

Contrastive topics in Japanese: An interface-based approach

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Abstract

Contrastive topics and non-contrastive topics in Japanese generally receive separate treatments in the literature. Although they are both marked by the particle *wa*, the former are emphatically stressed and are usually described as only optionally moving to clause-initial position, while the latter (Kuno's (1973) 'theme') are limited to clause-initial position. This paper presents arguments that contrastive topics are also restricted to clause-initial position. Evidence comes from examining the syntactic and interpretive properties of emphatically stressed *wa*-marked phrases in various discourse contexts. First, in contexts that require a contrastive topic on independent discourse grounds, the relevant *wa*-marked phrase must appear in clause-initial position. Second, in contexts that allow a *wa*-marked phrase to remain in-situ, the relevant phrase is not interpreted as a contrastive topic and cannot optionally move to clause-initial position. Third, *wa*-marked phrases displaced to clause-initial position bear out predictions concerning the distribution of contrastive topics, which derive from considerations at the interface between syntax and information structure, but those in-situ do not. Finally, although a clause may contain multiple *wa*-marked phrases, only the clause-initial one functions as a topic. I argue that the displacement of topics, contrastive or non-contrastive, is motivated by its effects at the interface.

1 INTRODUCTION

It is widely assumed that the Japanese particle *wa* is a topic marker. The standard characterisation of the particle *wa* in the literature on Japanese is that it has two uses: contrastive and non-contrastive (Kuno 1973).¹ A phrase marked by non-contrastive *wa* does not bear an emphatic stress, typically occupies clause-initial position and is interpreted as what the rest of the sentence is about. These properties are demonstrated by (1), with a *wa*-marked object to highlight its non-canonical positioning. A phrase marked by contrastive *wa*, on the other hand, is emphatically stressed (has a raised f_0 -peak), only optionally moves to clause-initial position and implicates contrast with a contextually salient alternative. These properties are shown in (2). I will call these *wa*-marked phrases 'non-contrastive *wa*-phrase' and 'contrastive *wa*-phrase', respectively. Needless to say, the felicitous examples below are felicitous on the assumption that the interlocutors know the referents of 'that book' and *John*. (Throughout the paper SMALL CAPS is used for emphatic stress and # indicates infelicity).

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¹ Kuno (1973) calls the two uses 'thematic' and 'contrastive' and the terms are widely used. Following Heycock (2008), however, I will call the former 'non-contrastive' in order to be less theory-specific.

- (1) non-contrastive *wa*:
- a. ano hon_i-wa John-ga e_i katta.
that book-WA John-NOM bought
 - b. #John-ga ano hon-wa katta.
John-NOM that book-WA bought
'Speaking of that book, John bought it.'
- (2) contrastive *wa*:
- a. ANO HON-WA_i John-ga t_i katta.
that book-WA John-NOM bought
 - b. John-ga ANO HON-WA katta.
John-NOM that book-WA bought
'John bought that book.'
- (Implicature: 'There is another book that John perhaps didn't buy.')

The two types of *wa*-phrases are generally analysed separately as two distinct types of 'topics', contrastive topics and non-contrastive topics, respectively (see Heycock 2008 for an overview). Indeed, if *wa* is a topic marker, the above examples suggest that the two types of topics have very little in common: they clearly have distinct syntactic, prosodic, and interpretive properties.

In this paper I propose that the two types of topics do have further properties in common and they can be given a uniform account. More specifically, I argue that not all contrastive *wa*-phrases are contrastive topics, and those that qualify as contrastive topics are restricted to clause-initial position in Japanese, just like their non-contrastive counterpart. There are independent tests motivated by considerations from discourse and the interface between syntax and information structure, that can identify items with the discourse function of 'contrastive topic'. According to these tests, only a subset of contrastive *wa*-phrases qualify as contrastive topics and crucially, such contrastive *wa*-phrases must move to clause-initial position, as in ((2)a). Moreover, in discourse contexts that allow a contrastive *wa*-phrase to appear in-situ, as in ((2)b), the *wa*-phrase in question is not interpreted as a contrastive topic and cannot optionally undergo movement to clause-initial position, contrary to the assumption in the standard literature. I argue that contrastive *wa*-phrases in-situ implicate a particular type of contrast, but are not contrastive 'topics'.

An obvious implication of the proposal is that the particle *wa* in its contrastive use does not mark a contrastive topic. This idea is not entirely new. Several authors have suggested either explicitly or implicitly that *wa* in its contrastive use and *wa* in its non-contrastive use are two different lexical items with their own properties. In terms of interpretation, it is claimed that non-contrastive *wa* unequivocally marks non-contrastive topics, while contrastive *wa* only implicates a certain kind of contrast (Kuno 1973, Kuroda 1979, 2005, Hara 2006, Oshima 2008, *pace* Kuroda 1965, 1992, Shibatani 1990). I follow this general idea that contrastive *wa* and non-contrastive *wa* are distinct lexical items. The novel contribution with respect to contrastive *wa* here is the observation that the interpretation of a contrastive *wa*-phrase is not invariant, as assumed in the literature, but that it correlates with the syntactic position of the phrase: those contrastive *wa*-phrases that have moved to clause-initial position function as contrastive topics, but those that appear in-situ do not. Considering that non-contrastive topics must appear in clause-initial position, the observation allows for a unified analysis of contrastive and non-contrastive topics in Japanese.

With respect to what motivates the displacement of both types of topic to clause-initial position, I argue, following Neeleman & van de Koot (2008), that it is motivated by its

effects at the interface. The displacement of a topic creates a transparent mapping between the syntactic structure and the topic-comment structure at the level of information structure.

The following section first clarifies the notions of ‘topic’, ‘contrast’ and ‘contrastive topic’ that this paper adopts. Section 3 demonstrates that a contrastive *wa*-phrase must move to clause-initial position in discourse contexts that require them to be interpreted as contrastive topics, just like their non-contrastive counterparts. I will also elaborate there on the idea that the displacement of a topic to clause-initial position is motivated by its effects at the interface. In Section 4 I examine discourse contexts that allow contrastive *wa*-phrases in-situ and provide arguments for their non-topical status in terms of their interpretation as well as their syntactic properties. Section 5 considers limited instances where a non-contrastive *wa*-phrase is reported to be possible in positions other than clause-initial position (Watanabe 2003). I will show that such non-contrastive *wa*-phrases do not fall under the definition of ‘topic’ adopted in this paper and furthermore, it has distinct syntactic properties. Thus, the generalisation that a topic is licensed in clause-initial position remains intact. Section 6 examines a further correct prediction of the current proposal, namely that there can be no more than one topic per clause, because there is only one clause-initial position. In Section 7, the current proposal is compared with some recent approaches in the literature. Section 8 concludes the paper.

2 TOPIC, CONTRAST AND CONTRASTIVE TOPICS

2.1 Topic

I follow Reinhart (1981) in characterising topics in terms of ‘aboutness’. Speakers generally have intuitions regarding what a given sentence is about. In fact, one could see the mere existence of expressions like ‘as for’, ‘about’, ‘regarding’, ‘concerning’, and so on, as evidence for the existence of aboutness. Yet, it is surprisingly difficult to pin down the exact content of the notion and how it is linguistically relevant.² This is reflected in the variety of definitions of topic offered in the literature (compare Chafe 1976, Reinhart 1981, Givón 1983, Vallduví 1992, Lambrecht 1994, and Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007).

There is some consensus, however, that it is important to distinguish between the topic of a unit of discourse, which can be rather abstract, and a syntactic constituent that newly introduces its referent as what the sentence is about. Such a referent may continue to function as the topic of subsequent discourse. I will refer to a topic in this first sense as a ‘discourse topic’, and to the second type of topic as a ‘sentence topic’. This paper is mainly concerned with the syntactic behaviour of sentence topics. The discussion of a discourse topic will be limited to what is necessary to understand its opposition to a sentence topic. Sentence topics are variously referred to in the literature as ‘chain-initial topic’ (Givón 1983), ‘link’ (Vallduví 1992), ‘aboutness topic’ (Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl’s 2007) and so on. I will refer to a sentence topic simply as a ‘topic’ when the distinction is clear.

A sentence topic can be identified as the item *X* in the answer to requests such as *tell me about X*. Such a request explicitly instructs the hearer to introduce the referent of *X* as the discourse topic. Thus, *John* in Speaker B’s utterance below is a sentence topic.

² Portner & Yabushita (1998, 2001) propose a formal account of ‘aboutness’. Their accounts, however, do not distinguish sentence topics and those that refer back to discourse topics, discussed immediately below. The syntactic generalisations discussed in later sections would therefore be difficult to capture.

- (3) A: Tell me about John.
B: John is a student from Canada.

The fact that *John* in (3B) indeed introduces the referent as the discourse topic, rather than *John* in (3A), is suggested by two facts. First, native speakers do not interpret the imperative in (3A), as being ‘about’ John. Thus, *John* in (3A) is not a sentence topic. Secondly, B’s utterance is also felicitous if the request is less specific about what is to be the topic of discourse, such as *tell me about someone in your class*. The latter point also illustrates that a topic need not be given or old information, contrary to what is sometimes assumed in the literature (Erteschik-Shir 1997, Rizzi 1997). A sentence topic is also associated with constructions such as *as for X...*, or *regarding X...*, where *X* is the sentence topic.³

Sentence topics must also be distinguished from items that refer back to them and are therefore interpreted as what the rest of the sentence is about (Vallduví 1992, Lambrecht 1994, Vallduví & Engdahl 1996). The point can be illustrated by the following exchange.

