Understanding the Use of *O* and *Ga* Particles in Japanese Sentences for Japanese Language Learners

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Abstract

Joshi or particle is a class of words that cannot change the form, other than that Joshi cannot stand itself. Joshi must be attached to another class of words to gain meaning. In the Japanese language, one of the joshi groups that can connect noun and noun or noun and verb or adjective called the kakujoshi category, two of them are o and ga particles. One of the functions of o and ga particles have the same function as an object marker; many Japanese language learners still have difficulty in using o and ga particles as an objective marker. This research is how Japanese language learners' understanding of using o and ga particles in Japanese sentences. The method used the quantitative and questionnaire technique. This research concludes that many respondents have passed the advanced level in the Japanese language proficiency test, and need more than two years for study. However, the understanding of Japanese learners in the use of o and ga particles are still at the intermediate level.

Keywords: Kakujoshi ; Ga; O; Understanding of particle

1. Introduction

The Japanese language is one of the languages that have SOP (Subject, Object, Predicate) sentence patterns. For each function, it is usually filled with noun, adjective, verb, etcetera. Based on the grammar of the Japanese sentence formation class words consist: *meishi* (noun), *doushi* (verb), *keiyoushi* (adjective), *jodoushi* (copula), *joshi* (particle), *setsuzokushi* (conjunctions), *fukushi* (adverb), and *kandoushi* (interjection).

Joshi or particle is included in fuzokugo, which is a class of words that cannot stand itself that must be attached to another class of words in order to obtain the meaning of the particle. (Sutedi, 2009, p. 45) states that *joshi* has no meaning if it is not attached to another word class, *joshi* is different from it such as adjective and verb that can change the form, *joshi* has a fixed pettern. (Dahidi, 2004, p. 181) *joshi* could not change the form. Then, the meaning will be formed after being used together with another class of words that can stand itself. So that it can form a sentence (bun). In Japanese language, one of the *joshi* groups that

can connect noun and noun or noun and verb or adjective called *kakujoshi* category. (Iori, 2005, p. 61) states that *kakujoshi* in this group are ga (が) 、 o (を) 、 ni (に) 、 e (へ) 、 de (で) 、 kara (から) 、 made (まで) 、 to (と) 、 yori (より) 、 zero-kaku (ゼロ格).

In this research, the object of research will only be on *o and ga* particles. According to (Masuoka, Takubo, & Teramura, 2009, p. 4) the functions of the particle ga are to indicate the main subject of a state, change, or activity. Besides as a predicate object of existing conditions, whereas o particle functions are as an object of action or activity, indicate rotating movement activity, period markers, and starting point marker. Look at the following sentence:

あの留学生は日本語を勉強している。
Ano ryuugakusei wa nihongo o benkyou shiteiru.
'The foreign student is studying Japanese'.
あの人は外国語ができる。
Ano hito wa gaikokugo ga dekiru.
'That person can speak foreign languages.
あの人はテニスが上手だ。
Ano hito wa tenisu ga jouzu da.
'That person is good at playing tennis'.

太郎は日本料理を好む。
Tarou wa nihon ryouri o konomu.
'Tarou likes Japanese cuisine'.
太郎は日本料理が好きだ。
Tarou wa nihon ryouri ga suki da.
'Tarou likes Japanese cuisine'.

In the example sentence above, in general, *o* particle indicates the object of activity carried out seen in the sentence (1), it is attached to a verb that indicates someone's feelings, such as 「好む」 *konomu* 'like', 「嫌う」 *kirau* 'hate', 「悲しむ」 *kanashimu* 'pathetic', 「憎む」 *nikumu* 'hate', 「ほしがる」 *hoshigaru* 'want', and others that are seen in the sentence (4). The ga particle is used as an objective marker for adjectives and verbs, which indicates importance, belonging, and ability. Verbs such as 「わかる」 *wakaru* 'understand', 「できる」 *dekiru* 'can', 「見える」 *mieru* 'can see' 「いる」 *mieru* 'exist', 「要る」 *mieru* 'necessary', and etcetera, that are seen in the sentence (2). Adjectives such as 「上手」 *jouzu* 'clever', 「下手」 heta 'stupid', 「得意」 *tokui* ' expert', 「苦手」 *nigate* 'weak', 「多い」 *ooi* 'many', 必要 必要 *hitsuyou* 'important', and etc, that are seen in the sentence (3). Ga particle is used in adjectives that indicate someone's feelings such as 「好きだ」 *suki da* 'like' 「嫌いだ」 *kirai da* 'dislike', 「ほしい」 *hoshii* 'want', 「悲しい」 *kanashii* 'sad', 「憎い」 *nikui* 'hate', and etcetera, that are seen in the sentence (5). *O and ga* particles have the same function as object markers; many Japanese language learners still have the difficulty of using *o* and *ga* particles as object markers. Therefore, the authors want to research more deeply about how Japanese language learners understand using *o* and *ga* particles in Japanese sentences.

