Explicit vs. Zero Postpositional Particles
in Modern Colloquial Japanese

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1. Introduction

In this paper I will explore the conditions for the appropriate use of postpositional particles and interpretation in modern colloquial Japanese. The discussion is more exploratory than definitive — a first step in the direction of an eventual clearer understanding of what has to be an important aspect of spoken language.

The Japanese particles have been the research focus of many scholars both in Japan and overseas. Although many important insights and observations have come out of the previous works, basic facts concerning the so-called 'no particle phenomenon' in colloquial Japanese still remain unexplained. Postpositional particles often do not appear in informal conversations, most typically in casual dialogues. I will argue that what happens in such cases is not particle drop, deletion nor ellipsis, but the use of the zero particle in place of explicit ones. Let us look at the following dialogue, where not a single postpositional particle appears. (The symbol @ stands for the zero postpositional particle, and ø for the zero pronoun):

(1)　A: Kimi@ Itariago @ wakaru?
　　　　　you　　Italian　　understand
　　　　　'Do you know Italian?'
　　　B: ø Sukoshi ø benkyoshita koto@ aru kedo.
　　　　　　a little　　studied　　　incident be but
　　　　　'[I] have studied [it] a little.'
　　　A: Kore@ dooyuu imi?
　　　　　this　　what-kind meaning
　　　　　'What does this mean?'

(1) is a typical example of frequent uses of the zero postpositional particle, besides the zero pronouns, in colloquial Japanese. It is not correct to say that there are no semantic differences between a sentence with explicit postpositions and one with the zero postposition. The two types of expression are not freely substitutable for one another. Replacing any of the @ in (1) with an explicit particle, as we will see below would make the whole utterance stylistically awkward or would add an irrelevant emphasis to the nominal.

I will examine the choice of an explicit or the zero postpositional particle in colloquial Japanese and will show that the decision is not done at random but for certain discourse effects. I demonstrate that the function of an explicit grammatical/topical particle in spoken Japanese is to make the noun phrase discourse prominent, while the zero particle is used to avoid unnecessary accentuation of the noun phrase as well as to send a metamessage of rapport to the addressee.

2. The Zero Particle in Colloquial Japanese

Every language has a means of indicating the case relations between the predicate and noun phrases. In formal/written Japanese the case relations are explicitly marked by postpositional particles. There are nine frequently used case particles: *ga* 'nominative', *o* 'accusative', *ni* 'dative/locative', *to* 'commitative', *kara* 'source', *de* 'instrumental', *made* 'destinational', *e* 'directional', *yori* 'comparative.' Besides, Japanese has a topical marker *wa*, which has been identified by a variety of terms by scholars, among which *kakari joshi* (relational particle) or *fuku joshi* (adverbial particle) are perhaps the two most widely used.

However, in colloquial Japanese, the most frequently used postpositional particle is the zero postpositional particle. Most people, including scholars who have worked on the absence of postpositional particles, treat the phenomenon as 'particle dele-

tion,' 'particle drop' or 'particle ellipsis.' My claim is that utterances like those in (1) are not the result of particle removal but that they are marked with the zero particle from the beginning. To justify my position, I will start with the English equivalent of (1B)[1] and compare it with the casual and formal ways of saying the same thing in Japanese:

(2) I have studied it a little.

The casual, unstressed way of saying (2) in Japanese is (1B), but if you choose to be formal you may prefer (2') with explicit pronominals and postpositional particles[2]:

(2') Boku wa sore o sukoshi benkyoshita koto ga arimasu.
      I   TOP it ACC a little studied   incident NOM be

(2') is a full-fledged sentence which you would use in delivering a public speech or in writing a formal letter, but it would sound out of place if used in contexts like (1). If someone says (2') in response to (1A), she/he would be regarded as being stuck-up, aloof or speaking out of textbook. The difference between the two versions of saying the same thing, such as (1B) and (2'), is not merely of a stylistic nature, but as I will demonstrate in the following sections, it involves some grammar and discourse-pragmatics.

