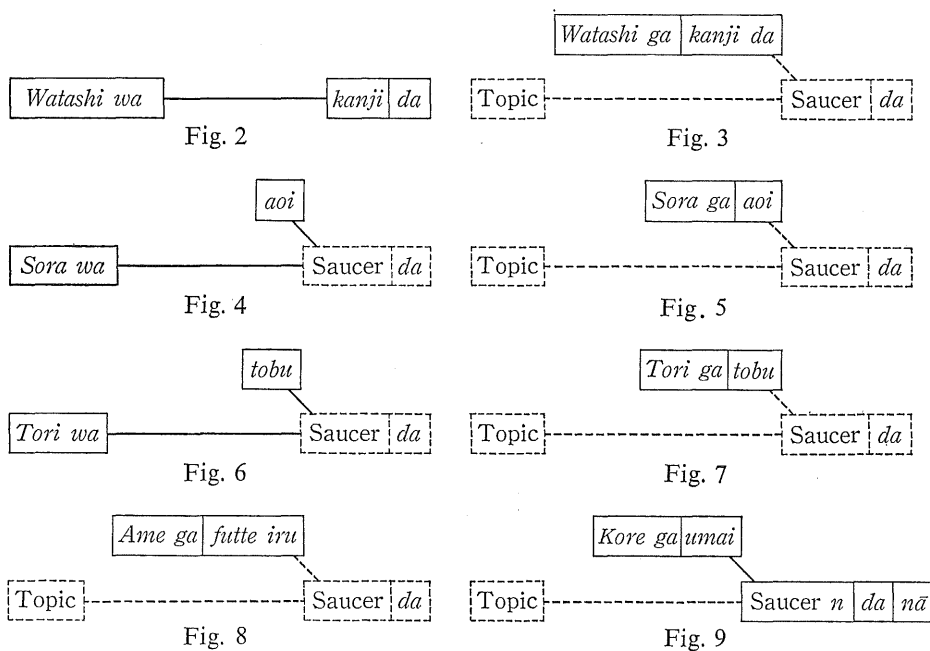


Fig. 1

topic, or that subsumes the concept of the topic, or that the topic most strongly reminds the speaker of, or that first of all occurs to him/her, and it is normally positioned directly after the comment. Taking the word 'Saucer' as a new term here, the structure of Japanese sentences would be revealed to a considerable extent (Fig. 1). The Saucer would function as if it stabilized the cup (Topic) into which drink (Comment) is poured. In fact, it can be said that a sentence is definitely steady, at least, when it begins with the *wa*-marked topic and ends with the form [noun (+*da*)].

It may be understood that this means, psychologically speaking, that the topic *A*, in many cases, tends to require the Saucer *B* in the [*A wa* . . . *B da*] construction; however, it should be noted here that the *D* in the [*C ga* . . . *D da*] construction cannot always be considered to be the Saucer, and in this sense, the Saucer is not necessarily the same as the word which may have been called Predicative Complement, or something. It can be considered that the [*A wa* . . . *B da*] construction is most likely to be one of the universal structures of Japanese sentences. *Desu* (polite), *de aru* (literary style), *datta* (past), and so on are variations of *da*; therefore, *da* is used here merely as the representative form of the copula verb. (3a)–(7) can be sketched as in Figs. 2–9.



### Topic and Saucer Tentatively Restored

In (3a), *watashi* specifies *kanji*, as shown in Fig. 2. The noun *kanji* describing what the person is, directly after *wa*, can be considered to function as the Saucer. (3b), as shown in Fig. 3, may have the Saucer, which would be *n*, and so (3b) may verge on *Watashi ga kanji na n da*, because it explanatorily states that the important thing is that

I am *the* manager, not anyone else. The *n* (or *no*), which expresses the highest class concept, can be considered to function as a Saucer that subsumes the topic-concept, so as to stabilize the whole sentence, including the Phenomenon-Describing Sentence (it also has the grammatical function of making the preceding clause a noun clause), and to capture the explanation-causing power of the topic. In (3b), the topic can be considered to be 'the important thing,' 'what I tell you,' 'the fact' as in (8), and so on.

(8) *Jitsu wa watashi ga kanji na n da.*

(The fact is I am the manager.)

