The syntax and pragmatics of fronting in Germanic

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November 14, 2012
Introduction

- Across the Germanic language family, we find a type of movement traditionally termed *topicalization*.
- This occurs both in Verb-Second (V2) Germanic languages, and in non-V2 varieties.

(1) **(German)** Das weiss ich.
    that.ACC know I.NOM

**(Icelandic)** Pað veit ég.
    that.ACC know I.NOM

**(English)** That, I know.

- This dissertation presents a comparative study of the syntactic and pragmatic properties of this construction across Germanic.
- In order to avoid making undesirable theoretical assumptions off the bat, I will refer to this phenomenon henceforward as *fronting*. 
Introduction

In the following, I will attempt to construct a unified theory of fronting in Germanic.

Although *fronting* is often treated as a single phenomenon, I will argue that **two distinct motivations for fronting exist**.

The two are related by the nature of the V2 constraint.

This account offers a principled way of understanding the differences between fronting patterns in closely related Germanic languages.

In addition, the observations presented here have serious consequences for the theory of information structure.
A puzzle in English fronting

Consider a puzzle in the history of English.

The overall rate of object fronting declines over time.

Speyer (2010): this is **not** a syntactic change.

- The loss of verb-second word orders limits the environments in which fronting is prosodically well-formed.
- Fronted DPs are accented: if the subject is accented, accent clash results.

\[(2) \quad \text{a. } \text{Bèans I líke.} \]
\[\text{b. } \text{?? Bèans Í like.} \]

- Not a problem when the finite verb immediately follows the fronted DP.

Note that this relies on the claim that fronted constituents are always accented in English.
A puzzle in English fronting

- Speyer: (unaccented) personal pronouns front in Old English, but rate of pronoun fronting rapidly declines in Middle English.

(3) Þone asende se Sunu
   this sent the son
   ‘The son sent this one.’
   (coaelhom,+AHom_9:113.1350)

(4) & hit Englisce men swy3e amyrdon
   and it English men fiercely prevented
   ‘and the Englishmen prevented it fiercely.’
   (cochronE,ChronE_[Plummer]:1073.2.2681)
Two mechanisms for fronting

- Speyer relates this to the proposal of dual fronting mechanisms in German presented in Frey (2004, 2006a,b).
  1. ‘True’ A-bar Movement (TAB).
  2. Formal Movement (FM).

- FM has no interpretive effect.
  - Restricted to targeting only the highest constituent in the Middlefield (between C and the right edge of VP).

- TAB results in a contrastive interpretation on the fronted XP.
  - Contrastivity is generally associated with a specific accent pattern (cf. Büring, 1997; Jackendoff, 1972).
  - TAB may target any constituent in the clause.

- Speyer: English lost FM after the OE period, but retained TAB.
A problem?

- Stevens (2010); Stevens and Light (2012) test the hypothesis that English lost non-contrastive fronting after OE.
  - Although the fronting of personal pronouns declines, the fronting of demonstrative pronouns does not.
- Demonstratives reveal a challenge to Speyer’s analysis.
  - They front in all periods without a contrastive interpretation.
  - In fact, in Early Modern English, demonstrative pronouns front more often than not (demonstratives 130/208, 62.50%; compare personal pronouns, 39/3575, 1.09%).
  - They appear to represent a class of unaccented DPs which continue to front through the history of English.

- Can we solve this puzzle without rejecting Speyer’s analysis?
The syntax and pragmatics of fronting in Germanic

Introduction

Proposal

- The solution can be found in a unified theory of fronting in Germanic.
  - The apparent problem is due to the assumption that non-contrastive demonstratives behave like unaccented pronouns.
  - Evidence from across Germanic supports an alternative analysis.
- I begin by using Frey’s hypothesis as a basis for comparison of the properties of object fronting across several Germanic varieties.
  - Differences in the fronting patterns of Germanic languages may be explained by the availability and restrictions on Formal Movement.
  - True A-Bar Movement will be a constant across all languages considered.
This dissertation is supported by synchronic and diachronic evidence from English, Icelandic, Dutch, German and just a bit of Swedish.

