Existentials as Existentials:
On Topic-Comment Structure in Existential Sentences

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Abstract

The common view in the literature is that the post-verbal NP of an existential construction cannot be interpreted as the topic of its sentence, where the term “sentence topic” is construed as an expression forming a relation of aboutness between itself and the clause in which it appears. The aim of this paper is to refute this claim. First, we discuss why the discourse functions associated with sentence topics and with post-verbal NPs are assumed to inherently oppose each other. A list of linguistic properties will then be shown to derive from the discourse function of sentence topics. Then, an extensive analysis of each property, showing why it supposedly proves a misfit when considered as a property of the post-verbal NP in existential constructions, will be provided. Finally a corpus of real-life utterances will prove that the post-verbal NP may function as the topic expression of its clause, and indeed be characterized by the linguistic properties associated with topic expressions.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Two types of entities will be examined in this paper, the first is TOPIC, the second is POST-VERBAL NP, referring to that found specifically in existential sentences\(^1\). The two are generally considered mutually exclusive; they have opposing discourse functions, and stand at opposite ends in their assumed syntactic, semantic and pragmatic characteristics. The sentences below and their subsequent analyses provide a quick glance at this intuition:

1.1. The children went to school. (Lambrecht 1994, ex. 4.1)

1.2. There’s someone standing in front of the door. (Adapted from Kuno 1972, ex. 6-10)

With regard to (1.1.), Lambrecht explains:

*The referent of the subject NP the children is properly “what the sentence is about”, hence [...] this NP represents the topic of the sentence. [...] the statement is intended to increase the addressee’s knowledge about the children as a previously established set of entities.* (Lambrecht 1994:121)

With regard to (1.2.), Kuno explains:

*[Sentence (1.2.)] above represents one of the very few constructions which cannot receive the thematic interpretation on [the post-verbal NP]. It is not a sentence about ['someone’]. It is a sentence that presents the whole event (or state) as new. [...] The most natural way to introduce an entirely new event in conversations seems to be to talk about the existence [...] of something.* (Kuno 1972:299)

Taking for now as a pre-theoretical assumption that a topic is what a sentence is about, and a post-verbal NP either introduces or asserts the existence of a new entity, the basic intuition underlying Kuno’s analysis is that one cannot assert the existence of (what apparently has to be) or introduce a new entity and talk about it at the same time. It will be the aim of this paper to show that this intuition is not entirely correct. Specifically, we will argue that a post-verbal NP in an existential sentence may well be interpreted as representing the entity which the sentence is about, i.e. its topic. This is actually a rather pervasive phenomenon.

\(^1\) Toward the end of this introduction we explain exactly what we take the term “existential sentence” to denote.
We take three main steps in reaching our goal. The first step, outlined in chapter (2), will be to examine the discourse function of both sentence topics and post-verbal NPs in existential sentences, analyzing why the two functions are assumed to exclude each other. The second step, found in chapter (3) will consist of a thorough analysis of the linguistic properties of both sentence topics and post-verbal NPs. We will show why for each proposed characterization the two types of expressions are assumed to stand at exactly opposite ends. Finally, in chapter (4) we will present a self collected corpus of existential sentences which will demonstrate that the post-verbal NP may indeed function as a sentence topic, in terms of its role in the discourse, as well as in terms of the linguistic properties assumed to be associated with topicality. We will propose how it is possible, and indeed perfectly logical, for the post-verbal NP to function as the topic of its existential sentence. Before we start, however, a short historical overview of the conception of topicality, as well as an understanding of what precisely we take “existential sentences” to mean is in order, and to these two tasks we now turn.

The linguistic, as well as cognitive and logical relevance of the notion of sentence topic has received much attention in the philosophical and linguistic literature within various schools of thought for centuries. The basic intuition behind its use in both logic and language is that sentences are broken down into two main subcomponents: the first consists of the establishment or identification of some entity and the second consists of a predication on that entity. These two subcomponents, first conceived of as primitives of a logical system, may be traced back all the way to Greek philosophy, particularly to Aristotle. Aristotelian logic was made up of the following four types of propositions:

A. All x\(^2\) is y
E. No x is y
I. Some x is y
O. Some x is not y

Each of the above proposition types is made up of a first part, x, which establishes some entity, and a second part, y, which predicates something of that entity. These have become known as the Subject and the Predicate, respectively.

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\(^2\) The variables x and y are known in Aristotelian logic as “terms”. The propositions expressed by A and E also include singular statements such as “Sparky is a dog”.

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Aristotle’s system has paved the way for logical thought over the next 22 centuries or so. Interestingly, linguists have adopted the notions subject and predicate as primitives of a grammatical system. The exact formulation of what a grammatical subject is, or what are its inherent properties has been the topic of much research over the years (cf. e.g. Keenan 1976). However, this is not the concern of the present paper. Rather, we would like to focus our attention on an interesting shift brought about by language scholars over the centuries, from a grammatically oriented view of subjects, to a discourse oriented one.

As far back as the medieval period, Arab grammarians made a distinction between the discourse notions mubtada, meaning ‘beginning’, and xabar, meaning ‘news’, as standing in opposition to the grammatical notions of subject and predicate (cf. Goldenberg 1988, Krifka 2006). Several centuries later, linguists of the 19th Century similarly felt that a distinction must be made between grammatical subject and psychological subject\(^3\), the latter corresponding to the entity which the sentence is about, whether it be a grammatical subject or not. Let’s take a look at some of those early formulations:

There is then a point of departure, an initial notion which is equally present to him who speaks and to him who hears, which forms, as it were, the ground upon which the two intelligences meet (Weil 1844)

Evidently I first mention that which animates my thinking, that which I am thinking about, my psychological subject, and then that what I am thinking about it, my psychological predicate (von der Gabelentz 1869; translation in Krifka 2006)

The psychological subject is [...] that which the speaker wants the hearer to think about, to which he wants to direct his attention, the psychological predicate that what he should think about it (Paul 1880; translation in Krifka 2006)

\(^3\) It should be noted that it isn’t absolutely clear that all the pair-terms we shall introduce in this introduction (i.e. topic-comment, psychological subject-predicate and theme-rheme below) relate to the exact same linguistic notion. However, I do believe they all aim at explaining the same basic intuition that a sentence is about one of its parts. Our subsequent analysis will take this notion as a most essential property of topicality. At any rate, while the different ways of explaining this basic intuition clearly diverge, by no means does each pair-term systematically relate to a single type of explanation across all authors employing it. A systematic explication of each term-pair and the relations between them requires a separate research which is beyond the scope of this paper. The term “topic” is the one chosen for this work.

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From Weil’s very early formulation we get a first glimpse of the idea that the topic represents, in a sense, something known and shared amongst the interlocutors, and as such forms a basis on which the sentence builds. From both Weil (“point of departure”) and von der Gabelentz (“first mention”) we get a glance at the idea that the topic appears first in the sentence. Lastly, from both von der Gabelentz and Paul it is evident that the topic represents what a sentence is about.

In the early part of the 20th Century linguists became ever more careful (though not always successfully) to distinguish the notion of grammatical subject from the notion of what a sentence is about. Jespersen (1924) explains that while the two notions often, if not most of the time, converge on one and the same expression, the former is by no means reducible to the latter. From the point of view of grammar, Jespersen argued, any attempt to define the grammatical subject in terms of what the sentence is about, is quite useless. The reason is that a sentence may be conceived of as being about any one of its parts, not necessarily the grammatical subject. We will return to a lengthy discussion on the matter when we discuss the notion of subjecthood in chapter (3).

An important step forward in the linguistic analysis of this bipartite separation, was introduced by The Prague School Linguists, headed by Mathesius. Mathesius (e.g. 1939) uses the terms theme, defined there as “that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation, and from which the speaker proceeds in his discourse” (1939:234; translation in Firbas 1966), and rheme, defined as “that which the speaker states about, or in regard to, the theme of utterance” (1939:234). The “theme-rheme” term-pair has become quite popular and is long considered standard terminology for the phenomenon under discussion, particularly in European linguistics. Mathesius too, like Weil before him and many after, attempted a definition of his theme in terms of given information. Clearly, this definition requires much explication, to which we will also turn in chapter 3. Note though that here again the notion of aboutness is nonetheless apparent.

To conclude this historical exposition we must mention Hockett (1958) who introduced the notion into American linguistics using the term-pair topic and comment. Hockett writes:
The most general characterization of predicative constructions is suggested by the terms “topic” and “comment”[…] The speaker announces a topic and then says something about it (Hockett 1958a:301)

We turn now to the term “existential sentences”, which we will use to refer to the following type of construction in English:

- There + to be + (indefinite) NP + optional locative⁴ (e.g. Bolinger 1977; Lyons 1999).

And its equivalents in other languages, particularly to our interest in Hebrew:

- Yeš + (indefinite) NP + optional locative (e.g. Ziv 1982).

In this paper we take the term “existential sentences” to refer only to those specialized constructions which are used to assert existence, as the ones above. Thus, we will not be dealing with other sentence types asserting existence, such as the English “lions exist” or the Hebrew, אריהים קיים, seeing as such sentences are not unique with respect to their information structure, and particularly with respect to the notion of topicality⁵. The construction which we are considering, by contrast, has some unique information-structure properties, which we will analyze below inasmuch as they bare on topicality. Note further, that in both languages, the NP appears, non-canonically, after the main predicate (a fact which will prove to be relevant to the information-structure of such sentences), and this is why we refer to it, as we have already been doing, as the “post-verbal NP”, a term which in this paper will always mean “the post-verbal NP in existential sentences”, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

The following may serve as some prototypical examples of existential sentences:

1.3. There’s fire! (Marty 1884; translation in Krifka 2006)
1.4. There’s a women in the house. (Rando & Napoli 1978)
1.5. There’s a fly in my tea. (Reinhart 1982)
1.6. Once upon a time there was a king. (Mathesius 1939; translation in Firbas 1966)

⁴ Following e.g. Lyons (1967), the term “locative” here includes also temporal expressions, such as in example (8) below.
⁵ Cf. Milsark (1974) for arguments against subsuming such sentences under the heading “existentials”.
As already explained, the above sentences are intuitively not taken to be about fire, a woman in the house, a fly or a king respectively. Rather, such sentences are interpreted as introducing these entities as new to the discourse, leaving a possible predication for subsequent sentences. As such, the term “existential sentences” is, at times, regarded a misnomer, and instead the term “presentational sentences” has been preferred (e.g. Bolinger 1971, 1977). We will continue to use the term “existential sentences” or for short “existentials” throughout this paper.

Having gained a first approximation of the ideas to be dealt with, we go on to an in-depth analysis of the discourse function of topic expressions and existential sentences.
Chapter 2: Discourse Function

A. Topic
While there is immense disagreement with regard to particular linguistic properties, the sentence topic is, rather consistently, interpreted as what a sentence is about; i.e. its function as a linguistic entity is to signal an aboutness relation between an expression and a predication in the clause in which it occurs. As pervasive as the notion of aboutness is, some authors suggest various other linguistic properties as definitional to sentence topics. Below we shall very briefly survey some of these works, enabling in passing a sneak peak at some of these other properties, which will be examined in depth in chapter (3). The present subsection will culminate with a detailed explication of the notion of aboutness as it is found in two studies, namely Reinhart (1982) and Lambrecht (1994), who consider aboutness the only property able to inherently define what a sentence topic is.

To start, Halliday (1967) defines the topic in terms of sequential ordering, as the first part of the sentence. At this position, he explains, the topic is responsible for framing each clause “into the form of a message about one of its constituents” (1967:223, my emphasis). In another place he writes more simply that the topic means “what I am talking about” (1967:212).

Gundel (1974), like Mathesius (1939) and Kuno (1972), defines the topic in terms of given information. She writes that the topic is “necessarily associated with an element that is part of the presupposed (given or known) information conveyed in the sentence” (1974:30, my emphasis). Still, within the very same paragraph she explains that the “topic-comment” distinction is one “between what the sentence is about […] and what is said about that thing” (1974:30).

Dahl (1974), following Chomsky (1971), identifies the topic with the most unstressed part of the sentence, whereas the complement of topic\(^6\) takes up the heart of the sentence stress. Dahl even goes as far as using the terms “unemphatic” and “emphatic” for topic and comment, respectively, and states that sentence stress is a universal means of signaling topic-comment structure. Still, Dahl maintains that “In a sentence with a topic-comment structure, […] we say something- expressed in the comment- about someone or

\(^6\) We intentionally avoid using a particular term here. Some options are “focus”, “comment”, “rheme”, etc. depending on the framework within which the author writes.
something- represented by the topic” (Dahl 1974:7, my emphasis). The above shows that the notion of aboutness is prevalent even in works which did not consider the idea the flagship of topicality.

The following authors put more stress on the function of sentence topics in the organization of messages, facilitating either the “packing” process of information, the “unpacking” or both. Chafe (1976), influenced by Halliday (1967 & 1970)\(^7\) explains that interlocutors come into discourse with some knowledge store made up of representations of entities (e.g. people, things or events), as well as of connections between these entities and propositions concerning them. We can imagine, for example, one holding a representation of President Obama, which is connected to such information as “the first black president of the United States”. With regard to what we consider here the essential characterization of topicality, Chafe writes that

*One of the main ways in which new knowledge is communicated- perhaps even the only way- is by identifying some particular as a starting point and adding to the addressee’s knowledge ABOUT it* (Chafe 1976:43-44, my emphasis)\(^8\).

The same idea is further developed in e.g. Heim (1982), Vallduvi (1993), Shir (1997). Heim and Shir adopt a rather extreme version of the theory which has come to be known as “the file card metaphor”, according to which our knowledge is stored on mental “file cards” representing entities. Each new piece of knowledge, i.e. each new proposition that is conveyed to the hearer, must either be stored within an existing file-card, or otherwise the speaker creates a new file-card. All file-card theories adhere to the notion of aboutness in that the topic expression functions so as to signal the appropriate file-card about which the sentence adds information.

At this point we turn to Reinhart (1982) and Lambrecht (1994), who both take the notion of aboutness as the one defining characteristic of topicality. Reinhart explains that any linguistic characterization of topicality other than aboutness, be it structural, semantic or even pragmatic (e.g. as "given") will not be able to explain what a topic inherently is. At

\(^7\) Halliday himself was influenced by the Prague school linguists, who were among the first to analyze the notion of sentence topic (their “theme”) in a unique pragmatic framework of information structure. Thus the notion of topicality is analyzed as a component of the sentence which enables the “internal organization [of the clause] into an act of communication” (Halliday 1967:199).

\(^8\) While in Chafe (1976) the “starting point” is associated for the most part with the grammatical subject, which in turn is explained as providing basically the discourse function of topics, Chafe (1987) explicitly adopts the term to express the notion of topicality.
best these could provide but a common characteristic, but they fail to explain why the topic should have any such characteristic in the first place. Only the notion of aboutness can provide a proper definition, and all other characteristics ought to follow from it. Moreover, both Reinhart and Lambrecht explicitly recognize that a topic expression will never be recognized based on structural or semantic criteria alone, but rather that the context of utterance is of crucial importance. To illustrate we may look again at example (1.1.), repeated below:

1.1. The children went to school.

Lambrecht notes that out of context there is no way to determine what the topic of this sentence is. Either NP may be interpreted as the topic depending, for example, on whether the children or the school are under discussion at this point in the discourse. Thus it is concluded that the notion of sentence topic is inherently a pragmatic one, and consequently the term “pragmatic aboutness” is adopted by both Reinhart and Lambrecht.

In explicating the notion of pragmatic aboutness both authors draw inspiration from the philosophical work of Strawson (1964). Strawson explains the idea of pragmatic aboutness\(^9\) using two principles, the first is known as the *Principle of the Presumption of Knowledge* and the second as the *Principle of Relevance*. The first principle explains that we don’t just spurt pieces of new information out of the blue; rather, very broadly put speakers assert by *relating* new information to information they assume their hearers are familiar with\(^10\). From this principle it may seem as though we are directed at explaining the notion of topicality in terms of given information after all. However, this view is rejected by both authors, who take up the second principle as the more crucial one.

