Linguistic prominence as a continuum: Prominence typology revisited on grounds of feature inheritance

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Abstract

Taking as a starting point the discrepancy in the classification of Mandarin Chinese in different prominence typologies, the present paper deals with the nature of linguistic prominence. Assuming a correlation between feature inheritance and prominence in grammatical or discursive relations, it is noted that Spanish, a language with discourse-prominent features, may not always appeal to discourse-feature inheritance, which suggests that linguistic prominence, instead of being discrete, may be characterized by a continuous nature. This leads the present paper to propose the hypothesis of the Prominence Continuum, and to argue that Mandarin Chinese has an intermediate level of discourse prominence, which may provide a natural and straightforward explanation for the aforementioned discrepancy in the classification of Mandarin Chinese. To confirm the validity of this hypothesis, this paper analyses the positions of different types of topics in Mandarin Chinese, and it is shown that while some of them occupy [Spec,CP], the others undergo A-movement to [Spec,TP]; this implies the coexistence of inheritance from C to T and retainment in C of the discourse features in this language, as expected for a language claimed to have an intermediate level of discourse prominence.

Key words

prominence, language typology, feature inheritance, topics, Mandarin Chinese

1. Introduction

The study of language typology has always been focused on the structural properties of different languages. According to their basic word orders, languages can be classified into S-V-O, S-O-V, V-S-O, among other types. But word order is not the only criterion. Since the work of C. N. Li and Thompson (1976), a new language typology has been developed, which focuses on the internal organization of the sentence manifested by basic sentence relations such as subject-predicate and topic-comment. Languages that show the same preference for one relation over another may be argued to have the same prominence pattern, hence the same language type.

Nevertheless, since prominence is often used as an intuitive concept, its determination needs to rely on observable linguistic phenomena, such as sentence patterns, morphological markings, movement and dislocation, etc. So, in distinct typology models, where different phenomena are analysed, the characterization for prominence may turn out to vary. This being said, some primary ideas that lie behind every prominence typology are supposed to be commonly understood:
a) Concepts such as subject, predicate, topic, comment, etc.
b) Relations such as subject-predicate and topic-comment
c) Prominence as an inherent property of language

Based on these shared ideas, and in view of a certain divergence between different prominence typologies, the present article is mainly concerned with the nature of prominence. I argue that prominence should be reconsidered as a continuum in which elements of it differ from each other only by minute degrees; as a consequence, a language may fall under different prominence types in different typology models.

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The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In the section to come, two prominence typologies are discussed; one is proposed by C. N. Li and Thompson (1976), and the other is based on the theory of feature inheritance (Miyagawa, 2005; 2017; 2022; Jiménez-Fernández, 2010; 2020; Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa, 2014, among others). Both centre around the same syntactic and discourse relations, but they are grounded on different theoretical considerations and distinct classifying criteria. In Section 3, it is shown that the aforementioned typology systems come to distinct conclusions on the discourse prominence of Mandarin Chinese. With this as the starting point, the notion of prominence is revised, and based on some data from Spanish, the present article proposes that linguistic prominence should be considered to be a continuum, which is called the hypothesis of the Prominence Continuum. In order to validate this idea, several types of topic constructions are analysed in Mandarin Chinese in Section 4, and it is found that in some of them the topic is base-generated at [Spec,CP], and in the others the topic is derived by A-movement. Adopting the theory of feature inheritance and assuming a correlation between prominence and feature inheritance, I have argued in Section 5 that the mixed nature of topicalization suggests that Mandarin Chinese has an intermediate level of discourse prominence, which is in conformity with the hypothesis proposed in the present article; in the meantime, this analysis has been proven to have the explanatory power to account for data in other languages such as German. Finally, Section 6 concludes the whole paper.

2. Prominence typologies
2.1 Subject- and topic-prominent languages
During a prolonged period of time, the mainstream generativist research presupposed that all languages share the basic phrase structure S → NP VP, which is easily identified in English. However, C. N. Li and Thompson (1976) raise questions against the validity of this hypothesis as they observe that in some other languages, the position that in an English sentence the subject usually occupies may be frequently filled by a constituent with other grammatical functions. For example:

(1) a. Fido is chewing a bone.
     b. The dog is a domestic animal. (É. Kiss, 1995, p. 7)

(2) a. *A José lo   eligieron   presidente.*
        to José 3SG.M.ACC elect-PST.3PL president
        'José, they elected him president.'

     b. *Ayer   compró   María el   coche.*
        yesterday buy-PST.3SG María the car
        'Yesterday María bought the car.' (adapted from Zagona, 2002, pp. 212, 215)

(3) a. *Nei-chang   huo xingkui   xiaofang-dui   lai-de-kuai.*
        that-CLF   fire fortunately fire-brigade   come-SP-fast
        (lit.) 'That fire, fortunately the fire brigade came quickly.'

     b. *Nei-xie shumu   shu-shen   da.*
        those   tree   tree-trunk big
        (lit.) 'Those trees, the trunks are big.' (C. N. Li and Thompson, 1976, p. 462)

The two sentences in (1) show the canonical S-V-O word order in English, with the subject heading both. But when it comes to some other languages, the sentence-initial position does not seem to be overwhelmingly more inclined to be occupied by the subject than by the other constituents of the sentence. For example, in Spanish, (2-a) shows that the object can appear at the beginning of the sentence, and in (2-b) the same structural position is filled by an adverb. In Mandarin Chinese, the leftmost position of the sentence may even be occupied by syntactically independent elements, as is demonstrated in (3). That being said, the sentence-initial elements in (2) and (3) are not completely unrelatable. According to Zagona (2002, pp. 212, 215), both the object in (2-a) and the adverb in (2-b) serve as the topic of the sentence; likewise, C. N. Li and Thompson (1976) affirm that the two sentences in (3) are headed by the topic.

Taking into consideration the cross-linguistic data, C. N. Li and Thompson (1976) affirm that the basic construction in a specific language does not necessarily present the subject-predicate relation; on the contrary, there are languages where the topic-comment pattern prevails. According to the authors, the choice of a certain language between the two sentence construction strategies actually suggests its prominence in the notion of subject or topic. Therefore, they propose that languages should be classified into four types: subject-prominent languages, topic-prominent languages, languages that are both subject- and topic-prominent, and languages that are neither subject- nor topic-prominent. Accordingly, subject-prominent languages would favour the subject-predicate structure as its basic sentence pattern, which has been shown by the earlier examples in English. Topic-prominent languages, on the other hand, may tend to organize their sentences in accordance with the topic-comment relation, whose results are homologous with the examples (2) and (3). In languages that are both subject- and topic-prominent, the two types of sentence pattern are supposed to be equally common, and according to the authors, Japanese exhibits this characteristic:

(4) a. *Hi ga nobor-u.*
    sun NOM rise-PRS

   b. *Hi wa nobor-u.*
    sun TOP rise-PRS
    'The sun rises.' (Shibatani, 1990, p. 262)

Finally, in languages that are neither subject- nor topic-prominent, subjects and topics are claimed to be indistinguishable. What is understood by *indistinguishable* is that the syntactic distribution and the morphological marking are identical in both cases. One of the languages that corresponds with such properties is Tagalog:

(5) a. *Nagbigay ng=libro sa=babae ang=lalaki.*
    gave GEN=book DAT=woman NOM=man

   b. *Nagbigay ng=libro ang=lalaki sa=babae.*
    gave GEN=book NOM=man DAT=woman

   c. *Nagbigay sa=babae ng=libro ang=lalaki.*
    gave DAT=woman GEN=book NOM=man

   d. *Nagbigay sa=babae ang=lalaki sa=babae.*
    gave DAT=woman NOM=man DAT=woman

   e. *Nagbigay ang=lalaki sa=babae ng=libro.*
    gave NOM=man DAT=woman GEN=book

   f. *Nagbigay ang=lalaki ng=libro sa=babae.*
    gave NOM=man GEN=book DAT=woman
    'The man gave the woman a book.' (adapted from Schachter and Otanes, 1972, p. 83)

As can be noted from the data in (5), with the verb in initial position, the order of the remaining components of the sentence is highly flexible; in other words, the subject in Tagalog does not have a unique structural position. At the same time, Schachter (1976) suggests that in Tagalog, as well as in other Philippine languages, the topic is frequently associated with some syntactic properties typical of the subject, such as permitting relativization and floating quantifiers. In such manner, the subject and the topic are often indistinguishable in this language, and neither of them can be argued to be more prominent than the other in terms of determining the basic sentence pattern.

