

BARE QUANTIFIER FRONTING AS CONTRASTIVE TOPICALIZATION¹

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Abstract. I argue that indefinites (in particular bare quantifiers such as ‘something’, ‘somebody’, etc.) which are neither existentially presupposed nor in the restriction of a quantifier over situations, can undergo topicalization in a number of Romance languages (Catalan, Italian, Romanian, Spanish), but only if the sentence contains “verum” focus, i.e. focus on a high degree of certainty of the sentence. I analyze these indefinites as *contrastive topics*, using Büring’s (1999) theory (where the term ‘S-topic’ is used for what I call ‘contrastive topic’). I propose that the topic is evaluated in relation to a scalar set including generalized quantifiers such as $\{\lambda P \exists x P(x), \lambda P \text{ MANY } x P(x), \lambda P \text{ MOST } x P(x), \lambda P \forall x P(x)\}$ or $\{\lambda P \exists x P(x), \lambda P P(a), \lambda P P(b) \dots\}$, and that the contrastive topic is the weakest generalized quantifier in this set. The verum focus, which is part of the “comment” that co-occurs with the “Topic”, introduces a set of alternatives including degrees of certainty of the assertion. The speaker asserts that his claim is certainly true or highly probable, contrasting it with stronger claims for which the degree of probability is unknown. This explains the observation that in downward entailing contexts, the fronted quantified DPs are headed by ‘all’ or ‘many’, whereas ‘some(thing)’, small numbers or ‘at least n’ appear in upward entailing contexts. Unlike other cases of non-specific topics, which are property topics, these are quantifier topics: the topic part is a generalized quantifier, the comment is a property of generalized quantifiers. This explains the narrow scope of the fronted quantified DP.

Keywords: topic, quantifier, topicalization, Romance, German

1. Introduction

In this article I discuss a construction which has received little attention in the literature and has been often misinterpreted: topicalization of a bare quantifier in Romance. It is currently believed that indefinites can be topics only if they are existentially presupposed (specific, partitive etc., see Erteschik-Shir 1997, 2007, Cohen and Erteschik-Shir 2002, a.o.) or if they belong to the restriction of a quantifier over situations (see “generic indefinites”, treated as indirect topics by Endriss and Hinterwimmer 2008; see Ebert & Endriss 2004, Endriss 2009, Cresti 1995a a.o.). As bare quantifiers are not existentially presupposed and they do not contribute enough descriptive content so as to build the restriction of a quantifier over situations, it is not expected that they should undergo topicalization (I use this term for a fronting operation correlated with a topic interpretation). However, I will show that bare quantifiers (e.g. ‘something’: Romanian *ceva*, Spanish *algo*, Catalan *quelcom*, *alguna cosa*, Italian *qualcosa*) can undergo topicalization in Romanian, Spanish, Catalan and Italian.

The construction which I will analyze as a type of topicalization is exemplified in (1)-(4), for Romanian, Italian, Spanish and Catalan respectively. It displays a fronted bare quantifier and focal accent on the verb or on an epistemic adverb, signaling “verum

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focus” (see Höhle 1992, Romero and Han 2002, 2004), i.e. focus on the truth value (Höhle 1992) or on a high degree of certainty (Romero and Han 2002, 2004)²:

- (1) a. Ceva TREBUIE să-ți fi spus Maria ca să
 something must SBJV-CL.2.G.DAT BE told Maria so that SĂ
 fii așa supărat.
 be.2SG so upset
 ‘Maria MUST have told you something, to make you so upset.’
 (Romanian)
- b. Cu cineva TREBUIE să fi vorbit Petre despre asta.
 with somebody must SĂ BE spoken Petre about this
 ‘There MUST be somebody Peter talked to about this.’
 (Romanian)
- (2) a. Qualcosa ti ha certamente DETTO Maria perché tu
 something 2SG.CL.DAT has certainly said Maria so that 2SG
 sia tanto amareggiato.
 be.SBJV so upset
 ‘Maria MUST have told you something, to make you so upset.’
 (Italian, S. Cruschina, p.c.)
- b. Con ualcuno deve aver PARLATO Piero, di questo.
 with somebody must have spoken Piero of this
 ‘There MUST be somebody Peter talked to about this.’
 (Italian, S. Cruschina, p.c.)
- c. Qualche amico avrai, che ti possa aiutare
 some friend will have-2SG that 2SG.CL.DAT can.SBJV.3SG help
 ‘You WILL have some friend to help you.’
 (Italian, Benincà et al. 1988, ex. (105))
- d. Qualcosa, (la) farò (non preoccuparti)
 something CL.F.SG.ACC will-do.1SG not worry
 ‘Something (or other) I will do (don’t worry).’
 (Italian, Cinque 1990: 74)
- e. Qualcuno, (lo) troverò di sicuro, per questo compito.
 someone CL.M.SG.ACC will-find.1SG of sure for this task
 ‘Someone (or other) I will surely find for this task.’
 (Italian, Cinque 1990: 74)
- (3) a. Algo debe haberte dicho María para que te
 something must have-2SG.DAT told Maria so that 2SG.REFL
 hayas enojado tanto.
 have.SBJV.2SG got upset so much
 ‘Maria MUST have told you something, to make you so upset.’
 (Spanish, Zubizarreta 1998, ex. (4c))

