AN ANALYSIS OF THE PARTICLE WA
IN JAPANESE NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

My informal observations of American students of Japanese have revealed that students have great difficulty accurately using the particle wa in their output. The problem is twofold: American speakers of subject-based English have difficulty with the concept of a topic-based language like Japanese, and while there are many well-written Japanese textbooks available, they do not adequately equip students with the skills needed to use wa in narrative discourse. Linguists such as Hinds (1987) have proposed pragmatic solutions to the usage of wa, but other answers exist. A synthesis of current analyses was created, and the tools of the Centering Theory were used to analyze wa-marking patterns in Japanese narrative discourse and how familiar information is coded in Japanese. This synthesis underwent a pedagogical application, which resulted in an algorithm that students can use to check the accuracy of their output using wa in narrative Japanese discourse, as well as in a series of exercises, drills, and lessons that can be used both in and out of the classroom to hopefully improve student performance. In the future, the algorithm developed can perhaps one day be implemented in the form of a computer program which students could use outside of the classroom, at their own pace.
Dedicated to my parents,

Rick and Judy,

for their love, support, and prayers
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The particle *wa* is perhaps one of the most thoroughly researched and widely debated grammatical elements of the Japanese language. Theories about the nature and usage of *wa* date back as far as the seventeenth century (Shibatani 1990). In spite of the vast amount of material available regarding this particle, however, my informal observations of American students of Japanese reveal that they still seem to be plagued by the inability to accurately use it in their output. This, in addition to the present conflicting analyses of *wa*, indicates that there is still more to be learned about this elusive particle and how to better educate students about its usage.

There are two major reasons that English-speaking students of Japanese have difficulty understanding and utilizing *wa*. The first of these is the fact that English is a subject-based language, while Japanese is topic-based (Li & Thompson 1976). The difficulty this presents lies in the fact that English often does not distinguish between the topic and the subject of a sentence; the two are often combined (Kuno 1973: 16). The result is that native speakers of English have trouble differentiating these two concepts when communicating in Japanese. Since *wa* is a topic marker (Shibatani 1990) but not limited to marking subjects, its usage is naturally problematic for students.
The second reason that English-speaking students of Japanese have difficulty using *wa* accurately is related to the available introductory materials. There are many textbooks used in various universities, such as *Nakama, Yookoso!*, and *Japanese the Spoken Language (JSL)*. While these texts do provide a good sampling of different ways in which to use *wa*, they do not completely equip students with the tools necessary for accurate output.

Most of these texts present the major analyses regarding *wa*. While *Yookoso!* only discusses topicalizing *wa*, *Nakama* and *JSL* differentiate between that and contrastive *wa*. Regarding topicalizing *wa*, *Yookoso!* states, "*Wa* is called the ‘topic particle’," (p. 46) and "...marks the topic of the sentence" (p. 86). *Nakama* uses a chart to describe topicalizing *wa* in terms of the topic/comment message structure (p. 36). Later in the text, the correct application of *wa* is explained more specifically: "A topic is a part of the sentence about which the speaker wishes to make some statement, and it usually comes at the beginning. Therefore, the particle *wa* to indicate the topic can be used with any type of noun" (p. 183). *JSL* uses a similar referent/predicate message structure, focusing on *wa* as a particle that "links the preceding nominal to a predicate occurring later in the sentence" (pp. 87-88). *JSL* gives further details about the characteristics of *wa*, calling it a "familiar, recognizable item regarding which something is about to be said" (p. 88). The predicate portion of the message structure is defined as being something that "applies specifically to X [the *wa*-marked word in question] and to no more than X, as far as this particular utterance goes" (p. 88). *Nakama* and *JSL* discuss "contrastive *wa* separately from "topicalizing" *wa". "Contrastive" *wa* is described in *Nakama* as follows: "Besides indicating a topic, *wa* can indicate a contrast... The *wa*
particle for contrast can be used with any type of noun as well.... *Wa* for contrast is often used in negative sentences. Often, the contrast is implicit rather than explicit....” (p. 184). Comments in *JSL* compliment this last sentence: “Some contexts may *imply* that indeed other items are not included [in the category defined by the predicate following /X,* wa], but this results from the context, not the particle” (p. 88). *JSL* continues on to give additional information about how *wa* indicates contrast by remarking that it is equivalent to intonation changes in English (p. 88).

More specific examples of when and when not to use *wa* are also provided in these textbooks. All three textbooks state that *wa* can never be used with interrogatives (*Nakama* 1998: 116, *Yookoso!* 1999: 111, *JSL* 1987: 88). *Nakama* compares subject-marking using *ga* and topic-marking using *wa*: “Once the subject noun has been mentioned, *wa* is often used for the subject that refers to the same item in subsequent sentences” (p. 116). It also notes that *wa* is frequently found with temporal terms, such as ‘*kyoo*’ (‘today’) and ‘*ashita*’ (‘tomorrow’) (p. 184). *Yookoso!* examines another feature of *wa*: it is not found in relative clauses (p. 349). *JSL* is careful to note that /X *wa/ is not equivalent to the concept of the English grammatical subject (p. 88), a common misconception among American students of Japanese.

The information in these textbooks does a good job of providing students with a basic overview of the major analyses regarding *wa* (e.g. *wa* is a marker of “topic,” *wa* is a marker of “contrast”), as well as some more specific instances of when or when not to use *wa* (e.g. it cannot be used with a wh-word). However, what is presented does not prepare students to deal with most other circumstances. For example, equipped with the knowledge that *wa* is used to mark familiar information, (*Nakama* 1998: 36, *JSL* 1987:
88), students who follow this advice to the letter would incorrectly mark the word 'ohimesama' in (1c) below with wa.

(1) a. Mukashi, aru ohimesama-ga ita. long ago a certain princess-NOM was ‘Long ago, there was a princess.’

b. Sono ohimesama-wa hitorimusume datta. that princess-TOP only daughter COP [past] ‘The princess was an only child.’

c. Aru hi, majo-ga a certain day witch-NOM ohimesama-ga (*ohimesama-wa/*o) shiro-ni tojikometa. princess-ACC castle-OB locked up ‘One day, a witch locked the princess in a castle.’

While ‘ohimesama’ here constitutes “information already known to the speaker and the listener (Nakama 1998: 36), it cannot be wa-marked in this case. Because these textbooks provide no stipulation against using wa in utterances such as this, students, guided by the knowledge that wa marks familiar information, may feel free to use it.

Students may also have difficulty understanding when the topic of a discourse segment must be represented as a zero anaphor instead of as a wa-marked topic.

(2) a. Mukashi, aru ohimesama-ga ita. long ago a certain princess-NOM was ‘Long ago, there was a princess.’

b. Sono ohimesama-wa hitorimusume datta. that princess-TOP only daughter COP [past] ‘The princess was an only child.’

c. Soshite [ _ ] (*ohimesama-wa) totemo kirei datta. and _ very pretty COP [past] ‘And she was very beautiful.’

The zero anaphor that appears in (2c) indicates the same referent as does ‘sono ohimesama-wa’ in the preceding line but must be phrased differently if it is to be grammatical. Relying solely on the explanations given in the textbooks mentioned above,
students would most likely be tempted to incorrectly repeat the topic, as would seem natural in an English discourse segment.

To deal with these potential problems and to aid students in better identifying instances where \textit{wa} should or should not be used, I have developed a method for instructing students on the usage of \textit{wa}, which I will present in Chapter 4. Chapter 2 gives an overview of what is known today about \textit{wa} and issues with some of these conflicting analyses. Chapter 3 uses our knowledge of \textit{wa} in discourse and synthesizes the analyses of the Centering Theory (Walker, Joshi, & Prince 1998) to explain the factors affecting \textit{wa}'s usage. The method of instruction in Chapter 4, therefore, uses these factors to help students understand how to use \textit{wa} grammatically in a broader range of contexts.
CHAPTER 2

PAST ANALYSES AND ISSUES WITH

DISCOURSE-CONSTRAINED PARTICLE \(wa\)

In this chapter, we will take a look at the ways in which discourse-constrained particle \(wa\) has been analyzed in the past: from the more traditional and familiar analyses done by Kuno (1973) and other linguists,\(^1\) to more recent ones by scholars such as Hinds (1987). Problematic issues with these analyses will also be presented.

2.1. Traditional analyses

The particle \(wa\) has enjoyed an impressively long history of analysis. In his book \textit{The languages of Japan}, Masayoshi Shibatani (1990) describes how our view of \(wa\)'s functions and meanings has evolved over time. He explains that the earliest analyses of \(wa\) done by Japanese scholars took place as far back as the eighteenth century. In his 1778 \textit{Ayuishō}, grammarian Nariakira Fujitani became the first to expound upon the topicalizing feature of \(wa\). For instance, in the following classic example (3), we find that \(wa\)-marked 'zoo' ('elephant') is the topic of the predicate that follows.

\(^1\)Mikami Akira's work is not described directly here because Kuno's (1973) work synthesizes many titles by Mikami, including the famous 1960 book, \textit{Zoo wa hana go nagai}. 

6
Shibatani relates that Fujitani and other eighteenth century grammarians such as Michitoshi Toganoi have viewed this as a "separating" function of *wa*, in that *wa* separates what it marks from what follows.