- (4) a. Who did Max see yesterday?
b. He saw ROSA yesterday.

Uttered discourse-initially, *Max* in ((4)a) is a sentence topic, introducing Max as the topic of discourse. The pronoun *he* in (4)b, on the other hand, is not a sentence topic. Its referent is indeed what the rest of the sentence is about, but the referent is not newly introduced by it. Rather, *he* is simply a discourse anaphoric item that refers back to the discourse topic Max. Thus, the sentence in ((4)b) is interpreted as being about the referent of *he*, because *he* refers back to the discourse topic, not because *he* functions as a sentence topic. The information structure of the utterance in ((4)b) is therefore that *Rosa*, that answers the *wh*-part of the preceding question, is the focus and the remaining items constitute the background, and the discourse topic is inherited from the previous utterance (Vallduví & Engdahl 1996). In other words, a sentence topic is always what the sentence is about, but the item that the sentence is about is not necessarily a sentence topic.⁴

In English, sentence topics are not necessarily overtly marked and are not easily distinguished from those that refer back to them, and some scholars have treated items such as *he* in ((4)b) as a ‘topic’ non-distinct from *Max* in ((4)a) (Gundel 1988, Rizzi 1997, Erteschik-Shir 1997). However, the grammatical relevance of the distinction between sentence topics and items that refer back to discourse topics is widely observed for other languages. The latter are often treated in the literature as a distinct type of topic from sentence topic, known variously as ‘continuing topic’ (Givón 1983, Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl

³ There are other constructions that introduce an item and instruct that item to be a sentence topic in the subsequent utterance, although the force of the instruction is not as strong as the imperative *tell me about X*. An example is a presentational construction. In (i) below, the first sentence introduces *a wizard* and *he* in the second sentence, referring to the wizard, is a sentence topic (Lambrecht 1994: 177, taken from Givón 1976):

(i) Once there was a wizard. He was very wise, rich and was married to a beautiful witch.

See Portner & Yabushita (2001: 279) for similar examples using *aru* ‘certain’ in Japanese.

⁴ There are also other constructions in Japanese whose meaning is described in terms of ‘aboutness’, including the so-called multiple nominative constructions (Saito 1982, Heycock 1993, Vermeulen). It seems that the notion of ‘aboutness’ is subtly different from topic constructions. For instance, a multiple nominative construction such as (i) cannot be produced as an answer to ‘tell me about elephants’. I will not elaborate on this issue here.

(i) zoo-ga hana-ga nagai.
elephant-NOM trunk-NOM long
‘An elephant’s trunk is long.’

2007), ‘role-oriented topic’ (Lambrecht 1994), and ‘given topic’ (Bianchi & Frascarelli 2009). Vallduví (1992) demonstrates that in Catalan, the distinction is formally marked by the direction of dislocation: sentence topics (‘link’ in his terminology) must be left-dislocated, while those that refer back to them must be right-dislocated together with other backgrounded material (‘tail’ in his terminology). Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl (2007) show that in Italian and German, sentence topics (‘shifting topics’ in their terminology) bear a different intonation from items that refer back to them (‘continuing topic’), and the former cannot be right-dislocated, while the latter can. The latter also behaves in other ways like those that are simply mentioned previously in the discourse. Choi (1999) argues that in Korean the so-called topic marker *nun*, in its non-contrastive use, typically marks sentence topics, but those that refer back to the topic of discourse are usually marked by a case-marker. In Section 5, I will claim that this distinction is also relevant in Japanese.

2.2 Contrast and contrastive topics

I take contrastive topic to be a sentence topic which additionally receives a contrastive interpretation. In addition to newly introducing its referent as the topic of discourse, it presupposes at least one salient alternative to the topic in the discourse. As such, a contrastive topic is typically associated with shifting the current discourse topic, narrowing down the referent of the discourse topic or simply implicating the existence of a relevant alternative (Büring 1997, 2003).⁵ Thus, *the female pop stars* in ((5)B) is a contrastive topic, narrowing down the referent of the topic of discourse from *the pop stars*.

(5) A: What did the pop stars wear?

B: The female pop stars wore caftans.

(Büring 1997: 56)

The female pop stars in the above example bears what Jackendoff (1972) calls the B-accent (maximally realised as L+H*, followed by a default low tone and a high boundary tone (L H%)). Contrastive topics in English are often identified as items bearing this accent. There have been several proposals on the exact meaning associated with the B-accent in English and the similar rising pitch accent in German (e.g., Büring 1997, 2003, Constant 2006, Hara and van Rooij 2007, Wagner 2008). I will not examine the details of different proposals here (but I will discuss some proposals for Japanese contrastive topics in Section 4), but an idea shared by many is that a contrastive topic bearing a B-accent is associated with a set of alternatives and a particular implicature with respect to the alternatives that are not selected such as ‘uncertainty’ of their truth values.

However, there are instances in which items with a B-accent or a rising pitch accent are not sentence topics in a most obvious way. Being what the sentence is about, a sentence topic must usually be specific (Reinhart 1981). The following examples from English and German show that these accents can be used to mark contrast on verbs or quantifiers. It is difficult to see in what sense these non-specific items are what the sentences are about. Conversely, if contrastive topics are identified simply as items bearing these accents, and not necessarily what the sentence is about, it is unclear what is common to contrastive topics and non-contrastive topics in terms of their interpretation.

(6) How’s your revision going?

Well, I [bought]_B the book, but I haven’t [read]_A it.

⁵ These are functions Büring (1997) attributes to his notion of S(entence)-topic.

- (7) How many people expressed interest in your house?
Well, [lots]_B of people [called]_A, and [three]_B [looked at it]_A, but [nobody]_B [made an offer]_A
(McNally 1998: 152)
- (8) Man √MUSS das Buch \NICHT mögen (, aber man KANN)
One must the book.acc not like but one can
(German: modified from Jacobs 1997, cited in Molnár 2002: 157; original notation)

I propose therefore that accents such as the B-accent or the rising pitch accent only indicate contrast of the type proposed in the literature and the topic status of a contrastive topic is identified by its discourse function, that is, newly introducing its referent as what the rest of the sentence is about, as discussed above (see also McNally 1998, Molnár 2002, Hetland 2005, Wagner 2008 for related ideas). Thus, the interpretation of a contrastive topic comprises of two independent elements, the contrastive meaning associated with a B-accent in the case of English and the discourse status as a topic. In the example in ((5)B), *the female pop stars* is a sentence topic, because it newly introduces its referent as what the rest of the sentence is about. It is also contrastive, because it bears a B-accent and is interpreted with the associated implicature that the speaker is perhaps not sure about a salient alternative topic, the male pop stars in this context. Section 4 provides further syntactic arguments from Japanese that contrastive topic is a composite of two independent attributes.

There is some evidence that ‘contrast’ is indeed an autonomous notion of information structure that has syntactic effects (Vallduví & Vilkuna 1998, Molnár 2002, Giusti 2006, Molnár & Winkler 2010). Vallduví & Vilkuna show, for instance, that a contrastive item in Finnish moves to a unique left-peripheral position, regardless of whether it is a contrastive focus or contrastive topic, but neither non-contrastive focus nor non-contrastive topic appears in this position. The relevant notion triggering the syntactic displacement must therefore be contrast (‘kontrast’ in their terminology).

In sum, I take topic to be a syntactic constituent that newly introduces its referent as what the rest of the sentence is about. This is an element of interpretation that is shared by contrastive and non-contrastive topics. Contrastive topic in addition has a particular implicature regarding the alternatives that are not selected. In the remainder of the paper, I will show that topics in Japanese identified in the ways described in this section must appear in clause-initial position.

3 THE SYNTACTIC DISTRIBUTION OF TOPICS IN JAPANESE

This section provides empirical evidence for the clause-initialness of both contrastive and non-contrastive topics in Japanese.⁶ Let us first consider non-contrastive topics. As mentioned in the introduction, it is well-known that non-contrastive topics in Japanese are marked by the particle *wa*, and they typically appear in clause-initial position (Kuno 1973; see Heycock 2008 for overview). The exchange in (9)/(10) confirms this standard description using an appropriate discourse context discussed above. A reply to the request ‘tell me about X’ in which the relevant *wa*-phrase occupies another position, such as ((10)b), is infelicitous.

⁶ It is possible that a non-contrastive *wa*-marked phrase is interpreted with contrast due to the context even in the absence of an emphatic stress, as noted by Kuroda (2005: Appendix II). Thus, one may infer simply from a sequence of statements such as *John buys Japanese novels and Bill buys English novels* that John and Bill are somehow contrasted. In all cases considered below, such contexts are avoided: contrastive *wa*-phrases are set in contexts where they must be emphatically stressed and a reading without contrast is not available.

- (9) ano inu-nituite nanika osiete-kudasai.
 that dog-about something tell-please
 ‘Tell me about that dog.’
- (10) a. ano inu-wa kinoo kooen-de John-o kande-simatta.
 that dog-WA yesterday park-at John-ACC bite-ended.up
 b. # John-o_i ano inu-wa kinoo kooen-de t_i kande-simatta.
 John-ACC that dog-WA yesterday park-at bite-ended.up
 ‘The dog bit John in the park yesterday.’

The same pattern obtains when the object is a non-contrastive topic in the reply, as illustrated below: it must occupy clause-initial position. (The nature of the empty category in ((12)a) is discussed in Section 4.)