² Since narrow focus is on the item indicating the degree of certainty, what follows the verb is distressed, which is manifested, in Catalan, by the obligatory use of commas (see Quer 2002 on examples (4): without the comma, they are unacceptable).

- b. Con alguien debe haber hablado Pedro acerca de esto.
 with somebody must have spoken Pedro about this
 ‘There MUST be somebody Peter talked to about this.’
 (Spanish, *ibid.*, ex. (4d))
- (4) a. Algu hi trobarem, a la Rambla.
 somebody LOC.CL will find-1PL on the Rambla
 ‘We will find somebody, on the Rambla.’
 (Catalan, Quer 2002: 264, ex. (34a))
- b. Alguns llibres deu haver comprat, l’Oriol.
 some books must.3SG have bought the Oriol
 ‘Oriol must have bought some books.’ (Catalan, *ibid.*, ex. (35a))

Most of the researchers who noticed this construction did not analyze it as topicalization. Thus, Cinque (1990) noted that bare quantifiers can be left-dislocated without clitic doubling, but did not address the informational-structural properties of this construction. Zubizarreta (1998) analyzed this construction as focalization. Quer (2002) treated it as a construction different from both topicalization and focalization³. Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal (2009) noticed the relation of this type of fronting with verum focus, but they did not distinguish it from focalization constructions: putting together this construction with emphatic focus fronting and fronting of certain context-given elements (demonstratives, ‘same’), they claim that the fronted element is not raised in virtue of its information structural status (i.e. this construction is neither focalization nor topicalization), but the construction as a whole is associated to verum focus. As I will show in the next section, there is evidence that this construction is a type of topicalization, which should be kept apart from focalization.

Arregi (2003) is the only paper, as far as I know, which acknowledged the fact that this construction, in Spanish, is an instance of contrastive topicalization. Arregi correctly observed that the topic part is a quantifier, not an individual or a property, and that usually these sentences contain verum focus. However, he did not explain the association with verum focus and did not further elaborate the semantics of the construction. This is the task I undertake in this article. Applying Büring’s (1999) semantics of contrastive topics and Romero and Han’s (2002, 2004) analysis of verum focus, I will show that: (i) the topic alternatives form a series of propositions related by entailment (for a fixed value of focus); (ii) the actual sentence corresponds to the weakest claim in this series; (iii) as the focus is on the degree of (epistemic) probability (verum-focus is focus on “for-sure”), the speaker actually asserts that this claim is certainly true or highly probable, contrasting it with stronger claims for which the degree of probability is unknown. Having established these facts, I will try to provide an explanation for the association of quantifier topicalization with verum focus. A second contribution of this paper is widening the empirical domain: besides Spanish, I will show that this construction is also found in Italian, Romanian and Catalan. Furthermore, this type of topicalization can also explain the exceptional narrow scope of some fronted indefinite DPs in German and Hungarian.

³ He claimed that the interpretation of this construction corresponds to the focus-affected reading of quantified DP of the type *few COOKS applied* = ‘few of the persons who applied were cooks’ (Herburger 1997). But this reading cannot obtain in sentences where the quantifier lacks an NP-restriction, as in (4)a. In fact, it obtains in none of the sentences involving verum focus which I present in this article.

2. Evidence for a topic analysis

Let us first present the evidence against a focus analysis. We have already mentioned the fact that the focal stress does not fall on the fronted quantifier in the examples (1), which shows instead the same intonation as topics (for Spanish, this was noticed by Arregi 2003). This contrasts with all known instances of focalization, which require narrow focus on the fronted element, manifested by focal stress.