At a practical level, C. N. Li and Thompson (1976, pp. 466–471) propose a series of characteristics that may help to identify a certain language to be topic-prominent, which include the surface coding and the co-referentiality of the topic, the prevalence of "double subject" constructions and the rareness of expletive and passive constructions. As a consequence, in conformity with the observation made by the two authors, while they say nothing about Spanish, English is considered to be a typical subject-prominent language, and Mandarin Chinese is classified among the topic-prominent ones.

Although such a classification seems to be consistent with the data in (1) and (3), C. N. Li and Thompson's (1976) typology still suffers from some limitations. To start with, they are only concerned with limited types of topic constructions in every language; for example, they only discuss the so-called Dangling Topics in Mandarin Chinese,[1] as shown in (3), leaving aside other possibilities of topic constructions in this language. Another weakness of this theory is that, for the topic-comment relation to be as *basic* as the subject-predicate one, C. N. Li and Thompson (1976) argue that topic constructions such as those in (3) cannot be derived, that is, this kind of topics are presumably base-generated; however, there has been a long-lasting lack of general consensus on the existence of movement in topic constructions in Mandarin Chinese (cf. C.-T. J. Huang, 1982; Shi, 1989; 1992; 2000; Ning, 1993; C.-T. J. Huang, Li, and Li, 2009, among others).

2.2 Agreement- and discourse-prominent languages

Chomsky (2008) proposes the theory of feature inheritance (FI), which states that T is not the inherent host for the (uninterpretable) φ-features as traditionally assumed for languages such as English, but instead, they are originated at phase heads such as C and later inherited by T. Empirical evidence in favour of this may be found in the raising constructions in English:

(6) a. $[_{CP} [_{TP}$ Manuel $[_{T}$ studies $]$ Chinese $]$ $]$.
     b. $[_{CP} [_{TP}$ Manuel is believed $[_{TP}$ ~~Manuel~~ $[_{T}$ to $]$ have $[_{vP}$ ~~Manuel~~ studied Chinese $]$ $]$ $]$ $]$.

The sentence (6-a) represents a situation where φ-feature agreement takes place on T in English: assuming there to exist an affix on T that combines with V in the moment of Spell-Out, since the verb *studies* is in its third-person and singular form, which shows person and number agreement with the subject *Manuel*, it is suggested that the unvalued and uninterpretable φ-features may have got valued on T. However, by shifting the attention to sentences such as (6-b), which is a typical raising (or long-distance passive) construction in English, the subject-verb agreement does not seem to hold. In this latter sentence, for the subject to reach the final position as shown in the example, this DP must undergo the successive-cyclic movement from within the lower *v*P to the edge of the embedded TP, and then to the main clause. This being the case, although the subject agrees with the matrix auxiliary, no apparent agreement seems to take place between the subject and the lower T. In addition, if there were agreement between them, the DP would be assigned the nominative Case and rendered invisible, and hence inactive for further agreement, which would be contradictory to the fact that the matrix auxiliary agrees with the subject in person and number.

The absence of agreement in (6-b) suggests a lack of uninterpretable φ-features on the lower T, and this, according to Chomsky (1993), could be due to the reduction of CP: in conformity with the Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC, Chomsky, 2001), with C being a phase head, if a CP layer existed in the embedded clause, all the content of the lower TP would be inaccessible to operations above this phase once C is assembled, hence no raising of the subject would be possible. Consequently, in (6-b) the lower T is *defective* because it is not selected by C. If it is true that T depends on C to be able to hold a certain set of features, it would naturally follow that the latter head is the real inherent host of these features, and their presence on T is derivative, through a mechanism of inheritance. Independent evidence may be found in a number of West Germanic languages, where C is reported to inflect for

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[1] Dangling Topics, sometimes referred to as Chinese-style Topics (cf. Chafe, 1976), are generally considered to be structurally independent of the comment clause, but semantically related to it by an aboutness condition (cf. Chao, 1968; Chafe, 1976; C. N. Li and Thompson, 1981, among others). This type of topic is discussed in detail in Section 4.3.

the φ-features of the embedded subject (cf. Haegeman, 1992; Hoekstra and Smits, 1999), for example in West Flemish:

(7) a. *K peinzen da / *dan dienen student nen buot gekocht eet.*
I think that-3SG that-3PL that student a boat bought has
'I think that that student has bought a boat.'

b. *K peinzen dan / *da die studenten nen buot gekocht een.*
I think that-3PL that-3SG those students a boat bought have
'I think that those students have bought a boat.' (Haegeman, 1992)

On the other hand, it seems that not only the φ-features but also the discourse-related ones may undergo a process of FI. Consider the following examples in Spanish:

(8) a. *Manuel ha estado en China.*
Manuel have-PRS.3SG been in China
'Manuel has been to China.'

b. *En China ha estado Manuel.*
in China have-PRS.3SG been Manuel
(lit.) 'To China has been Manuel.'

(9) a. *Manuel parece haber estado en China.*
Manuel seem-PRS.3SG have been in China
'Manuel seems to have been to China.'
b. **Manuel parece en China haber estado.*
Manuel seem-PRS.3SG in China have been

As demonstrated by (8), topicalization is commonly present in Spanish, and in line with Zagona (2002) and Gutiérrez Bravo (2007), the topicalized element presumably occupies the position [Spec,TP]. But in (9-b), the locative phrase cannot be topicalized within the embedded clause, which suggests that the lower T may not have the relevant discourse features (from now on referred to as δ-features in the present article). Also being a raising construction, the sentence (9-a) may be analysed on a par with (6-b) with a structure as sketched below:

(10) [$_{CP}$ [$_{TP}$ Manuel parece [$_{TP}$ ~~Manuel~~ haber [$_{vP}$ ~~Manuel~~ estado en China]]]].   (9-a)

Just as with the CP-reduction in (6-b), it might be argued that the embedded clause in (9-a)/(10) does not have a CP layer either; then, it would follow that in raising constructions such as (9), the lower T does not have the unvalued δ-features because they start at C, as well. Accordingly, in simple clauses such as (8-b), where T may inherit δ-features from C, topicalization in [Spec,TP] is possible.

The previous examples indicate that FI might be applied to both the φ- and the δ-features, and this would imply that such a mechanism is nothing but the reflection of a certain syntactic relation between phase and non-phase heads.

Nevertheless, cross-linguistic data suggests that languages may vary in terms of which type(s) of features are inherited. It has already been shown that in English, φ-features may undergo the C-T inheritance process, but when it comes to δ-features, it seems that they are retained by C in this language, since topicalization in English has been analysed as an instance of A′-movement in the literature (cf. Chomsky and Lasnik, 1977), which means that a sentence-initial topicalized element in English is probably situated in the CP area.

By contrast, some so-called agreementless languages such as Japanese seem to pass δ-features from C down to T. Consider the following examples:

(11) a. *Taroo-ga hon-o katta.*
   Taro-NOM book-ACC bought
   'Taro bought a book.'

   b. *Hon-o Taroo-ga katta.*
   book-ACC Taro-NOM bought
   (lit.) 'A book, Taro bought.' (Ishihara, 2001)

In accordance with the proposal by Miyagawa (2001), which follows a suggestion made in a different context by Kuroda (1988), the object DP *hon* 'book' is presumably raised to [Spec, TP], and as suggested by Jiménez-Fernández (2020), scrambling of the object may produce certain effects in the discursive interpretation of the sentence: the subject DP *Taroo* in (11-a) has a topic reading, but the same element in (11-b) is interpreted as an information focus, with the object DP being the topic of the sentence. So it seems that, being the subject or the object the element that occupies [Spec, TP] in Japanese, it must carry an interpretable [+Topic]-feature, which implies that T holds some unvalued δ-features inherited from C.

On the other hand, Miyagawa (2010) argues that person agreement also exists in Japanese, but in the CP area. His arguments are based on Ueda's (2006) observation that the person of the subject in Japanese is restricted by modals such as *-masyoo, oku, -na, -mai* and *-ta* in the sentence,[2] which presumably exist in the domain of C. Miyagawa (2010) assumes that the subject agrees with the modal in person at C — in other words, φ-feature agreement occurs at C in Japanese.

In this way, it seems plausible to classify languages according to the type(s) of features which undergo inheritance, and to a certain degree, it could be argued that inheritance implies some sort of prominence: the inherited features turn T into an active probe and may motivate the movement of relevant constituents to its specifier position; correspondingly, languages which pass φ-features from C to T often structure their sentences around the subject-predicate relation, hence displaying prominence in grammatical agreement, and languages which appeal to δ-feature inheritance can be characterized by topic-comment/focus-presupposition constructions, showing discourse prominence.

