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'Point of View' and Phrase Structure

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The purpose of this short note is to present some phenomena which suggest the existence of a functional category which is motivated by point of view (POV) of discourse-participants, most notably the speaker/addressee, and topic of the discourse. The discussion centers on the behavior of the auxiliary *V te simaw*, which has both aspectual and modal uses. Focusing on the modal use of this element, we suggest that this element occupies the head position of the projection ModP, whose Spec position hosts a POV-holder. This latter position is usually occupied by an empty category that is bound most typically by the speaker, but it can also be occupied by a *wa*-marked NP. This discussion leads to an observation of the very subtle ambiguity involving the interpretation of *wa*-marked NPs.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this short note¹ is to present some phenomena which suggest the existence of a functional category which is motivated by point of view (POV) of discourse-participants, most notably the speaker/addressee, and topic of the discourse.

The observation centers on the nature of sentences like (1b).

¹This note was prepared as a discussion paper for Tom Roeper's lecture on the point of view in syntax and cognition, which was delivered at Waseda University, Tokyo in January 1999. The ideas expressed here originate with the discussion with Mariko Nishikawa, circa 1994.

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- (1) a. Hanako-ga ronbun-o kai-ta.
 -Nom paper -Acc wrote
 ‘Hanako wrote a paper, or Hanako has written a paper.
- b. Hanako-ga ronbun-o kai-te simaw-ta.
 -Nom paper -Acc write simaw-Past

Sentence (1a) is a relatively neutral description of the fact that Hanako has written a paper, while (1b), which minimally differs from (1a) in the presence of an auxiliary V *-te simaw* attached to the main V, can have either of the following meanings:

- (2) a. Aspectual: Hanako has just completed the act of writing a paper.
 b. Modal (POV): The speaker has been affected (annoyed, surprised) by Hanako’s achievement.

This derives from the fact that the auxiliary *-te simaw* has a dual function: It can either function as an aspectual marker, or more precisely, the perfective aspect marker, which is realized in interpretation (2a), or as a modal auxiliary which expresses the discourse-participant’s (usually negative) attitude towards the event depicted by the core part of the proposition, and this latter interpretation is realized in (2b).

Thus there are two possible ways of looking at the situation involving *-te simaw*: Either there are two distinct words with the same phonological form, or there is only one word *-te simaw* that can be used either aspectually or modally. We will turn to this question in section 3. A question that may be related to this is whether there is a ‘mixed’ interpretation in (1b): Isn’t it possible to read it in such a way that there are both aspectual and modal meanings in this sentence, which, if possible, should be paraphrased by:

- (3) The speaker has been affected (annoyed, surprised) by the fact that Hanako has just completed the paper-writing.

My own judgment at this point is that this last interpretation is unavailable, so that when one interpretation in (2) prevails, the other interpretation fades away, though I am not completely positive about this judgment.

Our attention in this note will be mostly focused on the latter, modal function of *-te simaw*. Before discussing the modal status of this element, we will first discuss the aspectual use of *-te simaw*.

2. Aspectual *te simaw*

Part of the reason why (1b) was considered ambiguous was that the predicate expression involved there: ‘write a paper’ has the inherent aspectual property of being *telic*,

namely denoting an event which has a definite 'end-point' — the event of writing a paper comes to an end as soon as the paper is finished. Cf. Tenny (1994), Borer (1994). According to Vendler's (1967) and Dowty's (1979) classification of predicate expressions in terms of their semantics, 'write a paper' belongs to the class of *accomplishment* verbs.

This semantic aspect of the predicate expression 'write a paper' is quite congenial with the perfective aspectual meaning of *-te simaw*.

On the other hand, when the V involved is 'atelic', that is, it denotes action with no end-point, *te simaw* has only the Modal (POV) reading. A good example of an atelic predicate expression is one meaning 'pressing the button', which, according to the Vendler-Dowty classification, belongs to the *activities* predicates. Consider the following example.

- (4) Kodomo-ga botan-o osi-te simaw-ta.
 child -Nom button -Acc press simaw-Past
 'A child pressed a button, and this led to a situation by which the speaker is annoyed, etc.'

As predicted, this sentence has only the POV interpretation of *-te simaw*, expressing the speaker's negative attitude to the situation caused by the child's deed, whether intentional or unintentional.

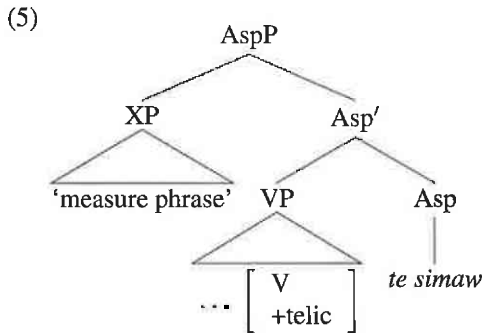
This consideration leads us to the following generalization.

