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КОНСТРУКЦИИ С ДУБЛИРОВАНИЕМ ТОПИКА МЕСТОИМЕНИЕМ И КОНСТРУКЦИИ ТИПА «CONCERNING X» КАК МАРКИРОВАНИЕ ТОПИКА

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Аннотация: В этой статье предлагается применить схему анализа маркеров топика, основанную на локусе маркирования (то есть схему, в которой позиция маркера может определяться либо относительно выражения топика, либо относительно всей конструкции), к стратегиям маркирования топика, обычно анализируемым отдельно от сегментного маркирования. Рассматриваются конструкции с дублированием топика местоимением и конструкции типа “concerning X”, различия между ними, а также проблемы, связанные с их анализом.

Ключевые слова: топик, маркер топика, локус маркирования

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PRONOMINAL DOUBLING AND “CONCERNING” CONSTRUCTIONS AS TOPIC MARKING

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Abstract: In this paper I argue that an approach based on the locus of marking (in which marking may be associated with the topic constituent it-

self or with the entire construction) may be applied not only to dedicated topic markers, but to some other constructions typically analyzed separately, namely, to constructions where the topic constituent is doubled by a pronoun, and to constructions similar to the English “concerning X” construction. I describe the variation these types of constructions show (including the variation in how similar they are to clear segmental topic marking strategies) and the problems they pose for analysis.

Keywords: topic, topic marking, locus of marking

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1. Introduction

Previous typological research on topic markers (see, for instance, [Wälchli 2019]) focused on markers attached to the topic constituent (as in (1)).¹ However, topics can be marked by various means. For instance, in (2), no marker attached to the topic constituent is present; instead, the tense-modal marker and the mood marker show agreement with the topic in gender.²

(1) Imbabura Quechua (Quechuan)³

fluka tayta-ka alpa-ta-mi yapu-n
 1SG father-TOP land-ACC-VALIDATOR plow-3
 ‘My father_{Topic} plows the land’. [Cole 1985: 95]

(2) Jarawara (Arawan)

oko siraba Okomobi jo-kaba-ni-ke
 1SG.POSS cangati(F) PN(M) OT-eat-PST.F-DECL.F
 ‘Okomobi ate my cangati_{Topic}’. [Dixon 2004, as cited in Marquardt, 2020: 14]

¹ Topic is defined in various ways in the literature (see, e.g., [Smith 2009: 196] for a brief overview of different definitions of topic). In this study, I use the aboutness definition following [Lambrecht 1994].

² Here and below, the relevant markers are given in bold.

³ Language families are given according to Glottolog [Hammarström et al. 2024]. The original orthography of all the examples is preserved, as are the translations; the only change made to the translations is the addition of subscript “Topic” for clarity (for the sake of uniformity, the same is done even if the topic is indicated by the use of a construction like “as for” in the translation). The glosses are partially unified.

To describe this variation, we may apply an approach parallel to that suggested in [Aannestad 2021; Aissen 2023; Lander 2022] for focus marking to topic marking as well. I suggest using the modification of head/dependent marking typology proposed in [Lander, Nichols 2020]. This modification allows for a more uniform analysis of what is termed C marking, which would, under the original head/dependent marking approach, be separated into head-marking (positioned in relation to the head) and detached marking (always taking a specific position, for instance, the second position). Under this approach, we may classify topic marking strategies as either D topic marking, where the position of the marker is defined with respect to the topic constituent itself (as in (1)), or C topic marking, where the position of the marker is defined with respect to the whole construction (as in (2)).

This approach can be applied to clear segmental topic marking, as in (1) and (2) above. However, other topic marking constructions, typically analyzed separately from dedicated topic marking, also exist, and I argue that this approach can be applied to them as well.

One example of such constructions is pronominal doubling constructions. Consider, for instance, (3) from Catalan, where the topic constituent (*aquesta pel·lícula*) is doubled by a pronoun (*l'*). These constructions are typically not seen as segmental topic marking (see, for instance, [Wälchli 2019], who additionally dismisses all marking not associated with the topic constituent as similar to these constructions).

(3) Catalan (Indo-European, Romance)

<i>aquesta</i>	<i>pel·lícula</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>l'</i>	<i>he</i>	<i>vist</i>	<i>encara</i>
PROX.F.SG	movie	no	3SG.ACC	have.1SG	see.PP	yet

'I haven't seen this movie_{Topic} yet'. [Hualde 1992: 229]

Similarly, constructions like the English *concerning X*, *as to X*, Russian *что касается X* (*čto kasaetsja X*), henceforth “concerning X” constructions,⁴ are also typically analyzed separately from segmental topic marking (for instance, Wälchli [2019] describes them as distinct from what he considers topic marking).

