

Выдвинутые топики, расщепленные фокусы и параметр интеграции в клаузу

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Аннотация. В работе обсуждается сходство между конструкциями с выдвинутыми топиками, с одной стороны, и клефтами и псевдоклефтами, с другой стороны. Это сходство, как кажется, проистекает из того, что все эти явления связаны с диссоциацией описания релевантной ситуации и информационной структуры. Топикализованные и фокализованные группы в описываемых конструкциях могут быть в разной степени интегрированы в клаузу, описывающую релевантную ситуацию, причем эта интеграция имеет в том числе и диахроническое измерение. Такой подход позволяет, в частности, предложить анализ для некоторых типологически необычных конструкций.

Ключевые слова: выдвижение топика, клефт, псевдоклефт, релевантная ситуация, информационная структура предложения

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Original article

Fronted topics, clefted foci and the parameter of integration into the clause

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Abstract. The paper examines the similarities between two families of constructions: fronted nominal topics and clefted nominal foci. These may originate from the fact that both fronted nominal topics and clefted foci dissociate the expression of the information structure and the expression of the semantics associated with the relevant state-of-affair (SOA). These topics and foci can be said to vary both cross-linguistically and diachronically in the extent to which they are integrated into the clause describing the SOA. This approach provides an analysis for some typologically unusual constructions.

Keywords: nominal topic, nominal focus, clefting construction, topic dislocation, state-of-affair, information structure

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1. Introduction

In this paper I consider similarities between two families of constructions, namely fronted nominal topics (1) and clefted nominal foci (2).

(1) *Lee, I've been following his progress very much over the last month.*
[Radford 2018:41]

(2) *What he brought was a donkey.* [Higgins 1979:2]

Cross-linguistically these constructions display much variation in morphosyntactic properties. I argue that this variation originates from the fact that both fronted nominal topics and clefted foci manifest dissociation of the expression of the information structure and the expression of the semantics associated with the relevant state-of-affair (SOA) to a different extent.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Sections 2 and 3 briefly present the phenomena we are interested here. The facts described there are widely discussed in literature and should not be taken as something new. Section 4 contains an attempt to interpret the commonalities between fronted topics and nominal foci. In Section 5 I illustrate how the perspective provided here can be useful in analyzing certain curious patterns in Malay/Indonesian, Tanti Dargwa and West Caucasian languages. The last section contains concluding remarks.

2. Fronted nominal topics

As is well-known, topics tend to occupy the initial position in the utterance. Thus, Givón [2001:278] mentions “the use of referent fronting in ‘marked’ topicalizing or contrastive constructions that seem to be attested in all languages, regardless of type and degree of word-order rigidity”. In the following example from Japanese, the topic phrase (which takes a dedicated marker) precedes all other constituents:

(3) Japanese (isolate)
 [kono *uta* *wa*] [jon *ga* *sakkyoku* *shi*, *pooru* *ga*
 this song TOP John NOM compose do:INF, Paul NOM
sakushi *shita*]
 write lyrics:PST
 'This song, John composed, and Paul wrote lyrics.' [Iwasaki 2013:238]

One can distinguish between three kinds of constructions with fronted topics [Surányi 2016]:

- Hanging Topic Left Dislocation constructions, where the topic shows no obvious syntactic connections (except for linear adjoining) to the syntactically complete sentence that follows it, as in (4), where the topic ‘that day’ is marked by the default absolute case rather than the oblique case which is expected for a temporal adjunct and hence is not likely to constitute a part of the clause ‘he didn’t do anything’;

(4) West Circassian (West Caucasian)

a mafe-r, a-š' z-ja ə-ša-κ-ep!
that day-ABS that-OBL one-ADD 3SG.ERG-do-PST-NEG
‘That day, he didn’t do anything.’ (elicited)

- Contrastive Topic Left Dislocation constructions, where the fronted topic necessarily coexists with a resumptive element in the subsequent sentence and can show other properties connecting it to this sentence (e.g., case marking), as in (5);

(5) Hungarian (Uralic)

az édes süteményeket, azokat szereti
the sweet cakes.ACC those.ACC likes
‘The sweet cakes, he likes (lit., them).’ [Surányi 2016:428]

- Plain Topicalization, where the topic retains its grammatical function within the sentence but appears at the very beginning of the sentence, as in (6).

