NON-REFERENTIAL TOPICAL PHRASES IN ROMANIAN AND THE THEORY OF TOPICALITY

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Abstract: I discuss various theories of sentence topics against the background of attested examples of topicalization in Romanian. I argue that non-referential topical phrases constitute a problem for the concept of aboutness topic proposed by Reinhart (1981) and can better be accounted for in a theory where topicalized constituents are indicators of the discourse topic (cf. von Fintel 1994). I examine various types of topicalized constituents, classified according to the relation they entertain with the previous sentences and the discourse topic. Furthermore, I discuss another function of sentence topics, which can be characterized independently of discourse relations: that of anchoring the new information in the common ground. I suggest a way in which this function can be subsumed under the general function of indicating discourse-topic dynamics.

Keywords: discourse and sentence topics, topicalization, aboutness, Romanian

1. Introduction

The extant studies on topicalization in Romanian are mostly concerned with syntactic properties (the presence or absence of clitic doubling, word order and the syntactic positions involved in topicalization) and use constructed examples[1]. This study addresses the interpretational side of the phenomenon, trying to elucidate the functions fulfilled by topicalized constituents. As it is difficult to imagine all the possible situations in which the topicalization of a phrase is pragmatically licit, this study uses the results of a corpus research: from a sample of various text types (oral corpora, drama, fictional prose, biographies, history and press) I extracted topicalized phrases classifying them according to the semantic properties of the topicalized constituents and its relation to the context. The texts from which the examples in this article are drawn are indicated under Sources, at the end of the paper.

The aim of this article[2] is to find the most suitable theory of topicalization which can account for the data obtained by this corpus research. As I will show in what follows, the analyses which entertain a notion of "sentence topic" based on "aboutness" and divorced from the notion of "discourse topic", analyses which seem to be the most widespread nowadays, have difficulties in accounting for non-referential topicalized phrases. Therefore, I will concentrate on such phrases, which my corpus research has proved to be quite common. I will argue that an analysis of the interpretative side of topicalization in which the notion of "discourse topic" plays a central role fares better in accounting for this type of topicalization.

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[1] See e.g. Dobrovie-Sorin (1987, 1994), Alboiu (2002), Cornilescu (2002, 2004).

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2. On the notions of Topic

Although the linguistic notion of "topic" draws its name from the notion of "topic of a conversation, a text, a debate", etc., very often the notion or notions of "topic" relevant for grammar, which are covered by the term "sentence topic", are defined independently from the pre-theoretical notion of topic (the topic of a conversation, a text, etc.), which is described by the concept of "discourse topic". Reinhart (1981), the foundational article for the notion of "aboutness topic" as a semantic characterization of sentence topics, argues for a complete separation between sentence topics and discourse topics. An overview of the differences between the two notions can be found in Roberts (2011).

A straightforward and undisputable argument for distinguishing the two notions is that the constituents linguistically marked as topics, by means such as fronting or topic particles, often (probably in most cases) do not correspond to what we would identify as the "discourse topic" of that portion of text using our intuition, e.g. as an answer to the question "what is the topic of this fragment?". Discourse topics are usually formalized as questions under discussion (cf. Carlson 1983, von Fintel 1994, Büring 1999, 2003, van Kuppevelt 1995, Roberts 1996); e.g. the discourse topic *yesterday's party* is paraphrasable by the question *What can you tell me about yesterday's party?*, formalizable as a set of properties which hold about the event *e* such that *e* is yesterday's party (here, the contextual restriction necessary for identifying the party is represented by C):

(1) DT *yesterday's party* = λP. P (ιe. e(party(e) $\wedge$ time(e)$\subseteq$yesterday $\wedge$ C(e))

More specific DTs including *yesterday's party* may be *who was at the party?, how was the party*?, etc.

(2) DT *who was at the party* = λx. at(x, (ιe. e(party(e) $\wedge$ time(e)$\subseteq$yesterday $\wedge$ C(e)))

If in (1) we are in a situation in which there is a topicalizable constituent which can be equated with the DT, namely, *yesterday's party*, in (2) we already see a case in which there is no such constituent – *was at the party* is not a topicalizable constituent.

Any cursory examination of a text which would try, for each sentence, to establish the DT, will offer plenty of examples in which the DT is not represented by a constituent; there are even cases when the DT is not represented at all by any overt material, but can nonetheless be easily inferred by the addressee.

As pointed out by Vallduví (1993) and Roberts (2011), the sentence topic (ST) is usually part of the material which can be taken to represent the DT. Roberts (2011) calls this material "Theme", as opposed to "Topical constituent", the constituent denoting the ST) – e.g. in a context where (2) is the DT, in Romanian we may front 'at the party', which represents a part of the DT material 'was at the party':

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(3) La petrecere au fost soţii Ionescu, Angelica, George şi Andrei.
at party have been spouses-the Ionescu Angelica George and Andrei
'The Ionescus, Angelica, George and Andrei were at the party'.

A view of ST as realizing a partition of DT was proposed by Büring (1999, 2003): assuming that the DT can be divided into several questions, which form a set, the ST represents the element which varies across these sub-questions – e.g. the question *What did the boys eat?*, where the boys are Fred and George, can be divided into the sub-questions 'what did Fred eat' and 'what did George eat'. An answer which addresses this question by solving the two sub-questions will have Fred and George as ST:

(4) A: What did the boys eat?
B: [Fred]$_{ST}$ ate [the beans]$_{Focus}$, and [George]$_{ST}$ ate [the eggplant]$_{Focus}$

However, this characterization proved to hold only for some of the linguistically marked topics, the so-called "contrastive topics".

Reinhart (1981), following Strawson (1964), Kuno (1972), Dik (1978) in considering the notion of "aboutness" as primitive, proposes a formalization of the aboutness relation and motivates this concept as a device of organizing the information which is exchanged and expanded during conversation: the topic provides a heading under which the proposition is stored. The various propositions which have a referent as a topic thus build a sort of file card. The topic must refer to an entity whose existence is established (either known to exist by the addressee, or accommodated as such). This derives the only positive characterization of topics: that they are referential expressions which carry a presupposition of existence. For generic indefinites and quantificational DPs, it is the set quantified over which is the aboutness-topic. Otherwise, topical expressions must be referring expressions (definites or specific indefinites). Reinhart's view was continued and further elaborated in Vallduví (1993), Erteschik-Shir (1997, 2007), Portner and Yabushita (1998), Jacobs (2001).

A problem for this view is that the criteria for deciding what the topic is (when there is no overt topic marking by word order or topic particles) are not very clear: as shown by Roberts (2011), the various tests that have been proposed may give conflicting results and fail to cover all the cases: the test of considering the sentence as an answer to *what about X?*, where X is the topic (Gundel 1974, 1985, Vallduví 1993) "implies a contrast between the mentioned entity *X* and the other members of some implicit set of relevant entities" (Roberts 2011:1912), so it is only applicable to contrastive topics. The same holds for the *as-for-X* test, which in addition presupposes that the hearer is aware of the set of alternatives to which X belongs. The *speaking-of-X* test (Kuno 1976, Reinhart 1981, Kehler 2004) is only applicable in cases of topic shift (when X had not been the topic of the immediately previous discourse). Reinhart's (1981) test *he said about X that* appears to be exempt of these problems, but falls short of a clear-cut result in all cases. Actually, researchers disagree on whether there can be sentences without a topic (Reinhart 1981) or not (Gundel 1974, Erteschik-Shir 1997, 2007) and on whether there is at most one topic per sentence (Reinhart 1981) or there can be more than one (van Dijk 1979, Erteschik-Shir 2007).

