

A DISCUSSION ON JAPANESE SUBJECT AND OBJECT MARKERS

SONOKO HARADA

Background Information

In the Japanese language, unlike the English language in which subjects and predicates are the minimal obligatory elements of sentences, predicates are the only obligatory elements. Even when a certain utterance or a certain written string of words does not have a subject but only a predicate in it, it can be a "complete" sentence rather than only a fragment of a sentence. So even a word, when that word or that string of words functions as a predicate, is to be called a major sentence.

Also, unlike the English language, the order of the positions of the elements of sentences is not rigid except for the nucleus of the predicate which comes at the end of a sentence,¹ and the grammatical relation in a Japanese sentence is marked by particles. The number of these particles exceeds forty. Although most of them have only one usage, some have more than one usags. These particles are traditionally divided into four sub-groups according to their uses. For our purpose, that is, in the discussion of the problems of subjects and

1 In a certain sentence, however, we find an extra element following the nucleus of the predicate. This is a so-called sentence particle, which adds a special nuance or characteristic to the sentence, such as "interrogative," "feminine," etc. Since the sentence particles are limited in number and are listable, and since they are always found following the nucleus of the predicate when they are found, they are identified without fail.

objects, I will examine only the cases where they function to mark nominals. Here by “nominals” I mean the fillers of the subject and the object positions of sentences, following Robert L. Allen’s “sector analysis.”¹

Those which mark nominals are *ga*, *wa*, *o*, *mo*, *koso*, *shika*, *sae*, *kara*, *made*, and *ka*. From now on, we shall call these “nominal markers.” I will exclude the markers other than *ga*, *wa*, and *o* because the rest are the markers which replace these when special emphasis or meaning should be expressed. So, they are nothing more than *ga*, *wa*, or *o* plus the connotation of “also,” “it is……that,” “only,” “including even,” “beginning from,” “even such……as,” and the interrogative, respectively.

When one of these nominal markers appears marking a nominal, we native speakers of Japanese intuitively feel that it never goes with something following it. So, I think we can treat these nominal markers as the endings of the nominals, forming a part of their nominals—and thus analyze them as occurring within particular nominals in sentences. Thus we can analyze Japanese nominals into noun clusters plus nominal markers.²

The consequent problem which occurs when we romanize Japanese writing is whether or not these markers should be written attached to the preceding words so as to show that they are the endings of nominals. In traditional Japanese orthography, there is no such problem as this. For example :

1 Robert L. Allen, *English Grammars and English Grammar* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), pp. 157—224.

2 When nominal markers do not occur, we assume that the nominal marker position is not filled, which often happens in colloquial Japanese.

Number 1 below shows the ordinary form of Japanese writing, and is read from top to bottom. Spaces between each symbol are even.

However, if a native speaker is asked to divide this sentence into two, he would write it as in Number 2, putting a space between *ga* and *naku*.

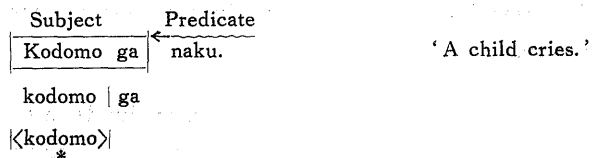
If he is asked to analyze it further, then he would write it as in Number 3, putting a space between *kodomo* and *ga*, and another between *ga* and *naku*.

‘A child cries.’

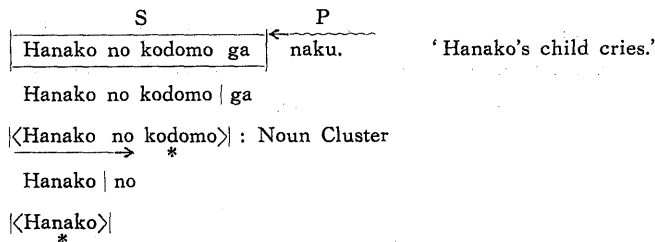
	1		2		3			
	子		子		子		kodomo	‘child’
Kodomo	供		供		供		ga	Nominal Marker
ga	が		が		が		naku	‘to cry’
naku.	泣く。		泣く。		泣く。			

Some Japanese grammarians, therefore, treat these particles as words, some treat them as suffixes, and some treat them as construction endings. I myself feel that they should be treated as construction endings. Although *ga* stands by itself when we come to the third step in the analysis of sentences, as in Number 3 above, *ga* does not function as anything unless it is taken as functioning together with the preceding noun, and conversely the element preceding *ga* does not function as anything (in this case as the subject) without the following *ga*. Also, although in my example above the element preceding *ga* consists of one word—one noun, it has possibility of consisting of more than one word, namely of a noun cluster. For example:

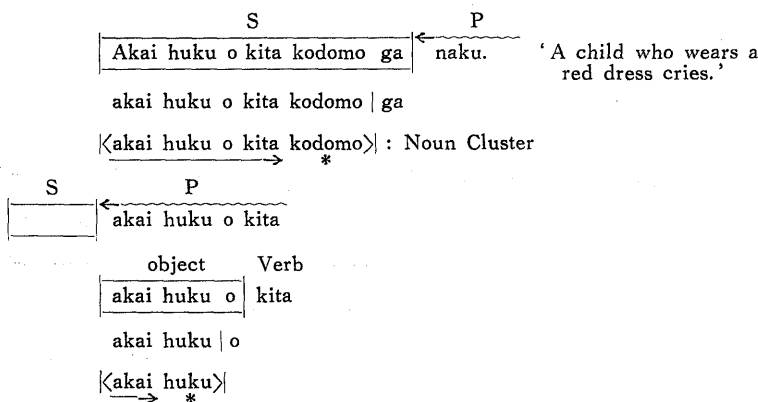
Example 1



Example 2



Example 3



Within nominals—the elements enclosed with rectangles in the analysis¹ above—, noun clusters which precede the nominal markers may consist of only a nucleus noun (ex. 1), of a nucleus noun plus its modifiers,

1 The analysis here is according to “sector analysis” by Robert L. Allen. Cf. Robert L. Allen, *English Grammars and English Grammar* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), pp. 157–224.

including even a sentence unit as one of the modifiers (ex. 3). *Ga*, *no*, or *o* in the examples above are not attached only to the preceding noun but to the preceding whole construction. This is why I think *ga* and other nominal markers should be treated grammatically as the endings of the preceding constructions, not as separate elements or suffixes.

However, going back to our present problem of writing in romanization, I think writing them separately is more convenient and not misleading. As you have seen in the analysis above, nominal markers are somewhat like the possessive 's of English, on the point that the possessive 's of English is not attached only to the preceding noun but to the preceding construction. For example:

My elder brother's car is over there.
|<my elder brother's car>|
| my elder brother | 's
|<my elder brother>|
| | *
| | *

The written form is misleading because the 's is written attached to the preceding noun. In order to avoid this same kind of misleading appearance, I think it is better to keep on writing the nominal markers in Japanese separate from the preceding nouns, as they have been written up to now.

Introduction

According to so-called traditional Japanese grammar, which is greatly influenced by the grammar of Indo-European languages, *ga* and *wa* are called the subject particles and *o* is the object particle under the condition that *ga* and *wa* sometimes function as the object particles. So, it has been impossible to tell whether a certain element is the

subject or the object of a sentence grammatically, since certain sentences which have elements followed by *wa* or *ga* can be understood in two ways. For example: *Tanaka-san ga sukidesu* can be understood either as “Mr. Tanaka finds (something/some one) likable/Mr. Tanaka likes (something / someone)” or “Mr. Tanaka is likable (to-me) / (I) like Mr. Tanaka”; or *Tanaka-san wa mita* can be understood either as “Mr. Tanaka saw (it)” or “(I) saw Mr. Tanaka.”

What I am going to show is that *ga* is the only subject marker, *o* is the only object marker, and *wa* is the topic marker in Japanese sentences, by finding and setting a new grammatical element which I shall call “topic.” In my study, as I already said above, so-called particles are called markers, and among the markers, *ga*, *o*, and *wa* are called nominal markers. Since the nominals are the fillers of the subject, the object, and the topic positions in Japanese, these three nominal markers are to be shown as functioning as the subject, the object, or the topic markers respectively at the same time.

Before I begin, I have to define and restate the concept of grammatical terms I am to use. I have to make it clear that the subject of a sentence is distinguished from the subject position in a sentence. The subject position is marked by the subject marker. The filler of the subject position is a nominal. A nominal in a Japanese sentence always consists of a noun cluster, which may consist of only a nucleus noun or of a nucleus noun plus its modifiers, including even a sentence unit as one of the modifiers, as well as a nominal marker. So, within a nominal, if you take off the nominal marker, which is also functioning as the subject marker if the whole nominal is filling the subject position, you will have a noun cluster left. The content of this noun cluster is the subject of a sentence, and this subject may or may not fit

the concept of the subject in the traditional grammar, which means an actor or an agent. For example:

If you look at the example sentence on p. 20; which goes *Hanako no kodomo ga naku*, the part up to *naku*, *Hanako no kodomo ga*, is a nominal, marked by the nominal marker *ga*. By deleting the nominal marker, *ga*, we get a noun cluster, *Hanako no kodomo*. The content of this noun cluster is to be legitimately called the subject of the sentence, after I prove that *ga* is the only subject marker.