⇒ Aspectual *te simaw* licenses only the 'telic' VP.

Thus, we will posit the following phrase structure involving *-te simaw*, where it occupies the head of the projection of Asp(ect)P, so that it 'governs' a VP which has the inherent semantic feature of [+telic].²

²Telicity is a feature that should be defined on VP, rather than lexical V. Observe the following contrast, assuming that *it takes time interval to* VP is a diagnostic of a telic VP.

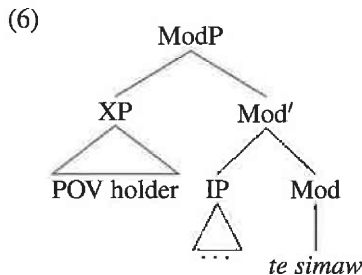
- (i) a. *It took five minutes to walk in the park.
 b. It took five minutes to walk across the park.



Here I am adopting Borer's (1994) syntactic analysis of telicity, in which the expression that defines the end point of the activity, typically object of V, and in the case of (1b), the object NP *a paper*, is moved at LF to the Spec position of AspP, with the semantic consequence that it serves as the 'measure phrase' licensing the head Asp by agreement.

3. Modal *te simaw*

In this section, we will consider the other use of *te simaw*, namely its occurrence as a Modal, which involves POV phenomena. More specifically, we are going to say that *te simaw*, in its relevant use, occupies the head of Mod(al)P, as in the following structure.



Here, 'IP' refers to the 'rest' of the projection of whatever belongs to Infl, including AspP that we discussed in the previous section.

The Spec position of ModP is occupied by 'POV holder', which is usually an empty category bound by the speaker or a person directly involved in the discourse. (Here I have in mind a discourse-operator proposed by Huang (1984) to account for the empty pronominal phenomena of Chinese.)

When the sentence involving *te simaw* is embedded in a *belief*-context, subject of the main V is the POV holder.

- (7) Taro-wa [kodomo-ga botan-o osi-te simaw-ta] to omow-teiru.
 -Top child -Nom button -Acc press simaw-Past that thinks
 'Taro believes that a child pressed a button and he resents the situation caused by that.'

In this sentence, Taro, subject of the *belief-V*, is the POV holder, who resents the situation caused by the child.

So the case illustrated by (7) can be regarded as a case in which the position of POV holder is occupied by some kind of empty category which is bound by some discourse-participant, which in the present case is the main clause subject.

3.1 'Overt' POV Holder

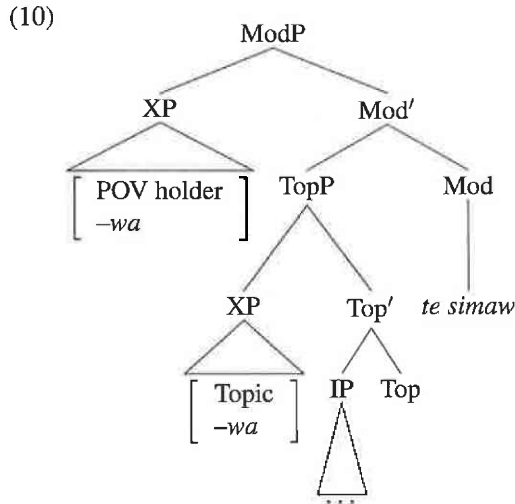
There are cases in which POV holder, or 'subject' of Mod, is overtly realized in the sentence. As a case in point, I would like to suggest that *wa*-marked NP, which usually serves as a Topic of the sentence, can be a POV holder. So (8) is 'ambiguous'.

- (8) Hanako-wa botan-o osi-te simaw-ta.
 -wa button -Acc press simaw-Past

This sentence minimally differs from (4) in that the subject of the sentence is marked by *wa*, usually a topic marker. Now, this sentence has the following interpretations.

- (9) a. As for Hanako, she pressed a button and this led to a situation which annoyed me. [POV = the speaker]
 b. Hanako was upset by her own embarrassing act of pressing a button. [POV = Hanako]

Reading (9a) is that on which the speaker is the POV holder and Hanako is the topic of the sentence, while (9b) represents the reading on which Hanako is the POV holder. This latter reading suggests that a *wa*-marked NP can be in the Spec position of ModP. Thus we posit the following syntactic structure.



Here, there are two possible positions in which *wa*-marked NP may appear. If the higher Spec position of ModP is occupied by an empty category, which by default is bound by the speaker, the *wa*-marked NP serves as the topic of the sentence, while if an overt *wa*-marked NP appears in Spec ModP, the understood topic is also the same individual, which suggests the presence of an empty category in Spec TopP which must be bound by POV holder.

