

German Right Dislocation as a Discourse Topic Marking Construction

In my talk, I consider NP right dislocation in German, i.e. a construction consisting of an NP at the right end of the clause and a coreferent pronoun inside the clause. I argue that the label of right dislocation in fact comprises two distinct constructions, which I call *right dislocation proper* (RD) and *afterthought* (AT). Whilst AT repairs insufficient pronominal reference, RD serves as an explicit marking of the current discourse topic. Discourse topicality corresponds to stable activation at the level of the discourse representation. Accordingly, I understand discourse topic as the discourse referent that is most stably activated during a particular discourse segment.

Besides having different discourse functions, RD and AT differ in a number of prosodic, syntactic and semantic characteristics. In short, RD is prosodically as well as syntactically integrated into its host sentence, whereas AT constitutes a separate prosodic as well as syntactic unit: e.g., RD is upward-bounded, whereas AT is not. Semantically, RD is restricted to <e>-type denotations, while AT allows all kinds of NP denotations.

I will concentrate on RD and propose a semantic account of RD, according to which RD-NP adds a separate meaning dimension to the semantics of its host sentence. This separate meaning can be described in terms of ‘separate performatives’ as a signal to the hearer to activate (or to hold activated) his mental representation of the referent of the RD-NP. This semantic account of RD-NP correlates straightforwardly with the topic-marking function RD has in discourse.

Separate performative account of the RD offers a semantic explanation of the fact that only definite individual or kind nominal denotations are possible in RD-NPs: quantificational expressions are excluded due to the impossibility of quantifying across meaning dimensions. I argue that this restriction corresponds to the ontological “individualized-entity-constraint” on the discourse topic referent.

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“What is it all about?”– reanalyzing a variety of theories about topicality

Reviewing the history of the discussions about topicality since the works of the Prague’s school of linguistics reveals a unique situation in which at the same time there are debates about the content of the phenomenon (*aboutness-givenness*) and doubts whether and how topicality is marked in the different languages. Such a situation suggests the possibility that in fact we are dealing with different phenomena and that this situation is asking for a careful reorganization of the discussion itself.

The goal of this paper is therefore to systematically review some of the major approaches concerning topicality in the literature, to demonstrate their theoretical problems, and to conclude that at the moment none of them is entirely satisfying.

It will be demonstrated that there is a list of interconnected questions that each theory should answer, besides the obvious task of defining topicality:

- How many topics each sentence must or can have?
- What are the elements that stand in the relation “to be a topic of”?
- What is the nature of the phenomenon? Is this a grammatical phenomenon at all?
- How to recognize a topic? Does it have to be marked linguistically? If not, is there any (good) test to identify the topic, and what is the nature of these kinds of exams?

Exploring the answers for these questions reveals that some of the debates in the literature are in fact results of constraints which were prompted from answering some of these questions, and sometimes they have external motivations that are not directly relevant to our discussion. Therefore, it will become clear that often there is no direct debate between the different approaches.

Following this discussion it would be appropriate to ask whether we should abandon the notion of topicality all together. I will argue for a negative answer and suggest restricting the relevance of topicality to the sphere of the interface between the syntax and the semantics, where it seems that topicality is very significant.

Complex Anaphors as Discourse Topic Markers

Complex anaphors are nominal anaphoric expressions with propositional antecedents (clauses or longer text segments). They refer to propositionally structured referents and constitute them as unified discourse objects in a discourse representation (text-world model), i.e. discourse participants can handle abstract referents like “things” (Consten/ Knees/ Schwarz-Friesel 2007). This so-called complexation process is the precondition for establishing referents as discourse topics (i.e. discourse referents that are highly activated and most accessible for coherence relations in the representation of a discourse segment, cf. Averintseva-Klisch 2007).

- (1) Am 12. Dezember 1969 explodierte in der Mailänder Landwirtschaftsbank [...] eine Bombe, die sechzehn Menschen in den Tod riß und über hundert schwer verletzte. Das Attentat wurde, wie man später erfahren sollte, von Neofaschisten verübt, doch deuten alle Indizien heute darauf hin, daß es vom italienischen Geheimdienst eingefädelt worden war [...]. (TigerKorpus, 9183–9184)

On the 12th of December in 1969, a bomb exploded at the Milan Bank of Agriculture killing sixteen people and hurting more than one-hundred seriously. Later on, they found out that the assassination had been committed by neo-Fascists. Today, however, evidence suggests that it had been contrived by the Italian Secret Service [...].

