

# On the Japanese multiple Case-marking construction

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We argue that the cross-linguistic variation in syntactic structure is more limited than considered so far, by discussing the Japanese *multiple Case-marking* construction (cf. Kuno 1973), in which the same Case marker can be attached to multiple nominals. It is shown that no matter in which order nominals appear, the Nominative Case marker *-ga* and the topic marker *-wa* can be interchangeably used for all nominals located in higher positions; they are topics, though they can be marked by *-ga* in the same way as the lowest nominal. It is also shown that the interpretation of the nominal located in the lowest position differs depending on whether it is marked by *-ga* or by *-wa*: the lowest nominal is interpreted as non-contrastive when marked by *-ga*, but interpreted as contrastive when marked by *-wa*. Thus, only the lowest nominal occupies a syntactically specified position where its interpretation is determined and acts as the subject of a sentence. We argue that both in Japanese and in languages such as English, only the lowest nominal occupies the structurally designated position, [Spec,TP] (cf. Rizzi 2016), acts as the subject of a sentence, and enters a syntactic relation with the functional head, T, whereas all other phrases are adjuncts, suggesting that the language faculty may not allow an individual language to produce a syntactic structure so different from other languages.

*Keywords:* Japanese multiple Case-marking construction, topic, subject, structurally designated position

## 1 Introduction, theoretical background and previous analyses

This paper argues that the cross-linguistic variation in syntactic structure is more limited than considered so far, by discussing the Japanese *multiple Case-marking* (MCM) construction, in which the same Case marker can be attached to multiple nominals (cf. Kuno 1973). Three nominals, *bunmeikoku* ‘civilized country’, *dansei* ‘male’ and *heikin-zyumyoo* ‘average life span’, can all be marked by the Nom(inative) Case marker *-ga*; see (1). On the traditional assumption that the Nom Case is associated with a subject, this construction appears to have more than one subject. Note that *heikin-zyumyoo* ‘average life span’ is the semantic subject of the sentence and the predicate is *mijika-i* ‘short’, which results in meaning ‘the average life span is short’; *bunmeikoku* ‘civilized country’ and *dansei* ‘male(s)’ modify *heikin-zyumyoo* ‘average life span’, and the meaning of the entire sentence is ‘males’ average life span in civilized countries is short’.

- (1)    *Bunmeikoku-ga      dansei-ga heikin-zyumyoo-ga    mijika-i.*  
civilized-country-NOM male-NOM average-life span-NOM short-PRES  
‘Males’ average life span in civilized countries is short.’

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The traditional Case theory since Vergnaud (1977) and Chomsky (1981) has assumed the notion of *abstract Case*, which licenses overt nominals and determines their distribution even when an overt morphological Case does not appear. Since when the minimalist framework was introduced (Chomsky 1995), Case has been assumed to be an uninterpretable feature that belongs to a nominal. The syntactic operation called *Agree* has been assumed since Chomsky (2000), in which the uninterpretable  $\phi$ -features of a functional head are valued by the interpretable counterpart of a nominal and the uninterpretable Case of the nominal is valued by the head. On this assumption, it is not expected that the same Case appears on multiple nominals as illustrated in (1): it would be at most one nominal that can be assigned a Case value from a head.

Among theoretical accounts of the MCM construction, Hiraiwa (2001) proposes that the operation he calls *Multiple Agree* can occur in Japanese. Assuming that the Japanese T has  $\phi$ -features, he claims that all nominals marked by *-ga* simultaneously enter an agreeing operation with T, as illustrated in (2).

- (2) 
$$[TP \text{ DP}_{[\phi]}-NOM(-ga) [TP \text{ DP}_{[\phi]}-NOM(-ga) [TP \text{ DP}_{[\phi]}-NOM(-ga) [T' T_{[\phi]} ]]]]$$
- T agrees with all DPs marked by *-ga* at the same time

Saito (2016) proposes an account of the difference between Japanese and English, the latter of which lacks the MCM construction, within the framework of *Labeling Algorithm* (Chomsky 2013). Assuming that the Japanese T does not have  $\phi$ -features, Saito claims that the Japanese Case marker functions as making a nominal it is attached to unable to label: at each node where a *-ga*-marked nominal merges as illustrated in (3a), only T can be seen and selected as the label. For English, whose T has  $\phi$ -features, Saito claims that only the lowest DP can value T's  $\phi$ -features, which results in labeling the lower projection  $\langle \phi, \phi \rangle$ . But no agreement occurs between a higher DP and T, with the higher projection unlabeled, due to which the MCM construction is not possible in English; see (3b).

