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COMMITMENT PHRASE: LINKING PROPOSITION TO

ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE*

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This article brings empirical support for the projection of a Commitment Phrase (CommitP) in the field that maps the conversational pragmatics at the left periphery of clauses. Krifka (2015, 2019, 2020) proposes CommitP as a projection that maps the speaker's commitment to act on the proposition insofar as s/he has evidence for the truth-condition or expects the addressee to produce and commit to such evidence. CommitP replaces Ross's (1970) idea that the speaker-hearer is related to the proposition by a speech-act predicate such as *declare*. Krifka argues for the alternative approach primarily on theoretical grounds. This article verifies and validates this proposal on the basis of Japanese sentence final particles and Romanian speech act particles. We extend our analysis beyond these languages that overtly mark the CommitP to a language such as English, which does not, by proposing an analysis of so-called biased questions that incorporates the CommitP.

1. Background

Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in issues related to the performative hypothesis of Ross (1970). The origin of this renewed effort to look at what has come to be called the *syntacticization of discourse* is the work by Speas and

*We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers for providing extensive comments and suggestions.

the CommitP to a language such as English, which does not, by proposing an analysis of so-called biased questions that incorporates the CommitP. Tenny (2003), who suggested that we need to recognize, as Ross did, that an expression has as part of its syntactic structure a representation of the speaker and the addressee. Mindful of the criticism that Ross's proposal faced for truth condition, Speas and Tenny only proposed that the speaker-addressee representations are syntactically projected above the CP, with no material providing information about the relation of the speaker-addressee to the proposition.¹ A number of works arguing for a similar perspective have emerged since Speas and Tenny (e.g., Haegeman and Hill 2013; Miyagawa 2012, 2017, 2022; Portner, Pak and Zanuttini 2019; Shapiro 2020; Sigurðsson 2004, 2011 2019; Wiltschko 2014, 2017, 2021, 2022; Zanuttini 2008).

The growing body of evidence for the syntactic representation of the speaker-addressee naturally leads to the question: how are speaker and addressee connected to the proposition? Assuming with Ross that this higher representation relates to the speech act of the expression, that is, to what the speaker is *doing* with the expression, what precisely is the content of the action on the part of the speaker to the addressee in relation to the proposition? In a series of works, Krifka (2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020) proposes a way to connect the speech act portion to the proposition without triggering the kind of truth-condition problem associated with Ross's idea. Following Pierce's (1934) notion of social aspects of commitment, and adopting Frege's (1918)

¹ The problem with truth condition pointed out for Ross's proposal is as follows. Ross argued that a declarative such as *prices slumped* is associated with the superstructure, *I declare to you, prices slumped*. However, the two have distinct truth conditions, thus they mean different things (Lewis 1970, Lakoff 1975).

tri-partite system of cognitive processing (see also Tuzet 2006), Krifka (2017, 2019, 2020) proposes a superordinate structure that reflects three distinct semantic operations (the following is taken from Frey and Meinunger 2019: 121; see also Krifka 2020):

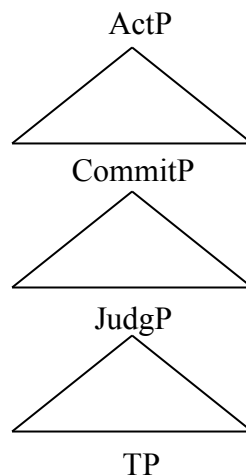
- (1) a. A thought/proposition ϕ which has truth conditions.
- b. A judgment of a person x concerning a proposition ϕ , a private act.
- c. An assertion of a person x of a proposition ϕ , a public act.

(1a) is the traditional proposition with its truth conditions, and it is syntactically in the lowest position of the three layers represented in (1). The layer above the proposition encodes the judgment by the speaker of his/her attitude toward the proposition; examples of items that occur in this layer include a subjunctive epistemic such as *probably* and the German modal verb *sollen* ‘ought’ (Krifka 2017, 2020). It is a private act because the speaker is not intending any kind of action directed at the addressee. Krifka names this layer JudgmentP. The top layer, which Krifka labels ActP, is related to the speaker’s performance of a speech act. As Krifka (2014, 2020) and Frey and Meinunger (2019) note, this top layer is the locus of the illocutionary force of the expression, which directly reflects Ross’s original idea for the performative projection. The illocutionary force embodies the action that the speaker is taking by uttering the expression, and as such, it is a public act.

