Subject contact relatives: A cross-dialectal approach

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Abstract

This paper advances a Minimalist structural account of subject contact relatives, such as *I met a man _ can speak five languages*, which are common to Belfast English and Ulster Scots but unacceptable in Standard British and North American Englishes. Previous accounts have treated these constructions as restrictive relatives (Doherty 1993) or topic-comment structures (Henry 1995). However, such approaches fail to describe the full range of syntactic and pragmatic restrictions affecting subject contact relatives; moreover, these studies have neglected dialectal differences in contact relative distribution. This paper treats subject contact relatives as TopicP constructions with null (or optionally resumptive) subjects but overt topics. These constructions are noted to be restricted to syntactic predicates that serve a presentational function in the discourse. Further, syntactic and pragmatic variations in the composition of TopicP engender the observed dialectal differences in subject contact relative distribution across Belfast English, Ulster Scots, and standard English.

1.   Introduction
In Belfast English and Ulster Scots,[1] the subject pronoun in a relative clause may be omitted:

(1) I met a man [(who) can speak five languages.]   (Henry 1995:125)

Such "subject contact relatives" occur in presentational sentences, as in (1), as well as *there*-existentials, *it*-clefts, and copula equatives in Belfast English and Ulster Scots. These structures are unavailable in standard English:[2] the relativized pronoun *who* in (1) is strictly necessary.

In the present article, I investigate the syntactic structure of subject contact relatives (henceforth, SCRs), accounting for both their contextual restriction and their cross-dialectal distribution. I analyse SCRs as TopicP constructions with null or resumptive subjects but overtly marked topics. These structures are restricted to predicates in presentational contexts, which I posit accept TopicP complements. Further, I suggest there is syntactic and pragmatic dialectal variation in the composition of TopicP, which enables the creation of SCRs in Belfast English and Ulster Scots, but not in standard English.

The remaining sections are organized as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of the distribution of contact relatives in standard English, Belfast English, and Ulster Scots. Section 3 outlines two previous approaches to Belfast English SCRs as advanced by Doherty (1993) and Henry (1995). Section 4 develops an analysis of SCRs as TopicP formations, accounting for both their semantic distribution and the cross-dialectal data. Section 5 concludes the paper with a comparison of the present and previous approaches, and also includes points for future consideration.

2. Distribution of Contact Relatives
At present, I summarize the syntactic distribution of contact relatives in standard English as well as that of SCRs in Belfast English and Ulster Scots.

Firstly, it is not the case that all contact relatives are ungrammatical in standard English. Object contact relatives are acceptable:

(2) I know I bought the book [Op_i you recommended <Op_i>.]   (Carnie 2013:372)

In (2), a phonologically null operator may represent the object of *recommend* in place of a relativized pronoun, such as *which*.

Nevertheless, wherever the subject is relativized, a contact relative is impossible.

(3)   a. There are people [who don't read books.]
       b. *   There are people [_ don't read books.]   (Henry 1995:124)

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[1] The linguistic status of Ulster Scots as a dialect of English or a separate, but related, language is beyond the scope of this paper. Ulster Scots is at least intricately related to English (Montgomery 2006), and for this reason, the distribution of subject contact relatives in Ulster Scots merits present consideration. The term "dialect" will be used to compare Belfast English, Ulster Scots, and standard English.
[2] The dispreference for SCRs is common to Standard British and Canadian Englishes, from which the data are drawn.

In (3a), a relative clause with the overt relativized subject pronoun *who* is acceptable; however, in standard English, the removal of the relativized subject, as in (3b), is ungrammatical.

   Conversely, in Belfast English, SCRs such as (3b) are grammatical in certain contexts.

(4) a. There are some students [_ never do any work.]
    b. It was John [_ told us about it.]
    c. He's the one [_ stole the money.]
    d. I know a boy [_ has never worked.]   (Henry 1995:125)

In Belfast English, SCRs may appear in *there*-existentials, such as (4a); *it*-clefts, as in (4b); equative sentences with the copula, as in (4c); and presentational sentences such as (4d), which generally serve to "introduce individuals into the discourse" (Henry 1995:125).

   Moreover, in all contexts where SCRs are permitted in Belfast English, an overt pronoun form is also possible:

(5) a. There's one woman in our street [_ went to Spain last year.]
    b. There's one woman in our street [she went to Spain last year.]
    c. There's one woman in our street [who went to Spain last year.]
                       (Henry 1995:126)

Note that the SCR in (5a) and the overt subject pronoun form in (5b) have the same interpretation: both may be paraphrased by the relative clause in (5c). Thus SCRs and their overt variants seemingly share the semantic values of their standard English relative clause counterparts.

   Additionally, overt pronoun variants may not appear alongside relativized elements.

(6) *There's one woman in our street [who she went to Spain last year.]
                       (den Dikken 2005:697)

Thus in (6), the overt subject *she* is disallowed after the relativized pronoun *who* in an SCR.

   Moreover, in all other contexts in Belfast English, SCRs and their overt pronoun forms are both considered unacceptable.

(7) a. * I lost the book [_ gives an account of this.]
    b. * I was talking to the lecturer [she takes the linguistics course.]
    c. * The students [_ have an exam next week] are working very hard.
    d. * The students [they are taking French] have an exam next week.
                     (Henry 1995:125–127)

SCRs are disallowed after non-presentational matrix verbs, such as *lost* in (7a); the same restriction holds for the overt pronoun with *talking* in (7b). SCRs (7c) and overt pronoun variants (7d) are also impossible in matrix subject position in non-presentational contexts.

   Note that SCRs are ungrammatical in matrix subject position, even in presentational contexts, such as in equatives.

(8)   *The person [_ could help you with that] is John.   (den Dikken 2005:699)

In (8), despite the appearance of the copula equative, an SCR is impossible with *the person*, the subject of the matrix clause. In sum, SCRs surface only in a restricted set of post-verbal complement contexts.

      SCRs also surface in certain contexts in Ulster Scots. In this dialect, these structures appear in the same conditioned environments as in Belfast English, which are outlined in (9).

