Genericity, topicality, and their syntactic correlates*

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Abstract

Cohen & Erteschik-Shir (2002) make the claim that English bare plurals are interpreted generically when they are topics, and existentially otherwise. I show that the facts from Japanese, a language with bare nouns and morphosyntactic topic marking, support their view. I argue that topics are base generated in an "utterance" phrase higher than CP—UtP—and that this is where they are phonologically realized in Japanese. Under the present view, genericity is the result of UtP being phasal, with a different set of type shifting procedures being available at the utterance, versus CP level.

1 Introduction

The effect that information structure—esp. the prosodic marking of focus—has on the interpretation of bare plurals has long been acknowledged, even by proponents of inherently syntactic mapping approaches (e.g. Diesing 1988, 1992; Kratzer 1989, 1995, to mention only the most representative). Cohen & Erteschik-Shir (2002), hereafter C&E-S, defend the thesis that information structure is really the only factor in determining the reading bare plurals take. Specifically, they argue that BPs in their topic incarnation are generic, while foci are existential. In this paper, I take the perspective from Japanese, a language with morphosyntactic topic marking and bare nouns, to bring confirmation to their view. I then develop an analysis where topics are defined in terms of a syntactic position, from where they combine with CPs, which act as predicates. Genericity is argued to come about as a result of this topic–CP predication.

§2 draws a picture of how topicality is realized in Japanese, and §3 does the same with genericity. §4 lays out the paper's proposal, while §4.4 discusses some additional open questions. Finally, §5 concludes the paper.

2 Topic marking in Japanese

Japanese has been described as a topic-prominent language, due to Li & Thompson's (1976) term. The reason for this is that topics in Japanese are both marked

*I would like to thank Daniela Isac for well needed last minute comments on this paper. Her comments helped me make this paper slightly less confusing and wrong. All travesties that *have* made it through are of course entirely mine.

morphologically with a special particle *wa*, and appear clause-initially. However, the appearance of another type of *wa*-phrases in clause-medial positions has for the longest time generated confusion in the literature. From Kuno (1973), it has been the practice to refer to clause-initial *wa*-phrases as *thematic* topics, and to the rest as *contrastive* topics. I will reserve the term 'topic' for the former class, on the grounds that so-called contrastive topics don't seem to conform to the information structure theoretical notion of topicality at all, but rather contribute a narrowing/contrastive effect, whether what they mark is a topic or not.

In §2.1, I introduce the standard view that topics are base generated in clause-initial position, as well as the putative counterexample of PP topics. In §2.2, I argue that true, i.e. thematic, topics are without exception base generated in clause-initial position, and that they correspond to arguments of a (potentially embedded) predicate, as opposed to adjuncts. In §2.3, I show that material can be scrambled to pre-topic position, but that this doesn't constitute a problem, since topics are defined by a syntactic—and not linear—position. In §2.4, I argue that Saito (2010)'s multipurpose left periphery PredP is untenable, and that topics should have a dedicated A position all to themselves.

2.1 The first position effect

Kuno (1973) notes that topics, in the narrow sense I've adopted, are only found clause-initially in Japanese. This is what has been dubbed the first position effect. While *Taroo* in (1a) can be interpreted as a topic, *ringo* in (1b) behaves like a narrow (contrastive) focus. Moreover, Kuno notes that the relation between the topic position and the canonical position of an argument can take place across islands, as shown in (2). He concludes from this that topics must be base generated in as opposed to raised to their surface position.

(1) a. Taroo-wa ringo-o tabeta.
Taroo-WA apples-Acc ate.
Taroo, he ate apples.
b. Taroo-ga ringo-wa tabeta.
Taroo-Nom apples-WA ate.
Taroo ate apples, I don't know or care if he ate anything else.

(2) Ringo$_i$-wa Taroo-ga [$_{\text{NP}}$[$_{\text{TP}}$ *pro*$_i$ tabeta] hito]-o sitteiru.
Apple$_i$-WA Taroo-ga ate person-Acc know.
The apple, Taroo knows the person who ate it.

Saito (1985, 2010) discusses a potential counterexample: PP topics. He argues from the ungrammaticality of sentences like (3) that an exception to the base generation of topics should be made with regard to what he calls PP topics.