The same thing is applied to the object and the object position. The object position is marked by the object marker. The content of a noun cluster within a nominal, which is the filler of the object position, is the object of a sentence, which may or may not fit the traditional concept of the object, which means something or someone being acted upon.

I shall limit my nominals in my example sentences here only to those which consist of only a nucleus noun and a nominal marker.

As you might already have noticed, there are three kinds of nominals in Japanese sentences. One is marked by *ga*, the second one is marked by *wa*, and the third one by *o*. I will call the first one the *ga*-nominal, the second one the *wa*-nominal, and the third one the *o*-nominal. Again, what I am going to do is to show that the first one, the *ga*-nominal, is the subject filler, the second one, *wa*-nominal, is the topic filler, and the third one, the *o*-nominal, is the object filler.

Traditional Analysis of Japanese Sentences

All the possible combinations of *ga*-, *wa*-, and *o*-nominals are found in Table 1 on page 24. △ and ⊙ marked sentences, namely sentences

Table 1

	Subject	Object	The nucleus of the Predicate	The kind of the Predicate
1.	Tanaka-san wa 'Mr. Tanaka'	hon o 'book'	katta. 'bought'	} Verb
2.	Tanaka-san wa	hon wa	katta.	
△ 3.	Hon wa Tanaka-san wa		katta.	
4.	Hon wa Tanaka-san ga		katta.	
5.	Tanaka-san ga	hon o	katta.	
6.	Tanaka-san wa	yama o 'mountain'	aruita. 'walked'	} Verb
7.	Tanaka-san wa	yama wa	aruita.	
△ 8.	Yama wa Tanaka-san wa		aruita.	
9.	Yama wa Tanaka-san ga		aruita.	
10.	Tanaka-san ga	yama o	aruita.	
11.	Tanaka-san wa		kita. 'come'	} Verb
12.	Tanaka-san ga		kita.	
13.	Tanaka-san wa	eigo ga 'English'	wakaru. 'understand'	} Verb
14.	Tanaka-san wa	eigo wa	wakaru.	
15.	Eigo wa Tanaka-san wa		wakaru.	
16.	Eigo wa Tanaka-san ga		wakaru.	
◎17.	Tanaka-san ga	eigo ga	wakaru.	
18.	Hon wa 'book'		takai.	} Adjective
19.	Hon ga		takai.	
20.	Tanaka-san wa	hon ga	sukida. 'likable'	} <i>Keiyo-doshi</i> 'Adjectival Verb'
21.	Tanaka-san wa	hon wa	sukida.	
22.	Hon wa Tanaka-san wa		sukida.	
23.	Hon wa Tanaka-san ga		sukida.	
◎24.	Tanaka-san ga	hon ga	sukida.	
25.	Tanaka-san wa		gakusei da. 'student' 'the copula'	} Noun plus the copula
26.	Tanaka-san ga		gakusei da.	

3, 8, 15, 22, 17 and 24, sound not quite grammatical to the native

speakers of Japanese but are used quite often and are accepted.¹ In this table you will find in the subject column *wa*- and *ga*-nominals, and in the object column *o*-, *wa*, and *ga*-nominals. This is the analysis of so-called traditional grammar.

First I will deal with the *wa*-nominals. As you look at the table, you will find in some sentences *wa*-nominals preceding the subject position, and in sentences # 4, 9, 16 and 23, the subject positions are filled with *ga*-nominals, and they are not marked Δ , which means they do not sound ungrammatical to the native speakers. So, I have come to feel there is another position in Japanese sentences preceding the subject position.² We will call this position the topic position. The topic position is marked by *wa*. The filler of the topic position indicates that the rest of the sentence is going to be about the content of the noun cluster of the nominal which is the filler itself. Even in the traditional way of grammatical thinking, even when these *wa*-nominals are analyzed as the subjects, some of them are thought to be better called "topics" rather than "subjects," since they actually are not functioning as the subject in traditional meaning.

The Result of Setting the Topic Position

As we have found another position, the topic position, and found that the fillers of that position are *wa*-nominals, I arranged the sent-

1 Sentences marked Δ are those that are not quite completed yet in meaning, though completed in form. In other words, listeners expect more to come in relation to each of those sentences.

2 Though the order of the positions in a Japanese sentence is not rigid except for the position of the nucleus of the predicate, as I mentioned, in order to make things easier and clear I take it for granted that S O V/Adj is the fixed order, which actually is the usual order, in my examples.

ences in Table 1 filling this position as well as I, as a native speaker, could, if doing so did not violate the meaning, and the result is in Table 2 on page 27.