(9)   a.   There wuz a yella cat [_ killed a power o mice.]
            'There was a yellow cat that killed a large number of mice.'
     b.   It wuz Jim [_ growed the flures.]
            'It was Jim who grew the flowers.'
     c.   That's a doag [_ wuz in mae shap.]
            'That's a dog that was in my shop.'
     d.   I met a man [_ had a lock o money.]
            'We met a man who had a large quantity of money.'
                                     (Montgomery 2006:307–309)

In Ulster Scots, as in Belfast English, SCRs occur in *there*-existentials (9a); *it*-clefts (9b); copula equatives (9c); and presentational sentences (9d) after matrix verbs such as *meet*.

      But Montgomery (2006) notes that Ulster Scots also allows SCRs in broader syntactic contexts than Belfast English. In particular, he observes that SCRs are permitted as modifiers of definite descriptions in presentational sentences;[3] they may also modify matrix subjects, sentence-initially.

(10)   a.   They caught the man [_ stole mae car.]
             'They caught the man who stole my car.'
     b.   The man [_ stole the car] leeves nixt dorr.
             'The man who stole the car lives next door.'   (Montgomery 2006:309)

In Ulster Scots, an SCR may modify a definite description, such as *the man* in (10a), in a presentational sentence. By contrast, in Belfast English, only indefinite DPs allow SCRs in presentational sentences (Montgomery 2006). Moreover, in Ulster Scots, an SCR may apply to the subject of the matrix clause, as in the case of *the man* in (10b).

      Recall that this same construction is ungrammatical in Belfast English:

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[3] Although Belfast English restricts SCRs to modifying indefinite phrases in presentational type sentences, this constraint does not apply to all contexts. Definite descriptions are acceptable in *it*-clefts and equatives, for example.

    a.   It was John [_ told us about it.]
    b.   He's the one [_ stole the money.]
                         (Henry 1995:125)

Thus in (a) and (b), repeated from (4b, c), the proper name *John* and the definite DP *the one* are both acceptable antecedents for SCRs in an *it*-cleft and a copula equative, respectively.

(11)   *The person [_ could help you with that] is John.   (den Dikken 2005:699)

SCRs are disallowed in subject position in Belfast English, as with the subject *the person* in (11), repeated from (8).

I have now reviewed the syntactic distribution of contact relatives in standard English, Belfast English, and Ulster Scots. In the next section, I address two prior analyses of SCRs in dialectal English.

3. Previous Analyses

SCRs have hitherto received two styles of treatment: firstly as canonical relative clauses, as advanced by Doherty (1993); and secondly as topic-comment structures, as in Henry (1995).

In this section I summarize these disparate analyses and address certain problems therein.

3.1 SCRs as Relative Clauses

Doherty (1993:155) characterizes SCRs as variant "true restrictive relative clauses." He parallels these structures to the object contact relatives of standard English, positing both types are finite TPs[4] instead of CPs. SCRs are semantically and not syntactically constrained, he suggests, as "a noun phrase modified by an SCR must be interpreted as non-referential." In these contexts, the contact relative may bind a null pronominal by means of a "covert resumptive pronoun strategy."

Firstly, Doherty observes that English CP relative clauses allow adverbial adjunction at the TP level, but contact relatives—including Belfast English SCRs—do not.

(12)   a.   The girl [who during the riot [the soldiers shot dead]]
         b.   *The girl during the riot [who [the soldiers shot dead]]
         c.   *The woman tomorrow [we'll meet _ after lunch]
         d.   *That's the girl just yesterday [_ was talking about you]
                                                                                    (Doherty 1993:161–162)

In (12a), the adverbial phrase *during the riot* may appear below the relativized pronoun *who* in [Spec, CP] but above the subject *the soldiers* in [Spec, TP]; thus it may adjoin at TP. Note the same adverbial is disallowed above the relativized pronoun, that is, adjoined at CP, in (12b). In the same way adjunction at the TP level is expected to be available in object (12c) and Belfast English subject (12d) contact relatives, but these forms are ungrammatical. Doherty (1993:162) posits "adverbial adjunction to the maximal projection of a relative clause is excluded." In general restrictive relatives, this maximal projection is CP, but in contact relatives, it is TP. Thus SCRs pattern differently than general relative clauses, but similarly to object contact relatives.

Belfast English SCRs also resemble object contact relatives as well as other restrictive relatives in their syntactic distribution and semantic interpretation, as evidenced in (13).

(13)   I gave a lift to anybody [_ asked for one.]   (Doherty 1993:158)

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[4] Doherty (1993) makes reference to IP, but for consistency, I use TP throughout this paper.

In (13), the SCR co-occurs with "free-choice *any*," a phenomenon Doherty (1993:159) argues is constrained to restrictive modifiers. Then SCRs occur in the same syntactic environments as restrictive relative clauses; they also share the relative clause's function of restricting meaning. Doherty thus considers these constructions to be variant relative clause types.

Next, Doherty explains the limited distribution of SCRs semantically: A head noun phrase modified by an SCR cannot be extensional. He posits this generalization from his observation that the head noun phrase either does not refer at all or must denote an intensional entity.

(14)　　a.　It was a thing [_ came naturally to my mind.]
　　　　b.　*She . . . gave me all the change [_ was in the house.]
　　　　c.　*We want someone [_ knows John.]　　　　　　　(Doherty 1993:158–160)

Predicate nominals, such as *a thing* in (14a), denote functions over entities, and not particular entities themselves (Heim & Kratzer 1998); similarly, nominals in the restriction of quantifiers, such as *the change* in (14b), fail to denote entities. Lastly, in intensional contexts, such as following the attitude verb *want* in (14c), Doherty notes that the nominal *someone* necessarily has an intensional meaning, and cannot have an extensional denotation.