Related to the research that the author will do; the authors find several references that will help the authors in conducting research. Research by (Atsuki, 2007) 助詞「が」と「を」の置換性について (substitution of *o and ga* particles), this research about the object of the predicate that uses ga particle cannot be replaced using o particle. The conclusion from this research is 1) the *ga* particle is used in some sentences such as *benkyou ga dekiru*, but not in other sentences such as *piano ga / o hikeru*. 2) for a few sentences, older people prefer to use ga particle, while young people prefer to use o particle. 3) *Ga* particle is generally used for a predicate that indicates condition (example: ... *tai*), and *o* particle is used for predicate that indicates action (example: ... *tagaru*). *Ga* particle is used when emphasizing an object from a predicate, and *o* particle is used when indicating an object moderately.

Whereas in research (Novianti, 2016) entitled 'Analysis of Errors in the Use of *De, Ni,* and *O* Particles in Sentences of Japanese Language Learners' about the errors of students in using these particles. There is the same function in the use of de, ni, and o particles. The role of the particles is to indicate the location where the activity takes place. Many particles have the same understanding; this makes the learning process challenging to use these particles. This research used a quantitative method. This research concludes that the average error of o particle use is 63.1%, the average error of de particle usage is 50.5%, and the average error of using ni particle is 43.3%. The average percentage of error in the use of de, ni, and o particle is 52.2%. It can be concluded that the error rate of using de, ni and o particles falls into the medium category. Factors causing the error are (1) most students cannot distinguish between the use of *kakujoshi de, ni,* and *o* in Japanese sentences. (2) Most mistakes in the translation problem section mean that almost all students have difficulty in translating Indonesian sentences into Japanese. (3) the books used in lectures, few of which explain the particles *de, ni,* and *o*.

In contrast to the above research, the first research describes the function of *o and*

ga particles used by native speakers of Japanese, then in the second research which examines o particle as a marker of location. There are only a few researchers who focus on understanding the level of using particle; many of them are analyzed the errors of using particles. In this research, the authors focus on the level of understanding of Japanese learners in the use of *o* and *ga* particles as a marker of objects. This research is expected to increase the understanding of Japanese language learners in using *o* and *ga* particles as markers of objects in Japanese sentences. The data is taken by distributing questionnaires that contained Japanese questions, then the respondents filled in by inserting o or ga particles in the sentence. Then the respondents were also asked to explain a little bit about the knowledge they knew about the difference in the use of *o* and *ga* particles in Japanese sentences. There are 92 respondents have passed the JLPT at levels N1, N2, N3, N4, and N5. Through these data, the authors will research the level of understanding the use of *o* and *ga* particles in Japanese language learners.
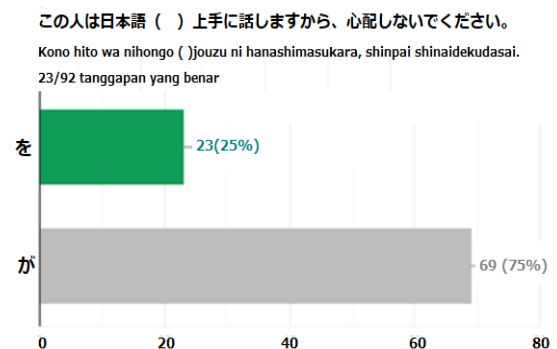
2. Methods