A second argument comes from word order. It is known that in Romanian and Spanish fronted foci cannot be separated from the verb by the subject (Alboiu 2002, Cornilescu 2002, Zubizarreta 1998):

- (5) a. AICI lucrează Ion. / *AICI Ion lucrează.
 here works Ion here Ion works
 ‘Ion works HERE / It’s here that Ion works.’
 (Romanian)
- b. AQUÍ trabaja Juan. / *AQUÍ Juan trabaja.
 here works Juan here Juan works
 ‘Juan works HERE / It’s here that Juan works’
 (Spanish)

However, a fronted bare quantifier allows an intervening subject in these languages:

- (6) a. Ceva el ȘTIE.
 something he knows
 ‘He KNOWS something / There IS something he knows.’
 (Romanian)
- b. [Context: Juan didn’t eat anything]
 No; Algo, Juan sí comió, pero no mucho.
 no something Juan yes ate but not much
 ‘No; Juan did eat something, but not much.’
 (Spanish, Arregi 2003, ex. (9))

Topicalized adverbials can also intervene:

- (7) Ceva acolo a VĂZUT.
 something there has seen
 ‘(S)he must have seen something there!’

For Italian, Cinque (1990) notes, besides the intonation typical of left-dislocated topics, that clitic-doubling is possible – see (2)d-e), something which is totally excluded for fronted foci in this language⁴.

Like in topicalization, more than one quantifier can be fronted, at least in Italian, according to Quer (2002) who cites Paola Monachesi’s judgment, and in Romanian, according to my judgment:

⁴ Floricic (2013) argues that the presence of the clitic is not correlated with referentiality in these examples (in fact, what he shows is that irrespective of the presence of the clitic, the indefinites are non-specific).

- (8) a. ?Qualcosa a qualcuno prometterà.
 something to somebody promise.FUT.3SG
 ‘I WILL promise something to somebody.’
 (Italian, Quer 2012, ex. (45))
- b. Ceva cuiva i- a SPUS, judecând după
 something somebody.DAT CL.DAT has told judging after
 rumoarea din sală.
 murmur-the from hall
 ‘(S)he must have told somebody something, judging by the murmur in the hall.’
 (Romanian)

The main reason for which previous researchers did not treat this construction in Spanish as topicalization, but rather as focalization or another type of fronting, is that it does not display clitic doubling. But, as shown by Arregi (2003) for Spanish, topicalization is not a sufficient condition for doubling: in the case of indefinites, doubling also requires that the topicalized DP be referential⁵. Therefore, doubling clitics are absent with topicalized bare nouns (see (9)-(10)). In that case, it is not a referent which is topicalized, but rather the NP-property, see (9)c) and (10)). In (9)d), the issue of a too big number of books must have been already raised in the discourse:

- (9) a. Dinero, a mí, Juan nunca me deja.
 money to me Juan never me lends
 ‘As for money, Juan never lends me (any)’
 (Spanish, Casielles-Suarez 2004, ex. (131))
- b. Niños, María dice que no ha visto.
 children Maria says that not has seen
 ‘As for children, Maria says she hasn’t seen (any)’
 (Fernando-Soriano 1993, ex. (48b))
- c. Cerveza, Juan ha traído.
 beer John has brought.
 ‘As for beer, Juan has brought some.’
 (Fernando-Soriano 1993, ex. (48c))
- d. Demasiados libros, Juan sí leyó.
 too many books Juan yes read
 ‘Too many books, Juan indeed read’
 (Spanish, Arregi 2003, ex. (18b))
- (10) a. Sonate de Beethoven au tot transmis pe Mezzo.
 sonatas by Beethoven have.3PL repeatedly broadcast on Mezzo
 ‘Sonatas by Beethoven, they have repeatedly broadcast on Mezzo.’
- b. Filme de-astea am mai văzut.
 films of these have.1SG already seen
 ‘This kind of films, I’ve seen before.’
 (Romanian)

⁵ Extending the generalization to cover universals, Arregi (2003) reformulates it as a requirement for an e-type interpretation of the trace of the topicalized phrase.

Of course, if the language has a clitic for NP-topicalization, clitic doubling will appear even with bare nouns. This is the case of Italian and Catalan, which have the pro-NP clitic *ne* / *en*, which would be used in the counterparts of (9)-(10). But in the case of bare quantifier fronting, we are not dealing with a topicalization of an NP. The topic is not a nominal property (such as ‘child’ or ‘beer’ in (9)), but the quantifier itself (see next section for a more precise semantic characterization). In fact, it is likely that bare quantifiers do not contain an empty NP position (see Corblin 1995, Giurgea 2010). Therefore, the pro-N clitic cannot appear in the quantifier topicalization construction.