(3) ?* Osuro-de$_i$-wa Taroo-ga [$_{\text{NP}}$[$_{\text{TP}}$ (yonenkan) e_i benkyoosita] hito]-o
Oslo-in-WA Taroo-ga for four years studied person-Acc
sitteiru.
know.
Speaking of Oslo, Taroo knows a person who studied there.
(Saito 2010, (57))

If the surface position of PP topics is the result of movement, we can invoke an island constraint violation as the culprit for (3)'s ungrammaticality.

2.2 Argumenthood as a condition for topicality

I reject Saito's distinction of PP/non-PP topics in favor of a argument/adjunct distinction. In (3) above, 'in Oslo' isn't part of the argument structure of 'studied.' As such, I believe it isn't a candidate for topicalization at all, islands notwithstanding.

I show in (4a-b) that locative—or more accurately, indirect object—topics marked only with *wa* are perfectly legitimate, while adjunct ones are bad. I propose, therefore, that the locus of the "aboutness" condition on topics often talked about lies in their argumental status to some predicate or other.[1]

(4) a. Hawaii-wa Taroo-ga kazoku-o tureteitteageta.
Hawaii-WA Taroo-Nom family-Acc took.
Hawaii, Taroo took family there.
b. * Hawaii-wa Taroo-ga kazoku-o kamera-de totta.
Hawaii-WA Taroo-Nom family-Acc camera-Ins took.
Hawaii, Taroo took a picture of family there.

(5) a. Hawaii(*-ni)$_i$-wa Taroo-ga [$_{\text{NP}}$[$_{\text{TP}}$ *pro*$_i$ itta] hito]-ni aitagatteiru.
Hawaii(*-Dat)-WA Taroo-Nom went person-Dat want-to-meet.
Hawaii, Taroo wants to meet someone who went there.
b. * To Hawaii, Taroo wants to meet someone who went.

The contrast in (5a) further shows that argumental PP topics are in fact island insensitive, but only when the phrase is marked with bare *wa*; when *wa* cooccurs with a postposition like *-ni*, the phrase behaves as if it had been forcefully raised, and the resulting sentence is ungrammatical. I conclude that the putative *-ni-wa* and *-de-wa* topics in (5a) and Saito's own (3) are really scrambled contrastive foci marked with contrastive *wa*, and that real topics are always marked with bare *wa*.

To sum up, I will assume, together with Kuno, that topics are without exception base generated clause-initially, but with the added proviso that adjuncts can never be topics. If adjuncts appear clause-initially with *wa* marking, that is the result of scrambling, which is island constrained movement. An English equivalent to this type of construction is given in (5b).

2.3 Topics in not-so-first position

It was claimed in §2.1 that topics in Japanese are invariably clause-initial. We have already encountered a potential problem for that view, however. I have said that the *wa* phrases in (3) and a version of (5a) are scrambled foci. It can be shown that grammatical, non-island violating variations of these sentences exist. I give, in (6a) and (6b), a *wa*-marked and a non *wa*-marked example, respectively.[2]

[1] One could argue that sentences of the form *Zoo-wa hana-ga nagai*, 'As for elephants, the nose is long.' constitute a counterexample to this claim, as *zoo* does not straightforwardly correspond to an argument. I suspect the correct analysis of such sentences will involve treating entire clauses as one-place predicates, if we are to formalize the "aboutness" relation in such cases.

[2] It's a little acknowledged fact that foci scrambled to pre-topic position sound odd in out-of-the-blue utterances. I follow Neeleman et al. (2009) in saying that it is contrast and only contrast which licenses scrambling.

(6) a. Osuro-de-wa Taroo-wa (yonenkan) benkyoositа.
Oslo-in-WA Taroo-Top for four years studied.
In Oslo did Taroo study for four years. (I don't know or care about other places.)

b. Hawaii-ni Taroo-wa ikitakute koohunsiteiru.
Hawaii-to Taroo-Top want-to-go-because is-excited.
To Hawaii is Taroo excited because he wants to go.

