

Topics of Existence : Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases and Types of Topic-Statement Relationships in Japanese

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Topics of Existence: Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases and Types of Topic-Statement Relationships in Japanese

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Explanatory Note

Japanese is a language with topic markers commonly represented by the postpositional particle *wa*. In the statement *X wa P*, *wa* creates the topic-statement relationship of “about X, saying P,” but various issues about this have been under much debate, such as the characteristics of its meaning and sentence structuring, as well as the difference between it and the subject-predicate relationship *X ga P*, formed from the postpositional particle *ga*. This paper is concerned with the restriction relating to noun phrases that function as topics.

It is commonly understood that noun phrases that function as topics must be definite noun phrases (in other words, noun phrases for which the hearer can identify the referent). Li and Thompson (1976), who studied topics and subjects typologically, noted that “one of the primary characteristics of topics is that they must be definite,” and this restriction also basically holds true in Japanese as well. However, in Japanese topic-statement relationships, there are those that question the existence or nonexistence of the topic noun phrase (X)’s referent, and the focus of this paper is that indefinite noun phrases (in other words, noun phrases for which the hearer cannot identify the referent) can function as the topic in these types of sentences.

This paper comprises Chapter 5 of the author’s book, *Nihongo no Daimokubun (Topic Sentences in Japanese)* (Izumi Shoin, 2006). In this book, topics in Japanese are divided into two groups: “topics of property/situation” and “topics of existence.” “Topics of property/situation” include:

Predicates that express property such as:

Chikyū- wa	marui.
Earth- TOP**	Round
The earth is round.	

and predicates that express states or events such as:

Tarō- wa	onaka- ga	suite- iru.
Taro- TOP	stomach- NOM	empty
Taro is hungry.		
Yamada-san- wa	kinō	kaette- kita.
Yamada-san- TOP	yesterday	came back
Yamada-san came back yesterday.		

These express interest in “what kind of property X has or what kind of situation it is in.” On the other hand, “topics of existence” express interest in “whether X exists or not,” such as:

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** For abbreviations in the example sentences, see “Glossary of Abbreviations” at the end of this paper.

It is commonly understood that topic noun phrases must be identifiable. Below, I will call this the “identifiability restriction” and the identifiable noun phrase the “definite noun phrase” (it is also commonly called the “known” noun phrase, however, please refer to Section 1.2 for the reason why I won’t be calling it by this name). In (1) and (2) of the following examples, the topic noun phrases are *ano hito* (that person), a noun phrase that includes the demonstrative, and *yuki* (snow), a generic noun phrase. These satisfy the identifiability restriction. However, in examples (3) and (4), *tairyō- no gomi* (a huge amount of trash) and *hito* (person) do not designate a specific “trash” or “person.” Therefore, because it does not satisfy the identifiability restriction, it sounds unnatural as an independent sentence.

- (1) Ano hito- wa doko- e iku- no?
that person- TOP where- to go
Where is that person going?
- (2) Yuki- wa shiroi.
snow- TOP white
Snow is white.
- (3) ? Tairyō- no gomi- wa soko- ni sute- rarete- iru.¹
huge amount- GEN trash- TOP there- LOC throw out- PASS
A huge amount of trash is thrown out there.
- (4) ? Kaijō- ni hito- wa ōzei tsumekakete- ita.
hall- LOC people- TOP many crowded
Many people crowded the hall.

However, there are some topic sentences where unidentifiable noun phrases (“indefinite noun phrases”) become the topic:

- (5) Wārudo- kappu- no kaisai- chū ōku- no hito- tachi- wa
World Cup- GEN held- during many- GEN person- PL- TOP
terebi- ni kugizuke- datta.
television- DAT riveted- COP- PAST
Many people were riveted to the TV during the World Cup.
- (6) Okyakusama- no naka- ni oishasama- wa irasshai- masu- ka?
customer- HON- GEN in- LOC doctor- HON- TOP there- HON- POL- Q
Is there a doctor among the customers?

In examples such as (5) and (6), while the identifiability restriction is not followed, the conditions differ. In the former, the topic noun phrase restriction is slightly looser than actually being identifiable. In the latter, the character of the topic differs from typical topics. While the topics of (1), (2) (and (5)) deal with property/situation, the topic of (6) is one that questions whether X exists or not. I believe that in this type of topic phrase, the identifiability restriction does not hold true to begin with.

In the following paper, I will investigate what a definite noun phrase is in Section 1; then in Section 2, I will discuss the treatment of examples such as (5). In Section 3, I will state what topics of existence are, and in Section 4, I will discuss the positioning of these topics of existence.

1. The Identifiability Restriction Relating to Topic Noun Phrases

1.1 Classification of Definite Noun Phrases/Indefinite Noun Phrases

The identifiability restriction for topic noun phrases is expressed as follows in prior research:

- (7) Even if an explanation is added to a piece of information that the hearer does not know, the hearer will not understand what is being explained. Thus, for that which is appointed “X,” the hearer hears “X” and must be able to determine what “X” refers to. (Shibatani, 1978: 213)
- (8) The topical *wa* is used for noun phrases where the speaker assumes the hearer knows what or who is being referred to. I shall call this kind of noun phrase a “known definite noun phrase,” meaning a noun phrase for which the hearer can identify what is being referred to. (Inoue, 1983: 32)
- (9) For a noun phrase to be a topic, it must be possible to identify the target being referred to through the conversation flow, the situation it is spoken in, common sense, etc. (Masuoka and Takubo, 1992:145)

The question of what is defined as something that “the hearer...must be able to determine what- [is referred to],” “a noun phrase for which the hearer can identify what is being referred to,” or “[a noun phrase where it is] possible to identify the target being referred to” — in other words, the problem of how definite noun phrases can be defined — must be investigated.

Here, I will first stray away from topics and state how to differentiate definite and indefinite noun phrases. This paper will define and classify definite/indefinite based, for the most part, on Horiguchi’s (1995: 29-33) classification. (The contents in the <broken parentheses> are abbreviations used in this paper).²

- (10) a. Definite noun phrases (identifiable noun phrases) are noun phrases where the speaker believes the range of the target being referred to is defined for the hearer and consist of the following noun phrases:
 - (i) Noun phrases that refer to a certain individual <Specified Individual>
 - (ii) Noun phrases that refer to a certain set as a whole <Whole Set>
 - (iii) Noun phrases that refer to a certain part of a certain set <Specified Part>
- b. Indefinite noun phrases (unidentifiable noun phrases) are noun phrases where the speaker does not believe the range of the target being referred to is defined for the hearer and consist of the following noun phrases:
 - (iv) Noun phrases that refer to a set with undefined elements<Unspecified Set>
 - (v) Noun phrases that refer to a part of a set <Unspecified Part>

Noun phrases that refer to particular individuals, or the (i) <Specified Individual> category, are demonstrative noun phrases or proper noun phrases that refer to single individuals, such as *kono ko* (this child), *watashi* (I), or *chikyū* (Earth). Noun phrases that refer to a set as a whole, (ii) <Whole Set>, include the following noun phrases:

- (11) Hito- wa mikake- ni yora- nu mono.
 person- TOP looks- DAT depend- NEG thing
 People are not what they seem by their looks.
- (12) Kono mise- no tōfu- ga ichiban umai.
 this store- GEN tofu- NOM the most delicious
 This store’s tofu is the most delicious.