3. Contrastive topichood and verum focus

There is however an important difference between the non-referential topics in (9)-(10) and the bare quantifiers in (1)-(4), which we claim to be topics. The classical definition of topics as “what a sentence is about” (see Reinhart 1981) can apply to the former (there are contexts in which we are discussing about a property), but not to the latter. But the research on topichood has distinguished several types of topics (see Jacobs 2001, Frey 2004, Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007, a.o.). The characterization as (possible) discourse topics holds for aboutness-topics (see Reinhart 1981, Erteschik-Shir 1997), and it is sure that bare quantifiers (and probably, more generally, indefinites which are neither existentially presupposed nor generic) cannot be aboutness-topics. But a different category of topichood, namely contrastive topichood (as defined in Büring 1999), can arguably apply even to bare quantifiers (as already suggested by Arregi 2003).

A similar observation was made by Kiss and Gyuris (2003) about topicalized narrow scope indefinites in Hungarian and German: they argue that the restriction of topics to specific or generic indefinites is only found with non-contrastive, purely aboutness topics, and that the contrastive interpretation enables non-referential expressions, such as properties, to function as topics. But in our construction it cannot be said that the topic is a property or a kind: ‘something’ lacks any descriptive content, whereas the [+human] feature in ‘somebody’ is certainly not the one topicalized in the examples discussed (a lexical noun such as *people*, *humans*, *human beings* would be used in that case).

I will show now that this intriguing type of topicalization can be explained using Büring’s (1999) theory of contrastive topics. First, notice that Büring calls the notion he defines “S-topic” (sentence-topic), but in order to distinguish this notion from aboutness topics, I use the term “contrastive topic”, like other subsequent studies (see Jacobs 2001, Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007, Krifka 2007, Büring 2007, a.o.)⁶.

According to Büring, “S-topics” introduce topic alternatives, which are a set of sets of focal alternatives. The focus value of a sentence is the set of propositions containing the proposition expressed by the sentence and all its focal alternatives (which are obtained by replacing the focus with another element from some contextually established set; the set of focal alternatives is obtained by lambda-abstraction over the position of the focus). If inside the non-focal material, another element is contrasted with other elements, this yields topic alternatives. The topic value is computed in the same way, but on the focus

⁶ For arguments in favor of a feature [Contrast] which cuts across [Focus] and [Topic], see Molnár and Winkler (2010), López (2008).

value (it is a “typed-up focus value”, in Büring’s words): it is the set of focal values obtained by replacing the topic with all the other elements with which it is contrasted. In other words, it is a set of sets of focal alternatives. In order for this important point to be clear, I reproduce here some of Büring’s examples. They illustrate sub-types of contrastive topics, according to how they arise in a discourse, using the question-answer model of discourse development. In (11), we have a shifted topic, triggered by changing an element of the background:

- (11) A: Do you think that Fritz would buy this suit?
 B: Well, [I]_T certainly [WOULDN’T]_F.
 - focal alternative set of A: {Fritz would buy this suit, Fritz wouldn’t buy this suit}
 - topic alternative set of B: = {{ Fritz would buy this suit, Fritz wouldn’t buy this suit},
 { I would buy this suit, I wouldn’t buy this suit},
}
 (Büring 1999, ex. (13))

In (12), a given discourse-topic is partitioned (an element is replaced by one included in it):

- (12) A: What did the pop stars wear?
 B: The [female]_T pop stars wore [caftans]_F.
 - topic alternatives = {{the female pop stars wore caftans, the female pop stars wore dresses, the female pop stars wore overalls,},
 {the male pop stars wore caftans, the male pop stars wore dresses, the male pop stars wore overalls,},
 {the female or male pop stars wore caftans, the female or male pop stars wore dresses, the female or male pop stars wore overalls,},
 ...}
 (Büring 1999, ex. (14))

Even if the answer totally complies with the question (no element of the background is replaced), the intonation typical of contrastive topics (called “accent B”) affecting an element immediately triggers topic alternatives, as illustrated by the following example:

- (13) A: Did your wife kiss other men?
 B: [My]_T wife [didn’t]_F kiss other men. (suggests alternatives)
 - topic alternatives = {{my wife kissed other men, my wife didn’t kiss other men},
 {your wife kissed other men, your wife didn’t kiss other men},
 {Fred’s wife kissed other men, Fred’s wife didn’t kiss other men},
 ...}
 (Büring 1999, ex. (17))

The relation of the topic value with the discourse context, in this simplified model which

uses question-answer pairs, is expressed by the following conditions ((15), considered as an implicature carried by the “S-topic”, says that there must be open alternatives in the topic value):

