

Contrastive Topic A Reductionist Approach

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Answers to Multiple Questions

Prototypical cases of contrastive topic:

(1) German: hat accent

Q: Welcher Junge hat mit welchem
which boy has with which
Mädchen getanzt?
girl danced

A: Hans_T mit Maria_F und Tom_T mit Britta_F.
Hans with Maria and Tom with Britta

(2) Hungarian (Gyuris, p.c.): SOV-word order and hat accent

Q: Mely fiú mely lány-t látta?
which boy which girl-ACC saw

A: János Mari-t látta, Gyuri Beá-t látta.
Janos Mari saw, Gyuri Bea saw

see also: Haida (2003); Gyuris (2002, 2004, 2005)

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Uncertainty/Unresolvedness

Ward and Hirschberg (1985); Büring (1997):

- (3) Q: Which boy danced with which girl?
A: Hans_T mit Maria_F
John with Mary
- (4) residual question: Which girl did Tom dance with?
- (5) *Uncertainty*: Contrastive topic $\phi(X_T, Y_F)$ requires that there be alternative expressions X', Y' such that the truth value of $\phi(X', Y')$ is undetermined.

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Scope Disambiguation

Contrastive topic accent can disambiguate scope; e.g. (6) to “not \gg all”:

(6) German (Jacobs, 1984, 1997):

Alle_T Politiker sind nicht_F korrupt.
All politicians are not corrupt

‘Not all politicians are corrupt.’
*‘No politicians are corrupt.’

(7) Hungarian (Molnár and Rosengren, 1997, 232)

Minden_T Grass-regény nem_F javasolható
all Grass-novels not recommend-can

‘Not all novels by Grass are recommendable.’
*‘All novels by Grass are not recommendable.’

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Explanation

Explanation (following Büring 1997): “not \gg all” scope satisfies uncertainty:

- (8) a. $[\text{not}]_F$ ($[\text{all}]_T$ politicians are corrupt)
- b. alternative: some politicians are corrupt.
- c. residual question: Are some politicians corrupt?

“all \gg not” scope cannot satisfy uncertainty:

- (9) a. $[\text{all}]_T$ politicians ($[\text{not}]_F$ are corrupt)
- b. some alternatives:
 - some politicians corrupt. [false]
 - many politicians are not corrupt. [true]

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Problem: The Last Answer

In a pair-list answer, all pairs bear contrastive topic accent:

- (10) Q: Which boy danced with which girl?
A: Hans_T mit Maria_F und Tom_T mit Britta_F.
Hans with Maria and Tom with Britta

Krifka (1999); Umbach (2001): The last answer doesn't satisfy uncertainty.

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Partiality Relative to a Question

Each conjunct of a pair-list answer must provide a partial answer (Krifka 1999, cf. Büring (2003)).

- (11) Q: Which boy danced with which girl?
A: [Hans_T danced with Maria_F]/Q and [Tom_T danced with Britta_F]/Q
- (12) *Partiality*: $[\phi(X_T, Y_F)]/Q$ requires that there be alternatives $X' \neq X, Y' \neq Y$ such that $\phi(X', Y')$ is a (partial) answer to Q.

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Problem 1: Questions

Hungarian requires contrastive topics in pair-list questions (cf. Gyuris 2005).

- (13) Q: Mely fiú mely lányt látta?
which boy which girl saw
A: János Mari-t látta, Gyuri Beá-t
Janos Mari-ACC saw, Gyuri Bea-ACC
látta.
saw

Licensing by reference to a question would need to be circular.

A single pair question:

- (14) Q: Mely fiú látta mely lányt?
which boy saw which girl
A: János látta Mari-t.
Janos saw Mari-ACC

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Question intonation in German

German seems to distinguish single and multiple pair questions intonationally (rise on 'welcher' in (15)):

- (15) Nun liste bitte mal auf: Welcher Junge hat mit welchem Mädchen getanzt?
'Now, please make a list: Which boy was dancing with which girl?'
- (16) Bloss ein Paar hat getanzt: Welcher Junge hat mit welchem Mädchen getanzt?
'Just one couple danced: Which boy was dancing with which girl?'

(I do not know of any phonological/phonetic work on German questions.)

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Problem 2: Cancellation of the List Presupposition

The second conjunct of the answer in (17) does not permit contrastive topic intonation.

(17) Q: Welcher Junge hat mit welchem
Which boy has with which
Mädchen getanzt?
girl danced?

A: Tatsächlich hat bloss Hans getanzt und
Actually has only John danced and
er hat mit Maria getanzt.
he has with Maria danced

[he_T Maria_F danced]/Q would be satisfied, though.

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Problem 3: Plural Questions

In Hungarian, multiple plural questions do not license contrastive topic word-order.

- (18) Mely fiúk látták mely lányokat?
which boys saw which girls
- (19) a. János látta Mari-t, Gyuri látta
Janos saw Mari-ACC, Gyuri saw
Beá-t, ...
Bea-ACC,
b. ??János Mari-t látta, Gyuri Beá-t
Janos Mari-ACC saw, Gyuri Bea-ACC
látta, ...
saw,

But, [János_T Mari_F saw]/Q should be satisfied.

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The Proposal

I propose a purely presuppositional analysis of contrastive topic (cf. Geurts and van der Sandt 2004; Sauerland 2005 for focus):

(20) $\phi(X_T, Y_F)$ presupposes that $\exists x: \phi(x, \llbracket Y \rrbracket)$ and $\exists y: \phi(\llbracket X \rrbracket, y)$

I show below that this presupposition follows from the lexical entries of T and F.

