

II. Noncontrastive and contrastive *wa* phrases

(5) Differences between the two, as summarized by Heycock (2008: §2)

	Noncontrastive <i>wa</i> phrases	Contrastive <i>wa</i> phrases
<i>Implicature?</i>	“convey[s] information... apparently without any implicature about the properties of any other [entity]”	“generate[s] implicatures concerning other entities in the discourse model”
<i>Distribution in clause types?</i>	main clause only (except: allowed with certain ‘say’/‘think’ verbs)	main clause and many types of subordinate clause
<i>Position?</i>	must be clause-initial	may be clause-internal
<i>Iteration?</i>	No; only one occurrence per sentence (but this is debated; multiple ‘scene-setting’ <i>wa</i> phrases may be possible)	Yes; multiple occurrences possible in one sentence
<i>If initial, did it undergo movement?</i>	If no, then interpretation is noncontrastive	If yes, then interpretation is contrastive

(6) Additional differences, from Tomioka (2007/WPSI3)

	Noncontrastive <i>wa</i> phrases	Contrastive <i>wa</i> phrases
<i>Receive focal accent?</i>	no	must [?? even if multiple?]
<i>Category of phrase?</i>	NP, PP, CP (‘nominal or quasi-nominal’)	essentially any, including also VP, AP
<i>Referent?</i>	contextually familiar or recoverable entity (‘given/old information’)	can be familiar or novel

- Does recognizing a difference between noncontrastive and contrastive *wa* phrases help clarify anything about the usage and patterning of *wa*?

(7) Why is it so tempting to think of *wa* as a “subject marker”?

- What kind of *wa* phrase is it that most looks like it’s related to “subject”?
 - Main-clause-initial, given in the discourse, no special intonation, ‘quasi-nominal’
- Why do you suppose people are less likely to confuse *wa* with an “object marker”?
 - What are the expected characteristics of an object that is marked with *wa*? What kind of *wa* phrase is this...
 - > ...if it remains in object position?
 - > ...if it moves to sentence-initial position?

(8) Upshot: The most confusing problem for a learner of Japanese (and for a theoretical linguist) is developing a theory to predict what situations will call for **noncontrastive topic marking** (with *wa*) and what situations will call for **subject marking** (with *ga*).

III. Some generalizations about the usage of *wa* (and *ga*)

- Disclaimer: As is clear from the later sections of the Heycock paper, there are many interacting factors that affect the acceptability of *wa* versus *ga* in a given sentence as uttered in a given context. The factors discussed here are not the whole story — but they should help.

A. Usage of noncontrastive topics ('As for X,...'): Some incompatible situations

- (9) Noncontrastive *wa* is used to set up some entity or concept that is already familiar in the discourse as a 'topic' which the rest of the sentence will then expound upon
- (a) Masuoka notes that the topic is in a sense subordinate to the "explanation" that accompanies it [i.e., it is the comment that is the new information] (M 1993: 89)
- (b) Along these lines, there is often **no overt topic expressed** in a sentence, since often it is recoverable from context and can be omitted
- (10) Since these are the things that a noncontrastive topic does, there are restrictions on the types of elements that can appear as (overt) noncontrastive topics
- (11) Two examples judged to be "husizen" 不自然 (I translate this as *infelicitous*); Masuoka says these are "repaired" if we replace *wa* with *ga* (M 1993: 90)

Dono hito-wa anata-no oniisan desu ka.
which person you-GEN older.brother COP Q

Intended meaning: 'Which person is your older brother?'

Hito-ri-no otoko-wa totuzen hanasikakete kimasita.
one-CL-GEN man suddenly talk-TE come-FML-PAST

Intended meaning: 'A man suddenly came and spoke (to me).'

- So why are those two examples not good noncontrastive topics?

Because for something to be a noncontrastive topic must designate **given information**.

- The 1st example has *wa* on a **question phrase**, which is clearly not designating anything.
- The 2nd example has *wa* on a **newly introduced discourse element**, something that would be used with an indefinite article in Eng. etc.; until after it is introduced, there is no prior information in the discourse as to what this expression designates

- (12) These next examples are fine, though: (M 1993: 91) — how would we gloss these?