(6) Russian (Indo-European, Slavic)

Slona=to ja i ne primegil.
elephant.ACC=TOP I.NOM ADD NEG noticed
‘I have not noticed the elephant.’ (Ivan Krylov’s fable “The inquisitive man”, 1814).

Thus, fronted topics can be integrated into the sentence to a different degree. Hanging topics like in (4) are often described as not being parts of the sentence at all (cf. [Lambrecht 2001] for an extensive discussion) and normally get the “most basic” form (e.g., the absolute form in West Circassian above). Case-matching effects like that shown in (5), where the dislocated topic takes the same case as the resumptive pronoun, suggest that such topics depend on the following sentence syntactically to a greater extent. Nonetheless according to the most typical syntactic approaches, they do not get any role-based grammatical function because their place in the sentence is already occupied by the corresponding pronoun. Finally, in plain topicalization constructions, the topicalized element retains its grammatical function within the sentence.

Several notes are in order here.

First, in the descriptive practice it is very hard or probably even impossible to make clear-cut distinctions proposed above. For instance, not all languages have flagging markers (cases or adpositions) that indicate the relations of a given element to the clause, hence it is sometimes impossible to distinguish between Hanging Topic Left Dislocation and Contrastive Topic Left Dislocation. Further, since in many languages activated discourse referents tend to get a null expression [Ariel 1990, Kibrik 2011] and topic phrases necessarily activate discourse referents, it is not always possible to understand whether a topic has a correlate expression in the subsequent clause. Not surprisingly, some authors divide the range of fronted topics in a different manner. For exam-

ple, Lambrecht [2001] only distinguishes between dislocation and (plain) topicalization, while López [2016] prefers to contrast between H-dislocation which only includes hanging topics and D-dislocation which is associated with some integration of the topic into the clause reflected in the presence of grammatical constraints.

Second, the presence of a dedicated topic marker does not imply integration of the topic into the clause. For example, the Japanese topic marker *wa* illustrated in (3) is sometimes thought to belong to the same class of “particles” as case markers [Kuno 1973] (even though it can combine with some of them; cf. (7) below), but this alone is not a sufficient argument for the *wa*-marked topic to be considered a part of the following sentence.

Third, it is not the case that any marker that *usually* implies syntactic dependency should be considered as a marker of the syntactic dependency *per se*. In fact, the primary function of many markers which specify role-related semantics may be semantic rather than syntactic (cf. [Lander and Vyunova 2018]). Hence the examples like (7), where the topic marker combines with a marker specifying the semantic role, should not be taken as evidence for the real integration of the topic into the sentence.

(7) Japanese (isolate)

[<i>sono</i>	<i>ko</i>	<i>ni</i>	<i>wa</i>]	[<i>jon</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>hana</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>okuri,</i>
this	child	DAT	TOP	John	NOM	flower	ACC	send:INF
<i>pooru</i>	<i>ga</i>	<i>uta</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>uttatta</i>				
Paul	NOM	song	ACC	sing:PST				

‘To this child, John sent flowers and Paul sang a song.’ [Iwasaki 2013:238]

Fourth, there can be many more kinds of evidence pointing to greater or lesser integration of topics into the clause. For example, according to Rudnitskaya [2010], in Korean topics can bind subject-oriented reflexive pronouns even in configurations where there is a subject in the clause; cf. the following example (still marginal, as indicated by the question mark):

(8) Korean (isolate)