Nevertheless, there are languages that do not seem to correspond to either of the two types mentioned above. For example, it has already been discussed that in Spanish δ-features can be inherited by T from

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[2] The relevant examples can be found in Ueda (2006, pp. 168–169, 174), which are based on Nitta (1991):

(i) a. Exhortative   [first person, *second person, *third person]
   *Watasi/*Anata/*Yamada-sensei-ga Taroo-ni tegami-o okuri-MASYOO.*
   I/*you/*Prof. Yamada-NOM   Taro-DAT   letter-ACC   send-let's
   'Let's (have) me/*you/*Prof. Yamada send Taro a letter.'

   b. oku   [first person, *second person, *third person]
   *Watasi/*Anata/*Yamada-sensei-wa Taroo-ni tegami-o okutte OKU.*
   I/*you/*Prof. Yamada-TOP   Taro-DAT   letter-ACC   send   AUX
   'I/*You/*Prof. Yamada will send a letter to Taro.'

   c. Prohibition   [*first person, second person, *third person]
   *Watasi/Anata/*Yamada-sensei-wa Taroo-ni tegami-o okuru-NA.*
   *I/you/*Prof. Yamada-TOP   Taro-DAT   letter-ACC   send-don't
   'Don't *I/you/*Prof. Yamada send Taro a letter.'

   d. Negative supposition   [first person, *second person, third person]
   *Boku/*Kimi/Kare-wa iku-MAI.*
   I/*you/he-TOP   go-probably.not
   'I/*You/He probably won't go.'

   e. Assertion   [first person, *second person, third person]
   *Watasi/*Anata/Yamada-sensei-wa Taroo-ni tegami-o okut-TA*
   I/*you/Prof. Yamada- TOP   Taro-DAT   letter-ACC   send-PST.ASSERT
   'Asserted: I/*You/Prof. Yamada sent a letter to Taro.'

C, resulting in structures such as (8-b), but at the same time, it is obvious that φ-feature agreement can occur at T, suggesting C-T inheritance of this type of features:

(12) a. *Manuel ha   estado en China.*
Manuel have-PRS.3SG been   in China
'Manuel has been to China.'

b. [CP [TP Manuel [T' ha estado en China]]].

Thus, Spanish is considered to be among those languages that are able to pass both φ- and δ-features from C to T and hence, attach equal importance to grammatical agreement and to discourse. In addition, Dinka is reported to retain both types of features in C, instantiating a fourth type of languages that do not give prominence to neither of the two relations (cf. Miyagawa, 2017).[3] In this way, a four-fold typology of languages, somewhat similar to the one in C. N. Li and Thompson (1976), can be established based on the mechanism of feature inheritance (see Jiménez-Fernández, 2010; 2020; Jiménez-Fernández and İşsever, 2012; Jiménez-Fernández and Spyropoulos, 2013; Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa, 2014; Jiménez-Fernández and Rozwadowska, 2017; Miyagawa, 2010; 2017; 2022), as summarised in Table 1:

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[3] Dinka is a Nilo-Saharan language spoken in South Sudan with V2 word order (Anderson, 1991; van Urk, 2015), and by analogy with other V2 languages such as Dutch and German, van Urk (2015) argues that the highest verbal element (either the main verb or an auxiliary) undergoes head movement to C in Dinka, and requires an XP in its specifier. As shown in (i), this XP agrees with C in person and number:

(i) a. *Y̱ĩin   ø-cέ   mìir   ṯĩiŋ.*
you   **2**-PRF.SV   giraffe see.NF
'You have seen a giraffe.'

b. *Mòc   à-cέ   y̱ĩin   ṯĩiŋ.*
man   **3SG**-PRF.SV you   see.NF
'The man has seen you.'

c. *Rọ̀ọọr   áa-cέ   y̱ĩin   ṯĩiŋ.*
men   **3PL**-PRF.SV you   see.NF
'The men have seen you.' (van Urk, 2015, p. 102)

At the same time, not only the subject, but also the object can appear in clause-initial position, and the fronted object may be interpreted as a topic or the focus of the sentence, as illustrated respectively in (ii) and (iii):

(ii) A: *Yè   ŋà   cέ   **cu̱ĩin** câam?*
be   who PRF.SV **food** eat.NF
'Who has eaten the food?'
B: ***Cu̱ĩin** à-cḭi   Bôl   câam.*
food 3SG-PRF.OV Bol.GEN eat.NF
'The food, Bol has eaten.' (van Urk, 2015, p. 96)

(iii) A: *Yè   **ŋọ́**   cḭi   Bôl   câam?*
be   **what** PRF.OV Bol.GEN eat.NF
'What has Bol eaten?'
B: ***Cu̱ĩin** à-cḭi   Bôl   câam.*
food 3SG-PRF.OV Bol.GEN eat.NF
'It is the food that Bol has eaten.' (van Urk, 2015, p. 96)

Therefore, Miyagawa (2017) argues that both δ- and φ-feature agreement occur at C, making Dinka a language that is neither an agreement- nor a discourse-prominent language (Category IV in his system).

Table 1. Language typology from the perspective of feature inheritance (adapted from Jiménez-Fernández, 2020, p. 97, based on the classification in Miyagawa, 2017, p. 4)

Type of languages	Feature inheritance	Typical languages
Agreement-prominent	$C_{\varphi,\delta} \rightarrow T_{\varphi}$	English
Discourse-prominent	$C_{\varphi,\delta} \rightarrow T_{\delta}$	Japanese, Korean
Both	$C_{\varphi,\delta} \rightarrow T_{\varphi,\delta}$	Spanish, Greek, Turkish, Polish, Brazilian Portuguese
Neither	$C_{\varphi,\delta} \quad T$	Dinka

However, being classified as a certain type does not mean that this language lacks the other kind of features; for example, English also has topicalization at its disposal, though it occurs in the CP area. Rather, this typology may serve to capture the most salient properties of a given language.

3. Discourse-prominence continuum
3.1 On the discourse prominence of Mandarin Chinese
The foregoing two language typologies may be built upon different theoretical considerations and properties of languages, but eventually they coincide in the notion of prominence, basically concerning two types of relations: grammatical relations such as subject-predicate, and discourse relations such as topic-comment (and focus-presupposition, as well). However, to our surprise, Mandarin Chinese is argued to be characterized by prominence in discourse in one typology, but to lack the same nature in another.

In C. N. Li and Thompson's (1976) system, Mandarin Chinese is treated as one of the most typical topic-prominent languages, and in more general terms, is characterized by discourse prominence. As a matter of fact, many of the characteristics of this type of languages are drawn from the Chinese data. As a consequence, it is expected that Mandarin Chinese corresponds with the criteria mentioned in Section 2.1 for topic-prominent languages:

(13) a. *Nei-ke   shu   yezi   da.*
    that-CLF   tree   leaf   big
    (lit.) 'That tree, the leaves are big.'

  b. *Zher   hen   re.*
    Here   very   hot
    'It is hot in here.'

  c. *Nei-ke   shu   yezi   da, suoyi   wo   bu   xihuan _____.*
    that-CLF   tree   leaf   big   so   I   not   like
    (lit.) 'That tree, the leaves are big, so I don't like it/*them.' (C. N. Li and Thompson, 1976, pp. 468, 469)

C. N. Li and Thompson (1976) argue that the Mandarin Chinese topic always appears in the sentence-initial position,[4] as shown in (13-a), which is considered to be a surface coding for the topic in this language. In addition, this sentence is also an example of the so-called "double subject" constructions, in which the topic (the ostensible subject, as it occupies a position usually reserved for the subject in languages such as English) and the (real) subject co-occur to the left of the sentence. In (13-b), it is demonstrated that a Chinese sentence does not necessarily require a subject, hence no expletive is used, which suggests that the notion of subject is less prominent in Mandarin Chinese. When it comes to (13-c), the empty category represented by the underline is claimed by the authors only to refer to the topic, but not the subject of the sentence, which indicates that the former controls the co-referential

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[4] However, this affirmation may be challenged by the fact that in Mandarin Chinese a pre-verbal and post-subject object can have a topic reading. This kind of sentence-internal object preposing is not discussed in the present article.

constituent in Mandarin Chinese, another characteristic for languages with prominence in topic (or discourse) according to C. N. Li and Thompson (1976).

Quite to the contrary, grounded on C.-T. J. Huang's (1984) observation of the subject-/object-gap asymmetry in Mandarin Chinese, Miyagawa (2010) argues for the non-topic-prominent properties of this language.