Quantitative evidence from parsed corpora:
- The York-Toronto-Helsinki Parsed Corpus of Old English Prose (Taylor et al., 2003)
- The Penn Parsed Corpora of Historical English (Kroch, Santorini, and Diertani, 2004; Kroch and Taylor, 2000)
- The Icelandic Parsed Historical Corpus (Wallenberg et al., 2011)
- The Parsed Corpus of Early New High German (Light, 2011)

Parallel parsed corpora of the New Testament:
- Martin Luther’s Septembertestament, date: 1522 (ENHG)
- William Tyndale, date: 1525/1534 (Early Modern English)
- Oddur Gottskálksson, date: 1540 (Icelandic)
Outline

1. Introduction

2. Two types of fronting

3. Formal Movement
   - Fronting and scrambling across Germanic
   - Formal Movement and the V2 constraint

4. The special status of demonstratives
   - Analyzing demonstratives

5. Conclusion
Previous work has grappled with the contrast between cases in which fronting is associated with a marked interpretation on the fronted constituent, and cases in which it is not.

(5) **Fast jeden Kollegen** schätzt der Hans
almost every.ACC colleague.ACC values the.NOM Hans.NOM
‘Nearly every colleague values Hans.’

(6) **Dem Karl** hat das Spiel gut gefallen
the.DAT Karl.DAT has the.NOM match.NOM well pleased
Karl liked the match very much.

Many have taken data of this sort as a reason to conclude simply that fronting can affect various information structural categories.
Frey (2004, 2006a,b) suggests an alternate account for German: fronting is actually the result of two kinds of movement, **Formal Movement** and **True A-Bar Movement**.

- By this theory, the dissimilarity between fronting examples is not surprising: we are actually observing **two different phenomena**.

- I will adopt Frey’s terminology, but purely as a descriptive tool.
  - These terms should not be mistaken for an analysis.
A brief background on German fronting

- German is Verb- and Tense-final.
- In matrix clauses, the finite verb moves to C.
  - Only one XP may then appear to the left of the finite verb (Spec,CP), resulting in “verb-second” (V2) order.
  - Any XP may hypothetically move to fill the preverbal position, which is traditionally called the Vorfeld, or Prefield.
- Movement to the Prefield is fronting.
- Any non-finite verbs or verbal particles remain in situ.
  - These elements are a diagnostic for the right edge of the verbal domain.
  - The traditional term for the field between finite verb and these right edge diagnostics is the Mittelfeld, or Middlefield.
Benefits of the FM hypothesis

- FM helps to explain why, in German, subjects front by default.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fronted</th>
<th>Middlefield</th>
<th>% fronted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>5229</td>
<td>1914</td>
<td>73.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objects</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>2947</td>
<td>5.18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Even more interestingly, some elements behave like subjects exclusively with respect to the V2 constraint.

  - Oblique experiencers in German do not have subject-like properties (cf. Sigurðsson, 2004), but they front without a contrastive interpretation.

  (7) Dem Karl hat das Spiel gut gefallen
  the.DAT Karl.DAT has the.NOM match.NOM well pleased
  Karl liked the match very much.

- Frey (2006a): dative experiencers are base-generated higher than the subject, and thus prime candidates for FM.
Movement operations in the Middlefield are predicted to facilitate FM of other elements.

- Any XP which can move higher than any other element in the Middlefield should be susceptible to FM.
- In German, this occurs via scrambling.

The Formal Movement hypothesis therefore predicts that the availability of scrambling should affect the availability of FM.

- Put another way, FM of an element should only be possible if it is permitted move sufficiently high in the structure prior to FM.
**FM and unaccented elements**

- Frey (2006b): contrary to popular belief, the obligatorily unaccented pronoun *es* (‘it’) may be fronted in German, under the right circumstances.

  (8) Ihr Geld ist ja nicht weg, meine Damen und Herren. Your money is PRT not gone my ladies and gentlemen
  Es haben jetzt nur andere. it.ACC have now only others.NOM
  ‘Your money is not gone, ladies and gentlemen. It is merely in the possession of others now.’