Finally, Doherty claims SCRs license either a null or a resumptive pronoun in subject position. He notes that resumptive pronouns of this sort are generally disallowed in the highest subject position by McCloskey's (1990:215) Highest Subject Restriction, which requires that "a pronoun must be A'-free in the least complete functional complex containing the pronoun and a subject distinct from the pronoun." By this constraint, SCRs are disfavoured, as the resumptive pronoun is in A'-position in [Spec, TP] and is bound by the preceding head noun phrase. However, in the non-extensional cases outlined above, Doherty argues the non-referential head noun phrase has no overt indexing; thus it cannot be coreferential with nor bind the pronoun, and the Highest Subject Restriction fails to apply. In these semantically-defined cases, then, SCR structures are permissible.

There are inherent problems with Doherty's analysis, however. Firstly, it is not clear that the head noun phrase is always non-referential; secondly, Doherty provides no restriction on SCRs in standard English.

Initially, Doherty claims that the head noun phrase of an SCR may not be extensional; yet an example from Ulster Scots shows that this is not always the case.

(15)　　The man [_ stole the car] leeves nixt dorr.　　　　　(Montgomery 2006:309)

In (15), reiterated from (10b), the nominal *the man* is not indefinite, nor is it constrained by a quantifier or a verb requiring an intensional context. Outside of these exceptional cases, the definite description *the man* is extensional, denoting a particular satisfier of the predicate *man* within the utterance context (Heim & Kratzer 1998). In (15), then, the referential nominal has an explicit indexing and therefore binds the null pronoun in the relative clause's [Spec, TP]. Thus the Highest Subject Restriction should disallow (15) as a potential SCR.

Furthermore, Doherty suggests SCRs are made acceptable by general syntactic and semantic restrictions; by extension, he does not constrain these structures from occurring in standard English. Indeed, object contact relatives—which, according to Doherty, are

similarly structured—are permissible in standard English. Thus the unacceptability of SCRs in standard English requires further explanation.

In sum, although Doherty argues SCRs are mere variants of restrictive relative clauses with non-referential head nouns, he does not account for the dialectal acceptability of referential head nouns in Ulster Scots; nor can he explain the unacceptability of these types of contact relatives in standard English.

3.2 SCRs as Topic-Comment Structures
In contrast to Doherty (1993), Henry (1995) claims that SCRs are not to be analysed as relative clauses, but as topic-comment structures. She suggests that the SCRs of Belfast English are akin to overtly introduced topic structures, which serve to bring a new entity into the discourse and subsequently comment on that entity. Thus the head noun is part of a topic phrase; the apparent relative is, in actuality, a matrix clause. In this way, she accounts for the limited distribution of SCRs in topic-presenting contexts.

Firstly, Henry observes the sociolinguistic prevalence of topic-comment structures in Belfast English. Such constructions introduce new topics into the discourse with sentence-initial CPs.

(16)   a.   See my brother, he never stops talking.
        b.   You know John, he never shuts his bake.   (Henry 1995:132)

In (16a) and (16b), the modified noun phrases are introduced as topics by *see* and *you know*. The following root clauses are comments: *he never stops talking* in (16a) and *he never shuts his bake* in (16b) provide some new information about *my brother* and *John*, respectively. Henry argues SCRs mirror the pragmatic function of these structures.

Moreover, where topic structures permit an overt pronoun in subject position, they also allow a gap.

(17)   You know John, never shuts his bake.   (Henry 1995:132)

Compare the gap in (17), which is coreferential with the topic *John*, to the overt pronoun *he* in (16b). Topic structures allow either an overt resumptive or a null subject pronoun; SCRs permit the same alternation. In this way, SCRs also syntactically resemble overtly introduced topic structures.

Based on these pragmatic and structural similarities, Henry proposes a topic-comment analysis of SCRs. In these types, the apparent matrix clause is a TopicP, and the contact relative itself is the matrix clause. I outline this analysis in (18).

(18)   a.   There are people don't read books.   (Henry 1995:124)
        b.

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                        CP
                 _____/_____
                /               \
            TopicP              CP
            __/\__            __/\__
           /      \          /      \
      There are people   _ don't read books
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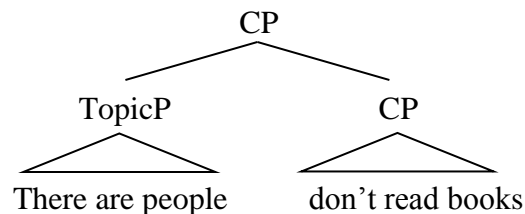
Then by Henry's treatment, (18a), repeated from (3b), has the structure outlined in (18b). The introductory phrase *There are people* is a TopicP, adjoined at the CP level; the comment *don't read books* follows as the matrix CP. The subject of the CP here is null.

A topic-comment approach allows Henry to account for the general restriction of SCRs to presentational contexts, wherein new topics are introduced. Her analysis also allows resumptive pronouns in subject position within these structures. Henry cites McCloskey's (1990) Highest Subject Restriction,[5] which disallows resumptive pronouns "in the highest subject position" generally; however, she observes that "topic structures do allow such pronouns coreferential with the topic" (Henry 1995:131). Similarly, topic-comment SCRs are exempt from this constraint.

However, a topic-comment analysis cannot provide a complete explanation for English data cross-dialectally. Specifically, English does not permit null subjects in general; and it remains unclear how Belfast English, Ulster Scots, and standard English differ syntactically such that CP topics are allowable in the former two with differing distributions, but are always ungrammatical in the latter.

Firstly, English is not a Null Subject language: both thematic and expletive subjects must be overt, and *pro*-drop is typically disallowed (Camacho 2013), as exemplified in (19).

(19) a. *Seems to be raining.
      b. *Left.   (Camacho 2013:3–4)

In English, matrix clause expletives (19a) and thematic subjects (19b) cannot be null.[6] Then it is contrary that Henry allows null subjects to appear in matrix clauses in topic structures and SCRs with no further explanation, whereas these are not permitted generally.

Secondly, as observed in Section 2, the distribution of SCRs varies between Belfast English and Ulster Scots. In particular, the latter allows SCRs to appear sentence-initially, as in (10b), reiterated below as (20).

