

The marker =*ga* and topicality in Tena Kichwa

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Abstract

Tena Kichwa is an endangered Quechuan (QII) variety spoken in the Ecuadorian Amazon. It exhibits features typical of the Quechuan language family: it is agglutinative, exclusively suffixing, and its word order tends towards SOV, but can vary due to discourse-related factors (cf. Muysken 1995). Also like other Quechuan languages, it has a set of word-final ‘free enclitics’, which, among other functions, are associated with information structural categories such as topic and focus. In this paper, I describe the usage of the Tena Kichwa marker =*ga*. In other Quechuan varieties, the cognates of =*ga* were analysed as markers of topicality (cf. Parker 1969; Cerrón-Palomino 1976; Muysken 1995; Cusihamán 2001; Faller 2002; Sánchez 2010; Muntendam 2015). In this paper, I show that, although associated with topichood, the Tena Kichwa =*ga* cannot be straightforwardly analysed as a topic marker.

Keywords: Quechua; Tena Kichwa; information structure; topic; morphological topic marking; referential expressions; corpus-based research

1. Introduction

I first provide background information on Tena Kichwa (§1.1), and discuss the methodology used in this study (§1.2). Following on from that, I provide definitions of the notions used in this paper (§2) and a brief overview of previous studies of topic-marking in Quechuan languages (§3). Subsequently, I focus on Tena Kichwa. I discuss the morphosyntactic properties of the marker =*ga* and the types of hosts with which occurs in the corpus (§4). Following on from that, I discuss the results of experimental tasks aimed at eliciting TK topical constructions and the role of =*ga* in their marking (§5). Lastly, I summarise the findings discussed in the previous sections and present some conclusions, as well as suggestions for future research (§6).

1.1. Language background

Tena Kichwa (henceforth TK) (QI, Quechuan, Ecuador) is a variety spoken by between 20 (Lewis 2015) and 40 (Moseley 2010) thousand people in the Napo province of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The exact number of speakers is hard to evaluate, due to absence of official data. Despite the fact that Quechua has an official status as ‘language of intercultural communication’ in Ecuador (ANCE 2008), TK and other Amazonian varieties are endangered, mostly due to the interruption of intergenerational transmission. A great majority of the adult TK-speaking population is also bilingual in Spanish, and, especially in the vicinity of larger population centres, children from TK-speaking communities now tend to acquire Spanish as their first language.

Quechuan languages are agglutinative and (almost) exclusively suffixing, and TK is no exception in this respect. Like other members of the language family, TK has two main grammatical categories: verbs and nominals, each associated with a distinct set of derivational and inflectional markers. Although the dominant word order is SOV, Quechuan languages have also been characterised as discourse-configurational (cf. e.g. Muysken 1995), since the order of constituents is often determined by pragmatic or information structural factors. Languages belonging to the Quechuan family tend to have word-final ‘free enclitics’,

which attach to hosts from all grammatical categories. In TK, these enclitics exhibit a range of epistemic and discourse cohesive meanings, and are associated with information structural categories. While TK is in many respects similar to other representatives of the Quechuan language family, its morphological structure is simpler than that of the more ‘conservative’ Peruvian varieties (cf. e.g. Adelaar with Muysken 2004). For instance, TK only exhibits residual object marking on the verb. Given that TK is spoken in the Amazonian lowlands, and most Quechuan languages are used in the Andes, it is not surprising that the TK lexicon differs substantially from those of related highland varieties.

1.2. Methodology of data collection and analysis

This study adopts a semasiological approach, focusing on the enclitic =*ga*, and investigating its distribution and meaning on the basis of evidence from both discourse and elicited data.

The data analysed in this paper was collected during 10 months of fieldwork in the province of Napo, Ecuador, in 2013 and 2014. During that time, I collaborated with a team of native speakers of TK. Together, we created a 13h corpus of transcribed and translated discourse, 2h of which have also been annotated with morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. The entire corpus was recorded in audio and video formats, and comprises a range of genres differing in spontaneity. The parsed-and-glossed part of the corpus consists of elicited discourse, that is, communicative events prompted by the use of different visual stimuli, including the Pear Story (Chafe 1980), map tasks (cf. Skopeteas et al. 2006), and other video-and picture based tasks (cf. Evans et al. 2004; Skopeteas et al. 2006).