In (4a), as shown in Fig. 4, the Saucer, which is required by the topic *sora wa*, can be regarded as the noun *mono* (thing). In (5a), as shown in Fig. 6, *tori wa* may require the Saucer, tentatively, *mono*, in the depth of the speaker's consciousness (→ See p. 203), while *Tori ga tobu* in (5b) might be considered to be the component of the complete sentence, describing a phenomenon, which may be syntactically separated from the topic, as in Fig. 7. (4a) and (5a) can be considered to be derived from *Sora wa aoi mono da* and *Tori wa tobu mono da*, respectively. It may be envisaged that the sentence-ending function of verbs and adjectives has developed, when preceded by the *wa*-marked topic, from the adnominal function; however, this seems difficult to prove due to lack of fore-shadows of early Japanese sentences. (It may be interesting to notice that the sentences, with the *wa*-marked topic, ending with the adnominal form of verbs or adjectives, can be found in *Makura no Sōshi*, a classical literary work.)

(9) a. *Ā, sora ga aoi nā.*

(Ah, the sky is so blue.)

b. *Watashi no inshō wa sora ga aoi koto da.*

(I'm impressed by the deep blue of the sky.)

(10) a. *A, tori ga tobu.*

(Oh, a bird is about to fly.)

b. *Are wa tori ga tobu tokoro da.*

(That's a bird preparing to fly.)

(11) a. *Umai n da nā, kore ga.* [From a TV commercial]

(This is so delicious.)

b. *Jitsu wa kore ga umai n da nā.*

(The fact is this is so delicious.)

c. *Watashi no manzoku wa kore ga umai koto da.*

(To my satisfaction, this is delicious.)

d. *Umai, kore ga.*

(This is delicious.)

(9a), (10a), and (11a) appear to be independent sentences per se, and are merely mentioning the color of the sky, a bird's preparing to fly, and the deliciousness of this (beer). According to the hypothesis, (9a) is a Phenomenon-Describing Sentence belonging to the Saucer *koto* required by a topic, and the topic can be considered to be, for example, 'my impression' as in (9b), while (10a) is a Phenomenon-Describing Sentence belonging to the Saucer *tokoro* required by a topic, and the topic can be considered to be 'that'

as in (10b). However, (11a), a seeming Phenomenon-Describing Sentence, has in it the Saucer *n*, which verges on *koto* as in (11c); thus, it can be considered to be a Comment Sentence explaining some topic that precedes the comment. Here it should be noted that (11d), which may as well be regarded as a Phenomenon-Describing Sentence, might be considered less usual than (11a) in real situations, and this shows that there is a spontaneous tendency for a Phenomenon-Describing Sentence like (11d) to become a Comment Sentence like (11a). It can be said that (9b), (10b), (11b), and (11c) correctly explain the situations to which the speaker gives those utterances, and it may be considered that this is a very useful or instructive point, though, in fact, (9b), (10b), and (11b–c) may be usually expressed as (9a), (10a), and (11a), respectively. The reason a topic does not need expressing in (9a) and (10a) may be that the speaker is not telling what he/she sees directly to anybody, or that he/she knows that the hearer, if there is one, is seeing the same scene together. And the reason a topic does not need expressing in (11a) may be that the speaker recognizes that the audience is aware of his/her having drunk and being satisfied with the deliciousness of the beer, and so mentioning the topic is superfluous. Treating those Phenomenon-Describing Sentences as subordinated to the Saucer, according to the hypothesis, possibly makes it easier, especially for learners of Japanese, to know the difference of the respective pairs of the situations in which (3a) and (3b), (4a) and (4b), (5a) and (5b) are expressed, and to use *wa* and *ga* properly.

The Phenomenon-Describing Sentence (6) would be expressed as (12a) in the same fashion:

- (12) a. *Watashi no odoroki wa ame ga futte iru koto da.*  
(I'm surprised that it is raining.)  
b. \**Oya, ame wa futte iru.*

The free-standing word *Oya* in (6) might suggest the tentatively restored topic *watashi no odoroki* in (12a); hence (12b) is unacceptable because (12b) inappropriately includes two topics, *ame* and *watashi no odoroki*, at one time.