This turns out not to be so much of a problem, in fact, if we associate the topic with a high projection, while allowing scrambling to happen across it. (In other words, if we construe the topic position in syntactic, rather than linear terms.) In the next subsection, I show that this is what Saito proposes with his PredP.

2.4 Saito's Japanese left periphery

Saito (2010) seeks an analysis that accounts for the (more or less) first position effects, as well as captures some facts about the effect of scrambling on anaphora and sentential negation. The resulting theory features a unified treatment of A and A' scrambling, the spirit of which I will adopt.

Scrambling effects On the basis of scope phenomena which I cannot fully discuss here, Saito posits a PredP>NegP>TP clausal structure, where the Spec.PredP position attracts an [arg] feature. The usual consensus in Japanese linguistics is that there are two types of scrambling: clause-bound scrambling, which is assumed to be movement to an A-position because it yields potential interpretational differences, and long-distance scrambling, assumed to be a form of adjunction. What makes for the perceived difference under Saito's unified treatment is that the [arg] feature of constituents don't make it across syntactic phases. Thus, long-distance scrambling is only possible at the cost of surrendering an [arg] feature at the clausal boundary.

Very briefly, one kind of effect associated with clause-bound scrambling is that of seemingly enabling narrow scope subject readings under negation. While sentences of the form 'Everyone didn't eat apples.' unambiguously give only the $\forall$>NEG scope configuration in Japanese, scrambling of the object will permit the other reading as well. This is where PredP comes into play. It supposedly attracts the closest bearer of an [arg] feature. This can either be the subject in Spec.TP, or an object scrambled above it.[3]

First position effect (bis) But PredP for Saito has a dual function. In addition to the above, it is also the base generated position of topics. The first prediction is that sentences with both an overt topic and a universal subject scoping under negation will be impossible. This prediction is not borne out, as shown in (7). On the basis of this, we can conclude that the topic position—wherever we end up locating it—should be exclusively reserved to topic material.

[3]Saito's analysis works by locating the $\forall$ subject above Neg (in Spec.PredP) in one case, and under Neg (in Spec.TP)—because the object is in Spec.PredP—in the other. In addition, the scrambled narrow scope reading is derived when the subject is in Spec.PredP and the object is adjoined above. While I have no concrete alternative on offer, I suspect the contrast is rather due to the contrastive effect of scrambling, and that ambiguity is simply due to the availability of two interpretable positions for scrambled objects.

(7) a. Hawaii-wa [[iku] keekaku]-o zen'in-ga tatenakatta.
Hawaii-Top plan-to-go-Acc everyone-Nom make-Neg-Past
b. Hawaii, no one made a plan to go there.
c. Hawaii, not everyone made a plan to go there.

2.5 Conclusion

I have argued so far that all topics correspond to arguments that are base generated in a high position. As has been noted in the literature, this makes them structurally equivalent to the construction otherwise known as left dislocation. Scrambling, on the other hand, should be viewed as the result of movement, where the landing site is a freely chosen adjoined position. I am adopting Saito's phase-based explanation as to why constituents cannot be interpreted out of their clause, though I reject his multipurpose [arg]-attracting PredP.

3 Genericity in Japanese

This section deals with the distribution of generic bare nouns. In §3.1, I show that the distribution of such nouns respects the conditions governing topicality, as expected under Cohen & Erteschik-Shir (2002)'s framework, which I also briefly introduce here. In §3.2, I present the results of an experiment, which confirm predictions of a topic-centric approach to genericity.

3.1 The pattern with topics

Diesing (1988) first discusses the distinction between I- and S-level predicates in Japanese. The subjects of I-level predicates take the *wa* particle, and are interpreted generically if they are bare nouns, while those of S-level predicates take the nominative *ga*, and are interpreted existentially. In her paper, Diesing shows that a syntactic mapping theory of the type she's developing is at least plausible for the language.

The minimal pair in (8) shows *wa*'s contribution. It can relatively easily be shown that the conditions for genericity pattern with those of topicality beyond morphological marking with *wa*, viz. that the syntactic conditions are also identical.

