

The Function of Japanese Cleft Sentences in Discourse

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Introduction

Discourse Sample

(Ozunu wa) motto okufukai yama de shugyoo shiyoo to, Kinpoosan(Yoshinoyama) ni me o tsuketa. Koko ni haitte aratame te shugyoo o tsuzuketa.

(1) Aragyoo no hate ni kare no mae ni arawareta no wa Shaka datta. "Watashi de doo da?" to kiku Shaka ni Ozunu wa kubi o futta. "Anata de wa ima no minshuu wa sukuenai."

(2) Tsugi ni arawareta no wa Kannon to Miroku datta. Ozunu a mata kubi o futta. "Anatagata demo dame da." (3) Saigo ni susamajii raimei to iwanari no naka kara arawareta no ga, Kongoo-Zaoo-Bosatsu-Daigongen da. (φ) Osoroshii ikari no gyoosoo o shite iru. Ozunu wa (φ) kandoo shita. "Anata koso motomete ita Hotoke da." Ozunu wa sugu waki no ki o kittle Kongoo-Zaoo o honzon to shite kizanda. Kore ga Daihoosan no Honzon da. (Katei-gahoo, July 1991)

Driven by the desire of devoting himself to austere discipline deep in the mountains, Ozunu decided to go to Mt. Kinpo. He went to the mountain and continued his austere practice. (1) What appeared in front of him after the practice was Shaka. Ozunu shook his head at Shaka, who asked, "What do you think of me?" "You cannot save people," Ozunu replied. (2) Those who appeared next were Kannon and Miroku. Ozunu shook his head again. He said, "Neither of you meets the requirement." (3) The last one, who emerged from a tremendous thunderstorm, was Kongoo-Zaoo-Bosatsu-Daigongen. (He) looked as though he were in a horrible rage. Ozunu was deeply impressed (by his appearance). He said, "You are the one I have been looking for." Hurriedly he chopped down a tree and carved a statue of Kongoo-Zaoo out of it. This is now the symbol of Daihoosan.

In the preceding discourse example, the underlined sentences

are cleft sentences. Those sentences with a 'A no wa B da' structure are wa cleft sentences, as illustrated in examples 1 and 2, and those with a 'A no ga B da' structure are ga cleft sentences, as illustrated in example 3.

The existence of two types of cleft sentences in Japanese has been known for some time. However, the function of these in discourse and the differences between the two have not yet been adequately studied. In this paper, I hope to clarify some of the functions of these cleft sentences by looking at how the 'A' and 'B' of 'A no wa B da' and 'A no ga B da' are connected to the previous context and also at how the topic persistence of phrases A and B is observed in the subsequent context.

Continuation from the Previous Context

When the previous context is continued in the A or B phrases in wa cleft or ga cleft sentences, they are termed continuous (CNT). If there is no continuation, they are termed discontinuous (DCNT).

To qualify as CNT, a sentence must satisfy one of the following three conditions, in which the content of A or B is

1. Conveyed largely by means of the same expressions in the previous context.
2. Inferred from the context of the previous sentences.
3. Contrasted with the content of the previous context.

When none of these conditions applies, or one of the above conditions only partially applies, such sentences are regarded as DCNT.

Examples of CNT and DCNT are as follows:

1. Aragyoo no hate ni kare no mae ni arawareta no wa

DCNT

Shaka datta.

DCNT

(What appeared in front of him after a religious

DCNT

austerities was Shaka.)

DCNT

2. Tsugi ni arawareta no wa Kannon to Miroku datta.

CNT

DCNT

(Those who appeared next were Kannon and Miroku.)

CNT

DCNT

3. Saigo ni susamajii raimei to iwanari no naka kara

DCNT

arawareta no ga. Kongoo-Zaoo-Bosatsu-Daigongen da.

DCNT

(The last one who emerged from a horrible thunder-

DCNT

storm was Kongoo-Zaoo-Bosatsu-Daigongen.)

DCNT

My examples in this paper were collected from magazines, novels, and essays intended for the general adult public. The total number of examples is 195, among which 126 are *wa* cleft sentences and 69 are *ga* cleft sentences.

As shown in Table 1, 101 samples of *wa* cleft sentences (80.2%) continue the content of the previous sentences. This supports the view that *wa* is used for information supplied earlier. The majority of the remaining 25 samples (19.8%) have *A* phrases that are not directly continued from the previous sentences but whose context is based on general or assumed knowledge or on other nonlinguistic information such as photographs. Examples of sentences that do not apply to any of the three conditions are as follows:

4. Kare wa Karyuukai o shiranakatta. Jookyoo shite kita no wa yo-nen mae de atta ga, chichioya wa too ni nakunatte (Yoru no Tsuru)
(He didn't know about Karyuukai, the entertainers' society. It was four years ago when he came to Tokyo, long after his father's death.)
5. 'Kotoshi no hatsuyume wa, sugokatta yo' to utau yoo ni iu no wa, Akitaken Noshiroshi no Sugihara Shigeru (70 sai) da. (Estaminet, December 1991)
(The person who said in a melodious tone that the first dream of this year had been tremendous was

Sugihara Shigeru from Noshiro-shi, Akita prefecture.)

