

■ Focus

The function of “focus” is to pick out various components (X) in sentences so as to imply other contrasting components of the same category paradigmatically, and show how X is related to these other components. This X is the focus.

(1) *Tarō dake kuru* ‘Taro alone will come.’

In Sentence (1), *dake* indicates that, in addition to “Taro’s coming,” “coming” is limited to Taro. What is implied is that “those other than Taro are not coming.” “*Dake*,” which expresses exclusion, focuses on “*Tarō*.”

Case particle *ga* and phonological prominence may express focus on the prefixed component in the sense of “exclusion,” but usually focus is shown by so called particles including *dake* (a) and adverbs (b). The relationship among components when focus occurs is varied: Limitation, prominence, exemplification, unexpectedness, accumulation, and so on.

(a) Particles: *dake, nomi, bakari, shika, koso, nado, nazo, nanka, nante, kurai, demo, datte, sae, sura, made, mo, wa*.

(b) Adverbs: *tada, tan ni, moppara, hitoeni, masani, masashiku, hokademonaku, tokuni, kotoni, toriwake, waketemo, nakanzuku, nakanimo, omoni, shutoshite, tatoeba, mushiro, dochiraka to ieba, isso, iwanya, mashite, sukunakutomo, semete, tatta, wazuka, takadaka, takaga*.

What becomes the focus may vary: nouns, adverbs, predicates, case component + predicate combinations, entire sentences. The word group in (b) may be suffixed to the focus as in (2) and (3), show up in the focus as in (4), or may appear at the end of the sentence, away from the focus, as in (5).

(2) *Sōsō [nonbirito] bakari shiteirarenai* ‘I shouldn’t be so [relaxed].’ (Adverb)

(3) *Shigoto rashii shigoto wa naku, tada [kyaku kara no denwa o toritsugu] dake da* ‘There’s no real work. I only [answer phone calls from clients].’ (Case component + Predicate)

(4) *Kare wa ben ga tatsu. [Ude mo ii.]* ‘He has a way with words. He [is competent, too].’ (Entire sentence)

(5) *Komugiko wa [hanryō] o tsukau dake de, nokori hanbun wa ato ni nokoshite okimasu* ‘We will only be using [half] the flour. We will save the other half for later.’ (Noun)

Please note that the words in (a) and (b) may be used for other functions than focusing in sentences. For example, *dake* in

(6) *Kome no meshi ga tabetai dake taberareru*. ‘You can eat as much boiled rice as you want.’

affects the entire phrase, “*tabetaidake*.” Its function is to create an adverbial phrase that expresses the quantity of “*kome no meshi*.” Its function is not focus. *Wa* of focus is *wa* of contrast, as in (7). The typical *wa* of topic, which does not concern someone else as in (8), is not *wa* of focus.

(7) *Sūgaku wa sukida ga, rika wa kiraida* ‘I like math, but I don’t like science.’

(8) *Hajimemasite. Watashi wa Tanaka Hanako to mōshimasu* ‘How do you do? My name is Tanaka Hanako.’

→助詞 Particles (2-B), モダリティの副詞 Adverbs of Modality (2-H)

● References

Kudo, Hiroshi (2000) ‘Fukushibun to bun no chinjutsuteki na taipu’ (Adverbial Sentences and Declarative Types of Sentences) in Moriyama, Takuro et al. *Nihongo no Bunpō 3 Modaritii* (Japanese Grammar 3: Modality). Iwanami Shoten.

Numata, Yoshiko (2000) ‘Toritate’ (Focus) in Kinsui, Satoshi et al., *Nihongo n bunpō 2 toki, hitei to toritate* (Japanese Grammar 2: Time, Negation and Focus). Iwanami Shoten.

(Numata Yoshiko)