Michitoshi Toganoi remarked in his 1770 *Teniha abikizuna* "particle dictionary" on this separating function and on how *wa* has an "emphasizing" function as well, Shibatani further explains. To show this "emphasizing" function of *wa*, we have created the example in (4) below. In the phrase we find in (4), *wa* "emphasizes" ‘*kyoo*’ (‘today’) as the day to be described as ‘*ame desu*’ (‘it will rain’), and it singles ‘*kyoo*’ out from other days that may or may not be described in such a way.

(4) *Kyoo-wa ame desu ga...*  
today-TOP rain COP but  
‘Today [at least] it will rain, but...’

To put it simply, ‘*kyoo*’ is described by the qualification ‘*ame desu*’, with no mention of whether or not there are other days that meet this criteria; we can say that it is a comment on the topic ‘*kyoo*’. Shibatani notes that this structure, like that discussed by Fujitani, is the topic-comment structure, to use the term, coined by Daizaburô Matsushita in 1928.

The development of the idea of a topic and its comment grew into the notion of the topic being representative of information that is familiar or old, and the comment that which is unfamiliar or new (Matsushita 1930, in Shibatani 1990). Therefore, when given an utterance such as that in (5), we know that both the speaker and listener understand that they have been talking about *wa*-marked *John*, but the comment that follows is new information regarding him.
In this way, *wa* has been viewed as a marker of familiar information, and *ga* as a marker of that which is unfamiliar.

Also cited by Shibatani is another feature of *wa* originally noted by W.G. Aston (1872): contrast. Aston argues that *wa* not only separates what it marks from other possible items, as we saw in (4), where ‘*kyoo*’ was separated from other possible days as one described as a day when it will rain, but it also contrasts certain items with others. For example, in (6), we see that ‘*kyoo,*’ a day when it will rain, is contrasted with ‘*ashita,*’ a day when it will not.

Most of these older and more traditional analyses have examined *wa* more at the sentential level and not in the realm of discourse. However, as Maynard (1980) and others have pointed out, *wa* is a discourse-constrained particle and, as such, can only be accurately analyzed within discourse. The major trend in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has thus followed this insight, and most current scholars look at *wa* within a given utterance only within the context of other utterances or other information shared between speaker and listener, writer and reader.

Perhaps the most famous and frequently cited analysis of *wa* is that done by Susumu Kuno (1973), who clearly classified *wa* according two separate, albeit functionally related, categories: thematic (or topic) *wa* and contrastive *wa*. Kuno’s example of these two types of *wa* are found in (7):
What Kuno calls "thematic wa," as illustrated in (7a), is used to mark what is and/or has been under discussion. The topic under discussion is John; the comment that follows, *sono hon-o yonda*, is new information relevant to him. Kuno’s concept of thematic *wa* encompasses the earlier ideas of *wa* as being part of a topic-comment structure, of it separating a *wa*-marked item from others unmarked by *wa*, and of it marking familiar or old information.

Kuno’s “contrastive *wa,*” on the other hand, “can place non-anaphoric noun phrases in contrast” (p. 46). In (7b), John is marked as the person who has read the book in question, and he is contrasted with Mary, who has not. By synthesizing and reevaluating earlier theories, Kuno came to view *wa* in these two ways.

Kuno further divides thematic *wa* into two more categories *wa* and *wa*.* Generic thematic *wa* is used to mark information that, while not the item under discussion, is nevertheless familiar to both the listener and speaker.

(8) a. *Kujira-wa honyuu-doobutsu desu.* [generic]
    whale-TOP mammal COP ‘Whales are mammals.’

b. *John-wa watashi no tomodachi da.* [anaphoric]
    John-TOP my friend COP ‘He [=John] is my friend.’

(Kuno 1973: 44)
In (6a), the speaker and listener both understand what ‘whales’ are, even if they are not the topic of discussion at the time of the utterance. Anaphoric thematic wa, on the other hand, is used to mark a noun phrase that refers to information that is the center of discussion. In (8b), we find an example of wa marking an anaphor. This usage of wa is only grammatical if the item marked—in this case, John—is or has been under discussion by the listener and speaker. Otherwise, Kuno explains, an ungrammatical utterance results.

2.2. Previous analyses: Issues and problems

There is one important issue regarding when wa can and cannot be used in an utterance, and it is an issue that contradicts Kuno’s 1973 analysis of wa and ga. As noted before, wa has been described as a marker for familiar information (Kuno 1973). However, this analysis is not completely accurate. By looking at the example in (9), we can see that even information that should be familiar because it has occurred previously in the discourse sometimes cannot be marked by wa in spite of its familiarity to the reader.

(9)  a. *Sono ohimesama-wa hitori musume datta.*
    that princess-TOP only daughter COP [past]
    ‘The princess was an only child.’

    b. *Aru hi, majo-ga ohimesama-o (*ohimesama-wa/*∅)*
    one day witch-NOM princess-ACC
    shiro-ni tojikometa.
    castle-OB locked up [past]
    ‘One day, a witch locked the princess up in a castle.’

Naturally, on the one hand, the grammatical subject ‘majo’ in (9b) has not occurred previously in the discourse and is not commonly known to writer and reader. Hence, it
cannot be \textit{wa}-marked (9b). On the other hand, since the princess in the story has been encountered already in (9a), by Kuno's account, \textit{ohimesama} should therefore be marked with \textit{wa} as familiar information. Yet doing so results in an ungrammatical utterance.

Many studies have attempted to explain this apparent contradiction to Kuno's 1973 analysis. While some analyses by scholars such as Maynard (1982, 1997), whose work showed that Kuno's sentence-level analysis of \textit{wa} could be applied at the discourse level to reveal differences in narrative point-of-view, appear to support Kuno's categorization of \textit{wa}, not all scholars agree on this point. Hinds (1987) suggests that \textit{wa} is not the only marker of familiar information, nor is \textit{ga} the only marker of information that is unfamiliar. Taking the English taxonomy of "given-new" information developed by Ellen Prince (1981) and applying it to Japanese, Hinds created the taxonomy found below.$^2$

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 2.1:** Hind's taxonomy of the marking of familiar and unfamiliar information

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$^2$ Hinds does not give any examples of how the different elements in his taxonomy are expressed in Japanese.
Hinds argues that the only type of familiar information that *wa* is *not* used to mark is what Prince terms “Unanchored Brand New Information.” This type of information is entirely new to the listener, has not previously been used in the discourse, and cannot be considered a “unique NP,” a noun phrase that is specifically identifiable as referring to a particular person (e.g. one’s own spouse, the Earth, the population of China). Hinds concludes that *ga* is the only acceptable marker for “Unanchored Brand New Information,” but all other types of information (including “Anchored Brand New Information” and “Unused Information”), depending on context, may be grammatically marked by *wa*. This suggests that the old definition of *wa* as a marker of familiar information and case particles as those of unfamiliar information needs some re-evaluation. Additionally, although Hinds gives an excellent pragmatic analysis of the grammatical usage of *wa* and *ga* in the marking of familiar and unfamiliar information, his analysis does not detail exactly when familiar information within a certain category (e.g. New Unused Information) must take *wa* instead of *ga*, and vice versa. I believe that there are other factors affecting this marking, which I will explore in Chapter 3.

2.3. Summary

In this chapter, we took a look at the history of the analysis of discourse-constrained particle *wa* and issues regarding *wa*’s analysis. Shibatani (1990) tells us that *wa* was described in the earlier Japanese grammatical tradition as being a “topicalizing” agent with “separating” and “emphasizing” functions. It is also the pivot of the “topic-comment” structure. Additionally, it has a “contrastive” feature. Kuno (1973) synthesized these ideas and created two classifications for *wa*. “thematic *wa*” and
“contrastive wa.” He further divided the former category into “generic wa” and “anaphoric wa.” All of these types of wa, Kuno tells us, are markers of familiar information, while the particle ga is used to mark unfamiliar information. Studies done by researchers such as Maynard (1987) generally support Kuno’s analysis by giving pragmatic explanations for some apparent exceptions to his theory, although an analysis done by Hinds (1987) is not supportive. While Hinds’ analysis pragmatically explains how either wa and/or non-topicalizing particles can be used to mark familiar and unfamiliar information, I believe that there are other factors that affect the grammaticality of the marking of familiar and unfamiliar information. These factors will be analyzed in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATION OF FAMILIAR INFORMATION

USING WA-MARKING, ZERO ANAPHORA, OR MARKING

WITH NON-TOPICALIZING PARTICLES

In the previous chapter, we examined traditional and contemporary analyses of wa, as well as problems with these analyses. In dealing with wa, the primary issue concerns the definition of wa as a marker of familiar information and, concomitantly, of other, non-topicalizing particles as markers of the unfamiliar. In the present chapter, we will look at three ways of marking familiar information and how the tools of Centering Theory for analyzing reference in discourse (CT) can help us explain these methods. In the process, Kuno’s (1973) paired concepts of wa as a marker of familiar information and ga as one marker of unfamiliar information will be redefined. To do so, CT will be utilized to conduct an analysis of the marking of familiar and unfamiliar information in Japanese discourse.

3.1. Past analyses of the Centering Theory (CT)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, wa is a marker whose functions are influenced by the discourse around it (Maynard 1980). Now that we have gleaned a basic
idea from the last chapter of what *wa* is and how it is used in referring to information in a discourse, it is time to take a look some principles that underlie how references operate in a discourse. To better understand precisely how reference works in discourse and the role of *wa* itself in this central discourse function, we will use CT to bring a syntactic approach to the analysis of *wa*-marked references. The next section presents the basic principles of CT in English discourse, followed by how they have been applied to Japanese.