(14) a. *Zhangsan*$_i$ *shuo* [*e*$_{i/j}$ *bu* *renshi Lisi*].
Zhangsan say   not   know Lisi
'Zhangsan said that [he] did not know Lisi.'

    b. *Zhangsan*$_i$ *shuo* [*Lisi bu* *renshi e*$_{*i/j}$].
Zhangsan say Lisi not   know
'Zhangsan said that Lisi did not know [him].' (adapted from C.-T. J. Huang, 1984, p. 537)

As noted by C.-T. J. Huang (1984), while the empty category (EC) in the embedded subject position in (14-a) can refer either to the matrix subject *Zhangsan* or to someone else in the discourse outside the sentence, the EC in (14-b), which is in the embedded object position, can only refer to someone other than *Zhangsan*. He claims that this asymmetry can be explained by assuming that the embedded subject EC is a *pro*, and the object EC is instead a variable, which is A′-bound by a null topic operator situated in sentence-initial position. This, according to Miyagawa (2010), suggests that the topic feature remains in C in Mandarin Chinese.

Further evidence in favour of the existence of the topic feature in C in Mandarin Chinese is presented in Miyagawa (2017), which is based on the proposals by Liu (2014) and Yang (2014) concerning the subject *pro* in this language.

(15) a. *Zhangsan*$_i$ *shuo* [$_{CP}$ [$_{IP}$ *pro*$_{i/j}$ *du-guo* *yuyanxue*]].
Zhangsan say   study-EXP   linguistics
'Zhangsan$_i$ said he$_{i/j}$ studied linguistics before.' (Miyagawa, 2017, p. 72)

    b. *Zhangsan*$_i$ *shuo* [$_{CP}$ *yuyanxue*$_k$, [$_{IP}$ *pro*$_{i/*j}$ *du-guo* *t*$_k$].
Zhangsan say linguistics   study-EXP
'Zhangsan$_i$ said he$_{i/*j}$ studied linguistics before.' (Yang, 2014, as cited in Miyagawa, 2017, p. 72)

It has been noticed in (15) that the topicalization of the object *yuyanxue* 'linguistics' blocks the subject *pro* from being interpreted as someone other than the referent of the matrix subject. The explanation of this phenomenon explored in Miyagawa (2017) is very sophisticated, but the main idea is that Chinese *pro* is defective in its feature content and referential index (cf. Liu, 2014), and to get the proper reference, *pro* has two options: it may get the person feature from the local T, which is presumably anaphoric to the higher Ts (Progovac, 1992, 1993) and consequently agrees with the matrix subject in person, so that *pro* gets co-indexed with the matrix subject and occupies the lower [Spec,TP]; alternatively, the local T does not pass on its person feature to *pro*, in which case *pro* raises to [Spec,CP] to get the ability to refer to an entity outside of the sentence. Crucially, Miyagawa (2017) claims that Mandarin Chinese has a topic position in the C region, which explains why *pro* can only refer to the matrix subject in (15-b): the topicalized object raises to [Spec,CP] and blocks *pro* from moving to the same position.

In an FI-based system (see Table 1), if the topic feature exists in C in a certain language, it is supposed to lack discourse prominence. In consequence, it seems that C. N. Li and Thompson (1976) and Miyagawa (2010; 2017) have arrived at two incompatible conclusions regarding discourse prominence in Mandarin Chinese. Such a result might be surprising, given that despite their different standpoints, both typologies share the notion of prominence, whose essence is reflected through the basic sentence patterns in a certain language; in addition, both of them coincide in the dichotomy between the relation of grammatical agreement and that of discourse. I will argue in a later section of this paper that, in reality, both perspectives hold some validity, as prominence should be viewed as a continuum.

3.2 Hypothesis of Prominence Continuum

In order to justify the continuous nature of prominence, I take as an example Spanish, a typical *both*-type language according to Jiménez-Fernández (2010, and subsequent work), that is, it shows agreement- and discourse-prominent properties at the same time. In Section 2.2, I have already provided some clues about the discourse-prominence of this language by virtue of the δ-feature inheritance from C to T, and Jiménez-Fernández (2010) also proves this point through the reconstruction effects:

(16) a. *Su_i *enfermera* *llamó* *al* *paciente_i* *ayer.*
      his nurse call-PST.3SG to.the patient yesterday
      '*His_i nurse called the $patient_i$ yesterday.'

    b. *Al* *paciente_i* *su_i* *enfermera* *lo* *llamó* *ayer.*
      to.the patient his nurse 3SG.M.ACC call-PST.3SG yesterday
      'The $patient_i$ was called by his_i nurse yesterday.' (Jiménez-Fernández, 2010, p. 40)

In sentence (16-a), the possessive anaphor *su* 'his' precedes and c-commands the R-expression *el paciente* 'the patient', and the two are co-indexed; but according to the Binding Theory (Chomsky, 1981, p. 188), an anaphor must be bound (condition A) and an R-expression must be free (condition C), so both conditions are violated and the resulting sentence is ungrammatical. However, if the R-expression is topicalized and moved to the left of the possessive anaphor, as is shown by (16-b), the binding relation is rescued, which suggests that in (16-b) the fronted topic phrase must be interpreted in the targeted position after movement, and no reconstruction is allowed. As argued by Lebeaux (1988; 2009), Chomsky (1993; 1995), Fox (1999), and Takahashi and Hulsey (2009), reconstruction obligatorily happens in constructions created by A'-movement, but is optional when it comes to A-movement, according to which, the topic constituent in (16-b) is supposed to occupy an A-position, presumably [Spec,TP]. This evidences the existence of the δ-features on T, which are considered to be inherited from C in the system of FI.

Accordingly, it seems plausible to claim that Spanish is prominent in discourse (which does not affect the fact that it is also prominent in agreement). Nevertheless, taking δ-feature inheritance as a criterion, it may be surprising to find that only some of the δ-features may be inherited by T from C in this language, as pointed out by Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa (2014). More specifically, they propose that while the δ-features for Contrastive Topics (C-Topics) and Given Topics (G-Topics) are lowered from C to T, those for Aboutness-shift Topics (A-Topics) stay at C in Spanish.

G-Topics, or Familiar Topics in the typology proposed in Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007), are generally used for topic continuity in the sense of Givón (1983). The sentence (16-b) contains an instance of Spanish G-Topics, in which the fronted object is a familiar element to the participants of the conversation, either because it has been mentioned earlier in the context, or because it is understood as part of the background of the conversation. And it has already been demonstrated that this G-Topic occupies an A-position, so the δ-feature for G-Topics is supposed to be inherited by T from C in Spanish.

With respect to C-Topics, they usually appear as an oppositional set of alternatives, with each of them introducing an answer to an inferred subquestion that forms part of a larger question (cf. Büring, 1997; 1999; 2003). Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa (2014) uses data of root effects to illustrate that Spanish C-Topics also occur within the TP projection.

(17) a. *It is impossible that those books, John read, but not these.
    b. *Mary denied that those books, she will read, but not these. (Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa, 2014, p. 285)

(18) a. *Es* *probable* *que* *el* *CD-rom* *nunca* *lo* *haya*
      be-PRS.3SG probable that the CD-rom never 3SG.M.ACC have-PRS.SBJV.1SG
      visto *antes,* *pero* *el* *casete* *lo* *conozco.*
      seen before but the cassette 3SG.M.ACC know- PRS.1SG
      'It's probable that I have never seen the CD-rom before, but I know the cassette.'

b. *Las pruebas niegan que al hombre lo hayan*
the proofs deny-PRS.3SG that to.the man 3SG.M.ACC have-PRS.SBJV.3PL
matado y a la mujer la hayan violado.
killed and to the woman 3SG.F.ACC have-PRS.SBJV.3PL raped
'They deny that he has been killed and she has been raped.' (adapted from Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa, 2014, pp. 285–286)

The English sentences in (17) exhibit the typical root phenomena: English topicalization can only be applied to root environments or a set of root-like embedded environments[5] (cf. Emonds, 1970; 1976; 2004). But in Spanish, C-Topics are compatible with non-root contexts, as shown by (18). To explain this type of contrast, Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa (2014) base their analyses on the proposal formulated by den Besten (1983) and the approach developed in Haegeman (2006; 2010) and Haegeman and Ürögdi (2010); they assume there to exist an event operator in CP in non-root subordinate clauses, and this operator moves to [Spec,CP], which blocks movement of any other material that targets the same position. If such an analysis is on the right track, the ungrammaticality of (17) can be due to the fact that topicalized elements in English occupy [Spec,CP], hence competing with the event operator in non-root contexts. By contrast, Spanish C-Topics may target a lower position, that is, [Spec,TP], which explains why the sentences in (18) are acceptable, despite the fact that the same types of predicates are used in (17) and (18).