It should be noted that those topics or Saucers tentatively restored are expressed here as linguistic phenomena just for convenience, in order to make clear what the speaker intends to express to the hearer, and that they are, in fact, superfluous, if they are deliberately expressed, in most of the real situations.

### Examples of Validity and Usefulness

Observe the following sentences:

- (13) *Kakon Nokoshita Zen-Hōdō Kyokuchō no Kanmon*  
*Nan tomo ii yō no nai, atoaji no warusa ga nokoru shitsugi datta.*  
(1993/10/26 editorial in the *Asahi Shimbun*)  
(The Summons of the Former Chief of the News Bureau by Which the Root  
of an Evil Will Remain.) [Headline]  
(It was an indescribable inquiry that would leave a bad aftertaste (in the mass  
media).)

- (14) . . . *kono tōsan wo karuku kangaete wa naranai darō.*  
*Baburu de itade wo oi, tōsan no kiki ni chokumen shite iru kigyō wa, yama hodo*  
*aru kara da.* (1993/11/3 editorial in the *Asahi Shimbun*)  
 (. . . we should not think little of this bankruptcy. It is because there are a  
 large number of enterprises that are severely affected by the Bubble Economy  
 and confronted with a bankruptcy crisis.)

In (13), readers would immediately find that the topic is expressed in the headline, though it is not marked by *wa*, and the Saucer is the *shitsugi* (inquiry) before *datta*, because they naturally notice that the *shitsugi* is specified by the topic *kanmon* (the summons), as shown in Fig. 10.

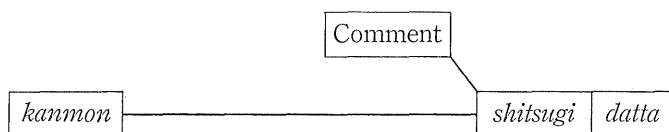


Fig. 10

Furthermore, readers would also find quite easily, in (14), that it might be better to rewrite *tōsan no kiki ni chokumen shite iru kigyō wa* (the enterprises that are confronted with a bankruptcy crisis) as *tōsan no kiki ni chokumen shite iru kigyō ga*, because they should know that the Saucer *kara* is required by the topic, the preceding sentence *kono tōsan wo karuku kangaete wa naranai darō* (that we should not think little of this bankruptcy), not by the false topic *tōsan no kiki ni chokumen shite iru kigyō wa*, as shown in Fig. 11, according to the hypothesis; therefore, it may not be proper usage to follow *tōsan no kiki ni chokumen shiteiru kigyō* is followed with *wa* except when *wa* indicates contrast (the function of contrast is not dealt with here, as it is beyond the scope of this paper).

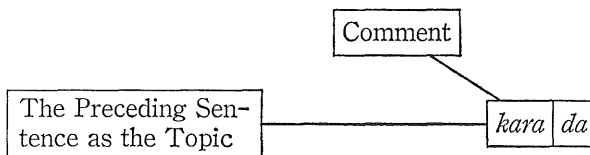


Fig. 11

- (15) *Hora, basu ga kita. Ano basu wa Kyoto yuki da.*  
 (Look, a bus is coming. That bus is bound for Kyoto.)

The beginning sentence in (15) has no topic; hence, it can be regarded as a Phenomenon-Describing Sentence. The second sentence in (15) has the topic marked by *wa*; hence, it can be regarded as a Comment Sentence with the topic *Ano basu wa*. According to the author's hypothesis, those two sentences in (15) cannot be treated as equally qualified, that is, it would be possible to build up some topic for the Phenomenon-Describing Sentence (non-topic sentence). Beginning the statement with the opening words *Hora, basu ga kita* connotes the speaker's dropping both the topic 'what I tell

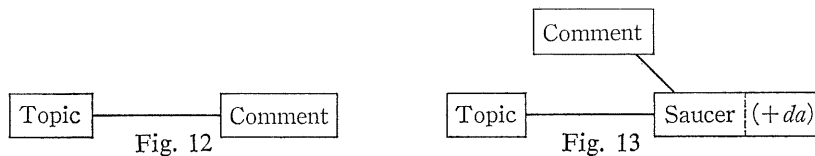


you,' which may be said to be suggested by the free-standing word *Hora*, and the Saucer *koto*, as in (16).