The research method used a quantitative method and using a questionnaire technique. The questionnaire technique requires a data source called the respondent. The advantages of the questionnaire technique are a) the researcher makes detailed questions before the respondent use it, b) with this technique can reach a broader target and does not require a long time, c) the results of the questionnaire that the respondents have done can be another source of data in different fields of research (Ratna, 2016, pp. 238-239). The form of distributing and filling out questionnaires in this research is to send via the internet (google docs). In the questionnaire, ten questions must be filled by respondents. After respondents fill out the data, the authors collected and classify the data for analyzing. The target respondents in this research were Japanese

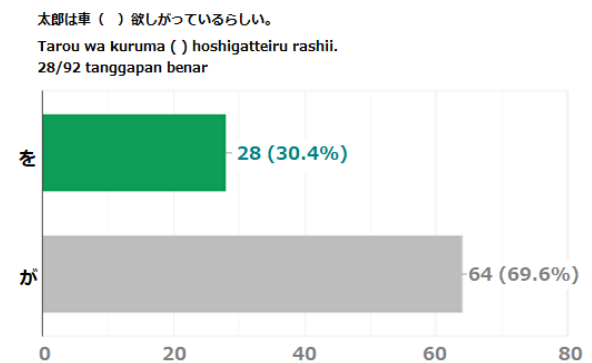language learners from basic to advanced levels, both those who studied Japanese in Indonesia or Japan.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Errors analysis in the use of *o* and *ga* particle

From ten questions distributed, there were two questions that less than half the respondents made many mistakes.
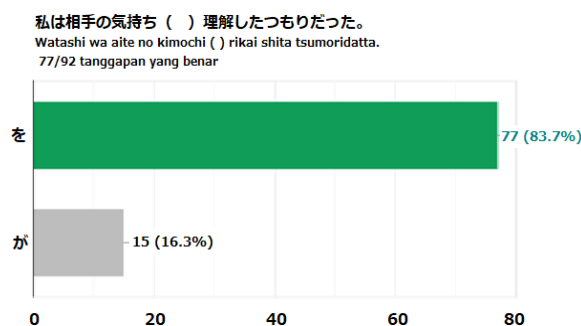
この人は日本語（　）上手に話しますから、心配しないでください。
Kono hito wa nihongo ( )jouzu ni hanashimasukara, shinpai shinaidekudasai.
23/92 tanggapan yang benar

Graphic 1

太郎は車（　）欲しがっているらしい。
Tarou wa kuruma ( ) hoshigatteiru rashii.
28/92 tanggapan benar

Graphic 2

In graphic 1, it can be seen that only 25% of respondents answered the questions correctly, while in graphic 2, there is 30.4% of respondents answered correctly. In graphic 1 with the question of *kono hito wa nihongo (　) jouzu ni hanashimasukara, shinpai shinaidekudasai*, many respondents answered with ga particle, but the correct answer is o particle. In this sentence, there is the verb *hanashimasu* 'speak', this verb requires an object to the activity carried out. So that the answer is more appropriate using o particle. Many respondents are deceived by answering with ga particle because there

are adjective *jouzu* 'smart ', this adjective indicates additional information in the sentence, not as in the main sentence. If use *ga* particle, it will be kono hito wa nihongo ga *jouzu* desu 'this person is good at Japanese'. While the other sentence, *kono hito wa nihongo o hanashimasu* 'this person speaks Japanese'. Therefore, the right answer is *kono hito wa nihongo* o *jouzu* ni *hanashimasu kara, shinpai shinaide kudasai* 'because this person speaks good Japanese, do not worry'. In graphic 2 with the question, *Tarou wa kuruma* ( ) *hoshigatteiru rashii*, many respondents answered with ga particle, but the right answer is o particle. In that sentence, there is *hoshigatteiru* which comes from *hoshigaru* 'want'. Based-on theory stated above, particles are used in verbs that indicate someone's feelings, and particles that are used in adjectives that indicate a person's feelings. From the change form of *hoshigaru* to hoshigatteiru, it is a form of verb ~*ru* to form ~*teiru*. Therefore, in the sentence above, it uses o particle. *Hoshigaru* is a change from *hoshii* which has the same meaning 'want', but *hoshii* is an adjective that is only used for the first-person pronoun. Therefore, in the sentence on graphic 2 'Tarou seems to want a car', Tarou is a third-person pronoun.
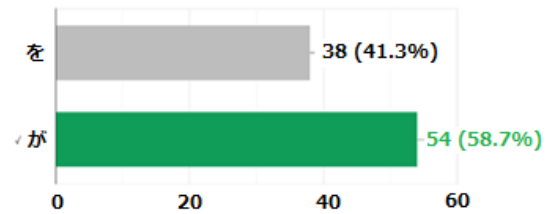
In general. Therefore, in this case, it is more appropriate to use o particle, watashi wa aite no kimochi o rikai shita 'I have understood the feelings of the other person'.

