TOPIC PARTICLES IN LANGUAGES OF CHINA

中国语言的话题助词

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In this talk, I survey topic particles in a set of representative languages of China and represent their syntactic and semantic functions.

Structure:

A. Typological Survey
    1. No Topic Particle
    2. One Topic Particle
    3. Two Topic Particles
    4. Three Topic Particles
B. Semantic Properties
C. Syntactic Properties

A. Typological Survey

Summary:

Form	Language	Productive	Scope	Functions	Unrelated Functions
ba 吧	Chinese	No	NP	[MT, RT]	Illocutionary Particle
ne 呢	Chinese	No	NP	[MT, RT]	Illocutionary Particle
ma	Mangghuer 土族	No	NP	[MT, RT]	Illocutionary Particle
ŋuəɲi	Qiang 羌	Yes	NP	[MT, RT, CT]	---
nend	Hmu 苗	Yes	NP, VP	[MT, RT, CT]	Demonstrative, Illocutionary Particle
ge^{11}	Zaiwa 景颇	Yes	NP, VP	[MT, RT, CT]	---
nɔ^{33}	Neasu 彝	Yes	NP, VP	[MT, RT, CT]	(Demonstrative,) Definite Article
ne	Nuosu 彝	Yes	NP, VP	[MT, RT]	---
li	Nuosu 彝	Yes	NP, VP	[CT]	---
me	Tujia 土家	Yes	NP	[MT, RT]	---
le	Tujia 土家	Yes	NP	[CT]	---
nya	Lisu 傈僳	Yes	NP	[MT, RT]	---
xe	Lisu 傈僳	Yes	NP	[CT]	---
oci	Manchu 满	Yes	NP	[MT, RT, CT]+factual mood	Verb o- 'become, be'
seci	Manchu 满	Yes	NP	[MT, RT, CT]+factual mood	Verb se- 'say, call, mean'
seme	Manchu 满	Yes	NP	[MT, RT, CT]+hypothetical mood	Verb se- 'say, call, mean'

Topic Functions:
- Maintaining Topic (MT)
- Resuming Topic (RT)
- Contrastive Topic (CT)

1. **No Topic Particle**

- Maonan 毛南 (Lu, 2008)

In most Tai-Kadai languages, topics are not morphologically marked by a dedicated marker.

(1)   Maonan（毛南）   (Lu, 2008:229-231)

  a.   ka:i^5 ju:n^3 ha^3 li:u^5 Common Noun

      chicken   all   kill   PF

      'All the chickens were killed.'

  b.   van$^{1?}$ɲuŋ^1 tɔk^7 li:u^5 bu:ŋ^6 sai^{3}zi^2 Temporal Adverb

      yesterday   drop   PF   CL   key

      'A bunch of keys was missing yesterday.'

- Chinese 汉

In Chinese and Chinese dialects, there are no dedicated topic markers but some sentence-end particles can be used as topic markers. The sentence-end particles are not productive as topic markers. They mark maintaining or resuming but not contrastive topics.

      Chinese

(2) a.   你们   明天   来   这儿   **吧**！

      nǐmen   míngtiān   laí   zhè'er **ba**!

      2.PL   tomorrow   come here   ILL

      'Why don't you come here tomorrow?' (Illocutionary particle)

  b.   他   **吧**   总是   找   不   到   路。

      tā   **ba**   zongshi zhǎo bu   dào   lù.

      3.SG   TOP   always   search NEG   arrive road

      'He (topic), never finds his way.' (Topic particle)

(3) a.   他们   有   三   头   牛   **呢**。

      tāmen   yǒu   sān   tóu   niú   **ne**.

      3.PL   have   NUM:3 CL   cattle ILL

      'Listen, they have three cattle.' (In response to earlier claim by addressee)

  b.   他   **呢？**   去   哪儿？

      tā   **ne?**   qù   nǎr?

      3.SG   TOP   go   where

      'He? Where did he go?' (Used to ask question about someone present)

- Mangghuer 土族 (Slater 2003)

Mangghuer 土族 (Slater 2003) is a Mongolian language spoken in Qianghai Province. It has extensively borrowed from Chinese. Mangghuer does not use a specialized and dedicated form to mark topics. Mangghuer has borrowed from Chinese the imperative marker **ma** 嘛. This marker can also be used to mark topics.

(4)   Mangghuer（土族）   (Slater, 2003:189)

a.   Beghe   zhuer=sa   -Ø   huni   maoke-lang   Zero-marked Topic
      tree   bottom   **TOP**   smoke   Waft-OBJ:IMPERF

      'From the bottom of the tree smoke was wafting out.'

b.   Qi=ni   aba=ni   wazi=ni   He-ji   ri   **ma.**   **ma** as Imperative Marker
      2P SG=GEN father=GEN   sock=ACC   take-IMPERF   come   **ILL**

      'Bring your father's socks.'

c.   Ni-ge   luoti=ni   **-ma**   chuna   qi   musi.   **ma** as Topic Marker
      DEM-CL   boot=ACC   **TOP**   wolf   2P SG   wear

      'These boots, Wolf, you wear (them).'

2. One Topic Particle

-    Qiang 羌 (La Polla & Huang, 2003)

Qiang 羌 uses one topic marker, the suffix -**ŋuəɳi** which is optional. It can occur on initial noun phrases or on nominalized clauses, but it seems unavailable on verb phrases to function as conditional conjunction.

(5) a.   dʐ�ə-**ŋuəɳi**   qa   theː-ta   kə-ji-wa.   NP
           affair-**TOP**   1S   3S-LOC   thus-say-3S.O.1S

           'I told him about the affair.'

b.   [pətsa-ɳi-zə-pə-ji-panə-la-ha]-**ŋuəɳi**   qa   theː   de-l-wa   Nominalization
      just.now-ADV-DIR-buy-CSM-thing-DEM-PL-**TOP**   1S   3S   DIR-give-3S.O.1S

      'I gave him the things that were just bought.'