3.1.1. Basic structure (English)

The Centering Theory (CT) was initially developed during the 1970’s and 1980’s, stemming from research into artificial intelligence. Walker, Joshi, & Prince (1998: 2) tell us that the construction of CT comes from a combination of the works of Joshi and Kuhn (1979), Joshi and Weinstein (1981), Grosz (1977), Sidner (1979), and Grosz and Sidner (1986). Discourse is characterized by how it coheres referents and the items that refer to them. In discourse, coherence occurs at the both global and local levels (Walker, Joshi, & Prince 1998: 2). CT is a tool for following the elements that guide local coherence, in other words, how sentences are logically connected and how the topic of a string of sentences is maintained or changed. Given the utterances in (10), CT enables us to examine how the listener is able to understand that ‘he’ in (10b) refers to the same discourse element as ‘John’ in (10a). According to Gordon, Grosz, & Gilliom (1993), CT states that discourse is comprised of discourse centers, semantic items that logically connect utterances to those both before and after them. For example, in (10), the
character ‘John’ is introduced in (10a), after which he becomes the discourse center, or topic, of the utterances (10b) and (10c).

(10)  a. Did you see **John** the other day?  
b. **He** was avoiding me all day and  
c. **Ω** wouldn’t talk to me.

Discourse centers are grouped into two different categories: forward-looking centers (Cf) and backward-looking centers (Cb). The former category is comprised of the semantic items in a given utterance ($U_i$) that have the potential to become the focal center—or topic—of the following utterance ($U_{i+1}$). These focal centers may be marked as topics in such topic-based languages as Japanese, or as subjects in subject-based languages like English (Walker, Joshi, & Prince 1998).

Any given sentence can have any number of Cf’s (Walker, Joshi, & Prince 1998). Those in (11) have been underlined as an example.

(11)  a. **John** gave **Mary** a present.  
b. **He** wanted to make **her** happy.  
c. **She** was.

As we can see, the grammatical subject ‘John,’ the indirect object ‘Mary,’ and the direct object ‘present,’ are all Cf’s in (11a); in other words, they all have the potential to become the focal point of the next sentence (11b). The Cf’s in (11b), ‘he/John’ and ‘her/Mary’ both stand the chance of becoming the focal point of (11c). Regardless of the fact that there are no utterances given following (11c), we know that ‘she/Mary’ in (11c) is a Cf and has the potential to become the focal point of whatever utterance may follow.

The second type of discourse center is the backward-looking center (Cb). In English, the Cb of a given sentence ($U_{i+1}$) is the grammatical subject of that sentence and must come from one of the Cf’s in the preceding utterance ($U_i$). While any sentence may
have any number of Cf’s, no sentence may have more than one Cb (Gordon, Grosz, & Gilliom 1993). In the example (11) above, the Cb of (11b) is ‘he/John,’ in that it is the subject, the focal center, of (11b), and, most importantly, it has the same semantic content as one of the Cf’s in (11a). The Cb of (11c) is ‘she/Mary,’ which comes from the Cf in (11b) with the same semantic content. Because no utterance precedes it, (11a) has no Cb’s; this is true for all initial utterances in a given discourse segment.

Another way to look at the relation between Cf’s and Cb’s is as follows in Diagram A.

![Diagram A](image)

Figure 3.1: Visual depiction of the connections between Cb’s and Cf’s

While the Cf’s (underlined) ‘John,’ ‘Mary,’ and ‘present’ in the first sentence all have the potential to become the focal center of the second sentence, only ‘John’ actually becomes the focal center in the second sentence. Similarly, in the second sentence, both ‘he/John’
and 'her/Mary' have the potential to become the focal center of the third sentence; ultimately, the latter Cf does. The first sentence has no Cb because it is the first sentence in this discourse segment. The Cb (boxed) of the second sentence is 'he' and can be referenced back to 'John' in the first sentence. 'She/Mary' in the third sentence can also be referenced back to 'her/Mary' in the second. Although 'her/Mary' in the second sentence can be referenced back to 'Mary' in the first, it is not considered a Cb because it is not the subject and the focal center of the second sentence.

3.1.2. Applying CT to Japanese

Since CT was originally developed for English discourse analysis and is not a universal model for language discourse (Walker, Joshi, & Prince 1998: 13), Japanese scholars have had to subsequently apply the CT model to their own language (Yamura-Takei et al. 2001). This section discusses the results of that application, which will be used in our analysis later in the chapter.

As with English CT, any utterance in Japanese can have any number of Cf's, all of which have case-markings (Yamura-Takei et al. 2001), at least tacitly.\(^3\) The Cf's in (12) have been underlined as an example.

\[(12) \quad \text{Taroo ga} \quad \text{Hanako ni} \quad \text{aimashita.} \]
\[
\text{Taroo-NOM Hanako-OB meet [past]}
\]

'Taro met Hanako.'

(adapted from Walker et al. 1994: 13)

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\(^3\) There are many ways in which a Cf can be introduced that do not merit case-marking, such as, "John-to iu gakusei née..." These types of cases are not under consideration in this paper.
Cb’s correspond to topic in Japanese and are marked by wa or represented as zero
anaphora (Walker et al. 1994). Examples of Cb’s are found in (13), first as a wa-marked
NP and then as a zero anaphor.4

13 a. Taroo wa Hanako o eiga ni sasoiwasita.
Taroo-TOP Hanako-ACC movie-OB invite [past]
‘Taro invited Hanako to a movie.’

b. Ø itiniti-zyuu nani-mo te ni tukimasendesita.
Ø all day nothing hand-IO put NEG [past]
‘He [Taro] could put his hand to nothing all day.’

(adapted from Walker et al. 1994: 9)

Cb’s do not need to be equivalent to the grammatical subject of a sentence; they can
correspond to any argument. One example of this trait is given below, in (14).

John-NOM cake-ACC eat [past]
‘John ate the cake.’

cake-TOP John-NOM eat [past]
‘As for the cake, John ate it.’

In Example (14a), the Cf ‘keeki’ (‘cake’) is marked by ‘o’ as a direct object. If we take
the same sentence and make ‘keeki’ its Cb by topicalizing it, however, as we have done in
(14b), ‘keeki’ obtains wa-marking which replaces its original marking of ‘o.’ This
example shows us how Cb’s can correspond to arguments other than subject.

3.2. Analysis of Japanese discourse

We have now reviewed the Centering Theory in some short discourse segments,
as well as some highlights from its prior applications to Japanese discourse analysis. In

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4 It is important to note that it is possible for a Cf to also be a Cb. All Cb’s are Cf’s that have
occurred previously in the discourse and have become the focal center of the discourse.
Section 3.2.1., we will discuss the organization of the discourse to which we will later apply CT. Section 3.2.1. will outline the factors that affect the grammaticality of the marking of familiar and unfamiliar information.

3.2.1. Organization of narrative discourse structure in Japanese

Before continuing on to our analysis of the factors that affect the usage of *wa* and case markers, we will take a brief look at how narrative discourse structure is organized in Japanese. Hinds & Hinds (1981) state that Japanese “narratives are structured into episodes, each episode maintaining a unified participant orientation, or a unified temporal or spatial setting” (p. 201). The authors, citing Hinds & Shibatani (1977), go on to describe the three stages of Japanese discourse that can occur in a given episode: an item is marked by *ga* (or some other case marker, such as *o, ni*, etc.) when it is first mentioned, *wa*-marked upon its establishment as the focal center of the discourse, and represented as a zero anaphor thereafter, assuming the current episode is not concluded.⁵

In Japanese, information that is familiar to both the speaker and listener, or to the writer and reader, can be marked in three different ways and remain grammatically acceptable. Kuno’s analysis states that *wa* is the marker of familiar information, and yet there are two additional ways in which this type of information can be marked: by what Hinds & Hinds (1981) refer to as a “non-topicalizing” particle (e.g. *ga, o, ni*) or as a zero anaphor. Two of the three means cited by Hinds & Hinds (1981) of marking anaphora

⁵ Hinds & Hinds (1981) note that there are “two types of conditions which may cause a noun phrase to be repeated rather than elided” (p. 201). My analysis deals only with the first of these conditions: cases where the author is forced to repeat a full NP by what Hinds & Hinds refer to as the “structural properties of the narrative” (p. 201). The other condition, that of a subjective decision made on the part of the narrator, does not apply to my analysis.
(i.e. with *wa* and as a zero anaphor) are identical to two of these three methods of marking familiar information. The third method of marking familiar information (i.e. with a non-topicalizing particle) is contrary to Kuno’s (1973) analysis, in that Kuno argues that *ga*, a non-topicalizing particle, is used to mark unfamiliar information.

In her PhD dissertation on CT and zero anaphora, Kameyama (1985) defines the center of a discourse segment as being a “non-linguistic entity” that is the focal center of a narrative “at the time an utterance is produced or understood” (p. 91). Kameyama also tells us that the center of a discourse segment is its Cb. Cb’s contain information that is familiar to all participants in the discourse, i.e. they are items of familiar information. In the remaining section, we will explore this point of Kameyama’s and investigate in Japanese the correlation between Cb’s and the marking of familiar information.