Moreover, in line with the observation that basing one’s analysis of language solely on naturalistic discourse is insufficient (cf. Matthewson 2004), I have also conducted grammatical elicitation sessions, including judgement and translation tasks, as well as tasks involving description of visual stimuli. The visual stimuli which were of major importance for the analysis developed in this paper are elicitations based on the Questionnaire on Information Structure (QUIS) tasks for one informant (cf. Skopeteas et al. 2006), aimed at investigating the strategies of marking topicality. I used the QUIS tasks (Skopeteas et al. 2006) after having adapted them to my fieldwork environment (see §5.2).

The examples used in this paper come above all from recorded interviews and elicitation sessions – in such cases, the reference to the name of the recording and the utterance within the recording is made underneath the example. Some examples were attested in natural discourse, in which case they are marked as ‘attested’, and others were obtained in unrecorded elicitation, and are marked as ‘elicited’.

2. Definitions

Before discussing the strategies of topic-marking in Quechuan languages, it is in order to clarify how topic and related notions are understood in this paper.

I understand topic as the referent which the proposition is ‘about’ (cf. e.g. Reinhardt 1982; Lambrecht 1994: 188 and references therein; Krifka 2008). The aboutness relation holds between the referent and the proposition when ‘the referent is assumed by the speaker to be a centre of current interest, about which the assertion is made’ (Nikolaeva 2001: 4-5; cf. Kiss 1998: 9). It follows that topic is part of the pragmatic presupposition, sufficiently prominent to be considered the centre of attention by both interlocutors. An important property of topic expressions is that they are referential, that is, they designate entities in the text external world. Consequently, propositions about them can be evaluated as true or false (cf. e.g. Lambrecht 1994).

‘Aboutness’ topics can be divided into different sub-categories, e.g. (1) aboutness-shift topics, which introduce a new discourse topic, replacing the previous one (2) contrastive topics and (3) familiar topics (Frascarelli 2007: 693). Sánchez (2010) used these categories to describe topic marking in Cuzco Quechua. They are also relevant to the description of TK. In §5, I show that in TK topics of type (1) and (2) are much more likely to be marked with =*ga* than familiar topics.

Contrastive topic expressions occur when a question is too complex for the answer to be based on one single topic (Krifka 1999; Féry & Krifka 2008: 129). They are topical, because they refer to an entity about which further information is required, and contrastive, because they come with alternatives – information is needed about more than one topical referent (cf. Krifka 1999: 114). The function of a contrastive topic is to indicate that the answer is partial (Krifka 1999: 121).¹

A different IS configuration arises when a clause has more than one topic. In such cases, a distinction can be made between a primary and secondary topic (cf. Nikolaeva 2001; Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011). The ‘secondary topic’ is a pragmatically presupposed element, such that the utterance is constructed about the relationship between that element and the primary topic (Nikolaeva 2001: 2). Secondary topics share the properties of primary topics in that they need to be referential and specific, so that the propositions about them can be evaluated with respect to truth-or-falsity.

Another type of topic expressions are ‘frames’ or ‘clause external topics’ (cf. Chafe 1976; Li & Thompson 1976): expressions setting a ‘spatial, temporal or individual framework within which the main predication holds’. Cross-linguistically, these expressions often correspond to adverbials (Nikolaeva 2001: 11). In the TK data, demonstrative pronouns were attested to be the most frequent frame-setting topics (see §5.2).

The last information structural category relevant to the description of the TK =*ga* is that of ‘background’. Background consists of presupposed content, which is not topical, but specifies details necessary for a complete understanding of focused information (Butt & Holloway King 2000).

In the following sections, I briefly discuss the morphosyntactic strategies of marking topicality in TK and other Quechuan. Consequently, I focus on the properties and distribution of =*ga*, showing how its occurrences correspond to the categories discussed above.

3. Strategies of marking topicality in Quechuan languages

Cross-linguistically, the topic-designating status of a constituent is most often represented by (1) adjustment of constituent order, (2) structure of expressions designating topical referents (used of definite articles, pronouns etc.), and/or (3) presence of the morphological marking of topical status (cf. e.g. Lambrecht 1994: ch. 4).