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A more serious problem for the aboutness-topic theory is the existence of topic-like fronting of non-referential constituents, as in the following example from Romanian:

(5) [Context: looking for somebody's help with a math problem]/
Bun la matematică este şi George
good at math is also George
'George, too is good at maths'

Unlike quantificational and generic DPs, where the quantified set or the kind provide plural entities whose existence is well-established and can function as aboutness-topics, for topicalized adjectives, verb phrases and other predicative expressions it is hard to find corresponding discourse referents which could be seen as the topic. The view which relates sentence topics with DT (cf. von Fintel 1994) fares much better in this case – for instance, in (5), the fronted predicate is a part of the current DT *who is good at math?*

Given this variety of proposals, as well as the existence of multiple topicalization in certain languages and the important crosslinguistic differences between topic constructions, some studies came to the conclusion that 'topic' covers different notions which lack a common defining feature (Jacobs 2001). A systematic proposal along these lines was put forth by Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007), further refined by Bianchi and Frascarelli (2010) and Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2016). They distinguish three types of topics: "aboutness topics" (A-topics), defined as in Reinhart (1981), "contrastive topics", which are defined as elements that introduce "alternatives which have no impact on the focus value and create oppositional pairs with respect to other topics", and "familiar topics", later labeled "G(iven)-topics", which are "used to resume background information or for topic continuity". In languages which allow multiple topicalization, such as Italian, the three types of topics are claimed to be associated with different positions, in the following hierarchy (where the first position is used to indicate a shift in the aboutness-topic, hence the label "aboutness-shift Topic")[3]:

(6) [$_{\text{ShiftP}}$ Aboutness-shift Topic [$_{\text{ContrP}}$ Contrastive Topic [$_{\text{FamP}}$ Familiar Topic [IP]]]]

Bianchi and Frascarelli (2010) claim that these three types differ in the distribution in subordinate clauses: A-topics only occur in root-like embedded clauses, which are endowed with illocutionary potential, C-topics occur in subordinates with a propositional denotation, G-topics are unrestricted. The difference between topic fronting in English and Italian subordinates would follow from the fact that English lacks G-topic fronting.

Whereas it is clear that topicalization is often used for topic shift, otherwise the topic referent being realized as a weak or null pronoun, and that not all topics are contrastive (so we can isolate "contrastive topic" as a sub-type), the status of G-topics is more problematic. In Bianchi and Frascarelli (2010) they are defined as Given constituents in the sense of Schwarzschild (1999). But not all given constituents undergo

[3] Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2016) further distinguish G-topics, characterized as weakly familiar, from Familiar topics proper, which would be strongly familiar; the former are preverbal in Italian, the latter occur in right-dislocation (as a result of remnant movement of IP to the Spec of a GroundP above FamP).

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topicalization, and it is not clear what property differentiates the topicalized given constituents from those left *in situ*. If we take into account DT, we may say that given constituents are raised not by virtue of Givenness, but as a means of indicating how the sentence fits into the discourse, by addressing a DT provided by the preceding text. This is what I will argue for in the following section.

In what follows, I will examine attested examples of topicalization in Romanian, with an emphasis on non-referential topicalized phrases, which cannot be subsumed under the concept of aboutness topic developed by Reinhart (1981) and her followers. I will show that such phrases are not always given, so they cannot be all treated as G-topics of the kind proposed by Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007). What I propose is that the role of these phrases is to indicate the connection of the clause to the DT. As the DT must be related to the previous discourse, the topicalized constituent is often given, or contains a given part, or is conceptually related to an antecedent in the previous sentence. As it is known that non-referential phrases can be more easily topicalized if they are contrastive (see É. Kiss and Gyuris 2003, Arregi 2003, Giurgea 2015), I will concentrate on non-contrastive topicalized phrases.

3. Types of topicalized phrases in relation to the previous text and the discourse topic

The data I consider involve phrases whose preverbal placement is clearly due to topicalization: therefore, although subjects are often topical, I excluded them, because it has been shown that preverbal subjects that are neither topical nor focalized can be found in Romanian (Motapanyane 1994, 1995, Giurgea 2016, 2017). I also excluded localizing expressions, which can appear preverbally without being related to the previous context or being part of the discourse topic, so that their preverbal placement seems "neutral". Although this placement is arguably linked to a function – the frame-setting function – which may be derived or connected to some definitions of the notion of topic (cf. Jacobs 2001, Klein 2008; see section 4 below), I have chosen to leave out such phrases, since their discourse properties clearly set them apart from the others.

As I explained above, I will first give examples of non-referential topicalized phrases, which cannot be taken to represent aboutness topics in the sense of Reinhart (1981). I will add examples of referential phrases with the same discourse properties, which can thus be analyzed like the non-referential ones, without resorting to Reinhart's aboutness.

3.1 The topicalized phrase (Top) is given

3.1.1 Top is (part of) the major DT

Although most examples of this type involve referential phrases, examples of non-referential Top can be found. Here is one:

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(7) [general DT: surprising things on the public scene nowadays; title of the article: *Nimic din ceea ce fac politicienii nu ar trebui să ne mai surprindă* 'Nothing politicians do should surprise us any longer']
Când crezi că s-a atins limita, apare altceva care o sfidează temerar. Bunul simţ e mereu şi mereu pus la grea încercare, uimirea e insuficientă. [...]Uimirea că *CNA* e surd şi vândut cui oferă reînvestirea în funcţii, aparatură şi sesizări false pentru Laura Georgescu e şi ea mereu proaspătă [...] *CNA* în schimb e mereu conectat vremurilor şi transformă protecţia mizeriei în artă.
'Just when you think a limit has been attained, something else appears which defies it. Common sense is challenged time and again, astonishment grows scarce [...] The astonishment that the CNA (National Broadcasting Authority) is deaf and sold to those who make the nominations [...] But the CNA is always in tune with the times and turns the protection of abjection into an art'
Mut rămâi şi când analizezi pe ce arături a apucat-o
dumb remain.2SG also when analyze.2SG on what furrows has taken it
vânătoarea partidelor după candidaţi.
chase-the parties-the.GEN after candidates
'Dumbstruck, too is what one feels when analyzing how much off the rails the parties' chase of candidates has gone.'
(*Revista 22*, 10-17 October 2016)

First, we can see here that Top is part of DT, which can be written as {p| p is a fact on the present-day Romanian public scene and p is astonishing}. The part 'on the present-day Romanian public scene' is a wider contextual restriction which needs not be marked linguistically. We are still left with the DT 'what is astonishing'. But Top does not exactly match this DT: the main predicate is an idiom meaning '(one) is astonished' – *a rămâne mut* 'to remain/become dumb' = 'to be struck dumb'. As the verbal part of this expression is raised to the inflectional head which marks Tense, Mood and the subject features (here 2SG, with a generic interpretation) – *rămâi* 'remain.IND.PRES.2SG' – we are left with the adjectival predicate *mut* 'dumb/speechless.MSG'. We can analyze this as topicalization of the remnant VP *rămâne mut,* containing the trace of the verb raised to Infl.

Another noticeable fact is that Top, although referring to the major DT, comes after a sentence where this DT was not mentioned. This is what justified the explicit marking of the current DT, via topicalization – otherwise, such marking would presumably be superfluos.

We often see this with a referential Top included in the current DT: overt marking via topicalization is needed if Top was not explicitly mentioned in the immediately preceding discourse, otherwise weak pronouns would be more appropriate. Here is an example:

(8) [current DT: Smaranda and Ştefan a Petrei's children]
Se pare că Ştefan a Petrei a avut cu totul opt copii. În jalba din 1858, după moartea tatălui, Ion Creangă pomeneşte de încă 7 copii [...]. Ar fi o nevinovată sporire de fraţi în scopul de a înduioşa".

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‘It appears that Ştefan a Petrei had eight children in all. In the 1858 grievance, after his father’s death, Ion Creangă mentions 7 other children [...]. This would be an innocuous increase of the number of siblings, in order to arouse compassion.’

Totuşi, **progenitura Smarandei** n-o cunoaştem deloc bine.
nevertheless offspring-the Smaranda.GEN not-CL.ACC know.1PL at all well
‘Nevertheless, Smaranda’s offspring we don’t know well at all.’

(Călinescu, *I. Cr.* 22)

There are also cases in which Top has been previously mentioned and is part of the current DT, but cannot be realized as a clitic or null pronoun for morphosyntactic reasons: it is part of a PP. In such cases, the whole PP can be fronted:

(9) Uliţa mea e paşnică, tăcută. Rareori o tulbură năvala târgului.
‘My street is peaceful, quiet. The city’s throngs rarely trouble it.’
Prin ea străbat carele cu boi, venind de la ţară.
through it go-through carts-the with oxen coming from countryside
‘Along it the oxen carts drive through, coming from the countryside.’

