The left periphery and focus structure in Japanese

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1. Goals of the study

- To describe the structural and pragmatic properties of the left periphery in Japanese, with special reference to the so-called topic marker -*wa* and nominative (focus) marker -*ga*.

- In particular, to propose *subordinate focus-structure* in RRG focus structure projection to define different types of topic and focus (topic, contrastive topic, contrastive focus, restrictive focus, etc.).

- To pin down the default range of topic and focus and extend the account in order to capture "unexpected" use of topic and focus, which brings out particular discourse-pragmatic effects.

2. Left periphery: sentence-initial topic and focus

(1) Yesterday, what did John give to Mary in the library?

- Functions of the left periphery

Topic (often contrastive/switch topic)
Catalan, Czech, Danish, German, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, ASL…
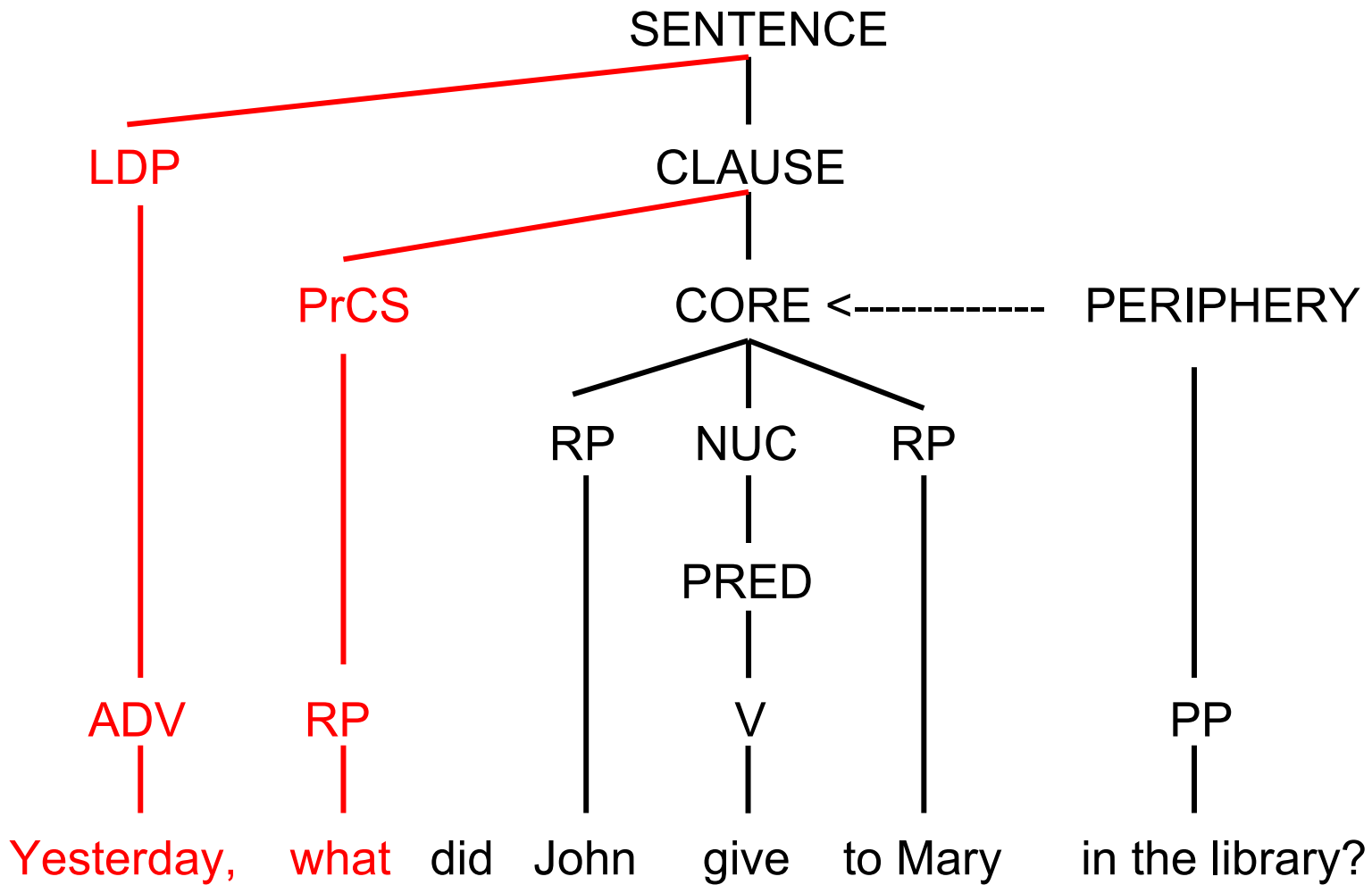
Focus (typically restrictive or narrow focus)
Czech, English, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, ASL…

- Ordering of topic-focus

Hungarian (Horvath 2000)
Top … Restrictive-Foc V … Informational-Foc

Restrictive (identificational, exhaustive-listing) focus (selected from a discourse-specified set) must appear preverbally, while non-restrictive focus remain in situ.