- (11) ano boosi-nituite nanika osiete-kudasai.
 that hat-about something tell-please
 ‘Tell me about that hat.’
- (12) a. ano boosi_i-wa John-ga kinoo e_i kaimasita.
 that hat-WA John-nom yesterday bought
 b. #John-ga ano boosi-wa kinoo kaimasita.⁷
 John-nom that hat-wa yesterday bought
 ‘John bought that hat yesterday.’

Contrastive topics must also appear in clause-initial position. In (13) information about John is requested, but not knowing the relevant information regarding John, a speaker might provide information regarding Bill, as in (14). In doing so, s/he has shifted the topic of discourse from John to Bill, making *Bill* a contrastive topic. *Bill* is emphatically stressed and marked with *wa* and crucially, it must occupy clause-initial position, as demonstrated by the contrast between ((14)a) and ((14)b). A focus in Japanese can undergo scrambling in answering a *wh*-question (Miyagawa 1997, Aoyagi & Kato 2008, a.o.), although an additional contrastive interpretation needs to be accommodated for many speakers. Thus, the example in ((14)b) is infelicitous because the topic does not occupy clause-initial position, not because the object is fronted in this context. The same pattern obtains when the object in the answer is a contrastive topic, as in (15)/(16).⁸

- (13) John-wa kinoo-no paatii-de nani-o tabeta no?
 John-WA yesterday-GEN party-at what-ACC ate Q
 ‘What did John eat at the party yesterday?’
- (14) hmm, John-wa doo-ka sir-anai kedo,
 well, John-WA how-whether know-not but,
 ‘Well, I don’t know about John, but...’


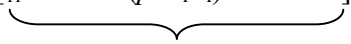
⁷ For reasons not entirely clear to me, an object *wa*-phrase seems to prefer not to surface adjacent to the verb. In order to circumvent this effect, an adverbial is inserted between object and verb throughout the paper. I assume following Neeleman & Reinhart (1998), that a structure in which an argument has scrambled across an adverbial can be base-generated, hence the absence of an empty category below the adverbial in ((12)b). This does not affect the discussion in the main text.

⁸ The set-up of the discourse context is due to Neeleman & van de Koot (2008). As pointed out by Neeleman & van de Koot (2009), however, it is important to note that contexts can only strongly favour an interpretation of particular items as topics and foci. They cannot rule out alternative interpretations entirely, as the hearer may be willing to accommodate. Nevertheless, judgements reported here were quite robust for my informants.

- a. BILL-WA 8-zi-goro MAME-O tabeteita (yo).
 Bill-WA 8 o'clock-around beans-ACC eating.was particle
- b. #MAME-O_i BILL-WA 8-zi-goro t_i tabeteita (yo).
 beans-ACC Bill-WA 8 o'clock-around eating.was particle
 'as for Bill, he was eating beans around 8 o'clock.'
- (15) kinoo-no paatii-de dare-ga pasuta-o tabeta no?
 yesterday-GEN party-at who-NOM pasta-ACC ate Q
 'Who ate the pasta at the party yesterday?'
- (16) hmm, pasuta-wa doo-ka sir-anai kedo,
 well, pasta-WA how-whether know-not but,
 'Well, I don't know about the pasta, but...'
- a. #BILL-GA MAME-WA 8-zi-goro tabeteita (yo).
 Bill-NOM beans-WA 8 o'clock-around eating.was particle
- b. MAME-WA_i BILL-GA 8-zi-goro t_i tabeteita (yo).
 beans-WA Bill-NOM 8 o'clock-around eating.was particle
 'as for the beans, Bill was eating them around 8 o'clock.'

The above data demonstrate clearly that both contrastive and non-contrastive topics, identified independently by the use of appropriate discourse contexts, must appear in clause-initial position. I propose that a topic occupies an adjoined position to the highest maximal projection in the clause (Saito 1985). Thus, in a normal declarative clause, the topic is adjoined to TP. Following the standard view on Japanese, I assume that if the topic is a non-contrastive nominal argument, it is base-generated in its surface position, binding an empty pronominal in the thematic position; if it is a non-contrastive PP argument or a contrastive argument, nominal or otherwise, it has undergone movement to that position (see Saito 1985 and Hoji 1985 for evidence for this distinction). In addition, for concreteness, I assume that so-called 'scene-setting topics' are base-generated in the adjoined position, while other adverbials such as manner adverbials, have moved to this position.⁹

Following Neeleman & van de Koot's (2008), I assume that the generation of such syntactic structures is motivated by their effects at the interface with information structure. Specifically, the displacement of a topic from its thematic position, either by base-generation in its surface position or movement, results in its sister constituent as a whole being mapped to information structure as the comment of the utterance. In other words, the comment is represented as a coherent constituent, while without the displacement, it would be discontinuous. The displacement thus facilitates this one-to-one mapping. Neeleman & van de Koot implement the effect as a mapping rule, shown in (17). This mapping rule makes correct predictions, which will be discussed in Section 4.3.

- (17) *Mapping Rule for [Topic]:*
- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| Syntax: | [_{TP} XP _i -wa [_{TP} (pro _i /t _i)]] |
| Information Structure: | <div style="display: inline-block; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;"> Topic
  </div> <div style="display: inline-block; text-align: center; vertical-align: middle; margin-left: 100px;">  </div> |

The idea of transparent mapping is similar in spirit to the so-called cartographic approach initiated by Rizzi (1997), which projects in the left-periphery a potentially recursive

⁹ In this paper, I concentrate mainly on argument topics. See Kuroda (1986a,b, 1988) for some discussion on *wa*-marked adverbials, and also footnote 21.

functional projection TopP, among other discourse-related functional projections. The phrase occupying its specifier is interpreted as the topic and the complement of the head Top⁰ is the comment of the topic. In Section 7, I compare the above approach and the cartographic approach (and its precursor) to Japanese topics, and argue that the above approach is superior.

A significant consequence of the claim that topics must occupy clause-initial position is that *wa*-marked phrases in other positions, such as the contrastive *wa*-phrase in (2)b, cannot be topics. The remainder of this paper provides further arguments for the claim.

4 CONTRASTIVE *WA*-PHRASES IN-SITU

4.1 Contrastive interpretation

In this section I argue that contrastive *wa*-phrases in-situ are items whose contrastive interpretation is contributed by the contrastive particle *wa*, but lack the topical interpretation in the sense discussed in Section 2. I first elaborate on the contrastive interpretation and then provide two syntactic arguments for their non-topical status.

There has recently been much work on the precise interpretation of contrastive *wa*-phrases (Kuroda 2005, Hara 2006, Hara & van Rooij 2007, Oshima 2008, Tomioka 2010). Adapting Büring's (1997, 2003) analysis of contrastive topics in German, Hara (2006) argues that a contrastive *wa*-phrase induces the presupposition that a scalar alternative stronger than the assertion of the sentence exists and also the implicature that the stronger alternative could be false. Let us consider the following example.

- (18) NANNINKA-WA kita.
 some people-WA came
 'Some people came.' (Implicature: 'Not everyone came')

The above example has the meaning in ((19)a) and the presupposition that there is a stronger scalar alternative such as ((19)b) which could be false. This results in the implicature indicated above that '(it is possible that) not everyone came'.

- (19) a. $\exists(x) [[\text{person}(x)] [\text{came}(x)]]$
 b. stronger scalar alternative: $\forall(x) [[\text{person}(x)] [\text{came}(x)]]$

Hara's analysis explains the infelicity of the following example, where the subject is a universally quantified item. The reason is that there is no stronger alternative and therefore the presupposition is not satisfied.¹⁰

- (20) *MINNA-WA kita.
 everyone-WA came

The analysis is extended to non-quantified DPs. A contrastive *wa*-phrase can answer the *wh*-part of a preceding question with the implicature that the speaker is unsure about the

¹⁰ Note that *wa* can mark *minna* 'everyone' if the sentence is negative, as in (i), as there is then a stronger scalar alternative. See Hara (2006) for further discussion. Thanks to Aviad Eilam for pointing out the relevance of this.

(i) minna-wa konakatta.
 everyone-wa come-not.PAST
 'Not everyone came.'

alternatives. In cases where there are only two individuals, say *Mary* and *John*, the example in ((21)b) has the implicature that John probably did not pass the exam.

- (21) a. dare-ga siken-ni ukatta no?
 who-NOM exam-DAT passed Q
 ‘Who passed the exam?’
 b. MARY-WA ukatta.
 Mary-WA passed
 ‘Mary passed’ (Implicature: ‘John probably didn’t pass’)

The stronger alternative that the utterance in ((21)b) induces is that both Mary and John passed. However, the speaker just asserted that Mary passed. The hearer can therefore infer that the intended implicature is that John did not pass.

The data considered in the literature involve predominantly cases where the subject bears contrastive *wa*.¹¹ The same contrastive interpretation obtains with contrastive object *wa*-phrases in-situ in similar contexts, and Hara’s analysis can be extended straightforwardly to these cases. The sentence in (22) gives rise to the implicature ‘John did not help everyone’, because ‘John helped everyone’ is a stronger scalar alternative and this alternative could be false. A universal quantifier *minna* ‘everyone’ cannot be an object marked with contrastive *wa*, as in (23), similarly to (20). Finally, marking the object *Mary* with contrastive *wa* gives rise to the implicature ‘John did not help Bill’ in a context where only Bill and Mary are the relevant individuals in the discourse, in the same way as in ((21)b).