As integration of the topic into the clause can be gradual (see [Lander 2021] for a discussion and for parallels with focus constructions), I argue that these

⁴ I use the longer and more compositional *concerning X* construction to refer to constructions of this type. Lambrecht (1994) refers to them as “as-for constructions” using the shorter and less compositional *as for X* construction, but I chose *concerning X* to indicate that not only the least compositional of these constructions are taken into consideration here.

constructions may be more and less similar to grammaticalized topic marking. Namely, “concerning X” constructions may be similar to D marking, and pronominal doubling constructions may be similar to C marking.

The rest of this article is structured as follows. In Section 2, I discuss the parameter of integration and its relevance for topic marking constructions, sections 3 and 4 are dedicated to “concerning X” and pronominal doubling constructions respectively, and, finally, Section 5 contains some concluding remarks.

2. The parameter of integration

A parameter that is highly relevant for topic marking constructions is that of integration, that is, of the degree to which the topic is integrated into the clause.

Consider pronominal doubling constructions. They are often not analyzed as (segmental) topic marking and seen as a separate phenomenon (see, for instance, [Wälchli 2019]), as the topic constituent is analyzed as external to a complete clause where it is resumed by a pronoun.

A similar analysis can be argued for in the case of constructions like “concerning X”, as these constructions also appear to be external to the clause. For instance, [Wälchli 2019] describes them as “clausal or pseudo-clausal” and notes that the marker in them is a predicate; [Lambrecht 1994: 152; 182] describes them as a subtype of left dislocation constructions. Conditional markers used as topic markers (see [Haiman, 1978] on the connection between conditionals and topics) can also be analyzed in this manner, as the presence of the conditional marker allows interpreting these constructions as biclausal.

However, in both of these types of constructions, like in other constructions with fronted topics, the topic may be integrated into the clause to different degrees (see [Lander 2021] for a discussion). For instance, in Japanese, unlike in many other languages, dislocated topics bind reflexives and hence function as parts of the clause (this is illustrated by (4)). Lander [2021: 115] mentions the same phenomenon in Korean.

(4) Japanese (Japonic)

Ken-wa zibun-no ie-ga Tokyo-ni aru.
 PN-TOP REFL-GEN home-NOM PN-LOC exist

‘As for Ken_{Topic}, his home is in Tokyo.’ [Gunji 1987:167]

Besides that, topic constituents bearing dedicated topic markers also show different degrees of integration, with some being resumed by pronouns (optionally or obligatorily), or being separated from the clause prosodically.

For instance, in Dagaare, topic constituents marked by *éng* may optionally be doubled by a pronoun (this is illustrated in (5)).

(5) Dagaare (Atlantic-Congo, Gur)

à dɔ́ ɔ́ nyé éng (ò) kú-ló lá
 DEF man PROX TOP (3SG) go.home-IPFV FOC

‘As for this man_{Topic}, he is going home.’ [Ali et al. 2021: 36]

Likewise, in Nigerian Pidgin, constituents bearing topic marking may be prosodically separate from the clause (being separated by a pause and forming their own phrase stress group) and doubled by pronouns (see (6)).

(6) Nigerian Pidgin

Gàri kwanu, ìm sel fòr maket.
 gari TOP 3S sell.FACT P market

‘As for the gari_{Topic}, (s)he sold it in the market.’ [Faraclas 1996: 123]

Marked topics in Tzotzil are described as adjoined to a complete clause (and so are indexed on the verb):

(7) Tzotzil (Mayan)

?ati tzeb-e, ?i-s-sa? s-malal.
 TOP DEF girl-CLCMP-A3-search A3-husband

‘The girl_{Topic} looked for a husband.’ [Aissen 1987: 18]

As both dedicated topic marking strategies on one hand and “concerning X” and pronominal doubling constructions on the other may show different degrees of integration, analysis of the latter alongside the former appears to be a worthwhile pursuit.

3. “Concerning X” constructions

“Concerning X” constructions⁵ may show different degrees of grammaticalization. The most compositional “concerning X” constructions consisting of clear

⁵ As noted in Section 2 above, use of conditional markers for topic marking is associated with similar problems to those of “concerning X” constructions, so the two types are discussed together in this section.

lexical items are the least grammaticalized. An example of a compositional “concerning X” construction is the Russian *если мы говорим о X* (*esli my говорим о X*, lit. ‘if we are talking about X’), illustrated in (8).⁶

(8) Russian (Indo-European, Slavic)

Esli my говорим о журнале Maxim, to
 if 1PL.NOM talk.PRES.1PL about journal.PREP.SG PN then

on našel inuju auditoriju, čem
 3SG.M.NOM find.PST.SG.M different.ACC.SG.F audience.ACC.SG than

nazvannye vyše proekty.
 named.NOM.PL above project.NOM.PL

‘If we are talking about the journal Maxim_{Topic}, it found a different audience than the projects mentioned above.’