The second principle completes the first by explaining that the speaker makes use of what is presumed to be known, in order to expand the hearer’s knowledge with regard to *that* piece of knowledge. In Strawson’s words a statement “intends, in general, to give or add information about what is a matter of standing or current interest or concern” (1964:97). It follows that the sentence topic can only be deduced by understanding the *purpose* of an

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\(^9\) Strawson is opposed to the idea of “semantic aboutness” which is explained in, e.g. Putnam (1958), but is assumed to be irrelevant from a linguistic point of view (cf. Reinhart 1982).

\(^10\) Lambrecht (1994) notes that this is not a trivial fact. If we aim at expanding our hearer’s knowledge, then we might assume that stating information assumed to be known is redundant. However, as Lambrecht’s analysis shows, new information is obtained by connecting it to what is already assumed to be known, and so it turns out that relating what we say to known information is quite a necessity.
utterance in a certain context, which will successfully provide the “current interest or concern”. Lambrecht explains as follows:

If a topic is seen as a matter of standing interest or concern, a statement about a topic can count as informative only if it conveys information which is RELEVANT with respect to this topic (Lambrecht 1994:119, original emphasis).

In this respect, Reinhart suggests a criterion to identify the topic of a sentence. First she explains that a single proposition may be used to convey various different assertions; the topic will be identified only relative to the appropriate assertion in a given context. Accordingly, the topic represents the entity which the hearer is intended to assess if he is to find out the truth conditions of the sentence. Thus, for example, in a sentence like

2.1. Max danced with Rosa yesterday. (Adapted from Reinhart 1982: example 6), if Max is under discussion and the speaker aims to assert that he danced with Rosa, then in order to determine the truth of the statement, the hearer is to assess his knowledge of Max and see who he danced with. However, if Rosa is under discussion and the speaker aims to assert that Max danced with her (in which case most likely “Max” will receive relatively heavy stress) then the hearer is more likely to assess his knowledge of Rosa and see if Max indeed danced with her.

To conclude, here’s Lambrecht’s formal definition for sentence topic:

A referent is interpreted as the topic of a proposition if in a given situation the proposition is construed as being about this referent, i.e. as expressing information which is relevant to and which increases the addressee’s knowledge of this referent (Lambrecht 1994:131).
B. Existential Sentences

Traditionally, existential sentences have been treated as just that, sentences whose purpose is to make an assertion of existence (cf. e.g. Lyons 1967, Kuno 1971 & 1972, Berman 1978). Kuno (1971) writes:

*The term “existential sentence” will be used to refer to sentences such as:*

1. (a) There are two books on the table.

[...] which state the existence of certain indefinite objects (Kuno 1971:333).

Some linguists chose to diverge from this characterization, claiming that in natural language discourse, a mere assertion of existence “is a rather special kind of speech act which is of limited use in everyday communication” (Lambrecht 1994:179). Thus a shift has been made toward characterizing such sentences as “presentational” (cf. Hetzron 1975, Bolinger 1971 & 1977, Lambrecht 1994, inter alia). Bolinger (1977) writes:

*In place of ‘existential’ I shall adopt a modification. [Such sentences do not] bring something into existence [...but rather] bring something into awareness* (Bolinger 1977:92-93)

And another quote from Lambrecht is also useful:

*From the discourse-pragmatic point of view, it is [...] preferable to interpret the function of such sentences as that of presenting or introducing a referent into the “place” or “scene” of the discourse and thereby raising it into the addressee’s consciousness, rather than of asserting its mere existence. [The presentational function is the] fundamental communicative function of existential sentences* (Lambrecht 1994:179).

Evidently, examining sentences which were uttered in real conversations, it appears it is often difficult to say which one of these two functions is actually at work. For example, Chafe (1994) provides a transcription of a conversation where someone is telling her friends about a hiking trip she was on and says:

2.2. …And there were these two women hiking up ahead of us. (Chafe 1994:130)

In Chafe (1987) the following analysis of existential sentences is given:
The function of the "there" construction is precisely to introduce a new referent, often one that will be used subsequently as a [topic]. But an intonation unit containing this construction evidently does not itself contain any [topic] as such (Chafe 1987:37)

Now sentence (2.2.), I believe, may properly be analyzed as presentational, indeed introducing a new referent and making it available for future predication. In fact, the relative clause “hiking up ahead of us”, immediately makes a topical use of the freshly introduced entity. Note, however, that even here we cannot completely ignore the function of the sentence in asserting the existence of people the hearer didn’t know about, even if it does seem that such an assertion is of minor importance in this context, without the accompanying presentational function.

A case where I believe it is clear that an existential reading only is possible, can be found in the following real life conversation I have held:

2.3. - How big is your apartment?
- Well, there are two bedrooms…

It seems that the reply here is not intended to introduce the bedrooms into the conversation, but rather the assertion of their existence actually provides just the information the interrogator was requesting about the apartment. But now note that here too a presentational function may be superimposed on the originally intended existential function, by way of continuing the conversation about the bedrooms, e.g. if the speaker went on to say “One is rather large, the other is smaller…” Thus it seems that whenever the presentational function is employed, the existential function cannot but also take some functionally relevant part, and vice versa. We conclude that separating these two notions is a rather difficult task, requiring much more theoretical as well as empirical work. At the end of the paper we will return to this problem and shed some new light on it.

At any rate, what is important for our purposes is that whether analyzed as existential or as presentational the predominant view is that the post-verbal NP in such

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11 Chafe uses the term “starting point” which he prefers to “topic”. An explanation to this choice of his does not concern us here (essentially we understand the two notions the same, i.e. in terms of aboutness), but the interested reader will find such an explanation in Chafe’s article.
12 The existential sentence, i.e. from the word “and” to the word “sentence” constitutes an intonation unit in Chafe’s analysis.
13 cf. analysis in Lambrecht 1994:180, where it is argued that the topic of a relative clause following an existential is expressed either by the word “who”, as in “…who were hiking up ahead of us”, or as is possible in English, via ellipsis, as occurs Chafe’s transcription.
sentences can NOT be construed as representing the entity which the sentence is about. This restriction is argued to follow from the presentational function in that one cannot, it appears, introduce an entity and talk about it at the same time. It also follows from the existential function in that it appears to be redundant to assert the existence of an entity which could be topical in the discourse; i.e., if an entity can be represented as topical, its existence is presupposed and need not be asserted.

Following we shall show that indeed an NP whose function is signaling what a sentence is about, and an NP whose function is introducing a new referent into the discourse, inherently oppose each other.

C. Opposing Discourse Functions

We have suggested an essential difference in the respective discourse functions of topic expressions and post-verbal NPs. A topic is used as the (familiar) basis about which an assertion is made, while a post-verbal NP is used either to assert the existence of some entity or introduce a new entity into the discourse, leaving a possible predication about it for subsequent discourse.

This difference in function has been alluded to by 19th Century German philosophers Brentano and Marty. While their own interest was primarily in logic, their theory has influenced work in linguistics, particularly in the domain of information structure (e.g. Kuroda 1972, 1984 & 1985, Dahl 1976, Vattuone 1975, Ulrich 1985, Sasse 1984 & 1987, inter alia). Brentano and Marty drew an inherent distinction between two types of judgment, *categorical* and *thetic*. Let us take a look at how Lambrecht understands the difference between these two:

The CATEGORICAL judgment, which is expressed in the traditional subject-predicate sentence type, involves both the act of recognition of a subject and the act of affirming or denying what is expressed by the predicate about the subject. [...] In contrast, the THETIC judgment involves only the recognition or rejection of some judgment material, without predating this judgment of some independently recognized subject. (Lambrecht 1994:139)

As we can see, the categorical judgment involves two acts, one of recognition and the other of predication. Its logical form is “A is B” or “A is not B”, such as in the sentence
that started this paper "The children went to school", where the grammatical subject corresponds to A, and the predicate to B. The thetic judgment, by contrast, involves only a single judgment; as Lambrecht explains, it lacks the independent recognition of a subject. Instead, thetic judgments simply "pose" (which is the basis for the word "thetic") a certain state of affairs as taking place or not. Hence, its logical form is "A is" or "A is not". Now as prototypical examples of thetic judgments Marty himself provided existential sentences (whether deemed existential or presentational). Consider for example:

2.4. There are yellow flowers. (Marty 1918, translation in Lambrecht 1994: ex. 4.13-b)

This sentence does not ask its hearer to first recognize "yellow flowers" as a separate act of judgment, but it simply makes a statement about a certain state of affairs taking place at the time of utterance. Thetic judgments, however, are by no means restricted to existential sentences. Any sentence type which is used to introduce a new entity into the discourse is treated in the literature as thetic, whether it is an existential sentence or not (cf. e.g. Kuroda 1972, Lambrecht 1994). The NP in such sentences will, accordingly, fail to receive a topic interpretation. Thus the inherent difference in discourse function between topic NPs and post-verbal NPs is strengthened, for this difference stretches beyond the use of solely existential sentences. Interestingly, the marking of NPs in all presentational constructions, including existentials, shares properties in common. Consider the following minimal pairs (caps indicating heavy intonational stress):

2.5. A. What’s the matter? My BACK hurts. (adapted from Lambrecht 1994, ex. 4.10)
B. How’s your BACK? It HURTS. (Lambrecht 1994, ex. 4.10 B)

2.6. A. Behind me stood THE VICE-PRESIDENT. (Gundel 1974, ex. 93 d)
B. He/ The vice-president STOOD BEHIND ME.

The A sentences present a certain state of affairs, not intending to predicate anything of the subject NP, and the sentences are therefore deemed thetic. Both Lambrecht and Gundel explicitly state that the NP in these sentences cannot be interpreted as topical, this fact being marked in (2.5.) by non-canonical heavy stress on the subject, and in (2.6.) both by heavy stress and by the subject’s shift to a sentence final position, much as occurs in existential

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14 A discussion on existential sentences being naturally attributed a locative and a temporal even without overt realization, as occurs in example (2.4.), is provided in Gundel (1974), chapter 2. If, for example, one watches T.V. and utters “there’s a game on”, the natural interpretation is “on the T.V. and now”.

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constructions. The B sentences, by contrast, are constructed as topic-comment sentences. The topic is so marked by the use of a pronominal and its placement in canonical initial position, and with low stress. Consider also the Hebrew:

7.2  ..
זהירות! בא אוטו
Watch out! Is coming a car.
7.2  .
נפלה עלי עייפות. מה קרה
What happened? Fell upon me tiredness.
7.2  .
כואב לי הגב. מה קרה
What happened? Hurts my back.
7.2  .
פרצה שרפה! מה קרה
What happened? Broke out a fire!

None of these sentences can receive a topical interpretation on the subject NP, in all cases this is marked by a non-canonical sentence-final subject position. Sentence (2.7.) clearly is not intended to say something about a car, neither does sentence (2.8.) about tiredness, (2.9.) about my back or (2.10.) about a fire. These are all thetic statements, posing a certain state of affairs as taking place (at the time of utterance).

We have established an inherent difference in discourse function between topics and “presentational” NPs in general, going beyond their use in just existentials. In accord with these two opposing discourse functions, below we shall analyze how each of the properties attributed to sentence topics appears to be a misfit when considered as a property of post-verbal NPs. It is important to note that we will not be concerned here with characterizing positively the properties of existentials in general or of post-verbal NPs in particular; rather we will use the properties of sentence topics as our basis, and will define the post-verbal NP only negatively, to the effect that it appears NOT to possess these same properties, thereby leading to the commonly held conclusion that the post-verbal NP cannot function as a topic expression.
Chapter 3: Linguistic Characterizations

A. Semantico-Pragmatic Properties

I. Two Kinds of Givenness

We start our analysis with one of the most intuitive, yet at the same time one of the most controversial properties of sentence topics, namely that the topic must represent a “given” expression in the sentence. According to Gundel & Fretheim (2004), the controversy stems from the fact that two different notions of “givenness” are found in the literature, one they term “referential”, the other “relational”. Below, each will be examined in turn, starting with the referential notion.

Gundel & Fretheim explain:

*Referential givenness [...] involves a relation between a linguistic expression and a corresponding non-linguistic entity* (2004:176)

What this means is that referential givenness deals with the interlocutors’ ability to construe representations in mind of the things denoted by linguistic expressions. In this respect, referential givenness is closely tied to the notion of *identifiability*, i.e. the hearer’s ability to identify a particular referent via a linguistic expression. Gundel, Hedberg & Zacharski (1993) give the following definition of identifiability:

*The addressee can identify the speaker’s intended referent on the basis of the nominal alone [...which] may be based on an already existing representation in the addressee’s memory*” (1993:277).

Several different reasons may justify a speaker’s assumption that an expression could sufficiently identify some referent, thereby felicitously rendering it an expression which can function as the topic of its clause. These are reviewed below:

1. Identifiable based on general Knowledge of the world, i.e. an expression which denotes a referent forming part of the general shared knowledge amongst interlocutors (cf. e.g. Prince 1981), such as “the sun”, “The President”, “Steve” (among a group of friends). **Example**: *Steve* ate the cake.

2. Identifiable based on linguistic context, i.e. an expression which refers back to something which has already been mentioned in the discourse, either an entity or a whole proposition (cf. Lambrecht 1994). **Examples**: I saw a movie, *it* was good. OR: – John’s crazy. – No, *that’s* not true.
3. Identifiable based on situational context, i.e. a deictic expression. **Example:** *This* smells bad.

4. Identifiable based on inference, i.e. the speaker assumes the hearer can gather the denotation by relating it to something already established in the discourse or the situational context (cf. Prince’s 1981 notion of inferables, Chafe’s 1987 discussion on “schemas” and the “semi-active” cognitive status of referents, or Fillmore’s 1982 and Lambrecht’s 1994 notion of “frames”). **Example:** I got on a bus, *the driver* was drunk.

5. Identifiable based on a sufficiently identifying description, i.e. the hearer is not familiar with the referent, but the nominal contains enough information so that the hearer can access the intended representation (cf. Prince’s 1981 notion of “containing inferables” or Gundel et al’s 1993 notion of “uniquely identifiable”). **Example:** *My next door neighbor* is so loud.

Any of the above cases can be considered “referentially given” in discourse, and as such may be used as a topical expression about which a predication is made\(^\text{15}\).

Associating the topic with given information stretches all the way back at least to Weil (1844) and Mathesius (1939), as we have noted in the introduction, and continues to be pervasive throughout many works, e.g. Kuno (1972), Gundel (1974), (1985) & (1988), Chafe (1987), inter alia. The logic behind this characterization of topics is that in order to felicitously provide a predication, i.e. say something about some entity, this entity must be familiar to the hearer; or otherwise the hearer wouldn’t be able to recognize with regard to what information is being conveyed. Is this indeed the case? Is the hearer incapable of interpreting a sentence which is *about* a yet unfamiliar entity?

According to Reinhart’s analysis the reason it appears to some linguists that topics must represent old information is due to the fact that repetition of reference is one of two main cohesive devices used in producing a coherent discourse, the other being semantic connectors. Seeing as two sentences are coherently linked if they provide reference to the same entity, and seeing as it is likely that this repeated reference represents the entity under discussion it appears that in many cases the topic will indeed represent old information.

\(^{15}\) For further discussion on the notion of identifiability the reader is directed to e.g. Chafe (1976), Reinhart (1982), Gundel et al. (1993) or Lambrecht (1994).
Furthermore, in the serialization of a text it appears that what constitutes a new referent in one sentence is naturally followed by a sentence in which the same referent is now topical and represents old information, thereby contributing to the coherence of the discourse as a whole (e.g. “Once there was a king. He lived in a big castle.”)

However, as Reinhart argues, this correlation between givenness and topicality is not necessary, particularly in cases where a cohesive link is achieved via a semantic connector. Reinhart gives the following example:

3.1. The public benches that used to be there are now gone. Of course, as a consequence, the tenants of 1415 Ocean Walk will no longer have the benches to sit on. (Reinhart 1982: example 40)

In the underlined sentence, Reinhart argues, it is the referentially new entity represented by “the tenants” that is interpreted as topic, and not the referentially old entity represented by “the benches”. “As a consequence” serves as a semantic connector to achieve coherency.

