

Topicalization strategies in Old French

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Starting point: Doubling structures are common in a number of modern languages.

Doubling structures

- ▶ A fronted XP is repeated by a pronominal or adverbial element in the clause. → *topicalization* and *adverbial resumption*

In the following: examples from a SV language (English) and a Verb-second (V2) language (Norwegian)

Topicalization – subject doubling

- (1) But Barosky, he's like all those dirty cops—careless and greedy.
Sons of Anarchy S7E1
- (1)' [_{TOPIC} Barosky_i] [_{SUBJECT} he_i] [_{VERB} (i)s]

Topicalization – object doubling

- (2) *Petter, han har jeg kjent i mange år.*
Peter him have I known in many years
'As for Peter, I have known him for several years.'

Norwegian

- (2)' [TOPIC *Petter_i*] [OBJECT *han_i*] [VERB *har*]

Topicalization and adjacency

- (3) **Petter**_i , **han**_i , har jeg kjent i mange år. → Left dislocated topic
- (4) ***Petter**_i , jeg har kjent **ham**_i i mange år. → *Left dislocated topic
- (5) **Petter**_i # jeg har kjent **ham**_i i mange år. → Hanging topic

- (6) **Peter**_i , I've known **him**_i for years

Topicalization and adjacency

Basic principles

- ▶ In V2 languages the topic must always be adjacent to the initial element of the clausal core. (Norwegian)
→ V2: $XP_i - X^0_i / XP_i - V$
- ▶ In non-V2 languages there is no adjacency principle. (English)
→ SV: $XP_i - S - V$

Pronominal and adverbial resumption

A priori

- ▶ A nominal topic is resumed by a pronoun.
- ▶ An adverbial topic is resumed by an adverbial resumptive.

In Modern Scandinavian, SÅ is a generalized adverbial resumptive (Meklenborg, 2020a) that follows CPs, PPs and AdvPs.

- (7) *Etterpå så skal vi bade.*
afterwards SÅ shall we bathe
'Afterwards we will go for a swim.'

Norwegian

In Fenno-Swedish *så* may also be used after a topic corresponding to a thematic element.

- (8) *Men barnen så fick inte skåla*
but children *så* got not toast
'But the children weren't allowed to toast' Fenno-Swedish
→ SUBJECT + adverbial resumptive

Fenno-Swedish, Harling-Kranck (1998, p. 82)

Summing up

- ▶ A DP topic corresponding to the subject or the direct object is normally resumed by a pronoun.
 - ▶ It may be resumed by an adverbial resumptive in Fenno-Swedish.
- ▶ A CP, PP or AdvP is resumed by an adverbial resumptive.

How about French?

Modern (spoken) French (SV) makes extensive use of topicalization.

(9) Subject doubling

- a. *Moi_i , je_j suis toujours fatiguée.*
me I am always tired
- b. *Lui_i , il_j est parti tôt.*
him he is gone early
- c. *Sophie_i , elle_j est plutôt bête.*
Sophie she is rather stupid
- d. *Nous_i , on_j n' y est pour rien.*
we one NEG there is for nothing
'We are innocent (it is not our fault).'

(10) **Object doubling**

- a. *Benjamin_i , je ne l'_i aime pas trop.*
Benjamin I NEG him love NEG too.much
'As for Benjamin, I don't like him much.' (DIRECT OBJECT)
- b. *Les joueurs_i , on vient de les_i rencontrer.*
the players one come of them meet
'As for the players, we just met them.' (DIRECT OBJECT)
- c. *(*A) Marie_i , il lui_i a donné des roses.*
to Mary he her.DAT has given DET roses
'As for Mary, he gave her roses.' (INDIRECT OBJECT)

- ▶ Pronominal objects are clitics, and adjacency is ruled out on independent grounds.
- ▶ → no adjacency principle

What was the situation in Old French?