But when it comes to A-Topics, which are constituents "newly introduced, newly changed or newly returned to" (Givón, 1983, p. 8), Spanish is no different from English in that A-Topics exhibit, to some extent, root effects in both of them:

(19) ?*I regret that your book, you haven't finished yet.

(20) ?*Siento que tu libro no lo hayas terminado*
regret-PRS.1SG that your book not 3SG.M.ACC have-PRS.SBJV.3SG finished
todavía.
yet
'I regret that you haven't finished your book yet.' (adapted from Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa, 2014, p. 286)

If the analysis of competition between the event operator and the topic constituent is true, the marginality of the Spanish sentence (20) would be indicative that the dislocated object *tu libro* 'your book', an A-Topic, occupies [Spec,CP]. So, assuming FI, it seems that in Spanish δ-features undergo C-T inheritance for C- and G-Topics, but stay at C for A-Topics. The conclusion drawn by Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa (2014) is that, while the δ-features associated with C- and G-Topics may either be inherited by T from C or stay at C depending on different types of languages, the δ-features for A-Topics are retained by C universally. Acknowledging the advantages of Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa's (2014) analysis, what is relevant to us here is that Spanish, in spite of its discourse-prominent properties, does not always lower its δ-features from C to T.

A pivotal point suggested by this observation is that, being an indicative factor for the discourse/agreement prominence of a certain language, FI does not identify this language as a discrete unit, but rather, there may exist a continuum of discourse prominence (and another of agreement prominence), and every language could be placed on a certain point of the continuum; in other words, languages may differ from each other in the prominence of a certain type of features by minute degrees, and the notion of prominence is supposed to be, from this point of view, a coherent and continuous sequence of values. This is what I would like to propose in the present article, which could be referred to as the hypothesis of the Prominence Continuum (PC).

Another piece of indirect evidence in favour of the non-discrete nature of prominence may be found when we take a closer look at (19) and (20): although neither of them is marked as totally correct, the Spanish sentence is slightly more acceptable than its English counterpart. However subtle

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[5] Predicates such as *deny*, *be impossible* and *regret* do not constitute root-like embedded environments. See Hooper and Thompson (1973, pp. 473–474).

the difference may be, it implies that the δ-feature for A-Topics somehow shows more disposition to be inherited by T from C in Spanish than in English (although FI does not eventually happen in both cases). So, it can be noticed that, even though the δ-feature for A-Topics presumably stays at C cross-linguistically, languages may vary in the degree of *reluctance* of this δ-feature to undergo FI – the more discourse-prominent a language is, the less difficult it is to lower the δ-feature for A-Topics. So, this is actually a reflection of the continuous nature of prominence.

Returning to the different conclusions drawn in C. N. Li and Thompson (1976) and Miyagawa (2010; 2017) with respect to the prominence in discourse (topic) in Mandarin Chinese,[6] I believe that they can be easily reconciled by appealing to PC. Assuming the theory of FI and the correlation between prominence and FI are on the right track, in the section to come, I will revise several types of topics in Mandarin Chinese and demonstrate the validity of this proposal.

4. Topics in Mandarin Chinese: a case study
4.1 Hanging Topics

In Section 3.2, three types of topics are mentioned, namely G-, C-, and A-Topics; this typology is proposed in Bianchi and Frascarelli (2010) by taking into account the intonational properties and discourse functions of topics. Meanwhile, topics in Mandarin Chinese are often categorized exclusively based on their formal properties (e.g., Badan and Del Gobbo, 2011), as a result of which, the discussion that follows will adopt a typology of topics distinct from the one in Bianchi and Frascarelli (2010), mainly relying on syntactic criteria for classification.

Grounded on the distinction drawn in Benincà (2001) and Benincà and Poletto (2004) between Hanging Topic (HT) and Left Dislocation (LD) for Italian, Badan (2007) and Badan and Del Gobbo (2011) extend the same analysis to Mandarin Chinese and claim that these two types of topics may also be distinguished in this language. The current discussion will be centred around HTs in Mandarin Chinese, and LDs will be addressed in the next subsection.

Benincà and Poletto (2004) sums up a number of syntactic properties of HTs noted in Cinque (1983) and Benincà (1988) as follows:

(21) Diagnostics of HTs
    i. HTs can only be DPs.
    ii. Multiple HTs are not possible.
    iii. HTs always require a resumptive element expressing the type of argument, which only agrees with the HT in number and gender, not in Case.
    iv. The copy of the HT can be a tonic pronoun or an epithet. (adapted from Benincà and Poletto, 2004, pp. 64–65)

According to the diagnostics described in (21), HTs can also be found in Mandarin Chinese:

(22) a. *Zhangsan*ᵢ, *wo gei* [*na-ge shazi*]ᵢ *ji-le yi-feng xin!*
       Zhangsan I   to   that-CLF imbecile send-PFV one-CLF letter
       (lit.) 'Zhangsan, I sent a letter to that imbecile!'

    b. **Gei* *Zhangsan*ᵢ, *wo gei* [*na-ge shazi*]ᵢ *ji-le yi-feng xin!*
       To   Zhangsan I   to   that-CLF imbecile send-PFV one-CLF letter
       (lit.) 'To Zhangsan, I sent a letter to that imbecile!' (Badan, 2007, p. 32)

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[6] As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, the research orientation pursued in C. N. Li and Thompson (1976) may be radically different from that in Miyagawa (2010; 2017), and the language typology proposed in the first is not up to the time of the more recent theories of feature valuation. I concur with the reviewer on this point, but I would like to emphasize that this divergence does not diminish the significance of the comparison drawn between their respective classifications. The paper's fundamental premise, that prominence in agreement or discourse is intrinsic to a language, suggests that conclusions stemming from various perspectives on the same objective property should ideally align or be compatible, and this alignment is precisely what the present paper is intended to achieve.

(23) a. *Zhangsan$_i$, wo gei ta$_i$ qu mai dongxi.*
　　Zhangsan I to him go buy thing
　　(lit.) 'Zhangsan, I go to buy things for him.'

　 b. **Zhangsan, wo qu mai dongxi.*
　　Zhangsan I go buy thing
　　(lit.) 'Zhangsan, I go to buy things.' (Badan, 2007, p. 33)

(24) a. *Zhangsan$_i$, wo zhidao women keyi cong zhe-jia yinhang ti/wei ta*
　　Zhangsan I know we can from this-CLF bank for him
　　jie-dao henduo qian.
　　borrow-COMPL much money
　　(lit.) 'Zhangsan, I know we can borrow a lot of money from this bank for him.'

　 b. **[Zhe-jia yinhang]$_i$, Zhangsan$_i$, wo zhidao women keyi cong nali$_i$ ti/wei*
　　this-CLF bank Zhangsan I know we can from there for
　　ta jie-dao henduo qian.
　　him borrow-COMPL much money
　　(lit.) 'This bank, Zhangsan, I know we can borrow a lot of money from there for him.'
　　(adapted from Badan, 2007, p. 33)

The properties manifested by the sentence-initial DP in the above sentences correspond with all the diagnostics of HTs mentioned in (21): it can be realized as a DP but not a PP in (22); it must be related to a resumptive element, without which the construction is illicit as observed in (23-b); the resumptive element can either be a pronoun as shown in (23-a), or an epithet such as *na-ge shazi* 'that imbecile' in (22-a); and multiple topicalization is not allowed in (24). All the previous examples suggest the HT status of the DP *Zhangsan*.

As a consequence, it seems plausible to affirm the existence of HTs in Mandarin Chinese, and the next question is if such constructions involve movement. In line with the observations made in Shyu (1995), Badan (2007) proposes that Chinese HTs are actually base-generated, for which the evidence mainly comes from the obviation of Island effects.

(25) Complex NP Island
　　Zhangsan$_1$, wo renshi [[da ta$_1$]] de ren].
　　Zhangsan I know hit him REL person
　　(lit.) 'Zhangsan$_1$, I know the person who hit him$_1$.' (adapted from Shyu, 1995, p. 192)

(26) Adjunct Island
　　Lisi$_i$, Zhangsan [yinwei wo gei ta$_i$ mai dongxi] hen bu gaoxing.
　　Lisi Zhangsan because I to him buy things very not happy
　　'Because I go to buy things for Lisi, Zhangsan is not happy.' (Badan, 2007, p. 49)

As may be noted in (25) and (26), Chinese HTs are not sensitive to Island effects, which means that no movement takes place.