We will argue that complex anaphors, especially lexical ones, are predestinated to refer to discourse topics. Corpus data suggest that complex and nominal discourse topics can occur together in the same discourse segment so that the notion of discourse topic as the only topical referent in a given discourse segment has to be revised.

References: Averintseva-Klisch, M., 2007, Anaphoric Properties of German Right Dislocation. In: Schwarz-Friesel, M., Consten, M., Knees, M. (eds), *Anaphors in Texts*. Amsterdam: Benjamins (SLCS 86), 165–182. // Consten, M.; Knees, M.; Schwarz-Friesel, M. 2007, The Function of Complex Anaphors in Text. In: Schwarz-Friesel, M.; Consten, M.; Knees, M. (eds.), *Anaphors in Text*. Amsterdam: Benjamins (SLCS 86), 81–102.

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Topicalization and Contrastive Readings: Insights from Japanese *Wa*

Contrastive reading is one of the interpretive functions that are often linked with topichood cross-linguistically (e.g., topicalization of non-specific indefinites is only licensed on contrastive readings in Danish; the Japanese topic marker marks contrasts as well as themes). Since this association is too pervasive to be a coincidence, it calls for an explanation.

To this end, I discuss in this talk contrastive readings as they relate to the Japanese *wa*-topicalization. In particular:

- (i) I discuss two types of contrastive readings, where contrastiveness is not attributable to *wa*-marked phrases themselves;
- (ii) I demonstrate how these contrastive readings are derived;
- (iii) I conclude that (at least most) contrastive readings associated with *wa*-topicalization are not due to the semantic ambiguity of *wa*-marked phrases themselves, contrary to the wildly held view (e.g., most notably in Kuno (1973)).

I assume that the basic interpretive function of Japanese *wa*-topicalization is “to limit the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain,” as Chafe (1976: 50) argues for Chinese topics. On this assumption, I illustrate and argue for two ways in which contrastive readings are derived: (i) through interaction among topicalized phrases, and (ii) due to the nature of a certain type of predicates.

Contrary to the well-accepted assumption, I conclude that *wa*-marked phrases do not have the intrinsic meaning of contrast in addition to theme. I contend that the two types discussed in this study account for a good portion, if not all, of contrastive readings associated with *wa*-topicalization.

References: Chafe, Wallace L. 1976. Givenness, Contrastiveness, Definiteness, Subjects, Topics, and Point of View. In *Subject and topic*, ed. Charles N. Li. New York: Academic Press. // Kuno, Susumu. 1973. *The structure of the Japanese language*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

IL *versus* CELUI-CI: topic continuity *versus* topic shift ?

Research questions: The aim of my talk will be to verify :

- (i) whether the French third person pronoun IL refers to continuous topics, i.e. whether it refers to the topic entity of the current sentence, which was also the topic of the previous sentence;
- (ii) whether the French demonstrative pronoun CELUI-CI marks a topic shift, i.e. whether it refers to the topic entity of the current sentence, which was not yet the topic of the previous sentence.

I shall mainly treat endophoric occurrences of both pronouns in non-subordinate clauses (475 of IL and 460 of CELUI-CI), taken from the newspaper corpus *Le Monde sur cd-rom*. The analysis is largely based on the framework developed by Lambrecht (1994). IL is considered to be a preferred topic expression; CELUI-CI is treated as if it were a definite NP, rather than an (unaccented) pronoun. The following research questions will be answered:

- (i) Is the last mention preceding IL *a topic expression* (as defined by Lambrecht 1994) ?
- (ii) Is the last mention preceding CELUI-CI *a non-topic expression* ?

(Provisional) Results: My corpus shows some clear tendencies that largely support the research hypotheses : IL refers to continuous topics in 64.63% of the cases, whereas CELUI-CI is used to mark a topic shift in 60.65% of the examples. Nevertheless there are also counterexamples into which I will go more deeply during my talk. In the case of the demonstrative pronoun, the need for disambiguation or the desire to express some referential contrast account for most examples in which a third person pronoun would be expected, given that the referent in question is a continuous topic. Finally I hope to be able to present some results with respect to the question of topic continuity/shift in subordinate clauses.