Along with these three layers of structure, Krifka argues that there is a fourth layer between ActP and JudgmentP called the Commitment Phrase (CommitP). This projection encodes the notion that speech acts should be understood as an expression of public commitments, not the mentalist approach of intentions or beliefs that we

find, for example, in Gricean pragmatics (see also Bach and Harnish 1979; Truckenbrodt 2006; Green 2007; Brabanter and Dendale 2008; MacFarlane 2011; Geurts 2019; Krifka 2019, 2020). It is this CommitP that relates the speaker and the addressee to the proposition, without the problem Ross encountered with truth conditions.² The commitment layer expresses the idea that “in an illocutionary act the speaker takes on certain commitments; for example, in an assertion, the speaker takes on the liability that the asserted proposition is true [. . .]” (Krifka 2014, 65). For related work, see Peirce (1934, 384), Searle (1969, 29; 1979, 12), Brandom (1983; 1994, chap. 3), Wright (1992), Alston (2000), MacFarlane (2003, 2005), and Krifka (2015, 2020).³ Krifka’s proposal has the syntactic structure in (2).

(2)



Geurts (2019, 3) explains how commitment connects the speaker-addressee with the proposition: “commitment is a three-place relation between two individuals, [the speaker] and [the addressee], and a propositional content, p: [the speaker] is

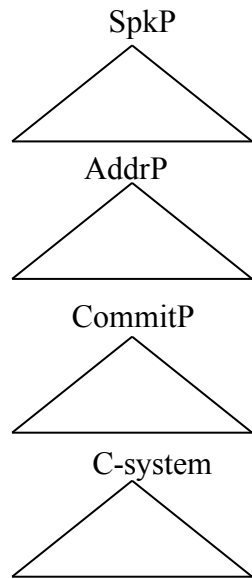
² CommitP is reminiscent of Wiltschko’s (2017) *grounding phrase* layer, where the speaker’s or the addressee’s commitment toward the proposition of the utterance is encoded (see also Wiltschko and Heim 2016).

³ Portner et al. (2019) propose a cP around the same position as CommitP, but its function is fundamentally different: it contains “meanings involving the relation between the speaker and interlocutor-addressee” (Portner et al. 2019: 12), such as politeness.

committed to [the addressee] to act on p [. . .].” The *act* could be the speaker committing to the truthfulness of p, which is for assertions, or to commit to making p true, in the case of commissives (see Bach and Harnish 1979). A directive commits the speaker to the goal of the addressee making p come true (Geurts 2019, 10; see Green 2007:76 for an opposing view). Questions can fall under directives on the assumption that they are requests for information (e.g., Frege 1918).

Accepting the basic proposal by Krifka, Miyagawa (2022) proposes two modifications. First, in order to clarify the role of ActP as the locus of illocutionary force, Miyagawa argues that this top projection should be associated with the speaker and the addressee, as Speas and Tenny (2003) originally argued following Ross. Miyagawa names this the Speaker-Addressee Phrase (SAP), echoing the speech-act Phrase (saP) of Speas and Tenny. Second, Miyagawa questions the need to include JudgmentP as a standard representation. Frey and Meinunger (2019) give arguments for the JudgmentP based on several types of topicalization in German, but Miyagawa (2022) shows that these arguments do not necessarily force us to postulate the JudgmentP; instead, their observations can be accounted for through more general properties of topicalization. The structure in Miyagawa (2022) is shown in (3)

(3)



The SpkP + AddrP and the CommitP comprise the syntactic representation of speech act (SAP) and corresponds to Ross's performative structure. The C-system, which represents the articulated CP as proposed in Rizzi (1997) and others, contains the proposition, and is the locus of truth condition.

2. Motivating the Commitment Phrase: Japanese

There is sufficient evidence for the SAP from a variety of languages (see, for example, Miyagawa 2022 and references therein). However, apart from one piece of evidence in Miyagawa (2022), and Krifka's (2020) suggestion that certain sentence adverbials like German *echt* and *ungelogen* express commitment levels, CommitP remains empirically unmotivated. It is conceptually motivated in that it replaces the mentalist approach in Ross's proposal. In the remainder of this paper, we will give two pieces of evidence, one extending the analysis of Japanese sentential particles in Miyagawa (2022), the other a new argument based on a sentential particle in Romanian.