(8) a. Kyooryuu-ga kombu-o tabeteita.
Dinosaurs-Nom kelp-Acc ate.
Dinosaurs were eating kelp.
b. Kyooryuu-wa kombu-o tabeteita.
Dinosaurs-Top kelp-Acc ate.
Dinosaurs ate kelp. (GEN)

C&E-S propose that topicality is the only condition for a generic interpretation of bare plurals. The special characteristic of (some, but not all) S-level predicates is that they take a Davidsonian spatiotemporal argument in Kratzer's (1988, 1995) sense. In C&E-S's view, all well-formed utterances must have a topic, and in the case of episodic sentences, it is that spatiotemporal argument which can act as a "stage topic" (sTOP). Subject bare plurals can thus remain in the focus, which is how they receive an existential interpretation. If a topic

is not spatiotemporal, it must be refer to an individual, viz. be of type e, at insertion. Non-referential topics are thus ruled out.

C&E-S assume that the existential type shift is responsible for the existential interpretation of foci, while the topic is accommodated—when needed—into the restrictor of a generic operator. As such, their account is in line with most modern views on genericity. The crucial difference is that they explicitly associate the locus of genericity with the information structure theoretical notion of topic. In the next subsection, I show that experimental data supports some predictions made by their view.

3.2 Experimental data

A small-scale survey was conducted among 28 subjects identified as native Japanese speakers. The key generalizations are presented below.

***Wa* mediates genericity** As expected, characterizing/habitual readings of a predicate—where an event predicate like 'eat' in (8) is generalized over relevant stages—and generic readings of common nouns are made available by *wa*. Inversely, stage/existential readings are only available in the absence of the topic marker.

Proper names and definite expressions Proper names and definite expressions are only mandatorily topicalized with characterizing/I-level predicates. A general tendency to topicalize such subjects even with stage/event predicates was observed, but it was shown that non-topicalized versions were acceptable as well. The contrast in (9) exemplifies this, where 26 out of 28 subjects went for (9a) as the more grammatical sentence. This finding is expected if we consider that referential expressions can always be topicalized, and that only episodic sentences can have an implicit stage topic.

(9) a. Kurodasan-ga kagami-no mae-de keshoo-o siteiru. (...)
Ms. Kuroda-Nom mirror-Gen front-Loc makeup-Acc doing. (...)
Ms. Kuroda is doing her makeup in front of the mirror.

b. ?* Kurodasan-ga bijinda. (Takadasan-mo bijin da.)
Ms. Kuroda-Nom beautiful-Cop. (Ms. Takada also is.)
Ms. Kuroda is beautiful. Ms. Takada too.

Kind predication We were also interested in the subjects of kind-level predicates. Krifka et al. (1995) make a distinction between genericity, which is due to a form a quantification (the relevant arguments are said to be "accommodated" into the restrictor of a generic quantifier), and direct kind predication. The few kind-level predicates that exist are assumed to combine directly with kind individuals.

Since this type of predication by assumption does not rely on generic accommodation, the prediction is that topicalization would at best be optional. This prediction is borne out, as the preference of 21/25 subjects for (10a) over (10b) shows. (11) shows a similar contrast for objects.

(10) a. Zoo-ga afurika-ni koohan'i-ni bumpusiteiru.
Elephants-Nom Africa-Loc widely spread.
Elephants are widespread in Africa.

b. ?* Zoo-ga afurika-ni yoku iru.
Elephants-Nom Africa-Loc well exist.
Elephants are numerous in Africa.

(11) a. Zoo-o mituryoo-ga taesaseteiru.
Elephants-Acc poachers-Nom making-extinct.
Poachers are making elephants extinct.

b. * Zoo-o mituryoo-ga korositeiru.
Elephants-Acc poachers-Nom killing.
Poachers are killing elephants. (*GEN, OK∃)

4 The proposal

We have seen that the distribution of generic *wa* phrases closely matches that of topics in Japanese. This in turn supports C&E-S's thesis that genericity is the result of a topic-specific interpretational procedure.