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**Italian Clitic Left Dislocation and German D-Pronoun Left Dislocation:
A fresh look of comparison**

In the literature, Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD) of some Romance languages (and of Greek) and Germanic D-Pronoun Left Dislocation (GLD) of German or Dutch are standardly seen as equivalent, especially in terms of their information structural property as topic marking constructions (e.g. Anagnostopoulou 1997, Grewendorf to appear). Only certain (actual or presumed) syntactic differences are acknowledged, which are mainly seen as reflexes of the different syntax of the resumptive elements.

The talk concentrates on CLLD in Italian (*Il libro su se stesso, l'ha comprato ieri.*) and on GLD in German (*Das Buch über sich, das hat er gestern gekauft.*). It is true that these constructions share a number of properties: (i) the dislocated phrase (XP_{disl}) cannot be a quantified phrase; (ii) CLLD and GLD are said to be dislocations which do not induce weak crossover; (iii) they do not license parasitic gaps. However, there exist important syntactic and information structural differences, some of which have not been discussed in the literature so far: (iv) CLLD may involve several XP_{disl} , while GLD allows only one XP_{disl} ; (v) a clause with CLLD is not an island, whereas a clause with GLD is; (vi) in embedded structures with a complementizer, XP_{disl} of CLLD follows the complementizer, XP_{disl} of GLD precedes it; (vii) there exist CLLDs with non-specific indefinites as XP_{disl} ; there do not exist such GLDs; (viii) CLLD is possible in any type of subordinate clause, GLD only occurs in so-called root contexts; (ix) XP_{disl} of CLLD is not possible as an answer to a wh-question, but XP_{disl} of GLD is; (x) XP_{disl} of CLLD is always contrastively interpreted, this does not hold for XP_{disl} of GLD.

The talk argues that contrary to the standard assumption, CLLD does not necessarily mark a topic, only GLD does. However, CLLD and GLD share the property that their respective XP_{disl} have to be – in a broad sense – anaphoric. Furthermore, the obvious assumption is made that the Italian clause offers a richer structure at its left periphery than the German clause does. Finally, I presume that XP_{disl} of CLLD has reached its surface position via movement, whereas XP_{disl} of GLD is base generated there. It is argued that under these assumptions, the noted properties of the two constructions become plausible.

References: Anagnostopoulou, E. (1997): Clitic Left Dislocation and Contrastive Left Dislocation. In: E. Anagnostopoulou et al. (eds.) : *Materials on Left Dislocation*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 151-192. // Grewendorf, G. (to appear): The Left Clausal Periphery: Clitic Left Dislocation in Italian and Left Dislocation in German. In: B. Shaer et al. (eds.): *Dislocated Elements in Discourse: Syntactic, Semantic, and Pragmatic Perspectives*. New York, London: Routledge.

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**On (Non-)Correlations of Movement as Re-Merge and Topicalization:
Evidence from Topics in Adjective Doubling**

The current work analyzes topicalized doubling adjectives. Its aim is to contribute to the issues of adjective and movement properties in connection with topicalization.

More specifically: Predicate doubling with verbs is (dialectally) known from varieties of Germanic, Romance, Semitic, etc. (cf. e.g. Vicente 2007 and references therein). In some languages, topicalization-based doubling also occurs with adjectives, in some of them widely and in fully grammaticalized fashion in colloquial speech (call this type of phenomenon AA constructions). Both predicate types, when doubled, show parallels to topicalization (conspicuous semantic ones and the clause-peripheral position). At the same time, drawing essentially on Romanian data, we suggest that a simple (and hence attractive) cross-categorial generalization (along the lines of “Topicalize and/or doubly Spell-out a predicate!”) is *not* warranted (*pace* copy theory of movement). Morphosyntactic and semantic differences are observed in our case study of AA – viz. both (i) from their adjectival counterparts (i.e. the topicalized variant without double Spell-out), and (ii) from their categorial cousins: doubling verbs. We suggest that there are three key factors that determine AA: [f1] syntactic and semantic properties of topicalization; [f2] double Spell-out of the adjective, i.e. in both the head and the foot of what we claim to be an A'-dependency; [f3] degree- and movement-sensitivity. It is significant that [f2] requires morphosyntactic support through the morpheme *de* ‘of’ in Romanian. The latter factor, [f3], gives one kind of indication that the phenomenon at hand may be semantically motivated, if morphosyntactically implemented in the pertinent derivations. We compare the doubling phenomenon to additional evidence in which A'-dependencies in the language require the presence of the same or suspiciously similar morpheme; e.g., degree questions and subcomparatives (cf. e.g. Chomsky 1977, Grosu 1994, Heim 2006 *i.a.* on their A'-status).