"Left periphery" in layered structure of the clause (Van Valin 2008)

3. Left periphery and topic-focus in Japanese

a. The basic word order is SOV (despite some flexibility).

b. Post-nominal markings are sensitive to the focus structure: *-wa*=topic, *-ga* 'NOM' (or other case markers)=focus

c. A topic is preposed. $S_{top}OV$, $O_{top}SV$…

d. A contrastive topic may remain in situ. $S_{c.top}OV$, $SO_{c.top}V$…

e. A focus normally remain in situ. $S_{foc}OV$, $SO_{foc}V$ …

f. A contrastive focus may be preposed. $S_{c.foc}OV$, $O_{c.foc}SV$…

g. A nominative-marked subject which is normally topic-marked (in expressing permanent, generic state of affairs, etc.) results in a narrow-focus reading.

h. Topic marking on a focus brings out particular readings (contrastive, etc.)

- Post-nominal marking: *-wa*=topic, *-ga* 'NOM' (or other case)=focus

(2) What happened to your car?
     (kuruma-wa) kosyoosita   [predicate-focus]
     car-TOP   broke down
     '(The car) broke down.'

(3) What happened?
     kuruma-ga   kosyoosita   [sentence-focus]
              NOM
     'The car broke down.'

(4) I heard your motorcycle broke down.
     KURUMA-GA kosyoosita   [argument-focus]
     'THE CAR broke down.'

                                        (Lambrecht 1994)

- Topic and focus defined for the study

Topic:

Represented by NP's marked with -*wa*. Includes contrastive *wa*'s also.

(Note that zero anaphora is normally used for a continuing topic.)

Focus:

Part of the sentence that represents non-presupposed information (Lambrecht 1994).

5. Previous claims

5.1 Hasegawa's (1992, 1996) three-way representation

- Topic NP-*wa* in a left-detached position [LDP]
- Contrastive NP-*wa* and narrow-focus NP-*ga* in a precore slot [PrCS]
- Broad focus argument NP-*ga* in ARG inside the CORE

Captures the 'focus' property of the contrastive *wa*, distinct from a topic *wa*. But fails to differentiate contrastive NP-*wa* (contrastive topic) from narrow-focus NP-*ga* (i.e. fails to capture the "topic" property common to topic and contrastive *wa*'s).

5.2 Shimojo (1995)

- Subject NP-*wa*'s (whether contrastive or non-contrastive) tend to be outside the focus domain of a sentence (according to a text count in TV talk show data); hence, NP-*wa* is in LDP.

Captures the discourse generalization.

Acknowledges the 'topic' property in both types of NP-*wa*.

But fails to differentiate topic NP-*wa* from contrastive NP-*wa* (i.e. fails to capture the "focus" property common to NP-*ga* and contrastive NP-*wa*).

Remaining problem

These previous studies highlight critical properties of topic and focus in Japanese; however, the claims are mutually exclusive and suggest the need of a framework to properly capture the observed range of topic and focus. I.e.

(1) Common property of NP-*wa*'s

(2) Common property of NP-*ga*'s

(3) Common property of contrastive NP-*wa* and narrow-focus NP-*ga*

(1)
| Topic NP-wa |
| Contrastive NP-wa |

(2)
| Narrow-focus NP-ga |
| Broad-focus NP-ga |

(3)
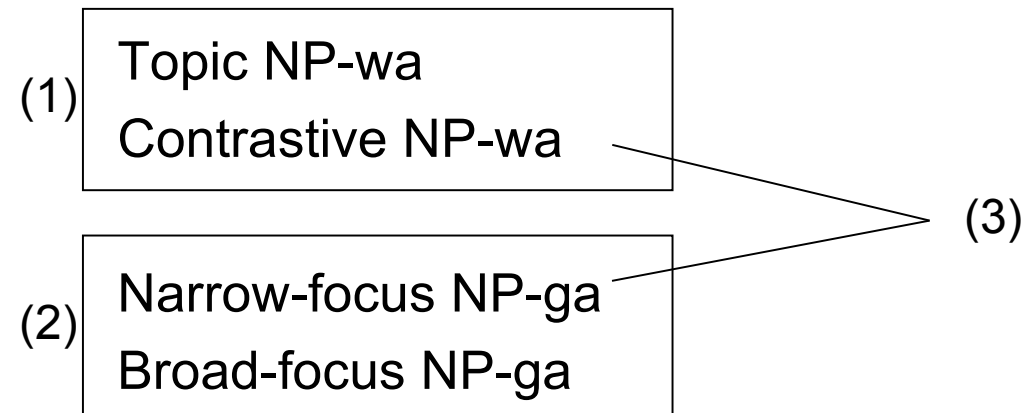
5.3 Shimojo (2005): Recent discourse findings

A more extensive analysis of conversational Japanese (informal two-party conversation) has revealed:

- NP-*wa*'s (subject and object) tend to be contrastive.
- They commonly represent discourse-new entities, i.e. focus (about 50% of the total).

Contrary to the general assumption that *wa* is a topic marker, NP-*wa*'s may be foci as well as topics. A theory needs to capture focus-marking *wa* also.