    A natural question may arise, "In the case of transitive construction, if both the nominative and accusative particles are missing (or if either the subject or the object or both appear as the zero pronoun as in (1B)), it would be impossible to differentiate the subject from the object." Japanese being a language of flexile word order, this is indeed a rational question. In order to answer it, we may as well refer to the following quote from Hinds (1982: 155):

(3) Postpositional particles may be ellipted when they do not contribute necessary, non-redundant information. Because the function of these particles is to indicate grammatical relationships, and a knowledge of grammatical relationships is required for the interpretation of a given utterance, it might therefore be presumed that particles always signal necessary information. However, … there are alternative ways of indicating grammatical relationships, … these alternative ways may, under specific conditions, obviate the necessity of particles.

Hinds (1982) used the term 'ellipsis', but apart from that I see that his functional assumption expressed in (3) is tenable. Two new questions may be raised at this point, (i) "What alternative ways of indicating grammatical relationships are there in Japanese?" and (ii) "If there are alternative ways of indicating grammatical relationships, why should case markers exist at all? I will return to these problems in Section (7).

    For now, let us move on and consider the following sentence:

(4) (While watching a game in a ballpark)
    Ima no taisen goran ni narimashita ne?
    now LK match-up watch LK become EP
    'You watched the match-up that took place a moment ago, didn't you?'

Compare this with the following version with the accusative marker, which serves to differentiate the noun phrase:

(4') Ima no taisen o goran ni narimashita ne?
                 ACC

What (4') means is, " I'm not talking about other match-ups but the one which took place a moment ago. You watched that, didn't you?" The accusative marker should not be used unless you have a reason to make the noun phrase discourse prominent.

3. The Zero Pronoun: Another Grammatical Element in Japanese Grammar.

The status and function of the zero prepositional particle in colloquial Japanese is comparable to those of the zero pronoun, which is arguably the only one true pronoun in Japanese. The normal, unstressed way of saying "I went" in Japanese is (5) and not (5')

(5) Ikimashita.
    went
(5') Watashi wa ikimashita.
     I   TP went

In fact, as Rubin (1992: 28–30), a well-known professor and a translator of Japanese literature, among others, points out, strictly speaking, (5') would be an inaccurate translation for "I went," because what it actually means is "I don't know about those other guys, but I, at least, went." It would be okay if you really want to proclaim to the world, "I know not what course others may have taken, but as for me, I went!" *Wa* in colloquial Japanese thus functions as an indicator of contrast: it differentiates 'I' as a topic of discussion from other possible topics. I will return to this point later in Section 5.

Then what about *watashi* 'I', *boku* 'I', *anata* 'you', *kimi* 'you', *dare* 'who', *kanojo* 'she', etc., which are conventionally treated as pronouns? In fact, those are only adapted nouns originally meaning "selfishness', "servant" or "over there" or the like. They are not used simply to avoid repetition as English pronouns are, and need to be avoided unless the discourse context requires them. Thus, schematically shown, *Watashi wa ikimashita* = "As for me, I went" ≠ "I went."

Unlike the zero particle, the zero pronoun is used in every register, including formal writings. As long as the writer or speaker is confident the referent is clear, the only pronoun is zero. If you tried putting *watashi*, *anata*, *kanojo*, etc. for every 'I', 'you' and 'she', you would end up with stilted and unnatural Japanese. Or you would succeed in giving your sentences an exotic "foreign" tone by using more "pronouns" than are strictly necessary.

4. Discourse Function and Distribution of the Zero Particle

Returning back to the zero particle in casual speech, examples abound in interpersonal communication between two persons or within a small group. As we have demonstrated above, grammatical/topical particles in colloquial utterances function to make the noun phrase prominent. The zero particle works exactly the opposite: it makes the noun phrase discourse non-prominent. It is used when the speaker does not want to put emphasis to any of the noun phrases and is confident that the address will not be confused about the grammatical relationships between the noun phase and the predicate.