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On (De-) Topicalization in Hausa

This talk discusses the correlation between focus and topic marking of subjects in Hausa (West-Chadic). Hausa shows an asymmetry with respect to focus marking: While focused non-subjects do not require focus marking, focused subjects must (in general) be marked by movement to a left-peripheral focus position, triggering a special form of the person-aspect marker (the *relative* aspect, as opposed to the *absolute* aspect). Hartmann & Zimmermann (2007) and Fiedler et al. (submitted) attribute this asymmetry to the fact that phrases in the canonical subject position are interpreted as topics (if they allow for a topic interpretation; see below). When a subject is focused, its focus status must be overtly marked. Put differently, it must be de-topicalized (the *De-Topicalization Hypothesis*, DTH). In this talk, we corroborate the DTH by showing that subjects that resist to be interpreted as topics do not have to be de-topicalized when they are focused. The argument to this conclusion is based on distributive subject quantifiers, which cannot serve as topics cross-linguistically.

Hausa has a class of adnominal quantifiers with distributive interpretation. If a distributive subject quantifier is focused, the person-aspect marker can appear in the absolute form, which is in general excluded after focused subjects:

(1) Q: Who is reading the books of Ken Saro-Wiwa?

A: Kóo-wanee d'áalibíi yá-**naa** /*yá-**kee** kár@antá littattafáí ná Ken Saro-Wiwa.
DISJ-which student 3SG-PROG.ABS/REL read books of KSW
'Every student is reading the books of Ken Saro-Wiwa.'

The grammaticality of the absolute aspect in (1) can be explained with the DTH: Since distributive quantifiers cannot be topics, they can remain in the canonical subject position even if they are focused. If our account is correct, the asymmetry between obligatory subject focus marking and optional non-subject focus marking becomes spurious in Hausa. In our view, focus marking is generally optional in Hausa and becomes obligatory for subjects under the following conditions: i) when they have to escape a topic interpretation, ii) when they are interpreted exhaustively, or iii) when they are negated.

To illustrate ii), observe that the relative form of the person-aspect marker becomes obligatory if a focused distributive quantifier is to carry an exhaustivity presupposition, which is marked by the focus-sensitive particle *nee*:

(2) Kóo-wanee d'áalibíi **nee** *yá-**naa**/yá-**kee** kár@antá littattafáí ná Ken Saro-Wiwa.

Thus, this talk adjusts the wide-spread assumption that focused subjects are *always* marked in Hausa. It proposes a unified analysis of focus marking that considers focus marking optional across all parts of speech in Hausa and attributes the manifold exceptions to the optional marking of subject phrases to the factors i) to iii) mentioned above.

**Topicality and discourse structure:
evidence from the French marker *autrement***

We want to investigate the organization of discourse structure, as revealed by the adverb *autrement*, which in one of its uses works as a marker of topic shift (roughly equivalent to apart from that). *Autrement* is anaphoric and takes as its antecedent a ‘topical’ constituent, that is ‘what is being talked about’ in the current sentence or discourse (or any subpart of the latter), but also a framing adverbial, a topicalized phrase, or the subject. The idea advocated here is thus that discourse has a structural organization where topics are ‘embedded’: there is a general matter of discussion, divided into sub-matters, further distinguished according to adverbial specifications, and so on, down to the subject of the clause, which is a topic in the traditional sense of information structure. Although there are great morphological as well as syntactic differences between those topical constituents, they all pass the ‘talking about X’ test, they cannot be taken as predicates in any way, they do not bear focus (and *autrement* cannot have a constituent under focus as its antecedent). Finally, and most importantly, although the notion of topic is a notoriously slippery one, there happens to be no satisfying discourse relation (whatever the theoretical framework) to describe two sentences connected by *autrement*, except that ‘something has changed’. ‘Topic’ here is a rather vague notion, not necessarily amenable to formalization, working more or less as a mental address or anchor. But when *autrement* shows up, then we know that ‘something has changed’, and that what has changed is what we are talking about.