The topic marker can occur on any of up to three topics. It can mark maintaining and contrastive topic.

(6)   tsa-tau-tu-**ŋuəɳi**   kapətʂ-tou-**ŋuəɳi**   tsa-χsaʳwu   gul   ɦe-se-kei-stu...   Double Topics
      this-time-LNK-TOP   orphan-DEF.CL-TOP   this-few.all friend   DIR-make-INF.HS-PART

      'This time, the orphan had made friends with all these...'

(7)   pitɕ-**ŋuəɳi**   zmətʂi   ʂpi-ʂ,   qəːʳ-**ŋuəɳi**   juanʁuai   zmə   Maintaining &
      now-TOP   emperor call-LNK   before-TOP   yuanwai   be-named   Contrastive

      'Now he's called emperor, in the past, he was called Yuanwai.'

-    Hmu 苗 (own fieldwork)

In Hmu 苗, one of five demonstrative pronouns (encoding the value 'medium distance from speaker and addressee') has grammaticalized to become a topic marker.

(8)   Hmu（苗）

a.   maix ib   dail naix nongt gangl mongx hangd **nend**   dax.   Demonstrative Pronoun
      have NUM.1 CL   man will from 2P SG place **DEM.2.MED** come

      'There is someone who will be coming out from your place.'

b. dol   naix   **nend**   nongt   ait   gheb.   Noun Phrases
    CL   man   **TOP**   should do   work   Topic Particle

    'As for people, they should be working.'

c. (Hangd) hmat   not   **nend,** ghax   ax   vut.   Verb Phrases
    if   speak much   **TOP**   then   NEG   good   Topic Particle

    'If one speaks too much, it is for no good.'

- Zaiwa 景颇 (Lustig, 2010)

Zaiwa 景颇 is a Northern Burmish (Tibeto-Burman) language. In Zaiwa, topics can be marked by the marker ge^{11}. It is attached to noun phrases and to clauses (verb phrases). When ge^{11} is attached to clauses, it functions as conditional ('if') or causal ('since') conjunction.

(9)   Zaiwa（景颇）   (Lustig, 2010:149, 255)
a. Ngo^{31} **ge^{11}** $zang^{11}$ zo^{31} lye^{31}, $nang^{31}$ **ge^{11}** a^1-zo^{31} ra^{31} luq^1 Pronoun
    1P SG   **TOP**   food   eat   **also+I**   2P SG   **TOP**   NEG-eat   need   Y/N

    '[After drinking booze] I'm having rice, won't you have some?'

b. Zaq^1 zo^{11} lo^{31} r^{11} **ge^{11}**,   (…)   Conditional Conjunction
    only   eat   no.more+1   also   **TOP**

    'If the only thing we can do is starting eating, then…'

c. $Nang^{31}$ $muyang^{11}$ lye^{31} **ge^{11}**, hu^{31} a^1zeng^{35} be^1-yu^{31} bi^{11} raq^5 ma^{11}.   Causal Conjunction
    2P SG   also   TOP   **above** thing   help-take   give   VO   ROUS

    'Since you are tall, please grab that thing there up for me…'

- Neasu 彝 (Gerner, 2003)

The Neasu (彝) language spoken in Western Guizhou province has a topic marker derived from the medial demonstrative pronoun. The synchronic Neasu determiner system consist of the following six forms

	PROXIMAL	MEDIAL	DISTAL
Demonstratives	t^ha^{55}	na^{55}	ga^{55}
Definite articles	$t^hɔ^{33}$		$gɔ^{55}$
Topic marker		$nɔ^{33}$	

Table: Demonstratives, articles and topic marking in Weining Neasu

The three demonstrative pronouns underwent sound changes *(aphaeresis/apocope/tone lenition)*. They merged with the Neasu proto-classifier *mo which disappeared after the merger was complete.

		Aphaeresis		Apocope + Tone Lenition/Deletion	
Proximal Demonstrative	$t^ha^{55} + mo^{33}$	→	$t^ha^{55} + o^{33}$	→	$t^hɔ^{33}$
Medial Demonstrative	$na^{55} + mo^{33}$	→	$na^{55} + o^{33}$	→	$nɔ^{33}$
Distal Demonstrative	$ga^{55} + mo^{33}$	→	$ga^{55} + o^{33}$	→	$gɔ^{55}$

The topic marker **nɔ³³** has split from the medium demonstrative pronoun na⁵⁵ by first grammaticalizing into the definite article **nɔ³³**. **Nɔ³³** morphed later into a topic marker.

The noun phrase topic marker **nɔ³³** identifies all three major types of topic: maintaining topic, and resuming topic and contrastive topic. The marker **nɔ³³** is also productive as sentence topic marker. In different contexts, it can be interpreted as conditional, reason and circumstantial conjunction.