- (13) Soko- ni atsumatte-iru hito- tachi- o minna- de torikakonda.
 there- LOC gather person- PL- ACC together surrounded
 All of us surrounded the people gathered there.

Hito (people), *kono mise-no tōfu* (this store's tofu), and *soko-ni atsumatte-iru hito-tachi* (people gathered there) all refer to a set as a whole. This category includes noun phrases such as (11) or (12), called generic (or generic-like), as well as those that are not called generic; for example, (13) is a non-generic phrase, but in terms of the fact that it refers to the set as a whole, it also has the same characteristic. Further, both (i) and (ii) can point to the same referent. For instance *tsuki* (moon) is a <Specified Individual> but *chikyū-no eisei* (satellite of the earth) is a case where only a single element of the <Whole Set> is identified.

Now, let us examine categories (iv) and (v) before looking at (iii). Noun phrases that refer to sets with components that are not defined <Unspecified Set>, for one, include undefined words such as (14):

- (14) Donna hito- ga sukina- no?
 what kind person- NOM like
 What kind of person do you like?

Further examples of this category of noun phrases include noun phrases with *aru...* (a certain...) or “quantifier...” such as (15) and (16):

- (15) Aru hito- ni kīte- mita.
 a certain person- DAT ask- tried
 I tried asking a certain person.
- (16) Ōku- no jogen- o eta.
 many- GEN suggestions- ACC received
 I received many suggestions.

Aru hito (a certain person) is a set with a single element. On the other hand, noun phrases that refer to a part of a set (v) <Unspecified Set> include:

- (17) Sono jikan- wa watashi- wa koko- de hito- to hanashi- o shite- ita.
 that time- TOP I- TOP here- LOC person- with talk- ACC did
 I was here talking to a person at that time.
- (18) Kono mise- no tōfu- o tabe- tai.
 this store- GEN tofu- ACC eat- want
 I want to eat this store's tofu.

Hito (person) and *kono mise-no tōfu* (this store's tofu) refer to a part (an individual or a subset) of a set, but unlike examples (11) and (12), which part it is has not been identified. In example (17), the speaker is thinking of a particular *hito* (person), but the noun *hito* (person) in this sentence does not express this specific *hito* (person). The hearer can obtain information as to what kind of person this *hito* (person) is through the entire speech/text, and in following sentences it can be referred to as the definite noun phrase *sono hito* (that person) or *anata-ga hanashi-o shite-ita hito* (the person you were talking to).

Returning to definite noun phrases, noun phrases that refer to a particular part of a set (iii) <Specified Part> are centered on noun phrases called “pronominally used” common noun phrases (Kinsui, 1986a: 479). Examples of these are noun phrases that express deictic demonstratives:

- (19) Shachō- ga aisatsu- o mōshiage- masu.
 president- NOM welcome- ACC say- HBL- POL
 The president will give his welcome.
- (20) (a sign placed before a certain product displayed in a store reads)
 Tenjihin- ni kagiri 50%- biki.
 displayed product- DAT limited 50%- off
 50% off for displayed products only.
- (21) Isshūkan mae- ni hajimari- mashita.
 one week before- LOC began- POL
 It began the week before.

For example, in (19), the use of the common noun phrase *shachō* (president) refers to *uchi-no kaisha-no shachō* (our company president) within the set of *shachō* (presidents). These examples refer to *uchi-no kaisha-no shachō* (our company president), *kono tenjihin* (this displayed product), or *kyō-no issshūkan mae* (one week before today), all based on the speaker (writer) or hearer (reader), the location, or time (present). Another example is the common noun phrase expressing anaphoric demonstratives:

- (22) Soko- ni hitori- no otoko- ga yattekita.
 there- LOC one- GEN man- NOM came
 Watashi- wa otoko- ni michi- o tazuneta.
 I- TOP man- DAT way- ACC asked
 A man arrived there. I asked the man for directions.
- (23) Konkai- no hikōki- jiko- ni- tsuite gen'in- o
 this time- GEN plane accident- DAT- about cause- ACC
 kyūmei- suru tame- ni chōsadan- ga haken- sa- reta.
 make clear in order to investigation team- NOM dispatched- PASS
 About this plane accident, in order to make the cause clear, an investigation team
 was dispatched.

Each of the above examples refers to *sono hitori-no otoko* (that one man) in the category of *otoko* (men) and to *sono gen'in* (that cause) in the category of *gen'in* (causes), respectively. (22) is an example of direct anaphora, and (23) of indirect anaphora (Yamanashi, 1992: Chapter 4). (19) to (23) are noun phrases that express a certain set and point to a particular part of the set, but we must depend on the context to figure out which particular part it is. The deictic use depends on the scene and the anaphoric use depends on the context. These cases are not the only ones that belong to the <Specified Part> category. This category also includes:

- (24) (at the beginning of a novel)
 Jiken- wa ōmisoka- no hi- no yoru- ni okotta.
 event- TOP New Year's Eve- GEN day- GEN night- LOC happened
 The event occurred on the night of New Year's Eve.
- (25) (in a newspaper)
 Kinō, shushō- ga tsugi- no yōna danwa- o happyō- shita.
 Yesterday prime minister- NOM following- GEN like comment- ACC announced
 Yesterday, the prime minister announced the following comment.

Jiken (the event) in (24) refers to *kono hanashi-no hottan-to natta jiken* (the event that triggered this novel's story)

(Horiguchi, 1995: 31) and *shushō* (the prime minister) in (25) refers to *genzai-no nihon-no shushō* (the current prime minister of Japan). The former can be called an anaphoric use in the wider sense and the latter, the deictic use in the wider sense. The problem of how the context, situation, or predicate interrelate to constitute the definite noun phrase is a difficult matter, not only limited to the <Specific Part> category discussed here. However, because it is not directly related to this paper, I will not go into any further details.

1.2 Cases Where the Identifiability Restriction Is Followed

The identifiability restriction states that topic noun phrases are definite noun phrases that belong to one of the following categories mentioned above of (i) <Specified Individual>, (ii) <Whole Set>, or (iii) <Specified Part>, and not to indefinite noun phrases in categories (iv) <Unspecified Set> or (v) <Unspecified Part>. The reason why such a restriction exists is because there is no informational value in explaining what something is or the situation it is in if we do not know what it refers to. For example:

- (26) Onnanoko- wa ningyō- ga sukida. (ii)
 girls- TOP doll- NOM like
 Girls like dolls.
- (27) (at a children's gathering)
 Onnanoko- wa kocchi- ni atsumatte- kudasai. (iii)
 girls- TOP here- LOC gather- please
 Girls please gather here.
- (28) ?Onnanoko- wa itsumo kono kōen- de asonde- iru. (v)
 girl(s)- TOP always this park- in play
 Girl(s) always play(s) in this park.

