

■ Zero Particle and Ellipsis of Case Particles

In speech, particles often do not show up, as shown below. (\emptyset indicates absence of particle in the space.)

(1) (To Ms. Hayashi) *Hayashi san* \emptyset *kono kaban* \emptyset *kau?* ‘Ms. Hayashi, are you going to buy this bag?’

Such absence of particle has two functions.

One function appears, as in (1), at the beginning of a sentence, and it replaces *wa*. The difference between *wa* and zero particle is that the latter does not indicate comparison. Especially when the subject is first or second person, zero particle happens more often than *wa*. Conversely, when the context is comparative, it is not common to leave out the particle.

(2) A: *Rei no paatii ni iku?* ‘Are you going to that party we’ve talked about?’

B: *Boku* {*wa/?* \emptyset } *iku*. *Tsuma* {*wa/?* \emptyset } *ikanai* ‘I am. My wife isn’t.’

Ga of exclusion does not easily become a zero particle.

(3) A: *Dare da, garasu o watta no wa?* ‘Who (was it that) broke the glass?’

B: *Boku* {*ga/?* \emptyset } *warimashita* ‘I did.’

The other function shows up elsewhere in a sentence, as “*kono kaban* \emptyset ” in (1). It is an omission of a case particle (*o*, in this example).

Of the case particles, *ga*, *o*, *ni* (direction), and *e* may be omitted. *Ni* (the other party, location), *de*, *to*, *kara*, and *made* cannot be omitted.

(4) *Kondo Oosaka* {*ni/e/* \emptyset } *ikō* ‘Let’s go to Osaka next time.’ (Direction)

(5) *Kono ken wa kare* {*ni/** \emptyset } *tanomō* ‘I’ll ask him to take care of this matter.’ (The other party)

(6) *Kare wa jiko* {*de/** \emptyset } *shinda* ‘He was killed in an accident.’ (Cause)

(7) *Kare wa Chūgoku* {*kara/** \emptyset } *kita* ‘He came from China.’

Such non-use of particle is grouped together as ellipsis of particles. However, in the first example there is a positive reason for the absence of particle, and thus, it is not appropriate to call it ellipsis. (This is sometimes called the \emptyset -marker case.) In written language absence of particles do not normally occur.

→Topic (2-I), Characteristics of Spoken Language (4-B)

● References

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