However, note that it could be argued that the NP “the tenants” is inferable in this context and NOT new, as Reinhart assumes. The preceding expression “the public benches” possibly gives rise to a schema where talking about “tenants” becomes plausible. In addition consider the fact that the full NP is “the tenants of 1415 Ocean Walk”, i.e. an expression which contains enough information to be identifiable based on a “sufficiently identifiable description”. So perhaps Reinhart is wrong in assuming this NP cannot be treated as referentially given. At any rate, what is absolutely clear is that the NP “the benches” which also appears in the sentence is, we could say, “more familiar” at the time of utterance than the NP “the tenants of 1415 Ocean Walk”, and this at least shows us that it need not be the “most identifiable” referent which has to be interpreted as topic.

That givenness is not a necessary property for topics can perhaps better be shown if we consider sentences which start out a written text (say of literature or a newspaper article), and often naturally have as their topic expression a brand new entity. For example the sentences “Dorothy lived in the midst of Kansas” or “Alice was beginning to get very tired…” which start out the books The Wizard of Oz and Alice in Wonderland respectively, have as their topic an expression representing an unfamiliar entity. The books could have started out with a presentational sentence such as “Once there was a little girl…” However, it seems that the way these works actually start, is such that the heroes are presented via
topic expressions at the outset. In this respect cf. the analysis in Firbas (1966) who discusses cases where an author starts a text by introducing some entity *as if* it was already familiar in order to achieve a particular literary effect.

Another point against identifying referentially old information with topicality is made in Reinhart (1982) and in Lambrecht (1994), claiming that representing old information is not a sufficient condition for topic interpretation. Consider the following:

3.2. Who did they call? Pat said SHE was called. (Lambrecht 1994: example 3.30)

Within the subordinate clause, “SHE” clearly represents a given entity, referring back to “Pat”. However, “SHE” cannot be interpreted, in this context, as the sentence topic. The sentence is not intended to add information about the referent of “SHE”, but rather, as the question makes clear, about who they called.

Lambrecht (1994) notes that an implicit assumption of those accounts that identify the topic with referentially given information is that the information conveyed by a sentence is segmentable into “old” and “new” expressions. The appeal of this segmentation stems from such discourses as the following:

3.3. What did you do last night? I went to a concert.

“I” in the reply above makes up the “old information” part of the sentence, representing an entity which is clearly identifiable to the hearer, and hence interpreted as the topic; while the predicate “went to a concert” makes up the “new information” part of the sentence, denoting within it a referent unfamiliar to the hearer. Despite its intuitive appeal Lambrecht explains that such analyses would fail to account for the topic in sentences such as:

3.4. Where are you? At the university.

“The university” in the reply above clearly represents a fully identifiable referent, and yet it is obviously not the topic. The sentence, in fact, has no (overt) topic expression. This kind of argumentation leads Lambrecht to the *relational* analysis of givenness, to which we now turn.

According to the relational approach, a sentence is informative by virtue of establishing a relation between elements that make up a proposition (cf. Lambrecht 1994:48-49). What is important to stress here is that constituents within a sentence don’t constitute “information” in and of themselves. An expression may represent an identifiable entity, but calling it “old information” is quite misleading. The term “information” has
relevance only with respect to propositions, not to representations of particular entities. Sentence (3.4.) is informative because it successfully **draws a relation** between two elements: “the place where I am” and “the university”; and NOT because any one of these elements on its own conveys “old” or “new” information. This relation is, it is argued, a relation of aboutness which the topic part of the sentence holds with respect to the rest of it. So we see that the relational approach is directly linked to the notion of aboutness associated with topics (cf. also Gundel & Fretheim 2004 for a similar analysis).

From the point of view of relational givenness, the topic of the sentence is to be construed not only in terms of identifiability but crucially also in terms of *predictability*. The topic makes up that part of the sentence which the hearer can predict to occur within it (either overtly or not\(^\text{16}\)). Put in Lambrecht’s own words:

*The topic referent can be expected to play a role in a given proposition due to its status as a center of interest or matter of concern in the conversation* (Lambrecht 1994:151)

Thus, again in (3.4.), where the topic is not even overtly expressed, this is in virtue of the fact that the hearer could expect that the speaker will provide information about their location. It is worth noting that a topic expression used for the first time in a discourse, unless deictic or in some cases contrastive, cannot, for obvious reasons, necessarily be completely predictable. Such a case we saw in the “tenants” example above, where the entity, even if inferable, is not strictly speaking predictable. Still, even in that sentence what makes us interpret “the tenants” as topic is the *relation* which the sentence intends to delineate between the denotation of the “the tenants” and the predication expressed within the rest of the sentence.

Lastly we note that referential givenness and relational givenness often, and not coincidentally, converge, simply by virtue of the fact that what the sentence is about is usually predictable and, as such, obviously identifiable, i.e. referentially given. That topics statistically tend to be referentially given is shown, e.g. in Chafe’s (1994) corpus analysis, where it is demonstrated that most topics take a pronominal form, requiring their identifiability. This correlation between the two notions must have contributed to the confusion in their analysis (cf. e.g. Kuno 1972, Reinhart 1982, Lambrecht 1994, Gundel &

\(^{16}\) We will discuss the relation of topic to ellipsis in the section on structural properties.
Fretheim 2004). For our purposes we will take both notions as indications of topicality, especially since they so often coincide.

Turning now to the post-verbal NP in existentials, the predominant view in the literature is that it cannot represent an identifiable entity, and from here it trivially follows that it also cannot represent predictable information in anyway. Simply put, it is neither referentially given nor relationally given.

With the post-verbal NP constituting part of a thetic judgment, the relational approach is inherently a misfit. Existential sentences, as thetic judgments, do not draw a relation between two elements of the sentence, but rather simply pose a state of affairs. In terms of identifiability and predictability, it appears that asserting the existence of something familiar or introducing into the discourse something predictable is redundant. Authors who consider referential givenness an inherent characteristic of topicality explicitly disallow post-verbal NPs from receiving a topic interpretation. Thus, in Firbas’s review of Mathesius’ (1939) work we find the following statement:

No theme can be established within a sentence if none of the sentence elements conveys a piece of information that is either known or at least obvious in the given situation. This is illustrated by the existential type of sentence (Firbas 1966:268).

In Ward & Birner (1995) we find an argument made from the point of view of the post-verbal NP’s role in the sentence:

[T]he post-verbal NP of a there-sentence represents an entity that is not presumed by the speaker to constitute shared knowledge. That is, the speaker treats the post-verbal NP in there-sentences as representing a HEARER-NEW entity (Prince 1992), where a hearer-new entity is one that the speaker does not assume to exist within the hearer’s knowledge store (Ward & Birner 1995:728).

These arguments are used to account for the difference between the following:

3.5. There’s someone at the door.
3.6. *There’s him at the door.

(3.6.) is ungrammatical because the pronominal “him”, indicating a familiar referent, cannot felicitously take the role of the post-verbal NP.

With regard to predictability, Kuno (1972) writes that the post-verbal NP “always signals […] unpredictable information”. As Kuno notes, existential sentences are only likely
to appear either: at the beginning of conversations, or as “neutral descriptions” answering a question as “What happened?”, or followed by an exclamation like “LOOK!” introducing some “out of the blue” occurrence. The following may serve as prototypical examples for Kuno’s intuitions:

3.7. There’s gum on your shoe.
3.8. Have you heard? There’s a new Tarantino movie out.

In (3.7.) clearly “gum” was not predictable, and the entire state of affairs constitutes entirely new information for the hearer. Similarly in (3.8.), which could start a conversation about this movie, at the time of the utterance represents completely new, unpredictable information. Kuno further notes that sentences such as:

3.9. *There is I.
are ungrammatical because “it is not possible, it seems, for the speaker to talk about his existence or appearance at the place of his speaking as if it were an entirely new event” (Kuno 1972:284-285); i.e. an expression such as “I”, which is deictically identifiable, proves a misfit when used as a post-verbal NP.17

We have seen that while identifiability and predictability are natural properties of topic expressions, directly related to the fact that a sentence is about something familiar which forms a “matter of concern” in the discourse, the post-verbal NP, by virtue of representing a newly introduced entity, is naturally unidentifiable and trivially unpredictable.

II. Referentiality

A commonly held assumption in the literature is that a topic expression must be referential. This characterization follows trivially from the fact that in order for a sentence to be about something, this something must have a salient referent for the hearer to construe in mind.18

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17 Lambrecht (1994) notes that a sentence such as “there’s me” is possible provided that the speaker is introducing themselves into a scene outside the speech situation, e.g. if the speaker points themselves out in a picture.

18 We are avoiding here some notions of topicality, e.g. as in Chomsky’s (1971) where the term “presupposition” is rather used, and need not be construed necessarily as referential. For instance, in Jespersen’s example “PETER said it”, it is presupposed that someone “said it”, though this is not in any obvious sense a referential expression.
Understanding what exactly it means for an expression to be referential is by no means an easy task, but we shall consider the notion only inasmuch as it sheds light on topicality, leaving various philosophical or purely semantic/logical notions out of the picture. We shall argue for the following: First, while an expression may “technically” denote a referent, it could still be construed as NON-referential in terms of its topic interpretation. Second, whether or not an expression has its referent in the “real” world as opposed to some make-believe world has no intrinsic effect with respect to topicality. We turn now to a discussion of each of these statements.

Starting with the first, Dahl (1974) explains that a referring expression is one which successfully “picks out an entity or a set of entities” (1974:8). He closely ties this idea to the notion of identifiability, to the effect that some level of identifiability must exist in order for the hearer to be able to successfully pick out an intended referent. To illustrate he contrasts the following sentences:

3.10. John is sitting on the grass. (1974: example 21)

3.11. A man is sitting on the grass. (1974: example 22)

Dahl explains that in (3.10.) “we pick out an individual- John- and say something about him- that he is sitting on the grass. [(3.11.) however,] cannot be interpreted in this way: ‘a man’ does not pick out any man” (1974:7). As such, it is argued, “a man” cannot receive a topic interpretation. In a footnote Dahl explains that some theories of reference would indeed consider “a man” just as referential as “John”, seeing as both “technically” denote some individual (provided that (3.11.) is truthfully uttered, clearly “a man” has someone as its referent). However, Dahl does not consider the indefinite NP to “function” as a referential expression about which something is being predicated. Rather, in its discourse function, (3.11.) is used to introduce a certain state of affairs. Dahl analyzes it as a thetic judgment, where the subject NP is not intended to represent an “independently recognized” entity, and thus does not have the function of a topic.

This explanation, of course, immediately reminds us of existential sentences, whose purpose is also to introduce a certain state of affairs. Indeed, Dahl explicitly regards existential sentences as the first prototypical example of thetic sentences, where the post-

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19 To be more accurate, he ties it to definiteness and to identifiability only via that. We will discuss definiteness in the section on structural properties.
verbal NP is not to be construed as referential. Let’s turn now to Reinhart who holds a similar view.

Reinhart (1982), in analyzing the existential sentence:

3.12. There is a fly in my tea. (1982: ex. 18a)

explains that “a fly” does not function as a topic expression, seeing as it “cannot be interpreted as referential” (1982:11). Now again, it is quite clear that a felicitous and truthful utterance of (3.12.) requires that there will indeed be a fly in the speaker’s tea, namely “a fly” technically does denote something. However, again it seems that the expression is not to be analyzed as referential seeing as “picking out” the fly as a particular entity about which a predication is made, is not of the least bit importance here; rather the sentence is aimed again at presenting some newly noticed state of affairs. What appears to be at issue here is whether an expression is functionally used to pick out a particular entity about which something is predicated or not. Thus, Reinhart concludes that the requirement is better stated such that the topic must be “pragmatically referential” (1982:13, my emphasis).

I would like now to explain why I support both Dahl’s and Reinhart’s analysis, and provide some linguistic evidence to strengthen it. Regarding (3.12.), consider the fact that even though the fly in the tea is right in front of the speaker, and even if the hearer too is completely attentive to this fly (think for example that the fly has parachuted directly into the cup, both interlocutors noticing this occurrence), still a deictic expression is impossible:


One might argue that “it” is not possible due to constraints imposed by the existential construction. But note that even if the sentence is not existential, the use of a deictic expression is still quite odd:


VS.

3.15. Look! A fly is in my tea.

Compare this to, say, using a deictic expression to refer to the tea, which is just fine:

3.16. It’s very hot.

Similarly, in Dahl’s example, one cannot say:

3.17. ??Look! He’s sitting on the grass.
Where “he” is only identifiable based on the presence of a certain unfamiliar man, even if this man is saliently visible to both interlocutors and is the absolutely only potential referent of the pronominal at the speech situation.

An explanation to these facts is given if we indeed look at the function which such statements take in the discourse. In Reinhart’s example, the speaker doesn’t intend to “pick out” a certain fly. The referent of the fly is utterly irrelevant, and referring to it using a pronominal (which as we shall see later can be a marker of topics) is not in accord with this irrelevance, rendering such a sentence ungrammatical if in an existential construction, or infelicitous if in a subject-predicate construction. In other words, the use of the deictic “it” or a deictic “he” implies that an integral part of the speech act is pointing to a particular thing, but if this is not to be a part of the speech act, then we should not be able to accept a deictic expression.

It may seem from the above analysis that indefinites can never be interpreted as referential, and hence cannot be topical expressions (cf. Gundel 1974). However, indefinite NPs may be interpreted as pragmatically referential, and thus topical, provided that they are construed as specific (cf. Reinhart 1982, Lambrecht 1994). Reinhart gives the following example where the indefinite “a child of my acquaintance” is interpreted as what the sentence is about:

3.22. When she was five years old, a child of my acquaintance announced a theory that she was inhabited by rabbits. (1982: example 21b).

Indeed, what makes such indefinite expressions pragmatically referential is that the speaker anchors the entity to some definite (i.e. identifiable) NP, thereby enabling a “specific” interpretation (cf. also Prince 1979 & 1981; Lambrecht 1994). Note that in this sentence the speaker intends to say something about a particular person, albeit one which is at the time of utterance unfamiliar to the hearer. For this reason the speaker employs a cataphoric construction, as well as an anchor on the indefinite NP.

Turning now to generic entities, they are considered, by and large, to constitute referential entities denoting whole sets, and can felicitously be interpreted as topic expressions. This idea may be found in Kuroda (1965), Kuno (1972), Dahl (1969, 1974), Gundel (1974), Prince (1981), and Lambrecht (1994), inter alia. Lambrecht explicitly treats generics as referring expressions in every respect. He writes of generics that “Identifying the
class of all entities which can be designated with an expression is identifying a unique referent” (1994:88). Thus the following sentence is considered to pick out the class of men and say something about it:


Generic entities pass the “about” test. E.g.:


Moreover, generic expressions presumably refer to identifiable sets, whether they are formally definite or indefinite (cf. Kuroda 1965, Firbas 1966, Dahl 1969 & 1972, Reinhart 1982, and Lambrecht 1994). Thus consider, for example, the response sentence below, where the topical status of “a dragonfly”, while indefinite, is nonetheless assured by the question, which explicitly requests information about this class of things:

3.27. What kind of animal is a dragonfly? A dragon fly/it is an insect.

Universally quantified NPs can also be interpreted as referential “provided that their referents are coextensive with the entire class designated by the NP” (Lambrecht 1994:156). Reinhart gives the following example, where the universally quantified NP is interpreted as what the sentence is about, and is also marked by left-dislocation:

3.28. Parents don’t understand. But all grownups, they do it to kids, whether they’re your own or not. (1982: example 20).

The term “pragmatically referential” has been adopted also in Lambrecht (1994), and we now turn to his analysis in order to say a word about the relation between referentiality and “real-world” reference. Lambrecht explains:

A topic expression must not only be referential; it must designate a DISCOURSE REFERENT (1994:155).