Old French

- ▶ Asymmetric V2 language (Adams, 1989; Foulet, 1930; Klævik-Pettersen, 2018; Labelle, 2007; Ledgeway, 2012; Meklenborg Salvesen, 2013; I. G. Roberts, 1993; Rouveret, 2004; Skårup, 1975; Thurneysen, 1892; Vance, 1997; Vanelli et al., 1985; Wolfe, 2015, 2019), but pace Kaiser (2002) and Rinke and Meisel (2009).
- ▶ Underlying SVO structure
 - ▶ Clausal structure quite similar to Modern Scandinavian (less like German)
 - ▶ Pronominal object clitics (= Modern French)
- ▶ → At the crossroads between Romance and Germanic

V2

- (11) *Une altre maniere de achate trovet hom en l'isle de Crete*
an other kind of agat finds one in the=island of Crete
'One can find a different kind of agat in the island of Crete.'
12th c., *Lapidaire en prose*
- (11)' [OBJECT une altre maniere de achate] [VERB trovet] [SUBJECT hom] → V2

Object clitics

- (12) *[...] in quant Deus savir et podir me dunat*
in as much God knowledge and power me_{CL} gives
'to the extent God gives me knowledge and power'
842, *Serments de Strasbourg*

→ Pronominal objects are clitics from the earliest text.

Summing up

- ▶ V2
- ▶ Underlying SV
- ▶ Object clitics
- ▶ Features in common with both Germanic and Romance

Old French has two different ways of topicalising a thematic constituent

- ▶ pronominal resumptive element → PRON-topicalization
- ▶ the adverbial resumptive particle SI → SI-topicalization

PRON-topicalization

PRON-topicalization with a fronted subject/object DP.

- (13) a. [*Li niés Marsilie*]_i, *il*_i *ad num Aëlroth*;
the nephew Marsilius he had name Aëlroth
'Marsilius' nephew was called Aëlroth ROLAND,93.1171
- b. *mes [qui or le droit]*_i *l'* *en le*_i *devoit tenir a mençongier*
but who now it say DET one him should keep to liar
'but the one who says that should be regarded a liar.'
QUESTE,13.449

Summing up

- ▶ PRON-topicalization in Old French = topicalization in Modern French.
- ▶ No adjacency requirement with pronominal resumption

SI-topicalization

(14) a. [*l'cil champion*] **SI** *est li anemis*
this champion SI is the enemy
'This champion is the enemy'

graal_cm, col. 184b, l. 2

b. [*Reis Vivien*] **SI** *succuras en Imphe,*
king Vivien SI help in Imphe
'You will help king Vivien in Imphe.'

ROLAND,291.3998

Summing up

- ▶ SI-topicalization in Old French: SI always follows the dislocate.
- ▶ Adjacency requirement

Is it justified to label DP + SI as topicalization?

- ▶ SI marks a focus (Benincà, 2006)
- ▶ SI marks a topic (Donaldson, 2015; Meklenborg, 2020b).
- ▶ SI marks both foci and topics in the earliest texts, but turns into a topic marker (Wolfe, 2020).
- ▶ 13th century: topic preceding SI: DISCOURSE OLD + topic shift (Meklenborg, 2020b) → clearly no focalization effects.

Roadmap

In the following:

1. Data from 15 Old and Middle French texts, analysed with respect to PRON and SI topicalization. (Bear over with me!)
2. A closer look at PRON topicalization.
3. SI topicalization and its reanalysis.
4. A formal analysis.

Sources

- ▶ *Modéliser le changement : les voies du français* (MCVF) (Martineau, 2008) (upper-case letters)
 - ▶ 233,794 words from the 12th to the 15th centuries
- ▶ *Base du français médiéval* (Guillot-Barbance et al., 2017) (lower-case letters)
- ▶ Examples from *La Mort du roi Arthur*, edited by Hult (2009)