The first method of marking familiar information is in accordance with Kuno’s analysis and corresponds to the second stage of a discourse segment noted by Hinds & Hinds (1981): that in which *wa* must be utilized. Example (15) below presents part of a discourse segment and illustrates the establishment of the focal center of a discourse segment there. The focal center is initially introduced in sentence (15a), which is the initial utterance in this discourse segment. Since it is the initial utterance, it has no Cb. Its two Cfs are ‘John’ and ‘Hanako.’ In example (15b), we can see the establishment of the focal center of this discourse segment. The focal center ‘Hanako’ is *wa*-marked upon its establishment as the Cb of this discourse segment. We know it is the Cb of (15b) because it originates as a Cf in (15a) and is the focal center of (15b). No marking of ‘Hanako,’ other than *wa*, is grammatical here in (15b).

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6 “Discourse segment” is equivalent to Hinds & Hinds’ (1981) concept of “episode.”
John-NOM Hanako-NOM to like COP
'John likes Hanako.'

b. Shikashi [Hanako-wa*Hanako-ga*ə] Taro-ga suki
however Hanako-TOP Taro-NOM to like
na no da.
EXP COP
'However, [the fact is that] Hanako likes Taro.'

From this example, we can see how information that is unfamiliar to the discourse participants prior to (15a) becomes familiar information; upon its repetition, it is established as the focal center of discourse (Cb), and obtains wa-marking is (15b).

Therefore, it is clear that Kuno's interpretation of wa as a marker of familiar information, as far as it goes, is correct.

Zero anaphora are another method of representing familiar information and they correspond to the final stage of a discourse segment (Hinds & Hinds 1981). The example in (16), a simple written narrative, shows how information that later becomes the focal center of a discourse segment is first introduced in (16a), established as the focal center of the discourse segment in (16b), and referred to with a zero anaphor in (16c). Like (15a) above, (16a) is the first sentence in this discourse segment and therefore has no Cb. Its two Cfs are 'John' and 'Hanako.' (16b) also has two Cfs, but they are slightly different: 'Hanako' and 'Taro.' Unlike (16a), (16b) has a Cb, 'Hanako.' What later becomes the Cb is first introduced to us as unfamiliar information in (16a), so when it is established as the focal center of this discourse segment in (16b), it obtains wa-marking. The sentence in (16c) is an extension of the story begun in (16a) and continued in (16b). Its Cb is continued from that in (16b), and it is represented as a zero anaphor.
John-NOM Hanako-NOM to like COP
‘John likes Hanako.’

b. Shikashi Hanako-wa Taroo-ga suki na no da.
however Hanako-TOP Taro-NOM to like EXP COP
‘However, [the fact is that] Hanako likes Taro.’

c. Sore de, Valentine’s Day ni, [ga/*Hanako-wa/*Hanako-ga]
that COP Valentine’s Day OB, φ
Taro-to issho-ni eigo-o mi-ni-itta.
Taro-CON together-OB movie-ACC go to see [past]
‘And so, on Valentine’s Day, she [Hanako] went with Taro to go
see a movie.’

Under a CT analysis of passages such as this one, we know that zero anaphora
provide us with another method, aside from wa-marking, by which to represent familiar
information. We know that zero anaphora represent familiar information because their
referents are the wa-marked Cb’s that precede them. In (16), it is clear that the zero
anaphor of (16c) is the continued Cb of this discourse segment, initially established in
(16b). As shown in Section 3.1.1., wa-marked focal centers represent familiar
information; since they are the referents for zero anaphora, zero anaphora must also
represent familiar information. Therefore, zero anaphora are clearly a second method for
representing information familiar to the discourse participants.

Kuno’s theory about ga is that it is a marker of unfamiliar information, implying
that it is not used to mark familiar information. Contrary to this implication, ga—and
other non-topicalizing particles (e.g. case markers o, and ni)—can also be used to mark
familiar information. An example of this phenomenon is found in (17c) below.

John-NOM Hanako-NOM to like COP
‘John likes Hanako.’
b. \textit{Shikashi Hanako-wa Taroo-ga suki na no da.} however Hanako-TOP Taro-NOM to like EXP COP

\textit{‘However, [the fact is that] Hanako likes Taro.’}

c. \textit{Sono koto de, John-no tame-ni, Yoko-ga that case COP John’s benefit Yoko-NOM Hanako-ni hanashi-ga aru-to ittekita.} Hanako-IO talk-NOM is-QUO said

\textit{‘That being the case, Yoko came and told Hanako, for John, that he wanted to speak with her.’}

Being the initial utterance in this discourse segment, (17a) has no Cb, just as was the case in examples (15a) and (16a). The Cf ‘Hanako’ of (17a) becomes the Cb of (17b), at which point it is \textit{wa}-marked. At this point, ‘Hanako’ becomes the established topic of discourse. In the following utterance, however, ‘Hanako’ loses its position as the center of the discourse and is found in (16c) neither as a \textit{wa}-marked full NP nor as a zero anaphor. (17c) has no Cb. Although ‘Hanako’ constitutes information familiar to the participants in this narrative, it is marked with ‘\textit{ni},’ a non-topicalizing particle. This is contrary to the idea of non-topicalizing particles (such as \textit{ga, o, and ni}) as markers of unfamiliar information, and yet it is an appropriate marking here. As with the case of zero anaphora, the case of non-topicalizing particles proves problematic in that it presents yet another way to mark familiar information. This phenomenon will be examined in Section 3.2.2.1.

3.2.2. \textbf{Triggers for the marking of different types of familiar information}

Now that we have reviewed these three ways of marking familiar information, it is time to use CT to examine specifically what is occurring in the usage of these markings and why grammaticality or ungrammaticality results. By applying CT in analyzing
discourse, we will learn what is happening in the discourse to trigger the marking of familiar information with different elements.

3.2.2.1. Establishment of the Cb: \([U_i(Cf) \rightarrow U_{i-1}(Cb)]\)

Walker, Joshi, & Prince (1998: 3-4) tell us that the initial utterance \((U_i)\) in a given discourse segment (DS) may have any number of Cf's, all of which have the potential to become the focal “center” (Cb) of the utterance to follow \((U_{i+1})\). The Cf's of \(U_i\) can only be marked by a non-topicalizing particle (e.g. \(ga\), \(o\), \(ni\)) and can never be marked by \(wa\) or represented as a zero anaphor. In example (18), which is the \(U_i\) of DS, we see that the Cf ‘ohimesama’ is \(ga\)-marked.

(18)  \textit{Mukashi, aru ohimesama-ga iita.}  
long ago  a certain  princess-NOM is [past]  
‘Long ago, there was a princess.’

The non-topicalizing particle \(ga\) is the only grammatical marking for this Cf. In other words, if a Cf exists in the first utterance of a given discourse segment, it should be marked with a non-topicalizing particle. We will use a style of transcription derived from that used by Walker, Joshi, & Prince (1998) to describe this phenomenon with the following equation: \(DS_i(U_i(Cf)) = Cf \text{ marked with a non-topicalizing particle.}\)

Continuing within the same discourse segment, the focal center (Cb) of DS, is established—and therefore \(wa\)-marked—in the second utterance \((U_{i+1})\), as presented in example (19) below.

(19)  \textit{Sono ohimesama-wa (\textasteriskcentered ohimesama-ga) hitorimusume datta.}  
that princess-TOP \(\text{ only daughter COP [past]}\)  
‘The princess was an only child.’
Here, we find this Cb ‘ohimesama’ to be wa-marked, the only grammatical marking for the first Cb of any discourse segment. If a Cf within one given utterance is found to be the focal center of the following utterance, the second occurrence of that Cf—which is the Cb of the second utterance—is to be marked by wa. This rule can be summarized by the following equation: If the referent of DSₗ(Uₗ(Cf)) = the referent of DSₗ(Uₗ₊₁(Cb)), then DSₗ((Uₗ₋₁(Cb)) = Cb marked by wa.

3.2.2.2. Continuation of the Cb: [Uₗ₋₁(Cb) → Uₗ₊₁(Cb)]

Once the Cb of a discourse segment has been established and marked by wa, any further references to this Cb should occur as a zero anaphor (Kameyama 1985: 102). This is demonstrated in (20c) below. Sentences (20a) and (20b) present the initial introduction of the Cf ‘ohimesama’ and its establishment as the wa-marked Cb, respectively.

(20) a. Mukashi, aru ohimesama-ga ita.
   long ago a certain princess-NOM is [past]
   ‘Long ago, there was a princess.’

b. Sono ohimesama-wa(*ga/*gai) hitorimusume datta.
   that princess-TOP only daughter COP [past]
   ‘The princess was an only child.’

   and COP [past]
   ‘And she was very beautiful.’

26
The only appropriate representation of the Cb in (20c) is as a zero anaphor. This is true of all Cb's after they have been established as wa-marked focal centers. In other words:

If the referent of $DS_i(U_{i+1}(Cb))$ = the referent of $(U_{i+1}(Cb))$, then $(U_{i+1}(Cb)) = O$. 7,8

These rules are in accord with the traditional analyses of wa and non-topicalizing particles as markers of familiar and unfamiliar information, respectively. However, they do not account for the uses of wa and ga pragmatically explicated by Hinds (1987) that are contrary to traditional analyses (cf. (16)). In the next section, we will see what factors affect grammatical marking with wa and non-topicalizing markers.