- (14) The question-answer condition:
The meaning of the question must match one element in the topic value of the answer
(Büring 1999, ex. (26))
- (15) Given a sentence A containing an S-topic, there is an element Q in $[[A]]^t$ (the topic value of A) such that Q is still under consideration after uttering A
(Büring 1999, ex. (32))

We should retain that contrastive topics require (i) the existence of a partition of the remainder of the sentence into focus and background, and (ii) the existence of topic alternatives – issues still under debate with different values for the topic and the same background. A sentence with a contrastive topic has thus the form

- (16) $[_{\text{Topic}} \text{Topic} [_{\text{Comment}} \text{Focus Background}]]$

I will refer to the set from which the topic part is picked up in each alternative as ‘topic contrast set’ – e.g. {female pop stars, male pope stars, female or male pop stars} in (12).

We can now come back to our construction. My proposal (which will be argued for a bit later, see below (23)) is the following:

- (17) a. The topic is a generalized quantifier (e.g. $\lambda P \exists x P(x)$), which is contrasted to other generalized quantifiers.
b. The topic contrast set is one of the series $\{\lambda P \exists x.P(x), \lambda P \text{ MANY } x.P(x), \lambda P \text{ MOST } x P(x), \lambda P \forall x P(x)\}$ or $\{\lambda P \exists x P(x), \lambda P P(a), \lambda P P(b) \dots\}$ (where a, b stand for entity-denoting expressions).

We have already seen that the construction is associated to *verum focus*, i.e. focus on a high degree of certainty. This means that the element which is variable across the focal alternatives inside the comment is the degree of certainty of the assertion. Romero & Han (2002) characterize *verum focus* as focus on the epistemic modal FOR-SURE (contrasted with *probably*, *possibly*, etc.). This proposal accounts for the use of necessity epistemic modals in some of the examples in (1).

Looking at the examples, the following generalization emerges:

- (18) The topic is the generalized quantifier corresponding to the weakest claim in a series (as defined by the choice of the topic contrast set in (17)b). The speaker asserts that this claim is certainly true or highly probable, contrasting it with stronger claims for which the truth value is unknown (so that they remain open issues)

Take for instance the series $\{\lambda P \exists x.P(x), \lambda P \text{ MANY } x.P(x), \lambda P \text{ MOST } x P(x), \lambda P \forall x P(x)\}$. Leaving aside the epistemic modal component (which falls under focus), we have, of

course, the entailments $\forall x P(x) \models \text{MANY } x P(x) \models \exists x P(x)$. Now, for an example such as (19), the topic alternatives will have the form in (20):

- (19) Ceva el ȘTIE.
something he knows
'He KNOWS / MUST know something.'
(Romanian)
- (20)
- | Topic | Background | Focus |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| $\lambda P \exists x P(x)$ | $\lambda Q_{\langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle} Q(\lambda y \text{ knows}(\text{he}, y))$ | for-sure |
| $\lambda P \text{ many } x P(x)$ | " | maybe, I can't tell |
| $\lambda P \forall x P(x)$ | " | maybe, I can't tell |

The existential quantifier also makes a weaker claim compared with referential expressions such as names: $\text{met}(\text{John}, \text{Mary}) \models \exists x \text{ met}(\text{John}, x)$, $\text{met}(\text{John}, \text{Sophie}) \models \exists x \text{ met}(\text{John}, x)$, etc. This scale applies to the use of the bare quantifier in (21), as represented in (22).

- (21) Cu cineva Ion s- a ÎNTÂLNIT.
with somebody Ion REFL has met
'Somebody Ion MUST have met.'
(Romanian)
- (22)
- | Topic | Background | Focus |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| $\lambda P \exists x P(x)$ | $\lambda Q_{\langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle} Q(\lambda y \text{ met}(\text{John}, y))$ | for-sure |
| $\lambda P P(\text{Mary})$ | " | maybe, I can't tell ... |
| $\lambda P P(\text{Sophie})$ | " | maybe, I can't tell |

'Something' is here read as 'at least something' – and we can indeed find examples with 'at least', as shown by Floricic (2013) for Italian:

- (23) Anche se a me non piace imparare tutto, ma **almeno**
even if to CL.2SG.ACC not likes learn.INF everything but at-least
qualcosa **la** imparo.
something CL.3FSG.ACC learn-1SG
'Even though I don't like to learn everything, I do learn at least something.'
(Italian, Floricic 2013, ex. (10a))

The crucial evidence for the generalization in (18) comes from negative contexts. Since under negation, entailments are reversed ($\neg \exists x P(x) \models \neg \text{MANY } x P(x) \models \neg \forall x P(x)$, $\neg P(a) \models \neg \forall x P(x)$, $\neg P(b) \models \neg \forall x P(x)$, etc.), we expect to find the opposite members of the series in the construction involving topicalization of a non-specific quantified DP and verum focus (note that negation takes scope over the quantifier). And, indeed, we find *all* and *many*, as illustrated by the following examples:

- (24) Chiar totul NU știe. (Ro.)
even everything not knows
'(But,) (s)he does NOT know everything.'