- (3) a. Japanese:  

$$[<T> (=TP) \text{ DP}-NOM(-ga) [<T> (=TP) \text{ DP}-NOM(-ga) [<T> (=TP) \text{ DP}-NOM(-ga) [T' T \text{ VP} ]]]]$$
- b. English:  

$$* [<?> \text{ DP}-NOM} [\langle \phi, \phi \rangle \text{ DP}-NOM} [T' T_{[\phi]} \text{ VP} ]]]$$

The overall claim by the literature above is that Japanese can yield a language-particular syntactic structure such as the MCM construction. This amounts to claiming that the human language faculty allows an individual language to produce a syntactic structure quite different from other languages.<sup>1</sup>

## 2 New observations on the Japanese multiple Case-marking construction

In this section, we present new observations, before which some notes are to be mentioned. The MCM construction is classified into several types in terms of which kind of sentential elements can appear in sentence-initial position marked by *-ga*. First, a part of a semantic subject can appear (e.g. Kuno 1973, Kikuchi 1996). In (4a), the semantic subject is *hana* 'trunk' and the sentence-initial phrase marked by *-ga*, *zoo* 'elephant(s)', is its possessor, which means 'elephants' (trunk)'. Secondly, an argument other than a semantic subject can appear (e.g. Saito 1985, Kikuchi 1996). In (4b), the semantic subject is *ookuno ressha* 'many train(s)'. The sentence-initial phrase marked by *-ga*, *Tokyo*, is the locative complement of the verb *tomaru* 'stop', which means '(stop) at Tokyo'. Thirdly, an adjunct can appear (e.g. Kuno 1973, Tateishi 1994). In (4c), the semantic subject is *shitai* 'dead body'. The sentence-initial phrase marked by *-ga*, *kono hoteru* 'this hotel', is a place adverbial, which means 'in this hotel'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See also the traditional literature such as Saito (1985), Fukui (1988), Kuroda (1988), which attributes the properties of the MCM construction to the syntactic structure and/or rules particular to Japanese.

<sup>2</sup> One more construction type is that the phrase marked by *-ga* in sentence-initial position makes a proposition, which is semantically associated with a main clause (e.g. Kikuchi 1996, Kobayashi 2010). In (i), the fronted phrase, *hime-to kekkon-suru keikaku-ga*, makes a proposition, which means 'he (= the king) has a plan to marry the princess'. It is

- (4) a. Zoo-**ga** hana-**ga** nagai.  
elephant-NOM trunk-NOM long  
'The trunk of elephants is long.'
- b. Tokyo-**ga** ookuno ressha-**ga** tomaru.  
Tokyo-NOM many train-NOM stop  
'Many trains stop at Tokyo (station).'
- c. Kono hoteru-**ga** shitai-**ga** hakken-sare-ta.  
this hoteru-NOM dead body-NOM find-PASS-PAST  
'A dead body was found in this hotel.'

In this paper, we focus on the construction illustrated in (1), which belongs to type (4a). As shown in (1), this construction type can have more than two *-ga*-marked sentential elements, which is difficult in other construction types (Kuno 1973, Kuroda 1987, Heycock 1993, Tateishi 1994, Vermeulen 2005). This point is important for our argument on the status of *-ga*-marked nominals and the syntactic positions they occupy.<sup>3</sup>

The Japanese particle *-wa* has two kinds of use (cf. Kuroda 1965, Kuno 1973). First, it acts as a topic marker: e.g. *ringo-wa kinou tabe-ta* (apple-WA yesterday eat-PAST) 'as for apples, (I) ate (them) yesterday'. Secondly, it expresses a contrastive meaning: e.g. *ringo-wa kinou tabe-ta-ga, momo-wa kyou tabe-ta* (apple-WA yesterday eat-PAST-but, peach-WA today eat-PAST) 'APPLES, (I) ate yesterday, but PEACHES, (I) ate today'. Below, *-wa* is notated as TOP regardless of its interpretation; when it is interpreted as contrastive, I notate as <sup>CONT</sup>-*wa*. The words and phrases that are interpreted as contrastive are notated with capital letters, e.g. as APPLES.