Various other “concerning X” constructions, while not described as grammaticalized topic markers, may not be compositional. Some examples of this would be the English *as for X* or *as to X* constructions or the Russian *что до X* construction (*čto do X*, lit. ‘what/that to X’, illustrated in (9)), which seem to be much more idiomatic.

(9) Russian (Indo-European, Slavic)

A čto do sosulek, to i oni ne tak
 DM what to icicle.GEN.PL then and 3PL.NOM not as

prozračny, kak kažutsja.
 clear.PL as seem.PRES.3PL

‘As for icicles_{Topic}, they are not as clear as they seem.’⁷

These constructions may also be in the process of grammaticalization. For instance, in Japhug, the topic marker *pu~pu-ŋu nɣ* is derived from the conditional form of the past imperfective of the verb ‘be’. It sometimes indexes the topic when it is a first or second person pronoun (as in (10a)), but sometimes occurs without such indexation (as in (10b)), which may indicate

⁶ Russian examples are taken from The Russian National Corpus (ruscorpora.ru). The glosses are mine.

⁷ The presence of *to* (glossed ‘then’), which normally appears in the apodosis of a conditional sentence, in (9) is also noteworthy. It appears to also be associated with topic marking.

that it is being reanalyzed as a topic marker rather than a verb form. Moreover, a short form of it, *ɲunɣ*, is also used (as in (10c)). This may be evidence of phonetic reduction, which typically accompanies grammaticalization.

(10) Japhug (Sino-Tibetan)

a. *aʒo pu~pu-ɲu-a nɣ, kɣndzɪɪ kumɲu tu-j,*
 1SG COND~PST.IPFV-be-1SG LNK siblings five exist:FNPST-1SG
 ‘Concerning me_{Topic}, we are five brothers and sisters.’

b. *aʒo ku-fse pɔpɔɲunɣ, ɕuɲgu sɣ-xtɕu~xtɕi nutɕu,*
 1SG S:PART-be.like TOP before GER-be.small DEM:LOC

χpuɲ lɣ-kɣ-ta,
 monk AOR:upstream-O:PART-put

‘For instance me_{Topic}, [I was] sent to become a monk early in my childhood.’

c. *ma u-ɲga ra ɲunɣ, maka wuma ʒo ko-nq^{hi} ma.*
 LNK 3SG.POSS-clothes PL TOP at.all really EMPH IFR-be.dirty LNK
 ‘As for his clothes_{Topic}, they had become very dirty.’ [Jacques 2021: 392–394]

Another case of potential grammaticalization is presented by the Turkish conditional marker. It has three forms: the full form of the conditional copula *ise*, its clitic allomorph = (y)sA and the affix -sA. Kabak and Schiering [2004] demonstrate that the full form *ise* is preferred as a topic marker (this use is illustrated by (11)), whereas the bound form is preferred when used as a conditional marker (however, both forms are occasionally used in both functions). Based on this distribution, Kabak and Schiering argue that the form *ise* is grammaticalized as a topic marker.

(11) Turkish (Turkic)⁸

Sibel Can ise Bursa-da iki yer-de sahne-ye ɕık-tı.
 PN TOP Bursa-LOC two place-LOC stage-DAT come.out-PST

‘As for Sibel Can_{Topic}, she performed in two places in Bursa.’ [Kabak, Schiering 2004: 9]

⁸ The glosses are mine.

Overall, some of the topic marking strategies described in this section are very similar to grammaticalized D marking, whereas others (for instance, the Russian *esli my govorim o X* construction) are quite distinct. The constructions that are in the process of grammaticalization (such as the Japhug *ɣupɣunɣ*) are of particular interest, being “in the middle” between these two phenomena.

4. Pronominal doubling

A similar case is that of pronominal doubling constructions. I use the term “pronominal doubling” and take into consideration only the constructions where the topic is doubled by a pronoun (as, for instance, in (3), repeated here as (12)), as opposed to those where it is doubled by a non-pronominal NP (as in (13), where the topic *ɣjəʷənɛʷxer* ‘my neighbors’ is doubled by the NP *a hezxem*, ‘those dogs’), as it would be difficult to interpret a non-pronominal NP as a topic marker.