- (25) a. Molti amici non si è fatto, di sicuro.
many friends not REFL has done of certain
'He certainly didn't make many friends.'
(Italian, Benincà et al. 1988, ex. (106))
- b. La vita è così, tutto non lo si
the life is like that everything not CL.3MSG.ACC CL.IMPERS IMPERS
può avere.
can.3SG have
'That's how life is, one cannot have everything.'
(Italian, Floricic 2013, ex. (14b))
- (26) Mucho dinero no ha ganado.
much money not has won
'He didn't win a lot of money.'
(Spanish, Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal 2009, fn. 22, (i))
- (27) a. Gaires estudiants no deu haver aprovat, aquest professor.
many students not must.3SG have passed this professor
'This professor must not have let many students pass.'
(Catalan, Batllori and Hernanz 2011, ex. (24 b))
- b. Molts diners no han costat, aquestes arracades.
much money not have costed these earrings
'These earrings didn't cost a lot of money.'
(Catalan, Batllori and Hernanz 2011, ex. (24 d))

'Something', which under negation becomes the strongest claim in the series, cannot be fronted in negative sentences (as noticed, but left unexplained by Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal (2009)):

- (28) Algo (*no) debe saber
something (*not) must.3SG know
(Spanish, Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal 2009, ex. (79a))

To conclude, bare quantifiers and other quantificational DPs can function as contrastive topics in order to open a set of alternatives which differ in strength and in the degree of certainty. This type of topicalization is used, as a rhetorical device, in order to strengthen the certainty the speaker attributes to an assertion, contrasting it with stronger claims for which (s)he allows the existence of doubts.

Now, notice that what appears to be the focus part can contain in addition another quantified DP:

- (29) a. Ceva a ciTIT fieCAre.
something has read everybody
'Everybody read (at least) something.'
- b. Măcar trei cărți a ciTIT fiecare stuDENT
at-least three books has read every student
'At least three books every student read.'
- (Romanian)

I see two possible analyses of this construction. One possibility is that here the part which varies across the topic alternatives is in fact only the degree of certainty, and the second quantified DP is stressed because it is discourse-new, not because it varies across the topic alternatives. Notice that there is a separate focal stress on the verb, which would not appear if the focus domain had contained both the verb and the second quantifier. The second possible analysis is that the focal part contains, beside the modal epistemic component, the quantifier alone – i.e. not the set on which quantification applies, for instance the set of students in (29)b):

- | | | | |
|------|---|---|------------------|
| (30) | Topic | Background | Focus |
| | $\lambda P \exists X (P(X) \wedge \text{books}(x))$ | $\lambda K_{\langle\langle e, t \rangle, \langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle\rangle} \lambda Q_{\langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle}$ | {for-sure ; all} |
| | | $K(\text{student})(\lambda z.Q(\lambda y \text{ read } (z, y)))$ | |

In the next section, we will see other cases to which this analysis may apply.

4. Extending the analysis to some other topical narrow scope indefinites

The construction in (29), in which the “comment” contains another quantifier, has been discussed for German and Hungarian (see Krifka 1998, Kiss and Gyuris 2003), as a problematic case of a narrow scope indefinite functioning as a topic (the signs “ $\sqrt{}$ ”, “ \wedge ” notate the ‘B-accent’ typical of contrastive topics (see Büring 1999), the sign “ \backslash ” notates the high-low tone characterizing the main stress):