(Teodoreanu, *Med.* I 6)

3.1.2 Top was not part of the DT and will not constitute a major DT

As Top is given and will not constitute a long-lasting DT, one might be tempted to resort to the Given feature alone for fronting, as Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007), without involving DT. However, it is preferable to consider that Top is involved in DT dynamics, because not just any Given phrase is fronted. The following example shows this: as the Speaker was part of the current DT, the PP *pentru mine* ‘for me’, referring to the Speaker, is not topicalized. Top is a predicate which had first occurred in the preceding phrase. The fact that it is taken over is relevant for DT dynamics: it signals a stronger link between the current sentence and the preceding one – the DT ‘something about the meeting between the Speaker and Rossini’ is enriched by adding this predicate, to ‘something sensational about the meeting between the Speaker and Rossini’. As the part ‘about the meeting between the Speaker and Rossini’ can be relegated to the general contextual restriction (cf. the discussion of example (7) above), the linguistically marked DT is ‘what was sensational’, which directly corresponds to the topicalized predicate:

(10) [context: meeting of the Speaker with Rossini]
Că m-a primit extrem de amabil, nu era deloc senzaţional.
‘That he received me extremely amicably was not at all sensational.’
Senzaţional a fost pentru mine să constat că aparenţa atât de
sensational has been for me SĂ notice.1SG that appearance-the such of
facilă a artei acestui muzician ascundea o uimitor de
facile GEN art-the.GEN this.GEN musician hid.IMPF an astonishingly of
autocritică luciditate
self-critical lucidity

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'What was astounding for me was to notice that the so facile appearance of this musician's art was hiding an astonishingly self-critical lucidity.'

(Bălan, *Wagner*, 135)

Here is another example of this type which involves VP-topicalization, realized in Romanian by the supine. Normally, in such cases the V is repeated under Infl in Romanian, being necessary as a support of the tense, mood and subject features. However, here, where it would occur as the subjunctive complement of the modal *trebui* 'must', the verb is not repeated, presumably because all its features are recoverable (the mood, tense and subject features are imposed by the configuration, so they can be considered uninterpreted):

(11) Chiria n-am s- o plătesc la 26, dar **de plătit** tot
rent-the not-have.1SG SĂ-CL.ACC pay.1SG at 26, but SUP pay.SUP still
va trebui într-o zi, peste o săptămînă sau două.
will.3SG must in a day after a week or two
'The rent I will not pay on the 26th, but I will still have to pay it some day, in a week or two'

(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 487)

We can also find this type of Top in subordinate clauses – here is an example of a complement of a factive verb; as the antecedent of Top is in a complement clause coordinated with the clause under discussion, the DT development occurs inside the material presented as a fact by being embedded under the predicate *a-şi da seama* 'to realize':

(12) Prostia şi răutatea nu-şi dau seama că, hulind pe creator,
stupidity-the and meanness-the not-realize.3PL that slandering PE creator
pot câştiga doar o victorie exterioară şi efemeră; că **învingător**
can.3PL win only a victory exterior and short-lived that winner
este până la urmă tot artistul care a avut curajul să înfrunte
is until to end again artist-the who has had courage-the SĂ confront
împotrivirea
opposition-the
'Stupidity and meanness don't realize that, by bashing the creator, they can only win an exterior and short-lived victory; that eventually the winner is still the artist who had the courage to face up to the opposition'

(Bălan, *Wagner*, 138)

Another example which belongs here, (13), is interesting in that it shows that Top can be an adverb:

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(13) [DT: Queen Mary of Romania, and her relations with Romanian culture]
Să spunem mai întâi că învăţase românește, nu „foarte bine”,
SĂ say.1PL more first that had-learned.3SG Romanian not very well
fiindcă **foarte bine**, chiar după spusele ei, tot
because very well even according-to sayings-the her continuously
amestecându-le (engleza, româna, franceza, germana), nu se
mixing-them English-the Romanian-the French-the German-the not REFL
mai exprima acum în nicio limbă
more express.IMPF.3SG now in no language
‘Let us first acknowledge that she had learned Romanian; she hadn’t learned it “very well”, because, even according to her own words, as she would continuously mix up languages (English, Romanian, French, German), now she could no longer express herself *very well* in any language.’

(Boia, *Balcic*, 75)

Here, the fronting of the adverb (not easily translatable into English) is important because it clarifies the relation between the quite long reason clause and the main clause: not speaking very well Romanian is included into a set of properties ‘λxλy.y speaks/ does not speak very well the language x’.

Finally, let us see an example of a referential Top which behaves like the non-referential ones just examined – its antecedent is new, rhematic material, and it introduces a transient DT (not being promoted to major DT):

(14) şi-a cumpărat caseta de argintărie↓ . . pe care-o
REFL3.DAT-has bought box-the of silverware PE which-CL.ACC
am↑ da’ am impresia că mi-au pierit
have.1SG but have.1SG impression-the that me.DAT-have.3SG disappeared
nişte linguriţe↑ că **linguriţele** le am în folosinţă↑ . . .
some little-spoons that little-spoons-the CL.ACC-have.1SG in use
şi- a cumpărat două fotolii de piele roşie↑ [...]
REFL3.DAT-has bought two armchairs of leather red
‘He bought the silverware box.. which I have – but I am under the impression that some of the teaspoons have gone missing, because the teaspoons, I use – he bought two two red-leather armchairs...’

(*CORV*, 117)

3.1.3 Top was not part of the DT but will be (part of) a major DT

Below is an example of a non-specific indefinite which had been rhematic material in the previous sentence and is promoted to major DT. The new DT is actually ‘why I (the person interviewed) do not have a job’, but from the expression *a-şi lua servici(u)* ‘to get a job’, as the verb is moved to Infl, where the subject features are also expressed, the non-specific object *servici(u)* ‘job’ is the only element which occurs in Top (as explained

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wrt (7) above, it is possible that the topicalized phrase is a remnant VP rather than O alone):

(15) [DT: about a person who takes care of a lot of dogs]
I: N-am servici şi trebuie să mă ocup NUmai de ei.
'I don't have a job and I must tend to them continually.'
R: Dar **servici** nu v-aţi luat NUmai pentru că eraţi
but job not you.DAT-have.2PL taken only because were.2PL
bolnav↑ sau ca să creşteţi câinii?
ill or so-that SĂ raise.2PL dogs-the
'But you didn't get a job only because you were ill, or in order to raise the dogs?'
(*CORV*, 229)

This type of Top often appears in answers, resuming an element introduced in the question: by using it, the speaker signals the fact that it assumes the DT suggested by the question. Here is an example of a non-specific indefinite:

(16) LDJ: Ai continuat înregistrări↑ Anca↓ ai mai făcut ceva?
'Did you go on with recordings, Anca, did you do some more?'
AH: **Înregistrări** acolo N-AM mai făcut↑ pentru că românii
recordings there not-have.1 more done because Romanian-the
pe care i- am întâlnit sânt toţi cam din ...
PE which CL.ACC-have.1 met are all rather from
'Recordings, I didn't do there, because the Romanians I met were all rather...'
(*CORV*, 112)

The actual thematic material is 'do recordings there', but the verb is moved to Infl and, as discussed wrt ex. (7) above, we can assume that Top contains the trace of the verb; here, if we pursue this analysis, where Top is a remnant VP rather than the object, we should include the adverb *acolo* 'there' in the topicalized constituent.

3.2 Top is D-linked by *containing* a Given part

3.2.1 The given part of Top is (part of) the current DT

Predicative expressions which are D-linked by containing a given part often involve *comparison*. The given part can be a covert argument of a comparison relation, as in the following example, where the standard of comparison of *mai frumoase* 'more beautiful' is *Cântecele pentru blonda Agnes* 'the songs for the blond Agnes', which are already established as a DT in the preceding sentence, the second sentence of the example (*Le cunoşti, nu-i aşa?* 'You know them, don't you?'):

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(17) Numai că, disperat, Viorin a scris: *Cântecele pentru blonda Agnes*. Le cunoşti, nu-i aşa? 'Nevertheless, in despair, Viorin wrote: *The songs for the blond Agnes.* You know them, don't you?'
După părerea mea **mai (Ø) frumoase lieduri** nici Schumann
after opinion-the my more beautiful lieder not-even Schumann
n- a scris
not has written
'In my opinion, not even Schumann managed to write more beautiful lieder.'
(Sebastian, *Oraşul cu salcâmi*, 119)

In this type of example, we may consider that only the given part of Top is actually the DT or part of the DT, and the whole topicalized phrase is moved as a result of pied-piping. (18) below is another example where the material referring to the DT, what Roberts (2011) calls "thematic material", is only a part of the topicalized phrase :

(18) Toate astea sunt amuzante, dar nu grave. **Zeci, sute de asemenea**
all these are funny but not serious tens hundreds of similar
(Ø) enormităţi le ascult şi le las să treacă.
absurdities CL.ACC listen.1SG and them let.1SG SĂ pass.3SG
'All these (things) are funny, but not serious. Tens, hundreds of similar absurdities I hear and let pass.'
(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 246)

Here, the DT of the first sentence is 'remarks made, on a certain occasion, by Camil Petrescu', which is enriched to 'other equally nonsensical things said by Camil Petrescu' (*asemenea enormităţi* 'similar absurdities'). The numerals *zeci, sute*, which specify the incredible number of these things, is clearly part of the rhematic material of the second sentence.