(16) *Kimi ni itai koto wa basu ga kita koto da. Ano basu wa Kyoto yuki da.*

(What I want to tell you is that a bus is coming. That bus is bound for Kyoto.)

From the viewpoint of the [*A wa . . . B da*] construction, *Kimi ni itai koto* and *Ano basu* correspond to *A* in the two sentences of (15), respectively, and *koto* and *Kyoto yuki* correspond to *B*, respectively, as tentatively expressed in (16), though the author may not be able to show sufficient evidence that the tentative *A* and *B* appear as linguistic phenomena in it. However, if the situation to which the speaker gives utterance is recognized in this way, the difference of these two types of sentences is understood with ease, especially by learners of Japanese, and if the difference of these two types of sentences is understood in this way, the situations to which the speaker gives utterance is recognized with ease by students, who would be able to avoid using the *wa*-marked topic by mistake, for example, after such free-standing words as *Hora*, *Oya*, *Al*, and so on (this does not mean that the *wa*-marked topic cannot be preceded by such free-standing words).



The orthodox way of diagramming the relationship between the topic and the comment in Fig. 12 would be altered as in Fig. 13. Prototypically, the Saucer can be considered to be embedded between the comment and the *da*.

### Peculiar Saucers

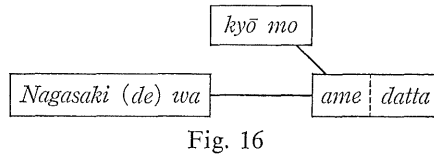
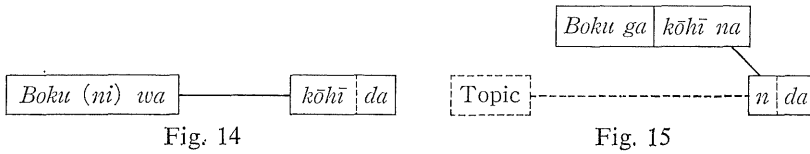
Observe the following sentences:

(17) a. *Boku (ni) wa kōhī da.*  
(Coffee for me.)

b. *Boku ga kōhī na n da.*  
(It is I that want coffee.)

(18) *Nagasaki (de) wa kyō mo ame datta.*  
(It was rainy in Nagasaki today, too.)

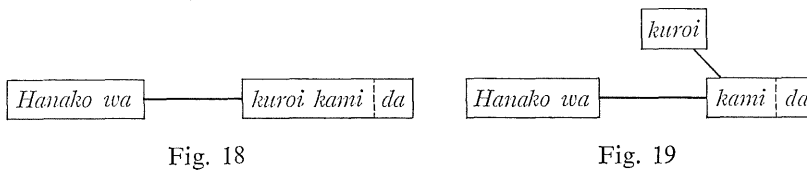
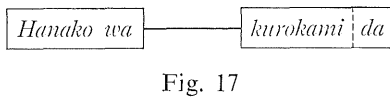
Supposing that the substantive noun *kōhī* (coffee) in (17a) is specified by the topic *Boku (ni) wa*, which can be considered to express the target at which coffee will be aimed, *kōhī* has the qualification for Saucer (Fig. 14), as far as the *wa* of *Boku (ni) wa* indicates merely topic, not contrast. However, there will still remain the problem about the relation between *Boku ga* and *kōhī* in (17b) (Fig. 15). In (18), *ame*, which expresses the state in Nagasaki at a specific time and might be considered to be the Saucer, is specified by the topic *Nagasaki (de) wa*, which shows the place where it was rainy (Fig. 16). Note that *ame* is a noun that can be regarded as a regular substantive noun meaning 'rain' and at the same time as an adjectival noun meaning 'rainy.'



Observe the following sentences:

- (19) a. *Hanako wa kurokami da.*  
(Hanako is black-haired.)  
b. *Hanako wa kuroi kami da.*  
(Hanako has black hair.)  
c. *Hanako wa kami ga kuroi.*  
(As for Hanako, her hair is black.)
- (20) *Hanako wa kuroki kami zo.*  
→ *Hanako wa kami zo kuroki.*  
→ *Hanako wa kami ga kuroi.*

In (19a), the seeming substantive noun *kurokami* might be considered to show one of Hanako's attributes (Fig. 17); thus, it would be the Saucer, while in (19b), it is very difficult to determine whether or not the *kuroi kami* (made of two words) should be regarded as the Saucer (Fig. 18) or whether or not only the *kami* should be regarded as the Saucer (Fig. 19).