If we consider these as independent sentences (the starting sentence of a discourse), (26) and (27) are natural, but (28) is unnatural. (26) refers to *onnanoko* (girls) as a whole and (27) refers to a certain set of *onnanoko* (girls) as a whole, but in (28) we do not know which girls in the set of *onnanoko* (girls) are in question. In order to make this a natural sentence, we must add some determiners, such as:

- (29) Kono kinjo- no onnanoko- wa itsumo kono kōen- de asonde- iru. (ii)
 this neighborhood- GEN girls- TOP always this park- in play
 Girls in this neighborhood always play in this park.

In other words, the reason why (28) is unnatural is because the expression *onnanoko* (girls) is not sufficient to determine what the set in question (the set corresponding to “always play in this park”) refers to (this is not (ii), and is, of course, not (i)), yet it cannot be understood deictically nor anaphorically (it is not (iii) either).

The concept of definite noun phrases (identifiable noun phrases), has often been termed “known noun phrases.” For example, the quote from Shibatani in (7) is followed by, “Mikami and others understand this through the concept of ‘the known.’” The reason why this paper does not use the term “known” is because it does not necessarily mean that the referent of the noun phrase is known by the hearer. Consider the following examples:

- (30) Kingyo- tte nannen- gurai ikiru- no? – Watashi- no ojisan- no
 goldfish- TOP how many years- about live I- GEN uncle- GEN
 uchi- no kingyo- wa, minna 5- nen- ijō ikite- iru- yo.
 house- GEN goldfish- TOP all 5 years- more than live- FP
 About how many years do goldfish live? – The goldfish at my uncle's home have all lived over 5 years.

- (31) (at the start of a newspaper column)

Tsūsanshō- no	G-māku- no	sentei- wa,
Ministry of International Trade- GEN	G mark- GEN	choice- TOP

kotoshi- de 28- kaime. (The Asahi Shimbun, morning issue, 11/25/1984)

this year- in 28th time

This year was the 28th time that the selection of the G mark by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry was made.

These examples function even when the hearer or reader is first introduced to the existence of *watashi-no ojisan-no uchi-no kingyo* (the goldfish at my uncle's home) and *tsūsanshō-no G-māku-no sentei* (the selection of the G mark by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry), and do not quite fall into the concept of "the known." However, because definite noun phrases are noun phrases with a definite demonstrative range, the hearer can differentiate the referent from other objects. *Watashi-no ojisan-no uchi-no kingyo* (the goldfish at my uncle's home) from (30) can, of course, be differentiated from *tonari-no uchi-no kingyo* (the goldfish at my neighbor's home). In this case, because *watashi-no ojisan-no uchi-no kingyo* (the goldfish at my uncle's home) as a whole falls under *5-nen-ijō ikite-iru* (live over 5 years), the differentiation between individual goldfish is not a question. In comparison, because the demonstrative range is not defined for indefinite noun phrases, the hearer cannot differentiate the object from other objects. This goes without saying for indefinite words such as *nani* (what). It is also true even if the phrase does not include indefinite words, for instance, the *onnanoko* (girls) from (28), referring to an unspecified part of this set for which it is not possible to differentiate which elements fall under those who "always [play] in this park" and those who do not.

2. Topic Noun Phrases that include Indefinite Words: A Case When the Identifiability Restriction Is Not Followed (1)

As stated above, topic noun phrases, in most cases, are definite noun phrases. However, there are cases when an (iv) <Unspecified Set> works as a topic noun phrase, as in the following examples (32)b and (33)b.

- (32) a. ?Dareka- wa, Michiko- no koto- ga suki- rashī.
 someone- TOP Michiko- GEN thing- NOM like- seems
 Someone seems to like Michiko.
- b. 3- nen- B- gumi- no dareka- wa Michiko- no koto- ga suki- rashī.
 3rd year class B- GEN someone- TOP Michiko- GEN thing- NOM like- seems
 Someone in the third year class B seems to like Michiko.
- (33) a. ?Ōku- no shain- tachi- wa, 5- ji- ni naru- to suguni kaeru.
 many- GEN staff- PL- TOP 5 pm- DAT turn- COMP soon go home
 Many of the staff go home right after it turns 5pm.
- b. Taian- Shōji- no ōku- no shain- tachi- wa, 5- ji- ni
 Taian Trading Company- GEN many- GEN staff- PL- TOP 5 pm- DAT
 naru- to suguni kaeru.
 turn- COMP soon go home
 Many of the staff at Taian Trading Company go home right after it turns 5pm.

Here, when an element or the subset of a certain object A is B, I will call A the “upper-class set” of B. *3-nen-B-gumi-no seito-tachi* (the students of third-year class B) is the upper-class set for which *3-nen-B-gumi-no dareka* (someone in third-year class B) is a subset and *Taian-Shōji-no shain-tachi* (the staff at Taian Trading Company) is the upper-class set of *Taian-Shōji-no ōku-no shain-tachi* (many of the staff at Taian Trading Company). The noun

phrases expressing these upper-class sets belong respectively to (ii) <Whole Set> for *Taian-Shōji-no shain-tachi* (the staff at Taian Trading Company) and to the (iii) <Specified Part> for *3-nen-B-gumi-no seito-tachi* (the students of third-year class B). The reason why (32)b and (33)b are able to function as topic noun phrases regardless of the fact that they are indefinite noun phrases is because the upper-class set directly above it is a definite noun phrase. Even if the noun phrase in question cannot identify the referent, if its immediate upper-class set can identify it – in other words, if what is referred to by the noun phrase in question can even roughly be determined – it may be believed that there is informational value in explaining it. In comparison, the reason why (32)a and (33)a are unnatural as independent sentences is because there is no upper-class set appropriate to them. For example, the upper-class set for *dareka* (someone) may be *hito* (person); however, this is too wide to limit what kind of someone this is.