An example of a fronted comparative where only the standard of comparison is given is (19). The text is about families with a lot of siblings, and a subordinate DT has been CM's mother's family. The fronted phrase compares this with the situation of her father, using the new adjective *prost* 'bad'. A secondary, transient DT can be assumed 'in which family the sibling situation is worse than in that of CM's mother' (why it is worse is explained later in the dialogue):

(19) LDJ: Ce NEAmuri erau pe vremuri. Şi MAma↓ e din opt copii.
'Ah, the size families once had! My mother too, she's one of eight children.'
GA: Mama are treişpe. 'My mother has thirteen.'
CM: I-auzi. Mama au fost ZEce:↑ sânt NOuă:↓ aia a murit la o LUnă↓ două↓ nu ştiu cât↑. Şi TOŢI trăiesc. Deci neamuri↑ berecHET.
'That's something! My mother – there used to be ten. Now there are nine, that girl died when she was a month or two, I can't remember. And ALL are alive! That makes for a LOT of relatives'

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Mai prost e la TAta.
more bad is at father
'My father's situation is worse'

(*CORV*, 106)

Let us now see an example of a referential Top containing a given part referring to the previous DT, which may be considered the actual thematic part of the sentence:

(20) Despre Fălticenii de atunci, târg într-un ţinut de poale de munte, nu departe de apa Moldovei, unde dealurile prin împrejurimi au patru sute de metri, ne-a lăsat o imagine vie scriitorul german Wilhelm de Kotzbue. 'About the Fălticeni of the time, town in a sub-mountainous region, not far from the Moldova river, where the surrounding hills are 400m high, the German writer Wilhelm of Kotzbue left us a vivid image.'
Sâmburele orăşelului îl alcătuieşte uliţa cea mare,
kernel-the little-town-the.GEN CL.ACC constitutes street-the the big
cu prăvălii, mai toate de lemn, învelite cu şindrilă, şi rareori cu
with shops almost all of wood covered with shingle and rarely with
tinichea lucitoare la soare
sheet shining at sun
'The heart of the town is (represented by) the High Street, sprinkled with shops, most of them wooden, covered with shingles, and rarely with sheet shining in the sun'

(Călinescu, *I. Cr.* 42)

3.2.2 The given part of Top was not part of the DT

As we have seen in 3.2.1 above, predicative expressions containing a given part may be comparatives. This includes cases where only the comparative head is new, the predicate, the standard, and the fact that the predicate holds about the standard being all given. Indeed, applying Schwarzschild's (1999) definition of Givenness, in order for the predicate 'λx.x is more P than y' to be given, it must be the case that there is a contextual antecedent which entails '∃x.x is more P than y'. But all we have as an antecedent is that 'y has P to the degree d' (I assume that degree specification yields, or may yield, the maximal degree to which an entity has a property), from which it does not follow that there is an x which is more P than y (cf. also the stress pattern in *Articolul e important, cartea e MAI importantă* 'The article is important, the book is MORE important'). Here is an example of this type, where the predicate, the standard of comparison and the fact that it holds about the standard are all given, and the only new part of Top is the comparative head. The given elements were not part of the DT. We may assume that they suggest a (transient) DT 'what else is P?', or even 'is there an x more P than y?':

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(21) Antoine m-a silit să-i povestesc unul din scenariile mele de teatru — şi atunci i-am schiţat în scurte cuvinte „Ursa Mare”. Povestind, m-am ambalat. Din nou mi s-a părut că e un scenariu norocos, cu mari resurse de succes.
‘Antoine forced me to tell him about one of my theater scripts – so I briefly told him the outline of “Ursa Mare”. The more I talked about it, the more excited I became. Again it seemed to me to be a lucky script, with great potential for success.’
Mai ambalat decît mine era el.
more excited than me was he
‘He was even more excited than me’

(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 511)

In (22), we have another example of this type, where the new DT introduced by Top is clearly suggested by the previous sentence: the general DT, in A’s narration, is how badly A’s boss treated his employees. C suggests that this is not a unique situation. In A’s reply, this idea becomes a matter of debate, a DT: ‘is this situation unique?’ is easily transformed into ‘is somebody worse than A’s boss?’:

(22) A: el ne-a tratat ca nişte sclavi [...] la ce salarii am avut. [...] a profitat de faptu că era viaţa mai boem-atunci. C: lasă că nu e o chestie, cum să spun, singuLAră şi:
‘A: he treated us like slaves [...] for the salaries we had. [...] He took advantage of the fact that life was more .. at the time. C: This is not a …, how should I put it, unique situation and..’
A: nu ştiu dacă singulară↓ # da eu # **mai rău ca el**
not know.1SG if unique but I more bad than him
N- AM întâlnit.
not-have.1SG met
‘A: I don’t know if it’s unique, but I myself have never met anybody worse than him.’ (lit.: ‘worse than him, I’ve never met’)

(*ROVA*, 148)

We can also see here an instance of multiple topicalization: the first topic, *eu* ‘I’, is a contrastive topic, restricting the claim to the speaker’s experience, as opposed to others, for which the possibility is left open of having met somebody worse.

Non-referential indefinites built with *alt* ‘other’ can have the covert argument of the alternative as the given part which provides a link to the context. The examples I found are all negative clauses. Thus, in (23), the major DT is ‘how to avoid the scandal’, and, after discussing Olimpiu’s resignation as a possible solution, the topicalized phrase indicates the enriched DT ‘what ways to avoid the scandal, other than Olimpiu’s resignation, are there?’. As this enriched DT plus the one provided by the previous sentence, ‘is Olimpiu’s resignation a way of avoiding the scandal?’, cover the whole DT ‘how to avoid the scandal?’, we are in a situation reminiscent of Büring’s contrastive topics:

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(23) OLIMPIU: Şi la ce o să-mi servească demisia? Năvălirile barbare tot o să publice fotografia cu pricina. Nu, nu. Nu se poate. E peste putinţă să demisionez.
'And what good will my resignation do me? The 'barbaric invasions' will still publish that photo. No, no. That's impossible. I just cannot resign.'
PUIU: **Altă scăpare** nu există.
other escape not exists
'There's no other escape.'

(Muşatescu, *Sosesc deseară*, 62)

3.3 Top is new but related to the preceding discourse

The literature on givenness and topicality pointed out the existence of intermediate cases between given and brand-new (cf. Chafe 1976, Prince 1981, Lambrecht 1994, Baumann and Riester 2013). One such case is when the existence of an entity is inferable from the information conveyed in the preceding discourse – e.g. *the driver* in a context which includes a bus, *the lock* in a context which includes a door (the relation between the inferred entity and the entity on whose existence this inference is based is called *associative anaphora*). As Baumann and Riester (2013) point out, such intermediate cases between given and new also hold at the conceptual level: a predicative term can be l-accessible ("lexically accessible", as opposed to "r(eferentially)-accessible", used for associative anaphora) based on lexical relations such as hyponymy, meronymy or antonymy (more precisely, hyponyms are l-accessible, a hyperonym of a mentioned predicate counts as given).

Here is an example of a topicalized predicate which is related by antonymy to an antecedent in the previous discourse (*scris cu multe detalii* 'written with many details'):

(24) Comedia ivită astă-seară mi se pare un lucru şarmant. Ingenios, vioi, plin de spirit. Am scris în întregime (cu multe detalii) scenariul actului I.
'The comedy which cropped up yesterday evening seems to me to be a charming thing: ingenious, lively, witty. I've written the script of the first act entirely (with many details).'
Mai vagi sunt actele II şi III, dar [....]
more vague are acts-the two and three but
'The second and third acts are more vague, but ...'

(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 493)

The DT here is 'how is the comedy imagined by the author?'. After specifying which parts are already accomplished, a transient DT 'what is still vague?' is introduced. We may consider it a sub-topic, part of the more general topic 'how is the comedy?' or 'how advanced is the writing of the comedy?' In this case, it qualifies as a contrastive topic.