(a) *Anata-no oniisan-wa dono hito desu ka.*
you-GEN older.brother which person COP Q

(b) *Hitori no otoko-ga totuzen hanasikakete kita.*
one-CL-GEN man suddenly talk-TE come-PAST
'A man suddenly came and spoke (to me).'

Otoko-wa pen to tetyoo-o te ni site-ita.
man pen and notebook hand NI do-PROG-PAST

B. When is a (noncontrastive) topic necessary/avoided?

- (13) Need to draw on the distinction between **active** and **stative** predicates (M 1993: 92)
[Question: What about **achievement** predicates?]

- Remember that a stative predicate can be identified by this diagnostic: If a stative predicate is true of a time interval, it is also true of all of its subintervals

- (a) With a **stative** predicate, there is a preference for **having a topic**. (M 1993: 92)

Takako-wa kinben da. 'T. is diligent.' / 'As for T., she is diligent.'
diligent COP

Koozi-wa sigoto de isogasii. 'K. is busy with work.' / 'As for K., he is busy...'
work INST busy-NONPAST

- If *wa* is replaced with *ga* here, we get, e.g., the answer to a question 'Who is diligent/busy?'. I.e., with *ga*, these are a bit odd in out-of-the-blue contexts.
- And, even where the *ga* versions are used, it is probably not the case that these sentences are really without a topic — there is probably a null topic, namely, 'the one who is diligent/busy'. [me: this may be why these are odd as discourse-initial sentences: there is no discourse referent for that null topic.]

- (b) With an **active** predicate, both [+topic], [-topic] sentences are possible (M 1993: 92)

Takako-wa marason-kyoogi ni syutuzyoo sita.
Takako-ga marason-kyoogi ni syutuzyoo sita.
marathon NI participate-PAST

- (14) More factors affecting presence of noncontrastive topic:

- (a) Active predicates: When an occurrence is **observed and immediately described** ("Oh, look!"), this is not the kind of utterance that is commonly given a topic-comment structure. (M 1993: 93)

Basu-ga kita yo. Saifu-ga otimasita yo.
bus come-PAST EMPH wallet fall-PAST EMPH
'(Look,) the bus came.' '(Oh, hey,) your wallet fell [=you dropped it].'

- (b) In fact, this effect occurs even with stative predicates. (M 1993: 93)

Nisi no sora-ga makka da. Tonari-ga kazi da!
west-GEN sky all.red COP next.door fire COP
'(Look,) the western sky is all red.' '(Hey!) Next door is on fire!'

- Cute: About the sentence *Tonari-wa kazi da* — Masuoka says, "...ika ni mo aida-no nuketa hanasi desu ne." ('This really seems to be a story that is missing the middle part.')

C. Contrastive topic ('X is Y, but...')

- (15) Use of *wa* to set up an overt contrast (examples from Jordan & Noda 1987)

- (a) Kono eki ni arimasu. 'There's one in this station.' p 141
Kono eki ni **wa** arimasu ga... 'There's one in THIS station, but (I'm not
this station LOC exist-FML but commenting on other stations).'

(b) Kyooto made **wa** ikimasu ga... 'I'm going as far as KYOTO (at least), but... (I
up.to go-FML but probably won't go any farther).' p 163

(c) Enpitu de **wa** kakimasen.desita. 'I didn't write [it] in PENCIL (but with
pencil INST write-FML-NEG-PAST something else).' p 176

D. So...What about *ga*?

(16) Jordan & Noda (1987: 90) on NP + *ga*

(a) "In this pattern, [NP] ... (1) often refers to a **new item in the conversation** — even one which may be unfamiliar to the person addressed — and (2) usually provides **exhaustive** information within the immediate context. Completely **lacking is the notion that X is being compared or contrasted** with other items, as in the case of *X wa*." [emphasis added]

- exhaustive information: approximately 'It was X that Y' (for *X-ga Y*)

(b) "In discourse, a *wa*-phrase may extend its meaning over a number of sentences, whereas a *ga*-phrase regularly links up only with a predicate in the same sentence." (Jordan & Noda 1987, 90) [could we even say further, same *clause*?]

(17) Does J&N's characterization of *ga* give any insight into why it often appears to be in "complementary distribution" with *wa*?

- How does *ga* relate to noncontrastive *wa* and contrastive *wa*?