The literature concerned with morphological and syntactic marking of information structural categories in Quechua focuses in particular on the Peruvian varieties. This includes studies devoted only to marking information structural categories (Muysken 1995; Sánchez 2010), and analysis of such marking within grammatical descriptions of Peruvian Quechua varieties (e.g. Cusihuamán 1976/2001; Weber 1996). In this literature, enclitics associated with focal

¹ In referring to topics as ‘contrastive’, I assume that contrast is an IS category separate from, and orthogonal to, topic and focus; this issue is not discussed here in more detail for reasons of space.

status of constituents, also analysed as evidential markers, are usually discussed in more detail than marking associated with topicality (cf. e.g. Muysken 1995). An exception from this rule is Sánchez (2010) who discusses the syntactic and morphological marking of both topic and focus. To my knowledge, descriptions of information structure marking in Quechuan varieties spoken outside Peru are very limited. For Bolivian Quechua, Muntendam (2015) describes the marking of focus, and – to some extent – topic. As far as I am aware, no studies devoted specifically to information structure exist for Ecuadorian Quechua.

The main focus of this paper is on the distribution and functions of the marker =*ga*. Consequently, the syntactic means of expressing topicality in TK and other Quechuan languages are only briefly discussed. Prosodic or lexical strategies involved in topic marking are not discussed for reasons of space.

Sánchez (2010: ch.3) observes that in Southern Quechua, encompassing several Peruvian varieties, constituents designating topics can occur in any position in the clause. Constituents corresponding to argument focus, on the other hand, can occur clause-initially and clause medially, but not post-verbally at the right edge of the clause. These observations were confirmed by other authors studying Quechua information structure (cf. Cerrón-Palomino 1987; Muysken 1995; Muntendam 2015).

According to Sánchez, topics can be morphologically marked (with the enclitic =*qa*) when they occur *in situ* or clause-initially. She shows that when topical material appears post-verbally at the right edge of the clause, or is right-detached, it tends not to be marked morphologically. She argues that right-dislocated topical constituents are used for disambiguation between potential topics of sentences or discourse, produced after the speaker notices a possible ambiguity (Sánchez 2010: 190-5). Furthermore, the studies show that multiple constituents in the same clause can be marked with the cognates of =*ga* (Muysken 1995; Sánchez 2010). Previous studies also establish that the cognates of =*ga* can only occur on clausal heads, and on constituents of main clauses (Weber 1996: 514; Muysken 1995: 381; Sánchez 2010: 43).

The above observations are only partially applicable to TK. As far as the data show, in transitive TK clauses SOV is not the dominant word order, with SVO being equally permissible. This, in turn, makes it difficult to define the *in situ* position for both focal and topical constituents. Moreover, within TK main clauses, both focal and topical constituents can occur in any position. Nonetheless, TK is similar to other Quechuan varieties in that the enclitics associated with topic and focus tend to appear on the left-peripheral constituents (cf. Sánchez 2010: 182), and =*ga* can occur on multiple constituents in the same clause. In TK, the enclitics associated with information structural categories, including =*ga*, occur - like in other Quechuan - only on clausal heads. Unlike in other varieties, however, they are not limited to constituents of main clauses.

4. Distribution of =*ga* with different types of hosts

As mentioned above, in all Quechuan varieties for which it has been described, =*ga*² or its cognates =*ka* and =*qa* have been analysed as topic markers (e.g. Parker 1969; Cerrón-Palomino 1976; Muysken 1995; Cusihamán 2001; Faller 2002; Sánchez 2010; Muntendam 2015). On the other hand, the analyses of the enclitic provide relatively little description of

² In Unified Kichwa, the Quechuan variety endorsed by the Ecuadorian government and taught in schools in the TK-speaking communities, there is no contrast between the voiced and unvoiced velar stops, and the marker is pronounced [ka] in all environments. Consequently, intra-speaker variation exists in TK between the [ka] and [ga] pronunciations. In what follows, I will be referring to the marker as =*ga*.

the discourse contexts in which it occurs. Typical examples involve cognates of =ga attaching to referential NPs. Such presentation leads us to believe that topic marking in Quechuan languages is a mirror-image of the marking of aboutness topics in better-described languages (cf. e.g. Lambrecht 1994). In this section, I show that distributional evidence from TK calls for a more complex analysis.

The description of the distributional properties of =ga presented here is based on the 2:03h excerpt of the TK corpus, containing ‘elicited discourse’, mentioned in §1.2. This part of the corpus contained 1537 turns³, in which 112 tokens of =ga were attested. This means that the marker only occurred in about 7.3 percent of turns. While I have not counted all the clauses in the corpus which contain topical constituents, it is reasonable to assume that the =ga-marked constituents make up a small percentage of all expressions designating topical referents in the corpus. This low frequency is in line with findings from e.g. Bolivian Quechua, where low frequency and restrictions of topic marking to particular grammatical contexts led Muntendam (2015: 224) to conclude that in the varieties she describes morphological marking of topic (and focus) is gradually lost.