(20) [The man [_ stole the car]] leeves nixt dorr.   (Montgomery 2006:309)

Under Henry's analysis, (20) is currently ungrammatical. The SCR is a matrix CP; in that case, after adjoining the TopicP (here, just a DP, *the man*), the entire topic-comment structure is the subject of a further predicate, *leeves nixt dorr*. Yet, as a CP, the topic-comment structure cannot receive nominative case from T nor a Theta-role from *leeves*; then the derivation should crash. Thus Henry's analysis cannot generalize to all dialectal variations of SCRs; specifically, Ulster Scots subject-initial SCRs are problematic.

Moreover, topicalization is not unknown in standard English: a DP may be topicalized.

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[5] Henry (1995) adopts a different formulation of the Highest Subject Restriction than Doherty (1993). Note that Henry's articulation of the constraint disallows Doherty's treatment of SCRs, as in his relative clause types, [Spec, TP] remains the highest subject position and is filled by a resumptive pronoun.

[6] Note that sentences with null subjects as in (19) may appear in informal speech, even in standard English: "I won't go out today. Seems to be raining," or, "Why isn't John with you?" "Left." These cases do not counter the present argument since the null subjects of SCRs, unlike those in (19), are not limited to informal discourse contexts.

(21) a. Newspapers, I really like.
      b. *See newspapers, I really like.   (Henry 1995:135)

While topicalization of an object DP, as in (21a), is acceptable in standard English, a CP may not be topicalized, and attempting to do so with *see newspapers* in (21b) is ungrammatical. Henry notes this distinction; nevertheless, she does not formally address why topic-comment structures such as (21b), as well as SCRs in general, are disallowed in standard English.

Thus while Henry's approach characterizes Belfast English SCRs, it cannot be generalized cross-dialectally. In particular, her account does not explain the grammaticality of null subjects in dialectal English; it also does not address structural variations in Ulster Scots, and the acceptability of DP but not CP topicalizations in standard English.

In this section, I have reviewed two treatments of SCRs in dialectal English: Doherty's (1993) relative clause analysis and Henry's (1995) topic-comment appropriation. Both approaches faced problems with regard to cross-dialectal data in Ulster Scots and standard English. Now I turn to my present TopicP analysis, which unifies the dialectal data.

4. A TopicP Complement Analysis

In this section I analyse SCRs as TopicPs, allowing these structures to be treated cross-dialectally. In Section 4.1, I present a syntactic analysis of SCRs wherein their heads are topic-marked DPs merged at the TopicP level. Next, in Section 4.2, I account for the limited syntactic distribution of these structures. Section 4.3 addresses SCRs cross-dialectally.

4.1 Subject Contact Relatives as TopicPs

I first establish a syntactic structure for SCRs, distinct from the accounts of Doherty (1993) and Henry (1995).

Initially, note that an SCR cannot simply be created by movement of a single DP.[7]

(22) *I met a man$_i$ [<a man$_i$> can <a man$_i$> speak five languages.]

The derivation depicted in (22) is ruled out straightforwardly for reasons of Case and Theta-role assignment: *a man* receives the role of Agent from *speak*, in A-position; the DP is then moved to [Spec, TP] in the lower clause, where it receives nominative case. If the DP moves beyond the relative, however, it may accept neither an additional accusative case nor Theme from *met*. Thus, as with restrictive relative clauses in standard English, there must be some separate operator in SCRs that fulfils the Case and Theta-role requirements of the lower clause.

But as Doherty (1993) notes, SCRs are not perfectly reducible to CP-based restrictive relatives. Indeed, SCRs are possible with an overt pronoun that is not relativized.

(23) There's a woman on our street she went to Spain last year.   (Henry 1995:126)

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[7] Similarly, an SCR cannot be generated through a theory of Copy and Merge, one particular account of which is given by Hornstein *et al.* (2005); for reasons of space, I refer only to a movement-based theory in this paper.

In (23), reiterated from (5b) in Section 2, the pronoun *she* is unexpected if SCRs are true restrictive relative clauses. In such a case, a null operator (*Op*) or a relativized *who* should move into [Spec, CP] to satisfy C's uninterpretable [+wh, –Q] features (Carnie 2013). Since a non-relativized resumptive occurs instead, I posit SCRs do not employ the same null operator, *Op* [+wh, –Q], as restrictive relatives. Instead a null subject, *pro*, or an overt resumptive pronoun fills the highest subject position.

       SCRs also disallow complementizer *that*.

(24)   *There's a woman on our street that she went to Spain last year.

                                       (den Dikken 2005:697)

The unacceptability of *that* in (24) suggests that an overt C is not compatible with an SCR. Based on the absence of *wh*-movement to [Spec, CP] and the unacceptability of an overt complementizer element, I adopt Doherty's (1993) argument that SCRs are based on TP and not CP projections.

       Although Doherty suggests a similar treatment for object contact relatives as found in standard English, native speaker judgements[8] reaffirm these structures are CPs.

(25)   This is the book [I bought] and [CP which you enjoyed.]

In (25), coordination of the object contact relative *I bought* is possible with a CP with an overt relativized pronoun; this suggests the two phrases are of analogous type.

       Furthermore, object contact relatives exhibit island violations, as seen in (26).

(26)   a.   I met someone [John knows.]
          b.   *Who did I meet someone [<who> knows?]

It is not possible to extract the subject *wh*-word *who* from the object contact relative in (26b), querying about the knower *John* in (26a). In this way object contact relatives demonstrate the same island character as observed of CP relative clauses in general (Santorini & Kroch 2006). Based on these data, I posit that object contact relative clauses are indeed CP projections, a fact that I return to in Section 4.2.

       Then, unlike restrictive relatives and distinct from object contact relatives, SCRs involve TP structures. These employ a possibly null resumptive pronoun, which fills the subject position [Spec, TP]. (The status of the head noun in an SCR, above TP, is addressed later in this section.) (27) outlines the structure I have posited thus far for (1).