While examples (32)b and (33)b have modifiers before *dareka* (someone) and *ōku-no shain-tachi* (many of the staff), there are also cases where there is no modifier:

- (5) Wārudo- kappu- no kaisai- chū ōku- no hito- tachi- wa
World Cup- GEN held- during many- GEN person- PL- TOP
terebi- ni kugizuke- datta.
television- DAT riveted- COP- PAST
Many people were riveted to the TV during the World Cup.
- (34) Kono mae- no fushōji- no toki, nannin- ka- no giin- wa
last time- GEN scandal- GEN time a number- GEN assemblymen- TOP
mō kono tō- ni mirai- wa nai- to ritō- ni
already this party- LOC future- TOP Not exist- COMP leave party- DAT
fumikitta- sōda.
decided- seems
At the time of the last scandal, some of the assemblymen decided to leave the party, saying there was no future for this party.
- (35) Sūnen- mae ōkina jishin- ga atta toki, aru hito- wa,
a few years- before large earthquake- NOM happened time some person- TOP
ningen- ga chikyū- o sakushu- shita tatari- da- to Itta.³
humans- NOM earth- ACC exploited punishment- COP- COMP said
A few years back when there was a large earthquake, some person said that it was punishment for humans having exploited the earth.

The *ōkuno-no hito-tachi* (many people) from (5) are the many *wārudo-kappu kaisai-chū-ni okeru nihonjin* (Japanese during the World Cup), and the *nannin-ka-no giin* (some of the assemblymen) from (34) are a few of the *kono mae-no fushōji-no toki-ni okeru sono tō-no giin* (assemblymen from that party at the time of the last scandal). In the case of (35), in the generalization that “there are always people in society who want to say something in the event of an incident,” *aru hito* (some person) can be thought as one person in the “set of people who wanted to say something when the large earthquake hit a few years back.” However, there are cases in which, even if determiners are added to indefinite noun phrases, they are still indefinite noun phrases. For instance, the following sentence sounds unnatural independently:

- (36) ?Gakusei- tachi- no ōku- wa arubaito- o shite- iru.
student- PL- GEN many- TOP part time job- ACC do
Many students have a part-time job.

This sentence is appropriate if there is context in which we can specify which students are referred to by *gakusei-*

tachi (students) (when *gakusei-tachi* (students) is a <Specified Part>).

As stated above, one of the cases in which an indefinite noun phrase can function as a topic is when an appropriate definite noun phrase that expresses its upper-class set can be imagined from the context and, even if the object itself is indefinite, if the range of its existence can be determined, its property or situation can be explained.⁴

3. The Character of Topics of Existence and Their Sentence Structure: A Case When the Identifiability Restriction Is Not Followed (2)

The second condition in which an indefinite noun phrase can act as the topic does not depend on the character of the noun phrase, but instead, depends on the character of the sentence. In other words, as can be seen in example (6) *Okyakusama-no naka-ni oishasama-wa irasshai-masu-ka?* (Is there a doctor among the customers?), it is possible for an indefinite noun phrase centered on a phrase that expresses existence or non-existence to act as the topic. This has already been pointed out by Horiguchi (1995: 29-34):

- (37) Kono chikaku- ni yūbinkyoku- wa ari- mase- n- ka?
 near here- LOC post office- TOP exist- POL- NEG- Q
 Isn't there a post office near here?
- (38) Otaku- ni inu- wa i- masu- ka?
 your home- LOC dog- TOP exist- POL- Q
 Is there a dog in your home? (Does your family have a dog?)

In these sentences, *yūbinkyoku* (post office) and *inu* (dog) are “indefinite” and, according to the categories presented in this paper, these belong to (v) <Unspecified Part>.

While Horiguchi's identification that an indefinite noun phrase can function as a topic if it is a predicate of existence is an important one, it has not gained much attention as of yet. This paper develops Horiguchi's theory and establishes “topics of existence” as a category of topics. Below, I will discuss the character of topics of existence and the sentence structures in which they are used, clarifying the difference between them and typical topics of property/situation.

The existence topic sentences dealt with here are not equivalent to existence predicate sentences. Sentences that express location, such as (*sono*) *yūbinkyoku-wa kono chikaku-ni aru* ([that] post office is near here) (where the focus is on *kono chikaku-ni* [near here]), are a type of topic sentence based on situation. While existence predicates may be considered a kind of expression for property/situation, existence topic sentences that pose the question of “whether it (something) exists or not” (the focus is on “it exists/it doesn't exist”) behave in a different manner from typical topic sentences. At the same time, as can be seen in the following section, there are some cases where sentences that do not contain existence predicates function as existence topic sentences.

3.1 Topics of Existence in Interrogative Sentences and Response Sentences

The topic-statement relationship in topics of existence is one that questions whether the topic noun phrase's referent exists or not. In the case of interrogative sentences such as (37) and (38), it becomes a sentence asking whether that referent exists or not. In the case of declarative sentences, it becomes a sentence that explains whether the referent exists or not. For example, in response to (37) and (38), the following answers can be offered:

- (39) Yūbinkyoku- desu- ka? Yūbinkyoku- wa nai- desu- nē.
 post office- COP- POL- Q post office- TOP not exist- COP- POL- FP
- /Yūbinkyoku- nara ari- masu- yo.
 /post office- TOP exist- PL- FP
- A post office? There is no post office./There is a post office.

- (40) Inu- desu- ka? Hai, inu- wa i- masu.
 dog- COP- POL- Q yes dog- TOP exist- POL
 /Ie, inu- wa i- mase- n.
 /no dog- TOP exist- POL- NEG
 A dog? Yes, there is a dog./No, there isn't a dog.
 (We have a dog./We don't have a dog.)

For the *yūbinkyoku* (post office) and *inu* (dog) in (37), (38) and (39), (40), no specific *yūbinkyoku* (post office) or *inu* (dog) is in question, and further, there is a possibility that they do not exist. As stated earlier, the reason why a definite noun phrase is required for typical topics (topics of property/situation) is because there is no informational value in questioning the property or situation of an subject when we do not know what the referent is. However, in the topic-statement relationship of topics of existence, because its question is whether the subject exists or not, the categories of definite or indefinite do not play a role.

Incidentally, in the following examples, changing (37) and (38) into declarative sentences, *ga* is natural, while *wa* is uncommon:

- (41) Kono chikaku- ni yūbinkyoku- ?wa/ga ari- masu.
 near here- LOC post office- TOP/NOM exist- POL
 (Soko- de inshi- o katte kudasai.)
 (there- in revenue stamps- ACC buy Please)
 There is a post office near here. (Please buy revenue stamps there.)
- (42) Watashi- no ie- ni inu- ?wa/ga i- masu.
 I- GEN house- LOC dog- TOP/NOM exist- POL
 (Namae- o Pochi- to ī- masu.)
 (name- ACC Pochi- COP say- POL)
 There is a dog in my house. (We have a dog.) (Its name is Pochi.)

Even with the same declarative sentence, these examples are different from responses (39) and (40), as they simply state the fact that “there is a post office near here” and “there is a dog in my home,” and do not question whether “there is or isn’t a post office near here” or whether “there is or isn’t a dog in my home.” Topics of existence are not only those that use existence predicates, but they are topics with the characteristic of questioning existence or nonexistence.