(19c) might be shown as in Fig. 20, according to the hypothesis, and the Saucer, if it appears as a linguistic phenomenon, may be *josei* (a lady), because it may not be unreasonable that the topic *Hanako wa* shows anew the tendency to require some other Saucer following *kami ga kuroi* when the Saucer is pulled out and lost. Further, the author would like to add that the process by which (19c) might be made from (19b) seems to be explained by a *kakari joshi*, *zo*, as shown in (20) (for details, refer to Ōno (1978, 1993)).

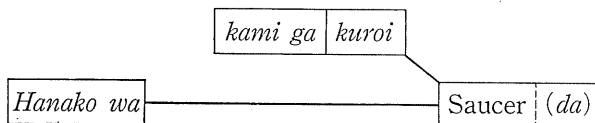


Fig. 20

Observe the following sentences:

- (21) a. *Kono sūtsu wa dō desu ka.*  
(How about this suit?)  
b. \**Kono sūtsu ga dō desu ka.*  
c. *Sore wa chotto boku ni wa hade sugiru n da nā.*  
(It's too colorful for me.)

*Dō*, in (21a), may be called Indefinite Saucer, which is specified by the topic but does not mention its attribute at all. Indefinite Saucers must normally be in the [*A wa . . B da*] construction; hence, (21b) is unacceptable. It can also be said that, as seen in (21c), which is a reply to (21a), the topic of this type of sentence has a tendency to require the Saucer *n* in most situations, as stated above. (For more on *n*, see section below.)

#### Insubstantial Nouns as the Saucer

Observe the following sentences:

- (22) a. *Boku wa kōhī na n da.*  
(I want coffee.)  
b. ?*Boku ni wa kōhī na n da.*  
(23) a. *Taro wa saisho ni tōchaku shita.*  
(Taro arrived first.)  
b. *Taro wa saisho ni tōchaku shita hito da.*  
(Taro is the first person that arrived.)  
c. *Taro wa saisho ni tōchaku shita hazu da.*  
(It is certain that Taro is the first person that arrived.)

In (22a), it seems that the Saucer *n* may be required by the topic *Boku wa* in order to express what situation *Boku* (I) is in, while (22b) seems less acceptable, which may mean it is difficult for the Saucer *n* to capture the topic which indicates the target (*Boku ni*) at which something (*kōhī* here) is aimed. This may be evidence that the Saucer is controlled by the type of topic marked by *wa*. (23a) may have the meaning of either (23b) or (23c), whose meaning seems to be put into words in (23a), depending upon the situation in which the speaker expresses the sentence; therefore, the Saucer is not always a regular substantive noun as in (23b) but may be an insubstantial noun (highly abstracted noun with no clear lexical meaning) as in (23c). It can be said that the Saucer may often hide itself as in (23a).

- (24) a. ?*Kodomo ga naite iru darō.*  
(A child may be crying.)  
b. *Kodomo ga naite iru no darō.*  
(It may be that a child is crying.)

It can be more clearly understood that the Saucer is required after a Phenomenon-Describing Sentence (or non-topic sentence), by noting that (24a) may not be acceptable in certain circumstances but (24b), stabilized by *no* as the Saucer between the seeming Phenomenon-Describing Sentence *Kodomo ga naite iru* and the word of modality *darō*, is always acceptable. This is also pointed out by Nitta (1991: 131). This may also be convincing proof of the existence of the Saucer. The Saucer captures the topic in Topic-Comment-Saucer construction. In this type of sentence, the topic is not always expressed linguistically, because no sooner has it been developed in the speaker's mind than the utterance is produced. However, this type of topic will possibly appear, when, for example, the hearer asks for the sake of confirmation about the situation in which the non-topic sentence (this may no more be regarded as a Phenomenon-Describing Sentence) is expressed, as follows:

- (25) a. *Ano koe wa dō shita n darō.*  
(What does that voice mean?)  
b. *Ano koe wa kodomo ga naite iru n darō.* (Fig. 21)  
(That voice means, I think, that a child is crying.)