2.1. Japanese sentential particles *yo* and *ne*

As the name indicates, sentential final particles in Japanese occur at the end of an utterance and express a variety of notions, such as the speaker's uncertainty about the truthfulness of the proposition, emphasizing the truthfulness of the proposition, and asking the addressee about the truthfulness of the proposition, among others. While there are approximately ten SFPs, around five are most commonly used, and of these, *yo* and *ne* are the most frequent (see Miyagawa 2022 and references therein).

(4) Hanako-wa kur-u yo.

Hanako-TOP come-PRS YO

'Hanako will come for sure.'

(5) Hanako-wa kur-u ne?

Hanako-TOP come-PRS NE

'Hanako will come, right?'

Suzuki (1976), extending the works of traditional grammarians Yamada (1908), Tokieda (1951) and Sakuma (1952), categorizes SFPs as speaker-oriented and addressee-oriented, and puts *yo* in the former and *ne* in the latter (see also Uyeno 1971). However, there is reason to believe that while *ne* is addressee-oriented, *yo* is associated with the CommitP.

It has been argued that sentential particles are associated with a head in what Miyagawa (2022) calls the treetop structure: see such works as Bayer (2012, 2018, 2020) and Haegeman and Hill (2013) for Germanic, and Endo (2010) and Saito (2015) for Japanese. Based on the assumption that *yo* and *ne* are associated with some head (see Endo 2010, Saito 2015), Miyagawa (2022) notes that *yo* and *ne* may co-

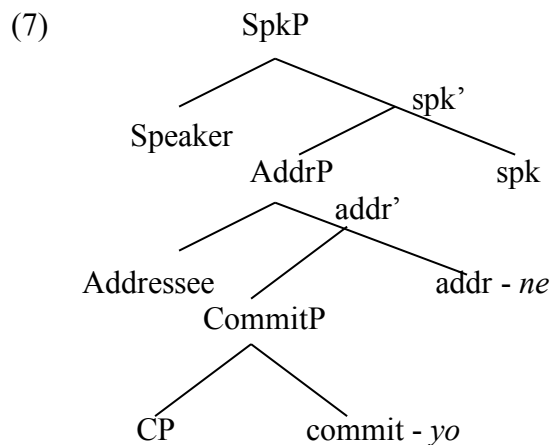
occur, but the order is not reflective of *yo* being speaker-oriented. As shown in (6), the order is *yo-ne*, but never **ne-yo*.

(6) Hanako-wa ik-u yo ne? (*ne yo)

Hanako-TOP go-PRS YO NE

‘Hanako will go, right?’

As noted in Miyagawa (2022), if *yo* were speaker-oriented, as suggested by Suzuki (1976), we would instead expect the order *ne-yo*, with *ne* on the addressee head and *yo* on the speaker head, but this is impossible. Instead, Miyagawa (2022) argues that this ordering is evidence that *yo* occurs on the head of CommitP, as in (7).



Expanding on what Miyagawa (2022) presented, whenever there is an SFP combination, as in *ne-yo*, one SFP may represent a participant-orientation (speaker or addressee), while the other cannot, simply because the two SFPs cannot represent two independent participants. We see this in the ungrammatical combinations between the addressee-oriented *ne* and any of the SFPs characterized in traditional grammar as speaker-oriented used for emphasis (e.g., Suzuki 1976): **ne-zo*, **ne-sa*, **ne-wa*. From this fact alone, we can tell that *yo* in *yo-ne* cannot be speaker-oriented because *ne* is

addressee-oriented. Since it occurs below the addressee-oriented *ne* and, as we will see below, above the Q-particle at C, it must be in the domain of CommitP. Unlike in Miyagawa (2022), in which the order of SpkP > AddrP is critical for arguing that *yo* is in the CommitP, our new account need not depend on this assumption. In particular, the argument for *yo* as a CommitP element goes through even in an alternative proposal in which AddrP > SpkP, as argued by Wiltschko (2021). Later we will give evidence from Romanin for the SpkP > AddrP order.

2.2. Further evidence for *yo* in CommitP

To further give evidence for *yo* being associated with CommitP, we can see that *yo* must be above the CP, as shown in (8), where C contains the question particle *ka*.

- (8) *Hanako-wa ik-u yo ka?
 Hanako-TOP go-PRS YO Q
 ‘Will Hanako go?’

As indicated, *yo* cannot occur below the question particle *ka* on C. On the other hand it is possible for *yo* to occur above *ka*, as noted by Saito (2015), and shown in (9). This is consistent with *yo* occurring above CP, in the domain of CommitP.

