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Topicalization in the Romance languages

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Summary

Topic and topicalization are key notions to understand processes of syntactic and prosodic readjustments in Romance. More specifically, topicalization refers to the syntactic mechanisms and constructions available in a language to mark an expression as the topic of the sentence. Despite the lack of a uniform definition of topic, often based on the notions of aboutness or givenness, significant advances have been made in Romance linguistics in the last decades, yielding a better understanding of the topicalization constructions, their properties, and their grammatical correlates. Prosodically, topics are generally described as being contained in independent intonational phrases. The syntactic and pragmatic characteristics of a specific topicalization construction, by contrast, depend both on the form of resumption of the dislocated topic within the clause and on the types of topics (*aboutness*, *given*, and *contrastive topics*). We can thus distinguish between Hanging Topic Left Dislocation (HTLD) and Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD) for sentence-initial topics, and Clitic Right Dislocation (CLRD) for sentence-final dislocated constituents. These topicalization constructions are available in most Romance languages, although variation may affect the type and the obligatory presence of the resumptive element.

Scholars working on topic and topicalization in the Romance languages have also addressed controversial issues such as the relation between topics and subjects, both grammatical (nominative) subjects and ‘oblique’ subjects such as dative experiencers and locative expressions. Moreover, topicalization has been discussed for medieval Romance, in conjunction with its alleged V2 syntactic status. Some topicalization constructions such as subject inversion, especially in the non-null subject Romance languages, and Resumptive Preposing may indeed be viewed as potential residues of medieval V2 property in contemporary Romance.

Keywords

topicalization, topic, aboutness, givenness, dislocation, intonational phrase, subject, locative inversion, subject inversion, verb second, clitic resumption

1. Introduction: Definitions and types of topic

Topicalization refers to the syntactic mechanisms and constructions available in a language to mark an expression as the topic of the sentence. Together with focus, topic constitutes a principal notion of information structure, which may affect the grammatical properties of a sentence at different levels: semantic, syntactic, and prosodic. As is often the case with basic terminology, topic has been used with several different meanings in linguistics, thus becoming one of the most intractable notions. Most of the relevant definitions are based on the notion of ‘aboutness’ and/or that of ‘givenness’. On the one hand, the definition of topic based on ‘aboutness’ may lead to confusion with the notion of subject (Chafe 1976), which has also been, since Aristotle’s *Categories*, defined as what the statement (more specifically, the predicate) is about. On the other, starting with the Prague School, the notion of topic, called “theme”, has been assimilated to old or given information. While it is undoubtedly true that topic constituents are most typically inferable from the context or related to the discourse, it is, however, also undeniable that there are also cases of topic constituents that convey or introduce new information.

Before examining the topicalization constructions available in the Romance languages, some definitions and clarifications are therefore in order. First of all, in functionalist approaches

to discourse, topic is generally understood as a pretheoretical notion that refers to coherent stretches of discourse ranging from single sentences to cohesive texts that take the grammatical form of sentences (see, e.g., Givón 1983, 1990). This concept of *discourse topic* must be distinguished from that of *sentence topic*, which is instead based on the notion of aboutness and defines what a sentence is about (see, e.g., Strawson 1964, Reinhart 1982, Lambrecht 1994). It is sentence topic that constitutes a key notion of information structure and that is relevant to those pragmatic phenomena that display grammatical correlates in the sentence structure. Due to its aboutness nature, sentence topic has also been labelled *aboutness topic*. According to Reinhart (1982), aboutness topics must be referential, but need not correspond to old information.

Gundel (1988) does not deny the aboutness nature of topic, but distinguishes between two dimensions of givenness (see article “Focus and Focus Structures in the Romance Languages” in this encyclopaedia; see also Lambrecht 1994, Gundel and Fretheim 2004, Cruschina 2012). According to a referential dimension, a whole hierarchy of givenness conditions on topics has been suggested ranging from type identifiable, to familiar, to active and focus of attention (Gundel, Hedberg and Zacharski 1993). The referents denoted by the topic expressions within a sentence tend to be familiar to the interlocutors, in the sense that at the time of the utterance the addressee must have a mental representation of their referents. By contrast, a relational dimension concerns the sentence-internal opposition between the constituents of a sentence, so that topic identifies what the sentence is about, while the comment is what is predicated of the topic (Reinhart 1982).

The referential dimension is especially relevant to the choice between alternative referring expressions (e.g. pronouns vs full noun phrases). However, referentially given expressions (e.g. pronouns) can well be part of the assertion and hence fall within the focus domain from a relational viewpoint. It is thus generally recognized that it is ultimately the relational dimension that constitutes the core of information structure, inasmuch as it deals with the propositional content that is linguistically encoded in the format of a sentence, and with how this information is *packaged* according to discourse functions and to the knowledge and beliefs of the speaker and the hearer(s) (see Halliday 1967, Chafe 1976, Prince 1981, 1984, Lambrecht 1994).