In this section, I develop a novel approach to fleshing out this interpretational procedure. Under this approach, topics are inserted in the specifier of an utterance phrase (UtP) sitting above CP, which furthermore constitutes a strong phase in minimalist terms. I argue that this approach not only accounts for the surface position of topics in Japanese while getting the semantics of genericity right, but also amounts to a first step toward doing justice to Strawson's (1964) idea—adopted by many—that "assessments of statements as true or untrue are commonly [...] topic-centred."

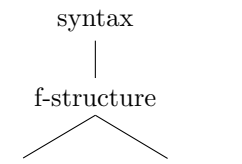
In §4.1, I propose that positing UtP amounts to a way to capture Erteschik-Shir's notion of f-structure in the main syntactic derivation. In §4.2, I introduce a type shifting procedure GEN, operative at the UtP phase, which gets the semantics of genericity right. In §4.3, I discuss how this view can be reconciled with non-topic-prominent languages. In §4.4, I speculate on some similarities between the idea of a topic anaphoric chain and what goes on in quantifier raising.

4.1 The anatomy of an utterance

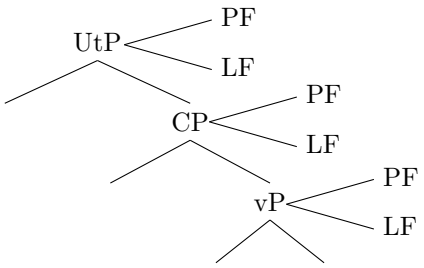
Erteshik-Shir (1997) posits a level of f-structure (focus structure) intervening between syntax and the Y-branches. This is illustrated in (12). In her framework, it is at this level that comments are predicated of topics. Comments can in turn be seen as full sentences minus whatever arguments have been mapped to the topic. This implies that the interpretation of utterances involves viewing topics as external to sentences. If this architectural hypothesis is on the right track at all, we now have a good reason to believe that this type of predication, as opposed to other types, is special in that it yields genericity.

In my analysis, I adopt the notion of f-structure in spirit but try to reconcile it with minimalist syntax. What I propose, in short, is that CP—what I take to be the sentence/comment—is dominated by UtP, as illustrated in (13). Topics are generated in Spec.UtP and this tree as a whole makes up the linguistic entity I choose to call the "utterance."

(12)



(13)



Moreover, I want to say that the UtP constitutes a strong phase independently spelled out after the CP. As such, Syntax does not generate the topic until after it has already spelled out CP. It thus follows from architectural necessity that the interpretation of topics has to wait until UtP is output. With the added assumption that the LF machinery available then is slightly different with that available in CP, we can derive the reading of bare nouns. This is what I demonstrate in the next subsection.

4.2 Type shifting in UtP

It will be noted that what is needed at this point is a device equivalent to the generic accommodation process usually argued for in the literature. Type shifting fulfills this role for me. It was mentioned earlier that C&E-S require topics to be referential. This requirement is taken care of immediately if we assume, following Chierchia (1998), that Japanese bare nouns unambiguously denote kinds.[4] This will inevitably lead to a number of type mismatches, as functions which take kinds as arguments are scarce in natural language. According to Chierchia, a way to resolve mismatches is to use his DKP—Derived Kind Predication—essentially an existential type shift for kind individuals.

I adopt DKP as the source of existential interpretation, but argue that at the UtP phase, DKP is unavailable and replaced with what I'll call the GEN type shift. Much like DKP, GEN comes in handy when direct kind predication yields an infelicitous representation. Definitions and a sample derivation are given in turn below. $^{\cup}$ refers to Chierchia (1998)'s up operator, which translates kind entities into properties. C is a function which acts as contextual filter to pick out only the relevant instances that fall under a property.

(13) a. GEN for kind/object mismatch:
$\lambda x_{object}.P(x) \Rightarrow \lambda x_{kind}.\forall y[^{\cup}x(y) \wedge C(y) \rightarrow P(y)]$

b. GEN for undefined spatiotemporal arguments:
$\lambda s.P(s) \Rightarrow \lambda s_{undef}.\forall s[C(s) \rightarrow P(s)]$

(14) [Ringo-wa]$_{TOP}$ [kodomo-ga taberu.]$_{FOC}$
[Apples-Top]$_{TOP}$ [children-Nom eat.]$_{FOC}$

[4]Though this is the assumption I take here, as far as I can see there is nothing in the present analysis that makes it incompatible with an alternative view on the matter.