(10)   na²¹   ma³³   n̪dʑa³³,   na²¹   ɣo⁵⁵   a³³nɤ⁵⁵   **na⁵⁵**   lɤ³³   ɡa⁵⁵   ʨa³³   lɪ²¹   kʲɛ³³.″
        2 P SG NEG   tired, bother 2 P SG family woman **DEM.MED** CL CAUS take come SUG
        ' "Don't bother, allow <u>that</u> young woman in your house to bring [me the umbrella]." '

(11) a.   ɕɪ²¹   n̥³³tsʰɤ³³mi²¹   tʰɔ³³   **nɔ³³** ʈʂʰɛ⁵⁵ pʲɛ¹³.   Maintaining Topic
          3 P SG hair   ART:PROX **TOP** long   very   NP
          'Her hair (topic) is very long.' (NP topic)

      b.   ʨi⁵⁵ **nɔ³³** na²¹ ʐɔ³³-ma²¹-tsu⁵⁵ ɕɤ⁵⁵ ʨy³³ ʐɔ³³ sɤ¹³.   Resuming Topic
          wife **TOP** 2P SG beautiful<NEG> NOM NUM.9 CL   select   NP
          'As for the wives, accept only the nine ugly ones.'

      c.   na²¹   ʨʰi⁵⁵   nɪ⁵⁵   ʐɔ²¹   kʰɤ²¹   **nɔ³³** ɖʐo²¹ma⁵⁵dzu³³ ŋɤ⁵⁵.   Contrastive Topic
          2 P SG wife   NUM:2 CL   marry   **TOP** reasonable<NEG> COP   NP
          'It is not okay for you to marry two women.' (Sentence topic)

(12) a.   na²¹   ni³³   ma²¹   tʰɤ⁵⁵ **nɔ³³** kʰʲɛ²¹ tʰa²¹   kʲɛ¹³ tʰɤ⁵⁵ ŋo²¹   tʰu³³ʨi³³ kʰʲɛ⁵⁵ ʈʂʰɛ⁵⁵   Condition
          2P SG heart NEG put   **TOP** thread NUM.1 CL   bind   1P SG ankle   on   bind   Sentence Topic
          'If you feel uncomfortable about this, just bind a thread around my ankle.'

      b.   su²¹   a³³ma³³ ɣo²¹ **nɔ³³** zi²¹   pu³³   kʲɛ³³ ɕɪ²¹   ɡa⁵⁵ bi⁵⁵.   Reason
          people mother have **TOP** water bucket ACC   3P SG CAUS carry   Sentence Topic
          'People who have a mother are allowed to have a water bucket.'

      c.   ɕɪ²¹   na³³ **nɔ³³** ŋo²¹ la¹³ʈʂu³³ a⁵⁵   tʰa²¹   pɔ¹³ ʈʂʰə²¹ dɤ⁵⁵ka⁵⁵ ɕɪ²¹   ɡa⁵⁵ na³³.   Circumstance
          3P SG look **TOP** 1P SG finger   small NUM.1 CL   stretch exit   3P SG CAUS look   Sentence Topic
          'When he is looking, I just let him see my little finger.'

3. Two Topic Particles

- Nuosu 彝 (Gerner, 2013)

In Nuosu （彝） there are two topic particles, *ne* and *li*.

    ► *Ne* marks **maintaining topic** (a piece of information fits under the ongoing discourse topic).
    ► *Li* encodes **contrasting topic** (a change in discourse topic or unexpected information about the discourse topic).

(13)   Nuosu（彝）
    a.   mu ti   mu jy max su **li**   ket mop mu jy max su nge.   Common Noun
        morning star ART **TOP** evening star   ART   COP
        'The morning star is the evening star.' (Context: Someone might think that the morning star and the evening star are two different stars)

b.

mup shy dex	**ne**	vut nyop	yur nyip	nge.		Temporal Adverb
tomorrow	TOP	female name	birthday	COP		

'Tomorrow is Vunyo's birthday.' (Context: Question about tomorrow)

- ► *Ne* and *li* are common topic markers, but are not morphologically required.
- ► Topics can be zero-marked morphologically.

(14)

"**co qot a mat**$_1$	nga	**cyx**$_1$	shy	ap-	dop	mu	
sorceress	1P.SG	3P.SG	overcome	NEG-	able	ADVL	
TOPIC	A	O		V			

	la ru	**cy**$_1$	gax	zze	lox		bbo	ox"	ddix.
	dried meat	3P.SG	COV.drop	eat	CONJ.and		go	DP	QUOT
	O	A		V					

' "The sorceress, I could not overcome and the meat was taken away by her." ' (Chen & Wu 1998: 239)

- Tujia 土家 (Brassett, 2006)

In Tujia 土家, there are two topic markers the difference of which appears to be maintaining vs. contrastive topic:

(15)   Tujia（土家）

ka^3	**me**,	ang^{2}ni^1	la^{1}nie^{1}hi^{4}lie^3	wo^4	ya		Common Noun
firewood	**TOP**	1P PL	every day	carry	EXCL		

'Firewood, we carry [it] everyday.'

si^{1}lie^{1}onŋ^3	**le**,	guo^2	duo^{3}ra^{3}lie^3	nie^3	bu	ta^2	bo^3.		Temporal Noun
confinement	**TOP**	3P SG	egg	two	CL	fry	STAT		

'In her confinement, she fries two eggs for herself.' (Context: "Confinement" is the first month of a woman after she has given birth to a child.)

- Lisu 傈僳 (Hope, 1974)

In Lisu 傈僳, there are two topic markers **nya** and **xe**. The first is a topic marker in simple clauses, the second is a topic marker placed after the topic in the second clause of a conjunctive clause.

(16)   Lisu（傈僳）   (Hope 1974)

ale	**nya**	thsibe	thyea	asa	**xe**	atha	de-a
Ale	**TOP**	banjo	play	Asa	**and.TOP**	knife	forge

'Ale was playing the banjo and Asa was forging a knife.'

4. Three Topic Particles

- Manchu 满 (Gorelova 2002)

In Manchu 满, there are three topic markers which are diachronically derived from verbs, but which synchronically have come to mark NPs for topics.