Conventionally, *wa* has been considered unnatural in sentences such as (41) and (42) because of the identifiability restriction, in other words, it was understood that they could not be topics because they are indefinite noun phrases. However, because interrogative sentences such as (37) and (38) or responses such as (39) and (40) are natural, it cannot be understood in this way. This difference between simple declarative sentences and interrogative/response sentences can also be seen in the following definite noun phrases used as topics of existence:

- (43) Robī- ni- wa Yamada-san- wa/ga i- masu- ka?
 lobby- LOC- TOP Yamada-san- TOP/NOM exist- POL- Q
 Hai, Yamada-san- wa i- masu- yo.
 yes Yamada-san- TOP exist- POL- FP
 Is Yamada-san in the lobby?
 yes, Yamada-san is there.

- (44) Hora, robī- ni Yamada-san- ?wa/ga i- masu- yo.
 see lobby- LOC Yamada-san- TOP/NOM exist- POL- FP
 See, Yamada-san is in the lobby.

Example (43) corresponds to (37), (38) and (39), (40), while (44) corresponds to (41), (42). Thus, (41) and (42) are unnatural not because of the identifiability restriction but, as stated above, because they are not in agreement with the topic's character of questioning existence. Interrogative sentences are sentences that question whether the statement is true or not and, in this case, it has an affinity to the topic-statement relationship that questions whether the referent of the topic noun phrase exists or not.

Topics where the identifiability restriction does not apply are not limited to the above *aru* (it exists [for inanimate things]) or *iru* (it exists [for animate things]). The following can also be understood as topics of existence:

- (45) Ima, onna- no hito- wa/ga ko- nakatta?
 now woman- GEN person- TOP/NOM come- NEG- PAST
 (Ima, kita onna- no hito- wa nakatta- ka?)
 (now, came woman- GEN person- TOP didn't exist- Q)
 Didn't a woman come here?
 (Wasn't there a woman who came now?)
- (46) Kōen-ni hana- wa/ga saite- i- mase- n- deshita- ka?
 park- LOC flower- TOP/NOM bloom- POL- NEG- COP- PAST-POL- Q
 (Kōen-ni saita hana- wa nakatta- ka?)
 (park- LOC bloomed flower- TOP didn't exist- Q)
 Wasn't a flower blooming in the park?
 (Wasn't there a flower blooming in the park?)
- (47) Ano, ima, ame- wa/ga futte- i- mase- n- ka?
 excuse me now rain- TOP/NOM fall- POL- NEG- Q
 (Ima, kōu-wa nai- ka?)
 (now falling rain- TOP not exist- Q)
 Excuse me, isn't it raining now?
 (Isn't there falling rain now?)

In these, *onna-no hito* (woman), *hana* (flower), and *ame* (rain) all belong to (v) <Unspecified Part>. These question not only the existence or nonexistence of the topic noun phrase's referent, but, as in the parentheses, it questions the existence or nonexistence of the entire thing, including the event indicated by the predicate. Thus, in terms of (47), even if the location of *wa* changes in the phrases *ame-ga futte-wa imasen-ka?* (isn't it raining?) and *ame-ga futte-iru-toiu-koto-wa ari-mase-n-ka?* (is there such a thing that it is raining?), there is no real difference in the meaning of the text. Likewise, for the case relation between the topic noun phrase and predicate, this is not just limited to the nominative case:

- (48) Saikin, hon- wa nanika yomi- mashita- ka?
 recently book- TOP something read- POL- Q
 (Saikin, hon- o nanika yomu- koto- wa atta- ka?)
 (recently book- ACC something read- NML- TOP existed- Q)
 Have you read some book recently?
 (Has there recently been such a thing that you read a book?)

- (49) Nanika eiyō-no- aru- mono- wa tabete-masu- ka?
 something nutrition- GEN- exist- thing- TOP eat- POL- Q
 (Nanika eiyō-no- aru- mono- o tabeteiru- toiu- koto- wa aru- ka?)
 (something nutrition- GEN- exist- thing- ACC eat- COMP- NML- TOP exist- Q)
 Have you been eating something/anything nutritious?
 (Has there been such a fact that you ate something nutritious?)
- (50) Isha- wa itteru- n desu- ka?
 doctor- TOP go- NML COP- POL- Q
 (Isha- e iku koto- wa aru- ka?)
 (doctor-to go NML- TOP exist- Q)
 Are you going to a doctor?
 (Is there such a fact that you are going to a doctor?)

The action's existence is questioned, as can be seen in the parentheses. However, not any noun phrase is allowed to be a topic that questions existence or nonexistence, and there are some limits. The following examples where an (iv) <Unspecified Set>, such as *dareka* (somebody) and *aru hito* (some person), becomes the topic often produce unnatural sentences:

- (51) ?Dareka- wa/ ?Aru hito- wa i- masu- ka?
 someone- TOP/a certain person- TOP exist- POL- Q
 Is there somebody/a certain person?

This is probably because there is no informational value in questioning the existence of *dareka* (somebody) or *aru hito* (a certain person) whom we do not know.

3.2 Topics of Existence in Negative Sentences

Negative sentences also offer sentence structures where topics of existence appear:

- (52) Kyō-no watashi- no shigoto- wa nai.
 today- GEN I- GEN work- TOP not exist
 There is no work for me today.
- (53) Watashi- no ie- ni inu- wa i- mase- n.
 I- GEN house- LOC dog- TOP exist- POL- NEG
 There is no dog in my home.
- (54) Saikin, ame- wa amari fura- nai mitaidesu.
 recently rain- TOP not much fall- NEG seems- POL
 It seems it does not rain much recently.

As examined in the previous section, noun phrases that are topics of existence can be either definite or indefinite noun phrases. In this case, (52) *kyō-no watashi-no shigoto* (work for me today) falls under category (ii) <Whole Set>, while (53) *inu* (dog) and (54) *ame* (rain) fall under (v) <Unspecified Part>.

Negative sentences, in most instances, are acknowledged to function in cases where its corresponding affirmative proposition is imaginable.

- (55) a. Kono mae, Yamada-san- wa/ga Hokkaidō- ni
 a while ago, Yamada-san- TOP/NOM Hokkaido- DAT
 itta- n- da- sōdesu- yo.
 went- NML- COP- seem- POL- FP
 It seems Yamada-san went to Hokkaido recently.
- b. Kono mae, Yamada-san- wa/ga Hokkaidō- ni
 a while ago, Yamada-san- TOP/NOM Hokkaido- DAT
 ika- nakatta- n- da- sōdesu- yo.
 go- NEG- PAST- NML- COP- seem- POL- FP
 It seems Yamada-san didn't go to Hokkaido recently.