6. Subordinate f(ocus)-structure

In order to overcome the previous limitations in the representation of topic and focus, I incorporate the representation of subordinate f(ocus)-structure (Erteschik-Shir 1997, 2007) into RRG.

A subordinate f-structure is embedded in a main topic or focus, and the extra layer of focus structure captures ambivalence of topic and focus properties.

(5) A person$_{FOC}$ [I$_{TOP}$ know_] is famous

The specific indefinite subject 'a person I know' is equivalent to 'I know a person' in terms of f-structure.

(6) I$_{TOP}$ know [a person]$_{FOC}$

While the indefinite 'person' is the focus, the subordinate topic 'I' represents specificity, hence the licensing of the whole NP 'a person I know' as a main topic.

The bi-level representation of focus structure is particularly useful to tease out the complex focus structure associated with contrastive elements, which function as both topics and foci, because it accounts for the various contrastive readings that are derived by different ways of imposing one f-structure on the other (Erteschik-Shir 2007: 50).

7. Subordinate f-structure and NP-*wa*/*ga*

7.1 Contrastive NP-*wa*: [{x_{foc}, y}$_{top}$]-*wa*$_{top}$ [predicate]$_{foc}$

Contrastive elements require a contextually provided set {x, y…} (i.e. the set as a whole is a topic), from which an element x is selected (i.e. x is a focus). The NP-*wa* is the main topic of the sentence with a focus on the predicate (i.e. the predicate-focus, the default f-structure for *wa*).

(7) watashi-wa ani-to   imooto-ga   imasu
     I-top   older.brother-and younger.sister-NOM exist
     'I have an older brother and a younger sister'
     ani-wa   tookyoo-ni sundeimasu   [{*ani*$_{foc}$, *imooto*}$_{top}$]-*wa*$_{top}$
     older.brother-top Tokyo-in   living
     '(My) older brother lives in Tokyo.'

7.2 Topic NP-*wa*: [{x$_{foc}$, …}$_{top}$]-*wa*$_{top}$ [predicate]$_{foc}$

The element *x* is selected from an unspecified set and the NP-*wa* functions as a topic of the sentence.

(8) ima watashi-no ani-wa   tookyoo-ni sundeimasu
    now I-gen   older.brother-top Tokyo-in   living
    '(My) older brother lives in Tokyo now.'

> [{*watashi-no ani*$_{foc}$, …}$_{top}$]-*wa*$_{top}$

Why does topic NP-*wa* contain the subordinate f-structure?

Contrary to the prevailing distinction of topic and contrastive *wa*'s, I propose a common underlying property, *the selection of element(s) of a given set*. However, for topic NP-*wa*, the elements of a set are not overtly specified.

Relevant observations:

• NP-*wa* typically represents either an overt contrastive relationship or a shift topic, i.e. a selection of a new topic out of a set of potential topics, and zero anaphora represents a continuing topic (Suzuki 1995, Shimojo 2005).

• When a continuing topic needs to be overtly specified, a bare NP (with no post-nominal marking) tends to be used (Shimojo 2005).

• Therefore, "topic" represented by *wa* is not characterizable by the general notion of givenness, as it typically involves contrastiveness.

7.3 Contrastive (narrow) focus NP-*ga*: [{x_{foc}, y}$_{top}$]-*ga*$_{foc}$ [predicate]

The focus element *x* is selected from a contextually provided set and the NP-*ga* functions as a narrow focus of the sentence.

(9)

A1: gokyoodai-wa?

　　siblings-TOP

　　'(How about your) siblings?'

B1: ani-to 　　　　　　imooto-ga imasu

　　older.brother-and younger.sister-NOM exist

　　'(I) have an older brother and a younger sister'

A2: sorede donata-ga tookyoo-ni irassharu no?

　　and 　　who-NOM Tokyo-in 　exist 　　　Q

　　'And who is in Tokyo?'

B2: ani-ga tookyoo-ni imasu

　　'(My) older brother is in Tokyo.'

[{*ani*$_{foc}$, *imooto*}$_{top}$]-*ga*$_{foc}$

7.4 Restrictive focus NP-*ga*: [{x_{foc}, …}_{top}]-*ga*_{foc} [predicate]

The element is selected from a set that is contextually restricted but not clearly defined, hence distinguished from contrastive focus (Erteschik-Shir 2007). The subordinate f-structure is identical to that of topic NP-*wa*; for both, elements are selected from a restricted but unspecified set.

(10)

A: domodachi-de dareka   ryuugakushita?

    friend-among   anyone studied.abroad

    'Did anyone of your friends study abroad?'

B: tanaka-ga   ryuugakushita   [{Tanaka_{foc}, …}_{top}]-*ga*_{foc}

    Tanaka-nom studied.abroad

    'Tanaka studied abroad.'

7.5 Non-contrastive focus NP-*ga*: x-*ga*$_{foc}$ [predicate]$_{foc}$

There is no subordinate f-structure for the NP-*ga*. This type typically represents sentence-focus.

