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Some Comments on Tanya Reinhart's PRAGMATICS AND LINGUISTICS:

AN ANALYSIS OF SENTENCE TOPICS

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The interest of linguists, especially syntacticians, is presently focussing increasingly on the so-called "soft" facts of grammar, i.e. facts that we have intuitions about, but which are somehow hard to grasp with the established machineries of formal syntax and semantics. The good thing text-grammar (as developed in Europe) has done is at least that it worked as a challenge to the linguists to look at the things happening beyond the domain of the sentence. Even if Reinhart's paper announces in the sub-title to deal exclusively with sentence topics, while reading through the paper it becomes clear that the notion of sentence topic cannot really be separated from discourse-level considerations. In this sense - unlike Halliday's approach for example - the Prague School research was always a study of sentences in the light of the preceding discourse. The intuitive naturalness of such an approach makes us wonder why generative grammar just recently grew as a new branch generative discourse analysis. In this environment I see Tanya Reinhart's enlightening paper. Probably it is so stimulating simply because there are many point

in it where I cannot agree. The first point concerns the distinction of the notions 'sentence topic' and 'discourse topic'. In BAYER (1980) I have criticized a similar proposal by van Dijk (VAN DIJK (1976)) and suggested the closing of the unmotivated gulf between these two phenomena.

1. Sentence topic vs. discourse topic

In Reinhart's paper (which I will refer to under the abbreviation P&L) it is insinuated that discourse topics are a l w a y s denoted by some complex expression (e.g. a complex NP like 'Mr. Morgan's scholarly abilities' or a proposition), whereas - at least in the scope of P&L - sentence topics are (usually?) re-presented by an uncomposed NP (e.g. a proper name like •Morgan*). I think that such a distinction lacks an interesting linguistic or philosophical motivation. Why?

If we allow ourselves to continue speaking in rather loose terms about information, we can say that

(4) Mr. Morgan has a clear hand writing and he is punctual.⁺⁾

is surely about Mr. Morgan, but not at first sight (and only via certain Gricean implicatures) about Morgan's scholarly abilities. The reason for this is just that (4) meets only some minimal and quite basic requirements concerning topichood. If we apply only the no-implicature reading, (4) satisfies the requirement

+) The numbering of the examples follows P&L; for my own examples I will employ Roman numerals.

that it is about Morgan, but it doesn't meet the requirement that it is about his scholarly abilities, which how-ever it should, since (4) being a letter of recommendation must be informative as to that specific topic. We can say then that there is a continuous hierarchy of topics that are ordered according to their contribution of information to certain requirements, - a topic-tupel, so to say, starting from the lowest level of information and going up to the amount of information the discourse itself provides, e.g.

<Mr. Morgan, Mr. Morgan's abilities, Mr. Morgan's scholarly abilities, ...>

Aboutness then can be viewed as ordered in such a way that the expressions denoting topics of higher order incorporate those denoting topics of lower order. The following picture shows that someone speaking about Morgan's scholarly abilities speaks also about Morgan and therefore about someone etc.⁺:

{X is about something} \supset {x is about someone} \supset {x is about Mr. Morgan} \supset {x is about Mr. Morgan's abilities} \supset {x is about Mr. Morgan's scholarly abilities}

+) Examples like

(I) Morgan had a black hat, but someone has stolen it recently.

suggest however that it is not all that simple. (I) is about Morgan's (black) hat, but from that we cannot deduce that it is in the same way also about Morgan himself, because a hat belongs to a person only in a very special way.

The second argument against a Separation of sentence topic and discourse topic comes from syntax. This argument holds only when we stick to the intuitive idea of aboutness, but as far as I can see this is what Reinhart proposes anyway. I want to demonstrate that the example

- (1) Mr. Morgan is a careful researcher and a knowledgeable semiticist, but his originality leaves something to be desired.

can be paraphrased in many ways when we use the about-test

(as for-/speaking about-topicalization, left dislocation etc.);

- (II)a. Speaking about Mr. Morgan, he is a careful researcher and a knowledgeable semiticist, but his originality leaves something to be desired.
- b. Speaking about Mr. Morgan's scholarly abilities, he is a careful researcher and a knowledgeable semiticist, but his originality leaves something to be desired.