3.2.2.3. Discontinuation of the Cb: $[DS_i(U_{i+1}(Cb)) \rightarrow DS_{i+1}(U_i(Cf))]$

We have just seen how the introduction of a Cf, its establishment as the Cb of a discourse segment, and its continuation as a Cb are marked. Note that in the previous example (19), no shift in GR occurred. Kameyama (1985) tell us that when a topic undergoes a GR shift, it obtains marking with a non-topicalizing particle. Therefore, with the introduction of a GR shift, the manner of marking of familiar and unfamiliar information changes. In this section, we will explore this change and what it means in terms of Kuno's definition of wa.

After the establishment of the Cb of a discourse segment, the first instance of a GR shift affecting the marking of an NP may occur. That is to say, if an NP that has been established as the Cb of a discourse segment undergoes a shift in its GR, it loses its status as a Cb and must therefore be marked with a non-topicalizing particle (e.g. ga, o, ni)

7 "X" is an integer greater than 1.
8 In this analysis I am not attempting to assess how long zero anaphora can be used to represent the Cb of a discourse segment. This formula is not intended to represent an indefinitely continuing focal center.
indicative of that GR shift (Kameyama 1985). An example of this phenomenon is
presented in (21c) below, where the Cb ‘ohimesama’ in (21b) undergoes a shift in its GR
from that of topicalized subject to direct object; this results in its being marked with the
non-topicalizing particle for direct objects, o.

long ago a certain princess-NOM is [past]
‘Long ago, there was a princess.’

b. Sono ohimesama-wa hitorimusume datta.
that princess-TOP only daughter COP [past]
‘The princess was an only child.’

c. Aru hi, majo-ga
a certain day witch-NOM
ohimesama-o (*ohimesama-wa/o) shiro-ni tojikometa.
princess-ACC castle-OB locked up
‘One day, a witch locked the princess in a castle.’

‘Ohimesama’ is first introduced as a Cf in (21a). When it becomes the Cb of this
discourse segment in (21b), we find it to be wa-marked. Had it continued into (21c) as
the Cb, without experiencing a GR shift, ‘ohimesama’ would have been represented as a
zero anaphor, as shown in (19). However, its GR changes in (21c) from that of subject to
direct object, and it is therefore marked with a non-topicalizing particle, o. We can
represent the particle marking resulting from this GR shift as follows: If GR of \((U_{i+x}(Cb))\)
\(\neq\) GR of \((U_{i+x}(Cf))\), then \((U_{i+x}(Cf)) = Cf marked with non-topicalizing particle\). From
this information, we can say that the occurrence of a GR shift causes familiar information
to lose its wa-marking and to be marked with non-topicalizing particles, seemingly as if it
were, according to Kuno’s analysis of wa, unfamiliar.

In the early part of this chapter, we learned how the initial utterance of a given
discourse segment has no Cb, and how its Cf’s must all be marked with non-topicalizing
particles. Considering that the GR shift of a Cb also results in marking with non-topicalizing particles (Kameyama 1985), we can say that when a Cb undergoes a GR shift, a new discourse segment begins. This is an important point because it alters Kuno’s analysis of *wa* and *ga*. *Wa* is not as much a marker of familiar information as it is a marker of a new focal center of discourse. The discourse function of *ga*, in a similar fashion, is not as much as marker of unfamiliar information as it is a marker of items that have the potential to begin a new discourse segment. This redefinition of *wa* and other non-topicalizing particles hopefully paints a more accurate picture of what is occurring with these particles and of what they are actually marking.  

3.3. Issues with this analysis

There is one problem with the analysis in Section 3.2., and it is found in Kameyama’s (1985) dissertation, in which she discusses exceptions to the rules of CT and the use of zero anaphora in CT. She cites the following example.

\[(22) \]  

\[a. \quad \text{Obuasan-ga} \quad \text{akanboo-o} \quad \text{daite ita.} \]  
\[\text{grandmother-NOM} \quad \text{child-ACC} \quad \text{hold [past]} \]  
\‘A grandmother held a child.’

\[b. \quad \text{Akanboo-ga} \quad \text{totsuzen} \quad \text{nakidashita.} \]  
\[\text{child-NOM} \quad \text{suddenly} \quad \text{cry out [past]} \]  
\‘The child suddenly cried.’

\[c. \quad \text{Ojiisan-ga} \quad \text{issyookenmei} [\emptyset/\text{akanboo-o}] \quad \text{nadameta.} \]  
\[\text{grandfather-NOM} \quad \text{do one’s best} \]  
\[\text{soothe [past]} \]  
\‘The grandfather did his best to soothe [the child].’

\[\text{This does not address the case of *ga* in embedded clauses.}\]
d. *Shibarakushite, [O/*akanboo-ga]* yatto
   after a while
   nakiyanda. cease to cry [past]
   ‘After a while, [the child] ceased to cry.’
   (Kameyama 1985: 139)

The only grammatical way to refer to this *‘akanboo’* in (22c) and (22d) is with zero
anaphora, in spite of the fact that their grammatical relations in which this referent
engages are different from those in (22b) and (22c), respectively. Kameyama points out
that the change in its grammatical relation from that of direct object (in 22c) to subject (in
22d) should not trigger the use of a zero anaphor, but she has no explanation for this
phenomenon.

However, Kameyama’s exception appears to lie within the scope of the event-
driven narratives analyzed by Maynard (1982, 1997). In her analysis of the marking of
characters in classic fairytales, Maynard found that while in one version of a story, such
as *Momotaro*, the characters, once introduced initially with *ga*-marking, were *wa*-marked
thereafter. The same characters never received *wa*-marking in the *Urihimeko* version of
the same tale. This is evident in examples (23) and (24), below, which are excerpts taken
from Maynard’s 1982 book.

(23)  *Momotaro*

a. *Mukashi, mukashi, aru* tokoro-ni, ojii-san-to
   long ago long ago a certain place-OB old man-with
   obaasan-ga sunde orimashita.
   old woman-NOM live [past]
   ‘Long, long ago, in a certain land, there lived an old man and an
   old woman.’

b. *Tokoro-ga, natsu-no aru* hi-no koto deshita.
   however summer’s a certain day’s fact COP [past]
   ‘However, it occurred on a summer’s day.’
c. *Ojiisan-wa yama-e shibakari-ni*  
   old man-TOP mountain-OB woodcutting-IO  
   *dekkemashita.*  
   go out [went]  
   ‘The old man went into the mountains to cut wood.’

d. “*Itterasshai.*”  
   come [imperative]  
   ‘”Come home safely.”’

e. *Obaasan-wa ojiisan-o okuridasu to...*  
   old woman-TOP old man-ACC see off when  
   ‘Upon seeing the old man off, the old woman...’  
   (Maynard 1997: 104-5)

(24) *Urihimeko*

a. *Mukashi, mukashi, aru tokoro-ni, ojiisan-to*  
   long ago long ago a certain place-OB old man-with  
   *obaasan-ga orimashita.*  
   old woman-NOM is [past]  
   ‘Long, long ago, in a certain land, there was an old man and an old woman.

b. *Aru hi, obaasan-ga kawa-e sentaku-ni*  
   a certain day old woman-NOM river-OB laundry-IO  
   *ikimashita.*  
   go [past]  
   ‘One day, the old woman went to the river to do laundry.’

c. *Kawa-ue kara hako-ga futatsu nagaretekimashita.*  
   upstream from box-NOM two flow [past]  
   ‘Two boxes flowed down from upstream.’

d. *Pukapuka, pukapuka.*  
   bobbing bobbing  
   ‘Bobbing, bobbing.’

e. *Kore-o miru to, obaasan-ga yobimashita.*  
   this-ACC see upon old woman-NOM call out [past]  
   ‘Upon seeing this, the old woman called out.’  
   (Maynard 1997: 105)

In both versions, the characters ‘*ojiisan*’ and ‘*obaasan*’ are found to be *ga*-marked when they are first introduced. This is where the similarities end. While these characters go on to be *wa*-marked in the version presented in example (23), they never lose their *ga-*
marking in the version presented in (24). According to Kuno’s (1973) ideas of familiar and unfamiliar information markers, it would seem that the latter version must be ungrammatical; however, Maynard explains this dichotomy with her concept of “staging.” When a narrative is “staged” around the characters in the narrative, a “spotlight” remains on them and they are marked as familiar information (e.g. with wa). The events in the story come in and out of this spotlight and do not remain within it. On the other hand, when a narrative is staged around the events in a narrative, the spotlight remains on the actions and not on the characters. Because the characters are not centrally staged in this type of narrative, Maynard tells us that they enter and exit the spotlight only as they relate to an action. Therefore, every time the characters enter the spotlight anew, they are treated as new information and are marked with non-topicalizing particles instead of with wa, as they would be in a character-centered narrative.

In the former version of the fairytale, the story is staged in terms of the characters; in the latter, it is staged in terms of the events in the tale. Therefore, the characters in the former version, once introduced, become familiar to the reader and remain in the “spotlight” of the story. In the latter version, the events hold the spotlight, and the characters, each time they enter the spotlight, are introduced anew.

To show that Kameyama’s exception is an example of one of Maynard’s event-driven narratives, we will force a character-focused perspective on the narrative. To do so, we will use the empathetic verb ‘ageru’ to link the perspective of the narrator with one of the characters in the utterance and make that character more salient than each event in the discourse segment. No utterance can have more than one locus of empathy (Kuno & Kaburaki 1977); therefore, if an awkward utterance results from the addition of
‘ageru,’ it is likely indicative of a violation of this rule. If the utterance resulting from our creation of a character-focused perspective in (22) is awkward in terms of the point of view of the narrator, then we know that an empathy violation has occurred and that (22) is likely an event-driven narrative.