- (11) a. [_{ModP} POV=Speaker ... [_{TopP} anything/anybody-*wa* ...
 b. [_{ModP} POV=somebody else_i ... [_{TopP} empty_i ...

3.2 *zibun*

Consider the following sentence, in which the reflexive *zibun* is used.

- (12) Hanako-*wa* *zibun*-no kodomo-ga botan-o osi-te simaw-ta.
 -*wa* self's child button -Acc press simaw-Past

This sentence does not allow the ambiguity that sentence (8) has. Of the two possible interpretations that (8) allows, (12) has only the interpretation described by (13a).

- (13) a. Hanako was upset by her own child pressing the button.
 b. *As for Hanako, her child pressed the button, and this has annoyed me.

That is, sentence (12) allows only the interpretation that Hanako is the POV holder. Observe, in contrast, the following sentence where the non-reflexive pronoun is used instead of *zibun* in the corresponding position.

- (14) Hanako-wa kanozyo-no kodomo-ga botan-o osi-te simaw-ta.
 -wa her child button -Acc press simaw-Past

There is a clear contrast between (12) and (14), so that the latter allows either of the interpretations in (13).

This fact suggests that the antecedent of *zibun* may not just be a topic of the sentence and that it has to be a POV holder, while non-reflexive pronominals do not have such a requirement.

3.3 Contrastive *wa*

So far, we have observed that there are two positions in which *wa*-marked NP may overtly appear: Spec TopP and Spec ModP.

There is another use of *wa*, distinct from the topical use, attested in the literature. Cf. Kuno (1973), among others. This use of *wa* is seen in the following example.

- (15) Hanako-wa kono botan-wa osa nakat-ta.
 -wa this button -*wa* press not Past
 ‘Hanako did not press this button (although she might have pressed the other).’

The second occurrence of *wa*-NP indicates contrast (between the button that she did not press and the one that she did), and this NP tends to be pronounced with stress.

Now let us see what happens if the type of sentence exemplified by (15) is ‘embedded’ in a clause headed by *te simaw*.

- (16) Hanako-wa aoi botan-wa osa nakat-ta ga,
 -wa blue button -*wa* press not did but
 akai botan-wa osi-te simaw-ta.
 red button -*wa* press simaw-Past

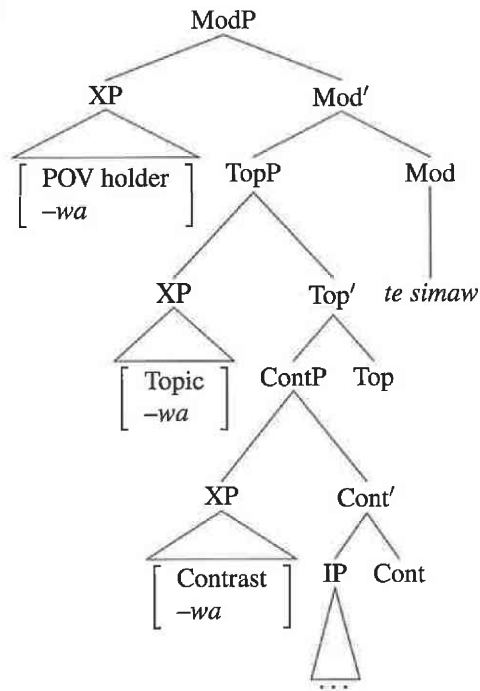
In this sentence, contrast between the blue button, which Hanako did not press, and the red button, which she ended up pressing, is at stake.

Judgment here is very subtle, but my observation is that sentence (16) allows the following two interpretations.

- (17) a. Hanako was upset by her pressing the red button (though she was careful enough not to press the blue button.) (POV = Hanako)
 b. As for Hanako, she pressed the red button (though she was careful enough not to press the blue button,) and I am annoyed by that incident. (POV = speaker)

Especially intriguing is the possibility of (17b), for this reading suggests the necessity for three syntactic positions which potentially host *wa*-marked NPs. This leads us to posit the following structure, where *Cont(rast)P* is a projection of a functional category whose *Spec* position hosts a contrast expression.

(18)



3.4 Further Ambiguity

It has been observed in the literature that the nominative subject of a sentence can have two ways of interpretation. Consider the following simple sentence.

- (19) *Musume-ga idai-ni hait-ta.*
 daughter-Nom medical school-to enter

One way of interpreting this is a neutral description of the state of affairs: (My) daughter has been admitted to a medical school. The other interpretation is the exhaustive listing of the nominative subject: (While I had expected both my son and daughter would go to medical school,) my daughter (alone) has been admitted. This latter interpretation is more readily obtained when the nominative subject is pronounced with stress.