Another example which relies on antonymy and uses a comparative is (25). Besides the conceptual link due to the predicate, there is a referential link due to the unexpressed standard of comparison, which is given ('it is the 1831 overture'):

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(25) Am scris în 1831 o uvertură pentru orchestră în care, la fiecare patru măsuri, intervenea o invariabilă lovitură a timpanelor. Ţesătura polifonică era atât de complicată încât [...]
'In 1831 I wrote an overture for orchestra in which an invariable beat of the timpani occurred every four measures. The polyphonic tissue was so complex that (...)
Ceva mai limpezit, mai aşezat mă arătam în lucrarea
somewhat more clarified more staid REFL show.IMPF.1SG in work-the
ce poate fi considerată ca momentul cel mai evoluat al
that can be considered as moment-the the more advanced GEN
perioadei mele de ucenicie.
period-the.GEN my of apprenticeship.
'I came across as somewhat more clarified, more staid in the work that can be considered the most advanced moment of my apprenticeship period.'
(Bălan, *Wagner*, 53)

In the following example (ex. (26)), there is no explicit antecedent for the predicate *precise*, but as the preceding text is about the historical proofs of the biblical legends, and presents uncertain evidence ('some specialists saw here...'), the evaluation of the purported evidence as more or less precise is something expected in the context and can serve as a DT (moreover, a referential link is established via the unexpressed standard of comparison):

(26) În tăbliţele de la Tell el Amarna apare un popor războinic, Habiru, care ocupă unele din cetăţile supuse Egiptului la marginea Palestinei; unii specialişti au văzut aci o aluzie la evreii întorşi din exod şi porniţi să recucerească Pământul Făgăduinţii.
'In the Tell el Amarna tablets a warrior nation is mentioned, Habiru, which occupies some of the strongholds under Egyptian rule on the Palestinian border; some specialists took this as an allusion to the Hebrews, back from their exodus and intent on getting back the Promised Land.'
Mai precise însă sunt apropierile ce se pot face între
more precise however are connections-the that REFL can.3PL do between
textul Bibliei şi alte tăbliţe cu scris cuneiform, aflate
text-the Bible-the.GEN and other tablets with writing cuneiform found
la Ras Şamra
at Ras Shamra
'More precise connections can however be established between the text of the Bible and other tablets in cuneiform writing, which can be found at Ras Shamra'
(lit. 'More precise are the connections which can be established between...')
(Brătianu, *Trad.* 23)

Here is an example of a predicative nominal, *schoolmaster*, related to the current DT 'Creangă's primary school':

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(27) [DT: Creangă's primary school]
Putem bănui că clasa funcţiona mai înspre primăvară, când era mai cald.
'We can guess that the class were held in early spring, when it was warmer.'
Învăţător era un om tânăr, voinic şi frumos, precât ni se spune, [...]
schoolmaster was a man young stout and handsome as us.DAT REFL tells
'The schoolmaster was a stout and handsome young man, as far as we are told, [...]'

(Călinescu, I. Cr. 30)

In example (28) we see a hyponymy relation – as an explanation for the fact that she and some other person do not consider themselves *relatives*, the speaker addresses the issue of what they consider to be a *cousin* relationship:

(28) CM: (...) Da' noi NU ne ţinem de rude. Decât ălea de gradu-ntâi. [...]
'But we don't consider ourselves relatives'
LDJ: În CE sens.
'What do you mean?'
CM: În sensul că: **veriŞOAre**⊥ pentru mine **veriŞORI↓ VERI↓**
in sense-the that cousins(F) for me cousins(M) cousins(M)
nu sânt decât ăia dă gradu-nTÂI.
not are except those of degree-the-first
'I mean that cousins for me are only the first degree ones'

(*CORV*, 105)

In (29), the DT introduced by the previous sentence is 'who participated in the literary festival'. The fronted predicate further restricts the predicate 'participant' to 'regular participant' (we can assume an enriched DT 'who participated, as usual?'):

(29) În sesiunea actuală i-am avut ca oaspeţi speciali pe Klaus Cristian Olasz, ataşat cultural al Ambasadei RFG la Bucureşti, fost Consul al Timişoarei şi Viceconsulul actual Siegfried Geilhausen [...]
'In the present edition our special guests were Klaus Cristian Olasz, cultural attaché at the German Embassy in Bucharest, former consul in Timişoara, and the current vice-consul Siegfried Geilhausen [...]'
Nelipsiţi ***comme d'habitude*** au fost sibianca Dagmar Dusil, not-missing *comme d'habitude* have been Sibiu-ADJ(F)-the Dagmar Dusil stabilită în Bamberg, ubicuul şi plurivalentul scriitor Hans Dama, settled in Bamberg ubiquitous-the and multivalent-the writer Hans Dama venit din Austria, Ilse Hehn, [...]
arrived from Austria Ilse Hehn

(*Dilema*, nº 638, May 12-18, 2016, 15)

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‘Our ever-present guests, *comme d’habitude*, were the Sibiu-born Dagmar Dusil, settled in Bamberg, the ubiquitous and multivalent writer Hans Dama, who came from Austria, Ilse Heim [..]’

Here is an example of a referential Top related by inclusion (part-whole) to its antecedent:

(30) Finalul actului se desemnează admirabil. E o bogăţie de nuanţe pe care nu o bănuiam acum zece zile, cînd întreg actul trei mi se părea sterp. Dar voi putea să aduc la lumină toate aceste nuanţe?
‘The end-part of the act promises to be admirable. There’s a richness of nuances that I didn’t suspect ten days ago, when the whole third act seemed arid to me. But will I be able to bring to light all these nuances?’
Dacă **din scena penultimă** — Leni, Ştefan, Bogoiu, Jef — nu scot
if from scene-the penultimate Leni Ştefan Bogoiu Jef not extract.1SG
scot un moment de o mare delicateţă şi de emoţie foarte fină,
extract.1SG a moment of a big delicacy and of emotion very subtle
atunci nu rămâne decât o singură explicaţie: că nu am
then not remains except a single explanation that not have.1SG
pic de talent.
whit of talent
‘If from the penultimate scene – Leni, Ştefan, Bogoiu, Jef – I don’t make a moment of great delicacy and highly subtle emotion, then there’s only one possible conclusion: that I don’t have a whit of talent’
(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 79)

Notice that Top here occurs inside a conditional, but indicates the enriched DT of the entire sentence: the text is about the third act of the play the author was working on; the preceding sentence raises the issue of whether the author will be capable of fully realizing the potential of the subject. This DT is narrowed down to the issue of whether the potential of the penultimate scene will be fully realized. We can consider that the DT is something like ‘what the last scene should be like’. Although *the last scene* occurs as an argument only inside the conditional, the whole sentence can be understood as a property assigned to *the last scene*, because it describes a possible situation involving *the last scene* – we can rewrite the sentence as ‘the last scene should contain a moment of great delicacy and subtle emotion, or else the author hasn’t got any talent’. I conclude that Top is only raised to the periphery of the conditional because of the adjunct island constraint, but is interpreted as referring to the DT of the whole sentence.

Let us now look at an example where the D-linked part (the part related to the context) is not the whole Top, but only a part of the fronted constituent (similar to the type illustrated under 3.2 above, where Top includes a given part):

(31) Îmi dau seama că procesul meu e cu adevărat pierdut. *Cum am devenit huligan* nu ajunge în cercurile în care sunt înjurat şi încă „după ureche”.

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'I realize that my trial is really lost. *How I became a hooligan* does not reach the circles where I am sworn at, and even by hearsay.'

O vorbă care indică ce forme ia „cazul" în conştiinţa
a word which indicates what forms takes case-the in conscience-the
publică mi- a povestit-o Samy Herşcovici, duminică, la Târgovişte,
public me-has reported-CL.ACC Samy Herşcovici Sunday at Târgovişte
unde am fost pentru o conferinţă.
where have.1SG been for a conference
'A word which indicates what forms the "case" takes on in the public conscience was reported to me by Samy Herşcovici, on Sunday, in Târgovişte, where I went for a conference.'

(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 19)

Here, the preceding sentences suggest as a DT the public opinion on the author. This DT is expressed in the relative clause *ce indică ce forme ia "cazul" în conştiinţa publică* 'which indicates what forms the case takes in the public conscience'. We can assume that this part alone carries the topic feature, and the whole DP is raised by pied-piping.

Another example of a loose relationship of Top with an antecedent is (32), where various geographical indications make the concept of *geographical data* salient. Top is a non-specific indefinite, which is not referentially linked to the context, but only conceptually linked ('l-accessible' in Baumann and Riester's (2013) terms). The transient DT which can be assumed here is: 'are the geographic indications of the current war situation sure?'