The notions of topicality and referential givenness have nonetheless been particularly central in the linguistic studies on topicalization in Romance, insofar as they have contributed to the identification of two types of topic with distinct grammatical properties: *aboutness topic* (AT) and *given topic* (GT). ATs identify what the sentence is about. By contrast, GTs are constituents that convey old and anaphoric information, and that are restated by the speaker from the previous discourse. In Romance, they do not generally identify the aboutness argument of the sentence, but may restore into the sentence the aboutness topic of the previous discourse.ⁱ Consider the following Italian example (from Frascarelli 2017: 478), where the aboutness topic *i gladiatori* is subsequently restated by the speaker and dislocated as a given topic:

- (1) [i gladiatori]_{AT} entravano nell’arena, sfilavano, salutavano gli spettatori e salutavano soprattutto l’imperatore, poi si recavano davanti alla tribuna [...] e c’era l’arena che era praticamente un tavolato di legno sul quale veniva buttata della sabbia e [su questa]_{GT}, [loro]_{GT}, [i gladiatori]_{GT}, lottavano.
 ‘The gladiators entered the arena, [they] marched, [they] greeted the public and especially hailed the emperor, then [they] used to go in front of the gallery [...] and there was the arena, which was practically a wooden stage covered with sand and on this they, the gladiators, used to fight.’

The topic established in the context can be divided into two sub-topics, which introduce an alternative-based opposition with a separate predicate for each alternative: this is characteristic of *contrastive topics* (CTs) (see Büring 1999, 2003, Krifka 2007, Frascarelli 2017: 477):

- (2) A: Dove vanno i tuoi figli in vacanza? (Italian)
 where go.3PL the your children in holiday
 ‘Where will your children go on holiday?’
- B: [Leo]_{CT} andrà all’ estero con gli amici, [Mario]_{CT} viene
 Leo go.FUT.3SG to.the abroad with the friends Mario comes
 con noi al mare.
 with us to.the sea
 ‘Leo will go abroad with his friends, Mario is coming with us to the seaside.’

As will be shown in the next section, different kinds of topicalization and dislocation constructions in Romance are sensitive to the type of topic.

Other types of topic have been identified in the literature: scene-setting topics, known also as frame-setting topics or limiting topics. In fact, these constituents do not fit in the typology of topics outlined in this section, in that the sentences they introduce are not about them, nor are they given. Despite their different precise functions, they generally “limit the applicability of the main predication to a certain restricted domain” (Chafe 1976: 50) and so restrict the dimension in which the following proposition should be evaluated (Krifka 2007). See Frascarelli (2017) and Chapter “Hanging topics and frames: syntax, discourse, diachrony” for more details about frames in Romance.

The chapter is structured as follows. In Section 2 the topicalization and dislocation constructions available in Romance will be reviewed, highlighting differences across structures and languages. Section 3 deals with some controversial issues concerning the Topic–Comment articulation of the sentence, and in particular the relation between topics and subjects. Section 4, finally, discusses topicalization in medieval Romance, also in relation with other syntactic properties of the medieval Romance languages.

2. Topicalization and dislocation constructions

Romance languages make use of syntactic topicalization strategies to mark various kinds of topic constituents, typically under mechanisms of dislocation (see article Chapters “Dislocation in the Romance languages: syntax, semantics, discourse, acquisition”, forthcoming and “Hanging topics and frames: syntax, discourse, diachrony” in this encyclopaedia, forthcoming). A topic expression is generally made prominent in a sentence-initial position; this is why the most discussed instance of topicalization in the literature is left dislocation. This term has been used to refer to different constructions that show considerable variation from a crosslinguistic perspective (see, e.g., Alexiadou 2006, López 2016). What all left-dislocation constructions have in common is the presence of a sentence-initial topical constituent that is connected to a resumptive element inside the clause. The resumptive element can be a regular personal pronoun or an epithet, as typical of *Hanging Topic Left Dislocation* (HTLD) in Romance, or a clitic pronoun in a structure which has become known as *Clitic Left Dislocation* (CLLD).ⁱⁱ

2.1. Hanging Topic Left Dislocation (HTLD) and Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD)

Starting with Cinque (1983, 1990), the contrast between HTLD and CLLD has been described in detail. Both CLLD and HTLD involve an AT, but the two constructions have different syntactic properties (Benincà 1988, 2001, Sauzet 1989, Villalba 2000, 2009, López 2009; see De Cat 2007 for an apparently different behaviour of spoken French). Let us consider the following examples from Cinque (1997 [1983]: 94):

- (3) a. Tuo fratello, *lui* sì che ha sempre fame. (Italian)
 you brother he yes that has always hunger
 ‘Your brother, he’s always hungry.’

- b. A tuo fratello, non *gli* hanno ancora dato il visto.
 to your brother NEG him.DAT have.3PL yet given the visa
 ‘To your brother, they haven’t given the visa yet.’

Sentence (3b) is an Italian example of CLLD, where the dislocated constituent *a tuo fratello* ‘to your brother’ is picked up by the dative clitic pronoun *gli* ‘to him’ attached to the verb. In (3a), by contrast, we have an instance of HTLD, where the resumptive element is the strong pronoun *lui* ‘he’.