Graphic 4

In graphic 4 there is 58.7% of respondents answered correctly. The sentence *asoko de kodomo ga asondeiru no* ( ) *miemasuka*, there is the verb *miemasu* 'can see'. In the theory mentioned above, *mieru* is included in the verb which indicates the meaning of potential. Therefore, it is more appropriate to use ga particle. *Asoko de kodomo ga asondeiru no ga miemasuka* 'is it able to see children who are playing there?'.

Graphic 5

In graphic 5, there is 76.9% of respondents answered correctly. The sentence *yoka* ( ) *tanoshimu koto mo taisetsu da*, there is a verb that indicates the feeling of *tanoshimu* 'enjoying with pleasure', therefore it is more appropriate to use o particle. Yoka o *tanoshimu* koto mo taisetsu da 'it is important to enjoy free time with happy feeling'.

Graphic 3

In graphic 3, there is 83.7% of respondents who could answer correctly. The sentence *watashi wa aite no kimochi* ( ) *rikai shita tsumoridatta*. There is a verb *rikai shita* which is the past form of the *rikai suru* 'understand'. *Rikai suru* is a verb that uses o particle because it is a marker of an object

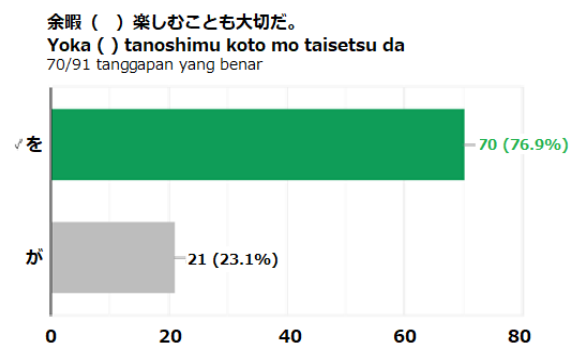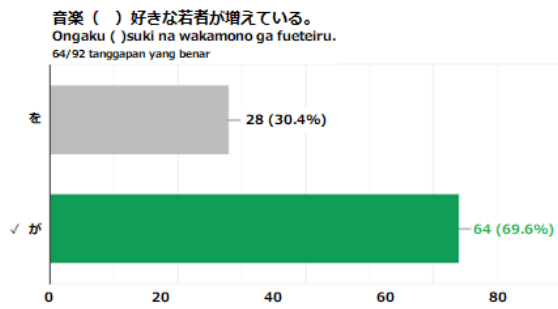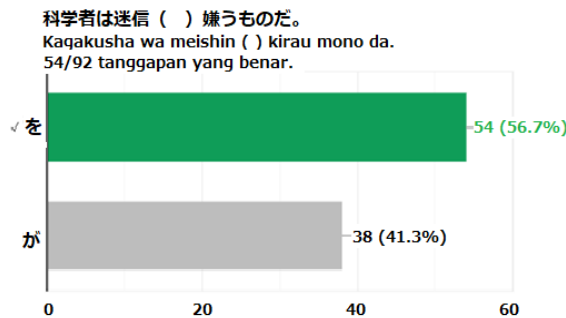**Graphic 6**