(12) Catalan (Indo-European, Romance)

aquesta pel·lícula no l' he vist encara
 PROX.F.SG movie no 3SG.ACC have.1SG see.PP yet
 ‘I haven’t seen this movie_{Topic} yet’. [Hualde 1992: 229]

(13) West Circassian (West Caucasian)⁹

s-jə-ʷənɛʷ-xe-r a he-ʒ-xe-m mafe-qes
 1SG.IO-POSS-neighbor-PL-ABS that dog-old-PL-OBL day-every

s-a-ʷe-ʷə

1SG.ABS-3PL.ERG-CAUS-cry

‘My neighbors_{Topic} — those dogs [insult] make me cry every day.’ [Lander et al. 2024]

As has been mentioned in Section 2 above, these constructions show different degrees of integration of the topic constituent into the clause. In (14), for instance, the topic constituent occupies a separate tone group from the rest of the sentence and lacks the object marker (which is generally obligatory for direct objects but becomes optional in this topic construction). Both of these facts are signs of a lack of integration into the clause.

⁹ The research article this example is taken from is in Russian. The English translation is mine.

(14) Maltese (Afro-Asiatic, Semitic)

Hija rajtu l-bieraħ
 brother.1SG saw.1SG.3M.SG the-yesterday

‘As for my brother_{Topic}, I saw him yesterday.’ [Borg, Azzopardi-Alexander 1997: 124]

In (15), on the other hand, the topic constituent (*a könyvet*) that is doubled by a pronoun (*azt*) is preceded by a different element of the sentence and shows case marking connecting it to the rest of the sentence, which are both signs of some degree of integration.

(15) Hungarian (Uralic)

Anna a könyvet, azt a szobá-ban olvasta
 PN the book.ACC it-ACC the room-ILL read

‘The book_{Topic}, Anna read it in the room.’ [Kenesei et al. 1998: 173]

Pronominal doubling constructions may be analyzed as a kind of C marking, with the pronoun being a topic marker whose position is determined with respect to the entire clause. This kind of analysis might be more meaningful for the cases where the topic is more integrated into the clause (as in the Hungarian example), as it is more plausible that the pronoun appears specifically to mark the topic,¹⁰ as opposed to the topic constituent simply being adjoined to a complete clause (which would be a more plausible analysis of a pronominal doubling construction with less integration, such as the one in the Maltese example above). As not all descriptions contain enough data to argue for or against a greater degree of integration of the topic constituent into the clause, the matter of whether a certain construction should be analyzed as C marking or as a separate phenomenon with the topic being adjoined to a complete clause is often problematic.

It may also be noted that some other topic marking strategies that I would analyze as C marking, that is, as segmental topic marking positioned with respect to the whole construction, are closer to pronominal doubling than others. For instance, the Chichewa object marker is described in [Bresnan, Mchombo 1985] as an incorporated pronoun. I view it as segmental C marking instead of grouping it with pronominal doubling constructions as it is

¹⁰ The Hungarian example is described as a case of “left dislocation” in [Kenesei et al. 1998: 173]. However, in all the examples of “left dislocations” given, the pronoun follows the topic constituent directly. This may allow for an interpretation of this construction as D marking. A similar case from Kannada is discussed in more detail at the end of this section.

incorporated into the verb (and therefore has a fixed position, unlike, in many cases, pronouns in pronominal doubling constructions) and described as only appearing in topic contexts. It is illustrated in (16).

(16) Chichewa (Atlantic-Congo, narrow Bantu)

njúchi zi-ná-wá-lúm-á alenje
 bees SM-PST-OM-bite-IND hunters

‘The bees bit them, the hunters_{Topic}.’ [Bresnan, Mchombo 1985: 277]

A topic marking strategy that is described as “agreement with topic” but appears quite similar to pronominal doubling constructions is attested in the Sign Language of the Netherlands (NGT). In NGT, the topic constituent is optionally doubled by a pronoun (indexical sign, abbreviated IX in (17) below) in the clause-final position. [Kimmelman 2014: 23] notes that this pronoun is not in the position expected of it (as NGT is an SOV language); notably, in (17a), both a pronoun doubling the topic constituent in the subject position and a clause-final pronoun are present. [Crasborn et al. 2009] describe this phenomenon as “topic agreement”, as these clause-final pronouns were thought to always refer to the subject ([Bos 1995], as cited in [Crasborn et al. 2009]; see also [Padden 1988: 86-89] for a description of clause-final pronouns doubling the subject, “subject pronoun copy”, in ASL), but Crasborn et al. also found examples of clause-final pronouns referring to (topic) objects (as in (17b)) and (topic) locative expressions (as in (17c)). Based on the available information, it is difficult to determine whether describing this as a C marking strategy would be correct (an argument in favor of such a decision would be, perhaps, if these clause-final pronouns were restricted to topic contexts).