Finally let us talk about the position that these HTs may occupy. As mentioned earlier, Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa (2014) affirm that root effects shown by some instances of topicalization are due to the competition between an event operator and the topic for the same position, [Spec,CP]. Adopting the same analysis, a similar phenomenon can be easily observed in HT constructions in Mandarin Chinese:

(27) a. *Zhangsan$_i$, women keyi cong zhe-jia yinhang ti ta$_i$ jie-dao*
    Zhangsan we can from this-CLF bank for him borrow-COMPL
    henduo qian.
    much money
    (lit.) 'Zhangsan, we can borrow a lot of money from this bank for him.'

   b. *Wo juede Zhangsan$_i$, women keyi cong zhe-jia yinhang ti ta$_i$*
    I think Zhangsan we can from this-CLF bank for him
    jie-dao henduo qian.
    borrow-COMPL much money
    (lit.) 'I think that Zhangsan, we can borrow a lot of money from this bank for him.'

   c. **Wo fouren Zhangsan$_i$, women keyi cong zhe-jia yinhang ti ta$_i$*
    I deny Zhangsan we can from this-CLF bank for him
    jie-dao henduo qian.
    borrow-COMPL much money
    (lit.) 'I deny that Zhangsan, we can borrow a lot of money from this bank for him.'

Whilst HT is shown to be compatible with a root clause (27-a) and a root-like embedded environment (27-b), it is not allowed in a non-root context (27-c). Assuming there exists an event operator in CP in non-root clauses and it needs to move to the specifier position, (27-c) may be accounted for in the same vein as what is explored in Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa (2014): HTs are base-generated at [Spec,CP] in Mandarin Chinese, which would constitute a competition between the event operator and the topic for the same position; hence the ungrammaticality.

Recalling the theory of FI, if Chinese HTs indeed occupy [Spec,CP], we may conclude that the δ-features are valued on C in this case; in other words, the relevant δ-features for HTs are retained by C in Mandarin Chinese. This seems to support Miyagawa's (2010; 2017) verdict of the disadvantage of this language in discourse.

4.2 Left Dislocation

In the literature (e.g., Lambrecht, 1994; Ross, 1967), the term Left Dislocation (LD) is frequently used to refer to constructions such as the following one in English:

(28) a. Now the wizard, he lived in Africa. (Lambrecht, 1994, p. 177)
   b. My father, the man he works with in Boston is going to tell the police that… (Ross, 1967, p. 423)

In this kind of sentences, a referential constituent seems to occur outside the boundaries of the clause to its left (cf. Lambrecht, 1994, p. 1050). However, following Benincà (2001) and Benincà and Poletto (2004), in the present article this term is used in a different way. According to them, in contrast with the aforementioned HTs, LDs (in Italian) may be characterized by the following distinctive properties:

(29) Diagnostics of LDs
   i. LDs can be DPs or PPs.
   ii. Multiple LDs are possible.
   iii. LDs require a resumptive clitic only when they correspond to direct or partitive objects; the clitic is optional in other cases. If present, the clitic agrees with the LD in number, gender and Case.
   iv. The copy of a LD cannot be a tonic pronoun nor an epithet. (adapted from Benincà and Poletto, 2004, pp. 64–65)

It should be noted that the diagnostic (29-iii) is not available in Mandarin Chinese, in view of the absence of clitic pronouns in this language. This would mean that Chinese LDs, if they truly exist, are not related to any resumptive elements in the clause. Indeed, we can find topic constructions that satisfy all these conditions:

(30) *Zhangsan, wo kanjian le.*
Zhangsan I see COS
(lit.) 'Zhangsan, I saw.' (adapted from Badan and Del Gobbo, 2011, p. 74)

(31) a. *Gei Zhangsan, wo ji-le yi-feng xin.*
  To Zhangsan I send-PFV one-CLF letter
  (lit.) 'To Zhangsan, I sent a letter.'

  b. **Gei Zhangsan_i, wo gei ta_i ji-le yi-feng xin.*
   To Zhangsan I to him send-PFV one-CLF letter
   (lit.) 'To Zhangsan, I sent a letter to him.'

  c. **Gei Zhangsan_i, wo gei [na-ge shazi]_i ji-le yi-feng xin!*
   To Zhangsan I to that-CLF imbecile send-PFV one-CLF letter
   (lit.) 'To Zhangsan, I sent a letter to that imbecile!' (Badan and Del Gobbo, 2011, pp. 73–74)

(32) *Cong [zhe-jia yinhang]_i, ti/wei Zhangsan_i, wo zhidao women keyi*
from this-CLF bank for Zhangsan I know we can
jie-dao henduo qian.
borrow-COMPL much money
(lit.) 'From this bank, for Zhangsan, I know we can borrow a lot of money.' (Badan, 2007, p. 33)

As is expected, this type of topics can be either a DP as in (30), or a PP as in (31-a); no resumptive element is permitted, neither a pronoun such as the one in (31-b), nor an epithet such as the one in (31-c), and multiple topicalization is possible in this case, as demonstrated by (32).

Authors such as Xu and Langendoen (1985) and Xu (1986) claim that Chinese LDs are base-generated, but there are good reasons for us to assume, in line with C.-T. J. Huang (1982; 1987), Y.-H. A. Li (1990), Shi (1992), Qu (1994) and Shyu (1995), that this type of topics are derived by movement. Evidence for this may be found, according to Badan (2007), in Island effects:

(33) Complex NP Island
*[Gei Lisi]_i, wo renshi [[ji-le yi-feng xin _____i] de ren].
To Lisi I know send-PFV one-CLF letter REL person
(lit.) 'To Lisi, I know the person who sent a letter.' (adapted from Badan, 2007, p. 48)

(34) Adjunct Island
*[Gei Lisi]_i, Zhangsan [yinwei ta _____i ji-le yi-feng xin] hen bu
To Lisi Zhangsan because she send-PFV one-CLF letter very not
gaoxing.
happy
(lit.) 'To Lisi, Zhangsan because she sent a letter is not happy.' (adapted from Badan, 2007, p. 49)

In contrast with the insensitivity to Island effects shown by Chinese HTs, (33) and (34) demonstrate that Chinese LDs cannot move out of a complex NP nor an adjunct, which suggests that they are derived by movement.

When it comes to the type of movement, C.-T. J. Huang et al. (2009, p. 202) claim that the O-S-V word order, that is, the LD constructions that are under discussion, is derived by A′-movement. Their argument is based on the unbounded dependency seemingly shown by such constructions:

(35) *Shu_i, ni renwei ta kan-wan-le _____i ma?*
book you think he read-finish-PFV Q
(lit.) 'The book, do you think he finished reading?' (adapted from C.-T. J. Huang et al., 2009, p. 202)

C.-T. J. Huang et al. (2009) believe that the acceptability of (35) is indicative of A′-movement, because only A′-movement, but not A-movement, can cross multiple clause boundaries. However, I would like to argue here that this test may be deceptive in this particular case, because the topic constituent in (35) may not involve any movement. Consider the following sentence:

(36) *Zhe-ben shu, wo renwei* [[*xie de*] *ren*] *feichang youcai.*
　　 This-CLF book I　think　write REL person very　　have-talent
　　 (lit.) 'This book, I think that the person who wrote (it) is very talented.'

As can be noted, the topic phrase is not sensitive to Island effects, which implies the absence of movement. This may seem to be a surprising result, since it has been proved earlier that Chinese LDs are derived by movement. However, such a problem would not arise if the topic in (36) is a HT, which is what I would like to suggest here. According to Xu (1986), Holmberg (2005), Roberts and Holmberg (2009) and Lee (2017), among others, Mandarin Chinese is a radical *pro*-drop language, which allows null pronouns to occur in both subject and object positions. Taking this into consideration, the previous sentence may be reanalysed as follows:

(37) *Zhe-ben shu$_i$, wo renwei* [[*xie pro$_i$ de*] *ren*] *feichang youcai.*
　　 This-CLF book I　think　write　　REL person very　　have-talent
　　 (lit.) 'This book, I think that the person who wrote (it) is very talented.'

The topic phrase *zhe-ben shu* 'this book' is resumed by a (null) pronoun in (37), which is characteristic of HTs, in conformity with the diagnostics listed in (21). In addition, this *pro* can be perfectly replaced by an explicit pronoun:

(38) *Zhe-ben shu$_i$, wo renwei* [[*xie ta$_i$ de*] *ren*] *feichang youcai.*
　　 This-CLF book I　think　write it REL person very　　have-talent
　　 (lit.) 'This book, I think that the person who wrote it is very talented.'