In order to explore the distributional properties of the zero particle as opposed to explicit particles, we start by identifying different types of explicit postpositional particles. Explicit postpositional particles can be classified into three types: grammatical, semantic, and topicalizing [see Hinds 1982[3], Kuno 1973, Kuroda 1965]. The grammatical particles are *ga*, *o* and *ni*, which are used to mark subject (and the object of certain predicates), direct object and indirect object, respectively. The semantic particles are used to mark adjuncts (non-arguments): principal ones are *ni* (location), *e* (direction), *kara* (source), *de* (instrument/location of action) and *made* (destination)[4]. Finally, the topicalizing particle *wa* isolates a noun phrase by 'attaching' the noun phrase so marked to the topmost clause[5].

An examination of wide-ranging conversational data shows that the zero postpositional particle may take the place of grammatical and topicalizing particles (with the exception of the dative marker ni, see below) with more frequency than the semantic particles. Let us look at the following examples, where the zero particle is used after subject and object but not after adjuncts, which require semantic particles.'

(6) a. Boku @ koko <u>de</u> bohshi @ katta yo.
       I   here LOC hat   bought EP
       'I bought a hat here.'
    b. ø Doko <u>kara</u> kita no?
         where from came COMP
       'Where do you come from?'

  c. Sono hon @ watashi <u>ni</u> kudasai.

    that book I   to give

    'Please give that to me?'

What each of these utterances demonstrates is that the grammatical particles do not contribute any nonredundant information, which is why they are replaced by the zero particle. Ellipsis of semantic particles, on the other hand, is relatively rare because these particles have intrinsic semantic contents and normally convey required, nonredundant information. They are essential for the correct interpretation of the utterance. If we replace the underlined (semantic/dative) particles with the zero particle, the sentences will become ungrammatical:

 (6') a. ＊Boku @ koko @ bohshi @ katta yo.

     I   here hat   bought EP

   b. ＊ø Doko @ kita no?

      where came COMP

   c. ＊Sono hon @ watashi @ kudasai.

     that book I   give

Note, however, that in (6c), the dative marker *ni* is indispensable: if we replace it with the zero particle, the sentence becomes ungrammatical. The idiosyncrasy of the grammatical marker *ni* and its relationship with the locative marker *ni* will be discussed in Section 6.

5. Topical and Grammatical Particles in Colloquial and Formal/Written Japanese

  Most scholars who have worked on *wa* have noted cases in which the primary function of wa does not seem to be the marking of a topic but rather, the marking of a contrastive relation between the *wa*-bearing element and some other element, which may or may not receive explicit linguistic representation. In short, *wa* in spoken discourse differentiates the named topic from implied other potential topics. We have seen in the previous sections that *Watashi wa ikimashita* in colloquial Japanese would be an inaccurate translation for "I went." Then, what about (7) below?

 (7) Watashi @, t ikimashita.

   I   went

This is an example of topicalized sentence of the spoken variety. *Watashi* has been moved out of the subject position to the topic position, exactly the same as in English topicalization. In uttering (7), rather than (5), the speaker chooses to be clear about the agent of the predicate, without making it discourse prominent. *Watashi* in (7) is a topic of the spoken variety, while *watashi wa* of (5') can be a topic in formal/written Japanese but not in colloquial Japanese. The one and the same particle thus can have different functions in colloquial and formal/written discourse.

  Compare the following utterances:

 (8) (Talking about the speaker's mother, who likes talking)

   a. Uchi no haha@ hito to hanasu no ga daisuki na no.

     home LK mother person with talk CMP NOM like LK EP

     'My mother really likes talking with people very much.'

   b. Uchi no haha *wa* hito to hanasu no ga daisuki na no.

   c. #Uchi no haha *ga* hito to hanasu no ga daisuki na no.

(8a) is a normal way of saying the same thing as, "My mother really likes talking with people very much." What (8b), the version with *wa*, means is the following:

 (8b') I do not know about others, but as far as my mother is concerned, she really likes talking with people very much.

