



『watashi ga』 『watashi ga』 『watashi ga』

# Pera Pera Penguin's

5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama

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I heard an interesting exchange in a restaurant the other day. I didn't really understand what they were doing, but two Japanese men were trying to take the bill out of each other's hand, saying, "watashi ga," "watashi ga!" I was surprised to see what they were doing, but no one else in the restaurant seemed to take notice. A few days later, I went to have a dinner with my friend at a restaurant. When we came to the cashier, I remembered the funny scene from the other day and said, "watashi ga." I was expecting that he would act in the same way as the people I had seen did. But he just said, "Why, thanks a lot!" and left the restaurant! Why did I have to buy his meal?

particle が (ga) ..... Emphasis by making selection.

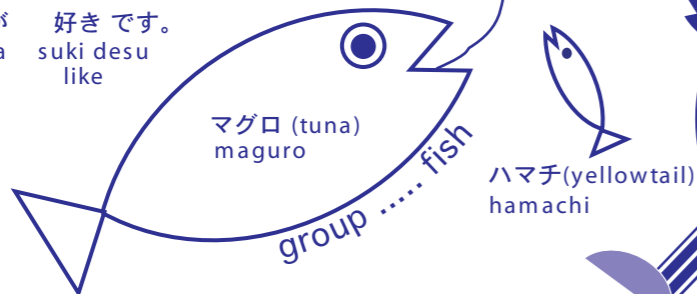
The basic rule is to have one "ga" in one sentence. There are many ways of using the particle, but let me explain the most common usage of it in this lesson: "emphasis." The particle "ga" emphasizes something by selecting it from a certain group. You can also emphasize situations such as occurrences and appearances. The following examples show you how to use the particle. Please try to discern how it is used.

• "ga" emphasizes by selection: (selection) ga (explanation)  
 ▲  
 this will be emphasized.

■ Selection/Choice (to emphasize by selecting one thing from the same category)

e.g., Selecting the taste of someone → like  
 (selecting tuna from fish category)  
 It is tuna that I like.

マグロ が 好きです。  
 maguro ga suki desu  
 tuna like



e.g., • Selecting someone  
 → There is/are  
 There's Mrs. Mori.  
 森さんがいます。  
 Mori-san ga imasu

• Selecting something/  
 cause → There is/are  
 There was an accident.  
 事故がありました。  
 jiko ga arimashita

• Selecting from things that you  
 think are good → is/are good  
 Sunday is good for me.  
 日曜日がいいです。  
 nichiyō-bi ga i desu

• Selecting from one's desires  
 → want  
 I want a day off.  
 休みが欲しいです。  
 yasumi ga hoshī desu

• Highlighting the ability  
 of someone → can  
 I can do e-mail.  
 イーメールができます。  
 e-mail ga dekimasu

■ ■ ■ Next time, I hope you'll take me out to dinner and then say, "watashi ga." I would be happy to have dinner with you! Gee, I wonder what I'll order... ha, ha, ha... I'm just kidding, Mr. Pole! To answer your question, your problem is particles again. Let me explain about the particle "ga" for this lesson. It is used to emphasize one thing over another. In this case, "watashi" (I) will be stressed. Thus, if you say, "watashi ga" at a cashier, it implies, "It is I (who will pay the bill)". Even though you just said "watashi ga," the particle "ga" emphasizes who will pay, and that would mean, "It is I who will pay the bill!"