(11) senshuu   tomodachi-ga nihon-kara   kita | tomodachi-*ga*$_{foc}$ |

　　 last.week friend-nom   Japan-from came

　　 'A friend came from Japan last week.'

7.6 Matrix f-structure and informativeness

Contrastive topic
$[\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}]$-*wa*$_{top}$ $\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}$ alone is not informative, hence NP_{top}.

Contrastive focus
$[\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}]$-*ga*$_{foc}$ $\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}$ alone is informative, hence NP_{foc}.

Both involve the selection of particular element(s) of a set, however, the selection per se does not make the sentence informative.

Truncation test: Contrastive topic

(12)   watashi-wa ani-to   imooto-ga   imasu
        I-top   older.brother-and younger.sister-NOM exist
        'I have an older brother and a younger sister'

    # ani-wa

        older.brother-top
        '(My) older brother.'

Presenting just the selected element results with an incomplete fragment.

Truncation test: Contrastive focus

(13)

A1:   gokyoodai-wa?

        siblings-TOP
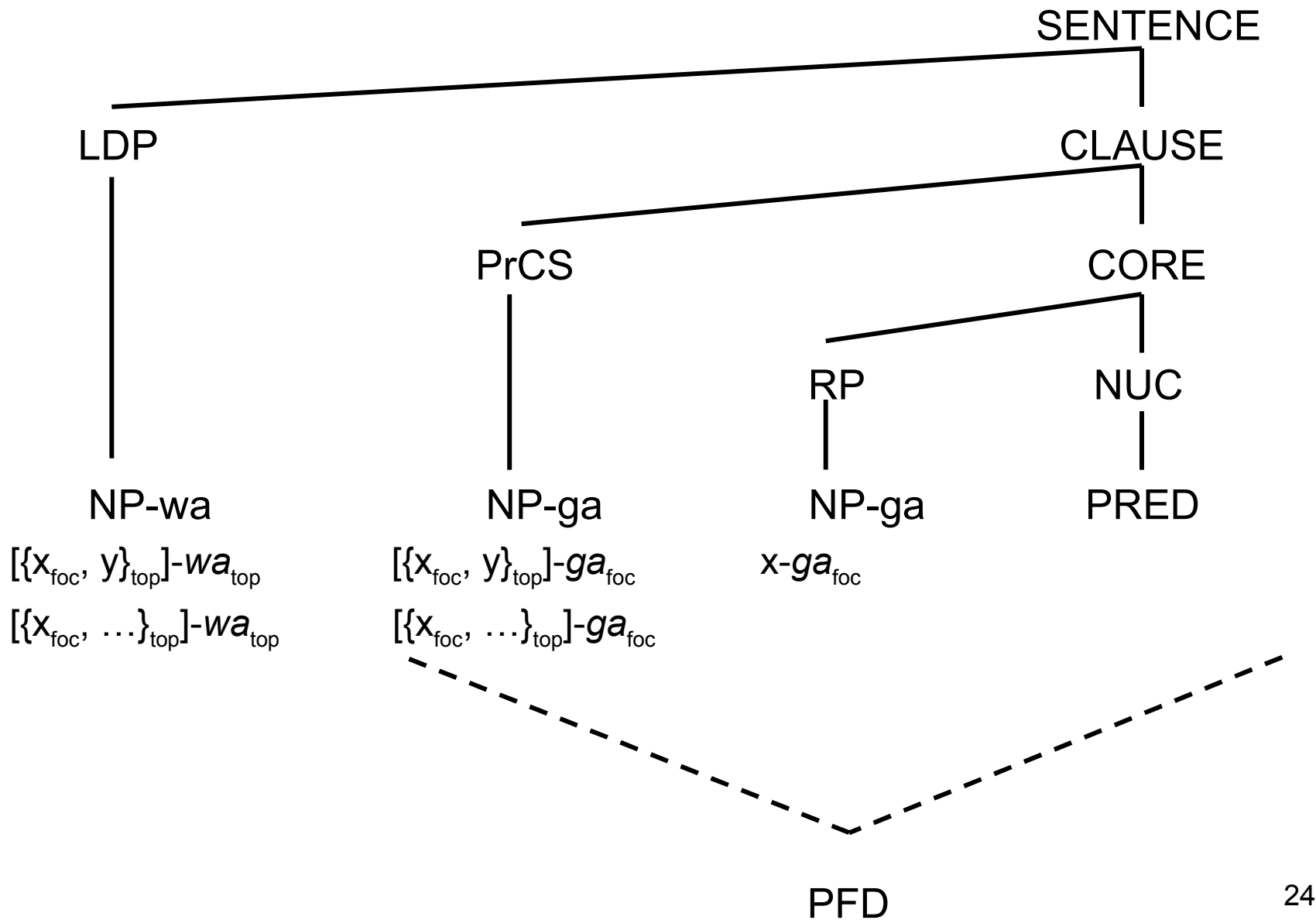
        '(How about your) siblings?'