(14) (*continued*)

1. $[\![\text{taberu}]\!] = [\lambda s.\lambda y.]_{\text{TOP}}\lambda x.\text{eat}(x,y,s)$
2. $[\![\text{taberu}]\!]\ ([\![\text{kodomo}]\!]) = [\lambda s.\lambda y.]_{\text{TOP}}\exists x[^{\cup}\text{child}_{\text{kind}}(x) \wedge \text{eat}(x,y,s)]$ (DKP)
3. $[\![\text{kodomo-ga taberu}]\!](s_{\text{undef}}) = \forall s[C(s) \rightarrow \exists x[^{\cup}\text{child}_{\text{kind}}(x) \wedge \text{eat}(x,y,s)]]$ (GEN b)
4. $[\![\text{kodomo-ga taberu at(s)}]\!]([\![\text{ringo}]\!]) = \forall s,y[^{\cup}\text{apple}_{\text{kind}}(y) \wedge C(s,y) \rightarrow \exists x[^{\cup}\text{child}_{\text{kind}}(x) \wedge \text{eat}(x,y,s)]]$ (GEN a)

First, a word on the spatiotemporal argument—here labeled *s* for *stage*. We are adopting the view that, whether *s* is implicit or not, it is always topicalized and can fulfill the role of a stage topic (sTOP) when it is defined. Having a stage topic in turn makes it possible for one or more arguments to stay in the focus and receive existential interpretation. The value of *s* is of course constrained by many factors such as verbal aspect and tense, and, if the tense/aspect allows for it, it is possible to leave the value of *s* undefined.[5] This is how characterizing readings of otherwise eventive verbs are attained, using (13b). GEN in this case has the effect of quantifying over relevant possible stages. Note that (13a) and (13b) operate independently, so that using one does not entail having to use the other. Specifically, (13b) serves only to derive habitual readings of event verbs, and (13a) is to derive the generic reading of bare nouns.

In the derivation in (14), 'eat,' being an event verb, takes three arguments, a subject, a direct object and a stage. The arguments corresponding to topic material, here *s* and *y*, remain anaphoric and can be treated syntactically as *pro*. A crucial feature of this analysis is that such anaphoric elements don't for the moment count toward saturating the argument structure of our predicate. I like to think that the argument-seeking disposition of a verb in this case percolates up and gets transferred to the host clause itself.[6] In practice, this has the effect of leaving the interpretation of selected arguments on hold.

In 2, a local type mismatch is solved with DKP, which yields an existential interpretation of the subject. In 3, we enter the UtP phase, and the unfulfilled argument slots make the whole CP clause act as a predicate, which was the sought effect. An implicit spatiotemporal argument could have been recovered at this point, but as it is undefined, GEN as defined in (13b) applies to turn the event predicate into a characterizing one. In 4, the kind entity 'apple' creates another type mismatch, which is here solved with GEN. (14.4) is the correct representation for this utterance, and we are done.

Note that, because GEN is a form of type shifting, it applies on an "on demand" basis. As such, kinds fed into kind-level predicates, whether as topics or inside the focus, will not trigger its use. Likewise, other *e* type arguments fed into compatible predicates won't necessitate GEN. This captures the generalization made in §3.2 that only sentences involving genericity are directly affected by topicalization. It also has a direct advantage over theories based on generic accommodation, as those don't have a principled theory-driven way to restrain just what and how much is accommodated when.

[5] Note that in such cases, a stage topic is not sufficient and well-formed utterances require another topic. As such the behavior of event verbs in their habitual reading is virtually analogous to that of I-level predicates.

[6] This operation is not unlike QR. I speculate on the relation with and significance for QR in what's coming.

4.3 English and the spellout options at PF

I have dealt so far with Japanese—a language whose topics are invariably located in the left periphery—and, in many ways, the proposed analysis was tailored to its facts. In Japanese, it's hard[7] to debate that topics are base generated in a high position. But we would like to know whether what has been said so far can extend to languages where topics are not so prominent.