While the affirmative sentence (55)a functions without a context, the negative sentence (55)b is commonly used in situations where the speaker understands that the hearer has some idea that *Yamada-san-ga Hokkaidō-ni itta* (Yamada-san has gone to Hokkaido). In negative sentences where both the affirmative and negative must be considered, as in (55)b, because it is spoken with an awareness of “whether Yamada-san went to Hokkaido or not,” it merits a structure where “Yamada-san” is explained and thus, *wa* is more appropriate than *ga*. This compatibility between negative sentences and topics is also true when existence or nonexistence is questioned. For instance, (53) is a sentence that designates, in the question of “whether there is or isn't a dog in my home,” that “there isn't (a dog).” In contrast, in the affirmative sentence (42) *watashi-no ie-ni inu-ga imasu* (there is a dog in my home), there is no need to establish the question of “whether there is or isn't a dog,” in order to simply state that “there is a dog.”

3.3 Topics of Existence in Sentences that Express the Quantity of Existing Things

In topics of existence, there are cases where existence is not questioned, but how many entities exist is questioned (the following are examples given by Horiguchi). In these cases, declarative sentences in the affirmative are also natural.

- (56) Wagaya- ni inu- wa 2- hiki iru.
 our home- LOC dog- TOP 2- CL exist
 There are two dogs in our home. (We have two dogs.)
- (57) Kono machi- ni kōsō-biru-wa sukunai.
 this town- LOC high-rise building- TOP few
 There are few high-rises in this town.
- (58) Kono ronbun- ni ketten- wa takusan mi- rareru.
 this paper- LOC flaws- TOP many see- PASS
 Many flaws can be seen in this paper.

Horiguchi states that “in such expressions, the topic noun phrase is always indefinite, and definite noun phrases do not work” (p. 34). In the examples (56) through (58), this is certainly true because they fall under category (v) <Unspecified Part>. However, on the other hand, consider the following cases:

- (59) 10- ika- no sosū-wa yottsu aru.
 10- under- GEN prime number- TOP 4- CL exist
 There are four prime numbers under ten.
- (60) Kono kaisha- no jūgyōin- wa 1- man- nin- mo iru.
 this company- GEN staff- TOP 10,000- CL- as many as exist
 There are as many as 10,000 staff members in this company.

In these examples, both *10-ika-no sosū* (prime numbers under 10) and *kono kaisha-no jūgyōin* (staff in this company) are definite noun phrases that fall under category (ii) <Whole Set>. They can be understood to question the quantity of its components as a property of the set. In other words, (59) and (60) are topic sentences of property/situation.

3.4 Topics that Question Existence Anew

As seen in Section 3.1, topics of existence do not necessarily function in simple declarative sentences in the affirmative, such as (41) *'kono chikaku-ni yūbinkyoku-wa arimasu*. (There is a post office near here). However, there are cases where they do function in declarative sentences in the affirmative. One of these cases is the response sentence shown in the aforementioned examples. Another case is when, as in the section above, the sentence demonstrates the quantity that exists. There is yet another case, where, as in the following, the existence (nonexistence) of the subject is questioned anew:

- (61) Yahari kamigami- wa iru- to omou.
 after all the gods- TOP exist- COMP think
 After all, I think the gods really do exist.
- (62) Sunaoni ayamare- nai hito- tte i- masu- yone.
 openly can apologize - NEG person- TOP exist- POL- FP
 People who can't openly apologize do exist, don't they?
- (63) Kurō- toiu- no- wa shite- miru mono- desu- ne.
 hardship- TOP do- try thing- COP- POL- FP
 Hardship should be experienced.

These not only simply state that the subject exists, but they rethink whether the subject exists or not and then state if it *aru* (exists [for inanimate things])/ *iru* (exists [for animate things]). They thus easily fit in to the topic-statement structure. Questioning existence (nonexistence) anew is not limited to declarative sentences in the affirmative, and includes cases such as the following interrogative and negative statements:

- (64) Kaze- tte yoku hiku- n- desu- ka?
 cold- TOP often catch- NML- COP- POL- Q
 Do you often catch colds?
- (65) Hon- toiu- no- wa amari yoma- nai- n- desu.
 book- TOP not often read-NEG- NML- COP- POL
 I don't usually read books.

In these kinds of topics the use of *wa* as in example (61) is acceptable, but they are often represented in topic forms using *tte* or *toiu-no-wa*, as seen in (62) through (65). These forms have the character of questioning the subject anew, regardless of the topics of property/situation or topics of existence.

3.5 Topics of Existence in Contrastive Statements

Topics of existence also appear in contrastive statements ((67) is an example given by Horiguchi).

- (66) Ame- wa futte- iru- ga, kaze- wa fuite- i- nai.
 rain- CNTR TOP fall- but wind- CNTR TOP blow- NEG
 The rain is falling, but the wind is not blowing.

- (67) Tabako- wa suu- ga, sake- wa noma- nai.
 tobacco- CNTR TOP smoke- but alcohol- CNTR TOP drink- NEG
 I smoke cigarettes, but I don't drink alcohol.

These examples are not commonly seen as topics, but these correspond to topics of existence in interrogative sentences such as *ame-wa futta?* (did it rain?) or *tabako-wa sutta?* (did you smoke?). In example (66), the question is whether *ame* (the rain) is falling or not and whether *kaze* (the wind) is blowing or not. They have a contrastive relationship, where the former is in the affirmative while the latter is in the negative. In other words, *kōu* (rainfall) exists, while *kaze-fuki* (blowing wind) does not exist. As stated with example (47) in Section 3.1, the location of *wa* can change, as in *ame-ga futte-wa iru-ga*, *kaze-ga fuite-wa inai* (rain is falling but wind is not blowing) and *ame-ga futteiru-toiu-koto-wa aru-ga*, *kaze-ga fuite-iru toiu-koto-wa nai* (there is such a thing that the rain is falling, but there isn't such a thing that the wind is blowing), without greatly changing the meaning of the sentence. A contrastive relationship is basically an opposition between the affirmative and negative, and while *wa* is often used at the significant point of this opposition (in (66) this is *ame* (the rain) and *kaze* (the wind)), if we consider the matter in its entirety, it is basically an opposition of whether the matter exists or not. In (66) and (67), the contrastive use and existence topic use of *wa* come together.

In terms of the relationship between contrasts and topics as used in the range of this paper, the use of *wa* in contrastive topics can occur in contrastive topics of property/situation or contrastive topics of existence. (66) and (67) are examples of the latter, while (68) and (69) are examples of the former.

- (68) Yamada- wa majimeda- ga, Tanaka- wa fumajimeda.
 Yamada- CNTR TOP serious- but Tanaka- CNTR TOP not serious
 Yamada is serious, but Tanaka is not serious.
- (69) Kocchi- no hon- wa kinō yonda- ga.
 here- GEN book- CNTR TOP yesterday read- but
 socchi- no hon- wa mada yonde- i- nai.
 there- GEN book- CNTR TOP still read- NEG
 I read the book here yesterday, but I haven't read that book there yet.