As you will find, all of the *wa*-nominals which were filling the object position in Table 1 are now filling the topic or the subject position in Table 2. Thus, we can see that *wa*-nominals are not the fillers of the object position, and, therefore, we can say that *wa* is not the marker of the object position any more.

However, on finding the topic position, there arose another problem of when or whether *wa*-nominals are the fillers of the topic or the subject positions. Actually as you will see in Table 2, sentences # 1, 6, 11, 13, 18 and 20 can be analyzed in two ways. This is caused by the traditional grammar that *wa*-nominals function as the subject. But now we have set a new position and we have seen that the fillers of this new position are *wa*-nominals, and it actually is very hard to tell whether a *wa*-nominal is filling the topic or the subject position when there is no *ga*-nominal and only one *wa*-nominal. So, it is possible, I feel, for us to go further in the analysis to the extent of thinking that the *wa*-nominal is always filling the topic position, and that the only filler of the subject position is a *ga*-nominal.

As a matter of fact, if you look at sentences # 2 and 7 in Table 2, you will find it very strange to have *hon*, 'book' or *yama* 'mountain' as the subject if you consider "subject" as an actor or an agent. For example, in sentence # 2, "book" cannot "bought (Past Tense, not Passive)" something, or in sentence # 7, "mountain" cannot "walked (Past Tense, not Passive)."

Since, in form, subjectless sentences are possible in Japanese, we can think that *wa*-nominals written in the subject position in Table

Table 2

	Topic	Subject	Object	The nucleus of the Predicate	The kind of nucleus of the Predicate
1	a.	Tanaka-san wa	hon o	katta.	} Verb
	b.	Tanaka-san wa	hon o	katta.	
2.		Tanaka-san wa	hon wa	katta.	
3.		Hon wa	Tanaka-san wa	katta.	
4.		Hon wa	Tanaka-san ga	katta.	
5.		Tanaka-san ga	hon o	katta.	
6	a.	Tanaka-san wa	yama o	aruita.	} Verb
	b.	Tanaka-san wa	yama o	aruita.	
7.		Tanaka-san wa	yama wa	aruita.	
8.		Yama wa	Tanaka-san wa	aruita.	
9.		Yama wa	Tanaka-san ga	aruita.	
10.		Tanaka-san ga	yama o	aruita.	
11	a.	Tanaka-san wa		kita.	} Verb
	b.	Tanaka-san wa		kita.	
12.		Tanaka-san ga		kita.	
13	a.	Tanaka-san wa	eigo ga	wakaru.	} Verb
	b.	Tanaka-san wa	eigo ga	wakaru.	
14.		Tanaka-san wa	eigo wa	wakaru.	
15.		Eigo wa	Tanaka-san wa	wakaru.	
16.		Eigo wa	Tanaka-san ga	wakaru.	
17.		Tanaka-san ga	eigo ga	wakaru.	
18	a.	Hon wa		takai.	} Adjective
	b.	Hon wa		takai.	
19.		Hon ga		takai.	
20	a.	Tanaka-san wa	hon ga	sukida.	} <i>Keiyo-doshi</i> 'Adjectival Verb'
	b.	Tanaka-san wa	hon ga	sukida.	
21.		Tanaka-san wa	hon wa	sukida.	
22.		Hon wa	Tanaka-san wa	sukida.	
23.		Hon wa	Tanaka-san ga	sukida.	
24.		Tanaka-san ga	hon ga	sukida.	
25	a.	Tanaka-san wa		gakusei da.	} Noun, plus the copula
	b.	Tanaka-san wa		gakusei da.	
26.		Tanaka-san ga		gakusei da.	

2 are also topics, that the subject position in this case is not filled, and that the topic of a sentence may be more than one. By thinking in this way we can set another topic position.

The Result of Setting Another Topic Position

Table 3 on page 29 is the result of setting another topic position. Now there are no *wa*-nominals in the subject column. Sentences #3, 8, 15, and 22 are marked \triangle , and may I remind you that the marks indicate ungrammaticality. Here let me explain the reason for the sense of ungrammaticality. Only these sentences have inanimate things in the first topic position. This may be the reason why they sounded not quite grammatical to the native speakers. If so, here is a rule that if two topic positions are to be filled, animate things must fill the first position. We will be able to see the same thing in the case of *ga*-nominals, which I will deal with later.