First, I take it that the arguments for viewing topicalized bare nouns as generic are just as good in English as they are in Japanese. I refer the reader to C&E-S, since I cannot fully expose those arguments here. The difference, then, must simply lie in the way the two languages phonologically realize topics. I have hinted that topicalization should be viewed as a form of dislocation. It's uncontroversial that this construction has an equivalent in English and many other Indo-European languages.

(15) Ningen$_i$-wa kompyuuta-ga *pro*$_i$ makasu.
Human beings-Top computer-Nom defeat.
a. Human beings, computers defeat them.
b. Computers defeat human beings.
Intended paraphrase: $\forall$s,x[human(x) $\wedge$ C(s,x) $\rightarrow$
$\exists$y[computer(y) $\wedge$ defeat(y,x,s)]]

Yet the fact remains that, while (15a) may be a perfectly fine construction, most speakers would rather use (15b) in a standard context. This means that topics can be freely realized in the canonical position of their argument type in English. I want to say that this doesn't reflect the syntactic reality, but rather is the result of a PF operation.

My system requires topics to be interpreted outside the CP phase, because that is where genericity comes about. I took every (non-deictic) pronouns, e.g. Japanese *pro*, to be inherently non-argumental, and I want English full DPs like 'human beings' in (15b) to be likewise non-argumental. I therefore propose that while Syntax's output is always like (15a), PF operations over that output can yield utterances like (15b). Clause-internal topics, i.e. those not phonologically realized in Spec.UtP, are thus bound members of a topic anaphoric chain.

In a topic anaphoric chain $\alpha...\beta...\gamma$, the antecedent α always corresponds to the topic position, because that's the only way to meet Condition C. I think a relatively simple solution to the dichotomy between languages that obey this constraint, and those that appear to violate it on the surface (e.g. English) can be had by assuming that an additional parameter, 'Declare Topic,' is active in the former, but not the latter class of languages. This parameter could very well explain once and for all the difference between topic-prominent (+*Declare Topic*) and subject-prominent languages (−*Declare Topic*).

(16) *Declare Topic*:

> The referential component of a topic anaphoric chain must be phonologically realized in Spec.UtP.

When 'Declare Topic' is inactive in a given language, the phonological content of Spec.UtP may be cut and pasted to the next member of the anaphoric

[7]Though not impossible. C.f. Kuroda (1988) who holds that no topic is base generated.

chain. This is why topics can also be realized in β position in English, as in (15b). Crucially, this is the result of a PF operation; syntactically speaking, we want to say that antecedents are always in α position, as this is what fuels our interpretational procedure.

4.4 The significance for QR

The careful reader may have noticed that the process whereby the feeding of arguments into a predicate is delayed to a later stage under my analysis is similar to what happens in the familiar operation of quantifier raising. In QR, quantified expressions which cannot be interpreted locally raise and adjoin to their host clause, which in turn becomes a predicate. In both QR and my analysis then, clauses act as predicates, and some selected arguments are interpreted high in the tree. On the other hand, there are also obvious differences. QR is most definitely (island-constrained) movement, while I argue that topics are base generated high. Topics are strictly referential at some point in the derivation, while raised quantifiers never are.

We would like to know whether there are deeper roots to this analogy and/or whether the differences discussed can be explained. In this final subsection, I offer speculations on this topic, all of which I think deserve further research.

It has been argued (in e.g. Diesing 1992) that it is those quantifiers which are deemed presuppositional which undergo QR. The clearest case in English is probably that of universal 'every.' 'Every' is assumed to presuppose the existence of its restrictor. Yet that has been debated, notably by Abusch & Rooth (2004), who claim that sentences like (17a) are trivially true in the absence of books, i.e. that presuppositional failure does not apply in such cases. I share their intuition for S-level, but not I-level predicate sentences: there is something more odd about saying (17b) when there are no books around than saying (17a). I grant that the judgements are very subtle here, but I believe (18) depicts the phenomenon under another angle. (18c) is a marginally more acceptable answer to (18b) than it is to (18a) in the same context.

(17) a. Every book here will be donated.
b. ? Every book here is interesting.