Lambrecht’s notion of “discourse referent” abstracts away from questions of real-world reference as opposed to imagined referents, or other entities which carry controversial statuses in the philosophical literature such as mathematical entities, round-squares, or abstract ideas. As long as the interlocutors believe or, at least, act as if they believe that some entity exists (be it an abstract entity, a set or whatever) then it may be construed as referential. What is important, as Lambrecht puts it, is that discourse referents “have a certain pragmatic reality for the interlocutors” (1994:156).
Thus, if a sentence such as the famous “the present king of France is bald” appears without context in a textbook on logic, then the sentence is rightfully interpreted anomalous since its natural topic “the present king of France” fails to refer (in today’s “real world” the expression has no referent). If, however, the sentence is uttered in, say, a make-believe discussion about the present king of France then clearly this expression designates the topic of the sentence, regardless of the fact that it denotes no one in the real world. By the same token, when we read, say, *Winnie the Pooh*, then sentences in the book that are construed as being about Pooh are successfully referential within the world created by the text. We will have more to say on the matter in the next subsection on existential presupposition.

Now, standing in contrast to topic expressions, we have already seen in the “fly” example an illustration of the fact that post-verbal NPs in existential sentences are not to function as referential expressions. Indeed it is just the types of NPs that are most commonly associated with existential sentences that are argued to constitute non-referential expressions. Thus, non-specific indefinite NPs and quantified expressions\(^{20}\) such as ‘nobody’, ‘somebody’, ‘more people’ or ‘many people’ are not considered referential expressions (cf. Reinhart 1982, Lambrecht 1994). The argument goes that existential sentences, if they function as presentational, aim to introduce a new entity, not to refer to it for the purpose of making a predication; if they function as existentials they are often used with a quantified expression which is not considered referential (unless it is a universal quantifier denoting a whole set as mentioned above). Consider:

3.29. There’s no one to help me move.

3.30. There’s probably someone who knows the answer.

3.31. There are many people here today.

Thus we see that in terms of referentiality as well, tendencies of topic expressions and post-verbal NPs diverge to opposite directions. While topics require a referential interpretation, post-verbal NPs, at the very least, do very well WITHOUT such a requirement.

\(^{20}\) That only universally quantified NPs can be topics but not other quantified NPs, is exemplified in Lambrecht’s following distinction:

1. As for all his friends, they…

2. *As for some people, they…
III. Existential Presupposition

Turning to the next property, we first note that in this paper we will not go into a deep analysis of presuppositions in general, but rather we focus on one particular kind of presupposition very often discussed with regard to topicality, and which will prove crucially relevant for our analysis in the final chapter, namely existential presuppositions. In much of the literature we find the argument that the entities represented by topic expressions must carry an existential presupposition, and moreover that an existential presupposition is necessarily and naturally superimposed on an expression which is coded as the topic of its sentence. The logic behind this view is that in order to talk about something, it must be assumed to exist. Lambrecht explains the idea as follows:

*It is obvious that for a proposition to be about some topic, and for this topic to be a matter of concern in the discourse, there must exist an entity or set of entities which can be designated by the topic expression. Moreover, the entity must be a part of the universe of discourse of the interlocutors*\(^{21}\) (1994:155, original emphases)

The idea that topics carry existential presupposition is traced back to Strawson (1964) who, in an attempt to shed new light on the so-called “truth gap” problem, suggested that the following sentence does indeed have a truth value, albeit the expression “the king of France” failing to refer:

3.32. The exhibition was visited yesterday by the king of France\(^{22}\).

This contrasts with the “classical” sentence, which is analyzed by Strawson as simply lacking a truth value:

3.33. The king of France is bald.

Strawson accounts for the difference between the two sentences by arguing for a difference in the topic interpretation imposed on each. In the former, the expression “the exhibition” is interpreted as topic, namely the statement is aimed to expand the addressee’s knowledge of *it*, and is simply false since the king did not visit the exhibition; in the latter the expression “the king of France” is interpreted as topic, and having no referent the

\(^{21}\) Lambrecht’s emphasis on the “universe of discourse” is, much like in our discussion of referentiality, aimed to explain that we are not talking here about any philosophical notion of existence, but rather what the interlocutors take to exist for the purpose of the discourse.

\(^{22}\) Strawson sets up a context where the expression “The exhibition” refers successfully.
sentence fails to assert anything at all, thereby rendering it truth valueless. In Reinhart’s terms, (3.32.) has a means by which to assess it, namely by checking the people who visited the exhibition, while (3.33.) by virtue of lacking an existential presupposition on the topical expression, has no means of assessment whatsoever, namely the information conveyed cannot even begin to be processed. Reinhart too concludes that “only topic noun phrase expressions carry existential presuppositions” (1982:15).

Strawson further shows that sentences like (3.33.) may be awarded a truth value when uttered in some contexts, provided that in these contexts “the king of France” is not to be interpreted as the sentence topic. Thus, consider (3.33.) when uttered in response to the following:

3.34. What other examples are there of famous contemporary figures who are bald?

In this case “The king of France” of sentence (3.33.) is no longer topical (indicated structurally by the fact that it will be heavily stressed) and subsequently the sentence will be judged as false. Strawson’s analysis is adopted by many linguists, e.g. Dahl (1972), Kuno (1972), Gundel (1974), Reinhart (1982), Lambrecht (1994) and Shir (1997), inter alia.

Gundel (1974), while closely tying the notion of presuppositions in general to topicality, states that “the presuppositions [associated with sentence topics] are reducible to existential presuppositions” (1974:30). She provides the following linguistic evidence for this. Consider the following two sentences:

3.35. A French king married his mother. (1974: example 89)

3.36. The French king married his mother. (1974: example 90)

Gundel argues that in (3.35.) the indefinite NP does not carry an existential presupposition, but rather the sentence “asserts that there is or was a French king and that this king married his mother” (1974:36), i.e. it appears that in some "deep structure" the sentence is actually construed as an existential23. In (3.36), on the other hand, the definite NP does carry an existential presupposition; the sentence doesn’t assert the existence of such a king, but rather presupposes its existence, only making an assertion about him, namely that he married his

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23 Interestingly Russel (1905) awards a truth value to sentence (3.33.) only by analyzing its logical structure as an existential statement, i.e. “there is a king of France and he is bald”. This need to construe the sentence as an existential indicates that a topical interpretation was impossible. Hence it was necessary to first present the entity, only subsequently making the predication.
mother. That the former sentence cannot be interpreted as the sentence topic is verified by Gundel using the “about-phrase” test. Thus consider:

3.37. *Concerning a French king, he married his mother. (1974: example 91b)
3.38. What about a French king? *He married his mother. (1974: example 91c)

The above examples lead Gundel to state that indefinite NPs generally do not carry existential presuppositions, seeing as they represent entities unfamiliar to the hearer. This observation accords, of course, with our previous analysis that, at least, non-specific indefinite NPs are not referential. Generic indefinites, as Gundel notes, do denote familiar sets which are assumed to exist i.e. they carry an existential presupposition.

Gundel observes, very interestingly, that even definite NPs must carry existential presuppositions only on the condition that they function as topic expressions. The definite NPs in the following sentences, she argues, are not topical and as such do not necessarily carry an existential presupposition:

3.39. I opened the door and there stood the handsomest man I had ever seen. (1974: example 93a).
3.40. Here come the Martians. (1974: example 93h)

Gundel rightfully maintains that the underlined NPs do not represent what these sentences are about. As such, an existential presupposition need not be imposed on them. The sentences have a means of being assessed simply by checking whether a certain state of affairs obtains or not. If the hearer was to discover that these NPs do not represent any entity whatsoever, these statements would simply be false.

We turn lastly to Lambrecht’s account of existential presupposition. In Lambrecht’s theory, the topic of a sentence is borne out, as was already shown, from the predictable element of the sentence, in relation to which an assertion is made. As such the topic represents an entity which is “taken for granted”, from which fact Lambrecht deduces “that the referents of topic expressions are necessarily presupposed to exist.” (1994:154). Lambrecht, much like Strawson or Gundel, goes on to show that existential presupposition is a requirement imposed only on topic expressions. Thus consider the contrast between the two following sentences:

3.43. John isn’t my FRIEND. (1994: example 4.28a)
3.44. My friend isn’t JOHN. (1994: example 4.28b)
Lambrecht argues that (3.43.) has the entity represented by “John” presupposed to exist, while the NP in the predicate, “my friend”, needs not represent any person whatsoever, and in fact functions as a predicate. Thus, if the speaker has no friends the sentence could still be felicitous and quite truthful. In (3.44.), on the other hand, it is presupposed that the speaker has a friend since “my friend” is now topical. If the speaker doesn’t have any friends the sentence is rendered infelicitous. Thus we see how existential presupposition is, in effect, superimposed on a potentially referring expression which is interpreted as topical.

The post-verbal NP in existential sentences, by contrast, by definition (at least according to some) lacks an existential presupposition. Intuitively, if it had had an existential presupposition then its use in an existential construction would be rendered absolutely redundant, for why would one assert the existence of something which is already assumed to exist. In its presentational function as well, it would appear that for the most part what is being introduced is something which the hearer is not aware of, and as such does not share an existential presupposition about. Consider for example:

3.45. There’s a new planet in sight. (Headline from National Geographic Kids: http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/stories/spacescience/newplanet/)

It is obvious that the reader does not carry an existential presupposition about this new planet.

We turn now to an examination of some structural properties often associated with sentence topics, and again we shall observe how these properties fail to characterize the post-verbal NP of existentials. Interestingly we will see how the different structural properties follow from the different discourse functions as well as from the different semantico-pragmatic properties analyzed above.
B. Structural Properties
I. Definiteness

The first structural property of sentence topics we shall consider is one which is directly related to all the semantico-pragmatic properties analyzed above, namely definiteness. Clearly there is a direct correlation between an NP being expressed as a definite and it being identifiable, referential and carrying an existential presupposition. Gundel et al. (1993) note that the cognitive status of identifiability is “a necessary condition for all definite reference, and it is both necessary and sufficient for appropriate use of the definite article the” (1993:277).

The association between definiteness and topic expressions can be found in virtually all the literature on sentence topics (e.g. Mathesius 1939, Gundel 1974, Lee & Thompson 1976, Reinhart 1982, Lambrecht 1994 inter alia). Indeed, most of the literature discusses this property only in direct relation to its strong correspondence with identifiability. The logic behind both is the same: in order for a hearer to construe a sentence as being about some entity, they must be able to identify that entity, and definiteness, as the argument goes, is simply the formal mark of identifiability. Gundel (1974) proposes to use the “as for” test to show that indefinite NPs are not readily interpreted as topics. Observe the following:

3.46. Bill ran a marathon.
   A. As for Bill, he ran a marathon.
   B. *As for a marathon, Bill ran one/it.

3.47. Jane/ A girl is coming.
   A. As for Jane, she is coming.
   B. *As for a girl, she is coming.

3.49. The/ A French king married his mother. (Gundel 1974, ex. 89)
   A. As for the French king, he married his mother.
   B. *As for a French king, he married his mother.

There is of course much discussion on the correspondence between definiteness and identifiability, which we will not go deeply into, but the reader is directed to e.g. Chafe (1976) & (1994), Prince (1992), Lambrecht (1994) or Lyons (1999), inter alia. Particularly interesting is the extensive discussion in Lambrecht (1994:79-87) on the imperfect relation between definiteness and identifiability. As Lambrecht notes, while identifiability is a cognitive concept forming a continuous scale, definiteness is a structural tool forming a discrete distinction, principally incapable of representing all levels on the identifiability scale.
Lyons (1999) goes as far as postulating that languages which have a morphological marking of topical and non-topical NPs have a lower chance of having an overt marking for definiteness, thus concluding that marking of definiteness serves basically a similar function for the language as that of marking topics. Lyons provides examples from several languages in support of his hypothesis, which we will not go into. For our purposes it suffices that we have established that topic expressions, representing identifiable referents, indeed have a strong tendency to take a definite form, and again the reader is welcome to examine the statistical counts found in Chafe (1994) in support of this tendency.

Turning now to existential sentences, perhaps the most fundamental characterization of the post-verbal NP, postulated as no less than a universally cross-linguistic phenomenon, following from an inherent semantic characterization, has becomes known as “the definiteness effect” (cf. Milsark 1974, 1977; Jenkins 1975; Gueron 1980; Reuland 1985; Safir 1985; Szabolcsi 1986; Reuland & ter Meulen 1987; Belletti 1988; Larson 1988; Lasnik 1992; Freeze 1992; inter alia). What this characterization basically says is that the post-verbal NP can only be expressed using an indefinite form. The restriction, so it is assumed, naturally follows from the absurdity of asserting the existence of or introducing into the discourse, an entity which is already familiar to the hearer. Consider the following examples, illustrating the definiteness effect (adapted from Ward & Birner 1995, ex.1):

3.50. A. There’s a dog running loose somewhere in the neighborhood. Have you seen it?
   B. #There’s the dog running loose somewhere in the neighborhood. Have you seen it?

However, empirically, it was found that definite NPs may, in fact, occur in the post-verbal position of existential sentences. Interestingly, attempts to account for such occurrences do not reject the basic hypothesis underlying the definiteness effect, namely, that it is absurd to assert the existence of or introduce something into the discourse which the hearer is already aware of. Though an exhaustive survey is beyond the scope here, we

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25 We did not go into the question of what exactly counts formally as definite. Following Lambrecht (1994) we take definiteness to designate any NP headed by a definite article or by a determiner (typically possessives or demonstratives), proper names and referential pronominals.

26 Of the many authors who discuss this effect, some seek to explain it taking a more semantic approach (e.g. Milsark 1977), some more of a syntactic treatment (e.g. Safir 1985) and some more of a pragmatic account (e.g. Abbott 1993). It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss these differences.
shall offer below a review of some of the accounts for those cases supposedly disobeying the definiteness effect. The cases we shall consider account for definiteness in the post-verbal NP by one of the following three methods: (1) arguing the definite is really indefinite for some reason or another, (2) arguing that the sentence does not function as an existential nor as a presentational, but rather as a locative, (3) arguing that while the hearer can identify the intended referent, the speaker has good reason to believe the hearer is not thinking about the entity at the time of the utterance, and so it is newly introduced into the discourse.

First, we consider a phenomenon which, e.g. Rando & Napoli (1978) discuss extensively under the heading “list there-sentences”. In such cases it is argued that while the NP in what they refer to as list there-sentences could be definite or indefinite, the list itself is always indefinite, thus overcoming the essential semantic constraint. Consider Rando & Napoli’s example below:

3.51. – I don’t have any friends.
   – Don’t be silly: There’s John and me and Susan and Peggy…
This analysis, we should note, is somewhat odd. Why say that the list is indefinite? What exactly does it mean? Does it mean that the list itself is not identifiable at the time of utterance? Clearly, we could construe a context where the list itself cannot be interpreted as anything but identifiable. Consider, e.g.:

3.52. Will you please tell me what is there to do at this mall? Well, there is a shoe store, a movie theater...
It seems to me that the list here must be very much identifiable; after all, the interrogator asked for it. Whatever the interpretation may be, it is important for our purposes to note that the list solution still doesn’t allow a topic interpretation on the post-verbal NP. The assumption is that even if definite, the entities represented by the post-verbal NPs in the list reading are newly introduced into the discourse. In fact, as Rando & Napoli show, the intonation pattern on the items on the list is marked by heavy stress, which as we will see below, is a mark of non-topical expressions.

An entirely different phenomenon, and solution, is offered by Ziv (1982). Consider the following Hebrew sentence:

איפה אני יכול למצוא את הספר של חומסקי? יש את הספר הזה/אותו בספריה הלאומית.

Where can I find Chomsky’s book? There’s it in the National Library.
Ziv argues that such sentences, which are quite common in Colloquial Hebrew, are better analyzed as locatives than as existentials. Namely, while they formally look like existentials, they share more properties in common with expressions whose function is to assert the location of some previously established entity in the discourse. Thus, in Ziv’s account the post-verbal NP actually is interpreted as topical, but the sentence is no longer interpreted as functioning as either existential or presentational. As such, the definiteness effect is no longer expected to hold. It is important to note that in Ziv’s account it is shown that there is a restriction on the kind of NP which can take part in such a functionally-locative existential sentence, namely it may only be a TYPE NP. Token NPs, by contrast must take part in a regular subject-predicate locative. Ziv argues for the TYPE reading in the above sentence by claiming that the speaker is not intending any particular book, and may actually utter something like “there’s it in the National Library in 3 copies”, overtly indicating that specific tokens are not referred to.