Thus, we have cleared the problem on *wa*-nominals, and we have come to the conclusion that *wa* is the topic marker.¹

On Ga-Nominals I

Although we have cleared up *wa*-nominals from the object column in Table 3, we still have *ga*-nominals there, in addition to *o*-nominals. As the result of further analysis of *wa*-nominals, we have found two topic positions. The case of the topic position showed the possibility of having two identical positions in a sentence.² Accordingly, there

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- 1 The meaning of each sentence with the topic positions filled, or the literal translation of it, is found at the end of this paper.
 - 2 Strictly speaking, though, these two identical topic positions seem not to be really identical: the first one seems to be for the animate things and the second one for the inanimate things.

Table 3

	Topic 1	Topic 2	Subject	Object	The nucleus of the Predicate	The kind of nucleus of the Predicate
1.	Tanaka-san wa				hon o katta.	} Verb (Transitive)
2.	Tanaka-san wa	hon wa			katta.	
△ 3.	Hon wa	Tanaka-san wa			katta.	
4.		Hon wa	Tanaka-san ga		katta.	
5.			Tanaka-san ga	hon o	katta.	
6.	Tanaka-san wa			yama o	aruita.	} Verb (Intransitive)
7.	Tanaka-san wa	yama wa			aruita.	
△ 8.	Yama wa	Tanaka-san wa			aruita.	
9.		Yama wa	Tanaka-san ga		aruita.	
10.			Tanaka-san ga	yama o	aruita.	
11.	Tanaka-san wa				kita.	} Verb (Intransitive)
12.			Tanaka-san ga		kita.	
13.	Tanaka-san wa			eigo ga	wakaru.	} Verb (Intransitive)
14.	Tanaka-san wa	eigo wa			wakaru.	
△ 15.	Eigo wa	Tanaka-san wa			wakaru.	
16.		Eigo wa	Tanaka-san ga		wakaru.	
◎ 17.			Tanaka-san ga	eigo ga	wakaru.	
18.		Hon wa			takai.	} Adjective
19.			Hon ga		takai.	
20.	Tanaka-san wa			hon ga	sukida.	} <i>Keiyō-doshi</i> 'Adjectival Verb'
21.	Tanaka-san wa	hon wa			sukida.	
△ 22.	Hon wa	Tanaka-san wa			sukida.	
23.		Hon wa	Tanaka-san ga		sukida.	
◎ 24.			Tanaka-san ga	hon ga	sukida.	
25.	Tanaka-san wa				gakusei da.	} Noun plus <i>da</i>
26.			Tanaka-san ga		gakusei da.	

arises the possibility of setting two subject positions, since sentences with two *ga*-nominals are accepted by the native speakers, and since most of the *ga*-nominals are the fillers of the subject position. I will try to show further logic to support the idea of considering the *ga*-nominals written in the object column in Table 3 as the subject fillers. *Ga*-nominals are found in the object positions in sentences #13, 17, 20 and 24. There seem to be noteworthy characteristics in the nature of the nucleus of the predicate in these sentences. They can be categorized into two cases. One is when the nucleus of the predicate is the verb, #13 and 17, and the other is when the nucleus of the predicate is the so-called *keiyo-doshi*, #20 and 24. I will discuss the 'adjectival' 'verb' latter case first.

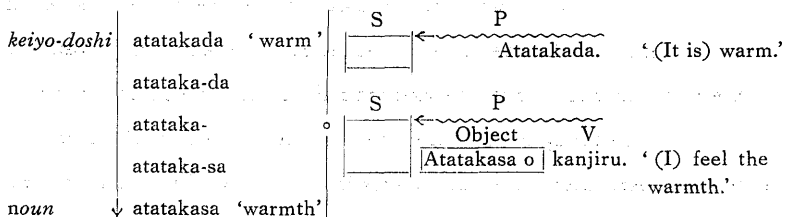
The nucleus of the predicate of sentence #20 or #24 is the so-called *keiyo-doshi*. The literal translation of this term might be "adjectival 'adjectival' 'verb' verbs." Although they are called *-doshi* 'verbs,' they are not really verbs; rather, they have the characteristics of adjectives. Indeed, quite a few of them have equivalent adjectives, so that they may well be thought of as a special kind of adjectives just having different forms. However, since this group of words always ends with the *-da* form in the citation form and inflects in exactly the same way as the copula *da* does, some contemporary grammarians at home and abroad treat this kind of word as a noun plus the copula *da*.¹ Others treat it as an adjective plus *da*.²

However, if this kind of word is treated as a noun plus *da*, it means

1 Cf. Elenor Jordan in *Beginning Japanese* (New Haven and London: Yale University press, 1963).

2 Cf. Anthony Alfonso in *Japanese Language Patterns: A Structural Approach* (Tokyo: Sophia University L. L. Center of Applied Linguistics, 1966).

that the part up to *-da* is a noun and is to be able to be treated in the same way as other nouns, namely it should be possible to fit it into a nominal position, i.e. the subject, the object, or the topic position, in a sentence. However, in fact you cannot do so. In order for it to be able to fit into a nominal position, an ending *-sa*, which is a suffix to form a noun, has to be attached. For example:



In the example above, *atataka-* by itself cannot fill the object position. The suffix, *-sa*, has to be attached.