So, sentences (35) and (36) may actually involve HTs, instead of LDs. As a consequence, it may be argued that the topic in (35) is base-generated, hence the seemingly unbounded dependency. This would also mean that the argument used in C.-T. J. Huang et al. (2009) in favour of an A′-movement analysis may not hold water. Contrary to their claim, there is evidence to suggest that Chinese LDs are derived by A-movement.

To begin with, Chinese LD constructions exhibit optional reconstruction, characteristic of A-movement (cf. Lebeaux, 1988; 2009; Chomsky, 1993; 1995; Fox, 1999; Takahashi and Hulsey, 2009), as demonstrated by the following example:

(39) a. [*Ziji$_i$-de　haizi*]$_i$, *Bill$_i$　zui　xihuan* ＿＿＿$_i$.
　　　 self-POSS　　kids　　Bill　most　like
　　　 'Bill likes his own kids best.'

　　 b. [*John$_i$-de　shu*]$_i$, *wo　yijing　gei-le　ta$_i$* ＿＿＿$_i$.
　　　 John-POSS　book　　I　already　give-PFV　him
　　　 'John$_i$'s book, I already gave him$_i$.' (adapted from Qu, 1994, pp. 36, 41)

The fronted object that contains the reflexive anaphor in (39-a) needs to undergo reconstruction to its base position, so that the anaphor can be properly bound by the R-expression. On the contrary, the sentence-initial topic in (39-b) needs to be interpreted without reconstruction, otherwise condition C of the Binding Theory would be violated.

Another piece of evidence comes from the amelioration of Weak Crossover (WCO) effects in Chinese LD constructions. As is generally assumed, WCO occurs when an A′-moved DP crosses a constituent that contains an element coindexed with the DP (cf. Chomsky, 1976; Koopman and Sportiche, 1982, among others). Accordingly, A-movement is not subject to this effect.

(40) a. *Wo   xiang tamende_i jiazhang biaoyang-guo suoyoude xuesheng_i.
      I   to   their   parents   praise-EXP   all   students
      (lit.) 'In front of their_i parents, I have praised all the students_i.'

   b. Suoyoude xuesheng_i, wo dou xiang tamende_i jiazhang biaoyang-guo ____i.
      all   students   I   all   to   their   parents   praise-EXP
      (lit.) 'All the students_i, I have praised (them) in front of their_i parents.' (adapted from Qu, 1994, p. 40)

As pointed out by Qu (1994, p. 40), the sentence (40-a) is ungrammatical because the quantified object *suoyoude xuesheng* 'all students' undergoes Quantifier Raising (QR) at LF, an A′-movement, which induces the WCO effect. However, when the quantified object is left dislocated, as shown in (40-b), the WCO effect does not arise even though the object is moved over a constituent that contains an element coindexed with the object.

In view of the optional reconstruction and the amelioration of WCO, it seems plausible to argue that Chinese LDs undergo A-movement, contrary to the claim by C.-T. J. Huang et al. (2009). In addition, this implies that the δ-features for this type of topic are valued on T, which, according to the theory of FI, is the result of the δ-feature inheritance from C to T in this language. According to the previous discussion on the relation between FI and prominence, if such an analysis is on the right track, Mandarin Chinese shows (at least some) discourse prominence.

4.3 Residual type: Dangling Topics

Dangling Topics (DTs), also termed Chinese-style Topics in contrast to English-style ones (cf. Chafe, 1976), are those topic phrases that show no structural dependency on the rest of the clause; they are not subcategorized by the predicate and no position inside the comment may be found related to them structurally (cf. C. N. Li and Thompson, 1981; LaPolla, 1990; Tsao, 1990; Ning, 1993). The example (3-a) that we have seen earlier, repeated below as (41), is of DT constructions:

(41) Nei-chang huo xingkui   xiaofang-dui   lai-de-kuai.
     that-CLF   fire fortunately fire-brigade   come-SP-fast
     (lit.) 'That fire, fortunately the fire brigade came quickly.' (C. N. Li and Thompson, 1976, p. 462)

The sentence-initial DP *nei-chang huo* 'that fire' is the entity that the sentence is about, and it actually has the status of A-Topic, whose semantic-pragmatic characteristics have already been mentioned previously. Syntactically speaking, it can be noted that this type of topic is not selected by the predicate, the verb *lai* 'come' in this case, but seem to be independent from the rest of the clause (the comment). The structural independence of DTs leads some linguists (e.g., C. N. Li and Thompson, 1976; Tang, 1990; Shyu, 1995) to conclude that they are base-generated left to the subject, and what allows the DT to be properly interpreted is simply a relation of *aboutness* (cf. Chao, 1968; C. N. Li and Thompson, 1976; C.-T. J. Huang, 1982; Tang, 1990; Qu, 1994), that is, the comment says something about the topic.

However, taking quite the opposite view, Shi (1992; 2000) denies the existence of DTs in Mandarin Chinese: all topics must be syntactically licensed by being related to a certain position inside the comment. For example, he proposes that the sentence-initial constituent in the previous example be analysed as a (non-dangling) topic:

(42) a. [Na-chang huo]_i xingkui   xiaofang-dui lai-de-kuai, buran   ____i jiu
        that-CLF   fire   fortunately fire-brigade come-SP-fast otherwise   then
        hui   shao-si   bu-shao ren.
        will burn-die   not-few people
        'As for that fire, fortunately the fire brigade came quickly, otherwise (it) would have killed many people.'

   b. [Na-chang huo]_i xingkui   xiaofang-dui lai-de-kuai, buran   na-ci_i
        that-CLF   fire   fortunately fire-brigade come-SP-fast otherwise that-time

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women   dou   hui   shao-si.
we   all   will   burn-die
'As for that fire, fortunately the fire brigade came quickly, otherwise we would all have been burnt to death at that time.' (adapted from Shi, 2000, p. 393)

In Shi's (2000) opinion, the sentence (41) actually allows two readings, which depends on the status of *na-chang huo* 'that fire' either as the subject or a temporal adverbial of the unexpressed main clause. If the unuttered is explicitly expressed, the two possible results are as shown in (42), and it can be noted that the sentence-initial constituent is always related to a position in the clause introduced by *buran* 'otherwise'.[7]

With constructions such as (41) included, Shi (2000) offers an inventory of six types of DTs, and the other five types are illustrated as follows:

(43) a. *Tamen   da-yu   chi xiao-yu.*
         they   big-fish eat small-fish
         'They act according to the law of the jungle.'

      b. *Tamen   shei dou   bu lai.*
         they   who   all   not come
         (lit.) 'They, none of them are coming.'

      c. *Zhe-jian shiqing ni   bu neng guang mafan yi-ge   ren.*
         this-CLF matter   you   not can   only   bother one-CLF person
         (lit.) 'This matter, you can't only bother one person.'

      d. *Na-zhong douzi   yi-jin   sanshi-kuai qian.*
         that-CLF   beans   one-CLF thirty- CLF money
         (lit.) 'That kind of beans, one catty is thirty dollars.'

      e. *Wujia   Niuyue   zui gui.*
         thing-price New-York   most expensive
         (lit.) '(Speaking of) the price of things, New York is the most expensive.' (Shi, 2000, pp. 389–397)

Shi (2000) argues that the sentence-initial DP in (43-c) is a reduced PP with the preposition *wei* 'for' dropped, a phenomenon fairly common in Chinese adverbial PPs according to Lü (1986). For the rest of the sentences in (43), Shi (2000) analyses their leftmost elements as subjects. Although Shi's (2000) non-dangling approach is criticized by Pan and Hu (2002), who advocate that constructions such as (41) and (43) do involve true DTs instead of reduced PPs or subjects, R. R.-H. Huang and Ting (2006) revise all the previous examples, and they provide a series of solutions for the problems in Shi (2000) pointed out by Pan and Hu (2002),[8] lending more credibility to the non-dangling approach.

As a consequence, following Shi (2000) and R. R.-H. Huang and Ting (2006), I assume that DTs do not constitute an independent topic type in Mandarin Chinese, and even though some of the constructions in (42) and (43) may involve topics, they are not in a more special situation than what has already been analysed earlier.

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[7] Lü (1980) claims that *xingkui* 'fortunately' is a conjunctive adverb that works in tandem with adverbs such as *buran* 'otherwise' and *cai* 'consequently' in Mandarin Chinese.

[8] As a departure from Shi (2000), R. R.-H. Huang and Ting (2006) analyse the sentence-initial constituents in (42) and (43-c) as adverbial and fronted object (topic), respectively.