The judgments of Japanese data are often not given a unanimous agreement. In (1), depending on the contexts, Japanese speakers can freely insert a comma intonation between the highest and intermediate nominals and/or between the intermediate and lowest nominals. It will be necessary to investigate detailed contextual effects to account for the total semantic properties of the MCM construction, which is far beyond this paper. Below, the judgments of the data are made in a neutral intonation without a specific emphasis on any sentential elements, though some disagreement in the judgments might occur among Japanese native speakers.

**2.1 Observation 1** It has been reported that in the MCM construction that contains two nominals marked by *-ga*, the *-ga* of the nominal located in sentence-initial position can be replaced with *-wa* (Kikuchi 1996). However, *-ga* and *-wa* can be interchangeably used for all nominals located in higher positions without changing their (non-contrastive) meanings. Specifically, either *-ga* or *-wa* can be interchangeably attached to *bunmeikoku* 'civilized country' and *dansei* 'male':<sup>4</sup>

- (5) Bunmeikoku-**ga/-wa** dansei-**ga/-wa** heikin-zyumyoo-**ga** mijika-i.  
civilized-country-NOM/TOP male-NOM/TOP average-life span-NOM short-PRES  
'In civilized countries, as for males, (their) average life span is short.'

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associated with the main clause, *yubiwa-ga mitsukara-nai*, which means, 'he cannot find a ring'. This construction type is so complicated that we leave it aside here.

- i) Hime-to kekkon-suru keikaku-**ga**, yubiwa-**ga** mitsukara-nai.  
princess-with marry-do plan-NOM ring-NOM find-NEG  
'He (= the king) has a plan to marry the princess, but he cannot find a ring.'

<sup>3</sup> In this construction type, all *-gas* but the one attached to the semantic subject can be replaced with the Genitive marker *-no*. In (1), *heikin-zyumyoo* 'average life span' is the semantic subject of the sentence. The *-gas* attached to *dansei* 'male' and *bunmeikoku* 'civilized country', which modify the subject, can both be replaced with *-no*:

- i) Bunmeikoku-**ga/-no** dansei-**ga/-no** heikin-zyumyoo-**ga** mijika-i.  
civilized-country-NOM/GEN male-NOM/GEN average-life span-NOM short-PRES  
'Males' average life span in civilized countries is short.'

<sup>4</sup> Kuno (1973) claims that the topical *-wa* interpreted as non-contrastive cannot multiply appear, whereas Kuroda (1988) claims that it can repeatedly appear in the unmarked case, the latter of which we agree with.

**2.2 Observation 2** Contrary to nominals located in higher positions, the interpretation of the nominal located in the lowest position can differ depending on which particle, either *-ga* or *-wa*, is attached. Specifically, when *-ga* is attached to the lowest nominal, *heikin-zyumyoo* ‘average life span’, it is interpreted as a normal subject without contrast; see (6a). But when *-wa* is attached, *heikin-zyumyoo*, and only that nominal, is interpreted as contrastive; see (6b).

- (6) a. Bunmeikoku-*ga*/-*wa*      dansei-*ga*/-*wa*      heikin-zyumyoo-***ga***      mijika-i.  
civilized-country-NOM/TOP   male-NOM/TOP   average-life span-NOM   short-PRES  
‘In civilized countries, as for males, (their) average life span is short.’
- b. Bunmeikoku-*ga*/-*wa*      dansei-*ga*/-*wa*      heikin-zyumyoo-***wa***      mijika-i.  
civilized-country-NOM/TOP   male-NOM/TOP   average-life span-TOP   short-PRES  
‘In civilized countries, as for males, (their) AVERAGE LIFE SPAN is short (, though (their) cancer mortality rate may be low).’

**2.3 Observation 3** It has been reported that multiple nominal phrases in the MCM construction can be scrambled (cf. Tateishi 1994).<sup>5</sup> Specifically in our example, *bunmeikoku* ‘civilized country’, *dansei* ‘male’ and *heikin-zyumyoo* ‘average life span’ can occur in any order. When a sentence contains three nominals, we have six order patterns. Assigning 1 to *bunmeikoku* ‘civilized country’, 2 to *dansei* ‘male’, and 3 to *heikin-zyumyoo* ‘average life span’, order pattern 1-2-3 is illustrated in (7a) (=6a-b). Pattern 1-3-2 is illustrated in (7b), pattern 2-1-3 in (7c), pattern 2-3-1 in (7d), pattern 3-1-2 in (7e), and pattern 3-2-1 in (7f). Our new observation is that no matter in which order nominals appear, *-ga* and *-wa* can be interchangeably used for all nominals located in higher positions, whereas the nominal located in the lowest position is non-contrastive when *-ga* is attached, but interpreted as contrastive when *-wa* is attached. In (7a-f), the non-contrastive meaning in which *-ga* is attached to the lowest nominal is given first; the contrastive meaning in which *-wa* is attached to the lowest nominal is given in brackets.<sup>6</sup>