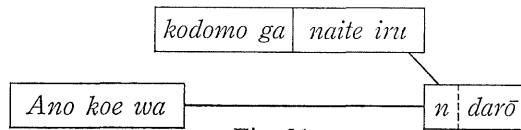


Fig. 21

Under those circumstances in which (24a) is acceptable, the author envisages that (24a) will be expressed, for example, as (26a) which is shown in Fig. 22. The Saucer *koro* subsumes the topic *imagoro*.

- (26) a. *Imagoro wa kodomo ga onaka wo sukashite naite iru koro darō.*  
(I think it's about time the child is crying for food.)  
b. *Kodomo ga onaka wo sukashite naite iru darō.*  
(The child may be crying for food.)

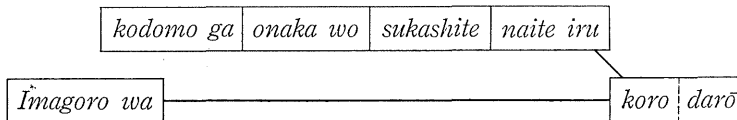


Fig. 22

The topic and Saucer in (26a) seem to be easily dropped; evidently, (26b) seems to mean (26a). Therefore, this means that the kind of Saucer like *koro* (around a certain time), which is required by a specific type of topic, can be hidden before a certain type of modality word like *darō* (I think), and also that the kind of Saucer like *n* (=no) is difficult to drop before a certain type of modality word like *darō*. At any rate, it can be inferred from this that the Saucer exists, and that a topic, requiring the Saucer and usually marked by *wa*, also exists, even though they are not always expressed as linguistic phenomena.

It may be impossible to always correctly restore a definite topic, when it is not mentioned from the beginning. The speaker must have had, even for an instant, the topic-like concept in the depth of his/her consciousness, which did not concretely appear because such sentences are usually expressed in an instant after something is observed; furthermore, there should be a noun as the Saucer, usually with *da* latently, required by the topic at the end of a sentence as shown in Fig. 1. It may be meaningless to restore a specific topic, and Niwa actually gives up pursuing this type of topic (1988). What should be noted here is that it is not stated that a specific topic or Saucer must always be restored in any sentence. The sentence whose topic is hidden in a specific situation (=Topic-Hidden Sentence 'Indai Bun') is a comment per se, and it must have some situation or some proposition as the topic in advance before the comment is stated (Niwa, 1988; Nitta, 1991: 120–121). The Topic-Hidden Sentence can be regarded as the kind of sentence whose topic is omitted (Niwa, 1988). This is why a Topic-Hidden Sentence (non-topic sentence) can be paraphrased into the [... *wa* ... *da*] construction.

- (27) a. *Ame ga futta n da.* [Nureta dōro wo mite]  
 (It must have rained.) [Looking at a wet road]  
 b. *Dōro ga nureta no wa ame ga futta kara da.*  
 (The reason why the road is wet is that it rained.)

Even if a Topic-Hidden Sentence is stated with a deliberately expressed topic as in (27b), (28b), or (28c), it can be said that it is just uneconomically mentioned, and it cannot be said that the sentence is ungrammatical even in the surface structure; hence, it must be grammatical enough in the depth of his/her consciousness. (27a) lacks the outward topic (Fig. 23), while (27b) is the sentence which is made by connecting the topic *Dōro ga nureta no wa* with the comment *ame ga futta*, by the medium of the Saucer *kara* (Fig. 24). Actually, the fact that the road is wet is equal to the result of the rain. And the *kara* (because) before *da* functions as the Saucer that captures the topic, in order to show that the result of something is expressed in the topic; therefore, it can be said that the *kara* is required by the topic expressing the road's being wet.

