

On the Syntactic Realization of Verum Focus in English: A Case Study of VP Preposing

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1. Background: Verum Focus

In the literature, Höhle (1992) proposes verum focus (or polarity focus) as an independent focus category that emphasizes the truth value of a propositional content (See Lohnstein (2016)). For example, verum focus can be expressed by the so-called emphatic *do* in English (cf. Laka (1990)):

- (1) I wonder whether Carl has finished his book. — Carl **did** finish his book.
(Gutzmann and Castroviejo (2011:144), with slight modifications)

Here, the truth value of the (discourse-given) proposition is in focus, and the emphatic *do* serves to highlight the affirmative value. In general, the presence of *do*, or *do*-insertion, has been considered a clue to understanding how verum focus is grammatically encoded in English (e.g. López and Winkler (2000) for polarity focus in VP ellipsis). Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal (2009) further attempt to extend the notion of verum focus to VP preposing in English:

- (2) As members of a Gray Panthers committee, we went to Canada to learn and
[learn we did]. ... (Ward (1990:743), with modifications)

In short, they argue that the auxiliary (*do*) in VP preposing encodes verum focus.

Within the generative framework, VP preposing has been investigated mainly in terms of A-bar movement and the ECP satisfaction (Chomsky (1986) and Haegeman (2012)). However, less attention has been paid to whether and how verum focus concerns the syntax and information structure of VP preposing. Thus, this study aims to (i) show that VP preposing exhibits some phonological and interpretive properties of verum focus and (ii) propose an approach on the basis of Laka's (1990) *SigmaP* (ΣP).

2. The Data: VP Preposing and Verum Focus

Previous studies have stated two basic properties of VP preposing. First, VP preposing requires an antecedent VP (Ward (1990)); this property has been argued to derive from VP topicalization (e.g. Emonds (1976)). Second, VP preposing also shows some phonological/interpretive properties corresponding to verum(/polarity) focus.

On the phonological side, Krifka (2001) observes that in VP preposing, the main accent (and therefore focus) is on *do* (cf. (2)). Furthermore, he argues that the phonological property can be seen as an indication of verum focus in VP preposing.

On the interpretive side, Ward (1990:742-743) notes that VP preposing “may serve to affirm a speaker’s belief in a salient proposition explicitly evoked in the discourse.” This discourse-related property can be seen as a reflex of verum focus (Krifka (2001) and Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal (2009)). In addition, there is a clear piece of evidence for verum focus in VP preposing. One of the defining properties of verum focus is its inability to occur when the truth value of the propositional content is presupposed in the previous discourse (Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal (2009:184)). An example of this is shown below:

- (3) I am so proud of Andy for getting a hundred on his exam. # And get a hundred
he did! (Ward (1990:752))

3. Proposal

To explain the phonological/interpretive properties of verum focus in VP preposing described in Section 2, this paper assumes, following Laka (1990), that English has *Sigma*P (Σ P) under TP, which hosts either the affirmative feature or the negative features (note: the affirmative feature is an empty morpheme *Aff*, while the negative feature is realized as sentential negation *not*):

- (4) a. $[_{CP} \dots [_{TP} [_{T'} do [_{\Sigma P} [_{\Sigma'} Aff / Neg (= not) [_{vP} \dots]]]]]]$
b. $[_{CP} [_{vP} t_i learn] [_{TP} we_i [_{T'} did [_{\Sigma P} [_{\Sigma'} Aff <[_{vP} t_i learn]>]]]]]]]$ (= (2))

Following and slightly modifying Laka's system, we further assume that the emphatic *do* (cf. (1)) is analyzed as a combination of the auxiliary *do*, inserted at the T head, and the empty *Aff* morpheme at the Σ head which is assigned a focus feature [+F] (cf. López and Winkler (2000)); furthermore, the focalized affirmative morpheme is interpreted as verum(/polarity) focus at LF and its phonological content (stress) is realized on the auxiliary *do* at PF.

This paper extends Laka's proposal in (4a) to VP preposing, as shown in (4b); that is, the Σ head licenses the topicalization of *vP* that has an antecedent in the previous discourse (cf. (2)). The proposed analysis directly accounts for Krifka's (2001) observation that the main accent falls on the auxiliary *do* in VP preposing. Furthermore, the derivation in (4b) necessarily involves the focalized empty *Aff* feature, which is interpreted as verum focus at LF. This roughly means that the empty *Aff* morpheme emphatically asserts the affirmative value. If the antecedent *vP* already presupposes its truth value as true in the previous discourse, it will be impossible to (re)assert the affirmative value (cf. (3)).