- The crucial point here is that the subject is low, allowing the object *es* to scramble higher in the Middlefield and become the target of FM.

- Thus, scrambled objects behave just as expected under Frey’s theory.
Pronoun data in the ENHG corpus

- Consider sample of 51 fronted pronoun objects from the ENHG corpus (33 accusative, 18 dative).
  - Pronouns resist accent: in the absence of a clear contrastive interpretation, pronoun fronting must be assumed to be an example of “unmarked” fronting.
  - 13 (25.5%) involve an unambiguous contrastive interpretation.

(9) Die wellt kan euch nicht hassen, mich aber hasset sie
the world can you.PL not hate me.ACC PRT hates it.NOM
‘The world cannot hate you, but it hates me.
(John 7:7)

- These are likely to have fronted via TAB.
Pronoun data in the ENHG corpus

- 14 (27.5%) are arguments Frey predicted to front via FM.
- Oblique experiencer arguments of psych verbs: six examples (four dative and two accusative).

(10) a. mich  durstet
    me.ACC thirsts
    ‘I’m thirsty’
    (John 19:28)

- Dative arguments in passive contructions: eight examples.

(11) Myr  ist geben aller gewallt ynn hymel  vnnd erden
    me.DAT is given all power in heaven and earth
    ‘To me is given all power in heaven and earth.’
    (Matthew 28:18)
Pronoun data in the ENHG corpus

- Two of the remaining examples (3.9%) contain a quantified, low subject.

  (12) a. vnd yhm folgete viel volcks nach
   and him.DAT followed many.NOM people.NOM PRT
   ‘And many people followed him.’
   (Matthew 12:15)

  b. vnd euch wirtt nichts vnmuglich seyn
   and you.DAT will nothing.NOM impossible be
   ‘And nothing will be impossible to you.’
   (Matthew 17:20)

- All remaining examples are **demonstratives which do not have a plausible contrastive interpretation**, which will be set aside until a later section.
The connection between FM and scrambling is supported by comparing German to Icelandic.

While the positions of T and V differ between German and Icelandic, the position of the finite verb in matrix clauses is thought to be the same (Þráinsson, 2007).

Scandinavian does not have scrambling of the type found in German: rather, it makes use of Object Shift, a restricted type of scrambling.

Object Shift generally cannot move an object higher than the subject.

Therefore, Frey predicts that unaccented fronting of arguments should not occur in Icelandic.
Pronoun fronting in Icelandic

- Recall that FM in German allows fronting of the unstressable object *es*.

  (13) Ihr Geld ist ja nicht weg, meine Damen und Herren. Es haben jetzt nur andere. 'Your money is not gone, ladies and gentlemen. It is merely in the possession of others now.'

- In the same context in Icelandic, it is not possible to front *það* (*‘it’*).

  (14) Féð ykkar er ekki horfð, dömur mínar og herrar. money-the your is not disappeared ladies mine and gentlemen

  a. *það* hafa núna aðrir.
     it.ACC have now others.NOM
  b. ?? það hafa aðrir núna.
  c. Aðrir hafa það núna
Pronoun fronting in Icelandic

- Icelandic behaves more like Modern English than German.
  - As a language without scrambling, Modern English cannot use FM.

  (15) Your money is not gone, ladies and gentlemen ...

  a. *It, others have now.
  b. Others have it now.

- Unlike German *es, það is not categorically unstressable.
  - Given appropriate contexts it may be fronted.

  (16) Grínistinn var kosinn borgarstjóri.
  comedian-the.NOM was elected mayor

  a. Ég veit það!
     I.NOM know it.ACC
  b. það veit ég!