Example (68) compares “Yamada” and “Tanaka” while simultaneously expressing that “Yamada” has the property “*majimeda* (serious)” and “Tanaka” has the property “*fumajimeda* (not serious).” Example (69) also shows a contrastive relationship while expressing the situations of “*kocchi-no hon* (the book here)” and “*socchi-no hon* (that book there)” as “(watashi-wa) *kinō yonda* ([I] read yesterday)” and “(watashi-wa) *mada yonde-i-nai* ([I] have not read yet.)”⁵ In the use of contrastive property topics, because they are topics of property/situation, the topic noun phrase must generally be a definite noun phrase. Examples (68) and (69) belong to (i) <Particular Individual>. However, consider the following:

- (70) ?Ichibu- no hito- wa shakaijin- da- ga,
 a part- GEN person- CNTR TOP working adults- COP- but
 ōku- wa gakusei- da.
 most- CNTR TOP students- COP
 Some of the people are working adults, but most are students.

The topic noun phrase is a (iv) <Unspecified Set> and the sentence is thus unnatural independently (as the opening sentence of a text). In this example, only when there is a context, as in the following, does the sentence finally become acceptable:

- (71) Kaijō- ni hito- ga takusan atsumatte- iru. Ichibu- no
 hall- LOC person- NOM many gather a part- GEN
 hito- wa shakaijin- da- ga, ōku- wa gakusei- da.
 person- CNTR TOP working adults- COP- but most- CNTR TOP students- COP
 Many people are gathered in the hall. A part of them are working adults, but most are students.

These, such examples as (5), (34), and (35), do not satisfy the identifiability restriction, but are acceptable because its upper set (*sono kaijō-ni atsumatta hito-tachi* [the people gathered in that hall]) is a definite noun phrase.

Because the topic-statement relationship is between the thing and its property/situation or the existence relationship of the thing, the topic must generally be expressed as a noun phrase. However:

- (72) a. Kono hana- wa kireini- wa saku- ga, nagaku- wa
 this flower- TOP beautifully- CNTR (TOP) bloom- but long- CNTR (TOP)
 mota- nai.
 last- NEG
 This flower blooms beautifully, but does not last long.
- b. Kono hana- wa, kireini saku- toiu- koto- wa aru- ga,
 this flower beautifully bloom- COMP- NML- CNTR TOP exist- but
 nagaku motsu- toiu- koto- wa nai.
 long last- COMP- NML- CNTR TOP not exist
 While there is such a fact that this flower blooms beautifully, there isn't such a fact that it lasts long.
- (73) a. Jōju- o negai- wa shita- ga, kanae- rare- wa
 realization- ACC pray- CNTR (TOP) did- but grant- PASS- CNTR (TOP)
 shi- nakatta.
 do- NEG- PAST
 I prayed for realization, but it was not granted.
- b. Jōju- o negau- toiu- koto- wa atta- ga,
 realization- ACC pray- COMP- NML- CNTR TOP existed- but
 kanae-rareru koto-wa nakatta.
 grant- PASS NML- CNTR TOP didn't exist
 There was such a fact that I prayed for realization, but there wasn't such a fact that it was realized.

In these examples, statements in (72)a and (73)a can be reworded into (72)b and (73)b respectively and the reworded “X *wa*” is definitely a (contrastive) topic of existence. We have already seen in the previous examples that when the existence of the matter as a whole is questioned in topics of existence, there is no significant change in the meaning of the sentence even when the position of *wa* changes. Examples (72) and (73) fall under this category. The sentences in (72)a and (73)a above fall out of the category of topics in that *wa* is used, not after the noun phrase, but after the adverb or within the predicate. However, the act of questioning the existence of the matter falls under the topic of existence. Topics of existence take a peripheral position as compared to topics of property/situation, and examples (72)a and (73)a can be understood as examples of the most peripheral of these topics of existence.

4. The Positioning of Topics of Existence

Compared to topics of property/situation, topics of existence have the following characteristics:

- 1) While topics of property/situation can have many kinds of properties (in other words, there can be many kinds of explanations for the topic), in topics of existence, the only explanation is whether it exists or not (or how many exist).
- 2) While the identifiability restriction applies to the topic noun phrases of topics of property/situation, it does not apply to topics of existence.
- 3) While the boundary between the topic and statement portions in topics of property/situation is clear (as in the position of *wa*), in topics of existence, when the existence of the matter as a whole is questioned, there is no significant difference in meaning even if the position of *wa* is changed.

In these respects, topics of existence have peripheral characteristics as topics.

The topic-statement relationship of existence lies at an intermediary position between topic-statement relationships of property/situation and contrastive relationships. In the property/situation sentence *X wa P*, the topic-statement relationship is created by assigning the property/situation P to X. On the other hand, in contrastive relationships, where *X wa P*, *X' wa Q* (*X' wa ¬P*), generally, on the issue of whether the affirmative or negative of P is assigned to X or X', X is assigned the affirmative and X' is assigned the negative. In contrast to this, in topics of existence for the statement *X wa P*, P explains X where the existent/nonexistent P is assigned to X. While limited to existence or nonexistence, the fact that this topic-statement relationship is established corresponds to topics of property/situation, and the fact that either the affirmative or negative is assigned corresponds to contrastive relationships.

Topics of existence also link to simple presentational uses:

- | | | | |
|------|---|---------------|---|
| (74) | Daigaku- e- wa,
university- to- SIMP PRESNT
When will you go to the university? | itsu
when | iku- n- desu- ka?
go- NML- COP- POL- Q |
| (75) | Daigaku- e- wa,
university- to- SIMP PRESNT
Do you often go to the university? | yoku
often | iku- n- desu- ka?
go- NML- COP- POL- Q |

The *wa* in (74) and (75) is used in a simple presentational way to form a problem structure between *daigaku-e* (to university) and *itsu iku* (when [do you] go)/*yoku iku* ([do you] often go). In (74), the focus is on *itsu* (when), and because the question is not “whether or not you will go,” it is not a topic of existence. On the other hand, (75) is synonymous with:

- | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---|---------------|--|
| (76) | Daigaku-e
university- to | iku- toiu- koto- wa
go- COMP- NML- TOP | yoku
often | aru- n- desu- ka?
exist- NML- COP- POL- Q |
| Is there such a fact that you go to the university often? | | | | |

Thus, it can also be understood as a topic of existence where *yoku iku-ka ina-ka* (whether you go often or not) or *yoku iku-koto-ga aru-ka ina-ka* (whether there is such a fact that you go often or not) is questioned.⁶

When the use of *wa* is shown with a focus on the classification of existence, we can summarize the use in the following table:

	Topic		Non-Topic
	Interest in property/situation	Interest in existence/nonexistence	
Absence of contrastive property	Topic of property/situation	Topic of existence	Simple presentation
Presence of contrastive property	Contrastive topic of property/situation	Contrastive topic of existence	Contrast
The nature of nouns in use	Definite noun phrases are generally used.	Either definite or indefinite noun phrases can be used.	