In sentence 4 the A phrase is expressed as if it were given information. By using a quotation, the information in sentence 5 shows that the utterance has already occurred and so is regarded as given. Magazine articles and, particularly, reports often use this structure.

Table 1

	Sample No. (%)	A		B	
		CNT	DCNT	CNT	DCNT
wa cleft	126 (100%)	101 (80.2%)	25 (19.8%)	4 (3.2%)	122 (96.8%)
ga cleft	69 (100%)	4 (5.8%)	65 (94.2%)	43 (62.3%)	26 (37.7%)

Even when A phrases in wa cleft sentences do not continue the context of the previous sentences, the listener can infer the content and activate it as given knowledge.

In contrast, B phrases in wa cleft sentences are usually DCNT. There are, however, some exceptions. They all use the structure of the following example, in which the demonstratives indicate the continuation of the context:

6. Tenjoo no takai heya de wa nekki wa joobu ni tamari kabu wa hikakuteki sugoshiyasuku natte imasu. Otera ya furui minka de no hirune ga kimochi yoi no wa, sono sei na no desu. (Katei-gahoo, July 1991)
(In houses with high walls, heat rises, leaving the lower part of the room cooler and relatively more comfortable. It is because of this that one finds it pleasant to take a nap in temples or old houses.)

This sentence is similar to the answer to the understood question 'Why?'. It is therefore possible to change it to 'Otera ya furui minka de no hirune ga kimochi yoi no

wa, naze ka to iu to, sono sei na no desu.' (Why one finds it pleasant to take a nap in temples or old houses is because of this reason.) 'Sono sei da' (because of), responding to 'Naze ka' (why), is the focus. As Hannay (1991) points out, the focus does not have to be a piece of new information. Except for a few such examples, a *wa* cleft sentence carries out the function of 'topic + focus' discourse by the information structure of 'A (CNT) no wa B (DCNT) da'.

Only four of our examples (5.8%) of *ga* cleft sentences contained an A phrase that showed the continuation of the previous context. This result supports the theory that *ga* introduces new information.

In regard to B phrases, there are 26 examples (37.7%) of DCNT, many fewer than the 43 examples (62.3%) of CNT but nevertheless a significant number. In 'dotei-bun' (identifying sentences) in the form 'A ga B da' (A is B), B refers to given information (Sakahara, 1990), but this theory does not seem to apply to cleft sentences.

It is clear that the B phrase in a *ga* cleft sentence is not relevant to whether or not the sentence continues the context of the previous sentences. If so, what are the functions of these B phrases in discourse, and how do these functions differ from the B phrases of *wa* cleft sentences? To answer these questions, let us examine the way in which the contents of A and B phrases reappear in the subsequent context.

Persistence of the Topic in the Subsequent Context

Tables 2 and 3 show how the A and B phrases are continued into the subsequent context. To indicate continuation into the following context, repetition of the same phrases, pronominalization, ellipses, and paraphrase are used. (See the phrases in boldface in the Discourse Sample).

When the phrase continues into the following sentences, it is denoted as (topic). When it does not, it is denoted as (#). Examples of CNT and DCNT showing continuation from the previous context are also noted in the tables. Before the slash (/) CNT or DCNT indicates continuation from the previous context, and after the slash it indicates continua-

tion into the next discourse. Therefore, for example, A(DCNT/topic) indicates that the A phrase is not continued from the previous context but continues into the following discourse as a topic. Thus the phrase continuing the context in the subsequent sentence is considered to be a persistent topic in the discourse. I shall therefore use the expressions 'persistence into the following sentences' and 'persistence as a topic'.

Table 2 shows the results of the *wa* cleft sentence analysis of examples in which (1) only A persists, (2) only B persists, (3) both A and B persist, and (4) neither A nor B persists.

Table 2

		wa Cleft Sentence	Sample No. (%)
Only A persists	1.	A(DCNT/topic) no wa B(DCNT/#)	3 21 (16.7%)
	2.	A(CNT/topic) no wa B(DCNT/#)	18
Only B persists	3.	A(CNT/#) no wa B(DCNT/topic)	52 63 (50.0%)
	4.	A(DCNT/#) no wa B(DCNT/topic)	11
Both A and B persist	5.	A(DCNT/topic) no wa B(DCNT/topic)	6 13 (10.3%)
	6.	A(CNT/topic) no wa B(DCNT/topic)	7
Neither A nor B persists	7.	A(CNT/#) no wa B(DCNT/#)	23
	8.	A(CNT/#) no wa B(CNT/#)	1 29 (23%)
	9.	A(DCNT/#) no wa B(CNT/#)	3
	10.	A(DCNT/#) no wa B(DCNT/#)	2
		Total	126 (100%)

Table 3 shows the results of the *ga* cleft sentence analysis. There were no cases in which only A phrases persisted. Therefore the results are categorized as (1) only B persists, (2) both A and B persist, or (3) neither A nor B persists.