B1:   ani-to   imooto-ga imasu

        older.brother-and younger.sister-NOM exist

        '(I) have an older brother and a younger sister'

A2:   sorede donata-ga tookyoo-ni irassharu no?

        and   who-NOM Tokyo-in   exist   Q

        'And who is in Tokyo?'

B2:   ani-ga

        '(My) older brother.'

8. Default assignment of NP-*wa*/*ga* in LSC

SENTENCE

LDP

CLAUSE

PrCS

CORE

RP

NUC

NP-wa

NP-ga

NP-ga

PRED

$[\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}]$-*wa*$_{top}$

$[\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}]$-*ga*$_{foc}$

x-*ga*$_{foc}$

$[\{x_{foc}, \ldots\}_{top}]$-*wa*$_{top}$

$[\{x_{foc}, \ldots\}_{top}]$-*ga*$_{foc}$

PFD

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9. Marked assignment of NP-*wa*

9.1 PrCS

(14) (at a party)

A: dare-ga   baakuree-no   gakusee?

    who-NOM Berkeley-GEN student

    'Who are Berkeley students?'

B: karera-ga baakuree-no   gakusee desu   [default]

    they-TOP Berkeley-GEN student COP

    'They are Berkeley students.'

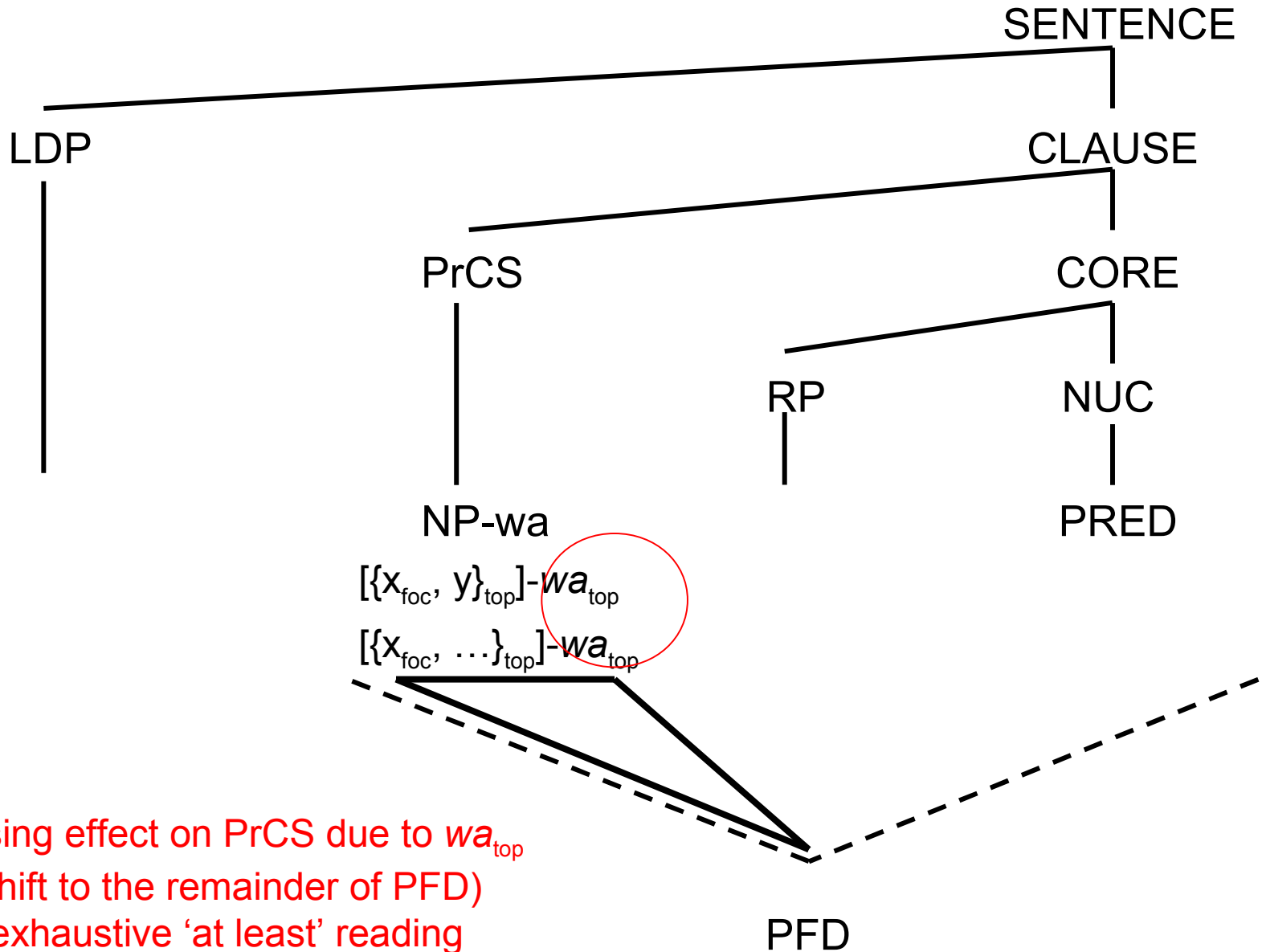B': karera-wa baakuree-no gakusee desu

    'They are Berkeley students (I don't know about others).'