As for in (8c), since the particle *ga* is normally considered a marker of discourse new information, *Uchi no haha ga* gets exhaustive listing interpretation, making the whole utterance awkward and out of place. What it means is (8'c):

(8'c) It is my mother, not others, who really likes talking with people very much.

Kuno (1972: 282) made the following claim:

(9) All instances of subject with no overt particles in the matrix sentence are the result of *wa* deletion [as opposed to *ga* deletion].

I do not subscribe to the idea of '*wa* deletion' or '*ga* deletion', but I think his observation is correct, and propose the following hypothesis:

(9') A matrix subject with the zero particle is the (non prominent) topic of the utterance.

To find justification for the above hypothesis, let us compare (5) with the following:-

(5") Watashi ga ikimashita.
      I   NOM went

The addition of *ga* in (5") makes the subject discourse prominent, resulting in exhaustive listing interpretation, i.e. "Among the people concerned, I and only I, went." You do not want to say (5") for a simple "I went," because what you are really saying is "*I* went."

    Kuno (1973) notes that the direct object marker *o* (and *ga* when it functions as a direct object marker) can be ellipted (in our terms, be replaced by the zero particle) with relative ease. We have seen an example of the opposition of zero marking and *o*-marking in (4) in Section 2 above. The following are examples with direct object marking:

(10) a. Kono hon @ hoshii ?
        this   book   want
        'Do you want this book?'
    b. Watashi hebi @ kirai.
        I   snake   hate
        'I hate snakes.'

If the zero particle is replaced by *ga*, the noun phrases get exhaustive listing interpretation: the meaning of the sentences (10a) and (10b) would be 'Do you want *this* book?' and 'I hate *snakes*', respectively.

6. Idiosyncrasy of *ni*

    Unlike other grammatical particles, the dative marker *ni*, the third argument of a three-place predicate, generally resists replacement by the zero particle. Let us look at the following transcript of a friendly exchange between two people:

(11) A: ø Kore ø ageyo ka?
         this   give-to-you Q
      'Shall I give this to you?'
    B: ø ø Kudasai
         give-to-me
      'Give me that, please.'

The agent and the recipient are indicated by the zero pronoun throughout the exchange. Both (11a) and (11b) are highly cryptic but full-fledged sentences. If we focus on (11B), its only explicit element is the predicate. Nevertheless, we perfectly understand that the speaker B is asking the speaker A to give something (the identity of which is known from the previous discourse) to him/her. Compare (11B) with the following:

(12) a. ø Sore @ kudasai.
          that give
     b. Watashi ni sore@ kudasai.
          I   DAT that give
     c. *Watashi sore@ kudasai.

If the speaker has a reason to be more specific in the same situation, he/she can either say (12a) or (12b) but not (12d). As we have seen in the previous section, the accusative marker *o* is replacable by the zero particle but not the dative marker: the sentence without the dative marker (12c) is ruled ungrammatical. In fact, I have yet to find an instance of the zero particle taking the place of *ni* when it functions as the indirect object marker.

However, there are numerous other examples of *ni* being replaced by the zero particle in conversations without altering the meaning, as in (13):

(13) a. sore o koko@ irete ne.
          that ACC here put-in EM
          'Put that in here, OK?'
     b. moo ohuro@ hairu yo.
          already bath enter EM
          'It's time to take a bath now.'
     c. atama@ ki o tukete ne.
          head   spirit ACC attach EM
          'Watch out for your head.'

All the instances of *ni* in (13), however, are not used as the indirect object marker but as the locative marker. This seems contrary to my hypothesis that the zero particle may replace grammatical and topical particles but not semantic particles. Not many scholars discussed the peculiar behavior of *ni* in any detail except Hinds (1982: 160), who hypothesized the following:

(14) The reason indirect object *ni* resists ellipsis is that it typically marks a second animate being in a sentences. The first animate being, the subject, is marked by *ga*/*wa* and it can be freely ellipted. If both *ni* and *ga*/*wa* were ellipted, confusion could result, and so one must be retained. Since there is already pressure for the subject marker to be ellipted based on transitive and intransitive sentence patterns, it is the one which may be ellipted.