(25)

a. Obaasan-ga akanbo-o daiteita.
   b. Akanbo-ga totsuzen nakidashita.
   c. Ojiisan-ga isshokenmei akanboo-o nadamete ageta.
      ??Ojiisan-ga isshokenmei Ø nadamete ageta.
   d. Shibaraku-shite, akanboo-wa yatto nakiyanda.
      ??Shibaraku-shite, Ø yatto nakiyanda.

Applying the empathetic verb ‘ageru’ to the actions performed by the ‘ojiisan’ results in the awkward utterances in (25c) and (25d). With the addition of full NP’s with non-topicalizing particles in (25c) and (25d), the utterances lose their awkwardness, at which point they prove to follow the analysis in the previous section. Thus, we know that this tale in its original form is not character-driven and cannot have Cb’s or wa-marking. In other words, the focal center of this narrative is the actions performed on or by the child in the story (e.g. ‘nadameru,’ ‘nakiyamu’). Therefore, we can conclude that the CT analysis of marking familiar and unfamiliar information in Section 3.2. is not incorrect; it is only representative of character-driven narratives, not event-driven ones.

3.4. Summary

In this chapter, we have reviewed how familiar information in a narrative discourse can be marked with non-topicalizing particles, with the particle wa, or represented as zero anaphora. We have also used CT and Kameyama’s (1985)
conclusions about the effect of a GR shift on topic marking to analyze what conditions affect the marking of familiar information. Our final analysis can be boiled down into the following chart (Diagram B).

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No GR Shift</th>
<th>Cf with non-topicalizing particle → Cb₁ with wa → Cbₓ = Ø</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GR Shift</td>
<td>Cf with non-topicalizing particle → Cb₁ with wa →[GR shift]→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cb₁ with non-topicalizing particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cf = non-topicalizing particle → Cb₁ = wa → Cbₓ = Ø →[GR shift]→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cf = non-topicalizing particle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Figure 3.2: Summary of the marking of Cf’s and Cb’s in narrative discourse

We can now define *wa* and non-topicalizing particles as follows:

**Definition of the particle *wa* (initial version)**
*Wa* is the marker of the initial establishment of a new focal center of discourse.

**Definition of *ga* and other non-topicalizing particles (initial version)**
*Ga* and other non-topicalizing particles are the markers of items that have the potential to begin a new discourse segment.

In addition to defining these particles, we took into account Kameyama’s (1985) exception to our new definitions, and evaluated it in terms of Maynard’s (1982, 1997) analysis of character- and event-driven narratives. From this, we concluded that our definitions of *wa* and non-topicalizing particles only applies to character-driven narratives and non event-driven ones. This resulted in the slight modification of our prior definitions, as seen below.
Definition of the particle *wa* (final version)
*Wa* is a marker of the initial establishment of a new focal center of discourse within a character-driven narrative.

Definition of *ga* and other non-topicalizing particles (final version)
*Ga* and other non-topicalizing particles are the markers of items that have the potential to begin a new discourse segment within a character-driven narrative.
CHAPTER 4

PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATION

As was mentioned briefly in Chapter 1 of this paper, there still remains a gap in the information that is taught to American students of Japanese regarding wa in narrative discourse. While the most commonly used texts do provide informative perspectives on a good sampling of the prevalent analyses of this particle, they do not equip students to deal with many cases involving its uses in discourse. This chapter will apply the Centering Theory in discourse to the Japanese discourse structures presented in Chapter 3 to propose a method of instruction designed to aid students in better recognizing when and when not to use wa in narrative discourse.

4.1. Methodology

The instruction presented here deals with teaching students to understand when and when not to use wa in an utterance. Rather than have students memorize a series of complicated equations, students are simply asked to perform two tasks: 1) identify and mark focal centers and 2) identify and elide secondary and subsequent occurrences of wa-marked words. The instruction itself has been divided according to the two previously
described tasks that students will be performing. The first lesson teaches students how to
decide whether or not to replace a non-topicalizing particle with a topicalizing one. The
second lesson involves teaching students whether to include a wa-marked focal center or
to elide it. In order to aid students in correctly evaluating these issues, self-check guides
have been developed from the analysis performed in the last chapter. Each lesson
includes segments as follows: instruction, application of instruction to example sentences,
rules for application, self-testing practices for students, and self-check questions to help
students assess their own progress. In addition, drills have been added that reflect the
style of drills found in JSL.

All of the textbooks discussed in Chapter 1 introduce the concept of topicalizing
wa within the first few chapters of each book; therefore, it is assumed that students will
have had some exposure to wa before encountering this lesson. Since this lesson deals
with wa-marking and focal center ellipsis in narrative discourse, it is important that
students have some knowledge of how to construct a basic narrative. Usually this type of
instruction occurs during the second year of study; we will assume that our students have
received at least this level of instruction.

An important aspect of the lessons presented here is that they are not intended as a
substitute for the information or practices presented in the textbooks examined in Chapter
1. The idea, rather, is that the materials presented here in Chapter 4 are to be used as a
supplement to the normal instruction given to and exercises performed by students. By
using this multi-frontal approach to teaching, students will hopefully achieve a broader,
more well-rounded picture of wa and its usage than they would with textbook instruction
alone.
4.1.1. Lesson one: Wa-marking

The first part of instruction is aimed at teaching students how to recognize whether or not wa-marking is necessary. To do so, we must begin by reviewing particles (e.g. the subject is marked by *ga*, the direct object by *o*, etc). This is intended to give students a good foundation in non-topicalizing particles to which they will be later asked to apply the concepts of wa-marking and focal center ellipsis. Students may be presented with a simple explanation of the marking of different nouns in Japanese, such as that below in (26).

(26) *John-ga Hanako-ni present-o agemashita*.

(a) (b) (c)

a. *ga*: prototypically marks the *subject* of the sentence, or what/who performs the verb. In this example, *‘John’* is doing the verb *‘agemashita’*; in other words, John is the one doing the giving.

b. *ni*: marks the *indirect object* of the sentence, which is often a directional word. In this example sentence, *‘Hanako,’* is the indirect object; she represents the direction of the giving by being the one who receives the present.

c. *o*: marks the *direct object* of the sentence, or upon what/whom the verb is performed. In this example, *‘present’* is the direct object; the act of giving is applied to this word since the present is the thing being given.

Once students have reviewed these terms, it is important to point out that words occurring for the first time are to be marked with their predicate particles.\(^{10}\) This concept should be repeatedly reintroduced throughout the entire lesson, since identifying the initial occurrence of a word is vital in determining whether or not to topicalize a word or to

\(^{10}\) Since students would most likely find the term “non-topicalizing particles” to be cumbersome, I will refer to these particles in Chapter 4 as “predicate particles,” being that the predicate of a sentence determines argument and thus their application.
elide a focal center. A rule for handling the case-marking of initially introduced words can be summed up as follows in (27).

\[ \text{(27) Rule 1: Predicate particles} \]

The first time a new noun appears, it must be marked with a predicate particle such as \( ga \), \( o \), or \( ni \).

As a quick review of the terminology covered in (26), students may be given a few practice sentences. The sample exercise\(^{11}\) in (28) below is intended to allow students to self-test their understanding of which predicate particles mark which nouns.

\[ \text{(28) Predicate particles} \]

Exercise: Underline the predicate particles found in each sentence below, and write the names of the nouns they are marking.

a. \( \text{Michiko-san-ga hon-o kaimashita.} \)
   [Answer: \( \text{Michiko-san-ga} \) (subject) \( \text{hon-o} \) (direct object) \( \text{kaimashita.} \)]

b. \( \text{Uchi-no imooto-ga yoru kaerimashita.} \)
   [Answer: \( \text{Uchi-no imooto-ga} \) (subject) \( \text{yoru kaerimashita.} \)]

This review should only take a small percentage of the time given to the entire lesson, since the lesson itself is more about the application of \( wa \) than of the overall application and identification of predicate particles in general.

Once students are familiar with the idea of predicate particles, it is important to discuss the role that \( wa \) plays in narrative discourse. While students using \( JSL \) may already understand that \( wa \) marks something "regarding which something is about to be said (p. 88), students using \( Yookoso! \) or \( Nakama \) may only be aware that \( wa \) is a marker of topic. While, as in the case of \( JSL \), it is unnecessary to use a specific term such as "topic," it is important in any case that students learn that \( wa \) marks what is being talked

\(^{11}\) As with all of the exercises presented in Chapter 4, it is important to present students only with familiar vocabulary and grammatical formations, thereby placing emphasis on the learning of the applications of \( wa \)-marking and \( wa \)-marked topics and less on learning new terms or structures.
about. To this, it should be added that what follows wa is the message, or crux, of the utterance. It in some way describes or makes a comment on the item marked by wa. One way to demonstrate this topic-comment message structure to students is presented in (29) below.

(29) a. \[John-wa\] \[shukudai-ga iya da\].

'John' is what is being talked about; he is the topic of this utterance. We know he is what is being talked about because he is marked by wa. 'Shukudai-ga iya da' is what is being said about the topic 'John'; this is the message portion of this utterance. We know this is the message because it follows wa. In other words, this utterance is saying, "If we are talking about John, he can be described as someone who hates homework."

b. \[Daigaku yo-nen-sei-wa\] \[minna sotsugyouo dekita\].