- But crucially, once stress is placed on the verb, the judgment changes:

  (17) a. Ég veit það!
       I.NOM know it.ACC
  b. ?? það veit ég!
Evidence for FM in Icelandic

- In other respects, however, Icelandic shows evidence of FM which parallels German.
  - As in German, the subject fronts by default.
- Because scrambling is limited to the Object Shift variety, certain elements are simply not targets for FM (i.e. objects).
  - In other words, FM in Icelandic behaves just as expected.
  - It is only the behavior scrambling that differs.
- This is further supported by the fronting patterns of adverbials.
Adverbial fronting

- Frey and Pittner (1998); Pittner (2004): semantic categories of adverbials determine their base adjunction sites in German.
- Sentence adverbials > frame adverbials > event-related adverbials > event-internal adverbials > process adverbials.
- Other than sentence adverbials, frame adverbials are the highest class available.
  - An easily identifiable type of frame adverbial is **temporal adverbs**.
  - These are predicted to front more frequently than locatives or manner adverbs, because they are higher and therefore more likely to be targeted by FM.
Adverbial fronting

- German: I compare temporal adverbs versus locatives and -lich (‘-ly’) adverbs, an easily identifiable set of manner adverbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fronted</th>
<th>Middlefield</th>
<th>% Fronted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporal</strong></td>
<td>104</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Locative</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>-lich</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- I also consider the set of temporal adverbs versus all non-temporal adverbs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fronted</th>
<th>Middlefield</th>
<th>% Fronted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporal</strong></td>
<td>104</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-temporal</strong></td>
<td>126</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All adverbs</strong></td>
<td>230</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- As predicted, temporal adverbs, roughly representing higher-adjointed frame adverbials, front more frequently than other types.
Adverbial fronting

- For Icelandic, I compare temporal, locative and ‘other’ adverb phrases.
- The frequencies are, again, consistent with the prediction from Formal Movement: temporal adverbs front at a higher rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fronted</th>
<th>Non-fronted</th>
<th>% Fronted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Temporal</strong></td>
<td>4943</td>
<td>6912</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Locative</strong></td>
<td>738</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td>2047</td>
<td>6260</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>All adverbs</strong></td>
<td>7704</td>
<td>13151</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This suggests that adverbials may behave differently than arguments with respect to fronting in Icelandic.

  - I suggest that Icelandic does have Formal Movement as an option, but this is blocked for objects due to the general unavailability of scrambling past the subject.
**FM in Dutch**

- Dutch, like Icelandic, has a more restricted scrambling system than German.
  - Scrambling of arguments across arguments is generally not possible for full DPs (cf. Neeleman, 1994).

\[ (18) \]
\[
\begin{align*}
a. & \quad \ldots \text{ dat Jan } op \ zondag \text{ het boek leest.} \\
& \quad \text{that Jan on sunday the book reads} \\
& \quad \text{‘...that Jan reads the book on Sunday.’}
\end{align*}
\]
\[ b. \quad \ldots \text{ dat Jan het boek op zondag leest.} \\
\]

\[ (19) \]
\[
\begin{align*}
a. & \quad \ldots \text{ dat Jan de mannen deze film toont.} \\
& \quad \text{that Jan the men the picture shows} \\
& \quad \text{‘...that Jan shows the men the picture.’}
\end{align*}
\]
\[ b. \quad * \ldots \text{ dat deze film Jan de mannen toont.} \\
\]
\[ c. \quad * \ldots \text{ dat de mannen Jan deze film toont.} \\
\]
\[ d. \quad * \ldots \text{ dat Jan deze film de mannen toont.} \\
\]

- The exception is **focus scrambling**, which is irrelevant for the current purposes because it scrambles only **accented** elements.
FM in Dutch

- Bouma (2008) presents a quantitative study of Dutch fronting using a corpus of spoken Dutch, the *Corpus Gesproken Nederlands* (CGN).
- Frey predicts that the only objects susceptible to FM are those which may precede the subject in the Middlefield.
  - Scrambling does not facilitate the necessary type of movement, so this is restricted to structurally high elements like dative experiencers.

\[
(20) \quad \text{Eigenlijk is me de accommodatie niet zo goed bevallen.}
\]

really is me the accommodation not so well pleased

‘I was not happy with the accommodation, to be honest.’

- This is initially supported by the fact that very few fronted object pronouns are attested in the CGN.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fronted</th>
<th>Non-fronted</th>
<th>% Fronted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>24662</td>
<td>13971</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct object</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3342</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect object</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fronting in Dutch

- The majority of the fronted object pronouns in the CGN are dative.
  - All 11 either occur in an impersonal passive, or as a dative experiencer.