Structural and information-structural effects on topicality

Reduced anaphoric forms such as pronouns are commonly assumed to refer to entities that are prominent/salient in interlocutors' minds (e.g., Ariel 1990, Gundel et al 1993), and these salient entities are often regarded as sentence-level topics (e.g., Grosz, Joshi & Weinstein 1995, Prince 2003, Beaver 2004). Various factors have been claimed to influence how salient an entity is at a particular point in the discourse, including being realized in subject position (e.g., Chafe 1976, Crawley & Stevenson 1990), being pronominalized (e.g., Kameyama 1999, Beaver 2004), and being semantically and/or prosodically focused (e.g., Birch, Albrecht & Myers 2000). If one regards highly salient entities as sentence-level topics, then these salience-influencing factors are also topicality-influencing factors.

In this paper we investigate how (i) subjecthood, (ii) pronominalization and (iii) focus influence the choice of sentence-topic. Research by Arnold (1999) and Cowles (2003) shows that focused entities are more salient (in our terms, more likely to be sentence-topics) than non-focused entities. However, existing work has not fully investigated how grammatical role/subjecthood and pronominalization contribute to salience and sentence-level topicality. Our aim is to better understand how these different kinds of information interact and contribute to sentence-level topicality, as measured by subsequent pronominal reference.

We present results from three psycholinguistic experiments which suggest that subjecthood has a stronger effect on sentence-level topicality -- as measured by subsequent pronoun interpretation -- than pronominalization and focusing. In fact, it seems that effects of subjecthood can be modulated but not overridden by the two information-structural constraints we tested. This fits with a model which allows multiple factors to influence sentence-level topicality, and supports our Structural Primacy hypothesis, which posits that grammatical role has a greater influence than information-structural factors, possibly because of the cognitively central role that factors like subjecthood play in successful comprehension.

Implicit stage topics

Many researchers observe that spatio-temporal adverbials in sentence-initial position specify the frame in which the whole proposition takes place and are topical/thematic in some way (cf. Jackendoff 1972, Laenzlinger 1996:50, Cinque 1990, Chafe 1976, Lambrecht 1994, Erteschik-Shir 1997, Jacobs 2001, etc.). Whereas most attention has been given to overt, explicit spatio-temporal topics, Erteschik-Shir (1997/1999) argues that spatio-temporal topics, or *stage topics*, can also be covert or implicit. In this talk, I will concentrate on the notion of *implicit stage topic* and provide empirical evidence in favour of its existence.

I will first give a brief overview of the literature on spatio-temporal topics, and I will present Erteschik-Shir's hypothesis according to which the presence of an implicit stage topic is only justified if its content is deictically or 'discoursally' specified, i.e. recoverable from the speech context or the narrative context. I will refine this author's conception of implicit stage topics while arguing that only those implicit stage topics whose presence is lexically or grammatically indicated in the clause are linguistically relevant. Thus, I will argue that the presence of a covert stage topic must be justified by the presence of a temporal or locative anaphoric expression, such as a temporal or locative pronoun or adverb, or by the tense morphology of the verb.

In the second part of my talk, I will show that the existence of implicit stage topics and the specific constraints they are subject to are confirmed by the distribution of nominal inversion in French. I will present the results of my corpus research, which has shown that absolute inversion only occurs in clauses which refer to the preceding temporal context, and, hence, where the presence of an implicit stage topic is justified. Moreover, I will argue that, from a theoretical point of view, the notion of covert stage topic as a formalization of the spatio-temporal linkage between sentences is also appealing to the extent that it enables us to draw a parallel with other types of topics, which can also be implicit. Zribi-Hertz (2003) indeed argues that, whenever a pronoun appears in a sentence, it must be licensed by the presence of an implicit or explicit (aboutness-)topic in the clause, which binds the pronoun.

The conclusion of my talk will be that, just as 'aboutness-topics', stage topics can be implicit, since they interact with syntactic structure in the same way as overt stage topics do.