In rather extreme cases, which I believe occur in natural communication, we could even imagine left and right dislocation with a long pause between the shifted item and the proposition:

- (III)a. Mr. Morgan's scholarly abilities (?) // He is a careful researcher and
- b. Mr. Morgan is a careful researcher and ...leaves something to be desired // to speak about his scholarly abilities.

However, this is not yet the end of the story. Even more complex topics, topics with sentential shape, can be used in that way as long as we don't attach a truth value. Generally speaking, topics cannot have a truth value, but they are free to choose whatever non-truth conditional syntactic form they please that can be made into an NP, e.g. by nominalising. The following example (IV)b. demonstrates that theoretically the whole discourse can be shifted into a topic-specific position in the form of a that-complement, while it leaves a pronoun and a truth- or propositional-attitude-predicate in the asserted clause. (IV)c. shows how questions can be used as topics:

(IV)a. Speaking about that Mr. Morgan has certain scholarly abilities, the professor says that he is a careful researcher and ..., but that his originality leaves something to be desired.

b. Speaking about that Mr. Morgan is a careful researcher and a knowledgeable semiticist, but that his originality leaves something to be desired, the professor says that

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{it is true/exactly the case} \\ \text{it is false/utterly wrong} \\ \text{he believed it} \end{array} \right\}$$

c. Speaking about

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{how Mr. Morgan goes on in the department} \\ \text{if Mr. Morgan should be hired} \end{array} \right\}$$

the professor mentioned that he is a careful researcher and, but his originality leaves something to be desired.

I hope these examples could show that representing a sentence topic by a simple NP and a discourse topic by a complex NP or a proposition or a question is a pure matter of tendency. Although the two notions might be psychologically different, the

hard syntactic and semantic facts suggest that nothing can really prevent us from turning against our tendencies in this respect.

2. Pragmatic aboutness vs. semantic aboutness

In her short review of the philosophical literature on aboutness Reinhart comes to the conclusion that the semantic notion of aboutness employed there is of little help, because on the back ground of this theory a) different L-equivalent sentences should be about the same referents (vide the crow-example), and b) - as a consequence of a) - any sentence is about more than one referent at a time. Since Reinhart takes sentences as contextually fully disambiguated utterance units which allow only for one topically marked discourse referent, she cannot agree with this. The following rough picture emerges:

semantic aboutness: what a contextually 'naked' sentence may potentially be about, i.e. at least all of its referring expressions

pragmatic aboutness: what an interpreted sentence is about in a given context (or discourse environment)^{+))}

If a sentence in context is not topically marked in a specific way (e.g. by intonational means or by dislocation) we have, according to Reinhart's Suggestion, the choice of either finding no topic at all⁺⁺⁾ or one salient referent denoted by some NP in the sentence in question. Thus, topic is the referent, we

+) The linguists have basically always done the right thing; they had just forgotten to introduce a proper context-theory.

++) An example would be a discourse-initial sentence like Firbas':
a girl broke a vase

feel, is mostly or to a high degree being talked about. In fact, in the rest of P&L a number of conditions are mentioned that play a crucial role in establishing this feeling, e.g. subjects tend to be "better" topics than objects, "old information" coincide more often with the intuitively felt topics than "new information" and so on.

If we don't care too much about terminology, we could say that up to here we are in an area where pragmatics puts some constraints upon syntactic phenomena like word order, attributive relative clauses, or suprasegmental phenomena like the intonation contour. But all of a sudden, we are back into semantics again: It is argued that despite of our syntactic intuitions we want to avoid Strawsonian truth-value-gaps in our discourses, and therefore non-denoting expressions like the famous the present king of France are avoided as topics, i.e. instead of (V)a. we would tend to have b.:

(V)a. Talking about the present king of France, he visited the exhibition in town yesterday.

b. Talking about the exhibition in town, the present king of France visited it yesterday.

because a. involves (according to the truth-value-gappists) a truth-value-gap, whereas b. is simply wrong. Now, one is slightly puzzled to learn first about all the arguments in favour of a non-semantic notion of aboutness and then to be confronted with

purely semantic problems that should also control our decision. If we follow the naive intuitions concerning aboutness of ordinary speakers - and I guess, Reinhart's attempt is to reconstruct these theoretically - I think we would hardly face intricate problems of this sort. Just imagine that someone talks in a series of fiction about the present king of France and the listeners eagerly expect what this figure had done next. Then the someone says

(VI) $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{The King of France} \\ \text{He} \end{array} \right\}$ visited the exhibition in town
yesterday.