The last phenomenon and explanation which we shall consider in this context may be found in Ward & Birner (1995). Consider the following:

3.54. Where should we have the party? There’s always the park.
3.55. I think we called everyone, right? No, there’s still John.

The argument here goes that while the entity represented by the NP is uniquely identifiable, thereby rendering it felicitously definite, the speaker assumes the hearer is not thinking about, or is not aware of, this entity at the present time in the discourse, i.e. it is presented as if it were new to the hearer, hence rendering it felicitous in an existential construction. The existential sentence here functions as a sort of a reminder, and as such is actually a sub-type of presentational sentences: it introduces something into the discourse which the hearer is not attending to. Note that in this account too the post-verbal NP is NOT topical.

We conclude that while topical expressions are naturally definite, post-verbal NPs are, for the most part not. If they are definite, the post-verbal NP is still not capable of receiving a topical interpretation; or otherwise, if it is topical, the sentence is considered a locative.

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27 See Ziv (1982) for a discussion on whether one should characterize existential sentences based on structure alone or based on other semantic or pragmatic factors as well.
II. “About” Phrases

Perhaps the most distinctive structural property of topic expressions, which is, quite unusually, relatively uncontroversial, is found in the ability of sentence topics to appear in “about” phrases, such as e.g. the English, “as for X”, “regarding X”, “speaking about X”, and their equivalents in other languages. This property is, as we have already seen, actually considered a diagnostic test for verifying whether or not an expression is indeed topical (e.g. in Kuno 1972; Gundel 1974; Reinhart 1982, Shir 1997, inter alia).

Reinhart notes, regarding “about” phrases, that “NPs in these positions are obligatorily topics” (1982:9). Lambrecht mentions that such phrases are perhaps the only structural property which is unequivocally used, at least in English, to mark the sentence topic. The ability of topics to appear in “about” phrases trivially follows from their essential characterization as what a sentence is about and requires no special explication. To see that only topics are naturally expressed within such expressions, let us contrast the following two sentences taken from Reinhart:

3.56. As for Matilda, she can’t stand Felix. (example 11.b)
3.57. Felix is an obnoxious guy. #As for Matilda, even she can’t stand him. (example 13)

(3.56.) is construed as a sentence which intends to provide information about Matilda. (3.57.), by contrast, is preceded by a minimal context in which Felix is established as the entity under discussion, and the second sentence actually continues to provide information about him. Thus it seems that the use of the “as for” phrase with ‘Matilda’ is somewhat not in order.

Note, however, that a sentence such as

3.58. Felix is an obnoxious guy. #As for Felix, even Matilda can’t stand him.

is equally anomalous, even though ‘Felix’ does represent the topic of this sentence by the aboutness criterion. Lambrecht explains that such phrases are not usually used merely to mark a topic expression, but rather to signal that a new topic is being picked up by the speaker. Lambrecht calls this phenomenon “topic promotion” (cf. also Givon’s 1976 notion of “topic-shift”).

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Whatever the exact restrictions on the use of “about” phrases are, it is still clear that when used, the NP positioned within the phrase is to be interpreted as the topic of its sentence.

A post-verbal NP, by contrast, cannot felicitously appear in “about” phrases. Thus consider the following sentences:

3.59. A. There is a fly in my tea. (Reinhart 1982: example 18a)
   B. ??As for a fly, it’s in my tea/there is one in my tea. (Reinhart 1982: example 18b)

3.60. A. There’s fire!
   B. ??Regarding fire, there is one.

The intuition underlying these judgments is that these sentences are not construed as being about a fly or about fire, and as such an “about” phrase is quite inappropriate. As Kuno (1972) explains:

*The most natural way to introduce an entirely new event in conversations seems to be to talk about the existence [...] of something. [...] These sentences are not sentences about something. They are theme-less sentences.* (Kuno 1972:284).

### III. Left-Dislocation and Topicalization

Next we shall consider a related phenomenon, similar to what happens in “about” phrases only without an overt “about” phrase present, namely “left-dislocation”\(^\text{28}\). Dislocation occurs when an NP\(^\text{29}\) is expressed in a detached, autonomous syntactic position to the left of the clause, and is coreferential with a resumptive pronominal within the clause. This syntactic construction is, like “about” phrases, also treated by many authors as an indicator of topical expressions (e.g. Gundel 1974, Givon 1976, Reinhart 1982, Lambrecht 1994, inter alia).

Lambrecht explains that dislocated NPs, like NPs within “about” phrases, serve the purpose of “topic promotion”. Nonetheless, their appropriate use is restricted to designating a familiar referent, which the hearer may expect the speaker to talk about (for example it

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\(^{28}\) cf. Lambrecht 1994 for discussion on the relation between “about” phrases and left-dislocation.

\(^{29}\) Ziv (1997) shows that in Hebrew, at least, a nonfinite verb form may appear in this position as well.
could be used to return to a previously established topic, which the discourse has digressed from). Lambrecht explains this restriction such that left-dislocated NPs must be “cognitively accessible”\(^ {30}\). Thus, consider the following example from Givon (1976):

3.61. Once there was a wizard. He was very wise, rich and was married to a beautiful witch. They had two sons. The first was tall and brooding, he spent his days in the forest hunting snails, and his mother was afraid of him. The second was short and vivacious, a bit crazy but always game. *Now the wizard, he lived in Africa…*

The restriction to be “cognitively accessible” makes perfect sense with respect to all other properties of topics we have considered so far. Thus a sentence such as the following, where the indefinite NP is presumed to represent an entirely new discourse entity, is rendered ungrammatical since one cannot say something *about* a yet unfamiliar referent:

3.62. *A strange guy, I saw him last night.*

Dislocation is not restricted to cases as in (3.61.) where an entity is being picked up from the prior discourse, and can occur in other situations as well; e.g. it could be used as a contrastive topic or in a case where the speaker wishes to disambiguate between two potential topics. Thus one could say:

3.63. I don’t know about you, but *me, I’m hungry.*

Here, again, the second sentence is clearly used to convey information about the speaker, who contrasts themselves to their fellow interlocutor.

A construction related to left-dislocation is one which actually derives its name from the term ‘topic’, namely “topicalization”. A topicalization construction is one where an element of the clause, an object NP or a PP\(^ {31}\), moves away from its canonical position into sentence initial position. Unlike left-dislocation, in a topicalization construction there is no resumptive pronoun, thus making the topicalized expression an integral part of the clause. Gundel (1974) and Reinhart (1982) maintain that a topicalization construction is generally used to mark the topicalized expression as the sentence topic. This, they argue, is true so long as the topicalized expression does not receive heavy stress, in which case it will rather be interpreted as the complement of topic. Below are two examples:

\(^{30}\) The same holds true for “about” phrases though we did not discuss this restriction there.

\(^{31}\) In Ziv (1997) it is shown that VPs can also be topicalized in Hebrew.
3.64. Your second proposal, the board found unfeasible. (Reinhart 1982, ex. 14)
3.65. With Rosa Felix went to the beach. (Reinhart 1982, ex. 15)

Now it should be noted that there is much discussion in the literature regarding what kind of expressions can be topicalized, what different kinds of topics are available for this construction, and the like. We will not go over these issues here, but we direct the reader to discussions in Prince (1998), Ward & Prince (1991), Ziv (1997) or Netz & Kuzar (2007).

What is important for our purposes is that such a construction is indeed employed to mark topic expressions. On the other hand, post-verbal NPs in existential sentences are assumed not to be able to participate either in left-dislocation, or in topicalization. Consider:

3.66. A. There was John still standing in front of the door. (Kuno 1972: example 6-10a)
   B. *John, there was him still standing in front of the door. (Kuno 1972: example 6-10b).

3.67. A. There’s a woman in the house. (Rando & Napoli 1978: example 1)
   B. *A woman there is in the house.

Seeing as the left-dislocated NPs in the B sentences mark the NP as what the sentence is construed as being about, and since these sentences aim, rather, to introduce a certain state of affairs or to assert the existence of some unfamiliar entity, the topically marked position is rendered ungrammatical. Kuno (1972) explicitly makes the claim that topicalization is impossible for sentences of “neutral descriptions”, where existential constructions are given as prime examples of such sentences. This is used by Kuno as proof that in such sentences the post-verbal NP cannot be interpreted as topical.

IV. Prosody

We turn to another most commonly attributed property of sentence topics, namely, their strong tendency to be expressed in an intonationally attenuated manner. We note immediately that this characterization too naturally follows from the notion of aboutness. The entity which the sentence is about is, as we have seen, most predictable in the discourse,

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32 Note that the “there” is not locative, and the sentence is understood as a “neutral description”, i.e. a sentence which is not about John, but rather introducing a state of affairs.
it is “a matter of standing or current interest or concern” (Strawson 1964), and as such does not require the speaker to “waste” too much energy expressing it. The informative value of the sentence arises not from the topical entity, but rather from the predication on it. Therefore it makes sense that the complement of topic will be expressed more emphatically, leaving the topic attenuated, if expressed at all.

Grammarians of the late 19th century, as e.g. Wegner (1885) or Lipps (1893) already identified the sentence topic with the attenuated expression in the sentence. Paul (1909), using the terms psychological subject and predicate, writes that the psychological predicate is “the most important member of the sentence, that which it is the aim of the sentence to communicate and which therefore carries the highest stress” (1909:283). The psychological subject, in return, carries lower stress within the clause. The observation was noted by many authors throughout the 20th Century, e.g. in Mathesius (1939, 1972), Halliday (1967), Chomsky (1971), Gundel (1974, 1988), Dahl (1974), Reinhart (1982), Lambrecht (1994), inter alia. It is important to note that, in this respect, the complement of topic has often received the name “focus”, indicating the focal stress on the non-topic expression (cf. e.g. Chomsky 1971, where the pair-term used is ‘presupposition-focus’)

Attenuation may be realized via three different forms, making up a scale from the least to most attenuated expression. First, a sentence topic may be expressed as an unaccented lexical NP. For example, in a sentence like “John ate the cake”, without any particular context we interpret “John” as representing the topical entity, and we expect the predicate “ate the cake” to carry the intonation focus of the sentence.

Second are unaccented pronominal NPs. Pronominal NPs in general are usually expressed cross-linguistically via relatively short words, which are highly attenuated (unless they intend to be contrastive). Clearly, pronominals are highly contextualized expressions, which are felicitously used only when the speaker assumes the hearer can identify the entity referred to (cf. Prince 1981 & 1992; Ariel 1985 & 1988; Lambrecht 1994, inter alia). As such, pronominals naturally serve as topics, being a center of interest in the discourse. We adopt here Lambrecht’s view and include under unaccented pronominals free and bound

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33 The term presupposition as used there does not entirely overlap with what we have been calling topic.
pronouns, inflectional morphemes, and possessive and demonstrative determiners. To get a taste let us look at the following example:

3.68. I really like this movie. It was very interesting.

The unaccented “it” clearly refers back to the movie, which has been established as a topical entity in the context.

According to Lambrecht (1994) unaccented pronominals are the PREFERRED topic expressions, due to their representing the most “active” referent at any given time in a discourse (cf. also Chafe 1994). Lambrecht explains that:

[the] interpretation [of unaccented pronominals] normally requires no, or only a minimal, processing effort on the part of the hearer in addition to the effort necessary to interpret the proposition ABOUT this topic… [And that] the normal grammatical correlate of activeness is lack of prosodic prominence. (Lambrecht 1994:172)

We should note that unaccented pronominals are not always and necessarily interpreted as topical, seeing as other pragmatic, structural or semantic factors may preclude them from a topical interpretation. For example, an expletive “it” is obviously never topical, seeing as it is an impossibility to construe a sentence as being about a “dummy”, structural requirement of English. We will not go into other cases where an unaccented pronominal cannot be interpreted as topical, but a thorough analysis can be found in Lambrecht (1994), pp. 172-176) where the reader is assured that each and every such case can be accounted for in a principled way.

Last on our scale are cases of zero anaphora or ellipsis. The topic expression, representing what the speaker is talking about, is quite often completely recoverable from the preceding discourse or situational context and need not be expressed at all. For example in reply to a question like “where are my shoes?” the answer “in the closet” is perfectly acceptable. The speaker of the reply need not bother saying something like “your shoes/they are in the closet”, seeing as the interrogator’s shoes have become, by virtue of the question, a matter of current interest or concern.

As a particularly interesting example of zero anaphora, we may consider the following very little discussed phenomenon: it is common knowledge that English sentences

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34 Lambrecht also includes here null arguments, which we will address subsequently.
35 The term was borrowed by Lambrecht from Chafe (1987)

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display an absolute requirement for a grammatical subject, even to express sentences which semantically need no subject (e.g. “it’s raining”). However, if one opens their ears and listens closely it becomes rapidly evident that, quite often, English speakers and (at least informal) writers choose to NOT overtly express a subject. Consider the following example which I have heard in a real conversation:

3.69. Wow, you look so tired, how did you get here? Ø Rode my bike.

The reply above lacks an overt subject. Although the inflection of the verb leaves potentially many options available as to the referent, no confusion arises. This is not at all unusual. Since I have started noticing this phenomenon, I can hardly pass by a single English conversation without subjectless sentences. Reiman (1994) writes about this phenomenon and explains its relation to topicality. It is shown there that “empty subjects [may] represent all persons and both singular and plural referents” (Reiman 1994:142). For more obvious “pro-drop” languages, clearly whenever an entity is topical it may be omitted from the sentence. For example in Hebrew, we may omit the direct object of the verb “put”, only provided that it is topical. Thus, for instance, one cannot say out of the blue:

3.70. שמתי על השולחן. I put Ø on the table.

If, however, one asks “where is my notebook?” the reply above would be perfectly acceptable, since now the entity represented by the pro-dropped element is topical in the sentence.

We cannot end this discussion without mentioning Lee & Thompson (1976), who in their analysis of so called “topic-prominent” languages, show that topical entities expressed outside the scope of the clause, are later felicitously deleted as an argument expression within the clause. They call this phenomenon “co-referential constituent deletion”, and give as example Mandarin sentences such as the following36:

3.71. 那棵树，叶子大所以我不要. That tree, leaves big so I not like Ø. (1976: example 27).

3.72. 那块土地，稻谷长得非常大所以非常值钱. That piece land, rice grow very big so Ø very valuable. (1976: example 28).

In both sentences the topic expression is represented by the extra-sentential initial NP, which is later deleted when expressed as an argument within the sentence.

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36 I will only give here the word for word translation from the original Mandarin. The reader may find the sentences in (1976:469).
Now, unlike sentence topics, the post-verbal NP in existential sentences is not attenuated; rather it tends to be marked as the locus of heavy stress in the sentence in which it appears. Rando & Napoli (1978) consider existential sentences to have such an intonation pattern which places the highest stress on the post-verbal NP, whether the sentence is a plain existential or a “list” kind of existential (Rando & Napoli 1978:300). Consider their visual representation of the intonation pattern:

Similarly Ziv (1982) explains that the predominant view in the literature is that in existential sentences “the nucleus stress always falls on the non-locative, indefinite NP” (Ziv 1982:264). The explanation is again rather straightforward; the post-verbal NP, representing an entity which is newly introduced into the discourse, needs to be intonationally focalized. The speaker assumes that the hearer is not thinking about the entity at the time of utterance, possibly that they don’t even know of its existence, and so its introduction naturally requires stress.

Firbas (1966), working in the framework of Functional Sentence Perspective, alludes to this exact idea in his theory of Communicative Dynamism. Firbas argues that in existential sentences the existential expression (in English “there”) carries the least amount of CD, i.e. it is the element which least contributes to the informativeness of the sentence as a whole. The post-verbal NP, by contrast, carries the highest degree of CD and will, accordingly, receive heavy stress.

Just as the post-verbal NP cannot be attenuated, similarly it cannot be expressed as a pronominal, nor can it be ellipted or expressed as a zero. Thus consider:

3.73. *There are they in the room. (Bolinger 1977:91, ex. 11)
3.74. *There’s it in my tea.
3.75. *There is Ø in my tea.