(27)   [TP *pro*/he$_i$ can <*pro*/he$_i$> speak five languages.]

In (27), the null pronoun accepts the Agent Theta-role from *speak*, and nominative case from the finite T. Note that neither *pro* nor the optional resumptive pronoun *he* bears a [+wh] feature. To construct a hypothetical CP relative clause, the addition of a [+wh, –Q] C would be needed; however, with no [+wh]-valued element available for selection in the lower TP

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[8] My judgements for (25) and (26) were confirmed by three other native speakers of standard Canadian English.

structure, this uninterpretable [+wh] feature would be left unchecked. Thus, attempting to build a CP relative atop an SCR's TP causes the derivation to crash.

I turn now to a potential theoretical problem: As noted in Section 3.2, English is not a Null Subject language, and neither subjects nor expletives are generally permitted to be null. My analysis thus far seems to posit *pro*-drop in Belfast English and Ulster Scots. However, just as in standard English, null subjects are not generally permissible in Belfast English, either:

(28)   *Are books on the table.   (Henry 1995:128)

The overt expletive is necessary in (28). Thus *pro*-drop is not a general feature of dialectal English.

Moreover, as Henry (1995) notes, null subjects are made acceptable in Belfast English in topic-comment structures, in which the topic is previously made explicit.

(29)   You know John, never shuts his bake.   (Henry 1995:132)

The topic *John* is made explicit in (29), reiterated from (17); in the following clause, then, the null subject (which is implicitly indicative of *John*) is valid. Recall also that overt resumptive pronouns are possible in topic-comment constructions, which are explicitly coreferential with the preceding noun phrase (Doherty 1993). I conclude that null subjects are made possible in dialectal English only when bound by a preceding overt DP. I develop a syntactic account of this exception below.

Suppose that *pro*, alongside resumptive pronouns and expletives, is not a potential topic. All potential topics, then, are lexically defined by an interpretable feature [+topic],[9] in contrast to the marked [–topic] elements listed above. Further, I presume a layer above C in the projection hierarchy, headed by Topic,[10] which seeks a potential topic. This probing feature [TOPIC] need only be satisfied at LF, but it requires some [+topic] element to fill [Spec, TopicP].

In the case of a restrictive relative clause or an object contact relative, [TOPIC] may discover a valid [+topic] DP below in [Spec, TP] or in an object position and incite its movement to [Spec, TopicP]. In an SCR, however, the subject is necessarily null or resumptive; in either case, it is not [+topic]. If the subject is bypassed in selecting a lower DP, perhaps an object, the derivation encounters the problems addressed in (22) at the beginning of this section:

(30)   *I met a man$_i$ [$_{TopicP}$ [$_{DP}$ five languages$_j$] [$_{Topic'}$ *pro*$_i$ can speak <five languages$_j$>.]]

In (30), the selected DP is *five languages*, which has already received accusative case and Theme in the lower clause. In [Spec, TopicP], however, the DP receives a second case and

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[9] Note that [+topic] elements need not be topics in all contexts. Such elements only have the potential, depending on the context of a discourse, to be selected as topics.

[10] The present analysis may also be adapted to comply with Rizzi's (1997) split CP. For simplicity, I assume only the existence of TopicP, or Rizzi's TopP, in this paper. It may be that SCRs project not only a TP, but a deficient CP, which contains TopP, but not all of Rizzi's proposed components. This possibility necessitates further research, however.

Theta-role from the matrix verb. As in (22), this invalid assignment causes the derivation to crash.

Instead, to generate a grammatical SCR, a supplementary [+topic] DP must be provided in the numeration of the TopicP clause, as outlined in (31).

(31) a. I met a man can speak five languages.   (Henry 1995:125)
      b.
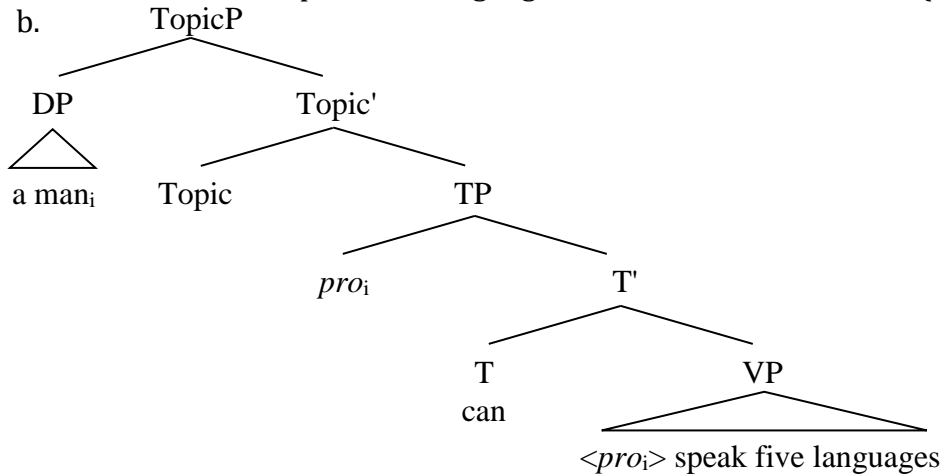
In (31b), the null pronoun receives nominative case and the Agent role in the lower clause. We then project Topic. Note that the subject *pro* does not bear [+topic], but an additional [+topic] DP, *a man*, exists in the numeration. Merge over Move[11] prioritizes this new DP, and *a man* is merged in [Spec, TopicP]. At this level of the derivation, the topic DP awaits Case and a Theta-role. Note that an SCR lacks a C projection, and thus presents no phase boundary (Hornstein *et al.* 2005); therefore, the topic DP is visible to the matrix clause. The matrix verb *met* may then freely assign case and a Theta-role to the topic DP, and the output is grammatical.