'Daigaku yo-nen-sei' are what is being talked about, they are the topic of this utterance. We know they are what is being talked about because they are marked by wa. 'Minna sotsugyouo dekita' is what is being said about the topic 'daigaku yo-nen-sei'; this is the message portion of this utterance. We know this is the message because it follows wa. In other words, this utterance is saying, "If we are talking about the college seniors, one can say that they were all able to graduate.'

In order to better utilize examples such as these, several may be presented to students in which the students themselves have to identify what is being talked about (i.e. what is wa-marked) and what is being said about that particular topic (i.e. what follows the wa-marking).

After examining the function of wa and what it marks, the concept of replacing some predicate particles with wa can be introduced. The rule found in (27) should first be reiterated: the first time a noun occurs, it must be marked with a predicate particle.
The next rule, found in (30) should then be introduced: in subsequent occurrences of the same word, the predicate particle should be replaced with the particle wa.

(30) **Rule 2: Wa-marking**
In the second and subsequent occurrences of a noun, the predicate particle marking it must be replaced with the particle wa.

To demonstrate this rule, it should be applied to example sentences such as the one presented in (31), so that students can better see how the rule is to be used.

(31) *John-ga Michiko-ni denwa shimashita kedo,*
    (a) *Michiko-[ga→wa] demasen deshita.*
    (b) *Michiko-ni* desu.
    (c)

a. *John-ga:* The first occurrence of this word; the predicate particle is kept.

b. *Michiko-ni:* The first occurrence of this word; the predicate particle is kept.

c. *Michiko-ga:* The second occurrence of this word; the predicate particle must be replaced by *wa,* thus *ga→wa.*

After students have been shown a couple of examples of how to apply Rule 2, they can be given some exercises to self-test their comprehension of its usage, such as those found in (32).

(32) **Wa-marking**
Exercise: Identify whether or not the nouns below are occurring for the first time. If they are, underline the particle. If they are not, give them a new, appropriate particle.

   *Keesu-ni, kirei na keeki-ga takusan arimashita.*

b. *Kinno, hisashiburi-ni Toshio-ni aimashita.*
   *Toshio-ga kotoshi sarariman-ni narimashita.*
   [Answer: *Kinno, hisashiburi-ni Toshio-ni aimashita. Toshio-WA kotoshi sarariman-ni narimashita.*]
The first practice sentence in (32a) is an example of a sentence that does not take wa-marking. The word ‘keeki’ appears for the first time in the second phrase and has no prior referent, or (Cf); therefore, it should not be wa-marked. Sentence (32b) demonstrates a sentence where wa-marking should be applied. With the instruction described above, students should be able to identify the two occurrences of the word ‘Toshio.’ According to Rule 2, students should know that in the second of these occurrences, ‘Toshio’ warrants wa-marking.

To help students check their particle choices along the way, Rules 1 and 2, in (27) and (30) above, have been modified into a simple question that students can use to check themselves when deciding whether or not to apply wa-marking (33). The idea is not that students should memorize this rule, since it is not natural that rules should come to mind when students are creating output. Instead, students should simply view this is a tool to aid them in checking and evaluating the accuracy of their output.

(33) Is the focal word found in the previous utterance?
    Y = Mark with wa
    N = Leave as is

With enough practice, students should become comfortable with the applications of Rules 1 and 2; additionally, they should begin to develop a sense for identifying the referents of wa-marked nouns. Once students have a handle on this part of the lesson, instruction can continue on to present the concept of including or eliding wa-marked focal centers.

Users of Yookoso! and Nakama should be familiar with the type of terminology underlined in (26), but JSL users will not be familiar with these terms. For JSL students, the above exercises and rules should be presented in a more JSL-friendly manner. JSL
divides predicates into two types: “operational” predicates and “affective” predicates. The two major arguments related to operational predicates are the “operator” (i.e. who/what performs the verbal) and the “operand” (who/what undergoes the action of the predicate). For example, in the sentence, “Yoshi-ga keeki-o tabemashita,” the operator is ‘Yoshi’ and the operand is ‘keeki.’ In the case of affective predicates, the two major arguments are “primary affect” and “secondary affect.” In a sentence such as, “Tanaka-san-ga eigo-ga wakarimasu,” the primary affect is ‘Tanaka-san’ and the secondary affect is ‘eigo.’ When an operator, operand, primary affect, or secondary affect are introduced for the first time and have no prior referent, they must be marked with predicate particles (what JSL calls “phrase-particles”). This JSL-friendly front should be presented to students using the JSL textbooks.

4.1.2. Lesson two: Wa-marked focal centers

The second lesson builds upon the skills developed by students in the first lesson, so it is important that students be able to readily apply Rules 1 and 2 before moving on to this lesson. Instruction begins by discussing the concept of focal center. Having been introduced to wa and its topicalizing function in their own textbooks and in the previous lesson, students should already be somewhat familiar with this idea. To begin Lesson Two, the concepts of “topic” and “comment,” or “what is being talked about” and “what is being said about what is being discussed,” should be revisited. The question to pose to students is whether the topic of a narrative discourse must always be marked with wa. To help students answer this question, they should be taught that in narrative discourse, when a previously introduced word initially undergoes wa-marking, the establishment of
the focal center of discourse occurs. Unless the focal center changes, it is unnecessary to repeatedly mark the focal center of discourse, since it is already understood; therefore, after the focal center of discourse has been established, subsequent inclusion of the wa-marked focal center need not be expressed explicitly.

The example provided in (34) demonstrates how a sentence may be used to show students how focal center is established and maintained in a discourse segment, starting with predicate particles and gradually applying wa-marking and ellipsis. This example also incorporates the skills learned by students in the previous lesson.

(34) Kinoo John-ga Hanako-ni hisashiburi-ni aimashita.
(c)  

a. *ga*: This is a predicate particle and should be left as is because this is the first appearance of this word.

b. *ga → wa*: The predicate particle is *ga*. This word obtains wa-marking because the same word ‘John’ has already been introduced in the previous sentence and because ‘John’ has become the focal center of this story. This wa-marked word is not elided because it is the first occurrence of this word with wa-marking and it represents the establishment of the focal center.

c. *ga → wa → o*: The predicate particle is *ga*. It is replaced by *wa* because the same word ‘John’ has already been introduced in the previous sentence and because ‘John’ is the focal center of this story. This word has already been wa-marked in the previous sentence; therefore, this second occurrence of this wa-marked word should be elided.

As with the previous lesson, the instructional content has been condensed into a pair of rules that students should find easy to remember and utilize. The first of these is found in (35). It addresses the establishment of a focal center and how it is not to be
elided. The second rule, in (36) below, deals with all subsequent appearances of a wa-marked focal center. In these cases, since the focal center is already understood, it need not be repeated and should be elided.

(35)  **Rule 3**  
The first time a wa-marked word appears, it cannot be elided.

(36)  **Rule 4**  
The second or subsequent times a wa-marked word appears, it should be elided.

For Lesson 1, a question that students could use to self-check their work was devised; here, too, such a question has been created. This self-check question, seen in (37), combines the Rules 3 and 4.

(37)  Is this wa-marked word also wa-marked in the previous utterance?  
\[ Y = \text{Elide} \]  
\[ N = \text{Leave as is} \]

Students should be able to use these two rules to help them practice the establishment and ellipsis of focal centers. After instruction, a series of exercises may be introduced to give students a chance to practice their new skills. An example of such an exercise can be found in (38).

(38)  **Wa-marked focal centers**  
Exercise: First, underline all of the predicate particles. Next, replace predicate particles with wa where appropriate (i.e. where a focal center is being established). Finally, circle and draw an ‘X’ through all wa-marked focal centers if they have occurred with wa-marking previously.

a.  
*Tonari-no John-ga inu-o katteimasu.*
*Sono inu-ga kotoshi nana-sai ni narimasu.*
*Inu-ga tottemo kawaii desu.*

[Answer: *Tonari-no John-ga inu-o katteimasu.* *Sono inu-wa kotoshi nana-sai-ni narimasu.* \[\text{\underline{\text{inu}}-\text{\underline{\text{inu}}}}\] tottemo kawaii desu.]
After students have achieved some level of comfort with the type of exercises presented in (38), they may be introduced to a slightly more difficult set of exercises, like those found in (39). These exercises address the difficulty of identifying a shift in focal center. The trick is that while there are multiple instances of wa-marked words, the words in particular change, and therefore do not always merit ellipsis.

(39) *Wa*-marked focal centers [advanced]
Exercise: First, underline all predicate particles. Next, replace predicate particles with wa where appropriate. Finally, circle and put an ‘X’ through all wa-marked words that represent already established focal centers that do not need to be overtly expressed.


To practice wa-marking in the performance-based classroom, such as the kind employed by *JSL*, performance drills can be given to students to memorize and perform in a role-playing setting. Example (40) below contains some wa-marking practice drills given in *JSL* format. The wa-marking, which is the focus of the drill, as well as the
To add a measure of complexity to the performance task, (40b) contains desu/masu-style predicates, or what JSL terms “distal-style” predicates.

Another set of JSL-style drills has also been created, this time to deal with the ellipsis of wa-marked topics. As with the wa-marking drills in (40), these ellipsis drills should be memorized by students at home and performed in the classroom. By switching contexts and moving between the drills in (41) and those in (40), students should find themselves engaged in a performance that, while challenging, is still doable.
c. Kinoo, ne! Madonna wa nihon ni kita no [n da] yo\v
Yesterday, [it's that] Madonna came to Japan.