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words	texte	PRON		SI		other		Rate of topicalization	
		topicalization no.	ratio	topicalization no.	ratio	no.	ratio	no.	ratio
12th century									
29,818	Roland	20	0.80	4	0.16	1	0.04	25	$8.38 \cdot 10^{-4}$
11,018	Saint Brendan	10	0.83	2	0.17	0	–	12	$10.89 \cdot 10^{-4}$
33,489	Marie de France	11	1.00	0	–	0	–	11	$3.28 \cdot 10^{-4}$
42,423	Yvain	6	0.75	2	0.25	0	–	8	$1.89 \cdot 10^{-4}$
116,748	TOTAL	47	0.84	8	0.14	1	0.02	56	$4.80 \cdot 10^{-4}$
13th century									
34,560	Clari	4	0.36	7	0.64	0	–	11	$3.18 \cdot 10^{-4}$
36,909	La Queste	4	1.00	0	–	0	–	4	$1.09 \cdot 10^{-4}$
4,690	Sermon	8	1.00	0	–	0	–	8	$17.06 \cdot 10^{-4}$
10,203	Aucassin et Nicolette	2	0.67	1	0.33	0	–	3	$2.94 \cdot 10^{-4}$
26,577	Pseudoturpin	1	0.14	6	0.86	0	–	7	$2.63 \cdot 10^{-4}$
78,379	TOTAL	19	0.58	14	0.42	0	–	33	$4.21 \cdot 10^{-4}$
14th century									
76,806	Joinville	15	0.63	9	0.38	0	–	24	$3.12 \cdot 10^{-4}$
53,287	Alexandrie	15	0.83	2	0.11	1	0.06	18	$3.38 \cdot 10^{-4}$
221,129	Froissart	58	0.92	2	0.03	3	0.05	63	$2.85 \cdot 10^{-4}$
351,222	TOTAL	88	0.84	13	0.12	4	0.38	105	$2.99 \cdot 10^{-4}$
15th century									
34,926	XV joyes	1	0.06	17	0.94	0	–	18	$5.15 \cdot 10^{-4}$
154,242	CNN	35	0.85	6	0.15	0	–	41	$2.66 \cdot 10^{-4}$
44,626	Commynes	8	0.80	2	0.20	0	–	10	$2.24 \cdot 10^{-4}$
233,794	TOTAL	44	0.64	25	0.36	0	–	69	$2.95 \cdot 10^{-4}$

Tendencies

- ▶ PRON topicalization is more common than SI topicalization
- ▶ Considerable intertextual variation
- ▶ Topicalization overall becomes less frequent over time
- ▶ SI topicalization increases apparently in the 13th century caused by two texts.
- ▶ later occurrences of SI topicalization (15th century) dubious (no longer V2)

PRON topicalization

Different kinds of resumptive pronoun:

- ▶ personal pronouns (*il, el* 'he, she')
- ▶ true demonstratives (*cil, cist* 'this one, that one')
- ▶ the demonstrative *ce, ço, ça* 'that'

	total no.	personal no. ratio	demonstrative no. ratio	ce no. ratio
12th century				
Roland	20	19 0.95	1 0.05	0 –
Saint Brendan	10	8 0.80	0 –	2 0.20
Marie de France	11	9 0.82	1 0.09	1 0.09
Yvain	6	5 0.83	1 0.17	0 –
TOTAL	47	41 0.87	3 0.06	3 0.06
13th century				
Clari	4	2 0.50	0 –	2 0.50
La Queste	4	3 0.75	0 –	1 0.25
Sermon	8	4 0.50	1 0.13	3 0.38
Aucassin et Nicolette	2	2 1.00	0 –	0 –
Pseudoturpin	1	0 –	1 1.00	0 –
TOTAL	19	11 0.58	2 0.11	6 0.32
14th century				
Joinville	15	7 0.47	0 –	8 0.53
Alexandrie	15	12 0.80	0 –	3 0.20
Froissart	58	47 0.81	0 –	11 0.19
TOTAL	88	66 0.75	0 –	22 0.25
15th century				
XV joyes	0	0 –	0 –	0 –
CNN	34	16 0.49	0 –	18 0.51
Commynes	8	2 0.25	0 –	6 0.75
TOTAL	44	18 0.44	0 0	24 0.55

Tendencies

- ▶ the personal pronoun is the most common resumptive in every century
- ▶ the demonstrative pronoun as a resumptive disappears after the 13th century
- ▶ the CE type of resumptive pronoun becomes more frequent

- ▶ When PRON topicalization has a true demonstrative (15-a) or *ce* (15-b) as its resumptive, its function is almost always that of a subject.
- ▶ When the resumptive is a CE type, the finite verb is always *estre* 'to be' (15-b).