In graphic 6, there is 69.6% of respondents answered correctly. The sentence *ongaku (　) suki na wakamono ga fueteiru*, there is an adjective suki 'like' that particle ga as an object marker, the object in this sentence is *ongaku* 'music '. *Ongaku ga suki na wakamono ga fueteiru* 'young people who like music are increase'.
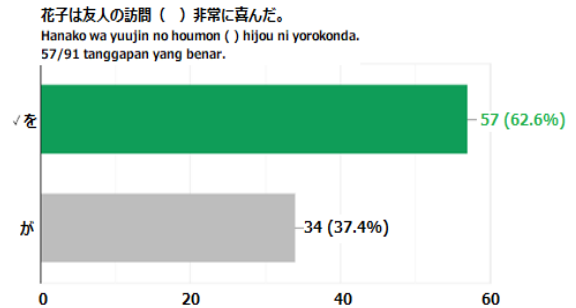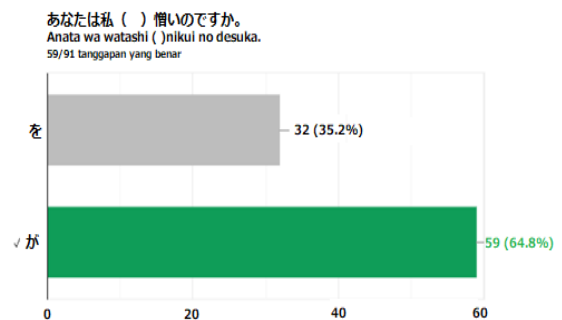

Graphic 7

In graphic 7, there is 58.7% of respondents answered correctly. The sentence *Kagakusha wa meishin (　) is a mono da*; there is a verb that indicates the 'dislike' feeling, which requires o particle as a marker of its object. Kagakusha wa meishin o *kirau* mono da 'scientists do not like superstition'.

In graphic 8, there is 62.6% of respondents answered correctly. The sentence *Hanako wa yuujin no houmon (　) hijou ni yorokonda* , there is the verb *yorokonda* which is the past form of the *yorokobu* 'happy' which is a verb that indicates feeling. Therefore, this sentence uses more appropriate to use o particle. *Hanako wa yuujin no houmon o hijou ni yorokonda*
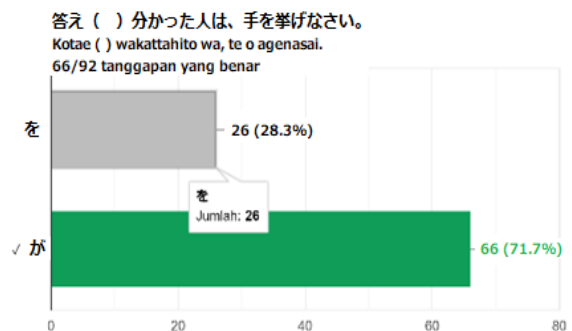
'Hanako is very happy to have a friend's visit'.

Graphic 8

Graphic 9

In graphic 9, there is 64.8% of respondents answered correctly. The sentence, *anata wa watashi (　) nikui no desuka*, there is an adjective *nikui* 'hate'. Ga particle is used as an object marker of the adjective. The object in this sentence is *watashi* 'me'. *Anata wa watashi ga nikui no desuka* 'do you hate me?'.
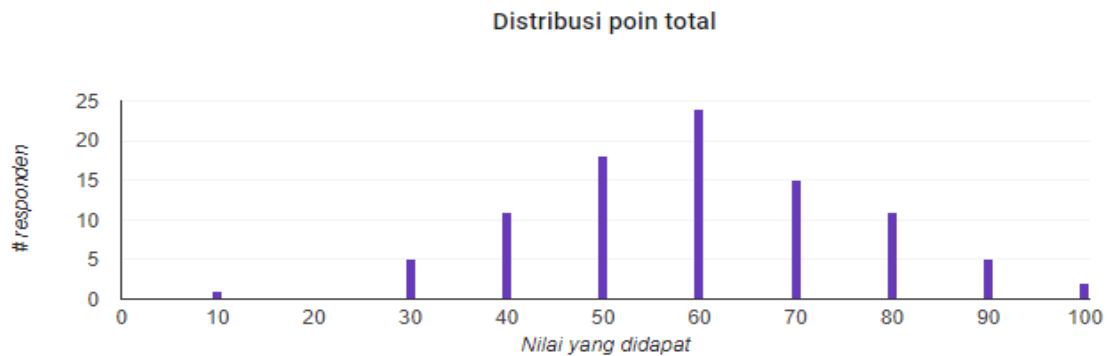

Graphic 10

In graphic 10, there is 71.7% of respondents answered correctly. The sentence of *kotae (　) wakattahito wa, te o agenasai*, there is a verb wakatta, the past tense form ~ ta (past) from the verb *wakaru*

'understand' which is a verb indicates ability. Therefore, in this sentence, it is more appropriate to use ga particle. *Kotae ga wakattahito wa, te o agenasai* 'please raise your hand for people who understand the answer'.