References: Chafe, W.L. 1976. Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics, and point of view. In C.N. Li, ed. *Subject and topic*. New York: New York Academic Press. 27-55. // Cinque, G. 1990. *Types of A' dependencies*. Cambridge: MIT Press. // Erteschik-Shir, N. 1997. *The dynamics of focus structure*. Cambridge: CUP. // Erteschik-Shir, N. 1999. Focus structure and scope. In G. Rebuschi & L. Tuller, eds. *Grammar of focus*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. 119-150. // Jackendoff, R. 1972. *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge: MIT Press. // Jacobs, J. 2001. The dimensions of topic-comment. *Linguistics* 39: 641-681. // Laenzlinger, C. 1996. *Adverbs, pronouns, and clause structure in Romance and Germanic*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. // Lambrecht, K. 1994. *Information structure and sentence form*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. // Zribi-Hertz, A. 2003. "Réflexivité et disjonction référentielle en français et en anglais". In P. Miller & A. Zribi-Hertz, eds. *Essais sur la grammaire comparée du français et de l'anglais*. Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes. 135-175.

Grammatical Relations and Discourse Configurationality

In mainstream typological work on comparative syntax, it is common practice to divide languages into the types 'topic prominent' and 'subject prominent' (cf. Sasse 1982; 1995). More recent work on this matter (cf. E. Kiss 1995; 2001) broadens the spectrum to a more general division into discourse configurationality and the prominence of grammatical relations: there are languages said to be *topic prominent* or *focus prominent* on the one hand, and, on the other hand, languages where *syntactic functions* marked by *specific case*, like the nominative in English-type languages or the absolutive in so-called 'ergative' languages, are said to play a prominent role in sentence construction.

This paper intends to discuss this matter on the grounds of empirical data from German in comparison to languages that are more obviously 'subject prominent', like English, and to languages that have been identified as discourse configurational in the literature, like Chinese, Japanese and Korean. The results of our discussion will be:

- Through its V2-syntax, the specific ways of topicalising and focussing, and the possibility of even having sentences without subjects, the classification of German syntax is not at all obvious. If a division as suggested above does indeed have typological relevance, then languages like German have features of *discourse configurationality* at least as much as those of 'subject prominence'.
- Dividing languages into 'discourse configurational', 'relation configurational', or 'mixed' types does not yield a proper classification. The systems *information structure* and *argument structure / case licensing* are subject to principles that are independent in the first place. Therefore, the parameters of these systems are not, in fact, complementary.
- Interface conditions of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, that can vary in several ways, are the reason for the existence of an uncaptured number of syntactic systems that can be typologically classified according to descriptive criteria. Languages that have been classified as 'topic prominent', for example, show the co-occurrence of topic fronting and the absence of a configurational subject. These two properties are not necessarily related, however. The existence of a high number of 'mixed languages' (cf. Li & Thompson 1976) is therefore not deviant, but, actually, the normal case.
- Grammatical relations that are the basis for the existence of subjects are purely formal and should be captured by formal methods. The discourse oriented relation *topic/ comment* is functionally motivated and should be explained on the grounds of pragmatics.

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Types of topic expressions and the structure of the left periphery in Old High German

The paper examines the behaviour of different types of expressions and constructions in OHG with respect to their ability to provide the aboutness topic of the utterance. First, it will be shown that phrases with properties of canonical aboutness topics, i.e. individual denoting expressions displaying the features ‘givenness’, ‘referentiality’ and ‘definiteness’ are good candidates to appear in the prefield of main clauses followed by the finite verb thus yielding V2 in the surface. In contrast, sentences with no topic-comment division likethetic or presentational sentences (Sasse 1995) use to leave the preverbal position empty. This allows to assume that the V2 pattern in main declarative clauses in OHG is sensitive to the ability to assign a topic-comment division to the utterance and that the preverbal position is identified with the constituent which represents the aboutness topic in the sentence.

From this perspective, we shall look at other types of phrases filling the prefield in main declarative clauses in OHG. On the one hand, they differ from canonical topics in the sense that they convey novel, i.e. not pre-established material in the discourse, or are indefinite. On the other hand, however, they share with canonical topics the property to act as the subject of the predication (Endriss and Hinterwimmer t.a.), i.e. they represent an individual or a set of individuals about which the sentence makes a comment.

These facts support the topical status of the preverbal position in V2 main clauses in OHG under the assumption of a more general term of aboutness topicality which not necessarily relates the status of the topic expression to givenness/familiarity but focuses on the predication structure of the utterance proper.