Topic Particle	Origin	Function	Gloss
oci	o- 'become, be'	Factual NP-Topic Marker	'if being/becoming someone/something'
seci	se- 'say, call, mean'	Factual NP-Topic Marker	'if speaking about someone/something'
seme	se- 'say, call, mean'	Hypothetical NP-Topic Marker	'if we were to speak about someone/something'

The first two topic markers **oci** and **seci** are factual topic markers. They set the platform for facts reported about the topic. The topic marker **seme** introduces a hypothetical comment about the topic.

(17) Manchu（满）   (Gorelova 2002: 410)

    a. etuhun   urse   **oci** ehe   be   yabu-me   fafun be   neci-mbi. | Common Noun
        powerful people **TOP** make-CONV ACC make-CONV   law   ACC violate-IMPF

        'As for the powerful people, they make evil and violate the law.'

    b. tere   **seci** sin-i   deo. | Common Noun
        that/he **TOP** you-GEN   younger brother

        'As far as he is concerned, he is your younger brother.'

    c. uttu o-ho-de   teni niyalma **seme** jalan de   banji-re   de yertecun aku   o-mbi.
        so   if(be-NOM-DAT) then person **TOP** world DAT live-NOM DAT shame   exist.not become-IMPF

        'If so, then **a man**, while he were to live in the world, would not be ashamed.'

B. Semantic Properties

As a diagnostics of topics, we use Portner & Yabushita (1998)'s necessary conditions which are

- familiarity,
- aboutness,
- lack of quantitative implicature, and
- wide scope interpretations.

1. Familiarity

The topic must refer to an entity that is familiar in discourse. Many linguists characterize *definiteness* as familiarity to discourse participants (definiteness ≈ familiarity). Topic markers cannot occur after entities that are newly introduced into discourse.

- **Examples (a)**: New unfamiliar discourse participants can be introduced using a nominative case marker.
- **Examples (b)**: New unfamiliar discourse participants can**not** be introduced using a topic marker.

(18) Hmu（苗）

    a. dail jib daib **nend** nongt   duf dud. | Noun Phrases
        CL   child   **TOP** should   read book   Topic Particle

        'The child should be studying.'

    b. * jib daib **nend** nongt   duf dud. | Noun Phrases
          child   **TOP** should   read book   Topic Particle

        'Children should be studying.'

2. Aboutness

Topics are traditionally characterized as the entities the sentence is "about". The idea of aboutness can be illustrated with the following examples.

(19a) is taken from the opening section of a folk story. The first sentence of (19a) introduces the protagonist of the story. The second sentence establishes this new referent as major discourse topic by using the shifting topic marker *li*.[1]

(19)   Nuosu（彝）

a. ꈌꇐꆿꄉꃅꅋ꒰ꁨꋊꇭꈬꅋ꒝ꂷꇬ。 ꄿꁨꋊꋋꂷꆸꌒꈐꅋꀋꁧ，…

ga lu la da mu ddix	bbox zze	got gop	ddix	xip	ma	go
place name place	man	name	be called	DEM.INDEF	CL	LOC

it.	bbox zze	cyx	ma	**li**	zza gat	ddix ap bbo, …
live	man	DEM	CL	TOP	stingy	not only

'In Galulada there was a man whose name was Gogo. This man was not only stingy,…'

In (19b), the topic moves from the story's protagonist to his wife and then to a particular day in their life. The noun phrases are marked by the maintaining topic particle *ne*.[2]

b. ꊰꑙꅋ꒝， ꑳꊜꄜꈎ꒬ꇂꏂꑸꎹꇂꑴ꒝。 ꏂꊰꄸ， ꏂꌒꑊꀃꄀꑋꈌ，…

ro	ndit	xip	ma,	tit	cyp
earnest face	put on	DEM.INDEF	CL	however	3P.SG.POSS

xyp mop	max su	**ne**	ssa hxuo	ggup jjux	ddop	hxip	get
wife	ART	TOP	capable	further	word	say	can

xip	ma	cyp	nyip	**ne**,	cyp	jiet ddu	ddip vip
DEM.INDEF	CL	NUM.1	day	TOP	3P.SG.POSS	home	guest

cur	gox	xi	la,	…
CL	LOC	arrive	come	

'…, but was also putting on an earnest face. His wife, however, was skillful and capable in speech. On one day, there were guests who came to their home.'

Later, one of the following sentences is used:

c.
bbox zze	got gop	ddix	max su	**ne**	jjiet	bbo	ox.
man	name	be called	ART.DEF	**TOP**	leave	go	DP

'The man whose name was Gogo left.'

d.
bbox zze	zza gat	ddix ap bbo,	ro	ndit	max su	**ne**	jjiet	bbo	ox.
man	stingy	not only	earnest face	put on	ART.DEF	**TOP**	leave	go	DP

'The man who was not only stingy, but also putting on an earnest face left.'

e.
## bbox zze	xyp mop	jjo	max su	**ne**	jjiet	bbo	ox.
man	wife	have	ART.DEF	**TOP**	leave	go	DP

'The man who was married left.'

Example (19c) and (19d) are acceptable, because the man is identified with information he was associated with when serving as topic in (19) and (19b). Example (19e) is odd, because the man is identified with information he was NOT associated with when serving as topic.

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[1] Quoted from the folk story "The earnest man" (Chén & Wū 1998: 221).

[2] Quoted from the folk story "The earnest man" (Chén & Wū 1998: 221-222).

Analysis: Information about a discourse participant is available only when the discourse participant was associated with that information in the function of topic.

Conclusion: Aboutness is the process of associating information with a discourse participant in a way that makes the information available for the whole time of discourse.

3. Conversational Implicature

Property: Topic phrases do not have quantity implicatures.

Implicature Theory is a theory in Pragmatics developed by Paul Grice in the 1960s. The theory systematically investigates the implicatures of sentences in communication. The theory involves four "maxims" that trigger certain implicatures when the speaker obeys to the maxims.