Whenever available, the resumptive clitic is obligatory in most Romance varieties (4a,b), but in some languages (e.g. Italian and French) its presence may depend on the syntactic category of the preposed topic, proving obligatory only with internal arguments but optional in other cases (4c) (Benincà 1988, Cinque 1977, 1990, Vallduví 1992, Delais-Roussarie et al. 2004, De Cat 2007, Abeillé et al. 2008, López 2009, Cruschina 2010, 2016, Leonetti 2010). In Portuguese, a clitic may be missing with a dislocated direct object (4a), giving rise to what has been analysed as a different construction that co-exists in the language with CLLD (4b), that is, Topicalization or Left Dislocation (Duarte 1987, Raposo 1998, Barbosa 2001):ⁱⁱⁱ

- (4) a. Ese libro, Luis *(lo) ha comprado para María. (Spanish)
 this book Luis it.ACC has bought for María
 ‘Luis bought this book for María.’
 b. Cartea, *(o) cumpărasem demult. (Romanian)
 book.the it.ACC had.bought.1SG long ago
 ‘I had bought the book long ago.’
 c. A Maria, (le) ho regalato due libri. (Italian)
 to Maria her.DAT have.1SG given two books
 ‘I gave Maria two books.’
- (5) a. Esse livro, o Luís comprou para a Maria. (Portuguese)
 b. Esse livro, o Luís comprou=0 para a Maria.
 this book the Luís bought.3SG=it.ACC for the Maria
 ‘Luís bought this book for Maria.’

Other important differences between HTLD and CLLD have to do with the syntactic category of the dislocated topic, with their syntactic distribution, and with the number of possible topics per sentence. HTs are always specific indefinite or referential definite noun phrases, and cannot be preceded by prepositions. On the other hand, CLLD topics are not subject to categorial restrictions: definite, specific and non-specific indefinite noun phrases, adjectival and prepositional phrases, and even subordinate clauses can all equally undergo CLLD. As for their distribution, HTLD is a root phenomenon, while CLLD can also occur in embedded clauses. Moreover, more than one dislocated element are allowed with CLLD, but not with HTLD, which only admits one dislocated topic. A combination of the two types of dislocated constituent is also possible, but the hanging topic has to come first:

- (6) a. Marie, de ce crime, je crois que je ne lui en parlerai jamais. HTLD > CLLD
 Marie of this crime I think that I not her of-it tell never
 b. *A Marie, ce crime, je crois que je ne lui en parlerai jamais. CLLD > HTLD
 c. Ce crime, à Marie, je crois que je ne lui en parlerai jamais. HTLD > CLLD
 d. *De ce crime, Marie, je crois que ne lui en parlerai jamais. CLLD > HTLD
 ‘I think I will never tell Marie about this crime.’
 (Delais-Roussarie et al. 2004: 509)

On the basis of these syntactic differences and of further tests, including connectedness, reconstruction, and sensitivity to islands, it is generally assumed that while CLLD applies to a sentential constituent, HTLD does not: the dislocated constituent is external to the clause.

Some scholars have suggested that HTLD and CLLD are also different interpretively. Cinque (1983: 95) proposes that HTLD encodes new or unexpected topics (roughly equivalent to our ATs), while Villalba (2000, 2009) claims that HTLD involves discourse topics but not sentence topics. Despite the typology of topics outlined in Section 1, it is often difficult to identify the type of a left-dislocated topic, inasmuch as it depends on the specific contextual and discourse conditions (see also Brunetti 2009a,b). On the range of pragmatic uses and social-interaction functions of topicalization, dislocation and HTLD, see also Silva-Corvolán (1984), Ashby (1988), Gregory and Michaelis (2001), Prévost (2003), and Pekarek Doehler et al. (2015).

In the case of multiple topics under CLLD, as in (7) and (8), it is generally acknowledged that the first counts as AT, while the others are instances of GTs. This means that both ATs and GTs can undergo CLLD, also simultaneously:

- (7) Mario, de so sorela, el ghe ne parla sempre. (Paduan)
 Mario to his sister SCL of.her speaks always
 ‘Mario is always talking about his sister.’
- (8) La Maria i jo, aquest any, a la mar, hi hem anat pocs cops. (Catalan)
 the Mary and I this year to the sea there have gone few times
 ‘Mary and I have been to the seaside a few times this year.’

There can be more than one GTs within the same sentence, but only one AT is allowed: this is assumed to be the highest, most external topic. As mentioned, however, the precise topic type at issue will depend on the context.^{iv} Topicalization may also involve CTs, as shown in (2) above. Some scholars have claimed that multiple topics are syntactically constrained and hierarchically ordered. This has been represented by means of different topic positions in the left periphery of the clause (Benincà and Poletto 2004, Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007, Bianchi and Frascarelli 2010):^v

- (9) Scene-Setting > Hanging Topics > Left Dislocated Topics > Listed Items > Focus ...
 (adapted from Benincà and Poletto 2004)
- (10) Aboutness-shift Topic > Contrastive Topic > Focus > Familiar/Given Topic
 (Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007: 89, Bianchi and Frascarelli 2010: 59)

Whereas Benincà and Poletto’s classification is based on syntactic properties, Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl’s (2007) types of topic are defined in terms of different information-structure properties and are also assumed to be associated with distinct prosodic contours in Italian: L*+H for ATs, H* for CTs, and L* for GTs.

From a prosodic viewpoint, in Romance, CLLD topics form independent intonational phrases (see also Poletto and Bocci 2016 and references therein). More fine-grained analyses, however, have called for a refinement of this generalization: Feldhausen (2010), for instance, provides evidence that, in Catalan, the insertion of a prosodic boundary is obligatory at the right edge of the CLLD topic, but not before it. As a consequence, it would be inaccurate to claim that CLLD topics surrounded by lexical material are exhaustively contained in an independent prosodic constituent.