(32) În Rusia, ca şi în Tripolitania (unde Montgomery a reluat de 2 zile ofensiva), „defensivă mobilă". Mobilitatea atinge Schlüsselburg la nord şi Kamensk la sud, iar în Tripolitania se desfăşoară probabil dincolo de Misurata.
'In Russia, like in Tripolitania (where Montgomery has resumed the offensive for 2 days'), "mobile defensive". The mobility is reaching Schlüssberg to the north and Kamnesk to the south, and in Tripolitania it is probably unfolding beyond Misurata'

Date geografice sigure n- am.
data geographical sure not-have.1SG
'I don't possess reliable geographical data'

Comunicatul german de aseară e interesant şi revelator ca stil şi ton, dar nu semnalează fapte propriu-zise
'Last evening's German announcement is interesting and revealing in style and tone, but fails to mention actual facts'

(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 497)

In this example, as well as in most of the examples we have seen, where there is no topic discontinuity, Top is not used to signal a major DT, but rather *a transient particularization (enrichment) of the DT, suggested by the preceding sentence*. Such secondary, enriched DT are very similar to the sub-questions which describe contrastive topics in Büring's (1999, 2003) theory. In the examples I have chosen, I tried to avoid

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contrastive topics, in order to show that the phenomenon is more general and that non-referential topics are by no means restricted to contrastive environments.

One might wonder why such transient DTs are needed. Wouldn't it be simpler to avoid referring to DT and to consider that Top is just raised by virtue of being D-linked (cf. Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl's 2016 'weak familiarity' condition for preverbal G-topics in Italian)? My answer is that referring to DT is a means of accounting for *textual coherence*, and if the DT is temporarily enriched with an element provided or suggested by the preceding sentence, the *coherence* of the discourse increases. This provides a reason for why the speaker chooses to raise the D-linked element in these examples. Notice that D-linking or givenness is by no means a sufficient condition for fronting: in (32) and (30) the order VX (where X is the topicalized D-linked item) would be equally felicitous, and likewise the order SVX in (31), (26), (24), etc.; this doesn't mean that the D-linked character of X in these orders would not be recognized. By fronting, the speaker chooses to stress the coherence between the uttered sentence and the preceding one. As DT is a means of describing textual coherence, we are entitled to refer to DT when we describe this type of topicalization.

Here is another example where the major DT is maintained and Top just summarizes the content of the preceding paragraph; Top here is involved in DT dynamics not by introducing a new DT, but by indicating that the preceding part of the description can be subsumed under the sub-topic 'the city's architecture', and a new sub-topic will follow (the population of the city):

(33) [context: along almost a page, various types of building in the city of Iaşi are described, followed by a digression on transportation means and roads]
La bizareria arhitectonică se adaugă împestriţarea
at queerness-the architectural REFL adds mixture-the
populaţiei
population-the.GEN
'To the queerness of the architecture, we may add the mixture of the population'
(Călinescu, *I. Cr.* 49)

I included this example here, rather than in 3.1 (Top = Given) because the fact that the city's architecture was queer (*bizar*) has not been mentioned, but is taken as inferable from the description.

3.4 Top is discourse-new

For this type, most examples I found are referential constituents. This may be explained by the fact that when Top is completely unrelated to the preceding discourse, it introduces a new major DT, rather than a transient sub-topic, and discourse referents constitute a crucial part of any DT and must therefore occur in the topicalized material indicating the new major DT.

However, I could find some examples of brand-new predicates, in non-contrastive environments, which all have the general meaning 'worth mentioning'. This is straightforwardly explained if the function of Top is not to mark givenness, but rather DT

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dynamics: ‘worth of mentioning’ is the same as ‘worth of becoming a DT’. In other words, by using evaluatives, the speaker justifies his choice of the subsequent course of his speech: it will address what is important, interesting, funny, etc. related to the current situation:

(34) [DT: the “Obamacare” law] Astfel, la finele anului 2013, 41% din americani erau mulţumiţi şi aproape 50% erau nemulţumiţi de ea. ‘Thus, by the end of 2013, 41% of Americans were satisfied and almost 50% were unsatisfied with it.’
Interesantă este distribuţia pe rase a aderenţei la
interesting is distribution-the on races GEN adherence-the.GEN to
noua lege
new-the law
‘What’s interesting is the racial distribution of the adherence to the new law.’
(*Dilema*, n^0 636, April 28 - May 4 2016, 9)

(35) Ar fi de făcut o antologie de eufemisme din presa zilnică.
‘Someone should make an anthology of euphemisms from the daily press.’
Deosebit de savuroasă mi se pare următoarea frază din
especially of palatalbe me.DAT REFL seems following-the sentence from
Acţiunea de azi
Action-the of today
‘I deem especially savoury the following sentence from today’s *Acţiunea*’
(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 379)

(36) **Memorabilă** a rămas în viaţa mea acea noapte când, pierzând toţi
memorable has remained in life-the my that night when losing all
banii la jocul de cărţi, hotărâsem să nu mă mai
money-the at game-the of carts had-decided.1SG SĂ not REFL more
întorc acasă
return.1SG home
‘A memorable moment of my life is that night when, having gambled away all my money, I had decided to never come back home’
(Bălan, *Wagner*, 36)

(37) Haig mereu arestat. ‘Haig continues to be arrested.’
Lucruri amuzante mi- a spus ieri Margareta Papagoga — şi ea
things amusing me-has said yesterday Margareta Papagoga also she
actriţă la Naţional — despre satisfacţia cu care s-a primit
actress at National about satisfaction-the with which REFL-has received
la teatru plecarea lui Haig şi mai ales prăbuşirea
at theatre departure-the GEN Haig and more specially downfall-the
Mariettei
Marietta-the.GEN
‘I was told amusing things yesterday by Margareta Papagoga – also an actress at the National Theater – about the satisfaction caused by Haig’s departure and especially by Marietta’s downfall’
(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 300)

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Besides this type, I found non-referential new Top in environments which can be described as contrastive. In the example (38), the DT is the American society, the previous sentence introduces an evaluative property ('a society which functions'); the topicalized predicate, *perfect*, introduces another evaluative property, which behaves differently wrt the American society – it does not apply to it. It is this contrast which allows topicalization (if the sentence had been affirmative, the topicalization would have been infelicitous: **perfectă e*). We thus have a partition of the DT 'which qualities does the American society have?' into sub-topics of the type 'is the American society P?', for which the rhematic part is the polarity of the clause (see the focal stress on the negation *nu*). The fact that the rhematic part for *perfect* (negative) is different from that of previously mentioned qualities satisfies the requirement that the rhematic parts should vary across topical alternatives.

(38) Este o societate care funcţionează↑ şi material↑ este: ... ALTfel decât
is a society which functions and materially is different than
restul↑ însă ... **perfectă** NU e↑ şi cred că e mai bine aşa.
rest-the but perfect not is and believe.1SG that is more good like that
'It's a society which functions, and materially, it's.. different from the others, but … as for being perfect, it is not, and I think it's better like that'

(*CORV*, 112)

Here, although the major DT is preserved, the topicalization is used in order to highlight the relations with the previous discouse – a contrast between qualities that apply or do not apply to the American society. Another example of this type is (39):

(39) Cea mai importantă din piesele găsite în 1962 la Tomis e reprezentarea şarpelui Glykon [....] Glykon avea o mică, dar activă sectă de credincioşi [...]
'The most important of the objects found in 1962 in Tomis is the representation of the Glykon snake [...] Glykon had a small, but active sect of believers [...]
Chiar unică piesa nu e – pe lângă unele foarte mici statuete
really unique piece-the not is besies some very small statuettes
similare de bronz, statuarie de marmură sau chiar bronz comparabilă a
similar of bronze statuary of marble or even bronze comparable has
mai apărut între timp [...] – dar a noastră e cea mai
more appeared in-the-meanwhile but GEN.FSG our is the more
realizată artistic
accomplished artistically
'The piece is not actually unique – besides some very small bronze statuettes, comparable statuary in marble or even in bronze has appeared since then (...) – but ours is the most artistically accomplished'

(*Dilema*, nº 647, July 14-20, 2016, 8)

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Let us now see an example of a definite DP, discourse-new but familiar to the speaker and probably present in the speaker's preoccupations at the time (the example comes from a private diary):

(40) Eu, Marietta, Elvira Godeanu, Haig, „Kiki" şi un tip Brătăşanu din Ploieşti. Două lucruri deopotrivă de penibile:
'Me, Marietta, Elvira Godeanu, "Kiki" and some guy Brătăşanu from Ploieşti. Two things equally embarrassing:
1) **Scrisoarea stupidă din „La zid" împotriva Norei Peyov** a scris-o Lilly
letter-the stupid from at wall against Nora.DAT Peyov has written-CL.ACC Lilly
'1) The stupid letter in "La zid" against Nora Peyov was written by Lilly'
(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 57)