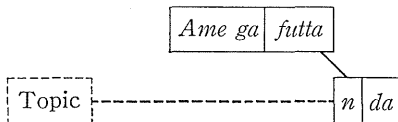


Fig. 23

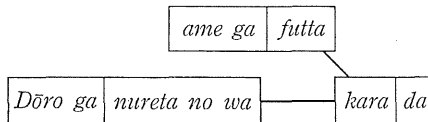


Fig. 24

- (28) a. *Mō iku no desu ka.*  
 (Are you leaving already?)  
 b. *Jitsu wa yakusoku ga aru n desu.*  
 (I'm sorry I have an appointment.)  
 c. *Mō iku no wa yakusoku ga aru kara desu.*  
 (The reason why I'm leaving is that I have an appointment.)

In the same fashion, (28b) and (28c) can be considered to be made by integrating the

topics *Jitsu wa* and *Mō iku no wa* with the comment *yakusoku ga aru*, the Saucers *n* and *kara*, and *desu* (Figs. 25, 26). It can be said that the Saucer is changed by the speaker, according to the type of the topic, by noting that the *ns* in (27a) and (28b) are changed to the *karas* in (27b) and (28c).

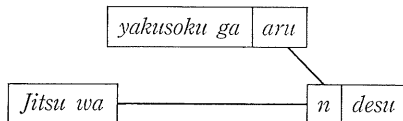


Fig. 25

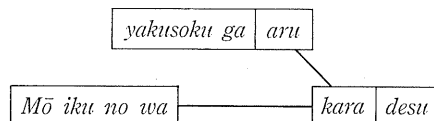


Fig. 26

- (29) a. *Ano sawagi wa dare ga tōchaku shita n da.*  
(Who does that tumult mean has arrived?)  
b. *Are wa Furanku ga tōchaku shita n desu.*  
(That means Frank has arrived.)
- (30) *Tōchaku shita no wa Furanku desu.*  
(The one who has arrived is Frank.)

The *n* in (29b) indicates the situation in which somebody's having arrived is shown by the comment, and it can be expressed by *are* as a topic, while the indefinite pronoun *no* in (30) is used instead of *hito* (the person / the one); thus, the difference between (29b), which is exactly a reply to (29a), and (30) may be understood with ease by seeing Figs. 27 and 28.

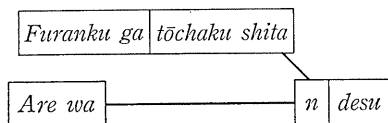


Fig. 27

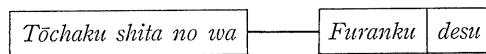


Fig. 28

The Insubstantial Saucer +*da* might vary, according to the type of the speaker's modality, as follows: *beki da*, *hazu da*, *kara da*, *mitai da*, *mono da*, *no da*, *sō da*, *tokoro da*, *tsumori da*, *wake da*, *yō da*, and so on. We shall take up one of them here and examine it.

- (31) a. *Kimi wa ima sore wo suru beki da.*  
b. *Sore wa ima kimi ga suru beki da.*  
c. *Ima wa kimi ga sore wo suru beki da.*  
(You should do it now.)  
d. *Kono jōkyō de wa ima kimi ga sore wo suru beki da.*  
(Under the present circumstances, you should do it now.)
- (32) a. *Kimi wa ima sore wo suru beki na n da.*  
b. *Sore wa ima kimi ga suru beki na n da.*  
c. *Ima wa kimi ga sore wo suru beki na n da.*  
d. *Kono jōkyō de wa ima kimi ga sore wo suru beki na n da.*
- (33) a. *Kimi wa soko e iku beki da.*

b. *Soko wa kimi ga iku beki da.*

(You should go there.)

The differences between (31a) and (32a), (31b) and (32b), (31c) and (32c), and (31d) and (32d) seem very small, because the topic is the same in each pair of sentences. This may mean that the insubstantial noun *beki* has a sizable number of meanings, which can change at any time (and this is the very reason why it is insubstantial), but not so drastically as another insubstantial noun *no*, which may be far more polysemous. The *beki* in (31a) means 'the person who should do it (= *beki hito*),' in (31b) it means 'the object which should be done (= *beki koto*),' in (31c) it means 'the time when it should be done (= *beki toki*),' in (31d) it means 'the circumstances under which somebody should do something (= *beki jōkyō*),' and so on. In the same fashion, the *beki* in (33a) means 'the person who should do something (= *beki hito*),' and in (33b) it means 'the target at which something should be aimed (= *beki tokoro*).' It can be said that the *bekis* in (31a)–(31d) are pulled into the comment part by the existence of the strong and flexible *n*, as in (32a)–(32d), and that the *n* captures the topic in each sentence instead of *beki* (Figs. 29, 30).