Kuroda (2005)

If a NP-*ga* is used for the contrastive focus (default), there is 'only *x*' (exhaustive listing) reading, due to the Gricean maxim of quantity 'make your contribution as informative as is required' (*maximality constraint*).

If a NP-wa is used (e.g. B'), the speaker is not giving a description of the situation (thetic judgment); he has committed himself only to the proposition that 'they are Berkeley students' with respect to the selected elements 'they' (i.e. 'at least they are Berkeley students'). This speech act could implicate that the speaker leaves the possibility of others 'being Berkeley students' open, hence, *anti-exhaustive listing implicature*.

Marked assignment of NP-*wa*: PrCS

SENTENCE

LDP

CLAUSE

PrCS

CORE

RP

NUC

NP-wa

PRED

$[\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}]$-*wa*$_{top}$

$[\{x_{foc}, \ldots\}_{top}]$-*wa*$_{top}$

Defocusing effect on PrCS due to *wa*$_{top}$
(focus shift to the remainder of PFD)
→ Anti-exhaustive 'at least' reading

PFD

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9.2 Marked assignment of NP-*wa*: RP

(15)
A: baffaroo doo?

   Buffalo   how

   'How is Buffalo?'

B: yuki-ga   huru yo.   [default]
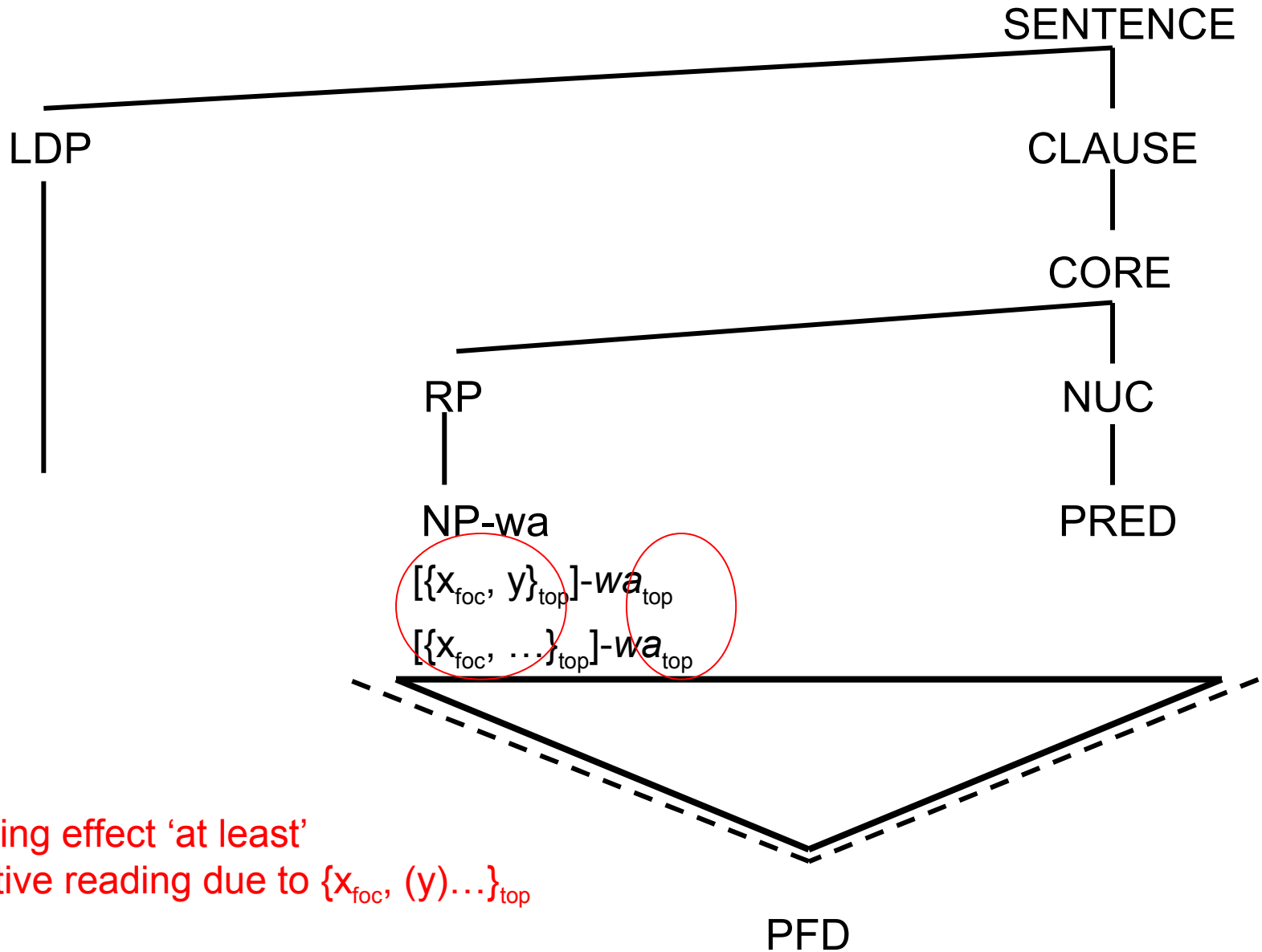
   snow-TOP fall   FP

   'It snows (lit. snow falls).'