- (15) a. [*Li Freisnes*]_i, *cele*_i fu *celee*;
the Fresne this.one was hidden
'The Fresne was hidden.' MARIEF_LAIS,.1114
- b. [*Sainte Souphie en griu*]_i *ch*'_i est *Sainte Trinités en franchois*.
holy Sophie in Greek that is holy Trinity in French
'Holy Sophie in Greek is Holy Trinity in French.'
CLARI_CONSTANTINOPLE,84.2105

When the resumptive is a personal pronoun, it can correspond to both the subject or the direct object.

- (16) a. [*Li niés Marsilie*]_j, *il*_j *ad num Aëlroth*;
the nephew Marsilius he had name Aëlroth
'Marsilius' nephew was called Aëlroth' ROLAND,93.1171
- b. [*Ceste bataille*]_j, *veirement la*_j *ferum*.
this battle truly it make
'we shall truly fight this battle' ROLAND,70.846

Table 1: Resumptive = a personal pronoun

	total no.	subject no. ratio		direct object no. ratio	
12th century					
Roland	19	13	0.68	6	0.32
Saint Brendan	8	0	–	8	1.00
Marie de France	9	5	0.56	4	0.44
Yvain	5	3	0.00	2	0.00
TOTAL	41	21	0.51	20	0.49
13th century					
Clari	2	2	1.00	0	–
La Queste	3	3	1.00	0	–
Sermon	4	4	1.00	0	–
Aucassin et Nicolette	2	1	0.50	1	0.50
Pseudoturpin	0	0	–	0	–
TOTAL	11	10	0.91	1	0.09
14th century					
Joinville	7	1	0.14	6	0.86
Alexandrie	12	10	0.83	2	0.17
Froissart	47	28	0.60	19	0.40
TOTAL	66	39	0.59	27	0.41
15th century					
XV joyes	0	0	–	0	–
CNN	16	12	0.75	4	0.25
Commynes	2	0	–	2	1.00
TOTAL	18	12	0.67	6	0.33

PRON topicalization – tendencies

- ▶ The personal pronoun is the most common resumptive in every century.
- ▶ The use of the demonstrative pronoun as a resumptive disappears after the 13th century.
- ▶ The CE type of resumptive pronoun becomes more frequent.

PRON topicalization – functions

- ▶ The dislocate corresponds to the subject → personal pronoun, demonstrative, CE
- ▶ The dislocate corresponds to a non-subject → personal pronoun

S_I topicalization

- ▶ S_I is a common resumptive element in Old French.
- ▶ It is not exclusive to traditional topicalization contexts (unlike PRON topicalization).
- ▶ It occurs in second position of the clause.
- ▶ It may follow a subordinate clause, a PP, an adverb or a thematic DP.
- ▶ When S_I follows a DP that corresponds to a thematic element of the clause, it corresponds almost exclusively that of a subject. (2 counterexamples in *Roland*)

- (17) a. *[Li fus de lui] si enbraise Cume buche de fornaise*
the fire of him SI burns like mouth of fireplace
'The fire that came from him burned like a fireplace.'

BENEDEIT_BRENDAN,54.630

- b. *Et [cele] si li demanda qui il estoit.*
and this SI him asked who he was
'And she asked him who he was.'

MortArtu II-7

Recap

- ▶ In Scandinavian, the adverbial resumptive particle SÅ may follow fronted adverbial subordinate clauses, PPs and AdvS.
- ▶ In Fenno-Swedish, SÅ may also follow a fronted thematic constituent.
- ▶ → The use of SI in Old French resembles the use of SÅ in Fenno-Swedish.

- ▶ In the earliest texts, SI may appear with any kind of verb.
- ▶ Over time, SI gets increasingly associated with the verb *estre* 'to be'.