  (21) *haar* werd verteld gewoon dat bepaalde dingen aan *haar*
      her was told PRT that certain things were due
      zouden liggen
to her
   ‘She was told that she should blame herself for certain things.’

  (22) *mij* boeit dat helemaal niet
       me binds that totally not
       ‘I am completely uninterested in that.’

- Unaccented personal pronouns front exactly in those cases in which an object may be expected to precede the subject in the Middlefield.
Interim summary

- In summary, various V2 languages show marked similarities in their ability to front certain unmarked constituents.
  - In all of the languages considered, subject fronting is treated as an unmarked default.
  - However, certain non-subjects may be treated like subjects with respect to unaccented fronting, just because they are sufficiently high in the structure prior to fronting.

- Apparent differences in the fronting patterns of these languages may be reduced to the presence or absence of scrambling above the subject.

- This contrasts with languages that do not front via FM, like English.
Support from Swedish?

- The subtle difference in fronting possibilities is made particularly clear by a study on L2 German by Swedish speakers. Both German and Swedish are V2 languages, and thus superficially very similar with respect to fronting.

- Bohnacker and Rosén (2008) considers the Prefield in a corpus of 80 letters in native Swedish and 70 letters in native German.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects in Prefield</th>
<th>Objects in Prefield</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Swedish</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native German</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- This was compared to a corpus of 135 letters written in L2 German by advanced learners whose native language is Swedish.

  - These compositions were handed to native German speakers who were asked make the letters sound “more German” (Rosén, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects in prefild</th>
<th>Objects in prefild</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L2 German</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected German</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The goal of the preceding discussion was to demonstrate that FM can be found in V2 languages across the Germanic family.

What I’ve thus far called Formal Movement is simply a mechanism to satisfy the V2 constraint.

Numerous existing accounts argue that in V2 languages, Spec,CP is filled to satisfy a formal requirement in the narrow syntax.

Heycock (1994): V2 is a predication requirement
Roberts (2005): V2 is an EPP requirement in the C-domain.

Whichever theory you adopt, in V2 languages, Spec,CP is filled without semantic effect by default.

FM should not be treated as an information structurally driven movement under any theory of fronting.
The special status of demonstratives

- Frey’s hypothesis predicts that FM is the only way to front non-contrastive/unaccented elements.

- However, the fronting patterns of German, Icelandic, Dutch and English are **more similar** than predicted.
  - Of the 51 fronted pronouns in the ENHG corpus, 22 (43.14%) were demonstrative pronouns without a plausible contrastive interpretation.

(23) Dise, *die* den gantzen welltkreyß errege, sind auch these who the whole world-circle excite are also herkomen, *die* hat Jason zu sich genommen here-come they.ACC has Jason.NOM to RFL taken

‘These (people), who have excited the whole world, have also come here; Jason has taken **them** in.’

(Acts 17:7)
Frey’s hypothesis, in its original formulation, is forced to predict that these demonstrative pronouns are fronted via Formal Movement. This is plausible in principle, as non-contrastive demonstrative pronouns may be expected to behave like non-contrastive personal pronouns.

However, the same class of fronted elements is found in both English and Icelandic, languages **without** Formal Movement of objects.

This is made clear by a verse-by-verse comparison of three parallel bible translations.
The special status of demonstratives

- *Contra* Frey’s prediction, all three languages have parallel examples of non-contrastive fronted elements.

\[(24)\]

a. *disen Jhesum* hat Gott auff erweckt, des this.ACC Jesus.ACC has God.NOM up awakened who.GEN sind wyr alle zeugen. are we.NOM all.NOM witnesses.NOM

b. *Pennan Jesúm* upp vakti Guð, hvers this.ACC Jesus.ACC up woke God.NOM who.GEN vottar vér erum allir. witnesses.NOM we.NOM are all.NOM

c. *This Jesus* hath God raysyd vp, wher of we all are witnesses.  
(Acts 2:32)
The special status of demonstratives