? <i>Mia-nun nwuna-ka</i>	<i>caki hakkyo-eyse ceyil yeppu-ta</i>
Mia-TOP	sister-NOM RFL school-LOC most beautiful-DCL
‘As for Mia, her sister is the most beautiful in her (Mia’s, *sister’s) class.’	
[Rudnitskaya 2010:125]	

Such syntactic properties suggest greater integration of topics into sentences (see also [Her 1991; Alsagoff 1992a; 1992b] *inter alia* who suggested that they topics be interpreted as grammatical functions on a par with subjects, objects, etc.). In fact, the integration of the topic into the clause may have many more dimensions, so the above-mentioned trichotomy described by Surányi [2016] may be just a simplification.¹ This has been recently emphasized by Andrason et al. [2016], who argued that the very concept

¹ Lambrecht [2001:1050] mentions four criteria important for recognizing prototypical dislocation constructions, namely (i) extra-clausal position of a constituent, (ii) possible alternative intra-clausal position, (iii) pronominal coindexation, (iv) special prosody. At the same time, he notes that only the first criterion is a necessary condition for qualifying a construction as an instance of dislocation, hence other criteria constitute independent parameters which probably reflect the integration of a topic into the clause.

of left dislocation has a radial structure involving a prototype and manifold deviations from it.

3. Clefted nominal foci

Lambrecht [2001:1066] states that “[s]ince focal denotata are by definition communicatively indispensable elements of propositions, and since propositions are expressed in clauses, focus constituents by necessity occur clause-internally”. This wording is not accurate enough, though, since many languages allow the focused element to appear outside of the clause which describes the relevant SOA. This is observed in clefting constructions including clefts (9) and pseudoclefts (10):

(9) Cleft

It was [this]FOCUS that caused it.

(10) Pseudocleft

What caused it was [this]FOCUS.

Pseudocleft constructions, which seem very widespread at least in some linguistic areas, exploit the natural association of the predicate and the focus: the relevant SOA is expressed by a relative clause that constitutes the subject and the focus formally constitutes the predicate. Cleft constructions, which presumably originate from the same association, probably result from more complex processes, so I will not discuss them here, although my general ideas hold for them as well.

As first noticed by Higgins [1973] for English and later discussed for a number of different languages, foci in such constructions often show connectivity effects, acting in some respects as if they are parts of the relative clause. For example, in (11) and (12) the focus takes an accusative marker which is expected if it is governed by the verb in the relative clause. This phenomenon is akin to case-matching effects observed with some dislocated topics.

(11) Hebrew (Afroasiatic, Semitic)

ma še-kaninu ba-šuk [ze et ha-sveder ha-kaxol]FOCUS
what that.we.bought in.the.market COP ACC the-sweater the-blue
'What we bought in the market was the blue sweater.' [Heller 2002:244]

(12) Russian (Indo-European, Slavic)

*kogo bespolezno iskat' v Sevilje, tak éto
who.ACC useless look.for.INF in Seville.LOC so this.N
cirjulnika
barber.ACC*

'It is a barber for whom it is useless to look in Seville.' (RNC)

Connectivity effects are not restricted to case marking. For instance, foci in clefts and pseudoclefts can be constituted by reflexive pronouns that are normally bound by subjects. Importantly, in these structures reflexive pronouns take antecedents from inside relative clauses rather than are bound by their formal subjects (i.e. headless relatives); cf. (13). I consider this unexpected binding to be parallel to the unexpected binding with fronted topics discussed above.

(13) Abaza (West Caucasian)

<i>ʕaləj</i>	<i>awəj</i>	<i>a-tʒə</i>	<i>z-zə́-j-č'pa-z</i>
Ali	that	DEF-house	REL.IO-BEN-3M.ERG-make-PST.NFIN
[<i>j-qa</i>		<i>akʷa-č</i>]	FOCUS
3M.IO-head		3N.COP-DCL	

Lit., 'For whom Ali built that house is himself.' (elicited)

Effects of this kind do not necessarily come together (cf. [Heller 2002]), hence different clefts/pseudoclefts may differ in this respect. If we interpret the connectivity effects as signs of integration of the focus into the clause describing the relevant SOA, this picture turns out to be of the same nature as topic integration into the clause.