- (9) a. Dare-ga soko-ni ik-u ka yo!
 who-NOM there-to go-PRS Q YO
 ‘Who will go there? = No one will go there!’
- b. Taroo-ni nani-ga deki-ru ka yo!
 Taro-DAT what-NOM can.do-PRS Q YO
 ‘What can Taro do? = Taro can’t do anything!’

As noted in Miyagawa (2022), the *ka-yo* combination always results in a rhetorical question, as Saito’s English translations indicate. This rhetorical interpretation is made possible by the use of the question particle *ka* that, according to Oguro (2015), possesses a negative element.⁴ Below, we will see that this is consistent with the idea that *yo* indicates that the person committing to the truth of the proposition has evidence for it, thus *yo* is a kind of evidential on commitment.

So far, we saw structural evidence that *yo* occurs above the CP, as we see with the *ka-yo* sequence, and below AddrP, as seen in *yo-ne*, thus giving empirical motivation for the projection of CommitP. We turn to its interpretation to further motivate this projection.

If *yo* were associated with the speaker and *ne* with the addressee, as noted by Suzuki (1976) and others, the *yo-ne* combination in (6) above would be predicted to have two speech acts, one in which the speaker presumably asserts emphatically the truthfulness of the proposition, and, in addition, the speaker asks the addressee for confirmation of the truthfulness of p. In fact, the utterance is associated with just one speech act, which is associated with the addressee-oriented *ne* that asks the addressee to confirm the truthfulness of the proposition. What, then, is the function of *yo*? What is the difference between an utterance with and without *yo*? Consider (10).

(10) a. Hanako-ga ik-u yo.

Hanako-NOM go-PRS YO

‘Hanako will go!’

b. Hanako-ga ik-u.

⁴A reviewer notes that the fact that *yo* occurs above the question particle *ka* can also be viewed as *yo* occurring in the SpkP projection. However, as we have noted above, *yo* cannot represent a participant.

Hanako-NOM go-PRS

‘Hanako will go.’

We argue that the difference here has to do with the notion of evidentiality, namely, in the (b) sentence without *yo*, the speaker is simply committing to the addressee that *p* is true, while with *yo* in (a), the speaker in addition is indicating that *s/he* has evidence for making this commitment.⁵ In this way, *yo* attaches to the head of CommitP to enhance the commitment by indicating that the speaker has evidence to base it on. This is similar to verum focus assertions in English, as in *Hanako WILL go* or *Indeed, Hanako will go*. By using *yo*, the speaker conveys a stronger commitment to the proposition, with the consequence of higher social costs if the proposition turns out to be false.⁶

Second, we note that *yo* is not necessarily speaker-oriented by revisiting the *yo-ne* combination in (6), repeated below as (11a), along with a version without *yo*.

(11) a. Hanako-wa ik-u yo ne?

Hanako-TOP go-PRS YO NE

‘Hanako will go, right?’

b. Hanako-wa ik-u ne?

Hanako-TOP go-PRS NE

‘Hanako will go, right?’

In (11b), without *yo*, the speaker is asking the addressee to confirm the truthfulness of

⁵ Oguro (2021) analyzes *yo* as addressee-oriented: “I am talking to you.” On this account, the combination *yo-ne* would comprise two addressee heads, something we do not see in other combinations. On our account *yo* is below Addr, thus allowing *ne* to occur as the addressee head. We thank an anonymous reviewer for bringing this paper to our attention.

⁶We thank a reviewer for noting this point.

the proposition. For (11a), the question is whether this *yo* relates to the speaker or the hearer. If earlier studies are true, we would expect it to be necessarily linked to the speaker. However, if *yo* is associated with the CommitP, as in our proposal, it need not be linked to the speaker. We believe that *yo* in (11a) is associated with the addressee, something we have confirmed with a number of native speakers. Following the evidential analysis of *yo* above, the speaker is asking the hearer not only to confirm the truthfulness of the proposition, but that the addressee make a stronger commitment to it, with a higher social cost if it turns out to be false. On this analysis, *yo* is clearly not speaker-oriented, since it can be linked to the addressee as well, to indicate evidentiality for the commitment, in this case, on the part of the addressee.

There are two further points we wish to note. First, we saw earlier that *yo* can occur with a question only if the question is interpreted as rhetorical. This makes sense on the evidential analysis of *yo*, since a pure question would not assert truthfulness with evidence, while a rhetorical question is semantically a declarative, which readily allows an interpretation of an assertion with evidence.

