

Principles of Word Order and the Presentative Function in Topic Introducing Constructions

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The goal of this research is to determine the syntactic constructions that are used to introduce new topics into the discourse building on Sunakawa's (1995b) analysis of copula constructions in written Japanese. Based on an analysis of the relation between the presentative function and principles of word order in existential and copula sentences in Japanese, I demonstrate that

- (1) existential and copula sentences are the two most frequently used constructions for the introduction of new topics,
- (2) in both of these constructions, the newly introduced topics are placed toward the end of the sentence.

I conclude that Japanese existential and copula constructions have what Hetzron (1975: 374) refers to as the presentative function, i.e., they function to call "special attention to one element of the sentence for recall in the subsequent discourse or situation." Hetzron also indicates that one exponent of this function is presentative movement that "brings the element in question to a sentence-final, or at least to a later than usual, position." Japanese existential and copula sentences are a manifestation of this presentative movement.

In contrast, Sunakawa (1994) shows that in one type of the copula

construction, A ga B da 'A is B', the preposed referent A tends to persist in the following discourse. Sunakawa (forthcoming) demonstrates that there are at least two types of A ga B da constructions: the "topic setting type" and the "subject highlighting type". While the postposed referents in topic setting copula construction tend to be topics in the subsequent discourse, the preposed referents in subject highlighting constructions tend to be referents that can be easily recalled when used later in the subsequent discourse.

I assume that there are at least two strategies involved in using the presentative function: (1) to place the referent towards the end of the sentence and (2) to highlight the referent by placing it at the beginning of the sentence. The motivation for both strategies is to impress the referent in the hearer's memory so that it is easy to recall when later used.