(14) cannot provide a complete explanation, since it leaves us with the facts exemplified by (13) unexplained. My tentative thesis is two-fold: (i) *ni* is a general location marker with scant semantic content: it can be translated variously as *at*, *in*, *into*, *on*, *against*, *by*, *to*, or *for*, depending on the context; (ii) dative marking *ni* retains its original function of designating a point in time and space, just the same as the complementizer *that* partly retains its deictic meaning [see Bolinger 1972]. Thus, *ni* as an indirect object marker behaves partly as a grammatical marker and partly as a semantic marker. When it assumes a grammatical argument marking function, it resists replacement by the zero particle, but when it is used to mark an adjunct, it can be replaced by the zero particle.

7. From Ecphonesis to Grammatical Particles: History of *wa*, *ga* and *o*

Historically, *wa*, *ga*, and *o* were originally ecphonesis (exclamation, rushes of emotion without much semantic content), which were somewhat like sentence-ending particles in present-day Japanese [see Nitta 1980: 81, Hiroike 1906, cited in Ban 1959: 148, Morino 1973: 46, Koreshima 1966: 69, among others.] It was the introduction of Chinese in the 6th century that trig-

gered their development as postpositional particles[6]. They came to acquire the role of "grammatical markers" in the interpretation and translation of classical Chinese texts into Japanese. Since the two languages are typologically far apart, it was impossible to apply Japanese grammar to Chinese writings. People have to cope with the unusual collocation and grammatical structures which are foreign to their own language. It was the need to differentiate the subject from the object in Chinese sentences that gave birth to the grammatical usage of *ga* and *o*.[7] Likewise, the need to set aside the topic from the rest of the sentence led to the development of *wa* as a topic marker.

8. Alternative Ways of Indicating Grammatical Relationships

There are alternative ways of indicating grammatical relationships in colloquial Japanese. These alternative ways may, under specific conditions, obviate the necessity of explicit particles. Speakers of Japanese know, first of all, that a certain number of nominals are associated with each verb in the language. Each of these nominals is followed by a specific particle. For instance, the verbal *naku* 'cry,' *kiru* 'cut,' and *ireru* 'put' each has the following requirements. (Postpositional particles separated by '/' indicate that either may occur, although the first sound more natural out of context.) Secondly, they also know something about the properties of each of the permissible nominals. Each verbal thus has a "case frame" which specifies the required number of nominals, the correct postpositional particles, and a brief description of the relevant properties of the nominals [see (Fillmore 1975, 1977).:

(15) a. naku [Agent ga/wa, _____]
               animate being
        b. kiru [Agent wa/ga, Patient o _____]
               human being physical object
        c. ireru [Agent wa/ga, Patient o, Location ni _____]
               animate bing object   container

Case frames of predicates with basically the same meaning may include information about distinctive properties of appropriate nominals. Look at (16), an array of the five Japanese verbs of 'giving.' Each has a case frame with the distinctive properties of the agent and the recipient. (SP stands for speaker/a member of the speaker's in-group; RE stands for someone who the speaker respects; SU stands for someone who is superior; E/D stands for the speaker's equal or someone who the speaker is condescending.)

(16) a. ageru   [Agent wa/ga, Patient o, Recipient ni, _____]
                    SP   object   RE
        b. sashiageru [Agent wa/ga, Patient o, Recipient ni, _____]
                    SP   object   SU
        c. yaru   [Agent wa/ga, Patient o, Recipient ni, _____]
                    SP   object   E/D
        d. kureru   [Agent wa/ga, Patient o, Recipient ni, _____]
                    E/D   object   SP
        e. kudasaru [Agent wa/ga, Patient o, Recipient ni, _____]
                    SU   object   SP

Once a particular frame is evoked by mentioning some nouns or verbs in a sentence, the speaker and the hearer expect that certain relevant concepts and actions can be used for further construction and interpretation of discourse. Japanese speakers thus have little difficulty understanding utterances without explicit particles but are sprinkled with the zero particle (and zero pronoun).