Clearly, the use of a pronominal or a zero requires a context in which the entity would have been mentioned or at least saliently present to all parties in the conversation, in order to be felicitous. However, when dealing with existentials conjuring up a fitting context seems to lead to a contradiction. If the interlocutors are already talking about or are co-attentive to...
some entity, then why would it be introduced via an existential, or why would its existence be asserted?

V. Position in the Sentence

We turn now to the next characterization of sentence topics, namely their tendency to appear sentence initially. The association between sentence initial position and topicality was, too, noted back in the late 19th Century. Gabelenz (1891) associates his “psychological subject” with “the idea that appears first in the consciousness of the speaker” (1891:351). He goes on to assume that whatever it is which indeed appears first in the mind will also appear first in the sentence, and the “psychological subject-predicate” distinction is expressed by word order. The appeal of this characterization should be clear; as speakers we like to establish first what it is that we are going to inform our hearers about, after which we can safely go on to the predication, knowing that our hearers know with regard to what this predication is relevant (cf. also Lee & Thompson’s notion of “serialization of information in discourse” in 1976:465).

Halliday (1967) makes this characterization the defining property of his “theme”, calling it “the point of departure for the clause as a message” (1967:212). Thus Halliday claims that the following sentences, while all conveying the same proposition differ only in their choice of topic, which is always interpreted as the first expression:

3.76. A. John saw the play yesterday.
   B. Yesterday John saw the play.
   C. The play John saw yesterday.

Lee & Thompson (1976), interestingly, show that being sentence initial is perhaps the most prevalent property of topics in topic-prominent languages. They observe that regardless of whether or not the topic is morphologically marked in such languages, it ALWAYS appears sentence initially.

37 Though we will not discuss it here, it is interesting in this respect to consider the psycholinguistical research on language production as found, e.g. in Levelt (1989). The argument there basically states that we start producing a sentence with the word which is most salient, or most activated in our mind, then continue to construct the sentence in accord with that initial word.
Even in languages which are not “topic-prominent”, it is worth observing that topicalization and left-dislocation constructions require the moved element to appear sentence initially (cf. e.g. Kuno 1972). In fact, this observation is one of the major thrusts for distinguishing the topic from the grammatical subject (cf. Gundel 1974:30-31). Thus consider the contrast between the two following pairs of sentences, where a left-dislocated or topicalized NP which do not appear sentence initially result in ungrammaticality:

3.77. A. Rosa Berkoff, last year she lost 20 pounds. (Ziv 1994: example 7b)
    B. *Last year, Rosa Berkoff, she lost 20 pounds. (Ziv 1994: example 7a)

3.78. A. This movie, I saw last year.
    B. *Last year, this movie I saw.

Despite these arguments, there seems to be reason to believe that this characterization is perhaps too strong and maybe even fails to capture a correct generalization. Gundel argues that

none of the authors who have proposed that topic is the leftmost element or leftmost noun phrase in surface structure have been able to provide evidence that this is in fact a valid generalization or [...that it] is linguistically relevant [...] at all (1974: 30-31).

Thus Gundel claims for the absurdity of interpreting “probably” as the topic of the following sentence:

3.79. Probably he’ll call off the news conference again. (1974: example 60).

Similarly Gundel finds it strange to say that the two following sentences should have different topics

3.90. Close the door immediately. (Gundel 1974: example 61)

3.91. You (better) close the door immediately. (Gundel 1974: example 62)

where the former has “close” as its topic, an oddity in and of itself (the sentence is about “close”?!?), and the latter “you” as its topic. Even more problematic sentences are the following, in which it is impossible, by the referentiality criterion, to interpret the topic as “nobody” or “somebody”:

3.92. Nobody saw Bill. (Gundel 1974: example 63 a)

3.93. Somebody saw Bill. (Gundel 1974: example 63 b)

And consider also the following:

3.94. A kid in the park threw up on me (adapted from Prince 1992: example 13)
It is quite unlikely that the speaker utters this sentence with the aim to assert something about “a kid”, and not about himself, represented rather, by the sentence final object “me”. Gundel also asks us to compare, for example, the following English sentence and its Russian translation:

3.95. A. A girl came in. (1974: example 64)
B. Vosla devuska. (Literally “came in (a) girl”). (1974: example 65).

Is the English sentence to be interpreted as being about “a girl”, while its Russian equivalent about “came in”? Assuming that the notion of aboutness is discourse oriented, defined essentially in terms of aboutness, there should be no difference with respect to topicality when conveying the same information in two languages (cf. also Lambrecht 1994: 146-147). While it should be noted that perhaps Gundel has not chosen the best example here, seeing as the above sentence could well be analyzed as lacking a topic expression altogether (cf. e.g. Mathesius’ 1939 notion of “all new” sentences or Kuno’s 1972 “neutral description”), still her basic observation holds true. Namely, different languages display different patterns of word order, and we cannot take this fact to argue that in, say, SV languages the unmarked topic is the S, while in VS languages the unmarked topic is the V, for the same sentences uttered in similar contexts. This exact argument is made explicit in Lambrecht (1994: 200).

Lambrecht further argues that a universal principle of topics appearing sentence initially cannot account for the fact that the complement of topic is quite salient in sentence initial position as well. To quote an example from Jespersen (1924), in answer to the question “who said it?” one may reply:

3.96. PETER said it.

In this reply clearly “PETER” is not to be interpreted as the sentence topic, albeit it appearing sentence initially. Lambrecht explains that

**Given that sentence initial position is cognitively speaking an eminently salient position, it would be a priori surprising if the prominence associated with this position could only be exploited for a single function, such as the marking of the topic relation** (Lambrecht 1994:201).

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38 “Said it”, at least according to Lambrecht cannot appropriately be labeled “topic” either, seeing as it is not referential. Suffice it at this point that we show “PETER” is not the topic.
Lambrecht suggests that in order to account, in some sense, for the sentence-initial characterization of topics, we must draw a distinction between accented lexical or pronominal expressions, and unaccented pronominal expressions. Unaccented pronominal expressions are, as we have mentioned earlier the PREFERRED topic expressions. Now Lambrecht argues that if an entity is already established as a topic (rendering the felicitous use of an unaccented pronominal to refer to it), its position in the sentence is quite irrelevant. Consider example (3.94.) given above: since the speaker is aiming to convey information about himself, there is no functional necessity to position “me” sentence-initially.

Lambrecht argues that pronominal topic expressions, rather than preferring a sentence-initial position, prefer to be in close association with the predicate “since it is the predicate that governs the semantic and syntactic relations in the clause” (1994:201).

Accented expressions, whether lexical or pronominal, if they are to be interpreted as topical, do tend to prefer sentence initial position, seeing as their function is usually to announce a new topic or to switch topics within an ongoing discourse (as we have discussed in the context of left dislocation; but this is true not only for that construction). As such, it makes functional sense for them to appear sentence initially. Further discussion on the issue can be found in Lambrecht (1994:202-203).

The post-verbal NP in existential sentences tends, by contrast, NOT to appear sentence initially. Existentials appear to cross-linguistically place the post-verbal NP in a postponed position in the sentence, whether that is after or before the locative. Thus consider:

3.97. *Someone there is at the door/ *Someone at the door there is.

And the Hebrew equivalent:

3.98. *مريשה יש בדלת/ *مريשה בדלת יש.

Seeing as existentials are not used to predicate something about the entity represented by the post-verbal NP, but rather to introduce a certain state of affairs, the natural inclination appears to be to postpone its appearance to a later position in the clause. Such inversion is extremely common in Hebrew, not only for existentials, but for any construction where an

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39 We leave here open the question of whether the post-verbal NP appears before or after a possible locative (cf. discussion in Ziv 1982), the crucial point is just that it doesn’t appear as the first expression in the sentence.
event is being introduced, the speaker not intending a predication on the post-verbal NP. Consider:

3.98  . פיצרה שיריפה!
Broke out a fire!
3.99  . הגיעו אורחים.
Arrived guests.
3.100  . יורד גשם.
Is falling rain.

Inversion phenomena may be found in English as well, although it is a language more rigid in its word order than Hebrew. Interestingly, in English too inversion is possible only when the dislocated NP represents relatively NEW information (see Birner 1994 for extensive discussion). Let us take a look at two of Birner’s examples, clearly indicating that the post-verbal NP represents an entity introduced into the discourse:

3.101. George, can you do me a favor? Up in my room, on the nightstand, is a pinkish-reddish envelope that has to go out immediately. (Birner 1994, ex. 1b)

3.102. You can drive as fast as you like in the outside lane on a West German highway and may feel like the king of the road- until you look in the rear mirror. Zooming in on you like a guided missile comes a rival contender, bullying you to get out of the way. (Birner 1994, ex. 1d)

It is interesting to observe that the post-verbal NP seems to show no particular preference for appearing close to its predicate either. In fact, at least in Hebrew, in a context where the locative expression is set up as topical, it appears that the post verbal NP is restricted from appearing close to the predicate, seeing as the locative must take that position (cf. 3.103-104 below). Note that, even when construed as topical, the locative in these existential sentences, while appearing closer to the predicate, still does not appear sentence initially. These facts put together provide further evidence for Lambrecht’s view that being close to the predicate is perhaps a more relevant characterization for topicality than is appearing sentence initially. Consider the contrast between the following two
sentences, uttered in a context where a person slowly opens a door and is not sure whether or not someone is inside the room. To find out they ask:

יש כאן מישהו?

There is here someone?

But not:

יש מישהו כאן?

?There is someone here?

We have seen that while topics tend to appear either sentence initially or close to the predicate, the post-verbal NP in an existential shows neither of those tendencies. Rather, like presentational NPs in general, it tends to take its place post-verbally and toward the end of the sentence, even when this requires non-canonical constructions.

VI. Subjecthood

We end this chapter with one of the most extensively discussed structural properties of topic expressions, namely, their strong tendency to coincide with the grammatical subject. We have already noted the strong correlation between these two notions, which is manifested in the earliest logical thinking. It is interesting to note that in some languages, e.g. English and Hebrew, the technical term used for grammatical subject, i.e. “subject” or in Hebrew “נושא”, are the very words in the language which colloquially mean, in fact, topic.

Despite claims such as that noted in the introduction by Jesperssen (1924) that grammatical analysis will come to no good equating the notion of aboutness with grammatical subject, analyses of subjects along these lines may still be found even in works of the second half of the 20th century. Chafe (1976) suggests that

It is a priori unlikely that [grammatical subjects,] a status which is given such prominence in English and many other languages, would not do some work for the language, and would be only arbitrary and superficial in its function.

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40 Cf. e.g. Lambrecht’s (1994:140-141) remarks on the work of Kuroda (1972), in which the term “subject” is preferred to that of “topic”, though the term is used to explain more of a discourse notion than a purely grammatical notion.
In the subsequent paragraph Chafe concludes that the age-old analysis, at least for English, seems to be correct, namely that “the subject is what we are talking about”.

Reinhart (1982) suggests that the speaker’s natural tendency is to place the topic in subject position and the hearer’s natural tendency is to interpret the subject as the sentence topic. Reinhart further argues that the use of the passive voice can be explained in terms of this preference to equate subject and topic. In passivization the functional object becomes the grammatical subject, and it is assumed that this is done precisely because the functional object is meant to function as the topic expression.

Lambrecht (1994) explains that, as one of the prime functions of language is to convey information, we tend to conjure up contexts where sentences would be informative even when we hear them in isolation. Now, despite the fact that sentences can be informative in many different ways, our natural inclination, provided there are no contextual clues or linguistic peculiarities, is to interpret a sentence as providing information about the entity represented by the grammatical subject. Thus, if one hears a sentence such as “Danny ate the cake”, one would think immediately that this sentence is informative with respect to Danny’s endeavors, and not with respect to the cake.

Lambrecht suggests that the reason for this strong correlation is due to the fact that the subject is the most commonly used argument in the sentence. Assuming that most sentences are interpreted as being about something, and assuming that most predications necessarily have a grammatical subject but hardly necessarily have other arguments (e.g. objects or obliques), it makes sense that in the unmarked case a correlation would emerge between subject and topic. Lambrecht further argues that the subject being the most common argument in the sentence has led traditional logicians and linguists alike to the conclusion that the “subject-predicate” construction is the most basic sentence type.

Clearly, in order to establish that a correlation between subjects and topics indeed exists, some empirical evidence is necessary. Interestingly, we find in Chafe’s (1994) statistical corpus analysis that most subjects indeed converge with all other topical properties we have considered so far. Over 80% of the utterances in Chafe’s examined

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41 Lambrecht cites authors who suggest other reasons for this strong correlation, such as that the subject usually takes up the semantic role of agent, and we are naturally inclined to interpret a sentence as being about the agent (cf. e.g. Kirsner 1973, Hawkins & Hyman 1975, Comrie 1981). While appreciating the importance of such an observation, Lambrecht maintains that this reason is at best secondary.
corpus had the grammatical subject represented as a pronominal NP, clearly identifiable, referential, carrying an existential presupposition, attenuated and appearing sentence initially. However, we note that when these topic-properties converge with some other expression in the sentence other than the subject, then it is that expression and not the subject that will be interpreted as the sentence topic (again such as in sentence (3.94.) above). Thus it seems that other properties “outrank” subjects in topical interpretation, despite topic properties most often converging with the subject.\(^{42}\)

The post-verbal NP of existential sentences, on the other hand, is at best a highly non-prototypical grammatical subject. In both English and Hebrew we may witness an interesting mix of subject and non-subject properties. We shall start with an analysis of English, followed by an analysis of Hebrew.

In English, in terms of position, the post-verbal NP, unlike canonical subjects appears after the verb. Additionally unlike canonical subjects, when forming an interrogative the post-verbal NP is not the element to switch places with the predicate, rather it is the expletive “there”. Thus:

3.106. A. Is there a fly in my tea?

VS.

B. *Is a fly there in my tea?

Finally, the post-verbal NP is like a subject in that it agrees with the main predicate. Thus:

3.107. A. There’s a fly in my tea.

B. There are flies in my tea.

However, it is interesting to note that in Colloquial English there appears to be less and less marking of agreement in such constructions, indicating that speakers choose not to treat the post-verbal NP as subject even in this respect. Thus the following is perfectly acceptable:

3.108. There’s millions of people at this party!

\(^{42}\) Further empirical and theoretical work is necessary in order to determine whether a “topic hierarchy” may exist and what form it might take.
Turning now to Hebrew, in terms of position, again the post-verbal NP takes a non-canonical position after the verb. In terms of agreement, there is no agreement in the present tense\textsuperscript{43} but there is agreement in the past and future tenses. Thus:

\begin{quote}
3.109

There is a fly in the tea.

3.110

There was a fly in the tea.
\end{quote}

Interestingly, in Colloquial Hebrew, much like in English, there appears to be less and less marking of agreement even in the past and future. Thus the following is fine for many speakers:

\begin{quote}
3.111

There was many people at the party.
\end{quote}

Lastly, it appears that in Modern Hebrew the post-verbal NP, if definite, is marked by the direct-object case marker “את” (“et”). While this use is considered “ungrammatical” according to the Hebrew Academy, most speakers and writers today use it freely. Consider again the sentence from Ziv (1982), repeated below:

\begin{quote}
3.112

Where can I find Chomsky’s book? There’s it (“et”) in the National Library.
\end{quote}

We conclude that while the post-verbal NP displays, at best, a mixture of subject and non-subject properties, a topic expression tends, statistically, to converge with grammatical subjects, and in the unmarked case, i.e. when a canonical subject is used, it is naturally interpreted as representing the sentence topic.