4. Information structure vs SOA-related semantics

It is convenient to contrast between the SOA-related semantics and the information structure. Quite often, the choice of a construction is motivated by considerations related to them both. A canonical example is presented by voice contrasts, which cannot be described without appeal to role semantics but at the same time are widely used for topicalization of some argument. Still, the expression of the SOA-related semantics and the information structure can be dissociated, even if such patterns look more marked (i.e. they are structurally more complex and are more restricted in use, at least in some languages). That is what happens in constructions with dislocated topics and clefted foci: there is a clause that provides a basic description of the relevant SOA and there is an external position which is responsible for the information structure formation.

The constructions showing dissociation between the SOA-related semantics and the information structure are also more complex for processing, because they require an additional step to create the semantic links between a separated element and the description of a SOA. Hence we expect the development of separating constructions into more integrated ones, which are more optimal for communication because they recover role relations in a more direct manner. This is indeed what we observe both for topics and for foci. Indeed, this idea is fully consistent with the well-known ideas of grammaticalization of topics into subjects [Shibatani 1990] on the one hand and on the development of monoclausal constructions from clefts and pseudoclefts [Heine and Reh 1984:181–182; Harris and Campbell 1995:151–168; Aannestad 2021:20–21] on the other hand. Given that the effects of integration are numerous and presumably need not strongly correlate with each other, it is likely to be gradual rather than abrupt. As a result, we expect to see constructions that display only partial integration of foci or topics into the clause describing the relevant SOA.

In fact, we can view the occurrence of connectivity effects on a par with formal separation as manifestation of this partial dissociation discussed here. Below we will look at more constructions which present challenges for a synchronic analysis but can be regarded as the results of partial integration of topics and foci into the clause.

5. More examples of partial dissociation

5.1. West Caucasian internally-headed clefts

When expressing the narrow focus, West Caucasian languages actively use pseudocleft constructions like (13) above and (14), where the backgrounded SOA is described by a non-finite relative clause and the focused part appears as the predicate

(sometimes accompanied by a copula); see, e.g., [Sumbatova 2009] for West Circassian, [Kindlein 2016] for Kabardian. Interestingly, even then the focused constituent can appear linearly embedded into the relative clause (15) (see also [Kindlein 2016] for an extensive discussion of this construction in Kabardian). For this pattern I will use the term “internally-headed pseudocleft” (by analogy with internally-headed relative clauses) and contrast it with externally-headed pseudoclefts like (14).

(14) West Circassian (West Caucasian)

<i>ta-š'ə-zə-ka-?e-re-r-ja</i>	<i>[gʷəye-r a.rə]</i> _{FOCUS}
1PL.ABS-LOC-REL.ERG-CAUS-be-DYN-ABS-ADD	hope-ABS 3.COP

‘What makes us live is (our) hope.’ (WCC)

(15) West Circassian (West Caucasian)

<i>adəge-qʷaje-r</i>	<i>[adəge-rjespwəbljəke-r a.rə]</i> _{FOCUS}
Circassian-cheese	Adygehe-republic-ABS 3.COP
<i>qə-zə-š'-a-ŷə-š'tə-r</i>	

CISL-REL.IO-LOC-3PL.ERG-do-FUT-ABS

‘It is in Republic of Adygehe where the Circassian cheese will be made.’ (WCC)

Both constructions show connectivity effects. Yet, internally-headed pseudoclefts seemingly display more connectivity effects than externally-headed pseudoclefts. In Abaza, for example, only the former allow the focus to take an its instrumental marker defined by its role in the relative clause (which is by the way also marked by a prefix within the predicate of the relative clause), as demonstrated in (16):

