

■ *Wa* and *Ga*: Explicit-Topic Sentence and Implicit-Topic Sentence

Sentences that include a topic are divided into explicit-topic sentences, where the topic is explicitly specified with *wa*, and implicit-topic sentences in which the topic is not explicitly specified with *wa*.

(1) is an explicit-topic sentence, and (2) is an implicit-topic sentence.

(1) *Ano hito wa shachō san desu* ‘That person is a company president.’

(2) *Ano hito ga shachō san desu* ‘That person is the company president.’

In (1) the speaker tells the listener that “that person” is a “president” and not a “director” or anything else. The topic is “that person” and it is marked explicitly by *wa*.

In (2), the speaker has chosen among candidates that “that person,” and not “this person” or anyone else, is “the president.” This sentence is equivalent to (3) and its topic is presumed to be the president, but it is not explicitly specified in (2).

(3) *Shachō san wa ano hito desu* ‘The company president is that person.’

In a topic-explicit sentence, such as (1), various components of a sentence can become the topic.

In (4) the case *o* component is the topic, and in (5) the case *ni* component is the topic.

(4) *Sono shorui wa watashi ga motte imasu* ‘I have those documents.’

(5) *Kono dōbutsuen ni wa panda ga imasu yo* ‘There are pandas in this zoo.’

In a topic-implicit sentence the predicate is the topic, as in (2). The predicate of a topic-implicit sentence frequently is a noun predicate, as in “*shachō san desu*” in (1), or a verb + *noda/nda*, as in (6).

(6) *Dare ga sonna koto o itta n desu ka* ‘Who in the world said such a thing?’

The topic-explicit sentence of (7) and the topic-implicit sentence of (8) are almost identical in their meaning, and they are practically interchangeable. However, when the topic is something that is present in the immediate environment of the utterance, or when it is from the previous context, and when it is placed at the beginning of the sentence, as in (8), the sentence tends to be topic-implicit.

(7) *Dazai Osamu ga umareta ie wa koko desu* ‘The house in which Dazai Osamu was born is this.’

(8) *Koko ga Dazai Osamu ga umareta ie desu* ‘This is the house where Dazai Osamu was born.’

→ハとガ－基本的な違い Wa and Ga: Basic Differences (2-I)

● Reference

Noda, Hisashi (1996). ‘*Wa to ga*’ (*Wa* and *Ga*) in *Shin Nihongo Bunpō Sensho I* (New Anthology of Japanese Grammar 1.) Kurosio Publishers.

(Noda Hisashi)