(20) a.　Maxim of Quality:

	i.	do not say what you believe to be false
	ii.	do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence
Maxim of Quantity:	i.	make contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange
	ii.	do not make your contribution more informative than is required
Maxim of Relevance:	i.	make your contributions relevant.
Maxim of Manner:	i.	avoid obscurity
	ii.	avoid ambiguity
	iii.	be brief
	iv.	be orderly

- **Examples** of an implicature triggered by the *Maxim of Quality*:

(21) a.　John has a PhD. (Statement) $\Rightarrow$ I believe he has, and have adequate evidence that he has.
　　b.　Does your farm contain 400 acres? (Question) $\Rightarrow$ I don't know that it does, and I want to know if it does.

- **Examples** of an implicature triggered by the *Maxim of Relevance*:

(22)　　Pass the salt. $\Rightarrow$ Pass the salt *now*.

- **Examples** of an implicature triggered by the *Maxim of Manner*:

(23) a.　Alfred went to the store and bought some whiskey. $\Rightarrow$ The events happened exactly in this order.
　　b.　#Alfred bought some whiskey and went to the store. $\Rightarrow$ (The sentence reflects an order of events that is not natural.)

- **Examples** of an implicature triggered by the *Maxim of Quantity*:

(24) a.　Nigel has 14 children. $\Rightarrow$ Nigel has *only* 14 children and not more.
　　b.　John and Mary are running. $\Rightarrow$ *Only* John and Mary are running.

- **Explanation**: (a) is compatible with "Nigel has 20 children", but It shall be taken to implicate that he has only 14 and no more because had he 20, then by the maxim of Quantity ('say as much as required') I should have said so.
- **Explanation**: (b) takes the subject "John and Mary" as encoding the number two, for which the same implicature can be construed as for (a).

Important Property: Non-topic clauses have quantitative implicatures, whereas topic clauses have not.

(25)   Nuosu（彝）

a. ꀀꆏꑵꄸꂷꉢꋒ?

ip nyip	kax ddi	ma	nga	shex?
today	INT.who	CL	1P.SG	look for

(Question)

'Who was looking for me today?'

b.

mu ga	nga	shex	ox.
Muka	1P.SG	look for	DP

$\Rightarrow$
implicates

Only Muka has been looking for me.

'Muka has been looking for me.'

c.

mu ga	**ne**	nga	shex	ox.
Muka	**TOP**	1P.SG	look for	DP

$\xcancel{\Rightarrow}$
does not implicates

Only Muka has been looking for me.

'Muka has been looking for me.'

(26)   a. ꆏꃀꇬꑕꀊꑟꑟ?

ne	vit gga	xix	ggu	cy	qi?
2P.SG	clothes	INT.what	CL	wash	want

(Question)

'What clothes do you want to wash?'

b.

vit gga	cyx	gge	nga	cy	qi.
clothes	DEM.PROX	CL	1P.SG	wash	want

$\Rightarrow$
implicates

I **only** want to wash these clothes.

'I want to wash these clothes.'

c.

vit gga	cyx	gge	**li**	nga	cy	qi.
clothes	DEM.PROX	CL	**TOP**	1P.SG	wash	want

$\xcancel{\Rightarrow}$
does not implicates

I **only** want to wash these clothes.

'I want to wash these clothes.'

4. Topics have wide scope over attitude verbs

Attitude verbs are mental verbs such as *think*, *wish*, *fear*… In formal semantics, attitude verbs are represented by an operator □. Noun phrases make an indirect claim about the existence of their referent (∃x). Attitude verbs might restrict the existence of a noun phrase referent to the context of the attitude. In (27), the person might not exist in the real world, his existence might be restricted to John's fear-world.

(27)   John is afraid that someone follows him.

Property: Non-topic phrases are in the scope of attitude verbs. Topic phrases have wide scope over attitude verbs.

(27)   a. ꂷꈨꀋꄂꀀꇬꁈꄉꅝꇴ。

mu ga	ax di	ip ko	pop	da	ddep lox.
Muka	only	door open	STP		WISH

□ ∃x S(x)

'It is desirable that only Muka opens the door.'

b.

mu ga	ax di	**ne**	ip ko	pop	da	ddep lox.
Muka	only	**TOP**	door open	STP		WISH

∃x □ S(x)

'Muka (topic) is the only one for whom it is desirable to open the door.'

(28)   a. ꂷꈨꀋꄂꀊꅿꂷꎭꂮ。

mu ga	ax di	a hnat	mu	shyr	mat.
Muka	only	very much		shout	FEAR

□ ∃x S(x)

'I am afraid only of Muka's shouting.'

b.

mu ga	ax di	**li**	a hnat	mu	shyr	mat.
Muka	only	**TOP**	very much		shout	FEAR

∃x □ S(x)

'Muka (topic) is the only one whose shouting makes me fear.'