In the case that a [+topic]-DP occupies [Spec, TP] in a potential SCR, the derivation should fail: SCRs allow only null or resumptive pronoun subjects. Invalid instances are ruled out by requiring the subject to be coreferential with the higher c-commanding topic, as is the case in (31) with the co-indexed pro_i and *a man*$_i$. Since no phase boundary exists between the referential topic in [Spec, TopicP] and [Spec, TP], any attempt to place a referential expression in [Spec, TP] incurs a Principle C binding violation. Similarly, the addition of a non-resumptive pronoun in [Spec, TP] incurs a Principle B violation (Hornstein *et al.* 2005).[12] In this way, [+topic] DPs are disallowed in [Spec, TP] in SCRs.

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[11] For an account of Merge over Move, see Hornstein *et al.* (2005).

[12] This rules out all invalid [+topic] subjects of SCRs except for anaphors, which, unlike pronouns and referential expressions, must be bound in their domain.

A constraint against anaphors in [Spec, TP] in SCRs can be formulated with recourse to Reflexivity Theory as described by Runner (2007). Therein, by Condition A, a reflexive-marked syntactic predicate must be reflexive. The relative Tense predicate is reflexive-marked since a SELF anaphor occupies [Spec, TP], which is a Case-assigned argument position. However, no two arguments of Tense are coindexed; the topic, notably, is not an argument of Tense, as it receives its Theta-role and Case from the higher clause. Thus, the predicate is not reflexive; the derivation fails Condition A and crashes.

I further note that [–topic] DPs may never be selected to merge in [Spec, TopicP] by the feature requirements of the probe [TOPIC]. Also, as the uninterpretable feature [TOPIC] need only be checked at LF, the derivation may Procrastinate until after Spellout (Hornstein *et al.* 2005) to satisfy this feature. In typical clauses, English word order is thus unaffected by raising due to [TOPIC]-checking. The [+topic]-valued DP may move covertly from [Spec, TP] to [Spec, TopicP] at LF. In the case of SCRs, however, explicit insertion is necessary for [TOPIC]-checking. A topic DP is based-generated in [Spec, TopicP] and so this position is overt at phonological Spellout.

Moreover, the present formulation does not rule out [+topic] insertion for non-SCRs. As I address below in Section 4.2, there are certain constructions in standard English that also employ [+topic] insertion. Additionally, Case and Theta-role requirements already disallow extraneous topic insertion. For example, if TopicP forms the root level of a tree, there is no higher clause to supply Case or a Theta-role to the newly inserted DP, and the derivation crashes.

Theoretically, an approach to SCRs as TopicPs notably abides McCloskey's (1990) Highest Subject Restriction as presented by both Doherty (1993) and Henry (1995). Firstly, by Doherty's (1993) formulation, the resumptive pronoun must be A'-free in its least complete functional complex. In (31), the null pronoun (and, by a similar analysis, its overt variant) is coreferential with the higher DP, *a man*, which is distinct from it. While the pronoun is in A'-position, having moved to satisfy the lower T's [EPP], the topic DP is in A-position. Recall that in the next step of the derivation it is positioned to receive its Theta-role from the higher clause. Thus the topic does not A'-bind the null (or resumptive) pronoun, which is A'-free in its domain.

Contrary to Doherty's (1993) approach to SCRs, the present analysis also abides Henry's (1995) interpretation of the Highest Subject Restriction, in which the resumptive pronoun must not occupy the highest subject position in its clause. Indeed, the resumptive is always disallowed from the highest subject position [Spec, TopicP], as it is intrinsically [–topic].

Thus far I have considered SCRs to be TopicPs: that is, TP-based structures with either a null or a resumptive pronoun in [Spec, TP], and with a topic requirement filled by an additional [+topic] DP, which is exposed to the higher clause in [Spec, TopicP]. This approach is advantageous with regard to its consideration of the topic-comment nature of the dialects in which SCRs appear, and its adherence to the Highest Subject Restriction. In the following section, I treat the syntactic distribution of TopicP SCRs.

4.2 Subject Contact Relatives in Presentational Contexts
In this section I account for the limited distribution of SCRs as they appear in certain dialects of English. Recall, in Section 2, that SCRs may occur in *there*-existentials, *it*-clefts, equative sentences, and introductory contexts with verbs such as *know* or *meet*. In fact, Henry (1995:126) notes it is "very difficult to characterize syntactically" what restriction generalizes these contexts; however, they share a specific pragmatic function: namely, topic introduction.

Indeed, SCRs are parallel to a similar discourse structure in standard English: presentational relative clauses. Duffield *et al.* (2010:19) note that in these types of sentences, the matrix subject is "semantically bleached;" it is in fact what modifies the head noun which carries the "assertion of the utterance" (2010:18). In this way, presentational relatives have

both an explicit topic (the modified noun) and a comment (the relative clause). Unlike restrictive relative clauses, removing a presentational relative significantly alters the semantic value of a sentence.

(32) a. I had a son.
     b. I had a son [that was an animal lover.]
     c. I've had a Burmese python, I've had rats, I've had mice [...] I had a son.
     d. I've had a Burmese python, I've had rats, I've had mice [...]
       I had a son [that was an animal lover.]   (Duffield *et al.* 2010:21)

In standard usage, the relative *that was an animal lover* is restrictive; it reduces the subset of possible denotations of *a son* to those that also love animals, leaving the semantics otherwise unchanged (Heim & Kratzer 1998). Thus (32b) differs only from (32a) in providing a smaller set of possible referents for the head noun *a son*. Contrastively, in a presentational context, removing the relative pronoun results in a different semantic interpretation for the sentence. In (32c), *a son* is counted among the dependent pets of the speaker; but in (32d), the reason for the speaker's menagerie is understood in the following presentational relative clause—his son loved animals.

     Similarly, SCRs display an explicit topic-comment structure. Removing the TP "assertion," or comment, changes the semantic value of an SCR sentence.