- (7) a. 1-2-3:  
Bunmeikoku-***ga***/-***wa***      dansei-***ga***/-***wa***      heikin-zyumyoo-***ga***/<sup>CONT</sup>-***wa***      mijika-i.  
civilized-country-NOM/TOP   male-NOM/TOP   average-life span-NOM/TOP   short-PRES  
‘In civilized countries, as for males, (their) average life span is short.’  
(Cont.: ‘In civilized countries, as for males, (their) AVERAGE LIFE SPAN is short (, though (their) cancer mortality rate may be low).’) (=6a-b)
- b. 1-3-2:  
Bunmeikoku-***ga***/-***wa***      heikin-zyumyoo-***ga***/-***wa***      dansei-***ga***/<sup>CONT</sup>-***wa***      mijika-i.  
civilized-country-NOM/TOP   average-life span-NOM/TOP   male-NOM/TOP   short-PRES  
‘In civilized countries, as for average life span, males’ is short.’

<sup>5</sup> This fact argues against the claim made by the traditional literature, e.g. Kuno (1973) and Kuroda (1983), that in the MCM construction (that contains two nominals marked by *-ga*), the logical subject of a sentence is located in an inner position.

<sup>6</sup> A Japanese speaker reported that the sequence of [... *-ga* ... *-wa* ... *-ga*] sounds degraded unless the first nominal marked by *-ga* receives a focal interpretation, but to the author’s ears, that sequence is totally acceptable without any emphasis on the first nominal with *-ga*.

Seraku (2023) claims that in the sequence of *-ga*-marked nominals, only the leftmost one can be subject to rightward movement. This is wrong. For one thing, we can scramble all nominals in any order as illustrated above. For the other thing, any of the nominals can be right-dislocated:

- i) [Dansei-*ga* heikin-zyumyoo-*ga* mijika-i ]-no-*wa* bunmeikoku-*da*.  
male-NOM average-life span-NOM short-PRES -GEN-TOP civilized-country-BE  
‘(The place where) males’ average life span is short is in civilized countries.’
- ii) [Bunmeikoku-*ga* dansei-*ga* mijika-i ]-no-*wa* heikin-zyumyoo-*da*.  
civilized-country-NOM male-NOM short-PRES -GEN-TOP average-life span-BE  
‘What is short for males in civilized countries is the average life span.’
- iii) [Heikin-zyumyoo-*ga* bunmeikoku-*ga* mijika-i ]-no-*wa* dansei-*da*.  
average-life span-NOM civilized-country-NOM short-PRES -GEN-TOP male-BE  
‘(Those for whom) the average life span is short in civilized countries are males.’

(Cont.: ‘In civilized countries, as for average life span, MALES’ is short (, though females’ is long).’)

c. 2-1-3:

Dansei-**ga/-wa** bunmeikoku-**ga/-wa** heikin-zyumyoo-**ga/CONT-wa** mijika-i.  
 male-NOM/TOP civilized-country-NOM/TOP average-life span-NOM/TOP short-PRES  
 ‘As for males, in civilized countries, (their) average life span is short.’  
 (Cont.: ‘As for males, in civilized countries, (their) AVERAGE LIFE SPAN is short (, though (their) cancer mortality rate may be low).’)

d. 2-3-1:

Dansei-**ga/-wa** heikin-zyumyoo-**ga/-wa** bunmeikoku-**ga/CONT-wa** mijika-i.  
 male-NOM/TOP average-life span-NOM/TOP civilized-country-NOM/TOP short-PRES  
 ‘As for males, regarding (their) average life span, it is short in civilized countries.’  
 (Cont.: ‘As for males, regarding (their) average life span, it is short in CIVILIZED COUNTRIES (, though it would be long in developing countries).’)

e. 3-1-2:

Heikin-zyumyoo-**ga/-wa** bunmeikoku-**ga/-wa** dansei-**ga/CONT-wa** mijika-i.  
 average-life span-NOM/TOP civilized-country-NOM/TOP male-NOM/TOP short-PRES  
 ‘As for average life span, in civilized countries, males’ is short.’  
 (Cont.: ‘As for average life span, in civilized countries, MALES’ is short (, though females’ is long).’)

f. 3-2-1:

Heikin-zyumyoo-**ga/-wa** dansei-**ga/-wa** bunmeikoku-**ga/CONT-wa** mijika-i.  
 average-life span-NOM/TOP male-NOM/TOP civilized-country-NOM/TOP short-PRES  
 ‘As for average life span, regarding males, it is short in civilized countries.’  
 (Cont.: ‘As for average life span, regarding males, it is short in CIVILIZED COUNTRIES (, though it would be long in developing countries).’)

**2.4 Other types of the MCM construction** Let us consider the other types of the MCM construction presented in (4a), which is the same type as the examples above but contains two nominals, (4b), in which the complement of the verb is extracted, and (4c), in which an adjunct is extracted:

- (8) a. Zoo-**ga/-wa** hana-**ga/CONT-wa** nagai. (cf. 4a)  
 elephant-NOM/-TOP trunk-NOM/-TOP long  
 ‘Concerning elephants, their trunk is long.’  
 (Cont.: ‘Concerning elephants, their TRUNK is long (, but their tusk is not).’)

- b. Hana-**ga/-wa** zoo-**ga/CONT-wa** nagai.  
 trunk-NOM/-TOP elephant-NOM/-TOP long  
 ‘Concerning a trunk, elephants’ is long.’  
 (Cont.: ‘Concerning a trunk, ELEPHANTS’ is long (, but tapirs’ is not).’)

- (9) a. Tokyo-**ga/-wa** ookuno ressha-**ga/CONT-wa** tomaru. (cf. 4b)  
 Tokyo-NOM-TOP many train-NOM/-TOP stop  
 ‘At Tokyo (station), many trains stop.’  
 (Cont.: ‘At Tokyo (station), many TRAINS stop (, but not so many taxies do).’)

- b. Ookuno ressha-**ga/-wa** Tokyo-**ga/CONT-wa** tomaru.  
 many train-NOM/-TOP Tokyo-NOM/-TOP stop  
 ‘Concerning trains, many of them stop at Tokyo (station).’  
 (Cont.: ‘Concerning trains, many of them stop at TOKYO (but not at Yokohama).’)

- (10) a. Kono hoteru-**ga**/-**wa** shitai-**ga**/<sup>CONT</sup>-**wa** hakken-sare-ta. (cf. 4c)  
 this hoteru-NOM/-TOP dead body-NOM/-TOP find-PASS-PAST  
 ‘In this hotel, a dead body was found.’  
 (Cont.: ‘In this hotel, A DEAD BODY was found (, but no weapon was found).’)
- b. Shitai-**ga**/-**wa** kono hoteru-**ga**/<sup>CONT</sup>-**wa** hakken-sare-ta.  
 dead body-NOM/-TOP this hoteru-NOM/-TOP find-PASS-PAST  
 ‘A dead body was found in this hotel.’  
 (Cont.: ‘A dead body was found in THIS HOTEL (, but not in that hotel).’)

In all the cases above, one nominal can either precede or follow the other. No matter in which order the nominals appear, *-ga* and *-wa* can be interchangeably used for the one located in sentence-initial position without changing its (non-contrastive) meaning. On the contrary, the nominal located in the lowest position is interpreted as non-contrastive when *-ga* is attached, but interpreted as contrastive when *-wa* is attached. We thus claim that our observations basically apply to the other types of the MCM construction, though a more detailed survey will be required.

### 3 The analysis of the multiple Case-marking construction

**3.1 Indications from our observations** There are many indications from the observations presented in the previous section. First, the properties of higher nominals differ from those of the lowest nominal. The Case marker *-ga* and the topic marker *-wa* can be interchangeably attached to higher nominals; their (non-contrastive) meaning does not change, whether they are marked by *-ga* or by *-wa*. This fact indicates that all nominals located in higher positions are topics, though they can be marked by the Nom Case marker *-ga* in the same way as the lowest nominal. Concerning the MCM construction that contains two nominals marked by *-ga*, it has been pointed out that the nominal located in sentence-initial position means ‘aboutness’ (Kuno 1973, Kuroda 1983) and/or acts as a topic (Kikuchi 1996). As shown by our data, it is not only the sentence-initial nominal as the literature claims, but all nominals other than the lowest one are topics. No matter how many nominals the MCM construction contains and no matter in which order they appear, the topical status of higher nominals does not change.