Table 3: SI topicalization and the verb

	total no.	verb = <i>estre</i> no.	ratio	verb \neq <i>estre</i> no.	ratio
12th century					
Roland	4	0	–	4	1.00
Saint Brendan	2	0	–	2	1.00
Marie de France	0	0	–	0	–
Yvain	2	0	–	2	1.00
TOTAL	8	0	–	8	1.00
13th century					
Clari	7	3	0.43	4	0.57
La Queste	0	0	–	0	–
Sermon	0	0	–	0	–
Aucassin et Nicolette	1	0	–	1	1.00
Pseudoturpin	6	4	0.67	2	0.33
TOTAL	14	7	0.50	7	0.50
14th century					
Joinville	9	6	0.67	3	0.33
Alexandrie	2	1	0.50	1	0.50
Froissart	2	2	1.00	0	–
TOTAL	13	9	0.69	4	0.31
15th century					
XV joyes	17	17	1.00	0	–
CNN	6	6	1.00	0	–
Commynes	2	2	1.00	0	–
TOTAL	25	25	1.00	0	–

The use of SI becomes increasingly restricted over the centuries →
specialization (see also Wolfe (2018) for similar observations)

- (18) STAGE 1: S, DO, IO + all kinds of verbs
- STAGE 2: S + all kinds of verbs
- STAGE 3: S + *estre*

Stage 1

(19) *[A l' emperere] si toldrat la curone.*

of the emperor si lift the crown

'You will take the crown from the emperor.'

INDIRECT OBJECT + *tolir* 'lift'

ROLAND, 116.1540

Stage 2

- (20) *[Aucassins] si cevauce.*
Aucassin SI rides
'Aucassin rides.'
SUBJECT + *chevaucher* 'ride'

AUCASSIN,.639

Stage 3

- (21) *[Le troisieme enseignement que mon pere me bailla] si fut que jamais*
the third lesson that my father me gave SI was that never
n' espousasse femme d' estrange region.
NEG marry woman of strange region
'The third lesson my father gave me was never to marry a foreign woman.'

ANONYME_CNN,336.7423

SUBJECT + *estre* 'be'

Summing up: the resumptive element

- ▶ 12th century: personal pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, the CE type, SI
- ▶ gradual specialization
- ▶ **personal pronoun**: all functions, all verbs – the generalized resumptive element in topicalization structures
- ▶ **demonstrative pronoun**: disappears
- ▶ **the CE type**: restricted to subjects and the verb *estre* 'to be'.
- ▶ **SI**: becomes restricted to subjects and later to the verb *estre* 'to be'.
(specialization process)

Question: May *si* and *ce* be distinguished?

	only subject	only <i>estre</i>
12th c.	<i>ce</i>	<i>ce</i>
13th c.	<i>ce, si</i>	<i>ce</i>
14th c.	<i>ce, si</i>	<i>ce</i>
15th c.	<i>ce, si</i>	<i>ce, si</i>

Table 6: SI and CE: S + *estre*

	ce	si
12th century		
Roland		
Saint Brendan	1	
Marie de France	1	
Yvain		
TOTAL	2	–
13th century		
Clari	2	3
queste	1	
sermon	3	
Aucassin et Nicolette		
Pseudoturpin		4
TOTAL	6	7
14th century		
Joinville	8	6
Alexandrie	2	1
Froissart	11	2
TOTAL	21	9
15th century		
XV joyes		17
CNN	18	6
Commynes	6	2
TOTAL	24	25

Reanalysis

Phonetic change I (Pope, 1956, pp. 92–93, 279, 450)

- ▶ > 12th century: *ce* [tse]
- ▶ 13th century: [se]

→ 13th century: *ce* and *si*: [se] [si]

Phonetic change II

- ▶ > 14th century: conditional adverb: *se* ‘if’
- ▶ 15th century: *se* > *si*

Reanalysis

Structural change

- ▶ 13th–15th c.: Old French loses its V2 structure (Steiner, 2014)
- ▶ → the left periphery no longer obligatorily contains phonetic material
- ▶ → SI is a left peripheral particle – base generated in the CP → intimately linked to V2