What would the listeners feel that is talked about? I guess, the present king of France more than the exhibition. If the talk however has been mainly about the exhibition, it would be the other way round. The theory proposed in P&L predicts that any Sherlock Holmes novel in which reference to real entities like London or Baker Street is made would be interpreted as being about London or Baker Street rather than about Holmes. This is entirely counterintuitive. It seems more likely that first of all the argument from the internal organization of the context set, i.e. the question which of the referents (despite of their reality or fictionality) is foregrounded, outranks semantic arguments from reference failure, and that second a detected non-referring expression in the discourse will either lead to a rejection of the discourse as meaningless or to an interpretation of it as a piece

of fiction. In the latter case the truth value of the uttered sentence or discourse can be calculated (e.g. on the background of mythology or the Sherlock Holmes novels or the Pickwick Papers) in analogy to the normal verification procedures. I think that even Strawson would have taken a similar position, because in his discussion on discourse about fictional entities he says:

"I may in one sense make statements a b o u t King Arthur, d e s c r i b e King Arthur and make King Arthur my t o p i c ; But I am really only making statements about him in the first and weaker sense."++

A strictly extensional notion of aboutness would rule out the present king of France to become topic, but would allow many other expressions - the referring ones - as topics. Reinhart doesn't like that either, but strives for a linguistically more appealing notion of aboutness. However, as we demonstrated above, the intuitions that call for a pragmatic (non-semantic) notion of aboutness allow quite well for non-referring expressions to become conversation topics. The mixed approach proposed in P&L is not in a position to do justice to either side: The semanticist claims that a sentence is at least about all of its referring expressions; the pragmatician observes that people often talk about things whose existence nobody is really sure about.

+) A more recent approach is shown in Parsons (1974) and (1975)

++) Strawson (1964: 98)

What we need here is a semantics allowing for more than just one mode of existence, such that also for NPs that are not referring in the most worldly sense, lists can be opened on the discourse-topic-score and they need not any longer be absorbed into the predicate where there is no need. The battle for topichood will then be entirely decided by the context and not by some interfering considerations stemming from an outdated positivist philosophy.^{+) I cannot go into the details that make the Strawson approach a bitter pill to swallow for linguists and logicians. Some quite serious consequences are hinted at in Kempson (1975). We should be extremely dilatory in giving up the semantic autonomy-hypothesis by stuffing problems from the "pragmatic waste basket" back into semantics. ⁺⁺⁾}

3. Sentence-level Restrictions on possible Topics

3.1 Syntactic Considerations

I quite agree with Reinhart's adaption of a sort of markedness theory which predicts that definite unstressed NPs in subject-position are candidates for an unmarked topic, while there are means to have

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This isn't intended to mean that discourses employing funny non-referring phrases like the present king of France always make at least some sense; but if they don't make sense with these NPs as topics they will not make much more sense with them in predicate-position. I also want to add that I am well aware of the difference between non-referring expressions and expressions for fictional entities. However, the arguments in P&L were presented in such a way that a more careful distinction was not needed.

++)
In a Strawsonian framework, for example, the passive transformation that is for quite good reasons considered as a meaning-preserving Operation would be able to change the truth-value of a given active declarative.

marked topics in non-subject positions via meaning-preserving word-order-shifts and stress-placement. I only want to comment briefly on the following: In discussing syntactic structures which mark an item as a topic uniquely, such that stressing it sounds odd in any case, Reinhart mentions the semantically equivalent discourses:

(12) Felix is an obnoxious guy. Even Matilda can't stand him.

(13) ?Felix is an obnoxious guy. As for Matilda, even she can't stand him.

Discourse (13) is, according to Reinhart, ill-formed, because:

"...in this case the sentence marks Matilda as the topic expression. So the sentence can only be understood as being about Matilda, in conflict with the expectation that it should be about Felix."