Secondly, the lowest nominal and the position it occupies are given a special status. Contrary to higher nominals, of which the interpretation as topics does not differ whether marked by *-ga* or by *-wa*, the interpretation of the lowest nominal differs depending on the (Case) particle marking: it is interpreted as non-contrastive when marked by *-ga* and interpreted as contrastive when marked by *-wa*. This fact indicates that the lowest nominal, and only that nominal, occupies a syntactically specified position where its interpretation is determined. As shown by our data, not only the logical/semantic subject but any of the nominals can be located in the lowest position; the nominal located in the lowest position is interpreted as a normal subject when marked by *-ga* there. Thus, the lowest position is the structurally designated position, [Spec,TP] (cf. Rizzi 2016), and the nominal acts as the subject of a sentence when it occupies that position.

Thirdly, a syntactic process should be involved in determining the interpretation of the nominal located in the lowest position. Tateishi (1994) claims that though *-ga* can be replaced with *-wa* in some cases of the MCM construction, *-wa* does not have any syntactic effect. However, the interpretation of the lowest nominal differs depending on whether it is marked by *-ga* or by *-wa* as shown above. The difference in meaning reflects the difference in syntactic operations. Therefore, the lowest nominal located in the structurally designated position, [Spec,TP], should enter a syntactic relation with the functional head, T, which results in determining the morphological appearance of either *-ga* or *-wa* on the lowest nominal as well as its interpretation. Since not only the logical/semantic subject but any of the nominals can be located in the lowest position and acts as the subject of a sentence, the relation between the lowest nominal and T should be a purely structural relation that does not involve  $\phi$ -feature agreement.

**3.2 Proposals** The syntactic representation of the MCM construction based on our observations is illustrated as in (11). The lowest nominal occupies the structurally designated position, [Spec,TP], and acts as the subject of a sentence; it is interpreted as non-contrastive when marked by *-ga* and interpreted as contrastive when marked by *-wa*. All other nominals are topics regardless of whether they are marked by *-ga* or by *-wa*.

- (11) [DP-TOP<sub>(-ga/-wa)</sub> [DP-TOP<sub>(-ga/-wa)</sub> [TP DP-NOM<sub>(-ga)</sub>/TOP<sub>(CONT-wa)</sub> [T<sup>-</sup> T ]]]]

We propose, for the nominal located in the structurally designated position, [Spec,TP], that a functional feature located in the functional head, T, determines the interpretation of the sentential element located in the designated position and also structurally licenses the morphological form of a (Case) particle attached to that element. Specifically, *T(e)ns(e)*, which is located in T, is responsible for the status of the nominal located in [Spec,TP] as the subject of a sentence and licenses the Nom Case *-ga* form that appears on it; see (12a). When T hosts an additional feature that brings about a contrastive interpretation, which we tentatively represent as *C(on)tr(ative)*, that feature ensures the interpretation of the nominal located in [Spec,TP] as contrastive and licenses the *-wa* form on that nominal; see (12b).<sup>7</sup> In the representations below, a relevant nominal will move from its base-generated position, which should be contained in [ ... ], to a surface position; its trace is omitted for convenience sake.

- (12) a. ... [TP DP<sub>[φ]</sub>-NOM<sub>(-ga)</sub> [ T<sub>[Tns]</sub> [ ... ]]]  
 b. ... [TP DP<sub>[φ]</sub>-TOP<sub>(CONT-wa)</sub> [ T<sub>[Tns, Ctr]</sub> [ ... ]]]