Second, we might ask, why can't *yo* in *yo-ne* be associated with the speaker? We could imagine an interpretation in which the speaker is asking the addressee to confirm the truthfulness of the proposition with *ne* while suggesting that the proposition is actually true with *yo*, a state of affairs that has been described for English biased questions, which we will take up below. Considering the hierarchy in (7), it follows that *yo* is blocked from being associated with the speaker by locality. In the structure we suggest for *ne* and *yo*, *ne* is on the AddrP head and *yo* below that, on the CommitP head. By this configuration, *ne* intervenes between *yo* on the CommitP head and the speaker head, which occurs above the AddrP. By minimality, *yo* is blocked from connecting to the speaker due to the intervening *ne*.

3. Motivating the Commitment Phrase: Romanian

Romanian provides a plethora of speech act particles whose meaning is partly lexical and partly read off the syntactic configuration; e.g., *hai* is lexically an injunctive that can turn into an evidential in certain structures (Hill 2014). The particularity of this language is that it displays dedicated speaker oriented particles (on a par with other Balkan languages) that may cooccur with addressee oriented particles and/or with vocative phrases (VocP). The strict order of these elements inform us on the hierarchy between SpkP and AddrP at the left periphery of clauses.

3.1. Hierarchy

In this section, we import evidence from current studies for a SpkP > AddrP hierarchy within the SAP domain (Hill 2007). The assumption, in agreement with a number of studies (Costa Moreira 2013; Haegeman 2014; Stavrou 2014 a.o.), is that VocP occupies Spec,AddrP and checks the [addressee] pragmatic role. Consider the constraints on word order in (12) and (13) in relation to VocP.

In (12), Romanian *vai* expresses the speaker's psychological state (on a par with Rom. *aoleu* or Bulg. *lele*). These particles may only precede VocP, the reverse order is ungrammatical if we maintain one intonation unit (only one high pitch).

- (12) a. Vai Dane, fii atent.
VAI Dan.VOC be.IMP.2SG careful
'Oh-my-God Dan, be careful.'
- b. *Dane vai, fii atent.
Dan.VOC VAI be careful

Insofar as word order mirrors hierarchy, the restriction in (12) indicates SpkP >

AddrP.

Romanian *hai* is an injunctive addressee oriented particle that qualifies as an Addr head (Haegeman & Hill 2013 a.o.), which explains the addition to it of the allocutive agreement for 2nd person plural, amounting to *haideți* in (13). Hence, it is expected to follow VocP in Spec, AddrP, as in (13a). However, when the particle also expresses the speaker's impatience or irritation in addition to the injunction, it may precede VocP as in (13b). (13b) should not be grammatical unless SpkP is higher than AddrP, and *hai* moved from Addr to Spk.

(13) a. Fetelor haideți să plecăm.

girls.the.voc HAI.2PL SBJV go.1PL

'C'mon girls, let's go.'

b. Haideți fetelor să plecăm.

HAI.2PL girls.the.VOC SBJV go.1PL

'C'mon girls, let's go.'

These data bring empirical support to Speas & Tenny's (2003) hierarchy, and it is adopted in this article since Romanian particles are also included in the justification of a CommitP.⁷

3.2. Commitment

The Romanian particle *zău* expresses the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition, and it implies that the speaker has some evidence for it. Its meaning could be paraphrased as 'I swear', 'cross my heart', 'I guarantee'. Despite its nominal origin (i.e., Latin *deus* 'god'), the particle is not phrasal: it cannot be inflected nor

⁷ We are aware that Wiltchko (2021) argues for the Addr > Ground(Spk) hierarchy. If that is correct for her data, we must assume that parametric variation is at work. Further discussion of this contrast is beyond the scope of this paper, since the CommitP is lower than either of them.

modified; hence, it qualifies as a head.

For the purpose of this paper, the distribution of *zǎu* is considered in clause initial position when it forms one intonational unit with the clause (i.e., one high pitch per unit, no breaks between the particle and the clause). With intonational pauses, the distribution of the particle is relatively free, and the meaning may be nuanced, between commitment and pleading, while the particle carries its own intonational contour.

Minding these caveats, the first observation on the distribution of *zǎu* is that it is restricted to declarative clauses that qualify as Austin's assertives, with an exclusive commitment reading, as in (14a). When *zǎu* does not belong to the same intonational unit with the clause, no sentence type restriction applies, so it may cooccur with an interrogative as in (14b), and the commitment reading turns into pleading or other variations (e.g., irony). The commas indicate intonation breaks.