When the Saucer is a substantive noun, such variety (as the *bekis* present) cannot be observed. It should be noted that we have no need to deny the possibility of the insubstantial nouns as the Saucers + *da* changing to auxiliary verbs, which may be caused because they can capture a significant number of topic types.

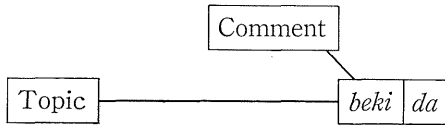


Fig. 29

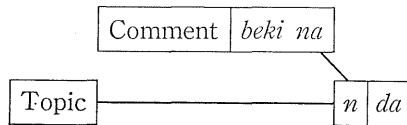


Fig. 30

### Conclusion

The difference between a sentence beginning with the *wa*-marked topic and one beginning with a word marked by case particles can be understood by looking at Fig. 31. However, the *ga* should not be treated as equally as the other case particles, because the *ga* seems to be predominant over them.

Onoe explains that the *wa* divides a sentence into two, separating the topic that pre-

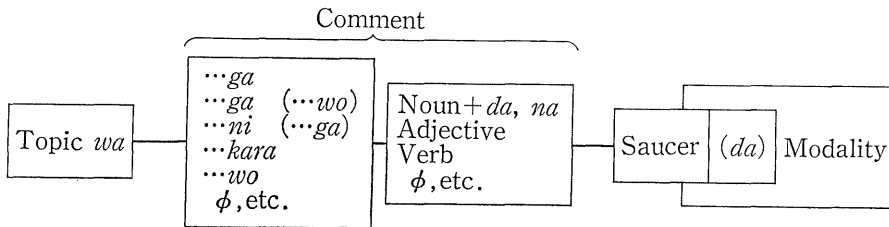


Fig. 31

cedes it from the rest of the sentence, and uniting them again (1977), and this may be shown, according to the hypothesis, as in Fig. 31. Only in the context between the topic and the comment preceding the Saucer, in many cases, can the *wa* that marks topic be said to act as proxy for various case particles.

From what has been considered in the above sections, it seems reasonable to conclude that:

1. The topic, usually marked by *wa*, tends to require a nominal Saucer that follows the comment, so that the Saucer may express what the topicalized thing is, what it is like, how it is described, so on. ('Saucer' has been taken here as a new term.)
2. The comment, which may be regarded as a Phenomenon-Describing Sentence or a non-topic sentence, subordinately belongs to the Saucer.
3. Prototypically, there is a [... *wa* ... *da*] pattern in Japanese sentences. (Fundamentally, this pattern should be differentiated from the [... *ga* ... *da*] pattern.)

However, the above conclusions, reached by observing limited types of sentences will necessarily require verification through the examining of many more kinds of sentences.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 青木伶子 (1986) 「『は』助詞は所謂『陳述』を支配するに非ず?」, 『国語国文』第55巻第3号.
- 大野 晋 (1978) 『日本語の文法を考える』, 岩波書店.
- (1993) 『係り結びの研究』, 岩波書店.
- 尾上圭介 (1977) 「提題論の遺産」, 『言語』6巻6号.
- 佐治圭三 (1991) 『日本語の文法の研究』, ひつじ書房.
- 角田太作 (1991) 「主語, 主格, 主題, 動作者: 文法分析の四つのレベル」, 『世界の言語と日本語』第8章, くろしお出版.
- 仁田義雄 (1991) 『日本語のモダリティと人称』, ひつじ書房.
- 丹羽哲也 (1988) 「有題文と無題文, 現象(描写)文, 助詞「が」の問題(上・下)」, 『国語国文』第57巻第6・7号.
- 原田信一 (1973) 「構文と意味——日本語の主語をめぐって」, 『言語』2巻2号.
- 三尾 砂 (1948) 『国語法文章論』83, 三省堂.
- 三上 章 (1960) 『象は鼻が長い——日本文法入門』, くろしお出版.
- (1975) 『三上章論文集』, くろしお出版.