References: Endriss, C. and Hinterwimmer, St. t.a. Direct and Indirect Aboutness Topics. In *The notions of information structure*, eds. Caroline Féry, Gisbert Fanselow and Manfred Krifka. // Sasse, H.-J. 1995. "Theticity" and VS order: a case study. *Sprachtypologie und Universalienforschung* 48, 1/2:3-31.

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On topics and conditionals in sign languages

In the past, various studies on spoken and signed languages have emphasized similarities between topics and conditionals (e.g. Haiman 1978; Coulter 1979). The proposed similarities range from morphological marking and syntactic properties to semantic interpretation. Haiman (1978:564), for instance, points out that “conditionals, like topics, are givens which constitute the frame of reference with respect to which the main clause is either true (if a proposition), or felicitous (if not)”.

In this presentation, I will take a closer look at topics and conditionals in sign languages, above all, in Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT) and American Sign Language (ASL). I will address two main issues. First, I will consider the similarities and differences between topics and conditionals in these sign languages. Crucially, topics and conditionals occupy a clause-initial position and receive similar non-manual marking (raised eyebrows). Note that generally, such syntactic non-manual markers are taken to be the overt realization of features hosted by functional heads which attract material into their respective specifiers.

Second, I will investigate the interaction of topicalized constituents with conditional clauses in the light of Rizzi’s (1997, 2001) elaborated structure of the left periphery. This investigation takes into account the fact that conditionals as well as topics precede interrogatives (which presumably occupy SpecInterP), that topic stacking is possible, and that topics in turn may precede conditionals; that is: topic > conditional/topic > interrogative.

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Topicalization and Asymmetric Coordination

A crucial property of Asymmetric Coordination (AC) in German (in the sense of Höhle 1990) is the fact that the finite predicate in the second conjunct is systematically fronted. And although coordinations tend to show parallelism effects, this has no effect whatsoever on the first conjunct's verb order, see the AC in (1) with VL+V2 order.

(1) [Wenn du nach Hause *kommst*] und [der Gerichtsvollzieher *steht* vor der Tür]

Given that there is no subject gap in the second conjunct, this conjunct shows V2, and the question emerges, whether its prefield is subject to any interesting restrictions. Apart from some remarks in Frank (2002), this question has not been addressed in the literature.

In this talk, I argue on the basis of data like (2) and (3) that only those complements are licensed in the prefield of an AC's second conjunct that would end up at the left periphery of the middle field in a verb final equivalent of the relevant sentence.

(2) wenn dich dein Team auf der Schlußrampe im Stich lässt und

a. du musst deshalb deine Konkurrenten ziehen lassen

b. *?deine Konkurrenten musst du deshalb ziehen lassen

(3) wenn du mit 180 Sachen fährst und dir sackt plötzlich der Kreislauf in den Keller

Within the framework of Frey (2004) this is equivalent to say that there is no „real A-bar-movement“ to the prefield of a non-initial AC-conjunct, only „formal movement“.

But why is that? Another crucial characteristic of AC is its fusing interpretation (see Höhle 1983), which is modelled as „event subordination“ in Reich (2007), triggered by a syntactic feature called [OCC(asion)] residing in the target position F of the fronted finite predicate. Since (only) real A-bar-movement to [Spec,F] is triggered by interpretable features like [TOPIC] and [FOCUS] this suggests a semantic incompatibility.

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On the (re)presentation of topics in some Gur languages (Niger-Congo)

This talk deals with the encoding and interpretation of topics in some African tone languages of the Gur family (Buli, Konni, Dagbani, and Gurene). First, it will be shown that subjects do not need special topic marking, corroborating the claim that the constituent cross-linguistically “most readily identified with the pragmatic role of topic” is represented by the subject (Lambrecht 1994: 132). The strong subject-topic correlation even permits the “intransitive-passive” use of a subgroup of verbs despite of the lack of passive morphology (cf. Reineke & Mieke 2005). Example (1) illustrates such a “flexible” verb in Buli which allows a topical theme to acquire subject function at the expense of the agent.