Soo? Yoku kuru [no]? Oh? [Is it that] [she] often comes [to Japan]?  

4.1.3. Lesson three: Predicate particle-marking of familiar information

The third and final lesson in this series covers shifting from wa-marked or elided topics to marking with predicate particles. As with the other lessons presented here, this lesson, too, begins with examples that can be used to demonstrate to students how and when to shift from wa-marking or ellipsis to marking with a predicate particle. These example sentences are presented in (42) and (43) below.

(42)  
Kino\o, tomodachi-ga burando-no kaban-o katta n desu kedo, ne!

(a)  
Sono [kaban-ga \rightarrow kaban-wa] seeru de ni-man-en datta n desu yo.

(b)  
Demo inu-ga sono kaban-o kaicchatta rashii n desu.

(c)  

a. o: This is a predicate particle and should be left as is because this is the first appearance of this word.

b. ga \rightarrow wa: The predicate particle is ga. This word, 'kaban,' obtains wa-marking because the same word has already been introduced in the previous sentence and because 'kaban' has become the focal center of this story. This wa-marked word is not elided because it is the first occurrence of this word with wa-marking and it represents the establishment of the focal center.

c. o: The predicate particle is o. Although this word has already appeared in this narrative, it is no longer the focal center. Because it is not longer the focal center, it cannot be marked with wa or elided.
(43) Kinoo, tomodachi-ga burando-no kaban-o katta n desu kedo, ne!

(a) Sono [kaban-ga → kaban-wa] seoru de ni-man-en datta n desu yo.
(b) [Kaban-ga → kaban-wa → o] kurokute sugoku suteki na n desu yo.

(c) Demo inu-ga yoru sono kaban-o kajicchatta rashii n desu.

(d)

a. o: This is a predicate particle and should be left as is because this is the first appearance of this word.

b. ga → wa: The predicate particle is ga. This word, ‘kaban,’ obtains wa-marking because the same word has already been introduced in the previous sentence and because ‘kaban’ has become the focal center of this story. This wa-marked word is not elided because it is the first occurrence of this word with wa-marking and it represents the establishment of the focal center.

c. ga → wa → o: The predicate particle is ga. It is replaced by wa because the same word ‘kaban’ has already been introduced previously and because ‘kaban’ is the focal center of this story. This word has already been wa-marked in the previous sentence; therefore, this second occurrence of this wa-marked word should be elided.

d. o: The predicate particle is o. Although this word has already appeared in this narrative, it is no longer the focal center. Because it is not longer the focal center, it cannot be marked with wa or elided.

With this instruction, it is important to highlight the fact that wa-marked or elided topics that lose their topic status shows a GR-shift. When a GR-shift takes place, wa-marked or elided topics must be marked with predicate particles.

After the above instruction has been given to students and they have seen how familiar information can be marked with predicate particles, the GR-shift that occurs when a topic is discontinued can be boiled down into the following rule.
Rule 5
If the grammatical relation (e.g. subject or direct object) of a wa-marked topic or elided topic undergoes a change, the word should be marked with a predicate particle.

JSL students also have a rule that encompasses this idea, using JSL terminology.

JSL Rule for predicate particle-marking of familiar information
If a wa-marked or elided nominal undergoes a change (e.g. from operator to operand, from primary affect to secondary affect), it should be marked with a phrase-particle.

Once the rules in (44) or (45) have been presented, students can apply their new knowledge using the sorts of exercises presented earlier in this chapter. Because they begin these exercises with predicate particle-marking and later apply wa-marking or ellipsis, students will not have to apply predicate particles to wa-marked or elided topics. They will, however, still have to decide whether a predicate particle should remain as such or undergo change.

Predicate particle-marked familiar information
Exercise: First underline all of the predicate particles. Next, replace predicate particles with wa where appropriate (i.e. where a focal center is being established). Draw an ‘X’ through all wa-marked focal centers that have occurred with wa-marking previously. Finally, circle all predicate particle-marked nouns that have occurred previously but should not be wa-marked or elided.

Kinoo, Bush-daitooryoo-ga Nihon-ni kita n desu.
Soko de, Abe-shushoo-ga Bush-daitooryoo-ni hisashiburi-ni aimashita.

By combining all of the rules presented in this chapter, the final set of self-check questions found in (47) has been created. This simple, three-step algorithm should be used by students in the future when interpreting or creating a narrative discourse of their own.

(47) Step 1: Is this the first occurrence of this word in the segment? 
Y = Leave as is and repeat Step 1 with next utterance 
N = Go to Step 2

Step 2: Is this focal word found in the previous utterance? 
Y = Mark with wa and go to Step 3 
N = Leave as is and repeat Step 1 with next utterance

Step 3: Is this wa-marked word also wa-marked in the previous utterance? 
Y = Elide and repeat Step 1 with next utterance 
N = Leave as is and repeat Step 1 with next utterance

For the performance-based classroom, in addition to the rules, lessons, and drills given above, it is important that students have a base monologue, to which they can apply different contexts and around which they can use different drills, to broaden the applicability of their practice. An example dialogue is given in (48) below.

(48) (A) Uti no imooto wa inu o katte (i)ru no [n da] yo√ (B) Soo? Sono inu wa nan-sai?
(A) San-sai da to omou kedo... (B) Hee√ Kawaii no?
(A) N. Kawaii [wa] yo√ (B) li [wa] nee. Uti wa inu o katte (i)na i n da kedo nee...

After students have memorized and practiced a dialogue such as the one in (48) that contains an NP that is marked with a predicate particle, marked with wa, represented as a zero anaphor, and undergoes a GR-shift, the instructor can present students with what JSL terms an “Application Exercise.” In these exercises, students are asked to
perform a spoken task that involves forms learned during the drill and dialogue performances. For a dialogue such as that in (48), students could be given cards that have items and descriptions of these items on them. Accurately applying their knowledge of wa-marking and ellipsis, students should discuss the items on the cards in the manner reflected in the dialogue. The important point here is that only one student in a pair has access to the information on the card; there should be a gap in information between the students.

After instruction and practice using various exercises, students will hopefully have a better grasp of how wa-marking occurs and, perhaps more importantly, of how focal center is established, maintained, and changed in narrative discourse. While this approach does not take into consideration the multiple pragmatic factors that affect wa-marking, such as those discussed by Hinds (1987) and mentioned in Section 2.2., it does give students a more firmly structured way of assessing the accuracy of their output and of interpreting any input.

4.2. Possible further development

The self-check questions that have been presented here are a tool that students can use manually to assess their accuracy. The next step at this point would be to utilize technology, in the form of a computer program, perhaps, to enable students to more quickly and accurately check their work. This approach to instruction, through the combination of CT analysis and computer programming, has already been undertaken by Fujiwara and Takei (2004) with the teaching of zero anaphora to non-native speakers of Japanese. Together, Fujiwara and Takei created a three-step method called the “Zero-
checker.” The first step teaches students how to use the valency of a verb to see whether or not a zero anaphor is present. This is called the “Zero-detector.” Once a zero anaphora has been detected, students know that it is a Cb and must refer to a preceding Cf. After this second step of identifying the referent of the zero anaphor, Fujiwara and Takei argue that students should then be able to complete the final step of the process in which students identify the semantic content of the zero anaphor and correctly interpret its meaning. To help students practice their ability to perform each step, it was developed into a computer program that could take students through each part of the process. The computer program was also able to help students identify when their own usage of zero anaphora was appropriate. Perhaps one day, the steps described in the previous sections of this chapter could in a similar fashion be turned into a simple computer program designed to help students practice and check when or when not to use wa and when or when not to elide a wa-marked focal center. Such a program would be accessible to students at home, through the internet or other media, and would not consume valuable time in the classroom.

5. Conclusion

Although the topicalizing particle wa has been long analyzed by many linguists, it still poses a problem for American students of Japanese. The problem is twofold: American speakers of subject-based English have difficulty with the concept of a topic-based language like Japanese, and while there are many well-written Japanese textbooks available, they do not adequately equip students with the skills needed to use wa in narrative discourse. Namely, they do not explain how wa is to be used in narrative
discourse. Linguists such as Hinds (1987) have proposed pragmatic solutions to the problem of explaining how wa is used, but other answers exist. These other factors were explored in Chapter 3 by using the tools of the Centering Theory to analyze wa-marking patterns in Japanese narrative discourse. By synthesizing Hinds & Shibatani’s (1977) analysis of wa in discourse (i.e. the first time a noun is introduced, non-topicalizing particle-marking obtains, the second time a noun is introduced, wa-marking obtains, etc.) and Kameyama’s (1985) analyses of the Centering Theory and zero anaphora (e.g. zero anaphora are discontinued when a GR-shift occurs), a new definition of wa was developed. This definition states that wa is a marker of the initial establishment of a new focal center of discourse within a character-driven narrative. Again using Hinds & Shibatani’s and Kameyama’s analyses, topic has also been defined. Topic is the focal center of a character-driven narrative; it is initially established with wa-marking, continued as a zero anaphor, and discontinued with the occurrence of a GR-shift. These definitions of wa and of topic were applied pedagogically in Chapter 4. The result was an algorithm that can be taught to students to help them decide when to use wa-marking and wa-marked focal center ellipsis. By dividing the instructional lessons leading to this algorithm into three parts, the final product should be easier for students to digest. In the future, this type of algorithm can hopefully be implemented in the form of a computer program which students could use outside of the classroom, at their own pace.
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