Example of the presupposition:

(21) János_T Mari_F saw
presupposition: Someone saw Mari and János saw someone.

When is the presupposition satisfied?

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Presupposition of Multiple Questions

Candidates for presupposition of a multiple question:

- (22) Which girl saw which boy?
- a. Completeness: For every girl there is exactly one boy she saw. (Dayal, 1996; Haida, 2003)
 - b. Surjectivity: For every girl there is exactly one boy she saw and for every boy there is at least one girl that saw him.
 - c. Bijectivity: For every girl there is exactly one boy she saw and for every boy there is exactly one girl that saw him. (Higginbotham and May, 1980)

Surjectivity or Bijectivity would satisfy the contrastive topic presupposition.

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Surjectivity?

Bijectivity seems too strong, but surjectivity can be defended.

- (23) a. Which student got which grade? (M. Krifka p.c.)
b. Which student [in my class] got which grade [of the ones I gave out]

Possible evidendence for surjectivity:

- (24) a. #Which of Florida, Iowa, and Ohio voted for which of Bush, Kerry, and Nader?
b. I wonder which sweet is in which bag?

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Contrastive Topics as Single Pairs I

The answer to a single pair question cannot bear contrastive topic intonation:

(25) Hungarian (Gyuris, p.c.)

Q: Mely fiú látta mely lányt?
which boy saw which girl

A: #János Mari-t látta.
Janos Mari-ACC saw

Explanation: The contrastive topic plus the uniqueness presupposition would render the assertion trivial:

- (26) a. *Contrastive Topic Presupposition:*
 $\exists x: \phi(x, \text{Mari})$ and $\exists y: \phi(\text{János}, y)$
- b. *Unique Pair Presupposition:*
 $\exists_1(x, y): \phi(x, y)$
- c. *Logical Consequence of a and b:*
 $\phi(\text{János}, \text{Mari})$

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Contrastive Topics as Single Pairs II

(27) *Contrastive Topic + Unique Pair* \Rightarrow Assertion
Trivial

I assume that an assertion must not be entirely presupposed.

(28) *Contrastive Topic* $\Rightarrow \neg$ *Unique Pair*

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Presuppositions vs. Questions

When an antecedent question is present, but the presupposition is cancelled, contrastive topic is bad:

(29) Q: Welcher Junge hat mit welchem
Which boy has with which
Mädchen getanzt?
girl danced?

A: Tatsächlich hat bloss Hans getanzt und
Actually has only John danced and
er hat mit Maria getanzt.
he has with Maria danced

The contrastive topic presupposition cannot be satisfied.

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Presuppositions vs. Questions II

In plural questions, a question is present, but the presupposition not supported. Again, contrastive topic is bad.

- (30) Mely fiúk látták mely lányokat?
which boys saw which girls
- (31) a. János látta Mari-t, Gyuri látta
Janos saw Mari-ACC, Gyuri saw
Beá-t, ...
Bea-ACC,
- b. ?? János Mari-t látta, Gyuri Beá-t
Janos Mari-ACC saw, Gyuri Bea-ACC
látta, ...
saw,

The plural pair question does not establish the presupposition of contrastive topic.

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Contrastive Topics in Questions

Contrastive topics occur in Hungarian multiple questions:

(32) Q: [Mely fiú]_T [mely lány]_F látta?
 which boy which girl saw

The presupposition of (33) cannot be: $\exists x$: saw(x , which girl) and $\exists y$: saw(which girl, y) because presuppositions cannot be questions.

Further LF-movement:

(33) Q: which boy λ_x which girl λ_y [x]_T [y]_F saw

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Presupposition Projection in Questions

Presuppositions in questions are accommodated into the interrogative.

- (34) a. Which girl sold her cello?
b. Which girl that had a cello sold it?
- (35) a. Which linguist stopped smoking recently?
b. Which linguist that was smoking stopped recently?

The question presupposes that a true answer exists, and in particular, that some girl had a cello, and some linguist was smoking.

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Account of Questions

Contrastive topic in (36) amounts to the presupposition in (37) (above the fraction line is presupposition):

(36) which boy λ_x which girl λ_y $[x]_T [y]_F$ saw

(37) wh λ_x wh λ_y $\frac{\exists x': x' \text{ saw } y \ \& \ \exists y': x \text{ saw } y'}{x \text{ saw } y}$

Accommodation yields:

(38) Which boy that saw someone saw which girl that was seen by someone.

This result is OK in view of surjectivity.

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Lexical Entries for T and F

Geurts and van der Sandt (2004); Sauerland (2005):
Focus introduces existential presupposition.
Claim today: Topic introduces an independent
existential presupposition:

$$(39) \quad \llbracket T \rrbracket = \llbracket F \rrbracket = \lambda_x \lambda_P \frac{\exists x': P(x')}{P(x)}$$

(See Sauerland (2005) for an account of multiple foci.)

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Derivation of the Contrastive Topic Presupposition

Predicting the presupposition of *János saw Mari* with contrastive topic:

(40) János-T λ_x Mari-F λ_y *x saw y*

(41) $\left[\lambda_P \frac{\exists x P(x)}{P(\text{János})} \right] \left(\lambda_x \left[\lambda_P \frac{\exists x P(x)}{P(\text{Mari})} \right] \lambda_y \text{ *x saw y* } \right)$

(42) $\left[\lambda_P \frac{\exists x P(x)}{P(\text{János})} \right] \left(\lambda_x \frac{\exists y \text{ *x saw y*}}{\text{*x saw Mari*}} \right)$

(43) $\frac{\exists x \text{ *x saw Mari* } \ \& \ \exists y \text{ *János saw y*}}{\text{*János saw Mari*}}$

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