2.2. Clitic Right Dislocation (CLRD)

Clitic Right Dislocation (CLRD) is a dislocation construction that is syntactically very similar to CLLD, except for the fact that the topic constituent is positioned at the end of the clause (Benincà 1988, Jones 1993, Cecchetto 1999, 2000, Belletti 2001, Vallduví 1992, Villalba 2000, 2009, Samek-Lodovici 2015). Any syntactic type of constituent that is amenable to CLLD, can also undergo CLRD. Similarly, a resumptive clitic pronoun appears within the sentence core with CLRD (11), although in some varieties the clitic may be omitted even with direct objects (11c):

- (11) a. I=vau sovent, al cinema. (Occitan)
 there=go.1SG often to.the cinema
 ‘I often go to the cinema.’
- b. Maria l’=at dza mandata, sa l’ittera. (Sardinian)
 Mary it.ACC=has already sent the letter
 ‘Mary already sent the letter.’
- c. (L’)=ha letto Mario, il giornale. (Italian)
 it.ACC=have.3SG read Mario the newspaper
 ‘Mario read the newspaper.’

The structure with no clitic resumption (11c) has been associated with a different construction altogether, named ‘marginalization’, but this construction seems to be present only in Italian, and not in Catalan, Spanish or Portuguese, nor in several Italian dialects (Frascarelli 2000, Cardinaletti 2001, 2002, Cruschina 2010, López 2009). Another structure that should not be assimilated to CLRD is ‘afterthought’, which, in spite of the similar interpretive properties, is not syntactically integrated to the preceding clause (Grosz and Ziv 1998, Cecchetto 1999, Villalba 2000, 2009).

Despite the many syntactic similarities, CLLD and CLRD must be told apart from an interpretive viewpoint. ATs and CTs are not admitted in CLRD: only GTs are allowed. Being already active in the discourse or anaphoric with respect to the immediately previous discourse, GTs are in fact optional, inasmuch as the corresponding resumptive clitic alone would be sufficient to restore the missing topical expression in the utterance. The fact that CLRD is restricted to GTs does not entail that GTs are in turn restricted to CLRD. As discussed in Section 2.1, in addition to ATs, CLLD may also involve GTs.

CLLD and CLRD of GTs are commonly found in an argument-focus structure, as in (12). The given constituent *il pane* ‘the bread’ in (12A) repeats the AT of the previous question and can thus be optionally restored as a GT by either CLLD or CLRD.

- (12) Q: Il pane chi lo=deve comprare? (Italian)
 the bread who it.ACC=must.3SG buy.INF
 ‘Who should buy the bread?’
- A: (Il pane,) lo=devi comprare tu (, il pane)
 the bread it.ACC=must.2SG buy.INF you the bread
 ‘(The bread), you should buy it (, the bread).’

Under this view, we can conclude that the function of CLRD is not to mark topicality, but rather givenness. This assumption is supported by the observation that topicality is a relational notion (cf. §1), involving a partition of the sentence into a Topic and a Comment. We thus expect topicalization to involve a sentence-initial constituent that is marked as topic with respect to the Comment, which must instead be placed in the scope of the topic (see Rizzi 1997).

This empirical generalization about the interpretive nature of CLRD, however, is not exceptionless. It has indeed been observed that CLRD may sometimes introduce a discourse-new referent, although this referent is presented by the speaker as shared knowledge (Benincà 1988, Ferrari 1999, Lambrecht 1994). This occurs most typically in yes/no-questions, where the givenness requirement for CLRD appears to be weakened (Sauzet 1989, Benincà 1988, Crocco 2013), allowing the construction to be employed even in out-of-the-blue contexts:

- (13) a. L'=as pagat, lo capel? (Occitan)
 it.ACC=have.2SG paid the hat
 'Did you pay for that hat?'
 b. L'=hai vista la partita? (Italian)
 it.ACC=have.2SG seen the football match
 'Have you seen the football match?'

These sentences exemplify cases in which the right-dislocated constituent need not be given in the context, but can be simply inferred from the situation.

CLRD topics too form independent intonational phrases (see Zubizarreta 1998 for Spanish, Frascarelli 2000 for Italian, Feldhausen 2010 for Catalan, among others). It has also been observed that they lack any degree of intonational prominence and are realized with a low and flat pitch contour (Astruc 2004). This characteristic prosodic contour of CLRD topics has been related to their pragmatic properties: Vallduví (1992), for example, claims that in Catalan CLDR constituents are placed outside the intonational domain relevant for the assignment of phrasal stress. Bocci and Avesani (2011) and Bocci (2013) propose, instead, that their typical low and flat contour is determined by the presence of a preceding focal constituent, as an instance of postfocal pitch compression.^{vi}

3. Topic-Comment in Romance: debate and controversies

The traditional Topic-Comment articulation displays a partial overlapping with the structuring of the sentence into (logical) subject or subject of predication and predicate (Sasse 1987, Kuroda 1972, Krifka 2007). If defined in terms of aboutness, the notion of topic can be described with Reinhart's (1982) file card metaphor: the topic corresponds to the heading of a new file card and the comment adds information about this new card into the common ground shared by the interlocutors. What is then the relationship between topic and subject? Indeed, the logical subject of the predication is also generally defined in terms of aboutness. Different positions have been assumed with respect to this issue in Romance, with contrasting consequences for the supposed syntactic status of topics and subjects.