Word order may help determine the grammatical relationships to some extent. The grammatical knowledge of Japanese includes the information that the unmarked word order is SOV, even though scrambling frequently occurs in accordance to contextual needs.

9. Register and Postpositional Marking

When we discuss postpositional marking, it is essential to note the functional differences of major postpositions in two distinct registers, viz. colloquial Japanese and formal/written Japanese[8]. Register consists of 'field,' 'mode' and 'tenor,' the three situational features which are most relevant to the language of a discourses. The following is the definition by Hasan (1968: 10–11):

(17) Broadly, the 'field' is what the language is about, in the sense not only of the subject-matter but also, more widely, of what the speaker or writer is trying to achieve. The 'mode' is the channel taken by the language whether it is spoken or written, extempore or prepared, and more generally its function as narrative, conversation, monologue and so on. The 'tenor' is the total set of social relations, permanent and temporary, among the participants.

One of the premises of this paper has been that the two registers should be kept apart when analyzing the functions of postpositional particles.

In this section, I explore the reasons for the absence of the zero particles in formal situations and written discourse. First of all, spoken language is tied to the context of utterance, which normally serves to guarantee recoverability of implicit elements. Written language and formal speeches tend to be made up of independent full-fledged sentences equipped with all the grammatical markers. Explicit marking of noun phrases is the norm in formal speech and written Japanese, since written sentences may be unclear the first time we read them through and require us to do some conscious analyzing if we want to understand them precisely. Formal speeches are more like written materials than conversations, for they often consist of prepared written sentences without presupposing any common standpoint between the speaker and the audience.

Another possible reason is the extensive use of Sino-Japanese compounds, many of which consist of both verbal and nominal elements of Chinese origin. Sino-Japanese compounds are quite productive and many can easily become 'light verbs' by the addition of *suru* 'do'. Let us look at the following pardigm of verb phrases.

(18) | English | Original Japanese | Sino-Japanese compound |
|---|---|---|
| a. read a book/books | hon o yomu | dokusho suru |
| | book ACC read | read-book do |
| b. drink alcohol | sake o nomu | inshu suru |
| | alcohol ACC drink | drink-alcohol do |
| c. wash face | kao o arau | sengan suru |
| | face ACC wash | wash-face do |

Nouns incorporated in Sino-Japanese compounds, being non-referential, never get case-marked while the nouns in original Japanese predicates may. Sino-Japanese compounds are used more often in formal/written Japanese than in colloquial Japanese, possibly for two reasons: (i) they sound more scientific/rigid than original Japanese expressions; (ii) there are many homophonic Sino-Japanese compounds, which become ambiguous when spoken: for example, *joso* can mean either 'dress as a woman,' 'approach run.' '(music) introduction', 'to weed', 'defrost', etc. No ambiguity arises in writing, since different Chinese characters are used for each distinctive meaning.

10. Differentiating Function and Discourse Effects

The zero vs. explicit postpositional marking serves as processing signals to the addressee. The fact that speakers may choose to use explicit particles in places where they do not serve essential grammatical functions is the evidence that they have communicative value and are much more than space fillers.

There are a number of particles in Japanese whose only function is to indicate prominence [see Hinds 1986c]. Included in this group are *koso* "very", *tomo* "indeed", and sentence-ending particles such as *yo*, *ne*, *sa*, and appropriate combinations of these sentence-ending particles. However, in colloquial Japanese, as we have discussed above, noun phrases marked by particles without semantic content get focused or contrasted. The particle *wa*, normally considered a marker of topic, would make the noun phrase which precedes it contrastive, while the particle *ga* normally considered a marker of focus [Martin 1975] would place the

constituent which precedes it into emphatic focus, thereby inducing exhaustive listing interpretation.

