1. Introduction

For constructing a theory of the Japanese language, the characterization of particles -\textit{ga} and -\textit{wa} is indispensable. This paper focuses on word order restrictions on their semantic diversity, and proposes that they can be captured structurally in terms of the cartography of the left periphery, also known as CP. With respect to word order restrictions, consider the pair of sentences in (1a-b) below. In (1a), the first -\textit{ga} shows a focus reading, while the second -\textit{ga} displays no such focus reading. In (1b), the first -\textit{wa} produces a(n) (aboutness) topic reading, whereas the second -\textit{wa} yields a contrastive reading. Following Kuno (1973) and Neeleman and Vermeulen (2012), we treat the first and second -\textit{ga} in (1a) as [focus] in the exhaustive-listing sense and [neutral-description (ND)], respectively, and the first and second -\textit{wa} in (1b) as [topic] and [contrast], respectively.

2. Background

2.1. Previous Analyses

Kuno (1973: 48, 71) presents the following descriptive generalizations: In the sequence of -\textit{ga}, only the sentence-initial one shows [focus] and others [ND], whereas in the sequence of -\textit{wa}, only the sentence-initial one displays [topic] and others [contrast]. Since then, the question of why such word order restrictions exist has been investigated empirically (e.g., Noda (1996)). Although semantics-pragmatics interface accounts have been examined intensively (e.g., Nishikawa (2013)), syntax-semantics/information structure interface explanations remain to be explored (cf. Vermeulen (2012, 2013) for suggestive discussion).

2.2. Cartography

Since Rizzi (1997), the so-called CP has been decomposed into multiple layers as in (2) below. Observing word order restrictions in Italian, Rizzi (1997) proposed the universal hierarchy of functional projections as in (2), where *TopP indicates that TopP is freely recursive. Endo (2007) explored whether the cartographic approach can be applied to the Japanese language, and suggested that the structure as in (2) holds in Japanese as well.

3. Proposal and Discussion

Applying cartographic insights into the distribution of -\textit{ga} and -\textit{wa} (cf. Hasegawa (2011)), the current paper proposes that the cartographic structure as in (2) underlies word order restrictions on semantic diversity of -\textit{ga} and -\textit{wa}. At the same time, it suggests that both the recursive nature of TopP and the configuration of TopP below FocP should be reconsidered, proposing a new structure as in (3) below by adopting Saito’s (2009) insights into the right periphery of Japanese. We assume that -\textit{ga} may occupy Spec-Foc for [focus] and Spec-T for [ND], and -\textit{wa} may occupy Spec-Top for [topic] and Spec-Contrast for [contrast]. Based on the data suggesting no co-occurrence of [focus] and [contrast], it is argued that FocP in (2) can be reinterpreted as a position for [focus] or [contrast], and TopP below FocP in (2) as realization of ContrastP.

Consider the pair of sentences in (4a-b) below. As observed by Kuno (1973), -\textit{ga} in (4a) is ambiguous because it can be interpreted either [focus] or [ND]. This suggests a reflection of the structure in (3) in that if -\textit{wa} in (4a) occupies Spec-Top, the following -\textit{ga} may occupy either Spec-Foc for [focus] or Spec-T for [ND]. On the other hand, in (4b) both [topic] and [contrast] readings of -\textit{wa} are hard to yield even if -\textit{ga} occupies either Spec-Foc for [focus] as in (4b) or Spec-T for [ND]. This can be interpreted as follows: For -\textit{wa}, [topic] is not permitted because neither TopP below FocP nor TopP below TP is possible in (3), and [contrast] is also disallowed because both co-occurrence of FocP and ContrastP and the configuration of ContrastP below TP are not possible in (3). The reason why [focus] and [contrast] cannot co-occur may be because they are semantically similar in involvement of some comparison, which can be considered a reflection of some kind of Obligatory Contour Principle (Leben 1973) banning the consecutive sequence of similar elements.

The present paper has suggested further evidence for the cartographic approach to Japanese, and moreover, proposed that a new structure as in (3) should be examined instead of (2). The structure in (3) is consistent with cross-linguistic observations suspecting TopP below FocP in Brazilian Portuguese (Bastos (2008)), Hungarian (Kiss (2007)), German and Italian (Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007)) (cf. MacDonald and Welch (2009) for Korean).
a. Zoo-ga hana-ga nagai.
elephant-NOM trunk-NOM long
‘For elephants and only elephants, their trunks are long.’ (intended meaning)

b. Zoo-wa hana-wa nagai.
elephant-TOP trunk-TOP long
‘As for elephants, their trunks are long (compared to other properties).’ (intended meaning)

Notes
1. In the literature, (1a) has been called the double subject/nominative construction. This paper does not analyze it specifically (see Kuno (2010) for the construction).
2. As an alternative approach to word order restrictions, see Wagner (2009).
3. Empirical coverage is a principal future issue (cf. Nishikawa (2013)).

References