Another example of familiar Top is (41). Here, the newly introduced discourse referent starts as a contrastive topic – the speaker (the text is an inner monologue in free indirect speech) compares the time she starts cooking (early) with her sister-in-law's (late) – then it becomes the major DT:

(41) Orice-ar fi, nu se-apucă de nimic pe inima goală, altfel îi vine leşin şi-i neom, nu-i bună de nimic toată ziua.
'Come what may, she won't start anything on an empty stomach, or else she'll feel feel faint and not herself, she won't be able to do a thing the whole day long'
Cumnată-sa, poa' să bage mâna-n foc de pe acu că n- a gătit pân' la ora asta...
sister-in-law-her can.3SG SĂ put-in.3SG hand in fire from now that not has not cooked until hour-the this
'Her sister in law, that one has surely not even started cooking by this time – she'd vouch for it right now'
Aşa a fost toată viaţa ei, ticăită, pân' să facă un lucru te trec toate alea, şi mereu, din orice, se plânge 'She's always been like that, slow all her life, drives you crazy before she does anything, and she always complains about the slightest thing.'
(Adameşteanu, *D.P.* 12)

A new topic can also be provided by entities present in the communication situation, referred to by deictics (in the following examples, from a play, two separate conversations start after the candidate's entry):

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(42) CATINDATUL *(intrând din fund triumfător)*: M-a curăţat spiţerul!
‘The candidate (entering from the back, triumphant): The apothecary cleaned me up!’
DIDINA *(încet)*: Cine-i ăsta? PAMPON *(tot aşa)*: Lasă că-ţi spui eu... *(Didina râde.)*
‘Didina (low): Who’s that? Pampon (likewise): I’ll tell you. (Didina laughs)’
CRĂCĂNEL *(Miţii)*: **Ăstuia** i- a dat o nebună la bal cu o
this.MSG.DAT CL.DAT-has given a mad(F) at ball with a
sticluţă cu doftorii în ochi!
vial with medicines in eyes
‘Crăcănel (to Miţa): This guy, a mad woman threw a vial with medicines in his eyes at the ball!’

(Caragiale, *D. C.* 249)

4. On the anchoring function of topics

Until now we have pursued the idea that topicalized constituents signal material which belongs to a (possibly secondary, transient) DT, their purpose being to highlight discourse coherence or to propose new or modified DTs. I would like now to discuss what may be called the “anchoring” function of topics, which corresponds more closely to the notion of “aboutness topic”, and to see whether it can be covered by or derived from the DT-marking function.

In the preceding section we have tried to reveal the conditions in which topicalized constituents are possible, examining attested sentences most of which had a preceding discourse the topic could relate to. What about sentences which cannot be related to a preexistent DT (being discourse-initial or introducing a radical break in the discourse)? As we have seen, such sentences can have a topicalized constituent, which can be described as introducing a new DT – a referent which will further be discussed about, cf. ex. (42) above, for a discourse-initial context, and (41), for a discourse-new familiar referent which will become a major DT. But there are also all-new sentences that lack a topicalized constituent and whose subject is either marked as non-topical – e.g. by being placed postverbally, in languages such as Romanian – or does not fulfill the necessary conditions for being a new topic. It has indeed been observed that not all DPs can function as topics (cf. Reinhart 1981, Erteschik-Shir 1997, 2007): topical indefinites must be either specific or interpreted in the restriction of an operator over situations, in which case they function as “indirect topics”, the actual topic being the set of situations (Endriss and Hinterwimmer 2008, Ebert and Hinterwimmer 2009).

All-new sentences with no overt topical constituent and whose subject does not fulfill the necessary conditions for being a topic have been claimed to lack a topic – cf. Kuroda (1972, 1992), who uses the term “thetic” for such sentences, adopting Brentano’s (1874) distinction between “thetic” and “categorical” judgments: categorical judgments involve two separate acts, one is “the recognition of that which is to be made the subject, and the other, the act of affirming or denying what is expressed by the proposition” (Kuroda 1972: 154); the subject of categorical judgments corresponds to the notion of

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aboutness topic; by contrast, thetic judgments represent a single act of "the recognition or rejection of material of a judgment" (Kuroda 1972: 154), i.e. lack a topic-comment partition. Other researchers argued that even thetic sentences have a topic, namely, the spatio-temporal coordinates of the event introduced by the sentence (Gundel 1974, Erteschik-Shir 1997, 2007), for which Erteschik-Shir proposed the term "stage topic".

The study of thetic sentences in languages with flexible subject placement – null-subject Romance languages (see Calabrese 1992, Saccon 1993, Pinto 1997, Zubizarreta 1998, Soare 2009, Giurgea and Remberger 2009, 2012), Hungarian (see É. Kiss 2002) – has provided support for the idea that thetic sentences are not possible in any circumstances, but require a salient/accessible spatio-temporal location. In these languages, all new sentences with a VS order qualify as thetic, therefore we have an independent way of testing whether a thetic sentence is possible in a certain context or not. This order was correlated with the presence of a null element which functions as an aboutness-topic or "subject of predication" – a null event argument in Calabrese (1992), a null locative in Saccon (1993), Pinto (1997), Tortora (2001) and Sheehan (2007, 2010), a null temporal adverbial in Zubizarreta (1998) – identified with Erteschik-Shir's stage topic by É. Kiss (2002) and Giurgea and Remberger (2009, 2012). Thus, I-level predicates, which do not introduce a location of the event (cf. Kratzer 1995), cannot appear in thetic sentences, as shown by the infelicity of postverbal subjects (in English, this can be seen in the fact that they do not allow the stress pattern characteristic of thetic sentences, compare the English translations of the two examples below):

(43) [Context: out-of-the-blue, all-new]

a. E deschisă uşa (S-level)
is open door-the
'The DOOR is open'

b. *E metalică uşa (I-level)
is metallic door-the
'*The DOOR is metallic'

Moreover, thetic sentences are normally episodic, referring to a situation which occurs at a specific spatial or temporal location – for the relevance of the temporal placement, cf. the allowance of stage-level nominal predicates which do not introduce an independent location[4], but do introduce a specific time of the eventuality:

(44) [Context: out-of-the-blue, all-new]
Ai auzit? E bolnavă Maria
have heard is ill Maria
'Have you heard the news? Maria is ill'

[4] This explains the fact that they do not license weak indefinites. See Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea (2015) and the references cited there for discussion.

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Adverbials of spatial and temporal location may occur at the beginning of all-new sentences and may be marked with the topic marker *wa* in Japanese, which indicates that they function as overt "stage"-topics:

(45) a. In the garden, the dog is chasing the cat
b. **Niwa de wa** inu ga neko o oikatete iru
garden in TOP dog NOM cat ACC chasing is
(Kuroda 1972:168)

If it is true that sentences where no overt constituent is topical have an implicit "stage" topic, which normally is a contextually accessible spatio-temporal location, as Erteschik-Shir (1997, 2007) claims, we may assume the existence of a principle requiring some linking of the new information with the hearer's knowledge state:

(46) Sentences unrelated to the previous discourse must contain an element whose existence is established in the common ground

The element satisfying (46) functions as the topic in the sense of Erteschik-Shir. It can be a discourse referent, a set of situations or a kind in the case of generic and iterative sentences, or the spatio-temporal location of the event, which is the only possible choice when the sentence is about a specific situation and all the arguments are newly introduced entities (the sentence is "presentational").

To be sure, there are exceptions to (46). At the beginning of a fictional story, no accessible location or established referent can be assumed:

(47) A boy loved a girl. (beginning of a story)

The absence of a stage topic is supported by the fact that Romanian does not display the VSO order in this case (note that the predicate is not episodic, so it is not expected to allow a stage topic):

(48) Un băiat iubea o fată / *Iubea un băiat o fată
a boy loved a girl loved a boy a girl

Importantly, the absence of an established stage, added to the total newness of the referents, is significant, indicating that the setting is fictional. We may thus modify (46) by making it a violable rule:

(49) Whenever possible, sentences unrelated to the previous discourse must contain an element whose existence is established in the common ground

In some fictional contexts such as fairy tales, (49) can be overruled. Note that existential constructions, which do not necessarily involve a contextually identifiable location, may also occur in the beginning of fairy tales, as in the following example from Romanian:

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(50) Era odată o prinţesă.
was once a princess
'Once upon a time there was a princess.'