■ Questions & Answers

Q: { When, Where, What, Who } ga noun, verb  
i-adjective  
na-adjective ? A: (selection) ga \_\_\_\_\_

When \_\_\_\_\_ ?(itsu ga)  
 e.g., Q: When would you like to go on the trip? A: I'd like to go next month.  
 旅行はいつがいいですか。 来月がいいですね。  
 ryokō wa itsu ga i desu ka raigetsu ga i desu ne

Where \_\_\_\_\_ ?(doko ga)  
 Q: Which restaurant is it that makes delicious food? A: It's the one in front of the train station.  
 どの店がおいしいですか。 駅前の店がおいしいですよ。  
 doko no mise ga oishi desu ka eki-mae no mise ga oishi desu yo

What \_\_\_\_\_ ?(nani ga)  
 e.g., Q: What is important in your life? A: Staying healthy is important.  
 人生で何が大切ですか。 健康が大切です。  
 jinsē de nani ga taisetsu desu ka kenkō ga taisetsu desu

Who \_\_\_\_\_ ?(dare ga / donata ga)  
 e.g., Q: Who is coming to this meeting? A: Mr. Koga is coming.  
 会議に誰が行きますか。 古賀さんが行きます。  
 kaigi ni dare ga ikimasu ka Koga-san ga ikimasu

■ The particle "ga" is used with intransitive verbs to talk about occurrences.  
 • e.g., to come out, to break down, to increase, to blow, to spill, to cry  
 e.g., The wind is blowing. I coughed. My salary increased.  
 風が吹いています。 セキが出ました。 給料が増えました。  
 kaze ga fuite-imasu seki ga demashita kyūryō ga fuemashita  
 (I got a raise.)

■ "ga" is not only used as a particle, but also as a transitional expression in daily conversations.  
 A , but B ▶ A が B  
 e.g., It is raining right now, but it's going to stop soon.  
 今雨が降っていますが、すぐやむでしょう。  
 ima ame ga hatte-imasu ga sugu yamu-deshō  
 now rain falling but soon it's going to stop



が ga?  
 selection / emphasis

は wa?  
 explanation

colleague: Who is going to London instead of Mr. Hayashi?  
 誰 [が は] 林さんの代わりにロンドンに行きますか。  
 dare [ga wa] Hayashi-san no kawari ni London  
 Who ① instead of ni ikimasu ka

Pole-san: Mr. Koga is going.  
 古賀さん [が は] 行きます。  
 Koga-san [ga wa] ikimasu  
 ②

colleague: What kind of person is Mr. Koga?  
 古賀さん [が は] どんな人ですか。  
 Koga-san [ga wa] donna hito desu ka  
 ③ what kind of

Pole-san: Mr. Koga is an accountant and he is very smart.  
 古賀さん [が は] 会計士で頭 [が は] 切れませ。  
 Koga-san [ga wa] kaikēshi de atama [ga wa] kiremasu  
 ④ accountant head ⑤ sharp

colleague: But really, Mr. Hayashi was supposed to go, wasn't he?  
 本当は林さん [が は] 行くはずでしたね。  
 hontō wa Hayashi-san [ga wa] iku-hazu deshita ne  
 truth ⑥ to be supposed to

Pole-san: Yes. But Mr. Hayashi won't be available because he can't finish his work by then.  
 ええ、でも林さん [が は] 今の仕事  
 ee demo Hayashi-san [ga wa] ima no shigoto  
 But present work  
 [が は] 遅れていますので行けません。  
 [ga wa] okurete-imasu node ikemasen  
 ⑧ being late

But if Mr. Koga goes, he will take care of everything.  
 古賀さん [が は] 行けば全てうまくいくでしょう。  
 Koga-san [ga wa] ikeba subete umaku iku-deshō  
 ⑨ if he goes everything will go fine

colleague: I'm glad to hear that.  
 それを聞いて安心しました。  
 sore o kīte anshin shimashita  
 that listen to feel at ease

Answers

- ① Questions & answers (Who?) ..... ga
- ② Selecting a person ..... ga
- ③ Asking for the explanation of him ..... wa
- ④ Explanation about Mr. Koga ..... wa
- ⑤ Selecting the characteristics of Mr. Koga ..... ga
- ⑥ Selecting Mr. Hayashi from among the staff ..... ga
- ⑦ Explanation of Mr. Hayashi ..... wa
- ⑧ Selecting the cause of Mr. Hayashi's situation ..... ga
- ⑨ Selecting Mr. Koga from among the staff ..... ga

With cooperation from Yasuhiro Koga