4. Implications for VP Preposing from a Cross-Linguistic Perspective

This paper proposed that VP preposing in English syntactically encodes verum focus by means of *do*-insertion, more specifically, the empty *Aff* morpheme at the (focus-assigned) Σ head. From a cross-linguistic perspective, VP preposing in English falls under the class of the so-called predicate clefts (Aboh (2006) for a review of predicate clefts). Further, the question is whether grammatical marking of verum focus is one of the core properties of predicate clefts. We will provide some arguments for such a view, referring to predicate clefts in languages such as Spanish (Vicente (2007)), Russian (Aboh and Dyakonova (2009)), and Japanese (Ishihara (2010)).

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On Sentence Fragments of NPIs in Japanese

—A Direct Generation Analysis—

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In this poster presentation, I argue that sentence fragments of *negative polarity items* (NPIs) in Japanese, particularly *WH-mo* and *sika*, are directly generated, not being derived from full sentences via deletion. Sentence fragments are non-sentential expressions with sentential interpretations, which are exemplified by the short answer in (1B).

(1) A: What did you eat for lunch?

B: Pizza.

There have been two kinds of analysis on sentence fragments: the Deletion Analysis (DA) (e.g. Morgan (1973) and Merchant (2004)) and the Direct Generation Analysis (DGA) (e.g. Culicover and Jackendoff (2005)). According to DA, sentence fragments have covert full-fledged syntactic structures and are derived from full sentences by deletion, if a certain kind of formal identity is established between the underlying structures and the antecedent sentences. It is recently assumed that sentence fragments undergo Focus Movement to the left periphery before deletion of TP takes place. According to DGA, on the other hand, they are directly generated as what they are and they have no covert syntactic structures. The aim of this presentation is to support DGA through an investigation of *-sika* and *WH-mo* expressions in sentence fragments.

Generally, NPIs must co-appear with a negative element (Neg), such as *-nai*, in the same clause. From the standard view, they must be in a certain syntactic relation with a Neg. According to DA, it is basically predicted that an NPI can be legitimate as a sentence fragment iff its antecedent sentence contains a Neg in a certain appropriate position.

Sentence fragments with *-sika* are not acceptable, as seen in (2) below.

(2) A: Dare-o mi-ta-no? B: ??Jon-sika.
 who.ACC see-PAST-C John-only
 ‘Did anyone come?’ ‘Only John.’

Whether the impossibility of sentence fragments with *-sika* is predicted by DA, however, depends on what analysis of the NPI is adopted. If it must be c-commanded by a Neg, (2B) violates this condition, since the sentence fragment is displaced to the left periphery by Focus Movement. Hence, sentence fragments with *-sika* themselves do not constitute counterevidence against DA.

Sentence fragments of *WH-mo* expressions, on the other hand, are well-formed, as shown by examples (3) and (4) below. Note that acceptability of a *WH-mo* fragment is independent of which

polarity its antecedent sentence has. As demonstrated by example (4), a *WH-mo* fragment is well-formed even if its antecedent sentence is positive. This fact is problematic for DA, since the analysis does not allow polarity mismatches between fragments and their antecedent sentences (*cf.* Watanabe (2004)). Thus, DA fails in explanation of *WH-mo* fragments.

- (3) A: Nanika mi-ta-no? B: Nanimō.
 something see-PAST-C anything
 ‘Did you see anything?’ ‘Nothing.’
- (4) A: Nanimō mi-nakatta-no? B: Nanimō.
 anything see-NEG.PAST-C anything
 ‘Didn’t you see anything?’ ‘Nothing.’

I propose a DGA of Japanese NPI fragments, in which *WH-mo* fragments are licensed without syntactic negation, within the framework of Culicover and Jackendoff (2005). The basic idea is that NPIs are generally required to be licensed by semantic negation, but they differ in sensitivity to syntactic negation. That is, some NPIs (e.g. *-sika*) must be licensed by a Neg in syntax, while the others (e.g. *WH-mo* expressions) need not to. I assume that *WH-mo* expressions are a kind of *negative concord item* (NCI) in the sense of Ladusaw (1992). More precisely, what is required for *WH-mo* expressions is to be interpreted within the scope of a semantic negation and they have no need to have a syntactic relation with a Neg. In the present framework, sentence fragments can have negative interpretations without syntactic negation. Therefore, the semantic condition on *WH-mo* expressions can be satisfied without explicit Neg, if they are generated as sentence fragments. Sentence fragments with *-sika* can also be semantically licensed, but they cannot be well-formed without explicit negation.