C. Syntactic Properties

1.1 Bound topics and movement

- Topics always occur in leftmost extra-clausal position.
- In Chomsky's X-bar theory, the leftmost extra-clausal position is the specifier slot of CP.

```
              CP [Complementizer Phrase]
             /            \
  XP[=Specifier]          C' [C-bar]
                         /        \
              C[Complementizer]   TP [Tense Phrase]
```
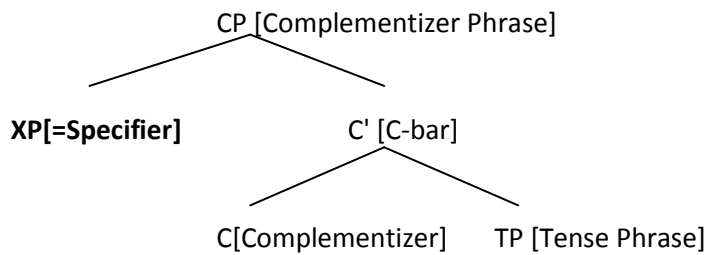
- Generative linguists think that at least some topics are the result of a kind of WH-movement.
- Quick presentation of WH-movement (Chomsky 1977):

(29) a. Echo-question: Your father did put which car in the garage?
     b. Non-echo-question: Which car did your father put in the garage?
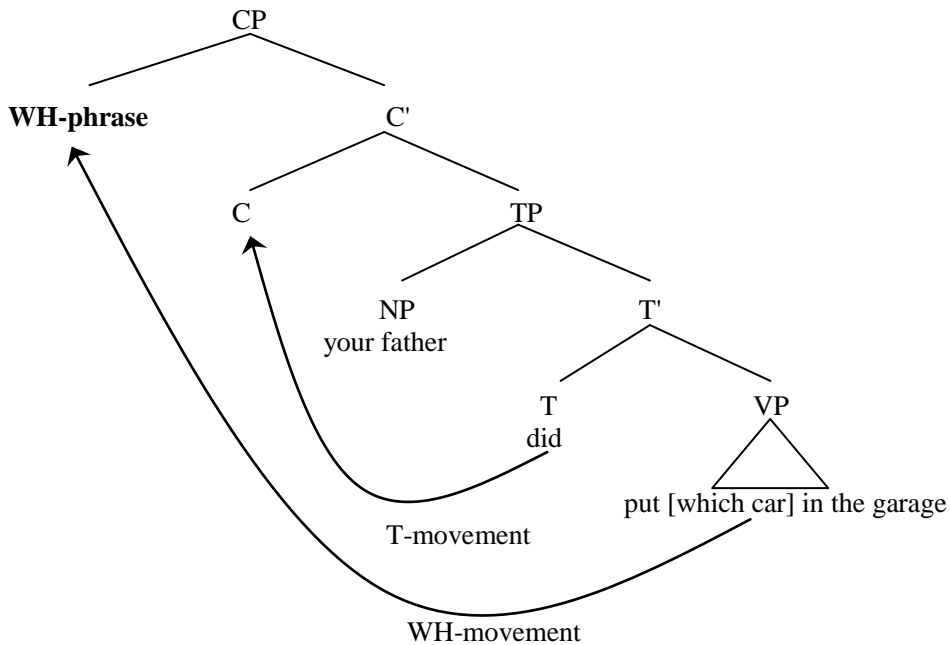
- TOPIC-movement is modeled on WH-movement.

(30) a.   ta   xihuan [nage   laoshi]
          3.SG   like   that   teacher

          'He likes that teacher.'

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b. [nage laoshi]$_1$ ta   xihuan $\varnothing_1$.
    that   teacher   3.SG   like

    'That teacher, he likes.'

```
                        CP
                   ┌─────┴──────┐
           TOPIC-phrase         C'
                           ┌─────┴──────┐
                           C            TP
                           ∅       ┌────┴─────┐
                                  NP          T'
                                  ta     ┌────┴────┐
                                         T         VP
                                         ∅        ╱╲
                                           xihuan [nage laoshi]

                          TOPIC-movement
```
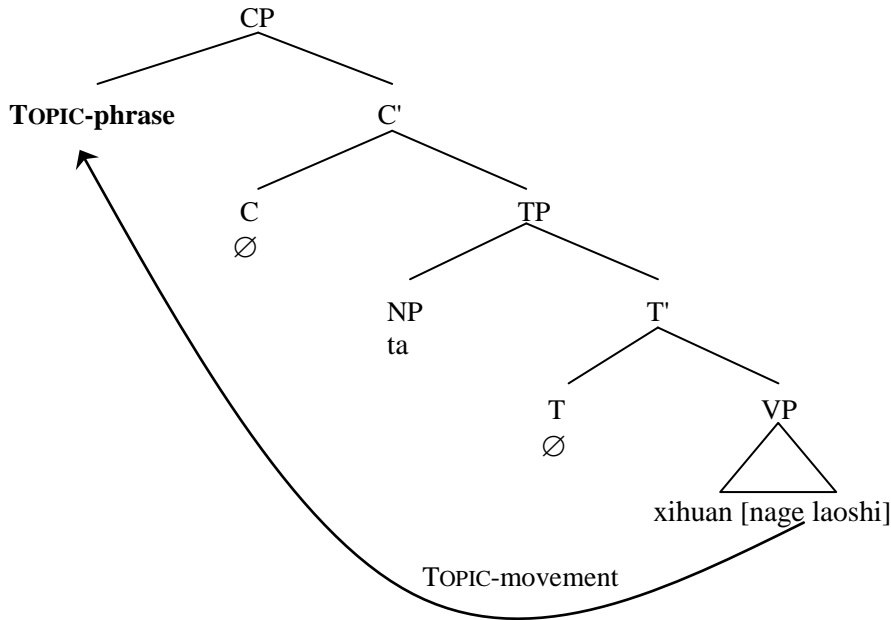
- **Aim**: Show evidence for the TOPIC-movement analysis by showing that the topic-phrase is somehow linked to an argument position of the sentence.
- **Subcategorization argument**: It shouldn't be possible to drop the topic phrase in topic-prominent languages.
- **Problem #1**: In Chinese and other languages, most transitive verbs allow *pro-drop* (can drop the arguments).

(31)   ta   xihuan.
        3.SG   like
        '*He likes.'

- **Problem #2**: Verbs that disallow object drop in non-topic clauses, also disallow object drop in topic clauses.