Ambiguity → reanalysis

- ▶ 13th century: *ce* and *si*: [se] [si] → minimal pair
- ▶ 13th–15th centuries: gradual erosion of the left periphery → loss of *si* on independent grounds
- ▶ 15th century: *si* may mean ‘if’ or it may be the resumptive particle
- ▶ reanalysis: *si* → *ce*

The big picture

Changes in topicalization from the 12th to the 15th centuries

- ▶ PRON topicalization becomes the default type
- ▶ 15th century: *si* may mean 'if' or it may be the resumptive particle
- ▶ reanalysis: *SI* → *ce*

Cutting a few corners

- ▶ A topic is situated in the left periphery, to the left of the clausal core.
- ▶ In Old French this clausal core has a V2 structure. Topics generate a surface V3 word order.
- ▶ When the topic contains a finite verb ([+FIN]) (DP + relative clause, free relatives), S1 is a phrase, occupying the initial slot of the V2 scheme.
- ▶ When the topic does not contain a finite verb ([-FIN]) and the resumptive is S1, S1 is a head.
 - ▶ Why: after a [+FIN] topic, the following clause may start with any kind of XP. After a [-FIN] topic, S1 is the only possibility.
- ▶ In the case of PRON topicalization, the initial element of the clause following the topic is always a maximal category. (Pronominal subjects not yet cliticized)

Topicalization and V2

- ▶ Topicalization must be understood through the lens of V2.
- ▶ V2 only allows movement of one XP to the specifier position of the finite verb in the left periphery—the bottleneck (Haegeman, 1996; I. Roberts, 2004)
- ▶ —→ When the initial constituent in the clausal core is a maximal category and different from the topic, the topic must have been base generated in the left periphery.

What about SI?

- ▶ Recap: In Germanic V2 languages, there is always adjacency between the topic and the resumptive pronoun.
- ▶ The resumptive pronoun is always a maximal category.
- ▶ The adjacency requirement is explained by a movement analysis (Grewendorf, 2002; Grohmann, 2000).

- (22) *[Per], han sa ingenting.*
Per HE said nothing
'Per didn't say anything.'

Norwegian

- (23) [_{LDP} Per_i [_{LD0} [_{SpecFinP} Per_i → han_i [_{Fin0} sa]]]]

- ▶ SI topicalization lends itself to the same type of analysis.
- ▶ An XP is moved across the finite verb and into the left periphery. As the V2 structure in Old French has a visibility requirement (Meklenborg, 2021), SI must be spelled out. If not, the derivation crashes.
- ▶ NB! While the resumptive pronoun in Germanic is a maximal category, SI after a [-FIN] topic in Old French is a head.

- (24) *[Icil champion] SI est li anemis*
this champion SI is the enemy
'This champion is the enemy'

graal_cm, col. 184b, l. 2

- (25) [_{LDP} [_{icil} champion]_i [_{LD0} SI [_{FinP} ~~icil-champion~~_i [_{Fin0} est ...]]]]

Topicalization in Germanic and Romance

- ▶ Modern Romance: base generated topics, no adjacency
- ▶ Germanic: moved topics, adjacency
- ▶ Old French: three patterns:
 - ▶ PRON topicalization: base generated topics, no adjacency
 - ▶ SI topicalization, [+FIN topic]: base generated topics, adjacency
 - ▶ SI topicalization, [-FIN topic]: moved topics, adjacency

Changes in topicalization in Old French

- ▶ The different topicalization structures undergo specialization.
- ▶ PRON topicalization with a personal pronoun becomes the default topicalization structure
- ▶ PRON topicalization with CE is restricted to cases where the topic corresponds to the subject and the finite verb is *estre* 'to be'.
- ▶ SI topicalization undergoes specialization until it merges with CE topicalization and disappears

Take-home message

- ▶ Old French has a Romance and a Germanic kind of topicalization.
- ▶ The Germanic type of topicalization gets lost as the language loses V2 and is reanalyzed as a presentative structure.

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