Table 3

	<i>ga</i> Cleft Sentence	Sample No. (%)
Only B persists	1. A (DCNT/#) no <i>ga</i> B (DCNT/topic)	20
	2. A (DCNT/#) no <i>ga</i> B (CNT/topic)	18
	3. A (CNT/#) no <i>ga</i> B (DCNT/topic)	2
	4. A (CNT/#) no <i>ga</i> B (CNT/topic)	2
Both A and B persist	5. A (DCNT/topic) no <i>ga</i> B (CNT/topic)	9
	6. A (DCNT/topic) no <i>ga</i> B (DCNT/topic)	4
Neither A nor B persists	7. A (DCNT/#) no <i>ga</i> B (CNT/#)	14 (20.3%)
Total		69 (100%)

In the *va* cleft sentences, persistence in the A phrase is seen in a total of 34 samples (27%), consisting of 21 samples (16.7%) in which only the A phrase is persistent and 13 samples (10.3%) in which both the A and the B phrases are persistent. The persistence in the B phrase was seen in a total of 76 samples (60.3%) in which only the B phrase persists (63 samples, or 50%) and both the A and the B phrases persist (13 samples, or 10.3%). In 29 samples (23%) neither the A nor the B phrase persists.

The results for the *ga* cleft sentences are similar to

those for the *va* cleft sentences. In 13 samples (18.8%), the A phrase persists. Of the 55 samples (79.7%) in which the B phrase persists, in 42 samples (60.9%) only the B phrase persists, and in 13 samples (18.8%) both the A and the B phrase persist. Neither the A nor the B phrase persists in 14 samples (20.3%). These results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

	A Persists	B Persists	Neither Persists
<i>va</i> cleft	34 (27%)	76 (60.3%)	29 (23%)
<i>ga</i> cleft (18.8%)	13 55 (79.7%)	14 (20.3%)	

There is no notable difference between the two cleft sentences in Table 4. But calculating the topic persistence (TP) using the technique developed by Givon (1989), the difference becomes apparent, particularly in the B phrase. The value of the topic persistence is the number of clauses continuing as topics. When the topic continues for 20 or more clauses, the value 20 is assigned.

Table 5

	TP average		sentences with TP value 5+	
	A	B	A	B
<i>va</i> cleft	4.9	4.7	33.3%	26.3%
<i>ga</i> cleft	4.5	7.7	38.5%	54.9%

As seen in Table 5, more B phrases in *ga* cleft sentences (TP value 7.7) persist longer as topics than those in *wa* cleft sentences do (TP value 4.7). Furthermore, of those sentences with TP values exceeding 5, there are more than twice as many *ga* cleft sentences (54.9%) as *wa* cleft sentences. In regard to whether the topic persists in the context in the subsequent sentences, there is not much difference between the *wa* cleft and the *ga* cleft sentences, as shown in Table 4. Table 5 does, however, clearly indicate the difference between the two in the topic persistence, in which the B phrases in the *ga* cleft sentences show apparently longer persistence than do the other kinds of sentences.

Functions of *ga* Cleft Sentences

It appears that *ga* cleft sentences perform the function of introducing new information, the A phrase, into the discourse and also the B phrase, which continues from A so that B will be established as a topic in the latter discourse. In other words, in discourse, *ga* cleft sentences introduce the topic. There are 13 samples (18.8%) which show TP in A phrases. In these cases, always together with B but never alone, showed topic persistence into the subsequent sentences. This also supports the conclusion that *ga* cleft sentences introduce a topic, by means of B phrases, into the context of the subsequent sentences.*

This characteristic of *ga* cleft sentences, like that of 'A *ga* B ni iru/aru' sentences (sentences such as 'There is A in B'), introduces a new topic so as to develop discourse based on this topic. The difference between the two is that unlike 'A *ga* B ni iru/aru' sentences, *ga* cleft sentences do

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 * In 14 samples (20.3%) neither the A nor the B phrase persisted into the subsequent sentences. Most of them included nouns of abstract concepts such as 'tokuchoo' (characteristics), 'kotsu' (trick) and 'tessoku' (absolute rules) in the B phrases. Such sentences appear to emphasize the A phrases. In any case I will not discuss this here. Rather, this paper is based on the remaining 55 samples (79.7%).

not have to introduce a noun or the equivalence but can even introduce a proposition.