Under the aforementioned view that all sentences have a topic, we may say that in these cases the new topics – *un băiat* 'a boy' in (48) and *odată* 'once upon a time' in (50) – are *not* given in the common ground and this leads the hearer to assume a fictional world.

Some support for (46)/(49) comes from some intonational properties of existential sentences. As we have seen, unlike the eventive thetic sentences, existentials may lack a context-given spatio-temporal location. The existential claim introduced by *there is/exists* can hold not only for a specific location, but also for a very large part of the world or for the whole world. Therefore, if there is no context-given location that functions as a stage topic and no overt locative phrase, as the "existential subject" by definition does not qualify as an element whose existence is established, (46) cannot be satisfied, which has the result that the existential is not unrelated to the previous discourse (all-new): some part of it must be given. This explains why sometimes existentials involve a focal stress on the verb, coupled with destressing of the "existential subject" (I use this term for the postcopular noun phrase with which the verb agrees, although probably it is not in a subject position, cf. Hartmann 2008, Cornilescu 2009), as can be seen in (51). Cornilescu (2009) noticed that in (51), focal stress on the verb distinguishes existentials from predicative clauses with a *pro* subject (without the stress of the copula, the sentences would be read as 'They are monsters', 'They are great composers'):

(51) a. SUNT monştri
are monsters
'There are monsters'
b. SUNT mari compozitori
are great composers
'There are great composers'

It should not be concluded from this that the stress on the verb is used to directly encode the existential construction, as Cornilescu (2009) did. Rather, this stress pattern is a direct consequence of (46)/(49): as in these cases we do not have a given spatio-temporal location (the sentence is not about the content of a specific location, the "here" and "now" of the current discourse), and the existential subject is by definition not an element whose existence is established, (46) is not obeyed. Therefore, the sentence cannot be all-new. As a consequence, the sentence is appropriate if the nominal property of the existential subject is given – we must use the sentence in a context where the issue of monsters or great composers is salient, due to previous mentioning or to a strong conceptual link with something given in the context. Therefore, the existential subject is destressed, and the nuclear stress falls on the last new word of the sentence, the verb.

Evidence for this explanation comes from the fact that, if the descriptive material of the existential subject can accommodate both a given and a new part, nuclear stress on the verb no longer appears:

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(52) a. Sunt şi ALŢI mari compozitori
are also other great composers
'There are other great composers'
b. Sunt compozitori MARI, şi compozitori de mâna a DOUA
are composers great and composers of hand-the second
'There are great composers, and second hand composers'

In (53), the context-related element is the speaker, realized as a *pro*, which occurs in a relative clause inside the existential subject (the sentence is a motivation of the preceding one, which was about the attitude of the speaker with respect to *aceste lucruri* 'these things'); the rest of the material in the existential subject is new, hence no destressing is necessary:

(53) Mi-am închipuit că asupra acestor lucruri nu e posibil nici un dezacord cu oamenii de condiţia mea. 'I imagined that any disagreement on such matters between myself and other people of my kind should not be possible'
Sunt anumite lucruri pe care — de la un anumit nivel de sensibilitate —
are certain things PE which from a certain level of delicacy
le consider de la sine înţelese.
CL.ACC consider.1SG from self understood
'There are certain things which – from a certain level of delicacy on – I consider self-evident'
(Sebastian, *Jurnal*, 123)

The element which satisfies (46)/(49), providing a link to the hearer's world knowledge and the common ground of the discourse, can be considered the topical constituent of these sentences. Note that in this case, especially when it comes to stage topics, it is not clear that the DT-related notion of "topic" identifies this element as topical. Intuitively, thetic sentences are not about spatio-temporal locations. Moreover, the "stage" is not usually referred to by pronouns in the subsequent discourse, as is normal for new topics.

Therefore, we may be dealing with a different function of sentence topics, for which I propose the term "anchoring function": the element in the discourse-new sentence which is independently accessible to the hearer, being given in the common ground, can be viewed as anchoring the new information in the common ground, borrowing a metaphor used in the discussion on specific indefinites ("referential anchoring", see von Heusinger 2002). This anchoring function covers new referential topics as well as stage topics.

I believe this notion of "anchor" is cognitively more plausible than Reinhart's notion of file cards. It is likely that a piece of information stored in memory acquires a large number of connections with other pieces of information, in a much more complex way than the organization of a library file – i.e., a permanent single header of propositions stored in the common ground is unlikely. What is however achieved via this function of topics is to facilitate the establishment of such links with the already available information at the moment when the sentence is heard and processed.

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The notion of anchor comes close to another notion used for describing topics (e.g. by Klein 2008), namely that of "topic situation". In a tradition going back to Austin (1950) and developed in situation semantics theory (Barwise and Perry 1983), assertions are about particular situations, called "topic situations" – they are evaluated with respect to those situations, claiming that the situation at hand belongs to the set of situations which constitutes the meaning of the sentence (for examples of the applicability of this concept, see Barwise and Etchemendy 1987, Kratzer 1998, 2007/2014, a.o.)[5]. The topic situation is identified by a location in space and time, in a world (e.g. real, hypothetical, fictional) and possibly also by certain entities it contains. Klein (2008) claims that topical expressions refer to such elements that build the canvas of the topic situation, they contribute to identify the topic situation. As both referents and locations are constitutive of topic situations, the co-occurrence of frame-setting expressions and referential topics and subjects in the preverbal domain is accounted for, both types having a topical function.

Whereas for a discourse-internal sentence, the preceding discourse, and the DT, more generally, provide the topic situation, in discourse-initial contexts it is what I called "anchors" that help to identify the topic situation. As the hearer should be able to identify the topic situation as well as possible, the fact that the topical elements are or tend to be available in the common ground (known to exist by the hearer) is expected.

As topic situations presumably are part of the DT, we may consider that the anchoring function belongs to the general function of indicating the DT, if it is true that anchors help to identify the topic situation. We may consider that discourse-initially we have the DT 'something about *s*', where *s* is the topic-situation. Indeed, researchers who consider that all sentences have a DT, understood as a question under discussion, treat thetic sentences as addressing the DT 'What happened?'. But *what happened* means 'what happened recently, in our surroundings', i.e. it involves a contextually accessible spatio-temporal location. This shows that the contextually accessible location, the "stage topic", is indeed part of the DT. It will not be resumed by anaphoric expressions in the subsequent discourse because constant elements of the DT need not be overtly realized, unless required by the grammar; such a requirement may apply to arguments, but not to locations which are optional constituents (i.e., if no overt spatio-temporal indications are given, the time and place of the event are identified with those of the preceding sentence). By this token, we may conclude that the DT marking function is able to cover stage topics, as well as other anchoring topical constituents in discourse-initial environments.

[5] Cf. Klein (2008:288): "In an utterance, a sentence base and a situation are brought together, and this is what happens when the sentence is made finite. By uttering *It was snowing*, for example, the speaker asserts that a situation X has the properties [be snowing]. He or she ASSERTS something about X. In questions, the speaker challenges the interlocutor to assert something with respect to such an X, and in commands, he instructs the interlocutor to do something with respect to X".

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5. Conclusions

In this article I concentrated on a category of topical expressions which are problematic for the influential theory of aboutness topics originating in Reinhart (1981): namely, non-referential, predicative expressions. I argued that treating them as simply given expressions (cf. Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl's 2007 given topics) is insufficient, because not all given elements are topicalized, and, moreover, there are also cases when non-referential elements are not actually given, but somehow expected to occur in the context, entertaining meaning relations with an antecedent (see section 3.3) or even totally new (see section 3.4). I consequently pursued an analysis where topicalized expressions are indicators of the discourse topic (DT). Indeed, the intuitive test 'what the sentence is about', also used in Reinhart's theory, will actually provide the DT, rather than a referent corresponding to some constituent. The DT is representable as a question under discussion and, therefore, in most cases it does not coincide with the denotation of the topicalized constituent. Rather, this denotation is part of the DT. Topicalized constituents mainly indicate a change in the DT, what remains constant being phonologically reduced, up to total drop, whenever possible.

I have examined various attested examples of non-referential topics, showing how they are related to the preceding discourse and to the DT. For each type, I have also provided examples of referential topics entertaining the same type of discourse relations, which supports a uniform analysis as indicators of DT dynamics.

Finally, I have considered a potentially distinct function of topics, manifest especially in situations unrelated to a previous discourse: that of anchoring the new information in the common ground. I have suggested a possible way of relating this function to the DT-indicating function, considering anchors as indicators of the topic situation, which is in turn part of any DT.

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