\textsuperscript{43} I consider the inflections ישנו/ישנה/ישנם/ישנן archaic in their use. Current speakers of Hebrew do not employ these forms in speaking, and even in writing they are quite optional.
To summarize this exposition, we have found that, with respect to the following characteristics, sentence topics and post-verbal NPs stand at opposite ends:

- The topic expression tends to be both referentially and relationally given, meaning it is also predictable; the post-verbal NP, by contrast, is referentially “new” and is, as such, unpredictable.
- The topic expression is restricted to NPs which can be interpreted as referential; post-verbal NPs are usually not interpreted as referential, and for the most part are expressed using such NPs which are not considered referential.
- The topic expression represents an entity which carries existential presupposition; the post-verbal NP, by definition, lacks existential presupposition.
- The topic expression is most commonly a definite NP; the post-verbal NP is assumed to be universally restricted to indefinite NPs. Even when a definite NP appears in this position, it is either still not topical or else the sentence is not functionally existential.
- The topic expression may felicitously appear in “about” phrases, in left-dislocated or in topicalized positions in the clause; the post-verbal NP may not appear in any of those structurally marked positions.
- The topic expression is usually attenuated; the post-verbal NP is usually marked by heavy stress.
- The topic expression tends to appear sentence initially or else close to the main predicate; the post-verbal NP canonically does not appear sentence initially, nor does it show a unique preference for appearing close to the predicate.
- Lastly, the topic expression is most commonly associated with the grammatical subject; the post-verbal NP is, at best, a very peculiar kind of grammatical subject.

We have further seen how all these properties of both topics and post-verbal NPs follow from their opposing respective discourse functions. In the next chapter we will show why it actually makes perfect sense for the post-verbal NP to function as the topic of its existential sentence.
Chapter 4: Existentials as Existentials

We have discussed how the topic expression and the post-verbal NP diverge both in terms of their discourse function and in terms of their linguistic properties, be they structural, semantic or pragmatic. It is our aim now to refute these claims by showing numerous examples in which the post-verbal NP of functionally existential sentences both plays the discourse role of a sentence topic, as well as displays the linguistic properties attributed to topic expressions. Our examples are all taken from REAL day-to-day conversations, evincing the fact that this kind of phenomenon, whereby the post-verbal NP is topical, is quite pervasive.

Our analysis aims at showing, first, that polysemy between a type and token interpretations of an NP may yield a corresponding duality in the existential presupposition associated with that NP. Existential sentences with a topical post-verbal NP will be shown to exploit this duality. Second, we will see that the somewhat neglected discourse function of existentials, namely to assert existence, has perhaps more value than some pragmatists has accredited it. We start the analysis by reevaluating the nature of the restriction known as the definiteness effect.

Indeed, as we have seen, perhaps the strongest characterization of post-verbal NPs, postulated as a universal restriction, is that they can only be expressed via an indefinite NP. This characterization is directly related to the fact that post-verbal NPs supposedly represent unidentifiable entities, and presumably it is redundant to assert the existence of, or introduce into the discourse an entity which the hearer is actively aware of at the time of utterance. However, consider the following example, where the post-verbal NP is not only definite, but actually takes an anaphorically pronominal form:

Should I buy this book? No, there’s it in the library.

The reader should immediately notice the similarity of the reply above to the example from Ziv (1982). Recall that in Ziv’s example and analysis the sentence was construed as a locative. In this context, however, the existential sentence is certainly not primarily a...
locative\textsuperscript{44}. Unlike in Ziv’s example, here the interrogator is not requesting information about a location at all. Rather, they are simply asking if they should buy a certain book. The response provides a good reason not to buy the book, namely by virtue of the availability of other tokens of the book, ones which the hearer is presumably unaware of. Note that the speaker does not intend here to pick out one book-token (the speaker could have said “there’s it in the library in five copies”), but rather any token may satisfy provided that it is a token of the book’s content physically instantiated in the library (with the properties implicated of this sort of instantiations).

Now, the book’s content carries, of course, an existential presupposition and its placement in an existential construction would indeed be redundant. However, the hearer did not know that the content is instantiated as a book you can loan from the library. So what the hearer learns is first, that tokens of the book are available in the library; and with that the generalization that the book’s content is, in principal, available for loan. The existential construction is perfect for informing the hearer of the existence of some tokens of the book. These are not just any tokens, but ones with a crucially relevant property which, in fact, create a subset of their own.

Observe that essentially the same analysis is available for when the post-verbal NP has no topic properties whatsoever. For instance, upon starting a new job an employer informs their employee that “there’s a bus right from your house to here”. The employer is asserting that a certain bus route is instantiated. Clearly, however, the employee does not learn about any bus-token but rather they learn that a subset of buses, created via a certain relevant property shared by some of the tokens of the more general set “bus”, exists. The difference between this example and sentence (4.1.) is that in this sentence the set, i.e. bus, is indeed introduced into the conversation, whereas in the former the set, i.e. this book, is as predictable as can be. Thus we conclude that the topical properties are due to the given and predictable set, while the existential construction is due to asserting the being of instantiations of that set sharing a relevant property.

Below are more examples where again the post-verbal NP is definite:

\begin{enumerate}
\item充滿了数学系的教室里，老师正在用电脑讲解数学。
\item המרצה מרצה בישיבה במחלקה למדעי המחשב, על נושא חדש בתורת המחלקות._excel.Aז 설חתי את הוראותיו הא整改措施.
\item 4.2
\end{enumerate}

\textsuperscript{44} Of course, it has a locative expression within it, but this is not necessarily indicative. Most existentials have locatives, for if something exists it exists somewhere (Kahn 1966, Lyons 1967, Bolinger 1977, inter alia).
A lecturer is showing a slideshow with mathematical problems and says: We will not solve all these problems, but if you want to solve them, there is them in the textbook.

A lecturer writes something on the blackboard and a student starts to copy. A fellow student asks: Why are you copying? There is it in the book.

In these examples too the interlocutors are dealing with a certain abstract entity which can receive various manifestations in the physical world. In the former sentence the lecturer is presenting some exercises in a slideshow, and employs the existential sentence to inform the students that these exercises, i.e. a particular content, is instantiated in a physical form which the students were unaware of. Again, no one token is meant, so it doesn’t matter for instance, if it’s my textbook or yours. What is crucial is that these tokens share the common property of appearing in the textbook, and as such enable the hearer to form the generalization that in principal the content is available in the textbook. Namely the hearer is able to form a subset made out of those tokens (any tokens) instantiated in the textbook. Similarly in (4.3), the existential is used to inform the hearer that the content written on the blackboard is physically instantiated elsewhere. The hearer is again informed not of any one particular instantiation, but rather of a certain kind of instantiations, for they all share a relevant property in common- being in the book.

Back now to the definiteness effect; note that our examples appear to violate it both in terms of its syntactic, as well as pragmatic explications. Syntactically, our examples display the felicitous and grammatical use of a definite post-verbal NP. The effect appears to be violated pragmatically since, while the sentences display the discourse function of an existential, the post-verbal NP represents an identifiable entity (hence it is pronominalized), resulting in an apparent contradiction. However, if we adopt the analysis suggested above, these examples actually strengthen the definiteness effect, for these sentences are indeed used to assert the existence of entities, i.e. instantiations, which in fact, do NOT carry an existential presupposition, despite full identifiability of the type to which these instantiations belong. What this shows is that, contra both Rando & Napoli (1978) and Ward & Birner
(1995) we may employ an NP which is in one respect both syntactically and pragmatically definite, but which nonetheless enables an assertion of existence of entities unknown to the hearer. This is achieved by shifting between representations of token manifestations of an entity and the type to which these tokens belong. The post-verbal NP in these sentences makes both representations available. We may say that the existential construction exploits the polysemy between types and tokens inherent in these expressions. Thus, a definite NP does not require existential presupposition on all the potential representations it is used to activate in the hearer’s mind, and where we have such a duality of representations, we may well find a topical post-verbal NP.

While it is quite illuminating to see where the definiteness effect errs in analysis, it must be noted that arguing that the post-verbal NP displays topical properties, such as definiteness, is still not necessarily saying it is a topic. Firstly, considering that a topic must be a referential expression, it is not clear in what sense is the post-verbal NP referential in the above examples. To what could it refer? The type is used perhaps more as a predicate than a referring expression, and as we have seen no one token is referred to either. Perhaps, following Lambrecht, we can talk of the type here as a “discourse referent”? Clearly much more work on the question of referentiality is needed, and this we leave for future research.

In addition, indeed all we have shown is that the post-verbal NP has certain topic properties. The question is whether and how we can employ the notion of aboutness here. Interestingly, we can argue on the one hand that sentence (4.1.) is used to assert about the content of the book that it has instantiations in the library; but we can also perhaps argue that the utterance is used to assert about some tokens that they are instantiated. What representation should we employ for the aboutness relation? If we choose the former analysis then we have a “classic” topic before us (the type is given and predictable), but the existential construction is then left unexplained seeing as it is not needed for the type representation, i.e. the book’s content. If we adopt the latter analysis, however, the existential construction is quite natural, but then, strictly speaking, givenness and predictability are completely lacking and we appear to not be talking of a topic any more (how was the hearer to know that tokens of the book in the library are coming up in answer to his question about the token in the store).
Let’s try to adopt Reinhart’s test according to which the topic represents the entity which the hearer is intended to assess if he is to find out the truth conditions of the sentence. It is more likely that upon hearing the sentences above the hearer will assess the set, i.e. the type and not the tokens, if only because the hearer would never be able to check the (indefinite) tokens. Namely, it is asserted about the set that certain instantiations of it are in existence; the hearer adds to his knowledge of the set that it is instantiated as such and such.

Let us continue now to see how the rest of the topic properties discussed in this paper are well manifested on the post-verbal NP. Consider the following examples where the post-verbal NP is ellipted:

In a conversation about a particularly old dog, someone asks: Can dogs even live 15 years? There are Ø that do.

Do you enjoy musicals? There are Ø that I enjoy.

In a conversation about the Hebrew University’s Hebrew as a Second Language Program, a new teacher to the program asks a colleague: Over here all the teachers are native Hebrew speakers, right? There are Ø that are not.

In these examples, by virtue of the interrogators’ questions, it could not be more obvious that the hearer of the existential sentences actively did not know about the existence of the kind of instantiations of the sets denoted by the post-verbal NPs, i.e. dogs that live more than 15 years, musicals that the speaker likes, and Hebrew teachers at the program. Despite this fact, these NPs are all ellipted, their denotations completely gathered from the preceding discourse. Here it is even clearer that asserting the being of certain instantiations of a set, only serves by way of forming subclasses, made of instantiations sharing the relevant property discussed. The interrogator of (4.5.), for instance, is not interested in any dog that lives more than 15 years, but rather in the generalization that such dogs exist. Again, the set was under discussion and thereby allowing ellipsis, while the instantiations forming the subclass are ones which the respective hearers, as made explicit by them, were unaware of.
The following construction, quite common in colloquial Hebrew, similarly enables the hearer to draw up subclasses of a class previously discussed, by way of a double ellipsis in a conjoined existential construction. Consider:

Are your students enjoying the class? There are ∅ and there are ∅.

How are your counselors this year? There are ∅ and there are ∅.

As a result of hearing these sentences the hearer ultimately learns of the existence of two subclasses of a set which has been brought up in the immediately preceding question. Thus, the hearer of (4.8.) learns that there are students who enjoy the class and there are students who do not enjoy the class. Prior to hearing the existential sentence the hearer did not know how to distribute this relevant property on the token-students. The existential construction here supposedly asserts only that the set of students enjoying the class and the set of students not enjoying the class are both not empty, i.e. they are both instantiated in the world. However, the sentence is not concerned with any specific student-tokens, but rather simply with the fact that each subclass of students is indeed instantiated, i.e. exists. Interestingly the use in Hebrew of this “double” existential sentence has the effect of contrasting, i.e. it forms the two subclasses by way of implying an opposition on a certain relevant property. Clearly, no student is contrasted with any other student, but rather the set of good students is contrasted to the set of bad ones. A similar analysis is given to (4.9.) where the hearer learns that there are some good counselors and some bad counselors. Such a construction in Hebrew is quite pervasive, and it would be interesting to further investigate its use and how it creates the subclasses by way of employing opposite evaluations of each subdivision of the whole under discussion.

Existential sentences may also be employed in order to make another kind of assertion with regard to the being of a previously established discourse entity, particularly regarding the quantity of the entity represented by the post-verbal NP, i.e. the extent to which it is instantiated. In the following examples it should be quite clear that no specific tokens are involved with the post-verbal NP, but rather the speaker of the existential is indeed making
an assertion about the amount of a certain set which is already under discussion. Consider the following examples:

Taken from an e-mail explaining the requirements for a certain job: The hours are flexible, and the whole bureaucratic part of the job (of which there is quite a bit), can be done from home.

4.11. …and they go through every kinda ligament. And I mean there’s a million ligaments\(^{45}\).

The post-verbal NP in the above examples clearly carries an existential presupposition at the time the existential sentence is uttered. Unlike in the previous examples, here the hearer does not learn of any new kinds of instantiations whatsoever. Rather, what constitutes the new information conveyed by these sentences is the fact that a certain quantity, i.e. a certain amount of instantiations, exists of the types previously mentioned in the discourse.

To continue, we have seen that the post-verbal NP tends to be expressed with heavy stress, indicating the fact that it represents the new information in the sentence. But consider:

I hate eating in restaurants, I’m never satisfied with the food. – Why? There are restaurants where the food is very good.

They say that Jerusalem is 7,000 teachers short. – I don’t think there are 7,000 teachers in Jerusalem.

relevant property of being “good”, thereby again enabling the formation of a subset ‘good restaurants’, where the ultimate message of the utterance is that the speaker thinks such exist. The intonation falls on the existential expression since the speaker’s assertion that such restaurants indeed exist is precisely the new information of the sentence, while the post-verbal NP represents a discourse entity which is quite predictable and requires little stress. In (4.13.) the speaker of the existential sentence is again making a statement as to the amount of instantiations of a certain set. The set (along with the amount) are given and predictable from what has been said in the immediately preceding utterance, leaving the existential expression appropriately in heavy intonation.

It was also argued that the post-verbal NP cannot take part in left-dislocation or topicalization constructions. However, consider the following:

In a conversation about a person that just graduated from a graphic design program: Did he find a job? –Yes. –Here in Jerusalem? –Yes. –Very nice! These jobs, there isn’t them a lot in Jerusalem.

Upon noticing a particular type of pen which both interlocutors have seen before in various places: Wow, this pen, there is it everywhere!

Note first that in both examples the left-dislocated NP abides by Lambrecht’s condition that such constructions are used for “topic promotion”. In (4.21.) the conversation up to our relevant sentence had the design-student as its topic, and the existential sentence marks the shift to a new topic, i.e. design jobs, clearly accessible from what has been said before. In (4.22.) the sentence is uttered as a starter of a new conversation, which is actually based on, and in a way continues, prior conversations the interlocutors have had recently about this pen. Now in both examples, while the post-verbal NP represents a fully accessible set, its use in an existential construction is employed in order to make some assertion regarding its existence, which comes as a sort of a surprise in both circumstances. (4.21.) asserts the relative non-existence of instantiations of the set, thereby implying that the speaker is quite
impressed with the student for finding one such instantiation. (4.22.) again makes a kind of assertion regarding the existence of a certain quantity of the set (here, as in the book example of 4.1. the set was evoked in the conversation via a particular token).

The post-verbal NP may be topicalized as well. In Hebrew, as noted, the canonical position of the post-verbal NP is after the existential expression. Thus, when the post-verbal NP appears sentence initially we take this as a case of topicalization. Consider:

Can you perhaps give an example? – Don’t worry, we will get to the examples immediately.

**Examples there are for everything.**

A teacher asks their colleague: Does this book allow the student to test himself? – Actually, self testing there isn’t.

Taken from *Ha’aretz* newspaper: Early this week Ayser Yaser was shot in the back. He was 15 years old, and he will no longer throw stones at passing Jewish cars. Everyone is searching for his murderer, but he will not be found. How do I know? Very simple: until today not one murderer-settler was captured. We have hundreds of murders like this behind us, and yet all these avengers are walking free. **Evidences and traces there are; justice there isn’t.**

Mom did you see my Lego? – **Lego there is all around the house!**

We can see here how the post-verbal NP (a term which does not exactly fit these examples) represents the entity which the sentences are about. In all, it is identifiable and quite predictable. Its appearance in an existential construction is used to make an assertion regarding the existence, i.e. the amount, or the very being, of instantiations of the entity.
under discussion. In (4.23.) the speaker reassures their interrogator that “examples” are indeed instantiated, i.e. the set of examples is not empty; (4.24.) asserts the non-existence of instantiations of a type which the interrogator has asked about; in (4.25.) Yosi Sarid expresses his indignation by asserting what is instantiated as opposed to what is not; and finally in (4.26.) the mother asserts that a large quantity of Lego is instantiated in their house.