While it may be organized in this way, we can also say that the difference between the three categories of “contrastive topic of property/situation,” “contrastive topic of existence,” and “contrastive,” under the heading of “presence of contrastive property,” is not very significant. On the other hand, under the “absence of contrastive property” heading, whether it is a topic or non-topic (simple presentation) and whether the predicate is a property/situation or existence (nonexistence) may be considered relatively significant. This is because, in the three that express contrastive relationships, the fact that “X – P” and “X’ – Q” are contrasted is the same and we can say that the only difference is whether X and P have a property/situation relationship, an existence (nonexistence) relationship, or neither of the two.

Notes

1. The question mark at the beginning or in the middle of example sentences means that its acceptability is open to question.
2. Horiguchi sets “definite” as “where the range of the referent is determined,” and classifies it into the following:

{	Definite	Generic (Refers to everything that can be expressed)	... (ii) <Whole Set>
		Limited Definite (Refers only to a single individual within ... everything that can be expressed)	... (iii) <Specified Part>
		Specific (Refers only to an originally specified individual)	... (i) <Specified Individual >
	Indefinite (Refers vaguely to something without determining the range of ... everything that can be expressed)		... (iv) <Unspecified Set>
			... (v) <Unspecified Part>

The expressions to the right of the ellipsis correspond to the terminology used here. While only generic noun phrases such as *koma-inu-wa jinja-no keidai-ni aru* (guardian dogs are in shrine precincts) and *kujira-wa umi-ni iru* (whales are in the sea) are given as examples here, from its definition as “[referring] to everything that can be expressed,” I have understood it to include (13) *soko-ni atsumatte-iru hito-tachi* (the people gathered there), thus relating it to (ii) <Whole Set>.

There are other classifications of definite/indefinite noun phrases in Japanese. For instance, Kinsui (1986b: Section 3) classifies noun phrase indications into “generic/definite/indefinite.” He separates “definite” from “indefinite” based on whether the hearer already knows what is indicated or not. Further, Sakahara (1996: 40-42, 57) states that bare noun phrases in Japanese have the function of both indefinite and definite articles in English and, for phrases with the indefinite article “a N” and phrases with the definite article “the N,” he respectively defines them as “introduces a new component N into the memory of the conversation” and “defines the component N in the conversation source using the concerned parameter.” This paper, however, is based on Horiguchi’s definitions/classifications because these are the easiest in dealing with restrictions on topic noun phrases. Relationships to other definitions/classifications are for future investigation.

3. Masuoka (2000: 119) points out examples where *aru mono* (a certain being) functions as the topic.

Tōji, aru mono- wa futari- no sugata- o kinkō- no
at the time a certain being- TOP two people- GEN figure- ACC nearby- GEN

onsenchi- de mita hito- ga aru- to itta.
hot springs location- in saw person- NOM exist- COMP said

At the time, a certain being said that there was a person who saw the two at a nearby hot springs location.

4. In the following example, *wa* is unnatural in [1]:

- [1] Senjitsu koko- de pātī- ga atta.
 the other day here- in party- NOM was held
 Shōtai- sa- reta ōku- no hito- tachi- ?wa /ga sankā- shita.
 invited- PASS many- GEN person- PL- TOP/NOM participated
 There was a party here the other day. Many of the people invited participated.
- [2] Senjitsu koko- de pātī- ga atta. Shōtai- sa- reta ōku- no
 the other day here- in party- NOM was held invited- PASS many- GEN
 hito- tachi- wa/ga bannan- o haishite sankā- shita.
 person- PL- TOP/NOM difficulty -ACC surmount participated
 There was a party here the other day. Many of the people invited surmounted all difficulties and participated.

Senjitsu-no pātī-ni shōtai-sa-reta hito-tachi (people invited to the party the other day) is an upper class set that belongs to (ii) <Whole Set>. But [1] is unnatural because, in terms of the sentence's focus, while an understanding of the sentence in terms of a <focus on the whole> or a <focus on the subject> ("talking about how many people participated, many of the people participated") are natural, an understanding of it in terms of a <predicate focus> is unnatural ("talking about whether or not many of the people invited to the party the other day participated, they participated"). On the other hand, for [2], an understanding of the sentence in terms of a <predicate focus> ("talking about how they participated, they participated surmounting all difficulties") is also natural.

5. It may be said that any sentence can be rewritten using predicates of existence, and even topics of property/situation examples can be rewritten like topics of existence:

- (68) Yamada- wa majimeda- ga, Tanaka- wa fumajimeda.
 Yamada- CNTR TOP serious- but Tanaka- CNTR TOP not serious
 Yamada is serious, but Tanaka is not serious.
- (68)' Yamada- ga majimeda- toiu- koto- wa aru- ga,
 Yamada- NOM serious- COMP- NML- CNTR TOP exist- but
 Tanaka- ga fumajimeda- toiu- koto- wa nai.
 Tanaka- NOM not serious- COMP- NML- CNTR TOP not exist
 There is such a fact that Yamada is serious but there isn't such a fact that Tanaka is not serious.

However, the character of (68)' which questions the existence of "the fact that Yamada is serious" and "the fact that Tanaka is not serious" is different from the sentence in (68) which questions the properties of "Yamada" and "Tanaka."

6. The following is another example:

- [1] Kanojo, dō- shite- iru-no? kanojo- to- wa yoku ai- masu.
 girlfriend how- be girlfriend- to- SIMP PRESNT often meet- POL
 How is your girlfriend doing? – I see her often.
- [2] Isogashikute asobu hima- mo nai- mitaida- ne.
 busy play time- even not exist- seem- FP
 demo, kanojo- to- wa tokidoki ai- masu.
 but girlfriend- to- SIMP PRESNT sometimes meet- POL
 It seems you are so busy you even have no time to play. – But, I see my girlfriend from time to time.
- [3] Kanojo- to tokidoki au- toiu- koto- wa ari- masu.
 girlfriend- NOM sometimes meet- COMP- NML- TOP exist- POL
 There is such a thing that I see my girlfriend from time to time.

The response to [1] cannot really be replaced with sentence [3], however, the response to [2] can be replaced with [3]. While both [1] and [2] are simple presentational uses that deal with the *kanojo-to* (to your girlfriend) relationship, it is easier to

understand [2] as a topic of existence that questions “whether or not you see your girlfriend.”

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Editor’s Note

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Glossary of Abbreviations:

ACC	Accusative case	NML	Nominalizer
CL	Classifier	NOM	Nominative case
CNTR	Contrast	PASS	Passive
CNTR TOP	Contrastive topic	PAST	Past tense
COMP	Complementizer	PL	Plural
COP	Copula	POL	Polite
DAT	Dative case	Q	Question
FP	Final particle	SIMP PRESENT	Simple presentation
GEN	Genitive case	TOP	Topic
HBL	Humble		
HON	Honorific		
LOC	Locative case		
NEG	Negative		