- (22) John-ga NANNINKA-WA tasuketa.
 John-NOM some.people-WA helped
 ‘John helped some people.’ (Implicature: ‘John didn’t help everyone.’)
 (23) *John-ga MINNA-WA tasuketa.
 John-NOM everyone-WA helped
 ‘John helped everyone.’
 (24) John-ga MARY-WA tasuketa.
 John-NOM Mary-WA helped
 ‘John helped Mary.’ (Implicature: ‘John didn’t help Bill.’)

There are obviously differences amongst the proposals mentioned above. However, they all share the general idea that a contrastive *wa*-phrase is associated with a set of alternatives, and it has a particular implicature regarding the alternatives, akin to incompleteness or uncertainty. I believe that this line of analysis provides an accurate characterisation of the interpretation of contrastive *wa*-phrases. However, crucially, nothing inherent in the contrastive interpretation makes a contrastive *wa*-phrase a contrastive ‘topic’, i.e., newly introducing its referent as what the rest of the sentence is about. I propose that contrastive *wa*-phrases in general have the type of interpretation proposed in the recent literature, but only those that move to clause-initial position are interpreted additionally as topics. Topicality and the particular contrastive interpretation are thus two independent interpretive attributes of a contrastive topic (Kuroda 2005, Tomioka 2010). Recall that the same point was made in Section 2 regarding the B-accent in English and the rising pitch accent in German.

¹¹ Fiengo & McClure (2002) argue alternatively that the contrastive interpretation depends on the *wa*-phrase occupying a non-clause-initial position. However, as many examples in this article and other works cited in the main text show, the contrastive reading is not limited to clause-medial positions and.

Noting the non-topic-like meaning of some contrastive *wa*-phrases, some authors refrain from using the term ‘contrastive topic’ and refer to them as ‘contrastive *wa*-phrases’ or talk in terms of the ‘function’ of contrastive *wa* (Hara 2006, Tomioka 2007b, Oshima 2008, among others). However, these authors, like those who treat contrastive *wa*-phrases generally as contrastive topics, do not distinguish contrastive *wa*-phrases displaced to clause-initial position from those in-situ. Their accounts therefore cannot easily capture the observation that contrastive *wa*-phrases must occupy clause-initial position in certain discourse contexts, as we saw in Section 3. The proposed analysis is also in line with a decompositional approach to contrastive topics (Kuroda 2005: appendix II; see also Giusti 2006, Wagner 2008, Tomioka 2010). Section 7 compares the present approach with other decompositional approaches to contrastive topics with some similarities to the current proposal. I now turn to the two syntactic arguments that support the present approach.

4.2 *Non-topical contrastive wa-phrases can’t move*

The current proposal predicts that contrastive *wa*-phrases that can appear in-situ cannot optionally move to clause-initial position, contrary to the standard characterisation. Recall that the displacement of topics is motivated to facilitate a transparent mapping between syntax and information structure (see discussion around (17)). By virtue of not occupying clause-initial position, a contrastive *wa*-phrase in-situ is not a contrastive topic. As such, a contrastive *wa*-phrase in-situ has no motivation for being displaced to clause-initial position. The prediction is borne out in four different contexts. In order to see clearly that the *wa*-phrase in question is either in-situ or has been displaced to clause-initial position, I will avoid using data with subject contrastive *wa*-phrases, whose canonical position is clause-initial.¹²

The first context is illustrated by the exchange in (25)/(26). The object in the answer to a question like (25) can be a contrastive *wa*-phrase in-situ. As ((26)b) shows, however, the *wa*-phrase cannot be fronted.

- (25) Dare-ga ziken-genba-de kyuuzyo-no tetudai-o sita no?
 who-NOM accident-scene-at rescue-GEN help-ACC did Q
 ‘Who was helping with the rescue operation at the accident scene?’
- (26) a. JOHN-GA 3-NIN-WA tasuketa.
 John-NOM 3-CL.-WA rescued
 b. #3-NIN-WA_i JOHN-GA t_i tasuketa.
 3-CL.-WA John-NOM rescued
 ‘John rescued at least three people.’

From an interpretational point of view too, it does not make sense to say that the contrastive *wa*-phrase in ((26)a) is a contrastive topic. The sentence is not about the *wa*-phrase. It does not mean ‘at least three people are such that John rescued them.’ The example in ((26)b) is felicitous for some speakers if *3-nin* ‘three people’ refers to specific three people who may be salient in the discourse. Considering that topics must usually be specific (Reinhart 1981), the fact that only the specific reading is available for the moved *wa*-phrase lends further support to the claim that the displacement is triggered if the relevant *wa*-phrase is a topic.

The second context exemplifies a peculiar property of contrastive *wa*, namely that it can project the contrastive interpretation to a larger constituent. In ((28)a), contrastive *wa* marks the subject *ame* ‘rain’ in the first conjunct and the object *kasa* ‘umbrella’ in the second

¹² To be clear, a subject contrastive *wa*-phrase in clause-initial position can thus be either a contrastive topic or a contrastive *wa*-phrase without the topical interpretation.

conjunct. The meaning of the sentence is not that the first conjunct is about rain and the second conjunct is about an umbrella. It is also not that rain is contrasted with an umbrella. Rather, what are contrasted are the events described by the two conjuncts. As ((28)b) demonstrates, this context does not permit the *wa*-phrase in the second conjunct to move to clause-initial position. The example in ((28)a) is modified from one cited in Kuno (1973: 46) attributed to Minoru Nakau (p.c.).

- (27) [Seeing someone worried]
 doo sita no desu ka?
 how did NMZ COP Q
 ‘What’s happened? / What’s wrong?’
- (28) a. [AME-WA hutteiru-ga] [John-ga KASA-WA motte-ik-anakatta].
 rain-WA falling.is-but John-NOM umbrella-WA bring-go-not.PAST
 b. #[AME-WA hutteiru-ga] [KASA-WA_i John-ga t_i motte-ik-anakatta].
 rain-WA falling.was-but umbrella-WA John-NOM bring-go-not.PAST
 ‘It was raining, but John did not bring an umbrella.’

Thirdly, it is possible to stress a verb and mark it with *wa* when it is explicitly contrasted with another verb, which is possible in a context like (29). In (30), each conjunct contains a *wa*-marked verb. As ((30)b) shows, the verbs cannot be moved to clause-initial position.

- (29) kotosi-no gakusee-no siken-no zyunbi-wa doo desu ka?
 this year-GEN student-GEN exam-GEN preparation-WA how COP Q
 ‘How is the exam preparation by this year’s students?’
- (30) a. [John-ga ano hon-o KAI-WA sita-ga], [sore-o YOMI-WA site-inai].
 John-NOM that book-ACC buy-WA did-but it-ACC read-WA do-ASP.not
 b. #[KAI-WA_i John-ga ano hon-o t_i sita-ga], [YOMI-WA_j sore-o t_j site-inai].
 buy-WA John-NOM that book-ACC did-but read-wa it-ACC do-ASP.not
 ‘John bought that book, but he hasn’t read it.’

The infelicity of the example in (30b) cannot be reduced to the idea that verbs are moved into phrasal positions. Even if the verbs are nominalised and marked with *wa*, they cannot be moved to clause-initial position:

- (31) a. [John-ga ano hon-o KAU-NO-WA sita-ga], [sore-o YOMU-NO-WA site-inai].
 John-NOM that book-ACC buy-NMZ-WA did-but it-ACC read-NMZ-WA do-ASP.not
 b. #[KAU-NO-WA_i John-ga ano hon-o t_i sita-ga], [YOMU-NO-WA_j sore-o t_j site-inai].
 buy-NMZ-WA John-NOM that book-ACC did-but read-NMZ-wa it-ACC do-ASP.not
 Lit.: ‘John has done the buying of that book, but he hasn’t done the reading of it.’

Finally, a contrastive *wa*-phrase can answer the *wh*-part of a preceding question, with the implicature discussed above, namely that the statement may not be true for a stronger alternative. We saw this for a subject in (21). In the case of an object, such a *wa*-phrase appears in-situ, and as ((33)b) shows, it cannot move to clause-initial position.¹³

¹³ Kuroda (1965, 2005) and Oshima (2008) suggest with examples like ((21)) and ((32))/((33)) that contrastive *wa* is like focal particles such as *mo* ‘also’ and *sae* ‘even’. Moreover, the prosodic properties of a contrastive *wa*-phrase are very much like those of focus: they bear an emphatic stress (raised *f₀*-peak), are followed by suppression of pitch movement and can be the sole focal accent of the sentence (Nakanishi 2001, Hara 2006, Ishihara 2007, Oshima 2008, Tomioka 2010). I will not discuss this issue further here.

- (32) John-wa nani-o katta no?
 John-WA what-ACC bought Q
 ‘What did John buy?’
- (33) a. John-wa OSENBEE-WA tikaku-de katta (kedo, KUKKII-WA kaw-anakatta).
 John-WA rice.crackers-WA near-at bought but cookie-WA buy-not.PAST
 b. #OSENBEE-WA_i John-wa t_i tikaku-de katta (kedo, KUKKII-WA kaw-anakatta).
 rice.crackers-WA John-WA near-at bought but cookies-WA buy-not.PAST
 ‘John bought rice crackers nearby, but (he) didn’t buy cookies.’