Being topical, the post-verbal NP can appear in “about” phrases as well. Consider the following examples from both Hebrew and English:

4.27. Host: We’re out of apples. As for pears, **there’s plenty left**.

4.28. Complements go straight out of the top VP node. But as for adjuncts, if **there is one**, you draw another VP node…

4.29. Teacher: Regarding next week’s class, **there isn’t one**.

A teacher is assessing an essay and says: to look at the content, **there is no content!**

About the flight, **there is on the tenth**.

X talks about how close she is to different friends she has and says about one friend: in terms of closeness, **there is great closeness between us**.

(4.27.) and (4.28.) seem perhaps like contrastive topics. In the rest of the examples there is no contrast, the speaker simply asserts that the set introduced by the “about” phrase *is* instantiated, a fact the hearer was unaware of. Whether or not the set is instantiated is precisely the matter at hand in these contexts.

In all the examples we presented the post-verbal NP manifests topical properties. All sentences aim to make an assertion about the existence, non-existence or the extent of existence of instantiations of some pre-established set. So what do we conclude from this? First of all with regard to properties of sentence topics, we conclude that topical expressions, at least in some of their potential representations, do not require an existential
presupposition. It is very possible that a hearer will not be aware of the existence of some manifestations of a set while the set itself is nonetheless accessible from previous discourse and does carry an existential presupposition. Indeed the phenomenon of a topical post-verbal NP is not redundant precisely because of this gap that people may experience between being familiar with a set and not being familiar with some of its instantiations, particularly those carrying a property which becomes relevant in the discourse. As we have seen, making an assertion with regard to the amount of instantiations is, too, a task fit for the existential construction, precisely by virtue of this construction being concerned with the very being of an entity, including the extent of its existence. It thus appears that asserting the existence of something is not “a speech act which is of limited use in everyday communication” (Lambrecht 1994:179). Rather, making assertions of existence or the extent of existence of something appears to be quite a common function in everyday language use; and why should it not be?

With regard to the problem mentioned earlier in this paper about drawing a line between the existential and the presentational functions of existential sentences, we can now say that our examples provide at least one kind of case where an existential sentence is definitely NOT presentational in its function. In the examples above we have seen that the type represented by the post-verbal NP forms a “matter of standing interest or concern”, and so it can obviously not be argued that it is introduced into the discourse. What is informative in these sentences is that the types are instantiated, but these instantiations are NOT meant to form any part of the ongoing discourse. Namely, the speakers of the existentials above have no specific tokens in mind which are to be picked up in the upcoming discourse (namely we certainly don’t have a case here like “once there was a king, he was very old…”). Thus, it is concluded that these sentences do not serve to present some unfamiliar entity into the discourse, but indeed make an assertion about a previously evoked type- that a certain kind of instantiations of it or a certain amount of instantiations of it, exist.

In light of the findings delineated above, I would like to propose a reanalysis of the phenomenon discussed in, e.g., Ward & Birner (1995), namely that the post-verbal NP could be definite when used as a sort of reminder, such as in:

4.33. I don’t know who will help me move? There’s always John.
It seems to me that a “reminder” analysis is not sufficiently explanatory. Why would the speaker not say

4.34. JOHN can help you

where “JOHN” is still marked as non-topical by heavy stress. Clearly the speaker can say that, but why it is that they cannot say only that? What makes the existential construction also possible? I would like to suggest the following solution: the speaker actually does make an assertion of existence (even if accompanied with a reminder function): the speaker asserts that the set “people to help you move” is instantiated, and particularly that it is instantiated by “John”. What licenses the existential is that as a result of hearing this sentence, the hearer learns of the existence of someone who will help him move. Note that while the hearer knew of the existence of John, they did not know of the existence of someone who will help them move. A similar analysis is available for other instances where a “reminder” function is postulated, e.g.:

4.35. Where can we have the party? There’s always the park.

Again, while the hearer of the reply knows, of course, about the existence of the park, they do not know what could instantiate a location for the party, hence their question. Thus we may say that the hearer did not know that the park is instantiated AS a place for having the party; just like in example (4.1.) above, where the hearer did not know that the book’s content is instantiated AS a token available for loan from the library. However, the definiteness in the reminder sentences is not due to the set being evoked earlier in the discourse, but simply due to familiarity with the entity represented.

We end this paper with an example which is especially interesting, because it appears that no type is involved whatsoever, but rather a negative existential construction is used and the definite post-verbal NP, which is in fact a proper name, is used to refer to one specific token and straightforwardly asserts the non-existence of that token. Thus, in this case the definiteness effect appears to be violated in every possible respect. Namely, in this example it is not the case as was in the other examples, that while the type is given, the token is not and so strictly speaking the effect is not violated; here simply no type is involved. the single representation alluded to by the post verbal NP in the following existential sentence is one which is most certainly active in the discourse.
First, the context for the example, taken from the T.V. show *Arrested Development*: Michael Bluth has been led to believe he may have a sister by the name N. Bluth. He has found a picture of himself as a child playing with a girl he doesn’t know but that appears to resemble him. He confronts his father with the picture as well as with an attached document he has found with the name N. Bluth on it. In the heat of the conversation his father shouts:

4.4. Michael, there is no N. Bluth!

Clearly the post-verbal NP here represents the topic of this sentence. The NP represents a fully identifiable discourse entity and hence is highly predictable. Michael and his father are having a conversation about this N. Bluth and the father is saying about her that she doesn’t exist. Note that here we are not dealing with any shifts between a type and its manifestations, and the definiteness effect appears to have been violated in every respect. I believe what makes this possible is the fact that the existence of some entity is denied, in a context where the existence of this entity is of prime importance. Michael Bluth found evidence leading him to believe a person by the name N. Bluth exists, and his father wants to deny this existence, hence making appropriate use of an existential sentence. Clearly, such cases (if more can be found) require further investigation.
Conclusion

Our analysis focused on two kinds of entities which were supposed to oppose each other both in their discourse function and in numerous aspects of their linguistic realizations. Contrary to the prevalent analyses, the paper culminated with a presentation and discussion of sentences showing that the post-verbal NP may indeed function as the topic of its clause, displaying the expected linguistic properties of topic expressions. As we have seen, in all the examples above the post-verbal NP represents an identifiable entity. It also represents the entity which the hearer could expect to play a role in the proposition, and as such it also forms the first judgment of a categorical sentence, where the second judgment is the assertion of existence. Thus, such existential sentences are by no means to be construed as “presentational”. What enables the post-verbal NP to be topical is the duality in its representations: while the set itself carries an existential presupposition, tokens sharing a certain relevant property do not, thereby enabling an appropriate assertion of existence. Alternatively, while the set carries an existential presupposition, the extent of its existence, i.e. the number of times it is instantiated is unknown to the hearer, also enabling the use of an existential construction with a topical post-verbal NP.

Now, we shall propose three directions for future research. First, having discovered that topic expressions need not necessarily carry an existential presupposition for the full range of their potential representations, it is worth investigating and delineating the extent of the phenomenon. Namely, do topics evince such a duality only when appearing in existential constructions? Perhaps similar/related sentence types could also have a topic expression lacking existential presupposition on one of its relevant representations while not on another. Perhaps the shifts we have seen from types to tokens are not the only ones relevant for understanding the notion of topicality, and other polysemous items, and more generally the notion of polysemy itself, may prove enlightening to the research on sentence topics as well.

Second, it would be interesting to conduct some empirical research on other languages of various types, in an attempt to discover whether some languages are more prone than others to accept topic expressions in existential sentences. Most of the examples above were taken from Hebrew and some from English. My intuition at this point is that the phenomenon is more pervasive in Hebrew than in English for the following reason: while
English has a verb “to be”, Hebrew at best has a much more limited use for this verb. Thus, for instance, the English sentence “the book is on the table”, is translated into the Hebrew "הספר על השולחן" WITHOUT any verb “to be” (“the book on the table”).

But what happens if the speaker’s interest is not only in asserting the location of the book, but also in asserting or in some way overtly responding to its EXISTENCE (the extent of its existence or the existence of its instantiations)? Let us think of our “pen” example above. While the Hebrew speaker said "העט הזה, יש א蛔 בכל מקום" (“this pen, there is it everywhere), I suspect the English speaker would have said “this pen, it’s everywhere”, NOT employing an existential construction. In fact the option of using an existential here is not available in English: “*This pen, there’s it everywhere.” The interesting question is why the Hebrew speaker did not say (what he certainly could have): "העט הזה, הוא בכל מקום" (“this pen, it’s everywhere”)? I believe the reason is that this latter sentence has no expression within it which expressly signals that a judgment is being made with respect to existence, and this kind of judgment was at the heart of the assertion in the context the sentence was uttered. Namely, the speaker was trying to convey a message regarding the extent to which this pen is instantiated, i.e. exists, in the world.

The English subject-predicate sentence has the verb “to be”, which has within it the meaning of existence, but Hebrew has to employ some other means to express the idea. One option could have been to use the verb “מציאות" ("can be found"), which interestingly indicates that a location is being talked about, though the verb clearly derives from “מציאות", namely the Hebrew word for “existence”. The option of saying "העט הזה, הוא נמצא בכל מקום" (“this pen, it can be found everywhere”), is of a somewhat higher register in Hebrew, which was not appropriate for the speakers at the time the sentence was uttered. Thus, the existential construction appears to have been a last resort.

I would like to propose that languages like Hebrew, lacking (at least in the present tense) a verbal copula which could overtly signal existence, employ the existential construction more often than languages which do possess such a verb “to be”. Another, related, line of research could focus on the fact that some languages, like Hebrew, use the same existential particle for both existential sentences and possessive sentences; this too could prove as a catalyst in a language for employing topical expressions in existential sentences. When we speak of possession, obviously the thing possessed is not restricted.
from being a topic expression. Now the difference between saying, for example יש לנו את הספר הזה ("there is to us this book" = we have this book) and יש את הספר הזה ("there is this book") is perhaps not that great. Clearly these issues require further research.

Lastly, in our examples we have analyzed the post-verbal NP as topical inasmuch as it represents a certain type. However, we had one example of a token-only reading, namely with N. Bluth. We suggested that perhaps it was the denial of existence that enabled the appearance of a particular topical token to be represented in an existential sentence. It would be worthwhile to further investigate how this token-only topic is licensed in an existential sentence and what is the extent of this phenomenon.
References


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Appendix: More Existential Examples

Topicalization:

- מורה שאומצה ואפשר להושב על צורה מסורתית של שמות עברית (אחרי שמיבאוה וגהנוזא ומקוליא)
  - או חלומד או-clock את להושב על דוגמה.-msיכייביו שטייה או המורה מבדירה על צורה מסורה של
  שמות והחולם מידי ימי סㅐר: או, חאלאה יע עברית.

- איך הבירוה? בירוה שישכרת.

- בידיו על כל הדבוריים טוישו הפר”ז מדרביו הג על כל הטפסים וtextBoxם מסר 1 ומשמעה מערר
  באמעצע שוחת: טפסר 18 יש והר מודי.

Ellipsis:

- ואלו לא מכן את נאנסי קודויל על כלבל ש終わった – יש במון.
  - הלוקה: אני רודה מין גור בכוכת. – נמר. (הלוקה מבריכת על חודר סמוכה) שומ יש?


  - והר.

  - ואנו חומס לסילי ولا פרודר ולשחורית את חספ של ביאור, וליי אמדר שיאו בטביל לא את
    העבץ. בתונבל על כל ימחה: אֶ בֶּ יאמה יש, היה ימי ממש מפתיעו ליבות.

  - מורים מתיינוים על בידור בходить: להעפף צרי להוהי נקודת על שגיאת מחנה. – למוה,

  - ודרויא אֶיִי הנחמה.

- בֶּמֶרָר במָרָר, אתת החפשורים בטבובל היא "המריה" מתחה חוכה: "מָגָבנה על מָרָרי – אֶי.
  - המילה "מריה" ומָשָׁמוּת של סֶפֶר הדבירה לgambar הליבריה את סֶפֶר הלים ומיהו החלמות תחלמתיים (הלוקה
    המוצרמאר על בסֶפֶר- קיריסטיניו לטינהו ווּראה השומרי לימעי)
  - אנא באים לא מתחלנה בָּמִילוֹל סֶשל קומיסט. – לא באבול פֶּפֶּ.sonים יש שָׁפֶּתונות בָּהַר. – בָּבָל

  - בֶּצִּיאאֶב לא היה כולם. – למוה, פֶּפֶּ.sonים יש שבָּצִּיאאֶב.

- מורה על העברית מלמדת ברמה גא אֶ בֶּיָּו "הרי בָּרָוון". אֶיחה הדבירה החלמתיים שאליו מתיי עוזי
  - עלילו משמעונים מבילים "הרי". המורה עונה: למוה "אֶילית חירה" מייילש לעבך ש.MessageBox ימי יצר
  - מָרי. "מאֶיִיין חירה" זה בָּשָׂמיחת מהאמני יוצר מרי. תלמידי: הָּמיו לע "דָּרָאם חירה"? מורה: או הז צָּר לא

- נשעָת אֶבי בָּאוּי ריש.

From Roseanne S06E17- Roseanne: Deep down inside, we both know that Fred is a decent guy. – Jackie: A decent guy?!? A decent guy doesn’t sue the mother of his

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child! There are no decent guys in this world! **There never have been! There never will be!**

- There are no decent guys in this world. There never have been! There never will be!

Ellipsis creating a new subcategory

- Цілодобовий фестиваль: якщо б ви перебували там і діялося йому, тоді ви б чули все, що йому відомо.

Anaphora/ Definiteness:

- На їхній життєвій шляхі, люди зустрічають багато трудностей, особливо коли вони розпочинають роботу в новій галузі.

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מדברים על דניאלה ספקטור והעובדה שכל הזמן יש שירים שלה בגלגל“צ.
– ואיך זהشت את אופטימיותה ל שכבר.

אתה מדבר על פונטים מסוימים: אני יכול לה짜ה פונטים קבועים, או פונטים עםпуска, או פונטים עם מספר פונטים בביצועים?
– אתה מדבר על כל מני קורסים מוזרים שאנו בדיקת הצלים או ב-cancel ב cohו, או פונטים עם מספר פונטים בביצועים.
–敖מריהם עליה: עותק היה הצלים בالجزיריות. – מה יש בשל כלאים?

מדברים על שבועות החודים שחלו ועוד שעלו העובדים שסכסוך אפיון הלגיון, או ממסת בפגוסף "הנהו
כמנים" בממסת "יש" עט. ואאיך אוירת: כל בצעים והזירות.

יש כלאו, שאופטים מתכשיטים הממסתא ויצחק באן (הってしまいました boşק שעריעם ספטמןוד)
מתכשיט של אבתות.

אמא שלי אומרת לי שכשהייתה ילדה היו לבנים אופניים עם "רמא" ולבנות אופניים בלי "רמא
אני שואל: מה זה "רמא"? אמא: רמא זה הגליל המתכתי שבין הכידון לכסא. אני: ואלה, היום אני
חושב שיש אתיי זה בצל אופינים. אמא: לא אתיי זה בצל אופינים. אופייני כיורש שייל אלישו אתיי.

ב.Microsoft

ברוחו של התאúa של התחם בהלשנה:恓,גם וברוח השחרראזא והחולות להברר על מצורית 시행ו. ב.

Cleft:

מדברים על מאמר ארוך ומעצבי שאוריק לקוראו והדבר ארמי בצעבות: מגו זה הקפקט הזה? מה
לוכלוו, זה הקפקט שיש.

אוריך: ביותר אויאו התווכי אויל ל룡ש? מגוו התווכו וו התווכי של העבר " documento". אואריך: לוכלוו
אטם קנים או זה דוקא? מהו זה שיו במרפס.

אני ממסת על כל המסרים ועדכון בממסת הדוקטור, שאנו מסת במצוריה: והו זה
ה תורה מהד. והנ מתיב: כו, אלו תדרישות שיש.