(32) a. 新政策会繁荣[金融市场 / *∅]。
         xin   zhengce hui fanrong [jinrong shichang / *∅].
         new   policy will boom   money   market
         'The new policy will cause the money market to boom.' (Yuan 1996)

    b. 金融市场 $_1$新政策会繁荣[#它 / *t_1]。
        [jinrong shichang]$_1$ xin   zhengce hui fanrong [#ta   / *t_1].
        money   market   new   policy will boom   3.SG
        'The money market, the new policy will cause to boom.' (Yuan 1996)

(33) a. 他的话温暖了[我的心 / *∅]。
         tade   hua wennuan-le [wode xin   / *∅].
         His   word warmed   my   heart
         'His words warmed our hearts.' (Yuan 1996)

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b.   * 我的心 $_1$ 他的话温暖了[t_1]。

    [wode xin]$_1$ tade hua   wennuan-le   [ta   / *t_1].
    my   heart His word warmed   3.SG

  'My heart, his words warmed.' (Yuan 1996)

- **Conclusion**: The subcategorization argument that works well for English cannot be applied to Chinese.
- **Island argument**: Chinese exhibits so-called "island constraints" which show existence for TOPIC-movement.

1.2 Island constraints

- The existence of so-called "island constraints" is evidence for movement
- There are island constraints on WH-movement in English
- There are island constraints on Topic-movement in Chinese (and other languages)

    A.   WH-movement in English (Chomsky 1977; Radford 1988)

- Transitive verbs in English disallow object drop.

(34) a.   *I put on the table.
    b.   I put the book on the table.

- In relative clauses with WH-pronouns, the WH-pronoun is moved into specifier position of the relative clause.
- **Problem**: In relative clauses with *that*, *that* as a complementizer is not moved, but the object can be dropped.

(35) a.   the book [$which_1$ I put t_1 on the table]
    b.   the book [O_1 *that* I put t_1 on the table]

- **Solution**: There is a covert (empty) pronoun, called "O", that is moved by WH-movement
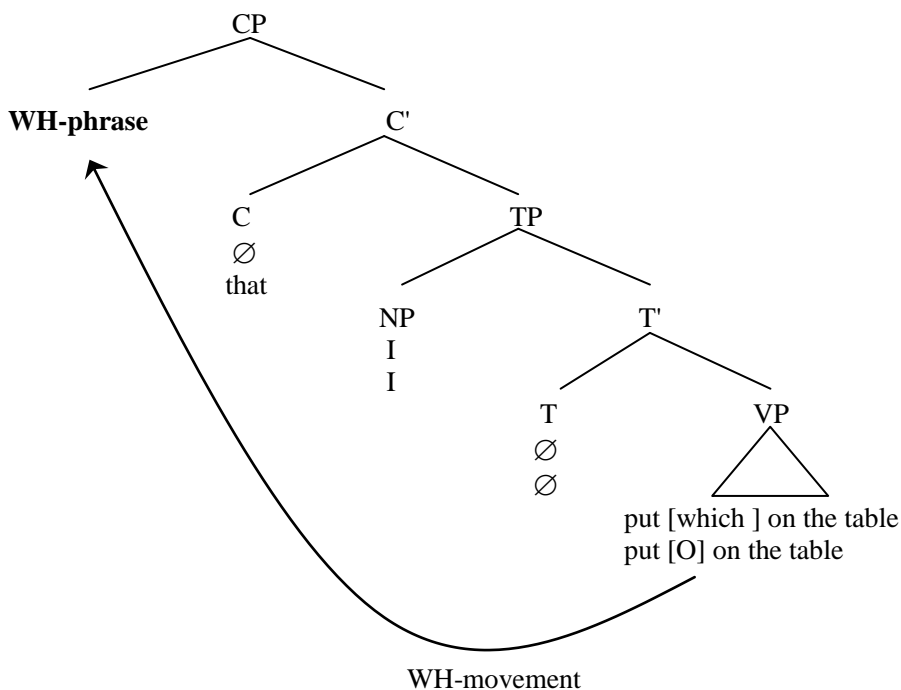
WH-movement

- **Evidence**: Island effects (no movement from an island unless you get drowned)

(36)   *Echo-questions*
  a.   He engineered [the downfall of who]?
  b.   [The downfall of who] caused consternation?
  c.   The government collapsed [after the downfall of who]?

(37)   *Non-echo questions*

a.	Who did he engineer [the downfall of ----]?	WH-Movement out of Object
b.	*Who did [the downfall of ----] cause consternation?	WH-Movement out of Subject
c.	*Who did the government collapse [after the downfall of ----]?	WH-Movement out of Adjunct

- **Island restrictions on WH-movement**: Subjects and Adjuncts are islands; Objects are not.

- Island restrictions also in relative clauses with WH-pronouns and with *that*

(38)   *Relative clauses with WH-pronoun*

a.	someone *who* he engineer [the downfall of ----]	WH-Movement out of Object
b.	*someone *who* [the downfall of ----] caused consternation	WH-Movement out of Subject
c.	*someone *who* the government collapsed [after the downfall of ----]	WH-Movement out of Adjunct

(39)   *Relative clauses with that*

a.	someone *that* he engineer [the downfall of ----]	WH-Movement out of Object
b.	*someone *that* [the downfall of ----] caused consternation	WH-Movement out of Subject
c.	*someone *that* the government collapsed [after the downfall of ----]	WH-Movement out of Adjunct

- **Conclusion**: In relative clauses with *that*, we have WH-movement of a covert (empty) pronoun, called "O".