The zero particle in casual conversation, on the other hand, sends a message of rapport. The speaker may be thinking, "There is no need to be over-specific about everything in my talk. I'm not focusing on any particular thing or group rather than all the others. My conversational partners might well understand what I mean without me saying things in so much words." Thus, the function of the zero particle can be termed "building solidarity" or "sending a metamessage of rapport.' It is customarily employed in casual friendly exchanges between two persons who are in in-group relationships with each other.

The function of putting in all the structurally unnecessary particles in casual conversation, as in (2') in Section 2, may be termed "building a barrier." The speaker appears to be polite on the surface, but in really she/he is being unfriendly or holding the hearer in derision. He/she sounds superficially courteous but his/her utterance gives cold and unfriendly impression to the hearer.

Zero marking is basically the norm for subject and object in colloquial Japanese. Nominative particle *ga* and accusative particle *o* will be employed only when the speaker wants to emphasize that she/he is talking about a particular thing/person/event and not the others. The noun phrase in question gets focalized (exhaustive listing effect). The function of an explicit particle in a place where it is not grammatically necessary may be termed "giving prominence.'

11. Summary

The function of postpositional particles is to indicate grammatical, semantic and pragmatic relationships required for the interpretation of a given utterance. I have argued that Japanese postpositional particles always signal necessary information and that when they do not contribute necessary, nonredundant information, they are replaced by the zero particle. Put differently, the zero particle may be used because another indicator of grammatical relationships is present in the lexicon. The zero postposition marking proliferates in grammatical case position, for there is no need to accentuate the obvious. If an explicit particle is present in the environment when it is not grammatically needed, it is used for a discourse effect. I have demonstrated that the whole question of explicit vs. zero postpositional marking in colloquial Japanese is involved with the question of what should be made discourse prominent and what should not. The following are among the findings concerning the use of the three major postpositional particles in Japanese:

(19) a. *Wa* is primarily a topic/contrastive marker. It may be used to mark topic (given information) in literally/formal discourse but not in colloquial discourse, where it functions as a contrastive information marker. (Non-contrastive topics or given information in spoken discourse typically become zero pronouns.)

b. *Ga* is primarily a new information/exhaustive listing marker. It may be used to mark grammatical subject or object (of predicates of desire, liking and ability) in literally/formal discourse but not in colloquial discourse, where it is used as an exhaustive listing marker.

c. *O* is primarily an exhaustive listing marker. It may be used to mark grammatical object in literally/formal discourse but not in colloquial discourse, where it is used as an exhaustive listing marker.

While there are doubtless other areas worth investigating, initial investigations conducted here may help to determine under what conditions Japanese particles are chosen.

Notes

[1] The final conjunct 'but' is omitted, because it is irrelevant to the discussion.

[2] Abbreviations used in the gloss are: TOP (topic), ACC (accusative), NOM (nominative), LOC (locative), CMP (complementizer), LK (linking particle), EP (sentence-ending particle), DAT (dative), Q (question particle)

[3] Hinds' terminology is 'primary,' 'secondary' and 'topicalizing.'

[4] As to the relationship between the indirect object marker *ni* and the destination marker *ni*, I will discuss later in Section 6.

[5] There are other topicalizing particles, such as *mo* 'also' and particle-like constructions which may mark topic, such as *nara* 'when it comes to', *to ieba* 'speaking of', but I will not discuss them.

[6] The Chinese letters were adopted in the middle of the 6th century, but the Japanese language remained intact, except for a multitude of loan words and the creation of a large number of Sine-Japanese compounds.

[7] Among the three particles, *ga* went through an idiosyncratic function shift, viz. from a genitive marker to a nominative marker [See Martin 1975: 264ff].

[8] It seems that Kuno (1973: 38) did not pay close attention to register differences when he pointed out that there are two different uses of *wa* (theme (topic) and contrast) and three for *ga* (neutral descriptions of actions or temporary states, exhaustive listing, object marking of stative predicate of emotion and ability).

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