- (31) $\sqrt{\text{Két könyvet}} \backslash \text{mindenki elolvasott.}$
 two book-ACC everybody read
 ‘Everybody read (at least) two books.’
 (Hungarian, Kiss and Gyuris 2003, ex. (21a))
- (32) Mindestens /EIN Student hat \backslash EDen Roman gelesen. $\exists(\forall), \forall(\exists)$
 at-least one.NOM student has every.ACC novel read
 ‘At least one student read every novel.’
 (German, Krifka 1998, ex. (16))
- (33) a. Mindestens /EINem Studenten hat er \backslash EDen Roman
 at-least one.DAT student has he every.ACC novel
 vorgelesen. $\exists(\forall), \forall(\exists)$
 read
 ‘He read every novel to at least one student.’
 (German)
- b. Mindestens /EINen Studenten hat er \backslash Edem Test unterzogen. $\exists(\forall), \forall(\exists)$
 at-least one.ACC student has he every.DAT test subjected
 ‘He subjected at least one student to every test.’
 (German, Krifka 1998, ex. (17))

It is interesting to notice that we find the same association of ‘all’, ‘many’ with negation and ‘rarely’ (which is downward-entailing) as for the Romance examples discussed in the

previous section, while ‘something’, ‘at least’-numerals and small numbers appear in affirmative sentences (in the English example (35), Krifka notes the same accent B):

- (34) a. /ALle Politiker hat so mancher \NICHT verstanden. $\exists (\neg(\forall))$
 all politicians have many-a-person not understood
 ‘There are several people y such that it is not the case that for all politicians x, y understood x.’
 (German, Krifka 1998, ex. (22))
- b. /ALle Politiker haben \NICHT zugehört. $\neg(\forall)$
 all politicians have not listened
 (German, Krifka 1998, ex. (21))
- c. /ALle Politiker sind \SELten betrunken. $\forall(\text{RARELY}), \text{RARELY}(\forall)$
 all politicians are rarely drunk
 (German, Krifka 1998, ex. (27b))
- (35) /All the men \didn’t go.
 (Krifka 1998, ex. 19b, from Jackendoff 1972)⁷

In (31)-(33) and (34)c), the accents show that the focus contains the second quantifier. The alternatives may be represented as follows, taking (31) as an example, and the number of persons considered as n:

- | | | | |
|------|-------------|------------------|--|
| (36) | Topic | Background | Focus |
| | two books | i persons read x | $i=n$: certainly |
| | three books | i persons read x | $i < n$: probably, may well be ...; $i=n$: unsure; |
| | four books | i persons read x | $i < n$: probably, may well be ...; $i=n$: unsure; |
| | etc. | | |

Going back to the issue raised at the end of the previous section (below (29)), we can now say that an analysis along the lines of (30) is supported by the examples (31)-(33) and (34)c), where the stress pattern clearly indicates focus on a quantifier inside the comment.

Now, I would like to point out that my analysis of the construction provides a straightforward account for the narrow scope of the topic: the narrow scope is due to the fact that, like in the case of bare quantifier fronting, the contrastive topic is a generalized quantifier, not an entity denoting expression. In other words, what are contrasted in these cases are neither referents, nor properties, but generalized quantifiers. Therefore, the comment abstracts over generalized quantifiers. Let us illustrate this for (31) (for simplicity, I notate the cardinal as $\exists 2$):

- (37) Comment: $\lambda Q_{\langle e, t, t \rangle} \text{CERTAINLY } (\forall z(\text{person}(z) \rightarrow Q(\lambda x(\text{read}(z, x))))$
 Topic: $\lambda P_{\langle e, t \rangle} \exists 2x (P(x) \wedge \text{book}(x))$
 [Topic Comment] = Comment(Topic)

⁷ Jackendoff (1972) recognized *all* as a contrastive topic here; he considers that the sentence has the proposition that ‘there is some quantity q such that q men went is true’ as a presupposed part, and the asserted part is that ‘all the men went is false’. In my view, what is implicated (rather than presupposed) is that we cannot be sure whether some man or other went.

$$\begin{aligned}
&= \lambda Q_{\langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle} \text{CERTAINLY } (\forall z(\text{person}(z) \rightarrow Q(\lambda x(\text{read}(z, x)))) (\lambda P \exists 2x \\
&\quad (P(x) \wedge \text{book}(x))) \\
&= \text{CERTAINLY } (\forall z(\text{person}(z) \rightarrow (\lambda P_{\langle e, t \rangle} \exists 2x (P(x) \wedge \text{book}(x)) (\lambda x(\text{read}(z, x)))) \\
&= \text{CERTAINLY } (\forall z(\text{person}(z) \rightarrow \exists 2x (\text{read}(z, x) \wedge \text{book}(x))))
\end{aligned}$$

This way of explaining the narrow scope of moved quantified DPs has already been proposed in the literature, being known as “semantic reconstruction” (Cresti 1995b, Rullmann 1995, Lechner 1998) (a moved quantified DP has a reconstructed scope reading if its trace is of the same type as the quantified DP, i.e. $\langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$, rather than type e). This has already been used, for our construction, by Arregi (2003), for examples such as (38), where, according to him, the quantified DP reconstructs for scope but not for binding⁸:

- (38) a. Menos de tres libros, si leyó cada estudiante. OK $\forall > \exists$
 less than three books yes read every student
 ‘Indeed every student read less than three books.’
 b. Un libro suyo_i, si leyó cada estudiante_{ij}. $\forall > \exists$ only with $i \neq j$
 a book his yes read every student
 ‘Indeed every student read a book of his.’
 (Spanish, Arregi 2003, ex. (25))

What my analysis explains is why semantic reconstruction takes place here: because the topic is not a referent or a property, but a generalized quantifier⁹.

Note that the narrow scope of the fronted indefinite also appears when there is no other quantified DP, because the fronted indefinite scopes below the epistemic modal:

- (39) Ceva TREBUIE să-ți fi spus Maria.
 something must SĂ CL.2SG.DAT be told Maria
 ‘Maria MUST have told you something.’
 Comment: $\lambda Q_{\langle\langle s, \langle\langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle, t \rangle \rangle} \text{CERTAINLY } (\lambda w Q(w) (\lambda w' \lambda x$
 $\text{tell}(w')(x)(\text{you})(\text{Maria})))$
 Topic: $\lambda w_s \lambda P_{\langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle} \exists x P(w)(x)$
 (Romanian)

⁸ I do not agree with Arregi’s judgment for the Romanian counterpart of (38)b.

⁹ Compare the much more complex explanation in Krifka (1998): he claims that a contrastive topic involves a focus within the topic; he assumes that focus can be assigned before S-structure and that focus is assigned immediately before the verbal predicate; therefore, in order to be assigned focus, the QP occupies this position at some point during the derivation; the wide-scope quantified DP is either base-generated above this position (see (31), (33)b) or is scrambled above it (see the scope of the object over the subject in (32), (33)a). This explanation is problematic for the following reasons: it is not clear how it can derive the contrastive topic interpretation, as focus assignment in the base position, before S-structure, does not predict the fact that topic alternatives are superordinate to focus alternatives (see Büring’s theory); the assignment of focus during the derivation has no independent motivation; the scrambling of a focused object over the subject is unlikely, as it is known that it is context-given elements that undergo scrambling.

Turning back to the Romance construction we were investigating, it should be noted that, although a preverbal subject may intervene between the quantifier and the verb, as we have shown in section 2 (see ex. (6)), it is nevertheless true that VS orders are common (see (1), (2)a-b, (3)). I explain this fact by the presence of *verum focus*. In subject Romance languages have indeed a construction in which the subject remains preverbal if the predicate is focally stressed, expressing *verum focus*:

- (Romanian)

For Romanian and Spanish, it is well-known that left-peripheral focus disallows preverbal subjects (see section 2, ex. (5)). For Italian, as noticed by Cardinaletti (2009), in cases of focus fronting VS is always available and even strongly preferred by some speakers. In fact, the intervening S arguably occupies the same position as Rizzi's (1997) low topics (Top₂ in the order Force > Top₁ > Foc > Top₂ > Fin). A common treatment of intervening subjects and intervening topics has been argued for by Samek-Lodovici (2005, 2006)¹⁰.

6. Conclusions

¹⁰ Benincà et al. (1988) claim that an intervening subject is possible only if inserted as a parenthetical (“comme un inciso”).

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but under very special conditions: the sentence must contain verum focus. Büring's (1999) theory of contrastive topichood provided the appropriate tools for elucidating the interpretative properties of this construction. We have seen that the contrast topic sets (the set of values that the topic part has in the different topic alternatives) constitute the series $\{\lambda P \exists x P(x), \lambda P \text{MANY}_x P(x), \lambda P \text{MOST}_x P(x), \lambda P \forall x P(x)\}$ or $\{\lambda P \exists x P(x), \lambda P P(a), \lambda P P(b) \dots\}$ and the focal part is the degree of certainty of the assertion. The speaker contrasts the claim he makes, to which (s)he assigns a high degree of certainty, to stronger claims, for which the degree of probability is unknown. We have also seen that the topic element is not a referential or property expression, but a generalized quantifier, which explains the narrow scope: the comment is an abstract over generalized quantifiers, containing an $\langle\langle e, t \rangle, t \rangle$ trace. Narrow scope hence follows from the mechanism of semantic reconstruction. This analysis extends to instances of narrow scope topicalized indefinites in other languages, such as Hungarian and German.

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