B': yuki-wa   huru yo.

   snow-TOP fall   FP

   'It snows (but it's not that cold, etc.)'

Marked assignment of NP-*wa*: RP

SENTENCE

LDP

CLAUSE

CORE

RP

NUC

NP-wa

PRED

$[\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}]$-*wa*$_{top}$

$[\{x_{foc}, \ldots\}_{top}]$-*wa*$_{top}$

PFD

Defocusing effect 'at least'
Contrastive reading due to $\{x_{foc}, (y)\ldots\}_{top}$

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NP-*wa* for a non-subject RP

(16) taroo-ga   ringo-o   tabeta   [default]
     Taro-NOM apple-ACC ate
     'Taro ate an apple.'

(17) taroo-ga   [ringo-wa]$_{RP}$ tabeta
     Taro-NOM apple-TOP   ate
     'Taro ate an apple (at least, but didn't eat an orange, etc.)'

(18) [sono ringo-wa]$_{LDP}$ taroo-ga   tabeta   [topicalized]
      the   apple-TOP   Taro-NOM ate
     'The apple, Taro ate.' (No defocusing, i.e. no 'at least' reading)

Unacceptable NP-*wa* in RP

- "Presentational" sentence (difficult defocusing)

(19) mite. marinaazu-ga/*wa   katta!
    look Mariners-NOM/TOP won
    'Look, Mariners won!'

- With an indefinite NP (difficult set reading)

(20) kinoo   otoko-ga/*wa   taihosareta
    yesterday man-NOM/*TOP   was.arrested
    'Yesterday, a man was arrested.'

10. Marked assignment of NP-*ga*: non-focus RP

SENTENCE

LDP CLAUSE

CORE

RP NUC

NP-ga PRED

x-*ga*foc

PFD
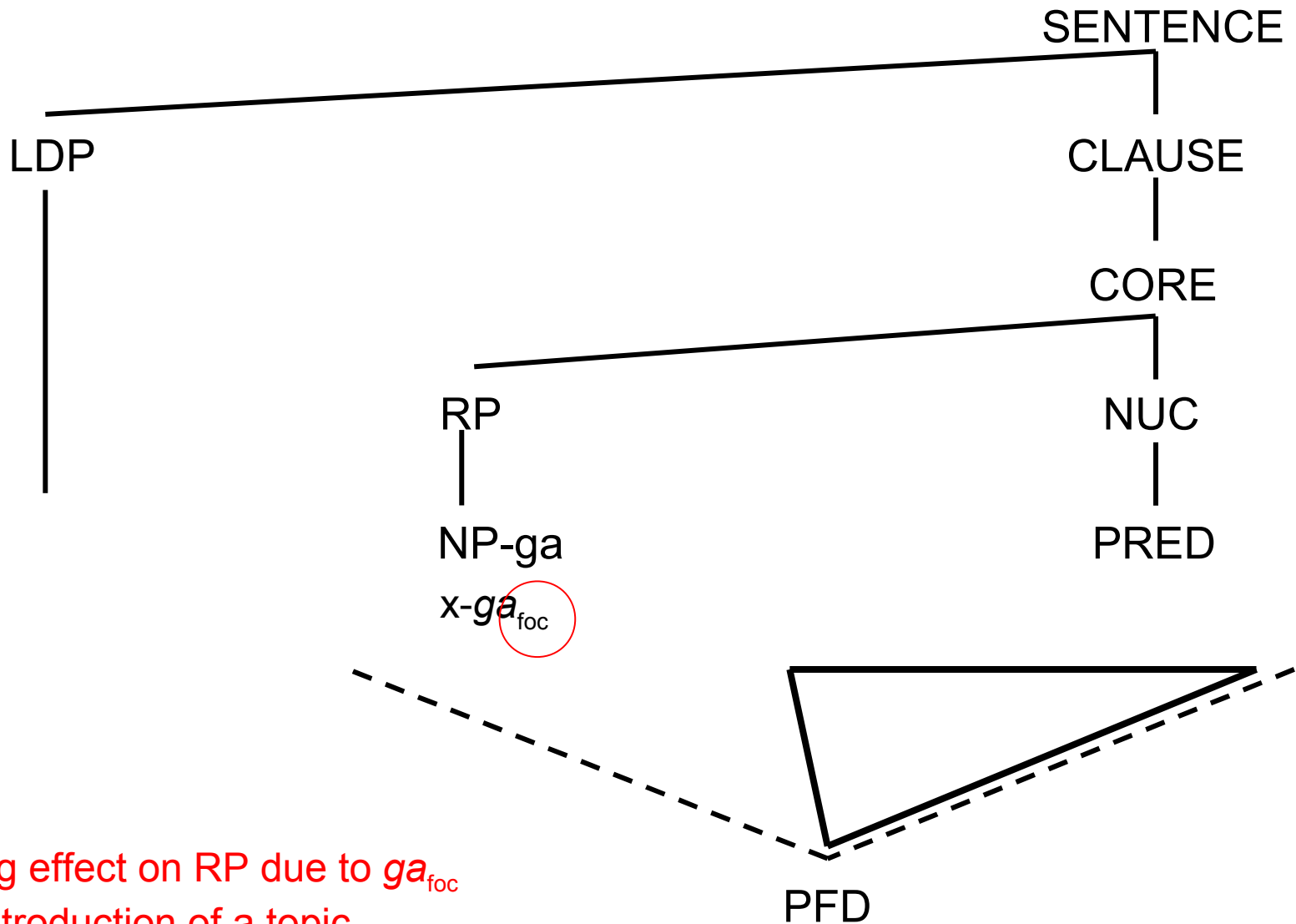
Focusing effect on RP due to *ga*foc
→ Re-introduction of a topic