Just this ambiguity is retained when the clause (19) is 'embedded' in the *te simaw* context with *wa*-marked NP.

- (20) Yamada-san-wa musume-ga idai-ni Hait-te simaw-ta.
Mr. Yamada -wa daughter-Nom medical school-to enter simaw Past

We have observed in the previous sections that the *wa*-marked NP may be interpreted either as Topic of the sentence, in which case the speaker is the POV holder, or as POV holder, in which case Mr. Yamada is also Topic. And this ambiguity can be further multiplied by the ambiguity associated with the nominative subject, between the neutral description and exhaustive listing interpretations, with the result that the following interpretations are available, some of them may be more or less plausible than others.

- (21) a. I am upset by (am envious of) the fact that as for Mr. Yamada, his daughter has been admitted to a med school.
b. I am upset by (am envious of) the fact that as for Mr. Yamada, it was his daughter (alone) that has been admitted to a med school.
c. Mr. Yamada is upset by the fact that his daughter has been admitted to a med school (for he is worried about the tuition, etc.).
d. Mr. Yamada is upset by the fact that it was his daughter (alone) that has been admitted to a med school (for he had expected that his son will also be admitted).

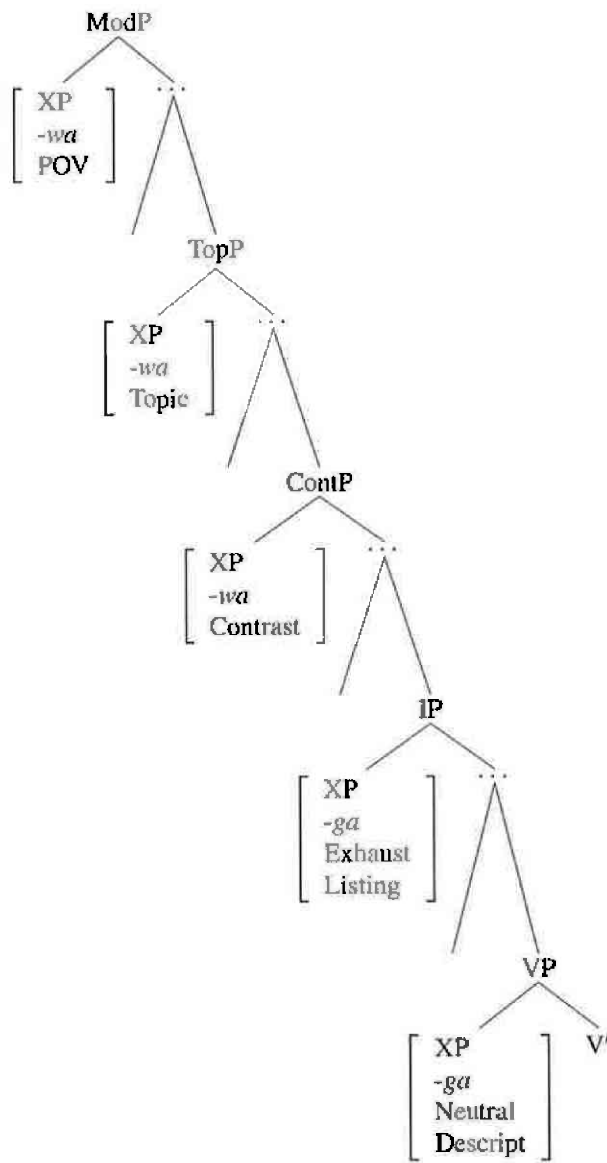
Nishigauchi and Uchibori (1993) relate the ambiguity involving the nominative subject to the distinction between the cardinal and presuppositional interpretations, drawing on Diesing's (1992) theory of indefinites. Nishigauchi and Uchibori assimilate the neutral description interpretation to the cardinal interpretation, and the exhaustive listing to the presuppositional interpretation, respectively. They further follow Diesing in that they support the structural correspondence between the two interpretations:

- On the cardinal interpretation, the NP is interpreted in VP.
- On the presuppositional interpretation, the NP is interpreted in IP.

Scope and other properties associated with indefinite NPs are shown to follow from this structural dichotomy. Further, if the ambiguity between the neutral description and exhaustive listing can be assimilated with the distinction between the cardinal and presuppositional interpretations, the former distinction can also be ascribed to the structural correspondence as well, at the point where interpretation is performed.

This leads us to posit the following skeletal structure of clause, with three positions where *wa*-marked NP may be potentially realized, and two position in which nominative NP may be interpreted. In this structure, 'IP' is an 'abbreviation' for the rest of projections belonging to Infl.

(22)



The point of the discussion up to this point is only to suggest the necessity for the proposed structure. Further syntactic and semantic consequences of this approach should be worked out in future study.

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