Later on it is briefly mentioned that phrases like as for, speaking about and the like are in fact topic-changing Operators.

This explains why

(VII) ?Felix is an obnoxious guy. As for Felix, even Matilda can't stand him.

is ill-formed. However, in this generality this is certainly not true. We simply need to expand our discourses a little to the "left" and we shall see that our expectations concerning the following sentence topic are not necessarily controlled by the utterance that occurred as the last in an ongoing discourse. A good example would be a discourse exhaustively listing a number

of persons and predicating something of them:

(VIII) # Bill got a new toy. Doris got a bicycle. Linda didn't get anything. She envied Doris. As for

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Bill, he was perfectly happy} \\ \text{Doris, she didn't care for her bike} \\ \text{*Linda, she started crying} \end{array} \right\} \# \text{ } ^{+)}$$

In contexts of this sort it is quite obvious that each sentence can be about another topic within a certain domain of discourse. An interesting fact is possibly that under a special condition even topics, that were spoken about in sentence S_n of an exhaustive-listing discourse, can reoccur in a sentence S_{n+1} . where their corresponding NPs are moved into an as for []_{NP} phrase. The condition would be that the predicate in S_{n+1} has to come from a different domain of discourse, e.g.

(IX) # Bill got a new toy. Doris got a bicycle. Linda didn't get anything. She envied Doris. As for Linda, she is a poor girl. Her parents really neglect her. #

Although Linda is already discourse topic in a way, she can be reintroduced by a topically unambiguous syntactic structure, if the discourse moves away from exhaustive listing with a fixed domain of predicates, for example here from "what the kids got or did" to "what the case with one of them is".

+) This, by the way, shows quite convincingly the strength of subjects and the relative weakness of objects to denote the topic.

3.2 Semantic Considerations

In the discussion of certain semantic restrictions upon NPs concerning their topichood Reinhart touches a couple of quite interesting problems. Although I am not in a position to give a satisfying solution to the handling of indefinite and quantified NPs, I want to put forward some ideas that were partially triggered by the examples in P&L.

The simplest case is found in the definite NPs. These are the candidates fitting perfectly well into topically marked positions. They are naturally specific and their referents can be considered to be already in the focus of attention of the hearer. Quantified NPs are a little harder to handle. Reinhart shows that they can sometimes get dislocated as a whole, as in:

(20) Parents don't understand. But all grownups, they do it to kids, ...

And I think she supposes that sometimes this is not possible.

The explanation given, however, is not convincing:

"Universally quantified NPs can be interpreted (pragmatically) as denoting sets, and consequently sentences containing them can be understood as asserting something about these sets or their members."

Other types of quantified NPs denote sets of entities as well, but speaking about such sets is hardly possible in an analogous way, as the following examples show:

Cases such as (20) above can be handled in this way consistently:
 (XIII) ... But grownups, they all do it to kids. ...

The most confusing phenomena are however the indefinite NPs. The generally acknowledged proposal says that indefinite NPs can become topics only under a non-specific reading, as these examples show:

- (XIV) a. Jones seeks a unicorn
 b. *As for a unicorn, Jones seeks it.
 [+spec]
 c. As for a unicorn, Jones seeks one.
 [-spec]

But then we are confronted with the examples in (21), where we find definite cataphoric pronouns triggered by indefinite NPs through backwards pronominalization; they can be considered to show just the reversed process of what we found in as for-topicalization with an anaphoric pronoun left in the matrix sentence. Reinhart comes to the conclusion that even specific indefinite NPs can serve as topics. A similar observation was put forward by Magretta (1977) in an attempt to refute certain claims about the non-specific-restriction upon indefinite NPs by Gundel (1974). Magretta presented sentences like these:

(XV) As for a certain bottle of Scotch, I'm sure $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{it} \\ *one \end{array} \right\}$ was thrown
 [+spec] out last night.

(XVI) A particular pipe he keeps in a box in his desk and only
 [+spec]
 takes $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{it} \\ *one \end{array} \right\}$ out on special occasions.