### 3.2 The understanding level of *o* and *ga* particles

In graphic 11, it can be seen from the total questions that from a total of 92 respondents got perfect points are two people, 90 points as many as five people, 80 points are 11 people. Fifteen points are 70 people, 60 points are 24 people, 50 points are 18 people, 40 points are 11 people, 30 points are five people, and 10 points are one person. The overall average point is 60, indicating that the level of understanding of Japanese language learners in studying particles, especially *o* and *ga* particles, is still at the intermediate level. While on graphic 12, it is seen that of 88 respondents that have passed the JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test) level, respondents that have passed N2, almost reached 50%, it indicates that the Japanese language understanding of the respondents is at the advanced level. However, the result of the average obtained indicates contradictive. This result indicates that although Japanese language learners have passed the JLPT level at an advanced level, it does not mean that these learners have an excellent understanding of the use of particles, especially *o* and *ga* particles.

Graphic 11

In the questionnaire, respondents answered o particle is used to: a) as an objective marker for an action, b) as a connecting noun with the verb, c) used for intransitive verbs, and d) used for rotating movement verbs. Whereas ga particle is used to: a) as a marker of a subject, b) as an affirmation and provide new information, c) as a linking of a noun with an adjective, d) used for intransitive verbs, and e) as object marker for a verb that indicates existence and ability. However, from the overall description given by the respondents, many respondents answered o particle as an object marker and *ga* particle as the subject marker or affirmation the sentence.
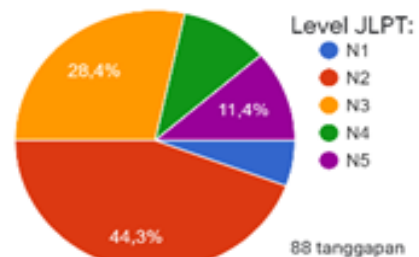
Graphic 12

3.3 The method, time, and place of learning Japanese

In graphic 13, it can be seen that the Japanese language learners who were respondents in this research, 83.7% which means more than half of total respondents

study the Japanese language more than two years, while the rest are less than one year. This result indicates that Japanese learners are familiar with the use of Japanese, language, and the particle is an essential lesson for Japanese learners to find out the meaning contained in Japanese sentences.

Graphic 13

Graphic 14

Graphic 15

In graphic 14, it can be seen that 88% of Japanese language learners learn the Japanese language at a university or school, only 12%, as many as eleven people who learn the Japanese language by self-taught. Japanese language learners who learn by self-taught, on the average pass the JLPT level at N5 and N4 levels and the average points are 54. This result indicates that Japanese language learners who learn by self-taught can be said to understand enough. In graphic 15, it can be seen that 51.1% of Japanese language learners

studied in Indonesia, 44.6% in Indonesia and Japan, and 4.3% in Japan. This result indicates that more than half of the total respondents have practised directly Japanese language that has been learned. It means they have no difficulty in using particles when talking directly to the Japanese people. Looking at previous data which averaged only 60 points, it means the use of particles, especially *o* and *ga* particles, do not have significant difficulties. In understanding the use of *o* and *ga* particles, Japanese learners should understand the predicates in the sentence.

4. Conclusion

Based on the description above, it concludes that the understanding of Japanese learners in the use of o and ga particles in the intermediate level clarified with an average of 60 points. Many respondents have passed the advanced level or N2, but the difference in the use of o and ga particles are still at the intermediate level. Many respondents who studied the Japanese language in Japan and Indonesia need more than two years, but in practice, the difference in usage is still experiencing difficulties. This research can be further developed regarding particle learning methods use both in Indonesia and Japan.

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