(33) a. There's one woman in our street [_ went to Spain last year.]
     b. There's one woman in our street. She went to Spain last year.
                             (den Dikken 2005:694–697)

In (33a), the SCR *went to Spain last year* may not be extracted without altering the interpretation of the sentence. Without the contact relative, (33b) asserts that there is "precisely one woman living in the street in question" (den Dikken 2005:697), and she also happened to go to Spain last year. Contrastively, the SCR in (33a) makes no such conclusion about the street's population; there may, in fact, be other women living there who have not visited Spain in the past year. Then, similarly to presentational relatives, SCRs serve a topic-comment function which makes them semantically distinct from restrictive relative clauses.

     Predicates in presentational contexts may take TopicP complements, such as presentational relatives or SCRs. Thus verbs such as *have*, *know*, and *meet*, as well as the copula in *there*-existentials, *it*-clefts, and equatives, all have at least two entries in the lexicon. One entry requires [uD] for a DP complement, as in standard usage, and one requires [uTopic] in presentational contexts. In this way, I ensure the possibility of the DP complement forms evidenced in (32a), (32c), and (33b), which, although not presentational, are still syntactically felicitous.

     Note that this analysis may also be extended to overtly introduced topic structures and post-verbal adjectivals in Belfast English, which Henry (1995) observes both closely resemble SCRs.

     I turn first to overtly introduced topics, which I outlined in Section 3.2.

(34) a. You know John, never shuts his bake.   (Henry 1995:132)
     b. You know [$_{TopicP}$ [$_{DP}$ John$_i$] [$_{Topic'}$ [$_{TP}$ *pro*$_i$ never shuts his bake.]]]

I propose that the overtly introduced topic in (17), repeated here as (34a), is to be analysed as in (34b); that is, with *John* as the topic of the SCR *never shuts his bake*. In this introductory context, *know* requires a TopicP complement. The matrix verb's Theme and accusative case are assigned to *John* thusly, *in situ*.

Henry (1995) also notes that, in addition to *you know*, the verb *see* frequently introduces an overt topic. I argue *see* in such cases is imperative or otherwise has an optionally null but obligatorily second-person subject: *(You) see John, never shuts his bake*. In this way, overtly introduced topics are presentational and can be analysed as TopicP complements of a semantically bleached matrix clause.

Post-verbal adjectivals in Belfast English also demonstrate topic-comment structure with respect to certain finite embedded clauses, as evidenced in (35).

(35) a. He was lucky [_ didn't get caught.]
      b. Mary was as well [_ took the other job.]
      c. *Mary forgot [_ was supposed to go.]
      d. *John is likely [_ will win.]
      e. *He was lucky [Bill didn't catch _.]   (Henry 1995:127–129)

The subject of the embedded clause following an adjectival predicate such as *was lucky* in (35a) or *was as well* in (35b) may be omitted, in much the same way as the resumptive pronoun in an SCR. However, this possibility is limited to post-adjectival contexts: null subjects are unacceptable in the embedded clausal complements of non-adjectival finite Vs (35c) or of raising constructions (35d). Null objects in the embedded clausal complements of adjectivals are also disallowed, as in (35e).

Then, like the presentational-type verbs seen thus far, adjectival predicates in Belfast English also accept topic-comment complements.

(36) a. He was lucky didn't get caught.   (Henry 1995:127)
      b. He$_i$ was lucky [$_{TopicP}$ [$_{DP}$ <he$_i$>] [$_{Topic'}$ [$_{TP}$ *pro*$_i$ didn't get caught.]]]

I analyse (35a), repeated here as (36a), in the same way as an SCR. In (36b), the adjectival predicate *was lucky* takes a TopicP complement, composed of the topic DP *he* and the TP comment *didn't get caught*. Further, the matrix predicate must assign Theme, and the matrix T has [uCase:Nom]. As *he* is without a Theta-role, and no C-boundary exists between the clauses, it receives Theme from the matrix verb. Further, *he* is selected by T for raising and receiving nominative case. This sequence of operations results in the surface order in (36a).

In this section, I have argued SCRs are limited to contexts wherein verbs take TopicP complements. Furthermore, I have examined several types of presentational structures in standard English and Belfast English, which may be analysed similarly; this suggests the robustness of the present hypothesis. What remains is to account for the restricted appearance of SCRs cross-dialectally.

4.3 Dialectal Restrictions on Subject Contact Relatives
In this section, I address dialectal variation in the permissibility of SCRs in standard English, Belfast English, and Ulster Scots. In particular, I discuss why these structures may be found

in certain dialects, but not in standard English; and I address pragmatic differences in the set of valid topics and topic-introducing contexts between Belfast English and Ulster Scots.

Firstly, as seen in Section 4.2, presentational sentences are permitted in standard English; however, SCRs are not. But I have analysed standard English presentational relative clauses as analogous to the topic-comment structures of SCRs. Then it would seem SCRs should also be acceptable in standard English, as both are merely TopicPs.

However, TopicPs in standard English, Belfast English, and Ulster Scots need not be identical. In Section 4.1, I argued that English restrictive relatives and object contact relatives involve CP complements of the modified DP; SCRs, by contrast, contain TPs. The complement of the modified DP in standard English may necessarily be a CP, whereas in Belfast English and other dialects, either a CP or a TP is acceptable.

That is, in standard English, Topic bears the selectional feature [uC]; in other varieties, two versions of Topic exist, one bearing [uC] and one bearing [uT]. This rules out SCRs in standard English, as a TP complement does not satisfy [uC]. Meanwhile, this duplicity permits restrictive relative clauses and object contact relatives in presentational contexts in all dialects of English, where Topic may select a CP complement to satisfy [uC]. Thus, the ungrammaticality of SCRs in standard English is a syntactic constraint on the feature specification of Topic.

I turn now to differences among dialects which permit SCRs. In particular, in Belfast English, SCRs may not appear modifying definite DPs in presentational sentences, nor may they occur sentence-initially; in Ulster Scots, nevertheless, these types are grammatical.

Firstly, in Ulster Scots, definite descriptions are valid topics for SCRs in general presentational sentences, as in (37).