3.1. Topics and preverbal subjects

According to some theories, the subject in initial position automatically takes over the role of topic. Under this view, when the subject is part of the comment (or focus), it must appear postverbally, at least in null-subject languages (see Cruschina, "Focus and Focus Structures in the Romance languages", forthcoming). Sentences without an initial topic constituent are the so-called *thetic* sentences, and are opposed to *categorical* sentences which instead do feature a sentence-initial topic. The idea that preverbal subjects are inherently topical has been converted in the syntactic assumption that all preverbal subjects in null-subject Romance languages sit in a high, topic-related position of the clausal, either a multifunctional or a dedicated position in the preverbal field. This view, however, has been strongly opposed by many scholars, who show that not all preverbal subjects can be analysed as topics (see Barbosa 1995, Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998, Ordóñez and Treviño 1999, Costa 2004, Rizzi 2005, 2018,

Even if this has been a matter of dispute, (colloquial) French seems to distinguish overtly between topical and non-topical preverbal subjects. According to De Cat (2007: 22), in colloquial French “a heavy (i.e. non-weak) element expressing the subject is interpreted as a topic *only if* it is resumed by a subject clitic.” So, if the context imposes a non-topical interpretation of the subject, as in the answer to a what-happened type of question, clitic resumption of the subject proves pragmatically infelicitous, as shown in (17):

- (17) Q: Qu’est-ce qui s’est passé ? (French)
 ‘What happened?’
 A: Les voisins (#,ils) ont mangé mon lapin.
 the neighbors they have eaten my rabbit
 ‘The neighbors have eaten my rabbit.’

Subject clitics are also widespread in northern Italian dialects. In these varieties, however, they do not uniquely identify topicalization or dislocation, but cover a range of functions from agreement morphemes to pragmatic markers (see Poletto 2000, Manzini and Savoia 2005 for an overview).

3.2. Topics and ‘oblique’ subjects

The controversial distinction between aboutness topics and subject of predication does not only concern grammatical (nominative) subjects but also oblique subjects (18) and sentence-initial locative and temporal expressions (19), which may be analysed either as logical subjects of predication or as aboutness topics when they occur in preverbal position (Pinto 1997, Fernandez Soriano 1999, Cardinaletti 1997, 2004, Lahousse 2007, 2011, Sheehan 2010, Corr 2016, Teixeira 2016, Leonetti 2017: 911).

- (18) a. A Gianni è sempre piaciuta la musica. (Italian)
 to Gianni is always pleased the music
 ‘Gianni always liked music.’
 (Belletti and Rizzi 1988: 334).
 b. A María le molestan los niños. (Spanish)
 to María her.DAT bother the children
 ‘Children bother María.’
 (Gutiérrez-Bravo 2008: 374)
- (19) a. Naquela fábrica trabalha um amigo meu. (Portuguese)
 in-that factory works a friend my
 ‘A friend of mine works in that factory.’
 (Avelar 2009: 234)
 b. Sous le pont Mirabeau coule la Seine. (French)
 under the bridge Mirabeau flow.3SG the Seine
 ‘Under the Mirabeau bridge flows the Seine.’
 (Lahousse 2011: 66)
 c. Toamna zboară rândunicile spre țările calde. (Romanian)
 autumn-the fly swallows-the towards countries-the warm
 ‘In autumn, swallows fly towards the warm countries.’
 (Giurgea 2017: 293)

These have been considered cases of the topicalization construction, in which a non-subject constituent is topicalized to the sentence-initial position normally occupied by the subject.

However, if a distinction between aboutness topic and subject of predication is maintained, the topical status of these non-nominative subjects turns out not to be a necessary condition: from a semantic-logical perspective, they serve the function of subject of predication and may or not be additionally topic depending on the contextual properties of the sentence. Syntactically, the subject status of non-nominative constituents in sentence-initial position presupposes a syntactic separation between the subject-of-predication and the grammatical function. It has indeed been claimed that an element occurring in subject position does not necessarily bear nominative Case, nor is it inevitably involved in agreement operations.

The experiencer arguments of psycho-verbs (18) are commonly believed to occur in the canonical subject position. Less unanimous is the view that the sentence-initial locative and temporal expressions (19) are also to be analysed as subjects. Some authors distinguish between locatives with impersonal, stative, or eventive verbs from the *locative inversion* that is common with motion verbs. According to Fernández-Soriano (1999), only the former behave as real subjects and occur in preverbal position in the unmarked word order, while the latter result from the anteposition of a VP-internal argument to sentence-initial subject position, which is pragmatically marked and thus infelicitous in answers to a what-happened question. Compare (20) with (21):

- (20) Q: ¿Qué pasa / pasó? (Spanish)
 what happens happened
 ‘What’s happening / happened?’
 A: En esta casa falta café.
 in this house misses coffee
 ‘Coffee is missing in this house.’
 (Fernández-Soriano 1999: 105)

- (21) a. ¿Qué pasó? (Spanish)
 ‘What happened?’
 b. #A esta casa llegaron estudiantes.
 to this house arrived students
 ‘Students arrived to this house.’
 (Fernández-Soriano 1999: 112)

Other scholars have claimed that the sentence-initial locative and temporal expressions in (18) are to be analysed as topics, in particular *stage topics* in the sense of Erteschik-Shir (1997), which is a type of topic that defines a spatial and/or temporal location (Lahousse 2007, 2011, Giurgea and Remberger 2012a,b, Teixeira 2016, Giurgea 2017). This analysis draws on a similar account ofthetic sentences and on the question of whetherthetic sentences with a postverbal grammatical subject lack an aboutness argument altogether, be it a subject of predication or a topic.