(16) Abaza (West Caucasian)

a. <i>acajnka z-la-sə-r-gələ-wa</i>	<i>[arəj a-ruč'ka(*-la)</i>
mark	REL.IO-INS-1SG.ERG-CAUS-stand-IPF
<i>akʷ-ŷ</i> _{FOCUS}	3N.COP-DCL
<i>j-z-la-sə-r-gələ-wa</i>	
mark	this DEF-pen-INS 3N.COP-DCL
<i>3N.ABS-REL.IO-INS-1SG.ERG-CAUS-stand-IPF</i>	

‘What I give grades with is this pen.’ (elicited)

None of these constructions can be considered a simple clause because both of them include two syntactically unrelated predicates – a finite copula and a non-finite predicate of the relative clause. Nonetheless, foci in internally-headed pseudoclefts are (quite expectedly) more integrated into the clause describing the SOA than external foci and the word order is just one of the manifestations of this.

5.2. Agreement with highlighted arguments in Tanti Dargwa

Tanti Dargwa belongs to the East Caucasian family and like almost all of its relatives displays ergative strategies of encoding both in case marking and in the agreement of the predicate. Still, as was first described by Nina Sumbatova, in some periphrastic constructions involving a lexical predicate and a copula, the latter may show agreement with either the actor (17a) or the undergoer (17b), even though the lexical predicate should agree with the absolute argument:

(17) Tanti Dargwa (East Caucasian)

a. *murad-li t'ant'i-b qali b-irq'-u-le=sa-b*
 Murad-ERG Tanti-N(ESS) house N-do.IPF-PRS-CVB=COP-N
 b. *murad-li t'ant'i-b qali b-irq'-u-le=sa-j*
 Murad-ERG Tanti-N(ESS) house N-do.IPF-PRS-CVB=COP-M

‘Murad is building a house in Tanti.’ [Sumbatova and Lander 2014: 451]

Sumbatova conjectured that the copula agrees with its own null subject, which is functionally the theme of the episode and may be coreferent to either the actor or the undergoer. This representation later received support from examples like (18), unknown by Sumbatova at that time, where the possessor serves as the topic (as indicated by its unmarked rather than genitive form) and in some sense “fulfill” the position postulated by Sumbatova on the basis of exclusively structural considerations. One problem acknowledged by Sumbatova is, however, that the copula can also agree with the element which is explicitly marked as focused by serving as the host of the copula clitic, as in (19).

(18) Tanti Dargwa (East Caucasian)

qāħmad qali b-ik:-ub-le=sa-j
 Ahmad house N-burn.PF-PRET-CVB=COP-M
 ‘Ahmad, (his) house burnt.’ (elicited)

(19) Tanti Dargwa (East Caucasian)

dali=sa-j=da rurs:i quli-r r-alt-un-se
 I.ERG=COP-M=1 girl house.LOC-F(ESS) F-leave.IPF-PRS-ATTR
 ‘It is me who leaves (my) daughter at home.’
 [Sumbatova and Lander 2014: 458]

A simple empirical generalization is that the copula agrees with some prominent element which is highlighted as the topic or the focus – and it is a matter of interpretation and assumptions on the organization of grammar whether an obligatory external position for it should be postulated. Of course, in either case the highlighted element is contrasted with the rest of the clause by controlling such “trigger-happy agreement” (in terms of [Comrie 2003]) on the external copula and hence retains behavior of a less-integrated element. But in many other respects (including case marking and controlling the agreement on the “internal” predicate”), it is normally integrated into the clause. If this is indeed a case of partial integration, we do not need to postulate an external position for all examples, even though it can exist in examples like (18).

