

Contrastive topic marking in Wenzhounese Wu noun phrases

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This paper proposes that the Wenzhounese (Southern Wu-Oujiang subgroup) sentence-medial affix *-ŋi* is a dedicated contrastive topic (CT) marker. The diagnostics in (1) lend support to *-ŋi*'s CT-marker status, following standard definitions of CTs, in which speakers address an overall question by partitioning it into subquestions (Büring 2003; 2014; Tomioka 2006): In (1a), *-ŋi* resists an exhaustive focus reading. In (1b), it resists maximal elements (in contrast to non-maximal elements). In (1c-d), *-ŋi* marks a hypothetical if-clause, while incompatible with a factual if-clause.

- (1) a. [Question: who said this?]
ləsi-(*ŋi) kuo gi .
teacher-(*CT) said DECL.PRT
'[The teacher]^{foc} said this.'
- b. {doubuvaŋzigi -ŋi/?aŋizigi-(*ŋi)}, o ei-ŋaba.
{most.thing -CT/any.thing-(*CT)}, all very-hard
'As for most things, they are pretty hard to do./??As for all things, they are pretty hard to do.'
- c. ŋi teaŋai fiuo-ŋi, ŋi you fu vai yaŋ kai peisei.
you if be.tired-CT, you then not will win this game
'If you're tired, then you won't win this game.'
- d. [A: I do not feel well today. B utters the following]
ŋi teaŋai fu sivu-(*ŋi), fiuŋi you ga ŋi pogmi ba.
you if not be.well-(*CT), we then another day meet.up DECL.PRT
'If you aren't feeling well, let's meet up another day.'

Assuming that CTs denote alternatives corresponding to subquestions of a prior overall question, they necessarily resist an exhaustive focus, which provides a complete answer and disallows the overall question to be partitioned. CTs similarly resist maximal elements (e.g. all-NPs), since the latter lacks contrasting alternatives. Hypothetical conditionals are CT-compatible, as they denote contrasting sets of possible worlds (Iatridou 1991), each corresponding to a hypothetical situation (if situation A, then...; if situation B, then...). Factual conditionals, in contrast, don't plausibly invite contrasting scenarios (it's already established that speaker A isn't feeling well, hence no contrasting question to be addressed about what if speaker A is feeling well, etc.).

A plethora of studies have shown that the CT operator in East Asian languages tends to be overtly realized by bound/affixal particles attached to topic phrases (Hara 2006; Heycock 2008; Tomioka 2014). Against this landscape, we argue Wenzhounese differs from Japanese/Korean in that Wenzhounese *-ŋi* exclusively marks CTs, and doesn't mark non-contrastive thematic topics (example 2). Contrarily, contrastive and thematic topics are subsumed under the same marker in Japanese/Korean (e.g. Japanese *-wa* marking).

- (2) a. ?ama maini o k^hø tɕə ei. ?aba-ŋi tsaitsai t^hauyite^hoŋ. (contrastive)
mom every.day all sleep early very. dad-CT, often stay.up
'(As for) mom, she sleeps early every day. (As for) dad, he often stays up late.'
- b. koŋkuo^hø maini o zaiditeyo təŋ. ?aba-(*ŋi) tsaitsai t^ho kai koŋkuo^hø. (thematic)
bus every.day all ten stop.by.dad-(*CT) often take that bus
'The bus stops by at ten every day. Dad, he often takes that bus.'

-ŋi's failure to mark thematic topics patterns with Mandarin CT-marking affix *-ne* when occurring sentence-medially (Constant 2012; 2014). We observe that Wenzhounese *-ŋi* further differs from Mandarin *-ne* in that the former doesn't appear in sentence-final positions, whereas *-ne* independently functions as a sentence-final progressive aspect marker and clause typing operator. We thus identify Wenzhounese as a Sinitic language to feature an exclusive CT marker.

References (selected) [1] **Büring. 2003**. On D-trees, beans and B-accents. *Linguistics & Philosophy*. [2] **Büring. 2014**. (Contrastive) Topic. *The Oxford Handbook of Information Structure*. [3] **Constant. 2014**. Contrastive topic: meanings and realizations. PhD thesis, UMass Amherst. [4] **Hara. 2006**. Japanese discourse items at interfaces. PhD thesis, University of Delaware. [5] **Heycock. 2008**. Japanese -wa,-ga, and Information Structure. *Handbook of Japanese Linguistics*. [6] **Tomioka. 2014**. Information Structure in Japanese. *The Oxford Handbook of Information Structure*.