Let us come back to the TK data. Table 1 presents the breakdown of the tokens of =ga with different types of hosts in the 2h corpus of elicited discourse.

Table 1: Distribution of =ga with different types of hosts

Host	N	Pro	V	Adv	Part	All
No of tokens	25	53	17	11	6	112
% of tokens	22.3	47.3	15.2	9.8	5.4	100

Table 1 shows that almost 70 percent of the token of =ga occur on nouns, and personal and demonstrative pronouns. Further 15.2 percent occur on verbs, all of which are non-finite or nominalised (see discussion below). Further 9.8 percent occur on adverbs of place and time. The remaining 5 percent of the tokens occur on discourse connectives such as ‘on the other hand’ (*randi*) (n=5) and ‘then’ (*shinakpi*, lit. ‘being like this’) (n=1).

While the fact that 70 percent of the tokens of =ga occur on nouns and pronouns is consistent with its interpretation as a marker of topic, the remaining 30 percent is more problematic if =ga is to be interpreted as topic marker in TK. I come back to this issue below.

As an enclitic, the marker =ga always attaches at the right edge of the host, following the inflectional morphology:

- (1) *Chimandaga,* *mayta* *rina* *rangay,*
 chi -manda=**ga** may =ta ri -na ra -nga =y
 D.DEM -ABL =GA where=INTER go-INF do -FUT=EMPH
- kay* *wagra* *shayashkamandaga?*
 kay wagra shaya -shka-mand =**ga**
 P.DEM cow stand -ANT -ABL =GA
 “From there, where should one go, from where the cow is standing?”

³ In this paper, ‘turn’ is loosely understood as an utterance of a discourse participant delimited by the utterances of their interlocutor(s).

[el_22102014_01 013]

Example (1) shows =*ga* occurring twice: on a pronoun functioning as the head of an oblique NP, and on a nominalised verb in a locative relative clause, co-referential with the =*ga*-marked NP. As mentioned previously, =*ga* always attaches to the head of the phrase. The contrast between (2a) and (2b) shows that =*ga* is not permissible on clausal dependents.

- (2) a. [*Chi ñambiga*] *mayta rin, awapurama?*
 chi ñambi=**ga** may =ta ri -n awa - pura-ma
 D.DEM path =GA where=INTER go-3 high - side -DAT
 “Where does this road go, up?”

[el_28112014_06 050]

- b. *[*chi=**ga** ñambi*] *mayta rin, awapurama?*
 chi=**ga** ñambi may =ta ri -n awa -pura -ma

While (2) demonstrates that =*ga* attaches to heads of NPs, the marker also occurs on heads of verbal and adverbial phrases (see below). The examples above show that =*ga* can occur on subjects, as in (2(2)), and obliques, as in (1). In the corpus, =*ga* was also attested to occur on object NPs. In both examples above, all the hosts of =*ga* could be analysed as topical.

As mentioned above, =*ga* also occurs on verbs and adverbs. In (1), it attaches to a nominalised verb within a headless relative clause. In the 2h corpus discussed here, 17 tokens of =*ga* occurred on verbal hosts. In all these cases, =*ga* occurred on non-finite verbs – i.e. verbs not inflected for tense and person. Five tokens occurred on verbs affixed with suffixes -*kpi* (DS) and -*sha* (SS), indicating actions concomitant to that expressed by the main verb. Examples of such construction are given in (3) and (4):

- (3) *Pichka dollarwa paganun. Ña pagajpiga, ñukaga kurani...*
 pichka dollar-wa paga-nun ña paga-kpi=**ga** ñuka=**ga** kura-ni
 five dollar-DIM pay -3PL well pay -DS =GA 1SG =GA cure-1
 [The patients] pay five dollars. Now, [when they] pay, I cure [them] ...
 [in_07072013_01 166]

- (4) *Shinarajpi timbrariajpiga maskan mochilama.*
 shinarajpi timbra-ria -kpi=**ga** maska -n mochila -ma
 therefore sound -CONT-DS =GA look.for -3 backpack-DAT
 So then when [the phone] rings, [he] looks in the backpack.
 [el_05122014_01 027]