The same kind of logic should be applied if this kind of word is treated as an adjective plus *da*. However, in the same way, the part up to *-da* cannot be treated in the same way as other adjectives.

Now, since the nature of the meaning of this kind of word is exactly the same with adjectives, and they can modify nouns by themselves,¹ I now feel that it is all right to treat them as a special kind of adjective, which is marked by *-da* and the inflections of *-da*.

Then, since the *ga*-nominals preceding adjectives are the fillers of the subject position, as in sentence # 19, the *ga*-nominals in sentences

- 1 For example : $\langle \text{atatakana o-cha} \rangle \rightarrow$: *keiyo-doshi* 'adjectival verb'
 'warm' * 'tea' * : noun
 $\langle \text{oishii o-cha} \rangle \rightarrow$: adjective
 'tasty' 'tea' * : noun

- Cf. 1. *-na* is one inflected form of *-da*
 2. Adjectives have inflected forms.

#20 and 24 now have to be treated as the subject fillers, too. In the case of sentence #24 we come to have two subject fillers and have to set two subject positions, but this sentence is marked ©, which means ungrammaticality. I will explain about this later together with sentence #17.

The other case where *ga*-nominals are treated as the fillers of the object position is found when the nucleus of the predicate is a certain group of verbs, as in the case of sentences #13 and 17. Again, the problem is whether or not the *ga*-nominals under the object column in Table 3 can be thought of as the fillers of the subject position in such sentences. Are there any characteristics which would lead us to treat them as subject fillers? Yes.

In order to show the characteristics of verbs categorized here, as found in such a sentence as #13 or 17, I have to discuss the characteristics of Japanese verbs first.

Japanese Verbs

Japanese verbs are categorized into transitive and intransitive verbs as those of the English language. However, because of the characteristic of the Japanese language that the only obligatory element of Japanese sentences is the nucleus of the predicate—which may be a verb, an adjective, including such a special kind of adjective as we have found above, or a noun plus the copula *da*—, the object nominals are not obligatory for transitive verbs. So, the definition of the transitive in Japanese should be that they *can* take nominals which function as the fillers of the object position. For example, into a sentence *Tanaka-san ga katta* ‘Mr. Tanaka bought,’ in which *katta* is a transitive, we can put a nominal *hon o* as the filler of the object position, ‘book’

thus to make *Tanaka-san ga hon o katta* 'Mr. Tanaka bought a book.'

Some of the verbs work either as transitive or as intransitive verbs. For example, the verb *huku* 'to blow' is an intransitive in the sentence *Kaze ga huku* 'The wind blows' and is a transitive in the sentence 'wind' 'blow'
Tanaka-san ga hue o huku 'Mr. Tanaka blows the pipe.' The characters used in Japanese writing for the verb *huku* is the same.

Some intransitive verbs have corresponding transitive verbs. For example, an intransitive *aku* '(something) opens' has corresponding transitive from *akeru* '(someone) opens (something).'

As you find reading the column of "The Kind of Nucleus of the Predicate" in Table 3, there are a couple of inconsistencies in the traditional concept of Japanese transitive and intransitive verbs. Some verbs that are categorized in the intransitive, as the second kind of verbs in that column, can take the units which end with *o*. Those units with *o* are treated as the objects, even if the verbs there are defined as the intransitive. For example:

1. *Aruku* 'to walk' is categorized into the intransitive.

Aruita.	'(Someone) walked.'
'walked'	
Michi o aruita.	'(Someone) walked the street.'
'street' 'walked'	
Tanaka-san ga michi o aruita.	'Mr. Tanakawalked the street.'
'Mr. Tanaka' 'street' 'walked'	

2. *Tobu* 'to fly' is categorized into the intransitive.

Tonda.	'(Something) flew.'
'flew'	
Sora o tonda.	'(Something) flew in the sky.'
'sky' 'flew'	
Tori ga sora o tonda.	'A bird flew in the sky.'
'bird' 'sky' 'flew'	

Some grammarians treat the units with *o* ending in the examples

above as a kind of adverbial, which may well be assumed out of the corresponding English translation. However, I feel it is better and will lead to a simpler grammar without many exceptions if we treat them as nominals. Since all the other *o*-ending units in Japanese sentences are object nominals, we can treat them as object nominals. Here, then, we have to make the correction in categorizing the verbs themselves. This kind of verb is now to be grouped into the transitive. My argument for this is the fact that no other case is found in which an *o*-ending unit is an adverbial in Japanese.¹ So, from now on we shall treat even this kind of verb, which is defined intransitive in traditional grammar, as transitive because they can take *o*-nominals.