Ga for non-focus: re-introduction of referents

Given information may be marked with *ga* for re-introduction of referents (Maynard 1987) or for a perspective shift (Watanabe 1990).

(21)
mukasi, mukasi, arutokoroni oziisan to obaasan-**ga** orimasita
'Once upon a time, there were an old man and an old woman in some place.'

sizukana yama-de hutari-**wa** siawaseni kurasiteorimasita
'In a peaceful mountain, the two were living happily.'

Transition in the story

aruhi no kotodesu. oziisan-**ga** yama-e sibakari-ni ikimasita
'One day, the old man went to the mountain to collect firewoods'

Ga for non-focus: self-contained facts

In texts such as newspaper articles, self-contained facts are often presented without connecting with the preceding text with NP-*wa*'s (Yamaguchi 2007).

(22)

Due to the effect of Typhoon #15, the rain [wa] started on the 28th, and stopped in the evening of the 1st; however, it has been reported that (the rain) started heavily in the late evening of the 1st. In X town, 95mm of rain [ga] fell between the midnight and 8:00 on the 2nd. (Asahi Newspaper)

Marked use of NP-*ga*: focusing effects for particular predicates

A NP-wa is normally used for a sentence with an individual-level predicate (e.g. 23).

(23) [taroo-wa]$_{LDP}$ gakusee da   [default]

    Taro-TOP   student   COP

    'Taro is a student.'

A marked focusing effect is achieved by a NP-*ga*, which imposes a narrow focus on the NP which would otherwise be a topic.

(24) [taroo-ga]$_{PrCS}$ gakusee da

    Taro-NOM   student   COP

    'It is Taro that is a student.'

11. Linking algorithm: semantics → syntax

(revised version of Shimojo 2009)

1. Construct the semantic representation of the sentence, based on the logical structure of the predicator.

2. Determine the actor and undergoer assignments, following the actor-undergoer hierarchy.

3. Determine the morphosyntactic coding of the arguments.

a. Select the privileged syntactic argument, based on the privileged syntactic argument selection hierarchy and principles.

11. Linking algorithm: semantics → syntax   (cont.)

b. Assign the arguments the appropriate case markers and/or postpositions.

(i) If the argument represents the f-strucutre $[\{x_{foc}, y\}_{top}]_{top}$ or $[\{x_{foc}, \ldots\}_{top}]_{top}$, or needs defocusing (marked assignment), assign *wa* to the argument(s). If the referent(s) requires absolute specification, assign no marking.

(ii) If an argument represents matrix focus of the sentence, or needs focusing (marked assignment), assign appropriate case markers, based on the case assignment rules for accusative constructions.

(ii) If neither (i) nor (ii) above applies, use no morphosyntactic instantiation for the argument (i.e. zero anaphora).

11. Linking algorithm: semantics → syntax   (cont.)

4. Select the syntactic template(s) for the sentence, following the syntactic template selection principle (and language-specific qualifications).

a. If an argument has no syntactic instantiation, use appropriate truncated syntactic templates.

b. Use LDP for default *wa* (but in situ for defocusing broad-focus *wa*), PrCS for a narrow-focus *ga* or *wa*.

c. If the referent(s) of the argument(s) requires cataphoric defocusing, use PoCS (default) or RDP (for a detached sentence topic).

5. Assign arguments to positions in the syntactic representation of the sentence. If there is no syntactic position to assign the argument(s) to, link them directly with the corresponding referents in the discourse representation structure.

12. Summary

- The bi-level f-structure representation pinpoints common and distinct properties of topic and focus NPs in Japanese, that are particularly associated with the left periphery of a sentence.

- The inherent f-structure of *wa* and *ga* and the RRG focus structure projection together nail down both default and marked representations of topic-focus, and offers a unified account for previous claims such as *anti-exhaustive listing*, and a variety of discourse observations.

- In terms of left periphery, Japanese fits the cross-linguistic trend (see Erteschik-Shir 2007) in that (i) only "topics" (including contrastive foci that contain a subordinate topic) appear in the left periphery, and (ii) [(contrastive) topic]$_{LDP}$ precedes [contrastive focus]$_{PrCS}$.

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