7. soshite Ishii san ga juutaku o sekkei suru sai ni mazu daiichi ni kangaeru no ga, koon-tashitsu na Nihon no natsu o doo sugosu ka, to iu koto na no desu.

Mushiatsu ni natsu o sugosu ni wa nani yori mo tsuufuu no yosa ga ichiban desu. Ishii san no sekkei shita Mekami-yama no juutaku ni wa, dono heya ni mo san hookoo ijoo no kaikoobu ga mookete ari, tenjoo ga takai no ga tokuchoo desu.

(Katei-gahoo, July 1991)

(What Mr. Ishii considers first when he designs houses is how to overcome the heat and the humidity during a Japanese summer.

In order to be comfortable during a humid and hot summer, good ventilation is the most important factor to be considered. The characteristics of the house in Mekami-yama, designed by Mr. Ishii, are that there are more than three openings in the walls for ventilation and that the ceiling of each room is very high.)

Another distinction between ga cleft sentences and 'A ga B ni iru/aru' sentences is that the new information introduced by the A phrase is not directly introduced as a topic but, rather, functions as an introduction to the real topic, which is introduced by a B phrase.

8. Shokki-kansooki o o-mochi no okusama no uchi, 5-nin ni futari made ga 'Jama ni naru' to kanjite iru to ka. Kore wa yuyushiki mondai desu yo, to iu wake de, okibasho o gun to setsuyaku shita no ga, kono shokki kansooki. (Katei-gahoo, July 1991)

(They say that two out of five housewives who have a dish-drier feel that it takes up too much space. This is a serious problem, isn't it? That's why we have developed an amazingly compact dish-drier. The one we have developed is this one.)

Sample 8 contains the following phrases:

1. Shokki-kansooki ga jama ni naru to kanjite iru.
(They feel that dish-driers take up too much space.)
2. Kore wa yuyushiki mondai da.
(This is a serious problem.)
3. Sono mondai o kaiketsu suru ni wa okibasho o
setsuyaku suru hitsuyoo ga aru.
(In order to solve the problem, we need to make them
more compact.)
4. Okibasho o setsuyaku shita.
(We have succeeded to make compact dish-driers.)
5. Sore ga kono shokki-kansooki de aru.
(This is the one, the compact dish-drier.)

The third phrase is not articulated, and the second and fourth phrases are joined by means of the conjunctive expression 'to iu wake de'. The new information in the fourth phrase is presented in order to reintroduce 'shokki-kansooki' later. In sum, the function of A phrases in ga cleft sentences is both to add new information to a discourse and to prepare the way for the B phrase, which has information relating to A and will be a topic in the following discourse. In this way, the A phrase relates the context of the previous sentences to the topic of the subsequent discourse.

In our example, the topic 'shokki-kansooki' is given information that was introduced by the previous context. But, as is clear from Table 1, the B phrases in ga cleft sentences do not have to be given information.

An example of a B phrase that does not continue the previous context and that therefore represents new information is the 'Kongoo-Zaoo-Bosatsu-Daigongen' in the Discourse Sample cited at the beginning of this paper. Such examples in fact show as high a percentage as 37.7%.

We noted earlier that the function of A phrases in ga cleft sentences is to relate the previous context to the

following topic. Perhaps we could rephrase the definition as follows: The function of A phrases is, regardless of whether the B phrases are given or new, to enable the B phrase to persist as a topic in the subsequent discourse.

Functions of *wa* Cleft Sentences

Most *wa* cleft sentences have the structure 'A (CNT) no *wa* B (DCNT) *da*'. Accordingly, we can assume that their function is to present information in the A phrase that either has already been established as topic in the previous context or that the listener will immediately recognize as a topic, with the help of nonlinguistic information, so that the speaker can develop the discourse by adding B, a new piece of information, to A. Therefore, B phrases introduced in *wa* cleft sentences do not always become topics in the following discourse. In 21 samples (16.7%) there was TP in only the A phrases, and in 29 samples (23%) there was no TP in either the A or the B phrases. These figures also support the conclusion that the introduction of the topic in B phrases is not the fundamental function of *wa* cleft sentences.

In *wa* cleft sentences, the TP value of B phrases is much lower than that of B phrases in *ga* cleft sentences. Also, in *wa* cleft sentences there are fewer than half as many B phrases with a value of 5 or higher than there are in *ga* cleft sentences. This evidence also supports the argument that introducing the topic into the following context is not the principal function of *wa* cleft sentences.

I have not been able to explore *wa* cleft sentences adequately in this paper. We need also to investigate further *ga* cleft sentences in which the topic does not continue into the following discourse, as well as the difference between 'dootei-bun' (Sakahara, 1990) such as 'A *wa* B *da*' (A is B) and 'A *ga* B *da*' (A is B), and the cleft sentences 'A no *wa* B *da*' and 'A no *ga* B *da*'.

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