

■ *Wa* and *Ga*: Comparison and Exclusion

Wa has the function of expressing comparison, as in “*kyōikugaku wa*” and “*shinrigaku wa*” in (1), while *ga* can express exclusion, as in “*otōto no hō ga*” in (2).

(1) *Watashi wa kyōikugaku wa benkyō shimashita ga shinrigaku wa benkyō shite imasen* ‘I studied pedagogy, but I haven’t studied psychology.’

(2) *Watashi no uchi de wa otōto ga ichiban se ga takaidesu* ‘In my family my younger brother is the tallest.’

Wa of contrast is typically used in a sentence of contrast, where two clauses are contrasted using *ga*, *keredo*, and so on, as in (1). What are contrasted often belong to the same category, such as “pedagogy” and “psychology,” and the predicates are often in contrast, such as “*benkyō shimashita*” and “*benkyō shite imasen.*”

When there is no contrast, *o* is used as in “*kyōikugaku o*” in (3), but in a sentence of contrast, *wa* of contrast shows up, as in (1).

(3) *Watashi wa kyōikugaku o benkyō shimashita* ‘I studied pedagogy.’

Wa of contrast may be used when the other party in the contrast does not appear in the sentence, as in “*shinrigaku wa*” in (4). Especially in negative sentences, this use of *wa* is frequent when there is hardly any meaning of contrast.

(4) *Watashi wa shinrigaku wa benkyō shite imasen* ‘I haven’t studied psychology.’

Typically, *ga* of exclusion is used in sentences of comparison, as in (2), and it is used in forms such as *X yori Y no hō ga*, *XYZ no naka de(wa)*, and *X ga ichiban*. If the pattern is not one of the contrastive patterns, *wa* shows up as in “*otōto wa*” in (5), but with a pattern of contrast, the *ga* of exclusion is used as in “*otōto ga*” in (2).

(5) *Otōto wa se ga takai* ‘My little brother is tall.’

→ハとガ－基本的な違い、*Wa* and *Ga*: Basic Differences (2-1)

● Reference

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

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