(14) a. *Zǎu* (cǎ) vine.⁸

ZAU that comes

'S/he comes (I guarantee).'

b. (*Zǎu*), vine, (*zǎu*)?

ZAU comes ZAU

'Is s/he coming (please seriously I want to know)?'

⁸ Out of 15 speakers, seven consider *cǎ* 'that' obligatory to obtain one intonational unit, for the others *cǎ* 'that' is optional, only the clause initial (vs. final) position is obligatory.

In terms of word order, the complementizer *că* ‘that’ is situated in C, more precisely, in Force in Rizzi’s (1998) hierarchy. That is, *că* ‘that’ precedes constituents moved to Topic and contrastive Focus within CP, as shown in (15).

- (15) Zău că [pe Maria] [la munte] o vom trimite, nu la mare.
 ZAU that DOM Maria to mountain her will.1PL send not to sea
 ‘I swear that we will send Maria to the mountains, not to the sea shore.’

The word order in (15) indicates that *zău* merges above C/Force. Consequently, *zău* cannot occur in embedded CPs, as confirmed in (16).

- (16) A promis că (*zău) se va rezolva.
 has promised that ZAU REFL.3 will.3 solve
 ‘S/he promised that this will be solved (*I/S/he guarantee(s)).’

Other particles were shown to merge above C/Force in Romanian. For example, in (13) we mentioned *hai* in Addr head. Crucially, *zău* can only follow (versus precede) *haideți* in the intonational unit, as in (17a) versus (17b).

- (17) a. Haideți zău (că) se va rezolva.
 HAI.2PL ZAU that REFL.3 will.3SG solve
 ‘Take it easy/calm down, this will be solved (I guarantee).’
 b. *Zău haideți (că) se va rezolva.⁹
 ZAU HAI.2PL that REFL.3 will.3SG solve

⁹ This word order is accepted with intonational break between the two particles.

The word order in (17) indicates that, according to the hierarchy in (3), *zău* is sandwiched between AddrP and CP; hence, it merges in CommitP, as predictable from its lexical meaning.

Some Romanian evidentials also have a commitment component in their meaning, and they also occur above *că* ‘that’ when the assurance is expressed as the speaker’s belief based on evidence that the speaker has. For example, *bineînțeleș* ‘certainly’, ‘of course’, ‘surely’ has an adjectival origin (i.e., ‘well-understood’) but behaves as a speech act particle, as in (18a), and is excluded under embedding, as in (18b).

(18) a. Bineînțeleș că vine.

of.course that comes

‘Of course s/he comes.’

b. Promit că (*bineînțeleș) vine.// Promit (*bineînțeleș) că vine.

promise.1SG that of.course comes// promise.1SG of.course that comes

‘I promise that s/he comes (of course/no doubt).’

Relevant to our discussion is the fact that such evidentials occur in complementary distribution with *zău* but not with *hai*, as shown in (19).

(19) a. * Zău bineînțeleș că .../ *bineînțeleș zău că....

ZAU of.course that / of.course ZAU that

b. Hai bineînțeleș că .../ Hai zău că....

HAI of.course that / HAI ZAU that

The complementary distribution between *zău* and *bineînțeleș* indicates that, in

Romanian, CommitP may also be spelled out through evidentials with a commitment component. This semantic blend echoes the discussion on the distribution of Japanese *yo* and *ne*, where the source of evidence (any person versus only the speaker) is essential for deciding where the commitment *yo* is merged in the derivation. Notably, in Romanian, the element that spells out CommitP is constantly bound by the speaker, because there is no intervention effect such as shown with *ne* in Japanese. For example, in (17a), *haideți* moves from Addr to Spk (it expresses the speaker's eagerness to calm the addressee), so *zău* is selected by a cluster of speaker/addressee features. The same is the case for *bineînțeles* in (19b). In Romanian, exclusively hearer oriented clauses (e.g., imperative or interrogative) do not allow for particles with commitment meaning.

One may argue that the complementary distribution between *zău* and *bineînțeles* arises from a semantic clash or tautology, not from syntactic competition. In this respect, we note that evidentials which allow for embedding may actually cooccur with *zău*, as shown in (20), taken from a web page.

(20) Zău că sigur îmi vorbea!