Magretta's as well as Reinhart's examples in favour of specific indefinite NP-topics have one thing in common: The nouns are all modified by either an adjective (certain, particular) or by an attributive prepositional phrase (in the science club at Mark Twain Junior High School of Coney Island, of my acquaintance). As soon as we delete these N-modifiers we get ungrammatical results:

(XVII)a. *Because they wanted to know more about the ocean's current, ~~students in the science club at Mark Twain Junior High School of Coney Island~~ gave ten bottles with return address cards inside to crewmen of one of New York City's Sludge barges.

b. *When she was five years old, a child ~~of my acquaintance~~ announced a theory that she was inhabited by rabbits.

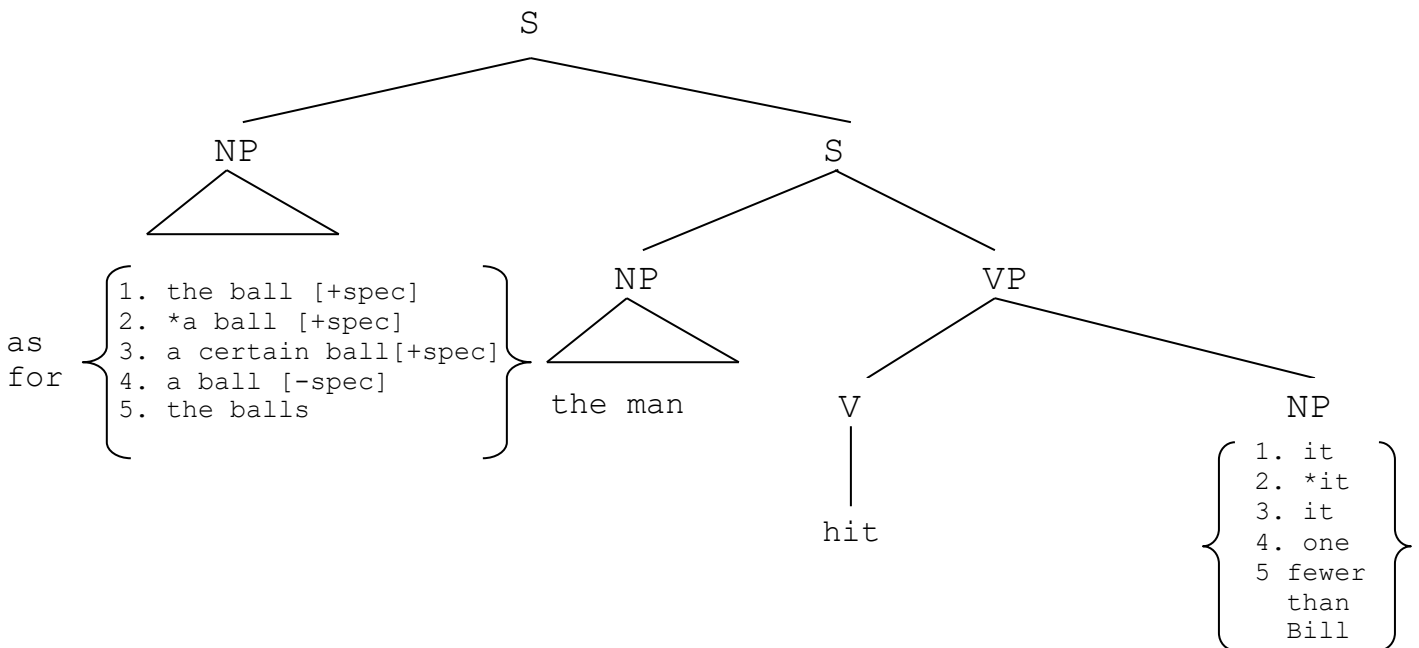
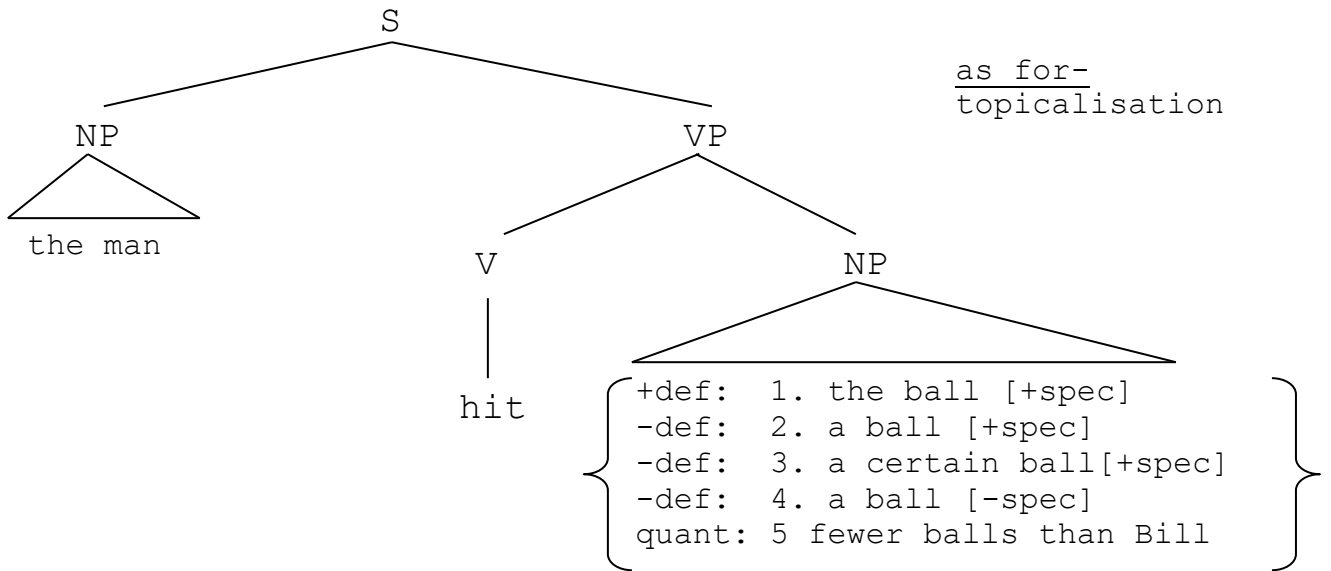
(XV)a. *As for a certain bottle of Scotch, I'm sure it was thrown out last night.