Building upon Benincà (1988), several scholars have claimed that, in the absence of an overt locative or temporal phrase, broad-focus subject inversion in null-subject Romance languages requires a null locative argument in preverbal position, thus being comparable to locative inversion (Pinto 1997, Tortora 1997, 2001, Sheehan 2006, 2010, 2016, Corr 2016). Consider the examples in (22) and (23), which have to be interpreted as broad-focusthetic statements, making new announcements:

- (22) a. A telefonat Maria. / #Maria a telefonat. (Romanian)
 has phoned Maria Maria has phoned
 ‘Maria has phoned.’
 b. A venit Maria. / #Maria a venit.

has come Maria Maria has come
 ‘Maria has come.’
 (Giurgea 2017: 299)

- (23) a. Morrió el güelu. (Asturian)
 died.3SG the grandfather
 ‘(My) grandfather died.’
 b. Apareceu um cão. (Portuguese)
 appeared.3SG a dog
 ‘A dog appeared.’
 (Corr 2016: 1)

According to Erteschik-Shir (1997), stage topics can be overt, as in (19), or covert, as in thetic sentences – at least with certain predicates. It is indeed a commonly held view that thetic sentences are not topic-less, but rather have a null argument as topic, which can be intuitively be described as a location or as a situation. For Romance, it has then been proposed that thetic sentences with VS are licensed by a null stage topic (Giurgea and Remberger 2012a,b, Giurgea 2017, Teixeira 2016). Under this view, the only difference between sentences in (19) and those in (22)–(23) lies in the overt vs covert realization of the stage topic.

Alternative proposals, however, separate the aboutness requirement of thetic sentences from the notion of topic, maintaining that in these sentences with subject inversion either an event argument or a situational argument functions as subject of predication. Bentley and Cruschina (2018), in particular, observe that thetic subject inversion requires the eventuality denoted by the predicate to be bounded. This happens whenever a specific final goal (a location or a state) is part of the argument structure of the verb, but also when such a goal is entailed or inferred via an implicature. Only certain predicates with particular lexical-semantic properties are compatible with the bounded reading provided by the goal and thus admit thetic subject inversion:

- (24) a. Si è svuotato il serbatoio. (Italian)
 REFL is emptied the tank
 ‘The tank has become empty.’
 b. #Si sono annoiati gli studenti.
 REFL are become_bored the students
 ‘The students have become bored.’
 (Bentley and Cruschina 2018: 37)

The verb *svuotarsi* ‘become empty’ in (23a) allows the implicature that a maximum value (e.g. to become completely empty) has been reached as a final goal state. The same implicature, by contrast, does not arise with *annoiarsi* ‘to become bored’. These structures display no Topic-Comment oppositions, insofar as they neither exhibit nor presuppose a topic. In this account, therefore, the either entailed or inferred goal argument is not given and does not exhibit any connection with the previous discourse, but is rather introduced with the utterance itself. It is thus defined as the subject of predication. Even if the distinction between stage topic and subject of predication may appear subtle and may depend on the perspective adopted, it thus emerges that the two notions are not fully synonymous.

4. Topicalization in medieval Romance and potential residues

Several topicalization constructions were already present in medieval Romance. In particular, CLLD, which is more easily identifiable due to clitic resumption (cf. (25)–(26)), seems to be

rather widespread since the very first attestations in written form (Salvi 2004, 2005, 2011, Benincà 2006, Ledgeway 2012: 159–160):

- (25) Sao ko kelle terre, per kelle fini que ki contene, trenta anni
 know.1SG that those lands for those confines which here contains thirty years
 le possette parte sancti Benedicti.
 them.ACC possessed party saint.GEN Benedict.GEN
 ‘I know that, those lands, within those borders which are contained here [in the document/map], have belonged for thirty years to the part [= monastery] of St. Benedict [of Montecassino].’
 (Old Campano, *Placito capuano*, 960)

- (26) Ceste bataille, veirement la ferum.
 this battle indeed it.ACC do.FUT.1PL
 ‘We will fight this battle, indeed.’
 (Old French, *Chanson de Roland* v. 882, 11th-century)

Occurrences of CLLD can be traced back to late Latin, or even to Classical Latin, although in the latter the dislocated topic was resumed by a strong pronoun (see Salvi 2004, 2005, 2011).

The frequency of topicalization has been directly related to a general syntactic property of medieval Romance. There is considerable – albeit not absolute – consensus that the syntax of medieval Romance was characterized by a V2 constraint as a transitional phase between the predominant SOV order of Classical Latin and the SVO order of modern Romance. The V2 status of medieval Romance is particularly well attested and widely supported by statistical studies,^{ix} but has also been disputed and denied, especially for old Ibero-Romance.^x It has also been suggested that the V2 syntax of medieval Romance was already present in late Latin (Spevak 2005, Ledgeway 2012, 2017) and finds its precursor in the V-initial orders of Classical Latin, which have been examined as the result of verb-fronting to a left-peripheral position due to syntactic or pragmatic reasons (Salvi 2004, Devine and Stephens 2006). According to Salvi (2004: 96f., 107–111), only from the second century AD does this marked process of verb-fronting become generalized in root clauses, and the fronted verb is increasingly more often preceded by a focal or topical constituent, thus signaling the development of a fully-fledged V2-system.