5.3. “Second passive” in Malay/Indonesian

In Malay/Indonesian there is a specific construction which is often described as a kind of passive [Alieva et al. 1972: 332–337; Chung 1976; Sneddon 1996: 248–249]. Here the transitive verb does not take any voice morphology (unlike in most other constructions) and is immediately preceded by its actor (normally pronominal), while the undergoer usually precedes the whole complex. Hence we find the structure like [Undergoer [Actor Verb]], illustrated in (20).

(20) Standard Indonesian (Austronesian)

rumah ini bisa kau tempat-i
 house this can you occupy-TR
 ‘...this house can be occupied by you.’ (SEALang)

As with passive constructions in many other languages, we can think that at least originally this configuration was intended to make the undergoer more topical; in fact, there are approaches that explicitly treat the undergoer in this pattern as the topic [Alsa-goff 1991; 1992]. The undergoer is fully integrated into the clause: for example, it is the only argument that can be relativized, which is one of the defining subject properties in languages of West Indonesia [Ogloblin 1996]. The actor, on the other hand, also displays some subject properties – for example, it can antecede the reflexive undergoer, even in lects that clearly prohibit semantic binding [Arka, Manning 1998]:

(21) Indonesian (Austronesian)

<i>Diri.saya</i>	<i>saya</i>	<i>serah-kan</i>	<i>ke</i>	<i>polisi</i>
RFL.1	I	surrender-TR	to	police
'I surrendered myself to police.' [Arka, Manning 1998: 7]				

Interestingly, the actor is obligatory here, so this construction clearly declines from the prototypical passive (as described, for example, by Siewierska [1984] and Shiba-tani [1985]) and is akin to ergative constructions in other languages. But if we consider this an ergative construction, it would violate the well-established generalization that locutor actors prefer accusative encoding as compared with non-locutor actors. Indeed, in Malay/Indonesian the situation is quite the opposite, since the “second passive” construction appears primarily with locutor pronominal actors.

The specific features of the construction under discussion can be easily explained, if we assume that it originates from a left-dislocation construction but the former topic in it has been already integrated into the clause, acquired some properties of the subject but left some other subject properties with the actor.

6. Conclusion

To sum up,

- the SOA-related semantics and the information structure can be expressed independently, in which case the topic or the focus are expressed outside of the clause expressing the semantic relations,
- nonetheless there is a pressure to express them in a single syntactic construction, and this pressure may lead to integration of initially separated topics and foci into the clause describing the relevant SOA,
- since this integration is a gradual diachronic process, we observe constructions that display elements only partly integrated, i.e. showing some properties of elements of the clause (described as connectivity effects) and other properties suggesting their independent status.

Presumably, when the dissociation between the SOA-related semantics and the information structure disappears, configurations simultaneously motivated by both components can arise. But this is certainly not the only (and possibly even not the default) way for the appearance of such configurations. Alternatively, the combination of features related to the SOA-related semantics and the information structure may be due to the obligatorification of tendencies (such as the tendency for the actor to be topical).

Note that both ways presuppose that the resulted structures are highly grammaticalized. If grammaticalization leads to the disappearance of transparency [Lander 2015], then the need for dissociation between the SOA-related semantics and the information

structure may show up again at this point, so new separating constructions can appear. This scenario, however, is still a matter of speculation, so many more traces of such a circle should be found to make it a valuable hypothesis.

Abbreviations used in glosses

ABS absolutive, ACC accusative, ADD additive, BEN nenefactive, ATTR attributive form, CAUS causative, COP copula, CVB converb, DAT dative, DCL declarative, DEF definite, CISL cislocative, DYN dynamic, ERG ergative, ESS essive, F feminine, FUT future, INF infinitive, INS instrumental, IO indirect object, IPF imperfective, LOC locative, M masculine, N neuter, NEG negation, NFIN non-finite, NOM nominative, OBL oblique, PF perfective, PL plural, PRET preterit, PRS present tense, PST past, REL relative, RFL reflexive, SG singular, TOP topic, TR transitive.

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