(17) NGT (Sign Language)

a. GIRL IX_{left} / IX_{left} BOOK THROW-AWAY IX_{left}
 ‘That girl_{Topic} she threw away the book.’

b. BOOK IX_{right} / IX_{left} BOOK THROW-AWAY IX_{right}
 ‘He threw away the book_{Topic}.’

[Crasborn et al. 2009], as cited in [Kimmelman 2014: 23]

c. IX_{right} LAST TUESDAY HEMA BUILDING IX_{left} IX_{right} ENTER WATCH
 FIND IX_{left}

‘Last Tuesday he found a watch in the HEMA_{Topic}.’

[Crasborn et al. 2009: 366]

Another interesting property of pronominal doubling constructions is that they may occasionally be similar to both C marking and D marking constructions. For instance, in pronominal doubling constructions in Kannada where the topic is not the subject, the pronoun is optionally moved next to the topic constituent (as in (18)).¹¹ As the pronoun is thus (if optionally) positioned in relation to the topic constituent, this may be analyzed as D marking.

(18) Kannada (Dravidian)

beLtaᅅgaDi bassa:? adanna iduvarege ya:ru: no:Dilla.
 Beltangadi bus-Q it-ACC now-till who-INC see-PP-NEG
 ‘As for the Beltangadi bus_{Topic}, nobody has seen it yet.’
 [Sridhar 1990: 144–145]

5. Concluding remarks

Overall, the less grammaticalized strategies of topic marking show significant variation and may be more or less similar to the more grammaticalized topic marking constructions. It appears that the notion of a clear distinction between segmental topic marking on one hand and other strategies on the other is an oversimplification. Indeed, some “concerning X” and pronominal doubling constructions may be hard (or impossible?) to distinguish from D and C marking respectively, whereas some others may be clearly different from the grammaticalized strategies and perhaps best analyzed separately. These constructions may show different degrees of integration of the topic into the clause; a greater degree of integration may be indicated by word order (for instance, by the presence of a different element before the topic), presence of case marking, the topic binding reflexives, and so on.

“Concerning X” constructions show variation from phenomena that are difficult to distinguish from grammaticalized D marking to quite distinct compositional expressions (like the Russian *esli my govorim o X* expression). The strategies “in the middle” between grammaticalized topic markers and compositional expressions, perhaps in particular the ones that are in the process of grammaticalization (like the Japhug data discussed in Section 3) are of particular interest, and in many cases, the matter of whether a specific marker is best analyzed as segmental topic marking or some other strategy remains problematic.

¹¹ When the topic is the subject, the pronoun is in this position by default.

Likewise, pronominal doubling constructions may vary greatly in terms of integration, with some of them showing no signs of integration and perhaps being best analyzed as a separate phenomenon with the topic constituent being adjoined to a complete clause, while others, showing more integration, appear more similar to C marking with the pronoun being analyzed as a marker. Similarly to “concerning X” constructions, in some cases, it might be difficult to determine whether a particular topic marking strategy is best analyzed as a pronominal doubling construction or as segmental topic marking.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 — 1st, 2nd, 3rd person; A3 — set A agreement affix, 3rd person; ABS — absolutive; ACC — accusative; AOR — aorist; CAUS — causative; CL — clitic; CMP — completive; COND — conditional; DAT — dative; DECL — declarative; DEF — definite; DEM — demonstrative; DM — discourse marker; EMPH — emphatic; ERG — ergative; F — feminine; FACT — factative tense/aspect/modality; FNPST — factual non-past; FOC — focus; GEN — genitive; GER — gerund; IFR — inferential; ILL — illative; INC — inclusive clitic; IND — indicative; IO — indirect object; IPFV — imperfective; IX — index (pointing sign); LNK — linker; LOC — locative; M — masculine; NEG — negation/negative; NOM — nominative case; O — object; OBL — oblique; OM — object marker; OT — object topic; P — preposition; PART — participle; PN — proper name; POSS — possessive; PP — past participle; PRES — present; PREP — prepositional case; PROX — proximal/proximate; PST — past; Q — question; REFL — reflexive; S — subject; SG — singular; SM — subject marker; TOP — topic; VALIDATOR — validator.

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