In sum, in the discourse contexts that allow a contrastive *wa*-phrase in-situ, the *wa*-phrase cannot optionally move to clause-initial position. Conversely, in a discourse context that requires a contrastive *wa*-phrase to function as a contrastive topic, the relevant *wa*-phrase must move to clause-initial position, as we saw in Section 3.

4.3 Syntax-information structure mapping

The second syntactic argument concerns considerations at the interface between syntax and information structure. It is well-known that at the level of information structure, a focus-background structure can be embedded inside the comment of a topic, but a topic-comment structure cannot be part of the background of a focus, an observation initially noted by the Prague School tradition (Hajičová, et al. 1998).

(34) Information Structure

- a. topic [comment FOCUS [background]]
 b. *FOCUS [background topic [comment]]

As discussed in Section 3, Neeleman & van de Koot (2008) argue that the sister constituent of a fronted topic is interpreted as the comment. They argue similarly that the sister constituent of a fronted focus is interpreted as the background.

(35) Syntax – Information structure

- a. XP_i [_{YP} t_i]
 | Topiccomment
 b. XP_i [_{YP} t_i]
 | Focusbackground

The two considerations in (34) and (35) together make predictions regarding the syntactic distribution of topic and focus, illustrated in (36): a focus can follow a fronted topic, because a focus is part of the comment, but a topic cannot follow a fronted focus, because a topic cannot be inside a background. Neeleman & van de Koot show in detail that the predictions are correct for Dutch. The cross-linguistic observation that topics generally precede foci also partially confirm the predictions (Hajičová, et al. 1998).

(36) Syntax

- a. topic_i [_{YP} FOCUS t_i]
 b. *FOCUS_i [_{YP} topic t_i]

The prediction in ((36)a) is superfluously borne out in Japanese because topics must occupy clause-initial position. The prediction in ((36)b) may at first seem untestable due to the same requirement, and therefore the above considerations regarding mapping between syntax-information structure in (35) may appear irrelevant for this language. However, close examination of examples involving embedded clauses demonstrates that the prediction in

((36)b) is correct and the mapping considerations in (35) are hence relevant for Japanese. Furthermore, and more importantly, it is only those contrastive *wa*-phrases displaced to clause-initial position that show the predicted distribution of ‘topic’ in (36).¹⁴

First, it is possible for a contrastive topic to appear in an embedded clause, as shown in (38), which can be uttered in a context such as (37). The context makes *ano CD* ‘that CD’ a contrastive topic, as it shifts the topic of discourse from *the book*. The presence of *kare* ‘his’, that is coreferential with the matrix subject *Bill*, ensures that the embedded clause is indeed embedded and not a direct quotation (Fukui 1995).

(37) Context: John finds a book on Sue’s desk and he asks Bill to tell him something about the book. Bill does not know anything about the book, but he knew how Sue obtained a CD that was also on the desk. So, he decides to tell John about the CD. In describing this situation, you utter (38).

(38) Bill_j-wa [_{CP} ANO CD-WA_i Mary-ga kare_j-no mise-de Sue-ni t_i ageta-to] omotteiru.
 Bill-wa that CD-WA Mary-NOM he-GEN shop-at Sue-to gave-that thinking
 ‘Bill_j thinks that as for this CD, Mary gave it to Sue in his_j shop.’

Independently, a focus can undergo long-distance scrambling in cases of correction, for instance (Saito 1989, Miyagawa 2006). A focus employed for correction is generally considered an instance of ‘contrastive focus’, a term I adopt here. Thus, correcting the statement in (39), one could say (40), where the embedded indirect object provides correct information and is fronted to sentence-initial position:¹⁵

(39) Bill_j-wa [_{CP} Mary-ga Jane-ni ano CD-o kare_j-no mise-de ageta to] omotteiru.
 Bill-WA Mary-NOM Jane-to that CD-ACC he-GEN shop-at gave that thinking
 ‘Bill_j thinks that Mary gave this CD to Jane in his_j shop.’
 (40) ie, SUE-NI_i Bill_j-wa [_{CP} Mary-ga t_i ano CD-o kare_j-no mise-de
 no Sue-to Bill-WA Mary-NOM that CD-ACC he-GEN shop-at
 ageta-to] omotteiru (ndayo).
 gave-that thinking PRT
 Lit.: ‘No. It’s to Sue that Bill_j thinks that Mary gave this CD in his_j shop.’

The precise prediction is that it should be impossible to combine the above two operations, as this will result in the unacceptable structure in (36)b. The prediction is borne out. In correcting the statement in (41), one cannot utter the example in (42). In (42), the embedded indirect object *Sue-ni* is a contrastive focus and is fronted to initial position of the embedding clause, while *ano-CD-wa* ‘that CD-wa’ functions as the contrastive topic and is moved to initial position in the embedded clause.

¹⁴ The ideas in (34)-(36) apply generally to topics and foci, contrastive and non-contrastive. The predictions are tested using contrastive types of topics and foci here, as the main aim of the paper concerns contrastive topics, and contrastive foci allow movement more easily than non-contrastive foci in Japanese.

¹⁵ Some of my informants allow long-distance scrambling of a focus also in answering a *wh*-question. Thus, they can utter (40) without *ie* ‘no’ as an answer to the question *to whom_i did Bill say that Mary gave this CD t_i in his shop?*. However, a contrastive interpretation is obligatorily accommodated even in such cases (Saito 1985, Miyagawa 2006, a.o.), suggesting that only the contrastive type can move long-distance.

- (41) Bill_j-wa [_{CP} Mary-ga Jenny-ni ano hon-o kare_j-no mise-de ageta to] omotteiru.
 Bill-WA Mary-NOM Jenny-to that book-ACC he-GEN shop-at gave that thinking
 ‘Bill_j thinks that Mary gave this book to Jenny in his_j shop.’
- (42) ie, Bill-wa ano hon-nituite-wa sir-anakatta-kedo,
 no Bill-WA that book-about-WA know-not.PAST-but
 ‘No, Bill didn’t know anything about the book, but...’
- *SUE-NI_i Bill_k-wa [_{CP} ANO CD_j-WA Mary-ga kare_k-no mise-de t_i t_j ageta to] omotteiru.
 Sue-to Bill-WA that CD-WA Mary-NOM he-GEN shop-at gave that thinking
 Lit.: ‘it’s to Sue_i that Bill_k thinks that as for this CD_j, Mary gave it_j to her_i in his_k shop.’

Crucially, the sentence is acceptable if the contrastive focus remains in-situ, which is an available option in the same context:

- (43) ... Bill_k-wa [_{CP} ANO CD-WA_j Mary-ga kare_k-no mise-de SUE-NI t_j ageta to] omotteiru.
 ... Bill-WA this CD-WA Mary-NOM he-GEN shop-at Sue-to gave that thinking
 ‘... Bill_k thinks that as for this CD_j, Mary gave it_j to Sue in his_k shop.’

On the other hand, contrastive *wa*-phrases in-situ are not subject to the syntactic distribution predicted for ‘topic’ in ((36)b). The utterance in (44) contains a contrastive *wa*-phrase in-situ in the embedded clause. Its non-topical interpretation is made explicit by the modifier ‘at least’. In correcting this statement, it is possible to front the contrastive focus *Sue-o* ‘Sue-ACC’ from within the embedded clause to sentence-initial position, as illustrated in (45). The contrast between (45) and (42) is unexpected if all contrastive *wa*-phrases were contrastive topics. Moreover, the acceptability of (45) shows that the unacceptability of (42) cannot be due to Relativized Minimality (Rizzi 1990) or an intervention effect (Beck & Kim 1997), caused by a contrastive focus crossing a contrastive *wa*-phrase. In the acceptable (45) too, the contrastive focus moves across a contrastive *wa*-phrase.

- (44) Bill_j-wa [_{CP} Mary-ga sukunakutomo 3-NIN-NI-WA Jane-o kare_j-no mise-de
 Bill-WA Mary-NOM at.least 3-CL.-to-WA Jane-ACC he-GEN shop-at
 syookaisita to] omotteiru.
 introduced that thinking
 ‘Bill thinks that Mary introduced Jane to at least three people in his shop.’
- (45) ?ie, SUE-O_i Bill_j-wa [_{CP} Mary-ga sukunakutomo 3-NIN-NI-WA t_i
 no, Sue-ACC Bill-WA Mary-NOM at.least 3-CL.-to-WA
 kare_j-no mise-de syookaisita to] omotteiru (ndayo).
 he-GEN shop-at introduced that thinking PRT
 ‘No, it is Sue that Bill said that Mary introduced to at least three people in his shop.’

The same result obtains if the embedded direct object is a contrastive *wa*-phrase in-situ and the embedded indirect object is a contrastive focus undergoing long-distance scrambling: the latter may move to a position above the former, as illustrated in (47).

- (46) Bill_j-wa [_{CP} Mary-ga Jane-ni sukunakutomo 3-NIN-WA kare_j-no mise-de
 Bill-WA Mary-NOM Jane-to at.least 3-CL.-WA he-GEN shop-at
 syookaisita to] omotteiru.
 introduced that thinking
 ‘Bill_j thinks that Mary introduced at least three people to Jane in his_j shop.’

- (47) ?ie, SUE-NI_i Bill_j-wa [_{CP} Mary-ga t_i sukunakutomo 3-NIN-WA
 no, Sue-to Bill-WA Mary-NOM at.least 3-CL.-WA
 kare_j-no mise-de syookaisita to] omotteiru (ndayo).
 he-GEN shop-at introduced that thinking PRT
 ‘No, it is to Sue_i that Bill_j said that Mary introduced at least three people to her_i in his_j shop.’