(XVI)a. *A particular pipe he keeps in a box in his desk and only takes it out on special occasions.

It seems that the sole distinctions [+definite] and [+specific] are not enough. Not only non-specific indefinite NPs can become topics, but also specific ones, provided that the specificity is marked lexically, e.g. by phrases like those that have been wiped out in the examples above.

After that the following picture emerges:

+) A further case would certainly be the restrictive relative clause.



The reading "some indeterminate ball" is always forced for structures of the shape a ball ... it ... as long as there is no



explicit lexical device changing the indefinite NP in such a way that its specificity can be read off from the surface, e.g. a certain bottle. Now we are in a position to give a tentative rule that can be expected to predict at least the cases mentioned:

Rule: (i) Definite NPs may denote topics unrestrictedly.

(ii) Specific indefinite NPs may denote topics under the condition that there is a lexical item on the surface forcing the specific reading upon the NP.

(iii) Non-specific indefinite NPs may denote topics unrestrictedly.

(iv) Quantified NPs cannot generally denote topics as such. Their corresponding topics (sets of individuals) are denoted by pluralic (generic or particular) NPs which can be fronted, while the quantifier remains in the clause.⁺⁺)

4. Topic and "Affectedness"

In explaining the seeming oddity of sentences like

(25)a. ?Speaking of Marilyn Monroe, I lost a book about her.

(26)a. ?Speaking of Ben, I don't know anyone ahead of him in the line.

versus good ones like

(25)b. Speaking of Marilyn Monroe, $\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{bought} \\ \text{read} \end{array} \right\}$ a book about her.

(26)b. Speaking of Ben, I don't know anyone ahead of him in the exam scores.

a somewhat dubious extrasyntactic hypothesis is made, according to which losing a book about someone does not affect him as much

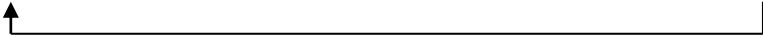
+) Although it should be obvious that they are psychologically much weaker than definite NPs or proper names.