(25) a. Pilatus aber schreyb eyn vbirschrifft, vnnd setzte sie auff das Pilate PRT wrote an inscription and set it on the creutz, ... *Dise vberschrifft* lasen viel Juden cross ... *this_ACC inscription.ACC read many.NOM* Jews.NOM

b. Pílatus skrifaði eina yfirskrift og setti hana upp yfir Pilate wrote an inscription and set it up over kross-inum. ... *Pessa yfirskrift* lásu margir af cross-the ... *this_ACC inscription.ACC read many.NOM* of Gyðingum Jews.DAT

c. And Pylate wrote his tytle and put it on the crosse. ... *This tytle* reed many of the Iewes. 
(John 19:19–20)
Demonstratives in Icelandic and English

- Quantitative evidence from the entire IcePaHC and PPCEME corpora indicates that this is not a translation effect.
  - In Icelandic, the rate at which demonstratives front is dramatically higher than the fronting rate for either pronouns or full DPs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full DPs</th>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Demonstr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fronted</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fronted</td>
<td>13312</td>
<td>3961</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Fronted</td>
<td>6.99%</td>
<td>11.82%</td>
<td>38.53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- In Early Modern English, demonstratives front more often than not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full DPs</th>
<th>Pronouns</th>
<th>Demonstr.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fronted</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fronted</td>
<td>12491</td>
<td>3536</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Fronted</td>
<td>3.62%</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
<td>62.50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Bouma (2008) independently made the same observation for Dutch, and proposes that demonstratives are key to understanding the pragmatic motivations for fronting in Dutch.
Analyzing demonstratives

Thus far, it has been assumed that non-contrastive demonstratives should be analyzed as fronting via FM.

- This involves, in part, the assumption that non-contrastive demonstrative pronouns pragmatically have more in common with non-contrastive, unaccented personal pronouns than with contrastively accented pronouns.
- In fact, this is not the case.

Demonstrative should be treated as **pragmatically contrastive elements**, and thus viable candidates for FM.

- The pragmatic analysis of these elements relies heavily on a notion of semantic alternatives.
Demonstrative pronouns and reference resolution

- Bosch, Rozario, and Zhao (2003): in discourse fragments like (26), the choice of a personal or demonstrative pronoun in the second sentence will affect the meaning.

\[(26) \text{Paul}\_i \text{ wollte mit Peter}\_k \text{ laufen gehen. Aber er}\_i \text{ / Paul.NOM wanted with Peter.DAT run go but he.NOM / der}_k \text{ war erkältet. he.DEM.NOM was caught-cold}
\]

‘Paul wanted to go running with Peter. But he had a cold.’

- Bosch, Katz, and Umbach (2007): speakers demonstrate a bias when evaluating pronouns realized in postverbal (non-fronted) position.
  - These are more natural when realized as personal pronouns.
  - **Demonstrative pronouns are most natural fronted.**

- **Information structure**, not just grammatical role, affects the choice.
Demonstrative pronouns and reference resolution

- Bosch and Umbach (2007): if the context is manipulated, the demonstrative can happily pick up a subject antecedent.

\[ \text{Woher Karl} _i \text{ das weiß? Peter} _k \text{ hat es ihm} _i \text{ gesagt. [Der} _k \text{ / Er} _{j,k} \text{] war gerade hier.} \]

‘How does Karl know? Peter told him. He was just here.’

- If the right context is supplied, the demonstrative may be clearly dispreferred to refer to a non-subject antecedent.

\[ \text{Woher Maria} _i \text{ das weiß? Peter hat es ihr} _i \text{ gesagt. [?Die} _i \text{ / Sie} _i \text{] war gerade hier.} \]

‘How does Maria know? Peter told her. She was just here.’