Another inconsistency is that the *ga*-nominals taken by some other small group of intransitive verbs, such as the fourth kind in the last column in Table 3, are treated as the object nominals. If we look further in the analysis, we will want to call these *ga*-nominals the subject nominals rather than the object nominals. When we examine this group of verbs, its characteristics become noteworthy. Some of them are verbs showing ability to do something, which are derived from other verbs. For example, *mieru* 'can see' in *Sora ga mieru* is from *miru* 'to see'; or *yomeru* 'can read' in *Eigo ga yomeru* is from *yomu* 'to read.' The others are the verbs of so-called "non-action" or "state," such as *wakaru* 'to understand' or *iru* 'to need.' These are verbs in form, but they have the characteristic of adjectives more than that of verbs in the sense that they are used to describe someone

1 Since the number of this kind of verb is small and they are listable, we might treat these *o* ending units which are taken by this kind of verb as adverbial and might exclude them from our present discussion on *o*-nominals. However, for now, it leads to less complicated grammar to treat all the *o* ending units as nominals.

or something rather than to describe an action performed by someone or something. For example, *wakaru*, above, describes the state of “being understandable,” while *mieru*, above describes also the state of “being see-able.” They are, then, much nearer to adjectives than to verbs. Then, it seems that the *ga*-nominals here actually function as the subject nominals just as the *ga*-nominals preceding adjectives function as the subject nominals. So, treating these *ga*-nominals here as subject nominals, we can correct this inconsistency in the traditional grammar that intransitive verbs take objects.

To conclude a brief discussion on the Japanese verbs, let me restate the definition of the transitive and the intransitive verbs. All the verbs that can take *o*-nominals are transitive, and the rest are intransitive.

On Ga-Nominals II

In the discussion on the Japanese verbs above, we have already solved the problem in the treatment of *ga*-nominals in sentences #13 and 17 in Table 3. The nucleus of the predicate of such sentences is one of the special kind of verbs whose characteristic is marked by its “adjective-ness.” Since the *ga*-nominals preceding adjectives are the subject nominals, it is all right to treat such *ga*-nominals preceding that kind of verb as the subject nominals. Since we have eliminated *ga*-nominals from the object column, we have now settled that the only object marker is *o*, and that *ga* is always the subject marker.

Here is an interesting phenomena that supports the fact that *o* is the only object marker, and *ga* does not function as the object marker. Nowadays young Japanese people, who know English grammar, often produce such a sentence as *Eigo o wakaru*, which should read *Eigo ga wakaru*, meaning ‘(I) understand English’. Since they know that

the English word *understand* is a transitive verb in English and requires an object nominal, they mistakenly think that the Japanese word for it, *wakaru*, also needs an object nominal, and put an *o*-nominal, which they think is an object nominal. They intuitively think that *ga* is not the object marker and use *o* as the object marker.

Another interpretation of this phenomena produced by young people can be considered. The word *wakaru* has the form of a verb, though the concept, or original characteristic, is that of an adjective, which does not take an object nominal. The form makes them think they need an object nominal, and they intuitively feel that *o*-nominal is one and *ga*-nominal is not functioning as the object nominal. Again, *ga* is not the object marker for them.

Now, we can assert that *ga* is always the subject marker. However, it is important to notice some more points concerning sentences #17 and 24. First, as we have seen in the discussion on *wa*-nominals, when both of the two identical positions are filled, animate things should be the fillers of the first position. This is applicable to the case of the subject positions. Sentences #17 and 24 have two *ga*-nominals, which means we have two subject positions. In these, the first fillers are the animate, and, if we put the second fillers which are inanimate into the first positions, the entire sentence would be very strange and sound ungrammatical to native speakers. So my previous hunch that the animate filler should come first when two identical positions are filled seems to be all right.

Second, sentences #17 and 24 are marked ©, which means that they are often produced but somewhat sound strange or not quite grammatical to native speakers. May it not be that this "non-grammaticality" is caused by the fact that there are two *ga*-nominals in each of these

simple sentences? In fact, if one of these *ga*-nominals were a *wa*-nominal, the sentences would sound perfectly grammatical. The grammatical versions of these sentences would be.....