In sum, contrastive *wa*-phrases that have not been displaced to clause-initial position are not contrastive topics: they are not necessarily interpreted as what the rest of the sentence is about, they cannot optionally undergo movement and they do not show the syntactic distribution of ‘topic’ that is predicted by considerations at the interface.

5 NON-CONTRASTIVE *WA*-PHRASES IN POSITIONS OTHER THAN CLAUSE-INITIAL POSITION

We saw in Section 3 that a non-contrastive topic must occupy clause-initial position. The relevant example for a subject is repeated below.

- (9) ano inu-nituite nanika osiete-kudasai.
 that dog-about something tell-please
 ‘Tell me something about that dog.’
- (10) a. ano inu-wa kinoo kooen-de John-o kande-simatta.
 that dog-WA yesterday park-at John-ACC bite-ended.up
 b. #John-o_i ano inu-wa kinoo kooen-de t_i kande-simatta.
 John-ACC that dog-WA yesterday park-at bite-ended.up
 ‘The dog bit John in the park yesterday.’

However, there are some circumstances under which a non-contrastive *wa*-marked phrase can appear in other positions (Kuroda 1988, Watanabe 2003). One such instance is in answering an object *wh*-question where a *wa*-marked subject is already introduced in the question. As shown in (49)b, the object in the answer in this context can be scrambled to a position above the *wa*-marked subject.

- (48) ano inu-wa dare-o kande-simatta no?
 that dog-WA who-ACC bite-ended.up Q
 ‘Who did the dog bite?’
- (49) a. ano inu-wa kinoo kooen-de JOHN-O kande-simatta.
 that dog-WA yesterday park-at John-ACC bite-ended.up
 b. JOHN-O_i ano inu-wa kinoo kooen-de t_i kande-simatta.
 John-ACC that dog-WA yesterday park-at bite-ended.up
 ‘The dog bit John in the park yesterday.’

If the current proposal that sentence topics must occupy clause-initial position is on the right track, the *wa*-phrase in (49)b cannot be a topic. Moreover, notice that what precedes it is a fronted focus. We saw in the previous section that a moved focus cannot precede a sentence topic. Thus, on the latter considerations too, the *wa*-phrase in (49)b cannot be a sentence topic. In Section 2, I argued with an analogous exchange to (48)/(49) in English that in this kind of context the subject in the answer is not a sentence topic, but an anaphoric item referring back to the discourse topic. I propose that in the above exchange too, the *wa*-marked phrase in the

question introduces its referent as the topic of discourse, while the *wa*-marked subjects in the replies are discourse anaphoric items that refer back to the discourse topic.^{16,17} This explains why *ano inu-wa* in (49) is not subject to the clause-initialness requirement for topics, unlike the same phrase in (10). That *ano inu-wa* ‘that dog-wa’ in the question in (48) is indeed a sentence topic is confirmed by the fact that according to my informants it must appear in clause-initial position, as shown above, if the question is uttered discourse-initially. On the other hand, if the discourse has been about the violent behaviour of a particular dog, for instance, and the dog is thus given in the discourse, the accusative *wh*-phrase can precede it.¹⁸

The same observation obtains in cases of correction where a fronted object may precede a *wa*-marked subject, as illustrated below. I argue that the same considerations apply here. Assuming that the statement in (50) is uttered discourse-initially, the *wa*-marked subject *ano inu-wa* ‘that dog-wa’ is a sentence topic, introducing its referent as the topic of discourse. Consequently, the *wa*-marked subjects in the correcting statements in (51) are not sentence topics, but items referring back to the discourse topic.

- (50) *ano inu-wa* Bill-o kande-simatta.
 that dog-WA Bill-ACC bite-ended.up
 ‘The dog bit Bill yesterday.’
- (51) a. ie, *ano inu-wa* kinoo kooen-de JOHN-O kande-simatta (no desu yo).
 no that dog-WA yesterday park-at John-ACC bite-ended.up NMZ COP PRT
 b. ie, JOHN-O_i *ano inu-wa* kinoo kooen-de t_i kande-simatta (no desu yo).
 no John-ACC that dog-WA yesterday park-at bite-ended.up NMZ COP PRT
 ‘No, the dog bit John in the park yesterday.’

One may wonder whether ((10)b) is infelicitous because object fronting is disallowed in this context, rather than because the topic is not in clause-initial position. However, there are arguments that ((10)b) is infelicitous because the topic is not in clause-initial position. First, as was demonstrated by (11)/(12), an object topic must also appear in clause-initial position, where no question of whether fronting of another argument is legitimate arises. Secondly, the object in ((10)b) is arguably moved out of VP-focus, the latter providing new information regarding the topic. There are other acceptable instances of object moving out of a focused VP across a subject *wa*-phrase, at least for some speakers, as illustrated in (52)/(53). The subject *wa*-phrase in (53) is a discourse anaphoric item that refers back to the discourse topic introduced in the preceding question. The acceptability of (53) indicates that ((10)b) is infelicitous because of the position of the sentence topic, not because of the object fronting.

¹⁶ In the corresponding English example in (4), the subject in the answer is a pronominal, while in (48)/(49), a full DP is repeated. Pronominals in Japanese have certain social implications and are not frequently used (Shibatani 1990). Being a pro-drop language, discourse anaphoric items are often not overtly expressed. However, there is some evidence that an item must be mentioned twice before it can be pro-dropped (Clancy 1980), and no awkwardness is present due to the repeated use of the full DP in (49).

¹⁷ Kuroda (1988) suggests that in examples such as ((49)b) and (51)b, the *wa*-phrase is a ‘downgraded’ topic, behaving like a parenthetical, (see also Saito 1985). See Sheard (1991) for arguments against Kuroda’s view.

¹⁸ It is possible for the subjects in (49) to be marked with the nominative case marker, instead of *wa*. However, such sentences have particular rhetorical effects, which I leave aside here. See Hinds, et al. (1987) for discussion. Moreover, the subject in the question in (49) can be marked with the nominative case marker, but in such a case the *wh*-phrase must precede it, giving rise to a different information structure (see Tomioka 2007). Crucially, such a question cannot be uttered discourse-initially, so I will leave such cases aside here.

- (52) ano inu-wa kinoo nani-o sita no?
 that dog-WA yesterday what-ACC did Q
 What did the dog do yesterday?
- (53) JOHN-O_i ano inu-wa kinoo [_{VP} t_i kooen-de kande-simai-masi-ta]_{FOC}.
 John-ACC that dog-WA yesterday park-in bite-end.up-POLITE-PAST

There is also some syntactic evidence that non-contrastive *wa*-phrase that is not in clause-initial position is not a sentence topic. The evidence comes from the sensitivity to island constraints. As noted in Section 3, it is a widely adopted view that a non-contrastive, nominal topic is base-generated in a left-peripheral position, binding an empty pronominal in the thematic position, illustrated in (54).

- (54) Topic_i [_{TP} *pro*_i]

This analysis explains the well-known observation that a non-contrastive topic can be linked to a position inside an island.¹⁹ The point is often illustrated with a relative clause in the literature (Kuno 1973, Saito 1985), but the same can be shown with a simpler example in (55), where the *wa*-phrase is interpreted as the possessor of the subject. The *pro* can be overt.

- (55) John_i-wa kyonen [_{NP} *pro*_i / kare_i-no ototo]-ga Mary-to kekkonsita.
 John-WA last.year he-GEN brother-NOM Mary-with married
 ‘Speaking of John, his brother married Mary last year.’

If the proposal that a sentence topic must be licensed in clause-initial position is on the right track, it seems plausible that the structure in (54) is associated with non-contrastive sentence topics, rather than those *wa*-phrases that refer to discourse topics, which need not appear in clause-initial position.²⁰ If this is the case, we predict that a non-contrastive topic can take part in a structure like (55), but a *wa*-phrase referring back to a discourse topic cannot. The prediction is correct in both cases. The sentence in (55) is a felicitous answer to the request *John-nituite nanika osiete-kudasai* ‘tell me something about John’.

Testing the prediction for a *wa*-phrase referring back to a discourse topic is a little more complex and requires the following ingredients. (i) The phrase that is marked with *wa* in the answer must be mentioned as a sentence topic in the preceding question. (ii) In the answer, a fronted focus should be present, preceding the *wa*-phrase, to ensure independently on the interface grounds discussed in Section 4.3 that the *wa*-phrase in the answer is not a sentence topic. (iii) Fronting of a focused object is permitted in answering an object *wh*-question and is most natural if other items in the answer remained the same as in the question. Considering that we are attempting to see if a *wa*-phrase could bind a position inside the subject, it must already do so in the question. These ingredients yield the question in (56). As indicated, the reply in (57) is infelicitous. The discourse in (58)/(59) illustrates the same point in a case of correction (see Samek-Lodovici (2008) for a similar distinction in Italian).

¹⁹ Kuroda (1986a,b), Sakai (1994) and Ishizuka (2010) argue that topicalisation always involves movement, but the possibility of linking to a position inside a relative clause is still considered a characteristic of (a construction that feeds into) topicalisation.

²⁰ Kishimoto (2009) claims that *wa*-marked phrases always move to the CP-zone. Crucially, he claims that the movement can be covert. The data in Section 3 show that the clause-initialness requirement pertains to overt syntax. My suggestion is that *wa*-phrases referring back to discourse topics are not base-generated and surface in the configuration in (54), an option that can be made compatible with Kishimoto’s proposal.

