

■ *Wa* and *Ga*: In the Sentence vs. In the Clause

There are big differences in the usage of *Wa* vs. *Ga* whether they are used in simple sentences or complex sentences, or whether they are used in clauses.

When the clause is highly subordinate, the *wa* of topic is fundamentally not used.

(1)

Hypothetical clauses: *-tara, -(re)ba, -to*

Temporal clauses: *-toki, -maeni, -atode*

Manner clauses: *-yōni, -hodo*

Adnominal clauses: *Watashi ga katta kamera, etc.*

Noun clauses: *-koto, -no, -ka*

While *wa* is used in (2), which is a sentence, *wa* is no longer possible in a clause as in (3).

(2) *Watashi wa kōkōsei desu* ‘I am a high school student.’

(3) *Watashi ga kōkōsei no toki, chichi ga naku narimashita* ‘My father passed away when I was a high school student.’

*Wa* represents the topic for the entire sentence, and cannot express the topic within a clause.

In (4) at first glance, the *wa* of topic appears in the *toki* clause. However, *wa* is actually outside the *toki* clause, as shown in (5).

(4) *Watashi wa kōkōsei no toki, tenisubu deshita.*

(5) *Watashi wa [kōkōsei no toki, tenisubu deshita]* ‘I was in the tennis club when I was a high school student.’

When the nominative case of the main sentence and that of the subordinate clause in a complex sentence are the same, generally the nominative case becomes the topic and marked by *wa*.

On the other hand, when the degree of subordination is low, as in (6), the *wa* of topic shows up as it does in simple sentences and in the main sentence of complex sentences.

(6) Parallel construction clauses: *-ga, -keredo, -shi*

Quotational clauses: *-to*

In (7), for instance, there is topic *wa* in the quotational clause.

(7) *Watashi wa kono shōsetsu wa omoshiroi to omoimasu* ‘I think that this novel is interesting.’

Further, *kara* and *no* of reason have a mild degree of subordination, and *wa* does not show up readily, but it does occur.

→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.

(Noda Hisashi)