

# **The focus-presentational function and salience-presentational function of Japanese cleft constructions**

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Japanese cleft constructions are classified into two types: GA-clefts and WA-clefts. GA-clefts have stronger restrictions than WA-clefts, as shown below.

- (1) Predicates of GA-clefts are restricted to nouns, whereas predicates of WA-clefts have more variety.
- (2) Nouns in the predicate position of GA-clefts are restricted to nouns at a higher level of the topicality scale, whereas those of WA-clefts are not restricted as strongly.
- (3) Nouns in the predicate position of GA-clefts are rarely accompanied by case particles, whereas those of WA-clefts are accompanied by case particles more often.

This paper claims that the grammatical properties of Japanese cleft constructions shown above arise from their functions in discourse -- i.e. the focus-presentational function and the salience-presentational function.

WA-clefts are classified as ‘predicate-focus sentences’, whose function in discourse is the ‘focus-presentational function’. As the focal target can be an object, person, event or state, the predicates of WA-clefts are nouns, adverbs, or clauses. When nouns are used as predicates, they tend to be the topic in succeeding discourse. However, this tendency is not as strong as in GA-clefts. Therefore the tendency of predicate nouns of WA-clefts to be at a higher level of the topicality scale is not as strong as that of GA-clefts.

GA-clefts are classified into two types: ‘subject-focus

sentences’ and ‘whole-focus sentences’. Whereas ‘subject-focus sentences’ have the ‘focus-presentational function’, ‘whole-focus sentences’ have the ‘salience-presentational function’.

In ‘subject-focus sentences’ the referent of the predicate is the topic of the preceding discourse, and in ‘whole-focus sentences’ the referent of the predicate is the topic of the succeeding discourse. The referents of the predicates are discourse topics in both cases. Thus the tendency of predicate nouns of GA-clefts to be at a higher level of the topicality scale is strong.

As Chafe states (Chafe 1994: 68), ‘Whereas events and states are activated transiently, many referents remain active for longer periods than any of the events or states in which they participate’; it is thus more likely that discourse topics will be the referents of nouns rather than the referents of adverbs or clauses. Therefore the predicates of GA-clefts are restricted to nouns. Also, because the predicate nouns of GA-clefts are discourse topics, it is more likely that they will be nouns at a higher level of the topicality scale. Predicate nouns of GA-clefts are not accompanied by case particles, because it is not necessary to indicate their case relations in this way, their being at a higher level of the topicality scale.

Chafe, W. L. 1994. *Discourse, Consciousness, and Time*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.