The precise nature of the fronted constituent, however, is not always unambiguous. One of the characteristic features of the preverbal position in medieval Romance V2 systems is its unrestricted nature and its ability to host a contrastive or unmarked (information) focus, an aboutness or a given topic. In the absence of a resumptive element, it might indeed prove difficult to establish whether the fronted constituent is a topic or a focus (see, e.g., Salvesen 2013). The following examples are reported in Benincà (2006):

- (27) Mal cosselh donet Pilat. (Old Provençal, *Venjansa*, 106)
 bad advice gave.3SG Pilatus
 ‘Pilatus gave bad advice’

- (28) Este logar mostro dios a Abraam. (Old Spanish, GE-I 62v)
 this place showed God to Abraham
 ‘God showed Abraham this place.’
 (Fontana 1993: 64)

- (29) Con tanta paceença sofría ela esta enfermidade.
 (Old Portuguese, *Diálogos de São Gregório*)

with so-much patience suffered she this disease
 ‘She suffered this disease so patiently’
 (Ribeiro 1995: 114)

Whether we are dealing with a focalization or topicalization construction is generally decided on the basis of the referential distinction between new and old information and of other interpretive cues inferable from the surrounding text, or else, from the syntactic category of the fronted constituent (see, e.g., Vanelli 1999, Cruschina 2011; see Lombardi Vallauri 2009 for a different approach to focalization). In the examples (26)–(29) involving direct objects, the lack of a resumptive pronoun would support the non-topical nature of the fronted object. At the same time, however, no clear articulation of the sentence into a Focus-Background structure emerges.

Even if topicalization constructions are frequently attested in all medieval Romance varieties, this does not constitute *per se* direct evidence for the V2 syntactic character of medieval Romance, given that these constructions independently exist in languages with no V2 constraint, including modern Romance. In this sense, other concomitant properties constitute more relevant pieces of evidence for the V2 nature of the medieval Romance, including subject inversion, whenever a constituent other than the subject is fronted and the subject is overtly realized ((27)–(29)), and enclisis to the finite verb ((30)–(31)), which is generally used as a diagnostics for V2 produced by verb movement over the weak pronoun (Benincà 1995, 2006, Ledgeway 2012):^{xi}

(30) [Lo primo modo] chiamo=*lo* estado temoruso. (Old Umbrian, *Jacopone*)
 the first mode call.1SG=it state timorous
 ‘I call the first type (of love) timorous state.’
 (Benincà 2006: 66)

(31) e [a los otros] acomendo=*los* adios. (Old Spanish, *Estoria de España*)
 and to the others commended.3SG=them to God
 ‘And he commended the others to God.’
 (Fontana 1993: 153)

Irrespective of the controversies surrounding the V2 syntactic character of medieval Romance and its precise definition, the unrestricted nature of the preverbal position of the earlier stages certainly represents an important difference with respect to modern Romance. V2 syntax and enclisis have survived in some modern Romance varieties, though apparently independently from one another: V2 has been preserved in some Romansh dialects, presumably under the influence of German (Haiman and Benincà 1992), while enclisis survives in western peninsular Ibero-Romance (for its distribution and restrictions, see Campos 1989; Martins 1994, 2005, Uriagereka 1995, Barbosa 1996, Raposo and Uriagereka 2005, Raposo 2000, Fernández-Rubiera 2009, among others).

In addition to these language-specific legacies, other more general syntactic configurations have been viewed as residues of medieval Romance V2. In *wh*-questions, the fronting of the *wh*-phrases in modern Romance seems to occur at the same time as verb raising, resulting in strict adjacency between the two elements (Rizzi 1996). Verb raising to the complementizer system has also been advocated as the key explanation for the different word orders and ordering restrictions that characterize certain concessive and conditional clauses in a number of Romance varieties (Rizzi 1982, Munaro 2010).

Medieval French differs considerable from modern French with respect to subject inversion in declarative root clauses. While in medieval French subject inversion is a frequent and relatively unrestricted phenomenon, in Modern French, by contrast, it is subject to strong restrictions, especially when compared to the null-subject Romance languages both in contexts

of broad-focus subject inversion and with narrow focalization of the postverbal subject (cf. § 3.2; see also Cruschina, “Focus and Focus Structures in the Romance Languages, forthcoming). In contemporary French, subject inversion is limited to unaccusative verbs, and the expletive pronoun *il* ‘it’, a temporal/locative expression, or a sentence-initial adverb such as *peut-être* ‘maybe’ or *sans doute* ‘doubtless’ must appear at the beginning of the sentence (cf. also (19b)):^{xii}

- (32) a. Il est venu trois femmes. (French)
 it is come three women
 ‘Three women have come.’
 b. Alors sont arrivés trois hommes en armes.
 then are arrived three men in arms
 ‘Then three armed men arrived.’
 c. Peut-être sont partis les enfants.
 maybe are left the children
 ‘Maybe the children left.’

Given that subject inversion in modern French is primarily confined to the written and literary language, this difference has been attributed to the V2 property of medieval French, which is lost in modern French.^{xiii} In this sense, subject-inversion structures “may be regarded as learnt vestiges of an older language stage” (Kaiser and Zimmermann 2011: 377).