++) Although my intuitions about English are not very reliable, I think we can imagine that Reinhart's examples (18) and (19) are not such that under no condition a fly or people can denote the sentence topic. My rule is quite permissive and probably allows for stylistically odd results.

as buying/reading one, or being ahead of someone in the exam scores affects him more than being ahead of him in the line. This, however, seems to be a pure matter of the underlying conversational background: The people engaged in the conversation may share the knowledge that Ben always gets terribly upset if he is not the first in an arbitrary line, whereas it does not matter to him at all if he is a good student or not (because he has unusual values or is crazy). In this case we would have to switch the degrees of acceptability assigned by Reinhart. Similar conversational backgrounds can easily be invented for the other examples from (24), (25), 27) whose acceptability is in doubt. What Reinhart does comes close to a classification of properties as a task of ontology. When I assert that I read/lost/bought a book about Marilyn Monroe, I assert besides certain other things that Marilyn Monroe has the property of having a book about her read/lost/bought by myself. Now, the acceptability of the sentences with a structurally marked topic is graded according to which properties seem important to the property-carrying individual and which seem quite irrelevant. This grading follows the selection of a conversational background. It is not at all a semantic problem, because semantically one property is as good as the other. As we showed above, the ?s in Reinhart's examples can readily be traced back to something we may call "Standard backgrounds of conversation"; these, however, are entirely contingent

as soon as we substitute alternative backgrounds, the examples lose their oddity.

A further problem that is not mentioned in P&L, but somehow introduced through the examples, is the as for-topicalization of NPs from subordinate clauses. As a matter of precaution I would again suggest to examine all the syntactic constraints operating on such movement rules before switching over to external explanations like "affectedness". I have already demonstrated that as for-topicalization works quite well in Reinhart's examples, provided we do not confine ourselves to admitting only "Standard" conversational backgrounds. This surely holds as well for NPs within if-clauses.+) Since conditional sentences always express a certain relation between the antecedens and the succedens - even if on an abstract level only - it is quite clear that any NP meeting the conditions set up by our rule above, can be as for-topicalized from an if-clause. The same holds probably also for subordination introduced by as long as, while, after, because, that, etc. In the case of examples like

- (XVIII)a. Susan took off with Bruno, while Bill was snoring.
 b. As for Susan, she took off with Bruno, while Bill was snoring.
 c. As for Bill, Susan took off with Bruno, while he was snoring.
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+) cf. example (27) in P&L

it is certainly more natural to interpret the a.-sentence in the spirit of the b.-sentence as long as there is no special discourse environment. If my claim in §1 is accepted, we can say that a given utterance may be about more than one thing at a time. Then, in a machinery of contextual aboutness-assignment (a sort of left-to-right-interpretation) it could turn out that a sentence like (XVIII)a. is in a much more relevant sense about a referent denoted in the subordinate clause than about a referent denoted in the matrix clause.

Relative clauses are clearer cut cases: While restrictive relative clauses are cases which obviously have the amount of "affection"-coherence with the modified NP Reinhart considers essential, this does not seem to be the case with attributive relative clauses. The following examples can show that:

(XIX)a. The trumpet on which Clara plays is carefully polished.

b. Speaking about Clara, the trumpet on which she plays is carefully polished.

(XX) a. The trumpet, on which (by the way) Clara played yesterday, is carefully polished.

b.?Speaking about Clara, the trumpet, on which she (by the way) played yesterday, is carefully polished.

5. A Short Note on Linking Adjacent Sentences in Discourse

In discussing the various devices for linking adjacent sentences in a discourse the author sticks to quite an old fashioned solution, which has the bad side effect that it does not work. Two types of link are postulated:

(i) referential links: Two adjacent sentences S_1 , S_2 are referentially linked if

- a. S_1 and S_2 contain a mention of the same referent or
- b. the referents in S_1 and S_2 are linked via set-membership relations or
- c. a referent from S_2 belongs to the 'frame of reference' set up by S_1 .⁺⁾

(ii) a semantic link: The propositions p_1 , p_2 expressed by S_1 , S_2 can be appropriately linked by an overt, or easily recoverable semantic connector.