A remaining problem is that in full sentences *WH-mo* expressions are unacceptable without explicit Neg. With a natural assumption that polarity marking is obligatory in full sentences, *WH-mo* expressions are cannot be semantically licensed in sentences without explicit negation (such sentences are zero-marked for positive polarity). Thus, the asymmetry between sentence fragments and full sentences is just attributed to the “non-sentencehood” of sentence fragments.

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On the Modality Expressed by the Japanese Particle *Nanka*
in Spoken Discourse

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In Japanese grammar, *nanka*, literally means “some, any, something, anything” (Daijirin 1995). One of a way, *nanka* is used, for example, as a predicative modifier attached before a predicate verb as in *nanka samui*, “I feel cold.” However, *nanka* is also uttered in statements such as *nanka densha-de hen-na hito-ga ite*, which means “there was a strange person on the train.” In this case, *nanka* is not accompanied by a predicate verb. When *nanka* is used in this way, its meaning becomes more abstract. The latest research shows this kind of *nanka* works as a filler similar to “like” or “well,” and explains that *nanka* expresses the speaker's uncertainty and vagueness (Lauwereyns 2002; Heffernan 2012). However, *nanka* cannot be simply defined as a filler because it tends to occur with the emotional expressions *kanji* (“feeling”) and *ki-ga-suru* (“seem to”) to reveal the speaker's subjective feeling. Thus, as part of revealing the speaker's modality, this study examines how *nanka* shows the speaker's cognition or attitude towards an event, especially considering co-occurring expressions.

The data used in this study is the “Mister O Corpus,” in which the subjects are female teachers and students, 22 pairs of native Japanese speakers. Each pair is asked to talk about the topic: “What has surprised you most?” From this data, 395 expressions using *nanka* are analyzed for recurring patterns.

The analysis of this data indicates that *nanka* is uttered to show the speaker's modality in three different ways. First, *nanka* indicates the speaker's interpretation of something:

- (1) *odaiba-toka-mo nanka kon-de-so-toka omo-u-to ika-nai-desu-ne*
“I don't go to Odaiba because it seems crowded.”

In (1), *nanka* works as a cue to convey the speaker's subjective interpretation in this case. Next, *nanka* shows the speaker's subjective image through onomatopoeia:

- (2) *chari-o koi-de, nanka kekko-sasso-to sa-tte i-tta-n saaaa-tte shaaaa-tte*
ma-ga-tte-ttara,
“(I) pedaled a bicycle breezily, (I) turned at the corner smoothly.”

In this example, after uttering *nanka*, the speaker is trying to describe the event that she experienced. Onomatopoeia imitates the natural sounds of a thing, making the

description more expressive and interesting. When using *nanka* with onomatopoeia, the speaker conveys that her image of the event is subjective, as if she is saying, “I don’t know, it might be inaccurate, but my image is....” Finally, *nanka* shows the speaker’s hesitation when it is uttered to begin the narration of an episode:

- (3) *a, ii-no-kana saikin-zya-naku-tte-mo, nanka watashi-ga kyonen-no
nigatsu-nioosutoraria-ni i-tta-n-da*

“Well, if it is not a recent story, is it all right? I went to Australia last February.”

In this case, *nanka* is mostly uttered with particular phrases as in *ii-no-kana*, “I wonder if...” or “I wonder if it is okay with you...” The speaker shows that she does not want to force her story on the listener.

These three usages of *nanka* reveal the speaker’s feeling. By using *nanka*, the speaker tries to convey her emotions and attitude when describing an event. As a result, the listener receives a vivid account of what is being narrated as well as of the speaker’s feelings. As can be seen, *nanka* has a wide variety of meanings depending on the speakers’ interpretations, images, and feelings of hesitation. Viewed in this light, *nanka* does not seem to simply correspond to the filler words “like” or “well.” Rather, it plays an important role in representing the speakers’ modality in social interaction in Japanese.

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