(37) a. We met a man [_ had a lock o money.]
      b. We met the man [_ had a lock o money.]   (Montgomery 2006:309)

In Ulster Scots, in a presentational sentence, the topic DP of an SCR may either be indefinite, as *a man* in (37a), or definite, as *the man* in (37b). However, as Montgomery (2006) notes, definite descriptions such as (37b) may not appear with SCRs in general presentational sentences in Belfast English.

Pragmatically, new information—such as a new topic—is usually introduced as an indefinite DP (Saeed 2009:206); thereafter it is considered given, "conversationally salient" information. The discourse in (37a), for example, might continue with "The man owned a golden pocket watch and drove a red Ferrari." As *a man* was introduced to the discourse context in the previous sentence, this contextually salient entity may now be indicated with *the*. The use of a definite description to introduce new information in (37b) is thus pragmatically odd.

Then Belfast English behaves as expected with regard to introducing new material with indefinite TopicPs. Ulster Scots is perhaps more lenient in what is an acceptable formulation for new topic information. I posit this is a pragmatic constraint: at LF, the element in [Spec, TopicP] is examined, and if it is definite, a referent must exist in the present discourse context. If no such entity is available in the discourse, there is an option—more readily available in Ulster Scots than in other dialects—to add such an entity to the context as a new topic.

Ulster Scots, but not Belfast English, also allows SCRs to appear sentence-initially.

(38) a. The man [_ stole the car] leeves nixt dorr. (Ulster Scots)
(Montgomery 2006:309)

b. *The person [_ could help you with that] is John.[13] (Belfast English)
(den Dikken 2005:699)

In Ulster Scots, an SCR may appear modifying the matrix subject, such as the subject *the man* in (38a), reiterated from (10b). However, such subject modification is invalid in Belfast English, as (38b) (Section 2's (8)) demonstrates with *the person*.

Once again, Belfast English and Ulster Scots vary with respect to a pragmatic constraint. According to Behaghel's Second Law, old information usually precedes novel information in a given sentence (Murray 2006). In Belfast English, then, new topic information is restricted to a post-verbal position. Ulster Scots again allows some variation in this regard; however, Montgomery (2006) observes that the contact relative as in (38a) must be given level and not falling intonation in order to be interpretable. Ulster Scots sentence-initial SCRs are thus an exception to an otherwise general pragmatic constraint.

It is worth noting that the judgements in Belfast English and Ulster Scots, above, are from elicitation tasks and are not native speaker productions (Montgomery 2006). Thus it is difficult to determine the precise role of discourse in identifying valid topics for SCRs. It may be that, in dearth of any provided discourse context in an elicitation task, Ulster Scots speakers are simply more willing to accept definite descriptions as new topics, and thus as specifiers of TopicPs. This may not be the case in established discourses; such an investigation awaits further study.

In any case, I treat this as a pragmatic preference, and not a syntactic rule, as definite descriptions are valid topics of SCRs in certain other clause types in Belfast English.

(39) He's the one stole the money. (Henry 1995:125)

As in (4c), reiterated here as (39), the definite DP *the one* may be modified by an SCR inside of an equative sentence. Then in Ulster Scots, the pragmatic constraints on new topic information, specifically, the preferences for indefinite DPs and right-edge structures, are weaker than in Belfast English.

In sum, I have accounted for the structure of SCRs as TopicPs composed of a [+topic] DP and a comment TP. These TopicP structures are restricted to topic-presenting contexts. Furthermore, syntactic and pragmatic constraints determine their dialectal distribution. The final section of my paper compares this analysis overall with those of Doherty (1993) and Henry (1995).

5. Conclusion

I have now provided an overview of subject contact relatives in Belfast English and Ulster Scots. Below, I summarize the structure and distribution of these constructions, and I compare my results to the approaches of Doherty (1993) and Henry (1995).

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[13] I postulate it is the subject position of the topic DP, and not its definiteness, that rules this example out. As noted in Section 2, definite topics may appear post-verbally with equatives in Belfast English.

I have analysed SCRs as TopicP structures. Like Doherty (1993), I suggest SCRs are composed of a TP element, with a null or possibly resumptive pronoun in [Spec, TP], which is coreferential with the modified DP. However, alongside Henry (1995), I argue that this modified DP is necessarily a potential topic. In the present analysis, this DP is merged at [Spec, TopicP] to satisfy the clause's overt [+topic] requirement. Notably, this treatment abides the Highest Subject Restriction (McCloskey 1990) in both presented formulations. Firstly, the resumptive pronoun is A'-free. Secondly, the highest subject position [Spec, TopicP] is never filled by the resumptive pronoun, a restriction which Doherty's analysis fails to meet.

I have also restricted SCRs to presentational contexts, where TopicP is desired to introduce a new topic element. Hence I explain the topic-comment structure of SCRs, as observed by Henry (1995). I have identified presentational constructions in standard English and in Belfast English that demonstrate similar topic-comment functions and may also be analysed as TopicPs.

Finally, I accounted for dialectal differences with syntactic and pragmatic constraints. Specifically, in standard English, Topic bears the selectional feature [uC], whereas in other dialects it bears [uC] or [uT]. Since SCRs require TP complements, they are disallowed in standard English. Moreover, a pragmatic restriction on new discourse information being non-definite and right-aligned produces the distinction between Belfast English and Ulster Scots; however, as I have noted, this constraint is not absolute.

In sum, the present analysis limits which DPs and predicates allow SCRs, as suggested by Doherty (1993); but I also construe SCRs as topic-comment structures, as put forth by Henry (1995). Overall, I have provided a broader cross-dialectal description of the data, restricting SCRs from standard English syntactically, and within certain constructions, pragmatically.

It remains to be defined precisely how pragmatics influences the syntax of Belfast English and Ulster Scots, allowing definite DPs in [Spec, TopicP] and sentence-initial SCRs in one but not the other. For this, further study of natural discourse productions is necessary. I might also examine how else pragmatic information—in particular, topic-comment structure—influences the syntactic derivation. We have thus far seen the impact of discourse in the SCRs of English; what other pragmatic differences exist between dialects and across languages remains a question for further research.

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