Demonstratives and contrastivity

- But in fact, **contrastive** topics may be referred to by the demonstrative:

(29)  
  a. ‘Most people brought Harry presents. For example, Anne gave him a picture.’
  
  b. Und was ist mit Maria? Was hat **sie** Harry gegeben?  
     ‘And what about Maria? What did **she** give Harry?’
  
  i. **# Dem** hat **sie** ein Hemd gegeben  
     him.DEM.DAT has she.NOM a.ACC shirt.ACC given  
     ‘She gave **him** a shirt.’

  ii. **Die** hat ihm ein Hemd gegeben  
     she.DEM.NOM has him.DAT a.ACC shirt.ACC given  
     ‘**She** gave him a shirt.’
Büring’s model of the discourse

- A better analysis may be formulated in the discourse structure proposed in Büring (2003), originally intended to account for the behavior of contrastive topics (Schwarz, forthcoming).

- A *discourse tree* is composed of questions, sub-questions, and answers.

```
discourse
  question
    subq
      answer
    subq
      answer
    subq
      subsubq
        answer
      subsubq
        answer
    subq
      answer
  ...```

The syntax and pragmatics of fronting in Germanic

The special status of demonstratives

Analyzing demonstratives
A summary of contrastive topics

- Büring proposes that contrastive topics signal the \textit{strategy} of sub-questions being used to answer a broader QUD.

(30) Q: What did the pop stars wear?

A: The \textsc{female}_{CT} pop stars wore \textsc{caftans}_F.

- The contrastive topic marks how the QUD is being divided into sub-questions, and that some sub-question remains to be answered.

What did the pop stars wear?

What did the female pop stars wear?  What did the male pop stars wear?

The \textsc{female}_{CT} pop stars wore \textsc{caftans}_F.

...
This discourse structure may also be used to analyze the referential properties of demonstratives.

The referent of a demonstrative may not appear in all possible answers of a strategy.

(31) **Den Patienten**$_i$ untersucht der **Chefarzt**$_k$.

Der$_k$ ist nämlich Herzspezialist

‘The head doctor examined the patient. He is a heart specialist.’

*Der Chefarzt* (‘the head doctor’) is taken to be in focus, and therefore will not be in every possible answer to the strategy.

*Den Patienten* (‘the patient’) is included in every possible answer.
Demonstratives and alternatives

- Note that this analysis relies heavily on a notion of *alternatives* – or alternative answers to a QUD.

- Intuitively: demonstratives represent unexpected information, and *unexpected answers presuppose expected answers*, therefore automatically requiring a set of alternatives.
  - The referential properties in demonstratives draw on notions quite similar to those independently used to account for contrastive topics.
  - The analysis in Büring’s framework makes this particularly clear.

- Viewed from the perspective of their discourse function, *demonstratives are inherently contrastive.*
In the preceding slides, I have argued that FM and TAB have distinct motivations.

- FM is a purely formal syntactic movement to satisfy the V2 constraint.
- TAB is an information structurally motivated movement, which at its core marks pragmatically contrastive elements.

The superficial similarity between these constructions in V2 languages arises because TAB may satisfy the V2 constraint.

- We may plausibly model TAB as a movement driven by some special feature, such as the [F]-feature of Katz and Selkirk (2011); Kratzer and Selkirk (2009); Selkirk (2008).
- FM, then, is a last-resort method to fill Spec,CP when nothing else does.
Conclusion: Solving the puzzle of English fronting

- Returning to Speyer (2010), we see that the potential challenge to his analysis has been dismissed.
- Recall that Stevens (2010); Stevens and Light (2012) found a stable rate of demonstrative fronting across the history of English.
  - This was a challenge to Speyer’s analysis under the assumption that non-contrastive demonstratives are unaccented and pragmatically parallel to personal pronouns.
- We now find that these observations are expected, given that demonstratives are contrastive and front via TAB.
Conclusion: Consequences for a theory of information structure

- Fronting in Germanic presents a serious challenge to a strict cartographic approach to information structure (cf. Cinque, 1999; Cinque and Rizzi, 2010; Rizzi, 1997).
  - Under this approach, fronting in Germanic would ideally be reducible to movement driven by a single information structural feature.

- Instead, fronting is a phenomenon in which there is no one-to-one correspondence between a syntactic position and information structural function (see also Féry, 2007).
  - We seem to find two types of movement, one purely formal and one information structurally motivated, targeting the same position.