ZAU that certainly to.me spoke.3SG

‘Cross my heart, it certainly spoke to me!’

In (20), *sigur* ‘surely’, ‘certainly’ is speaker oriented and synonymous to *bineînțeles* in (19). The only difference is that *sigur* may occur lower than C, whereas *bineînțeles* may not.¹⁰ Hence, our conclusion holds: high evidentials compete with *zău* for

¹⁰ The syntactic location pairs with other differences between the two items: while *bineînțeles* is exclusively a head expressing the speaker's evaluation, the CP-internal *sigur* may be either speaker or subject oriented, and may allow for phrasal structures as adverbial PPs; see (i).

- (i) [PP în mod sigur] vs. *[PPîn mod bineînțeles]
 in way certain in way certain
- (ii) Bineînțeles/sigur/în mod sigur vor avea de lucru.
 certainly will.3PL have of work
 ‘Certainly they will have work.’

spelling out CommitP.

4. Cross-linguistic implications

The proposal of derivations with CommitP, as in (3), has implications that go beyond the set of languages with overt material in this projection. More precisely, lack of dedicated particles for CommitP, as for example in English, does not mean lack of CommitP from the clause derivation.¹¹ Let us consider the biased questions in English. Reese and Asher (2009) have argued that a question such as in (21) is associated with two speech acts, a question and an assertion.

(21) Does John lift a finger to help around the house?

Along with the question, the inclusion of the polarity item *lift a finger* conveys the speaker's expectation for a negative answer (Borkin 1971), which Reese and Asher suggest is akin to asserting this negative statement (see also Guerzoni 2002; van Rooy 2003). Further evidence for the dual speech act analysis comes from discourse markers *after all*, which is said to mark an assertion, and *tell me*, said to mark a question (Sadock 1974).

(22) a. After all, your advisor is out of the country.

b. #After all, is your advisor out of the country?

(23) a. #Tell me, John owns a car.

b. Tell me, does John own a car?

¹¹A reviewer suggests that adverbs such as *truly* and *definitely* may be interpreted at the CommitP level in English.

The biased question allows both *after all* and *tell me*, suggesting both assertion and question (Reese and Asher 2009):

- (24) a. After all, does John lift a finger to help around the house?
b. Tell me, does John lift a finger to help around the house?

Based on our analysis of *yo* and *zău* as being associated with CommitP, there is another way to view the biased questions. First and foremost, there is only one speech act associated with the utterance, and that speech act is questioning, as indicated by the interrogative form of the expression. The expectation of a negative answer by the speaker is, on our account, not an assertion, but indication that the speaker has evidence for the negative statement, which is expressed as a covert evidential marker on CommitP. This is different from the *yo-ne* configuration, where *yo* is blocked from being associated with the speaker due to minimality. But this is expected because in English, there is nothing comparable to *ne* that intervenes between the CommitP and the speaker head, allowing the evidential element on CommitP to connect to the speaker (as also noticed for Romanian). This predicts that the discourse marker *after all* can occur with pure questions if there is suggestion of evidence in the message behind the question.

- (25) After all, is the Pope Catholic?

This idiom indicates that the point under discussion is obvious, presumably indicating that there is plenty of evidence for it. The question does not contain any polarity item

typical of biased questions, yet *after all* is allowed.

5. Concluding remarks

The evidence we gave for CommitP adds to the arguments given in the literature for the Speaker-Addressee Phrase, together providing what we believe are convincing arguments for the kind of performative structure that Ross originally proposed. A point that runs through all the works related to the performative structure, starting with Ross, is that it is syntax that projects such a structure. This raises questions about the role of syntax in communication. Given the unique nature of language (Chomsky 1966/2009), it is often assumed that language in its core was not designed for communication (e.g., Chomsky 1995), its primary role possibly as a tool for representing thought (Hinzen 2006, Chomsky 2013). However, there is no doubt that the performative structure of SAP - CommitP assists directly in communication by anchoring the utterance in the immediate conversational context of the speaker-addressee. One plausible way to make sense of this ostensible divergence in the view of language is to assume that the core, propositional portion of language is as has been described, possibly the result of a machinery for representing thought. But to make it usable for communication, syntax developed the performative projection in order to relate the core proposition to the actual conversational context. A similar scheme is suggested by Wiltchko (2021, 2022) in what she calls interactional linguistics. Without such projection, language would not be usable for communication, regardless of whether or not it was designed for it.

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