For nominals located in higher positions, of which the interpretation does not differ depending on the (Case) particle marking, we propose that they are adjuncts that do not enter a syntactic relation with a functional head; the morphological appearance of either *-ga* or *-wa* on them is determined at the interface component. Kikuchi (1996) states that in the MCM construction that contains two nominals, i.e. [DP-*ga* ... DP-*ga* ...], the *-ga* attached to the sentence-initial nominal can be always converted to *-wa*. He claims that the original construction is [DP-*wa* ... DP-*ga* ...], and the [DP-*ga* ... DP-*ga* ...] construction is derived from the former.<sup>8</sup> Kikuchi also gives two usages of *-ga*. It appears in the description of an all-new event that contains only new information: e.g. *Taro-ga ki-ta!* (Taro-NOM come-PAST) ‘(Look,) Taro came!’. It also appears in an answer sentence that identifies the information of a missing argument corresponding to a *wh*-phrase: e.g. (*Dare-ga ki-ta-no?* (who-NOM come-PAST-Q) ‘who came?’ → *Taro-ga ki-ta* (Taro-NOM come-PAST) ‘Taro came’. These two contexts in which *-ga* is used respectively correspond to *sentence focus* and *argument focus* in Lambrecht’s (1994) sense.<sup>9</sup> Based on these statements, we propose that all nominals located in higher positions are originally marked by *-wa* as illustrated in (13a), and that only when some focal effects are added, either by a discursial condition or by an emphasis given by a speaker, does *-ga* appear on (either of) them, as illustrated in (13b).

- (13) a. [DP-TOP<sub>(-wa)</sub> [DP-TOP<sub>(-wa)</sub> [TP ...  
 b. [DP-FOC<sub>(-ga)</sub> [DP-FOC<sub>(-ga)</sub> [TP ...

## 4 Conclusion

Concerning the Japanese MCM construction, it has been shown that no matter in which order nominals appear, *-ga* and *-wa* can be interchangeably used for all nominals located in higher positions; they are topics, though they can be marked by the Nom Case marker in the same way as the lowest nominal. It has also been shown that the interpretation of the nominal located in the lowest position differs depending on whether it is marked by *-ga* or by *-wa*: the lowest nominal is interpreted as non-contrastive when marked by *-ga*, but interpreted as contrastive when marked by *-wa*. Thus, only the lowest nominal occupies a syntactically specified position where its interpretation is determined, i.e. the structurally designated position, [Spec, TP], and acts as the subject of a sentence. We have proposed for the nominal located in the structurally designated position that the tense feature located in T is responsible for the status of the

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Miyagawa (2010), who claims that the T head can host not only tense but also focus.

<sup>8</sup> It has also been reported that when the *-ga* that appears on the first nominal is replaced by *-wa*, the processing of the sentence goes on easier (cf. Miyamoto 2008).

<sup>9</sup> For the use and function of *-ga*, see also the traditional literature, e.g. Kuroda (1965, 1987), Kuno (1973), Heycock (1993), Kuroda (2005), Vermeulen (2005), among others.

nominal located in [Spec,TP] as the subject of a sentence and licenses the Nom Case *-ga* form that appears on it; when T hosts an additional feature that brings about a contrastive interpretation, that feature ensures the interpretation of the nominal located in [Spec,TP] as contrastive and licenses the *-wa* form on that nominal. For nominals located in higher positions, we have proposed that they are adjuncts that do not enter a syntactic relation with a functional head, with the morphological appearance of either *-ga* or *-wa* on them determined at the interface component; they are originally marked by *-wa*, and only when some focal effects are added, does *-ga* appear on (either of) them.

As illustrated in the English translation given in (7a-f), (8a,b), (9a,b) and (10a,b), only the lowest nominal acts as the subject of a sentence in English. Other phrases can be fronted and act as topics; they are adjuncts that are accompanied by phrases such as *regarding* and *as for* in some cases but not in others. As claimed by the literature (e.g. Chomsky 2000), only the lowest nominal is located in the structurally designated position, [Spec,TP], in English, and enters a syntactic relation with the functional head, T, with the Case of the former licensed by the latter. Thus, both in Japanese and in languages such as English, only the lowest nominal is located in [Spec,TP], acts as the subject of a sentence, and enters a syntactic relation with T; all other (fronted) phrases are topics and adjuncts. Therefore, contrary to the literature (e.g. Saito 2016), it is not the case that Japanese can yield the MCM construction, a language-particular syntactic structure which appears to have more than one subject. Our argument also excludes *Multiple Agree* (Hiraiwa 2001), a syntactic operation that allows an individual language to produce a language-particular syntactic structure. We argue that the cross-linguistic variation in syntactic structure is more limited than considered so far: the language faculty may not allow an individual language to produce a syntactic structure so different from other languages.

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