- (56) John-wa kyonen [_{NP} *pro*_i ototoo]-ga dare-to kekkonsita no?
 John-WA last.year younger.brother-NOM who-with married Q
 ‘Speaking of John, who did his brother marry last year?’
- (57) # MARY-TO_j John_i-wa kyonen [_{NP} *pro*_i ototoo]-ga t_j kekkonsita.
 Mary-with John-WA lat year younger.brother-NOM married
 ‘John’s brother married Mary last year.’
- (58) John-wa kyonen [_{NP} *pro*_i ototoo]-ga Jane-to kekkonsita.
 John-WA last.year younger.brother-NOM Jane-with married
 ‘Speaking of John, his brother married Jane last year.’
- (59) # ie, MARY-TO_j John-wa kyonen [_{NP} *pro*_i ototoo]-ga t_j
 no Mary-with John-WA last.year younger.brother-NOM
 kekkonsita (no desu yo).
 married NMZ COP PRT
 ‘No, John’s brother married Mary last year.’

Thus, only sentence topics can be base-generated and licensed in a dislocated, left-peripheral position, and although items referring back to discourse topics are also marked with non-contrastive *wa*, they do not have the same syntactic properties. As discussed in Section 2, grammatical relevance of this distinction between a sentence topic and items that refer back to discourse topics is widely observed in a variety of languages. The data in this section show that the distinction is also relevant in Japanese.

It is not the main aim of this section to offer an analysis of what the function of the non-contrastive particle *wa* in general is. Suffice it to say that non-contrastive *wa* is not a marker of a sentence topic. One can maintain the standard view that a non-contrastive *wa* is a marker of ‘topic’, if a broad enough definition of ‘topic’, encompassing both sentence topics and discourse topics, discussed in Section 2, is adopted. The main aim here is to demonstrate that a sentence topic is associated with a set of syntactic properties distinct from items that refer back to discourse topics. One such property is the obligatory clause-initialness, a property shared with contrastive topics.

In summary, it is possible for a non-contrastive *wa*-phrase to appear in positions other than clause-initial position. However, like contrastive *wa*-phrases, non-contrastive *wa*-phrases in such positions are not sentence topics in the sense adopted in this paper. They can follow a fronted focus and they are not licensed in a dislocated position. Thus, the generalisation that a sentence topic in Japanese, contrastive or non-contrastive, must appear in clause-initial position remains intact.

6 ONE TOPIC PER CLAUSE

I now turn to a further prediction of the current proposal. The requirement that topics appear in clause-initial position predicts that there can be no more than one topic in a clause because there is only one clause-initial position. It is shown in this section that the prediction is borne out. A clause may contain multiple *wa*-phrases.²¹ In the following examples, the stressed

²¹ It is sometimes reported that multiple non-contrastive *wa*-phrases sound a little awkward, though multiple contrastive *wa*-phrases are fine (Tomioka 2010). However, a *wa*-marked adverbial may precede a *wa*-marked subject without either *wa*-phrase being interpreted as contrastive, as shown below (Kuroda 1965, 1986a, 1988):

(i) kinoo-wa ano inu-wa kooene-de John-o kande-simatta.
 yesterday-WA that dog-WA park-in John-ACC bite-ended.up

object *Bill-wa* is a contrastive *wa*-phrase, while the subject *ano inu-wa* ‘that dog-wa’ is a non-contrastive *wa*-phrase. The order between the two arguments can be reversed.

- (60) a. *ano inu-wa* *BILL-WA* *moo sudeni* *kyonen* *kandeiru*.
 that dog-WA Bill-WA already last.year bite-PERF.
 b. *BILL-WA_i* *ano inu-wa* *moo sudeni* *kyonen* *t_i* *kandeiru*.
 Bill-WA that dog-WA already last.year bite-PERF.
 ‘That dog has already bitten Bill last year.’

If a sentence topic must be licensed in clause-initial position, only the left-most *wa*-phrase in each of the above examples should display the characteristics we identified to be of sentence topics in Sections 3-5. First, in the discourse contexts that force a *wa*-phrase to be a non-contrastive topic or contrastive topic, the relevant *wa*-phrase must appear clause-initially. Thus, in a reply to the request in (61), *ano inu-wa* ‘that dog-wa’ must precede *Bill-wa*, as (62) shows. *Bill-wa* is interpreted only contrastively and not as a topic, as discussed in Section 4. Thus, (62)a can imply that the speaker is uncertain about whether the dog had bitten someone else, or the contrast can be projected to the VP-level with the implicature that the dog has not yet committed any other violent act (see discussion around (28)).

- (61) *ano inu-nituite* *nanika* *osiete-kudasai*
 that dog-about something tell-please
 ‘Tell me about that dog.’
 (62) a. *ano inu-wa* *BILL-WA* *moo sudeni* *kyonen* *kandeiru*. (= (65a))
 that dog-WA Bill-WA already last.year bite-PERF.
 b. *#BILL-WA_i* *ano inu-wa* *moo sudeni* *kyonen* *t_i* *kandeiru*. (= (65b))
 Bill-WA that dog-WA already last.year bite-PERF.

Similarly, if *Bill-wa* is a contrastive topic, it must occupy clause-initial position, as illustrated by the answers in (64) to the question in (63). *Ano inu-wa* ‘that dog-wa’ in (64) is not a topic, but only refers back to the discourse topic, as discussed in Section 5.

- (63) *ano inu-wa* *John-o* *kanda* *no?*
 that dog-WA John-ACC bit Q
 ‘Did that dog bite John?’
 (64) *hmm,* *John-wa* *doo-ka* *sir-anai-kedo,*
 well, John-WA how-whether know-not-but
 ‘Well, I don’t know about John, but...’
 a. *#ano inu-wa* *BILL-WA* *moo sudeni* *kyonen* *kandeiru*. (= (65a))
 that dog-WA Bill-WA already last.year bite-PERF.
 b. *BILL-WA_i* *ano inu-wa* *moo sudeni* *kyonen* *t_i* *kandeiru*. (= (65b))
 Bill-WA that dog-WA already last.year bite-PERF.

A second piece of evidence is that a contrastive *wa*-phrase following a non-contrastive *wa*-phrase cannot optionally move to clause-initial position. As discussed in Section 4.2, this is a characteristic of contrastive *wa*-phrases that are not topics.

I propose that *kinoo* here is the topic, while *ano inu-wa* is referring back to a discourse topic. (i) cannot be used where the subject is a topic: it cannot answer the request *tell me about the dog*. Rather, it is more naturally used as an answer to a question such as *I know that the dog bit Bill today, but what about yesterday?*

- (65) John-wa ziken-genba-de kyuuzyo-no tetsudai-o sita no?
 John-WA accident-scene-at rescue-GEN help-ACC did Q
 ‘Did John help with the rescue operation at the accident scene?’
- (66) a. hai, John-wa 3-NIN-WA tasuketa.
 yes, John-WA 3-CL.-WA rescued
 ‘Yes, John rescued at least three people.’
 b. # hai, 3-NIN-WA_i John-wa t_i tasuke-ta.
 yes 3-CL.-WA John-WA rescued

The data in (61)-(66) clearly show that a clause can contain no more than one topic, further supporting the proposed idea that topics must be licensed in clause-initial position.²²

7 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO TOPICS

In this section, I compare my proposal with other analyses with some similar ideas. In particular, I consider three that adopt a compositional approach to contrastive topics, and the so-called cartographic approach (Rizzi 1997), which treats topics as occupying one of the highest positions in a clause. First, Wagner (2008) proposes that contrastive topics in German and English can be decomposed into two attributes. On his view, a configuration which involves a contrastive topic and a focus is an instance of a structure involving two nested focus operators, such as the following (Wagner 2008: 10):

- (67) [_{FOC.OP1} Even] the most poisonous snake frightens [_{FOC.OP2} only] Bill.

Here, the focus operator *even* takes scope over the other focus operator *only*. Adopting Rooth’s (1985, 1992) Alternative Semantics to focus, Wagner demonstrates that the constituent marked with *only* must be part of every alternative in the set of alternatives generated by the focus *even the most poisonous snake* for the sentence to make sense.

Wagner argues that what is usually considered a contrastive topic corresponds to the item associated with the focus operator with the wider scope. Being a kind of focus, a contrastive topic generates a set of alternatives. The ‘uncertainty’ implicature derives from the tune associated with the construction involving a contrastive topic and a focus, namely the combination of A-accent and B-accent in English or the HAT contour in German. On the analysis proposed in this paper, generation of a set of alternatives and the ‘uncertainty’ implicature are both part of the semantics associated with contrastive *wa*. Thus, on Wagner’s

²² The test that a non-contrastive topic, but not a *wa*-phrases referring back to a discourse topic, is island-insensitive, discussed in Section 5, is difficult to test here. The exact prediction is that a non-contrastive *wa*-phrase following a contrastive *wa*-phrase cannot bind an empty pronominal inside an island. For a contrastive *wa*-phrase to move to clause-initial position, however, it must be a contrastive topic. A context that requires it to be a contrastive topic would be the equivalent of something like (i)/(ii). However, the exchange is already infelicitous at the first line of the response. The question introduces *ano onnanoko* ‘that girl’ as the topic and speakers have a strong intuition that the question is about ‘that girl’. Thus, it is strange to respond with an utterance which introduces *Mary* as a topic potentially contrasting with *ano onnanoko*.