Then is stated that "any of these two types of link is sufficient to produce a cohesive discourse, and it is necessary that at least one of them will hold." Afterwards we find a Short remark where more or less the exhaustiveness of the definition of cohesion above is called in question:

"...it is not sufficient that just any two expressions would be linked but there is a strong preference to link either the topic or the scene-setting expression (...) of each new sentence to previous expressions."

+) Unfortunately it is neither explained what a 'frame of reference*' nor what a 'semantic connector' should be.

Even after this one cannot quite see how to rule out pseudo-discourses like the famous example from Bierwisch (1965) as non-coherent:

(XXI) Es gibt niemanden, den ihr Gesang nicht fortreibt.
 Unsere Sängerin heißt Josephine.
 Gesang ist ein Wort mit fünf Buchstaben.
 Sängerinnen machen viele Worte. (Bierwisch 1965:72)

The crucial point is not that Reinhart's definition does not provide for enough phenomena occurring in establishing discourse coherence, but that the or between the clauses in (i) and the or between (i) and (ii) suggests that one of the listed conditions could exhaustively establish cohesion. This does not turn out to be the case. Unfortunately, I am not in a position to determine which factors cohesion then depends on. I simply suspect that something like the 'frame-of-reference' condition (i)c. plays a more general role than is argued here, and that the possible sentence topics in a discourse are either directly drawn from such a frame or they are systematically introduced into the frame. It has been observed by many authors that there is a fuzzy range of items or events we can refer to via a name or a definite description as soon as a discourse topic (and with it a 'frame of reference') is set up. In talking about a visit to a restaurant someone may without further steps refer to the food, the waiter, the smell coming from the kitchen etc., but

certainly not - out of the blue - the crocodile (which in fact may be the pet of the owner) or the alphabetization campaign in Nicaragua (which in fact may have started from this very place). This is a problem for a refined word semantics involving open (and possibly vague) concepts whose range is controlled by the epistemic states of the people in conversation and their conversational needs.

6. Topics for Conjoined Sentences

Although I agree with most of what Reinhart proposes concerning possible pragmatic assertions (PPAs), I strongly disagree with the suggestion that " $\langle \alpha, \varphi \rangle$ (with α being a variable for the topic and φ being the respective proposition in which α occurs, J.B.) is a possible pragmatic assertion of a conjoined S only if α is an interpretation of an NP occurring in both conjuncts." It is a rather mysterious assumption that a sentence - simple or conjoined - should always have one unique topic. I cannot see a reason why we have to decide on a single referent to become topic when our sentence, say

(XXII) Rosa loves Max, although Bruno doesn't like it.

occurs after a Stretch of discourse in which equally much is spoken about Max and Rosa in the intuitive sense of aboutness.

In that case (XXII) would continue to assert something about Rosa and Max, namely what kind of relation holds between them and what Bruno thinks of it. To conjoined sentences without any coreferent NPs Reinhart's restriction on the number of possible topics has the following effect:

(47)a. Max hit Ben and Felix hit Fritz.

cannot as a whole be about anything, because there is no natural way of shifting one of the four NPs into a topic-prominent Position:

(XXIII)a. ?As for Max, he hit Ben and Felix hit Fritz.

b. ?As for Ben, Max hit him and Felix hit Fritz, etc.

However, as soon as we admit more than one topic only we get very handsome results, because the system of pronominal reference in English allows for more than one bound variable at a time, as our paraphrase shows:

(XXIII)c. As for Max_i, and Felix_j, the one_i hit Ben and the other_j
hit Fritz.

Even for cases like (47)b. below where the anaphoric relations are quite obvious, we can disturb the whole thing by adding some antecedent context. In order to get the desired reading (interpretation of she) we have to resort to admitting conjoined topics for conjoined sentences:

(47)b. Max hit Rosa_i and she_i hit Fritz.

(XXIV) Max and Linda were a terrible pair of kids. While Max beat a boy from the neighbourhood, Linda watched out for new victims. All of a sudden Rosa and Fritz appeared. Max and Linda_j got ready for a really tough fight. Max hit Rosa and she_j hit Fritz.

The theory proposed in P&L would predict that either the last sentence of this discourse has no common topic at all, or that Rosa is the topic. The first prediction is counterintuitive, the latter is against the preferred pronoun Interpretation.

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