B. TOPIC-movement in Chinese (Xu 2006)

- There are island effects for Chinese topic phrases (adjuncts are omitted here)

(40) a.   我认识[很多 t_1 喜欢那个家伙的人 $_1$]。

wo renshi [hen duo t_1 xihuan nage jiahuo de ren$_1$].	Object
I know very many like that fellow NML person	

'I know many people who do like that fellow.' (Xu, 2006)

(41) a.   那个家伙 $_1$ 我认识[很多 t_2 喜欢他 $_1$ 的人 $_2$]。

nage jiahuo$_1$ wo renshi [hen duo t_2 xihuan **ta**$_1$ de ren$_2$].	TOPIC-movement out of Object
that fellow I know very many like him NML person	

'That fellow, I know many people who do like.' (Xu, 2006)

(42) a.   [t_1 看见那个人] 的学生 $_1$ 来了。

[t_1 kanjian nage ren] de xuesheng$_1$ lai-le.	Subject
see that man NML student come-ASP	

'The student who saw that man came.' (Xu, 2006)

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b. *那个人₁ [[t₂ 看见 t₁] 的学生₂ 来了]。

* nage ren₁ [[t₂ kanjian t₁] de xuesheng₂ lai-le]. that man see NML student come-ASP	TOPIC-movement out of Subject

'The student who saw that man came.' (Xu, 2006)

- **Problem:** Counterexamples with grammatical TOPIC-movement out of subjects exist.

(43) a. [t₁ 喜欢张三]的人₁很多。

[t₁ xihuan Zhangsan de ren hen duo like Zhangsan NML person very many	Subject

'People who like Zhangsan are many.' (Xu, 2006)

b. 张三₁ [t₂ 喜欢 t₁]的人₂很多。

[t₁ xihuan Zhangsan de ren hen duo like Zhangsan NML person very many	TOPIC-movement out of Subject

'Zhangsan, people who like him are many.' (Xu, 2006)

- Explanations to these irregular patterns were proposed but are abstract and complicated, and have not many followers.
- Generative linguists are split whether TOPIC-movement really exists in Chinese.


1.3 "Dangling topics"

In this section, I am using material published by Pan & Hu (2008)

- "Dangling topics" are topics that cannot be linked to an argument position of the sentence.
- "Dangling topics" occur in sentence in which all arguments of the comment sentences are filled with NPs
- **Test:** Dangling topic can always be dropped from the sentence, as they are not linked to an argument position.

(44) a. 他们：我看你，你看我。
Tamen, wo kan ni, ni kan wo.
they I look you you look me
'They look at each other (*lit*. They, I look at you, you look at me).'

b. 他们：大鱼吃小鱼。
Tamen, da yu chi xiao yu.
they big fish eat small fish
'They act according to the law of jungle (*lit*. They, big fish eat small fish).'

c. 他们：谁都不来。
Tamen, shei dou bu lai.
they who all NEG come
'None of them are coming (*lit*. They, nobody is coming).'

d. 物价：纽约最贵。
Wujia, Niuyue zui gui.
thing-price New York most expensive
'As for living costs, New York is top.'

e. 水果：香蕉最好吃。

Shuiguo,   xiangjiao   zui   haochi
fruit   banana   most tasty

'As for fruits, the banana is most tasty.'

- Generative linguists think that "dangling topics" are not moved into specifier position of CP, but base-generated.
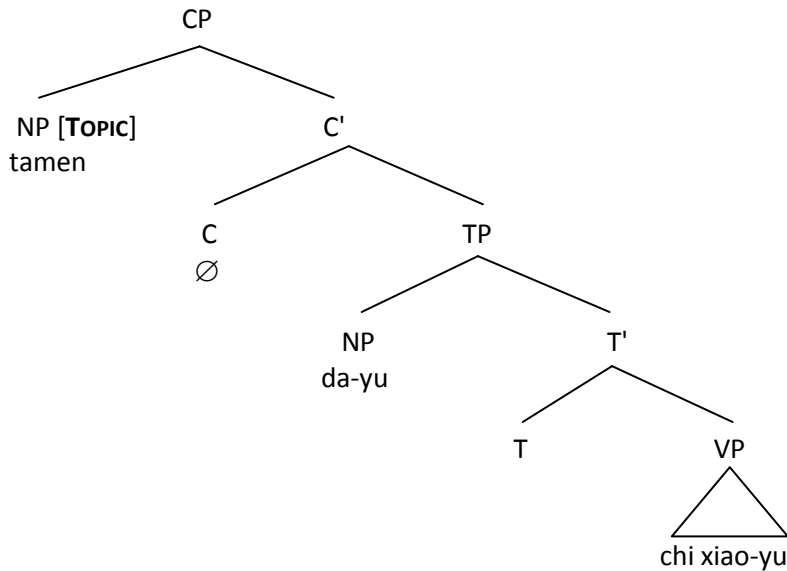
- **Licencing**: (a) is unacceptable because the "son" is not necessarily associated with the topic "幼儿园"
- **Licencing**: (b) is acceptable because the quantifier "only" presupposes the existence of the set of people who Zhangsan could potentially teach to draw pictures. The set of kids in the kindergarten is included in that set.

(45) a. * 幼儿园的小孩张三教儿子画画。

   * You'eryuan   de   xiaohai, Zhangsan jiao   erzi huahua.
   kindergarten LNK   children Zhangsan teach son draw-pictures

   'As for the children in the kindergarten, Zhangsan teaches his son to draw pictures.'

b. 幼儿园的小孩张三只教儿子画画。

   You'eryuan   de   xiaohai, Zhangsan zhi   jiao   erzi huahua.
   kindergarten LNK   children Zhangsan only teach son draw-pictures

   'As for the children in the kindergarten, Zhangsan only teaches his son to draw pictures.'

- **"Dangling Topic" Licencing**: "Dangling topics" are licenced if and only if their set of referents intersects with a set of referents induced by an argument of the sentence.

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