- (i) ano onnanoko_i-wa kinoo [_{NP} *pro*_i ototoo]-ga Mary-o mikaketa no?
 ‘Speaking of that girl, did her younger brother see Mary yesterday?’
 (ii) # hmm, Mary-wa doo-ka sir-anai kedo,
 ‘Well, I don’t know about Mary, but...’
 BILL-WA_k ano onnanoko_i-wa [_{NP} *pro*_i ototoo]-ga t_k mikaketa.
 Bill-WA that girl-WA younger.brother-NOM saw
 ‘as for Bill_j, the girl’s brother saw him_j.’

account the two distinct attributes of a contrastive topic are (i) generation of a set of alternatives and (ii) the uncertainty implicature; and on the account proposed here, they are (i) generation of a set of alternatives and the uncertainty implicature, and (ii) the discourse function of sentence topic.

One might wonder whether Wagner's analysis can be carried over to Japanese, with contrastive *wa* corresponding to the tune implicating uncertainty, and the emphatic stress indicating its focal status. However, if contrastive topic is a kind of focus, it is difficult to maintain the generalisations that hold of contrastive topics and non-contrastive topics. For instance, it is unclear why contrastive topics, like non-contrastive topics, are interpreted as what the sentence is about. Focus is not usually what the sentence is about. Moreover, specifically for Japanese, it is surprising that contrastive topics, like non-contrastive topics, must occupy clause-initial position, while contrastive foci need not, a property which is demonstrated by examples such as (43) and (48)/(49).

Tomioka (2010) proposes an analysis of Japanese contrastive topics along a similar line to Wagner's. According to Tomioka, the emphatic stress of a contrastive *wa*-phrase gives it a focal status, generating a set of alternatives. Following Krifka (2001), he assumes that Speech Act is represented in the syntax as SpeechActP and as such it can be manipulated in the semantics. The particle *wa* is a marker for topic and a *wa*-marked item can be out of the scope of a speech act. Consequently, the alternatives generated by the presence of a stressed *wa*-marked item are alternative speech acts and not alternative propositions as typically assumed for focus. Uncertainty arises as a result of selection out of a set of alternative speech acts, as opposed to selection out of a set of propositions. In contrast to Wagner's analysis, the claim that *wa* is a topic marker would explain why the discourse function of topic is associated with contrastive topics despite its focal status. However, Tomioka's analysis, like others in the literature, does not distinguish *wa*-phrases in-situ from those displaced to clause-initial position and therefore cannot explain the distributional and interpretive facts of *wa*-phrases discussed in this article. Specifically, we saw that contrastive *wa*-phrases that appear in-situ, as opposed to those that have moved to clause-initial position, are not interpreted as what the rest of the sentence is about, they cannot undergo movement to clause-initial position and they are not subject to the syntactic distribution of a 'topic' that is predicted by considerations at the interface.

Kuroda (2005) argues that a contrastive *wa*-phrase is not necessarily a contrastive topic: it can simply have a particular contrastive entailment with respect to its alternatives. Assuming that topics in general appear in SpecCP, he suggests, though without much discussion, that if the subject is a contrastive *wa*-phrase, it could also be a topic, i.e., a contrastive topic (Kuroda 2005: appendix II). The proposal put forward in this article shares and explicates the intuition behind this compositional analysis of contrastive topics in Japanese and the data presented here confirm this intuition. I have argued and demonstrated with object contrastive *wa*-phrases that contrastive *wa*-phrases generally have a particular contrastive interpretation, but only those displaced to in clause-initial position are contrastive topics.

Finally, there have been several accounts of the Japanese left-periphery in the cartographic approach (Rizzi 1997; for Japanese, see Watanabe 2003, Munakata 2006, Endo 2007, Kuwahara 2008), where a designated functional projection for topic, TopP, is postulated as one of the highest functional projections in the CP-domain of the clause, with the complement of Top⁰ interpreted as the comment. One may wonder whether the clause-initialness of topics can be derived from such clausal architecture. However, this approach faces some difficulties in capturing the observations presented in the previous sections. First, the particle *wa* is generally taken to be a manifestation of a 'syntactic' [+topic] feature on this approach. Thus, it clearly predicts that a *wa*-marked item should show syntactically uniform behaviour, which we saw in Sections 3-6 not to be the case for both contrastive and non-

contrastive instances. Moreover, it is often assumed that TopP is recursive (Rizzi 1997; Endo 2007 for Japanese). However, as we saw in Section 6, a clause may not contain more than one topic in Japanese and multiple *wa*-phrases in a clause are subject to ordering restrictions.

Secondly, it is generally assumed on the cartographic approach, that topics and foci that surface in clause-medial positions move to SpecTopP and SpecFocP, respectively at LF (Endo 2007, Kishimoto 2009, Tomioka 2010, among others).²³ On such an account, however, it is difficult to capture the observation discussed in Section 4.3 that a focus can follow a topic, but it cannot be moved to a position above the topic in the same context. The observed data are schematised below, repeated from (36):

(36) *Syntax*

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|---|
| a. topic _i | [_{YP} | FOCUS | t _i |] |
| b. *FOCUS _i | [_{YP} | topic | t _i |] |

Thus, if a topic and a focus appear in that order in clause-medial positions, they will both move at LF, but movement of the focus will create the illicit structure in (36)b at one stage. Moreover, scrambling of focus is generally optional, as we saw in (49) and (51). It is therefore not clear why it can only move at LF in the presence of a topic.

Finally, an example such as (68), where an adverbial precedes the non-contrastive topic *ano inu-wa* ‘that dog-wa’, is felicitous as a response to *tell me about that dog*. It has been pointed out to me that this observation is problematic for the current analysis and one may wonder whether it can perhaps be better accounted for under an approach with a more articulated left periphery, such as the cartographic approach or Tateishi’s (1994) account, who also proposes several projections for *wa*-marked phrases.

- (68) kinoo ano inu-wa kooen-de John-o kande-simat-ta
 yesterday that dog-WA park-at John-ACC bite-end.up-PAST
 ‘Yesterday that dog bit John at the park.’

On the current proposal, it is unclear why an adverbial may be disregarded for the purpose of satisfying the requirement for a sentence topic to occupy clause-initial position. However, it seems to me that an elaborate structure in the left periphery would not provide a more principled account than the current proposal.

First, in Tateishi’s account, the adverbial would presumably adjoin to his IP, the highest projection allowing adjunction and immediately dominates AgrP whose specifier a subject *wa*-phrase occupies, be it a sentence topic or an item referring back to a discourse topic on the notions assumed in this paper.²⁴ However, he also allows a scrambled object to be adjoined to the same IP in other contexts (Tateishi 1994: 112). We saw that this option is unavailable if the subject *wa*-phrase is a sentence topic, ((10)b), but is available if it is referring back to a discourse topic. Thus, on Tateishi’s account too, additional assumptions

²³ The definitions of topics and foci assumed by these authors are much broader than the definitions adopted here. Crucially, they do not make a distinction between what I call sentence topics and items referring back to discourse topics, or contrastive topics and contrastive *wa*-phrases, hence the description ‘clause-medial topics’.

²⁴ Tateishi (1994) assumes four functional projections whose specifiers a *wa*-marked phrase may occupy: CP>ModP>IP>AgrP. CP, ModP and IP are reserved for conditional topics, pure topics (his terminology; akin to what is commonly known as hanging topics), and major subject, respectively, and a *wa*-marked subject occupies SpecAgrP. A further problem with Tateishi’s approach is that in a response to the request *tell me about x*, where *x* in the reply is the subject, it is unclear why the specifiers of the higher projections must remain unoccupied.

are required to explain why an adverbial can be adjoined to IP, but not an object, if the subject *wa*-phrase is a sentence topic.

Secondly, under the cartographic approach, one may argue for a designated projection for the adverbial above the higher TopP. An obvious candidate is ModP, which Rizzi (2002) proposes below lower TopP for Italian, but there appears to be no principled reason to posit ModP above TopP in Japanese, except to capture the data in (68). In both my approach and the cartographic approach, one option is to argue that an adverbial in examples like (68) need not be part of the ‘comment’ of the topic. As far as I know, however, we currently understand very little about the notion comment independently of topic. The data such as (68) may thus shed light on what needs to be part of comment. I leave this issue for future research.

8 CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have provided a number of arguments that contrastive and non-contrastive topics are more alike than previously thought: they are both licensed in clause-initial position and the displacement to this position is motivated by its effects at the interface. First, in specific contexts that require contrastive topics, the relevant contrastive *wa*-phrase must appear in clause-initial position, like their non-contrastive counterparts. I have also argued that those contrastive *wa*-phrases that appear in-situ are not topics: they have discourse and syntactic properties that are different from their counterparts in clause-initial position. They have a particular contrastive implicature, but are not necessarily understood as what the rest of the sentence is about. As for the syntactic properties, contrastive *wa*-phrases that can appear in-situ cannot optionally undergo movement to clause-initial position, contrary to the standard characterisation in the literature. Moreover, they are not subject to distributional constraints which derive from considerations at the interface between information structure and syntax. I have also shown that in a limited number of cases where a non-contrastive *wa*-phrase may occupy a position other than clause-initial position, such a phrase is not a sentence topic in the sense understood in this paper, but a discourse anaphoric item referring back to the discourse topic and shows different syntactic properties. Finally, the claim that a sentence topic is licensed in clause-initial position was shown to be further confirmed by the observation that a clause may contain no more than one sentence topic, as there is only one clause-initial position.

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