5. Rethinking discourse prominence

In Section 3.2 I have proposed the hypothesis of PC, according to which languages are scattered along a continuum of agreement/discourse prominence. After revising several types of topic construction in Mandarin Chinese, this hypothesis seems to be supported by the analyses.

On the one hand, Mandarin Chinese is shown to have at its disposal δ-feature inheritance, which induces the A-movement of Chinese LDs; on the other hand, the reluctance of δ-features to undergo FI is also attested in this language, since Chinese HTs are proven to occupy [Spec,CP]. These two FI patterns apparently indicate two opposing conclusions about the discourse prominence of Mandarin Chinese. However, if linguistic prominence is indeed a continuum, their coexistence in the same language could be totally normal and expected: suppose Mandarin Chinese is positioned somewhere in the central area of the continuum of discourse prominence, its capacity of lowering δ-features from C to T would be limited, though not totally banned, for which δ-feature inheritance is possible in some topic constructions in this language, but not in others. In this sense, it would not be implausible to claim that Mandarin Chinese is characterized by an intermediate level of discourse prominence.

It is worth noting that having an intermediate level of discourse prominence is not synonymous with being both agreement and discourse prominent, a language type mentioned in Table 1 and represented by languages such as Spanish. The proposal made in the present paper differs from the previous language classification substantially in that, according to the original feature-inheritance-based typology, a language that is both agreement- and discourse-prominent is supposed to be equally prominent in discourse as a language that is solely discourse-prominent, that is, they are both characterized by the A-movement of topics/foci due to δ-feature inheritance from C to T; but this paper argues that languages like Mandarin Chinese exhibit discourse-prominent features only to a limited extent. Moreover, being less prominent in discourse does not imply a higher degree of prominence in agreement and vice versa, as the latter pertains only to φ-feature inheritance and does not address δ-zfeatures. Due to space limitations, here I will leave open the question as to whether a correlation exists between the continuum of discourse prominence and that of agreement prominence, but it is essential to consider that they may run in parallel and address distinct language properties.

The approach introduced in the present paper also has the potential to be applied to account for other languages. For example, in German, different types of topicalization could be argued to occur either in the region of C or in that of T. According to Frey and Meinunger (2019), four types of topicalization can be distinguished in this language: (aboutness) topics marked by *jedenfalls* 'for one', German Left-Dislocation (GLD), German Hanging Topic (GHT), and Right Dislocation (RD).

(44) a. *Heute wird Hans jedenfalls glücklicherweise helfen.* (*jedenfalls*-topic)
today will Hans for.one luckily help
'Fortunately, Hans for one will help today.'

b. *Den Hans₁, den mag jeder t₁.* (GLD)
the.ACC Hans ResP.ACC likes everyone
'Everyone likes Hans.'

c. *Hans, jeder mag ihn.* (GHT)
Hans everyone likes him
'Hans, everyone likes him.'

d. *Maria hat ihn heute in der Stadt getroffen, den Chef.* (RD)
Maria has him today in the city met the.ACC boss
'Maria met him in town today, the boss.' (Frey and Meinunger, 2019, pp. 96–100)

Frey and Meinunger (2019) notice that an important syntactic difference between the first three types of topicalization and RD consists in their root sensitivity, in the sense that topics marked with *jedenfalls*, GLD and GHT all exhibit root effects,[9] whereas RD does not.

(45) Weak root sensitivity with a *jedenfalls*-topic
    a. *Maria leugnete, dass [Fritz jedenfalls] kommen wird.*
       Maria denied   that Fritz for.one   come   will
       'Maria denied that Fritz for one will come.'

    b. *Maria denkt,   dass [Fritz jedenfalls] kommen wird.*
       Maria thinks   that Fritz for.one   come   will
       'Maria thinks that Fritz for one will come.' (Frey and Meinunger, 2019, p. 108)

(46) Weak root sensitivity with GLD
    a. *Jeder   bedauern würde, der   Otto, dass der   dabei ist.*
       everybody regret   would the   Otto that ResP   thereby is
       'Everyone would regret that Otto is there.'

    b. *Jeder   denkt,   der   Otto, dass der dabei sein   sollte.*
       everybody thinks   the   Otto that ResP thereby be   should
       'Everyone thinks that Otto should be there.' (adapted from Frey and Meinunger, 2019, p. 109)

(47) Strong root sensitivity with GHD
    Max gemeint hat, der Otto, dass er dabei   sein sollte.
     Max thought has the Otto   that he thereby be   should
     'Max thought that Otto, he should be there.' (adapted from Frey and Meinunger, 2019, p. 111)

(48) No root sensitivity with RD
    Max hat verneint, dass sie vorbeigekommen ist, die Chefin.
    Max has denied   that she by.passed   is   the boss-F
    'Max denied that she bypassed the boss.' (Frey and Meinunger, 2019, p. 113)

In line with the analysis presented in Section 3.2 and Section 4 for root phenomena in English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, it can be argued that (45a), (46a) and (47) are ungrammatical because of the competition between an event operator and the topicalized constituent for the same position, [Spec,CP] (cf. Miyagawa, 2022); by contrast, as suggested in Frey and Meinunger (2019), RD is not subject to root effects because it occurs in TP and no competition arises. If this is on the right track, *jedenfalls* topics, GLD, and GHT actually represent a lack of discourse prominence in German, since δ-features stay at C in these cases, but at the same time, RD seems to be indicative of the discourse-prominent properties of this language, given that the δ-feature is valued at T this time. Consequently, the scenario presented by the data in German is quite similar to what has been discussed about Mandarin Chinese, in that both languages exhibit properties that indicate the existence and lack of discourse prominence simultaneously. This observation aligns with the hypothesis of PC, which asserts that prominence is continuous in nature.

6. Conclusion

In the present article, I have revised two language typologies. One of them is proposed by C. N. Li and Thompson (1976), in which languages are divided into four types, namely subject-prominent, topic-prominent, both subject- and topic-prominent, and neither subject- nor topic-prominent. Their analyses

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[9] Frey and Meinunger (2019) actually distinguish between strong and weak root sensitivity. They show that topics marked with *jedenfalls* and GLD can appear in the clausal complement of a doxastic verb such as *denken* 'think', whereas GHT cannot; compare (45-b), (46-b) and (47). Due to space constraints, this issue will not be addressed here. The reader is referred to Frey and Meinunger (2019) for further discussion.

are based on the idea that the subject/topic prominence of a certain language is reflected by its sentence construction strategies, through which the language yields basic sentence patterns such as subject-predicate and topic-comment.

The other typology has been developed under the framework of FI (Miyagawa, 2005; 2017; 2022; Jiménez-Fernández, 2010; 2020; Jiménez-Fernández and Miyagawa, 2014, among others), and it also divides languages into four types: agreement-prominent, discourse-prominent, both, and neither. In contrast with the former one, this typology assumes that prominence is related to which kind of features undergo inheritance.

In spite of the different angles adopted, both typologies put prominence in a central position, for which this article is also focused on exploring and reconsidering the nature of this notion. Grounded on the two typologies revised above, and in contrast with both, I have proposed the hypothesis of the Prominence Continuum, which states that linguistic prominence is not identified as discrete categories, but as a continuous sequence.

In order to prove the validity of this hypothesis, I have taken Mandarin Chinese, a language that falls under totally different prominence types in the aforementioned two typologies, as an example. After analysing several topic constructions in this language, it is shown that Chinese HTs are base-generated at [Spec,CP], and Chinese LDs are A-moved to [Spec,TP]; in other words, from the perspective of FI, it can be argued that a proportion of δ-features are retained by C while the remaining proportion undergo C-T inheritance in this language. Assuming there indeed exists a correlation between prominence and FI, such data are satisfactorily in conformity with the hypothesis of PC, and it may be claimed that Mandarin Chinese has an intermediate level of discourse prominence. This analysis has been extended to other languages such as German, thereby highlighting the robustness of the current proposal.

Abbreviations

3 = third person, ACC = accusative, ASSERT = assertive, AUX = auxiliary, CLF = classifier, COMPL = completive, COS = change of state, DAT = dative, EXP = experiential, F = feminine, GEN = genitive, M = masculine, NF = non-finite, NOM = nominative, OV = Object Voice, PFV = perfective, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PRF = perfect, PRS = present, PST = past, Q = question marker, REL = relative, ResP = resumptive pronoun, SBJV = subjunctive, SG = singular, SP = structural particle, SV = Subject Voice, TOP = topic.

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