

- **The “topic” marker *wa***

Background preparation:

- *Heycock (2008) and HW #5(a) (optional)*

0. Today's plan

Topics for today's discussion:

- Why is *wa* a “topic” marker?
- What are the two kinds of *wa*, and how are they different?
- What are some factors that determine when it is appropriate to use *wa* vs. other similar options?

1. What is *wa*?

- Are these two sentences completely equivalent?

Watasi-**wa** Tanaka desu.

/ *WA* *COP-FML-NPST*

Watasi-**ga** Tanaka desu.

/ *GA* *COP-FML-NPST*

1. What is *wa*?

- Are these two sentences completely equivalent?

Watasi-**wa** Tanaka desu.

/ *WA* *COP-FML-NPST*

- used to introduce oneself

Watasi-**ga** Tanaka desu.

/ *GA* *COP-FML-NPST*

- used in response to question,
“Which of you is Tanaka?”
- In the opposite contexts, these are infelicitous

1. What is *wa*?

- What is the subject of this sentence?

Syuumatu-**wa** taitei nani-o simasu ka
weekend-wa usually what-ACC do-FML-NPST QSTN

1. What is *wa*?

- What is the subject of this sentence?

Syuumatu-**wa** taitei nani-o simasu ka
weekend-wa usually what-ACC do-FML-NPST QSTN

- A natural translation: 'On weekends, What do you/we/they usually do?'
- 'Weekends' is not the subject of the sentence!

Group discussion

- Data set - Examples of phrases marked with -wa
 - What are the wa phrases in sentences (3)–(6)?

1. What is *wa*?

- *wa* is not a **subject** marker
- *wa* is traditionally called a “**topic** marker”
 - In some cases, the subject is also the most natural topic
 - But non-subjects are often topics too
- Two types of *wa* can be distinguished ...
(see the Heycock 2008 reading for discussion)

2. Two types of *wa*

- Two types of *wa* can be distinguished (see the Heycock 2008 reading for discussion)
 - **Contrastive** *wa*
 - **Noncontrastive** *wa*
- Does recognizing a difference between the two types of *wa* phrases help clarify anything about the usage and patterning of *wa*?

2. Two types of *wa*

- Two types of *wa* can be distinguished ...
(see the Heycock 2008 reading for discussion)
 - **Contrastive** *wa*
 - **Noncontrastive** *wa*
- Handout - About the “particle” *wa*
 - What are some differences between the types?
- Data set - Examples of phrases marked with -*wa*
 - Which types of *wa* do we see in sentence (7)?

3. More examples and discussion

- Handout - [About the “particle” *wa*](#)
- Data set - [Examples of phrases marked with *-wa*](#)