(18) a. Tell me about every book here.
b. What will be donated?
c. Every book here will be donated. (a. ?; b. OK)

I suggest an explanation couched in information structure theory. 'Every book here,' in (17b) and (18a) is necessarily topicalized given what we know about topics. (In the first case, it is the subject of an I-level predicate, and in the second, topicalization is forced metalinguistically.) I believe this in turn calls for 'every book here' to refer to a contextually identifiable set of books, unlike what would be expected of a regular quantified phrase. What are the implications for QR?

Well, if it so happened, that the wide scope "raised" readings of $\forall$ phrases coincided with presuppositional readings, we'd have a case for treating QR'd phrases as topics. I believe this obtains, as (19c) in answer to (19b) seems to

lack an in situ scope reading.[8]

(19) a. What happened?
b. What happened to every book?
c. Some boy donated every book. (a. $\exists > \forall$ OK; b. $\exists > \forall$ *)

QR'd material as topics If raised QPs can be associated with the notion of topic, does that mean that they are base generated in Spec.UtP, as I've been trying to say is the general case? A strong prima facie objection to this idea would come from the fact that QR is taken to be robustly limited by island constraints. On the other hand, it's known that QR obeys *more* than what we care to call islands. The impossibility of a distributive reading in (20), even though the $\forall$ phrase is not within an island, illustrates this. What to make of this? I leave the answer to those issues to a later time.

On a closing note, we need to remember that while left dislocation more or less reliably mimics the structure of Japanese utterances (see (21)-(22)), the equivalent to *some* Japanese constructions, such as (23), sound more than odd in English. I have no answer at this point as to why this should be the case.

(20) A doctor thinks that good health will come to every patient.

(21) Ringo$_i$-wa Taroo$_j$-ga [*pro*$_j$ [[*pro*$_i$ nusunda] hito]-o sitteiru]-to itta.
Apples-Top Taroo-Nom stole person-Acc knows-Comp said.
The apples, Taroo said that he knows the person who stole them.

(22) Ringo$_i$-wa [[Taroo$_j$-ga *pro*$_i$ tabetara] [*pro*$_j$ kitto kenkoo-ni naru.]]
Apples-Top Taroo-Nom eats-if for sure healthy become.
The apples, Taroo will get better for sure if he eats them.

(23) Ringo$_i$-wa [Taroo-ga *pro*$_i$ mottekita]-kara pai-o tukuroo.
Apples-Top Taroo-Nom brought-because pie-Acc let's-make.
??? The apples, let's make a pie because Taroo brought them.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented evidence from Japanese that the distribution of topics and generically interpreted bare nouns overlap in more than an arbitrary manner. This observation is in line with Cohen & Erteschik-Shir's thesis that genericity comes about from the interpretation of material from the topic.

In both Japanese and left dislocated constructions, topics behave as if they are base generated in the left periphery as referential expressions. They also seem to correspond to arguments of some predicate or other. I have taken the hint from Japanese and left dislocated constructions and given the outline for a framework where the notion of topic is reduced to a syntactic position in the left periphery. The material in this position (Spec.UtP) combined with CP forms a linguistic entity I called the utterance. The positioning of topics outside of the CP phase allows for two things. First, it enables us to assume that a different set of type shifting options are available at the UtP, versus CP level. Second, it seems to capture syntactically and semantically the essence of the old idea of topic–comment predication.

[8] That's not to say the sentence can't be made true by a unique boy. That's of course, beside the point.

I have then suggested that the difference between so-called topic-prominent and subject-prominent languages could lie in the value of a PF parameter, 'Declare Topic,' which forces phonological spellout in Spec.UtP. Languages that don't respect this constraint have the additional option of spelling out the antecedent in another position in the anaphoric chain.

Finally, I have likened some aspects of my proposal to quantifier raising. I have suggested that topicality could have a say in determining the presuppositional status of strong quantifiers like 'every,' and that "raised" wide scope readings of 'every' phrases could in fact correspond to the presuppositional—a fortiori the topicalized—readings of these phrases. However, QR's apparent sensitivity to islands clashes with the base generation view of topics I've presented in this paper, and further research is needed to decide whether the Topic-QR analogy can be sustained.

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