Resumptive (or Anaphoric) Preposing is another type of construction which, due to its restriction to a specific style and register, and to its unclear status between focalization and topicalization, has been considered an instance of potential residue of V2 in modern Romance:

- (32) La stessa proposta fece poi il partito di maggioranza. (Italian)
 the same proposal made.3SG then the party of majority
 ‘The majority party then made the same proposal.’
 (Cardinaletti 2009: 8)

- (33) Dije que terminaría el libro, y el libro he terminado. (Spanish)
 said.1SG that finish.COND.1SG the book, and the book have.1SG finished
 ‘I said that I would finish the book, and indeed I finished the book.’
 (Leonetti and Escandell Vidal 2009: 157)

On the one hand, Resumptive Preposing resembles focalization, in that the fronted constituent is incompatible with clitic resumption, triggers subject inversion, and cannot cooccur with any other instance of *wh*- or focus-movement. On the other, this construction mostly involves fronted definite noun phrases which anaphorically resume an identical or inferentially linked phrase in the immediately preceding discourse. Demonstratives or lexical items meaning ‘same’ typically help this anaphoric function (Benincà 1988, Cinque 1990, Benincà and Poletto 2004, Cardinaletti 2009, Leonetti and Escandell Vidal 2009). In this sense, the fronted constituent never conveys new information, does not lead to clear Focus-Background partition of the sentence, and rather shows the interpretive properties typical of given topics.

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Notes

ⁱ Given topics are also called *referential* or *familiar* topics in the literature on Romance (Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007, Bianchi and Frascarelli 2010, Cruschina 2012). Vallduví (1992) adopts the terms *link* and *tail* to cover the same distinction between ATs and GTs, respectively (see also Brunetti 2009a).

ⁱⁱ The definition of topicalization as a topic-marking mechanism adopted here is admittedly broader than in the specialist research on Germanic languages, where it is generally conceived of as the syntactic displacement of (non-subject) constituents to the sentence-initial position with no resumptive elements (see Pekarek Doehler et al. 2015 on French). Such a stricter definition would automatically set topicalization apart from HTLD and CLLD, but not necessarily from focalization (see Prince 1994, 1998). Subsuming dislocation under the cover term of topicalization may thus seem problematic, but, as we will see in this chapter, in Romance the distinction between topicalization and other displacement or dislocation structures is not always clear-cut, while topicalization is neatly different from focalization. Indeed, CLLD and in particular Clitic Right Dislocation (CLRD) fulfil functions other than topic marking (see, e.g., Ashby 1988), but they have nevertheless been included in the discussion both for sake of comparison and because they can be used to mark specific types of topic.

ⁱⁱⁱ In fact, in Romanian the use of clitics does not correlate with topicalization, but with the specificity of the dislocated phrase, independently of whether it is a topic, a focus or a *wh*-element. The clitic is obligatory with definites or with specific indefinites (Dobrovie-Sorin 1990, 1994). The clitic co-occur with the corresponding constituent even when it is not displaced, but clause-internal. This phenomenon is known as clitic doubling, and is found to varying extents in Spanish, although it is very limited with direct objects (e.g. in Rio de la Plata Spanish). Clitic doubling is general considered absent in the other Romance languages, but it is actually possible with personal pronouns and/or with dative arguments in many varieties (Jaeggli 1986, Benincà 1988, 2001, Torrego 1998, Kayne 2000: Ch.9; Anagnostopoulou 2006).

^{iv} ATs and GTs may in fact be viewed as two contextual variants of the grammatical entity. Only when more topics are present at the beginning of the sentence does the distinction become relevant, insofar as only one topic can be interpreted as AT. However, it has been observed that if we change the order of the sentence-initial topics, it is difficult to unambiguously identify the AT of the sentence since it tends to coincide with the first topic (see López 2009, Cruschina 2012). On further differences between aboutness topics and dislocates, see López (2009).

^v While Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007) argue that there can be only one AT or one CT per sentence, whereas GTs can be iterated, López (2009) claims that all left-dislocated phrases are in fact contrastive (see also Arregi 2003 and Brunetti 2009a,b). López additionally shows that the order of multiple topics can be changed without altering their interpretation: in this sense, it becomes difficult to identify the AT of the sentence, which might simply coincide with the first dislocated constituent. These observations cast doubt on the cartographic idea that there are fixed syntactic positions for every different interpretation of the topic constituent.

^{vi} See also Poletto and Bocci (2016).

^{vii} For a prosodic perspective on this issue, see Feldhausen (2014) and references therein.

^{viii} Lambrecht refers here to grammatical subjects, which are of course to be kept separate from the notion of subject of predication defined on a logical-semantic level. See Section 3.2.

^{ix} See Benincà (2006), Ledgeway (2012), Poletto (2014), Wolfe (2018), and references therein.

^x See Martins (1994, 2001), Kaiser (2002), Sornicola (2000), Rinke (2009), Sitaridou (2012).

^{xi} On enclisis with V1 structures and in the absence of a fronted focus constituent, see Benincà (2006).

^{xii} Many other factors act as constraints on subject inversion in French, including register (cf., e.g., the so-called stylistic inversion) and sentence type (interrogative inversion or inversion in subjunctive clauses). For more details on subject inversion in French, see Marandin (2001, 2011), Lahousse (2003, 2007, 2011) and references therein.

^{xiii} See Rinke and Meisel (2009), and Kaiser and Zimmermann (2011) for alternative accounts.