- | | | |
|------|-------------------------------|--|
| # 17 | Tanaka-san wa eigo ga wakaru. | 'As for Mr. Tanaka, English is understandable (to him).' |
| | Eigo wa Tanaka-san ga wakaru. | 'As for English, Mr. Tanaka is understandable (of English).' |
| # 24 | Tanaka-san wa hon ga sukida. | 'As for Mr. Tanaka, books are likable (to him).' |
| | Hon wa Tanaka-san ga sukida. | 'As for books, Mr. Tanaka is likable (of books)/likes (them).' |

I now feel that there is only one subject position in a Japanese sentence.

Conclusion

Thus, I feel we are ready to re-arrange the sentences in Table 3, and they should be analyzed as in Table 4 on page 38. It appears, then, that in a Japanese sentence there are two topic positions, marked by *wa*, one subject position, marked by *ga*, and one object position, marked by *o*. These markers are the infallible markers of their respective positions.

Table 4

	Topic 1 <i>wa</i>	Topic 2 <i>wa</i>	Subject <i>ga</i>	Object <i>o</i>	The Nucleus of the Predicate	The Kind of nucleus of the Predicate
1.	Tanaka-san wa			hon o	katta.	Transitive Verb: can take <i>o</i> nominal
2.	Tanaka-san wa	hon wa			katta.	
△ 3.	Hon wa	Tanaka-san wa			katta.	
4.		Hon wa	Tanaka-san ga		katta.	
5.			Tanaka-san ga	hon o	katta.	
6.	Tanaka-san wa			yama o	aruita.	
7.	Tanaka-san wa	yama wa			aruita.	
△ 8.	Yama wa	Tanaka-san wa			aruita.	
9.		Yama wa	Tanaka-san ga		aruita.	
10.			Tanaka-san ga	yama o	aruita.	
11.	Tanaka-san wa				kita.	Intransitive Verb: cannot take <i>o</i> -nominal
12.			Tanaka-san ga		kita.	
13.	Tanaka-san wa		eigo ga		wakaru.	
14.	Tanaka-san wa	eigo wa			wakaru.	
△ 15.	Eigo wa	Tanaka-san wa			wakaru.	
16.		Eigo wa	Tanaka-san ga		wakaru.	
◎ 17.			Tanaka-san ga eigo ga		wakaru.	
18.		Hon wa			takai.	Adjective
19.			Hon ga		takai.	
20.	Tanaka-san wa		hon ga		sukida.	
21.	Tanaka-san wa	hon wa			sukida.	
△ 22.	Hon wa	Tanaka-san wa			sukida.	
23.		Hon wa	Tanaka-san ga		sukida.	
◎ 24.			Tanaka-san ga hon ga		sukida.	
25.	Tanaka-san wa				gakusei da.	Noun plus the copula <i>da</i>
26.			Tanaka-san ga		gakusei da.	

Literal Translations to Accompany Table 4

1. As for Mr. Tanaka, (he) bought a book.
2. As for Mr. Tanaka, and as for a book, (he) bought (it).
3. As for a book, and as for Mr. Tanaka, (he) bought (it).
4. As for a book, Mr. Tanaka bought (it).
5. (It was) Mr. Tanaka (who) bought a book. / Mr. Tanaka bought a book.
6. As for Mr. Tanaka, (he) walked (in) the mountain.
7. As for Mr. Tanaka, and as for the mountain, (he) walked (in it).
8. As for the mountain, and as for Mr. Tanaka, (he) walked (in it).
9. As for the mountain, Mr. Tanaka walked (in it).
10. (It was) Mr. Tanaka (who) walked in the mountain. / Mr. Tanaka walked in the mountain.
11. As for Mr. Tanaka, (he) came.
12. (It was) Mr. Tanaka (who) came. / Mr. Tanaka came.
13. As for Mr. Tanaka, English is understandable.
14. As for Mr. Tanaka, and for English, (he) understands (it).
15. As for English, and as for Mr. Tanaka, (it) is understandable.
16. As for English, Mr. Tanaka understands (it).
17. (It is) Mr. Tanaka (to whom) English is understandable.
18. As for the book, (it) is expensive.
19. (It is) the book (which) is expensive. / Books are expensive.
20. As for Mr. Tanaka, a book is likable.
21. As for Mr. Tanaka, and as for a book, (he/it) is likable.
22. As for a book, and as for Mr. Tanaka, (it/he) is likable.
23. As for a book, Mr. Tanaka is likable.
24. (It is) Mr. Tanaka (for whom) a book is likable.
25. As for Mr. Tanaka, (he) is a student.
26. (It is) Mr. Tanaka (who) is a student. / Mr. Tanaka is a student.

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