- (1) A: būgsī jǐgsá-ŋá.
pound sheanut.PL-DEF
‘Pound the sheanuts!’
B: jǐgsá-ŋá . būgsī-yā.
sheanut.PL-DEF be.pounded-ASS
‘[The sheanuts]_T have been pounded.’ (reply after completion of task)

Apart from unmarked topic-comment configurations, some common means to explicitly mark sentence constituents as (contrastive) topics will be illustrated. Of major interest are however topicless sentence configurations which are structurally reminiscent of comitative / imperfective encodings in the respective languages. Although they have the same surface order SV(O) as categorical statements, the constitutive relation between subject and predicate inthetic statements is not identical with that in the former. Inthetic utterances in Buli (2), non-topical subject and predicate need to be connected by a particle (*à*)ē. This encoding is quasi-automatically employed with indefinite subjects and always occurs with non-topical subjects within the focal domain (subject focus, sentence focus).

- (2) lóorá ɲàye` lē nàgì chāāb,
car.PL CL.two PTL hit each.other
‘Two cars crashed into each other.’ (reply on: ‘What happened?’)

I am going to argue that the special morphosyntactic encodings found inthetic utterances are based on presentational constructions compensating for the lack of topic-suitable discourse referents and serving the establishment of background information for the following predications.

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Sentence topics in processing English

Many languages permit considerable flexibility of word order. However, when a phrase appears in a non-canonical position, typically there are information-structure constraints on its discourse status. In German, a language that permits scrambling, it has been argued that an argument may be scrambled in front of a sentential adverb but only if the argument may serve as a topic (Frey, 2000). Do adverbs also convey information-structure constraints in a fixed word order language like English? It has been assumed that English, in contrast to languages like German, does not reveal a position for topics, but has only one subject position (Spec TP; see Bobaljik & Jonas, 1996; Svenonius, 2002).

Two self-paced reading studies investigated whether the position preceding a sentential adverbial is linked to topicality in English. If English does not have a position for topics, no effect of adverb position should be found. In contrast, if adverb placement in English is comparable to adverb placement in German, then topical properties might be attributed to the subject. In the subject-adverb order in (1d), a non-referential subject like *no king*, which cannot serve as topic, should be highly marked.

- (reading times)
- (1) a. The envoy said that presumably the king defeated the knights. (2208)
b. The envoy said that the king presumably defeated the knights. (2178)
c. The envoy said that presumably no king defeated the knights. (2277)
d. The envoy said that no king presumably defeated the knights. (2555)

The results of both self-paced reading studies revealed significantly longer reading times for sentences with a non-referential subject preceding the adverb in comparison to the other conditions. The data suggest that even in a fixed word order language like English adverb placement can influence assumptions about topichood in a manner similar to that proposed for scrambling languages.

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The Syntax of Topics in Japanese

This talk presents new evidence that ‘aboutness’ in the sense of Reinhart (1981) is the only notion relevant for the syntactic distribution of topics in Japanese. In particular, I argue that ‘discourse givenness’ and ‘contrastiveness’ are sufficient to mark an item with the putative topic marker *wa*, but the items so marked are not in fact topics. The evidence comes from the observation that only aboutness *wa*-phrases display a syntactic distribution that is predicted by independent considerations at the syntax-discourse interface.

Based on two separately motivated ideas, Neeleman & van de Koot (to appear) argue that a topic cannot follow a fronted focus (see also Büring 1997, 2003, Wagner 2007). One idea is that at the level of discourse, the background of a focus cannot contain a topic-comment structure (Hajičová et. al. 1997) and the other is that the sister constituent of a moved focus is interpreted as the background (Rizzi 1997).

I show that, indeed, in a context where a *wa*-marked phrase must be interpreted as an aboutness topic (Reinhart 1981), it cannot follow a fronted focus. A *wa*-phrase can follow a fronted focus, but examination of the relevant context reveals that such a *wa*-phrase is simply discourse given. There are also further syntactic differences between aboutness *wa*-phrases and discourse given *wa*-phrases.

The analysis is extended to contrastive topics, which are realised as stressed *wa*-phrases. I argue that contrastive topics are in fact aboutness *wa*-phrases that are interpreted contrastively. The statement is still *about* the *wa*-phrase. In a context where a *wa*-phrase must be interpreted as a contrastive topic (Büring 1997), it cannot follow a fronted focus. A stressed *wa*-phrase can also follow a fronted focus, but I argue that such a *wa*-phrase is simply contrastive in the sense that there is a salient alternative in the context (Hara 2006).