- This contributes to a rising field of research arguing for alternative approaches (cf. Büring, forthcoming, for one such account).
I would like to thank Anthony Kroch, Robin Clark, Florian Schwarz, Joel Wallenberg, and all my fellow Penn Linguistics students for their help and support in preparing this research. Thanks also to Anton Karl Ingason, Einar Freyr Sigurðsson and Beatrice Santorini for help with judgments for Icelandic and German.
Object Shift in Icelandic does not feed fronting.

As first observed in Holmberg (1986), Object Shift is bounded by the position of the verb in Icelandic.

- If the main verb moves to T (or C), then the object may undergo Object Shift out of the VP, and past a sentence adverbial.
- If a verb remains *in situ*, the object cannot shift past it.

(32)  
(a) Jón las aldrei pessa bók
John read never this book
‘John never read this book’

(b) Jón las pessa bók aldrei
John read this book never

(c) Jón hefur aldrei lesið pessa bók
John has never read this book
‘John has never read this book’

(d) *Jón hefur pessa bók aldrei lesið
John has this book never read
If Object Shift contributes to fronting possibilities, the presence of a non-finite verb should eliminate object fronting that is due to Formal Movement, because the object cannot escape the VP.

- The frequency of object fronting would be lower in clauses with a non-finite verb.
- However, this is not the case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topicalized</th>
<th>No non-fin. V</th>
<th>With non-fin. V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topicalized</td>
<td>1118</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-topicalized</td>
<td>14294</td>
<td>2970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Topicalized</td>
<td>7.25%</td>
<td>12.21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This demonstrates that the ability to Object Shift out of the VP does not contribute to an object’s ability to front.
Katz and Selkirk (2011); Kratzer and Selkirk (2009); Selkirk (2008) propose a three-way distinction in the syntax.

1. [F]-marking: called *contrastive focus*, but is defined primarily as constituents which introduce alternatives into the discourse.
2. [G]-marking: represents discourse-givenness.
3. Default (neither [F]- nor [G]-marked): represents discourse-newness, which the authors conflate with non-contrastive focus.

Because [F]-marking is defined simply by the notion of semantic alternatives, we may adopt this theory to analyze TAB.

- [F]-marking must be expanded to include demonstratives.
- What I have been calling True A-Bar Movement, then, is analyzed as movement of [F]-marked constituents to Spec,CP.

Unlike FM, TAB is information structurally motivated.
Every XP in the clause must be valued for the [F]-feature, either [+F] or [-F].

- C must have its [F] feature valued, and probes for the highest available XP with either a [+F] or [-F] feature.
- C needs this feature to be valued via Spec-head agreement, and so the target is pulled into Spec,CP.

In V2 languages, the EPP feature on C is merely checked by having some XP in its specifier, and this is accomplished when C values its [F] feature.

- In clauses where TAB occurs, C is valued for [+F].
- In clauses with FM, C is valued for [-F].
Optional TAB and the syntax-prosody interface

- What determines whether C probes for [+F] or [-F] is the key to the optionality of TAB.
- I speculate that the answer lies at the syntax-prosody interface.
  - Contrastive elements have frequently been identified as bearing a distinctive prosodic contour Büring (cf. 1997); Katz and Selkirk (2011).
- Büring (forthcoming): possible syntactic structures are filtered by **prosodic mapping constraints**.
  - I propose a mapping constraint called **MARKED PROMINENCE**: An [F]-marked constituent must form its own intonational phrase.
  - Movement to the clause edge allows an XP to form an independent IP.
  - TAB may be used to achieve this prosodic goal.
Remaining questions

- Speyer proposed that the sharp drop in personal pronoun fronting at the end of the OE period must be due to the loss of FM.
  - However, **OE was not a V2 language** like German (cf. Kemenade, 1987; Pintzuk, 1991).
  - It is not possible for OE to have Formal Movement.

- Further investigation must determine what caused the availability, and subsequent loss, of unaccented pronoun fronting in historical English.
  - Old English may help us explore the relationship between Formal Movement and other types of leftward movement of weak elements.

- What remains true is that Modern English has only TAB, and that this has been a constant since the beginning of the Middle English period.
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