In both examples above, =*ga* attaches to a subordinate verb, which is not a referential expression; this shows that the marker also occurs on expressions which cannot be analysed as topical. The only other Quechuan variety in which the cognate of =*ga* was reported to occur on non-nominalised verbs is Huánuco Quechua (Weber 1989). Weber observed that =*qa* only occurs on main verbs if the action denoted by the verb has been mentioned previously (cf. Weber 1989: 416 and references therein). In TK, speakers seem to use =*ga* on subordinate and main verbs when they consider actions denoted by them as mutually identifiable. This is the case in (3), where the marker occurred both on the pronoun designating the topic of the main clause, and on the verbal head of the subordinate clause. Note that in this case, the =*ga*-marked action was introduced in the preceding clause, which

means that it is textually accessible, and is under the scope of pragmatic presupposition. Example (4) comes from a story in which the protagonist is searching for his phone. When the consultant uttered (4), he has not previously mentioned ringing, but had mentioned the phone, therefore evoking a discourse frame (Prince 1981) in which the concept of ringing can be taken as presupposed. This shows that the TK =ga can occur on verbs encoding accessible concepts, irrespective of whether the accessibility is textual or inferential (cf. Prince 1981).

The remaining twelve tokens of =ga on verbal hosts, attested in the discussed part of the corpus, all occurred on nominalised verbs inside relative clauses. These examples could be reconciled with the interpretation of =ga as a topic marker, since nominalised verbs in TK are referential: they function as arguments of verbs, and designate entities in the discourse-external world. Consider:

- (5) [Kinrira pasaw]_{RC} warmiga ...
kinri -ta pasa -w warmi =ga
across -ACC pass -PROG woman=GA
- [bicicletay ajka]_{RC}, rinma
bicicleta -pi a -k =ga ri -n =ma
bicycle -LOC be -AG.NMLZ =GA go-3 =FOC
karura rinma pay ña.
karu -ta ri -n =ma pay ña
far -ACC go-3 =FOC 3SG already
“The woman who passed to the side, who was on the bicycle, goes,
well, she goes far.”
- [el_25092014_02 54]

Example (5) contains two relative clauses, one of which is marked with =ga. The marker also occurs on the head of both clauses, the subject noun warmi=ga (woman=GA), with which the =ga-marked RC is co-referential. Consider also (6), where the marker occurs on the adverbial modifier within the relative clause:

- (6) Shuk punda maskaw, [washaga ak]_{RC}
shu punda maska -w washa =ga a -k
one first look.for -PROG after =GA be -AG.NMLZ
- shuk, [kipalla aj]_{RC} shina chikan.
shu kipa =lla a -k shina chikan
one last =LIM be -AG.NMLZ like.this apart
“One is looking first, the one who is after, the one who is younger also
[looks], apart.”
- [el_16082013_02 060]

In (6) above, the RC is co-referential with the topical, =ga-marked subject. In (6), the occurrence of =ga on the first relative clause could be interpreted as designating a contrastive topic (see §2), since the reference of both relative clauses are candidates for topicality. The marker =ga attaches to the locative adverb *washa* (after), since the two referents competing for topical status contrast in position, designated by the adverb.

The examples above indicate that in relative clauses, unlike in NPs, =*ga* does not seem to have a fixed position. Nonetheless, it always occurs on heads of either VPs or AdvPs, which confirms the observation that it only attaches to phrasal heads. These examples also illustrate another issue: that of the scope of the marker. When occurring on NPs, =*ga* takes scope over the entire phrase, as in examples (1) and (2) above. When occurring on non-finite verbs, as in (3) and (4), =*ga* takes scope over the whole subordinate clause. The scope properties of =*ga* in relative clauses require a closer investigation, but a preliminary analysis suggest that independently of its position within it, =*ga* takes scope over the whole RC.

In the 2h part of the corpus analysed here, =*ga* was not attested on finite verbs. In the bigger, 11h corpus of conversational data, =*ga* also mainly occurs on verbal hosts in environments described above. However, occurrences on finite verbs are also attested:

- (7) *Cumuna kallarishkawnara iyay chariniga...*
 cumuna kallari-shka-guna-ta iya-y chari-ni=**ga**
 community begin -ANT -PL -ACC thought-OBJ.NMLZ have -1=**GA**
I remember [lit. have an idea] the ones who started the community...
 [KICHB07AGOPEDROCHIMBO1 015]

Example (7) comes from an interview with a community elder, who is an expert on the history of the community and is interviewed for that very reason. This excerpt shows that, on finite verbs, =*ga* could be interpreted as marking a presupposed proposition as relevant to the understanding of the current discourse, and thus corresponding to the information structural category of background (see §2). When occurring on the finite verb, =*ga* seems to take scope over the entire proposition.

The last type of hosts on which =*ga* was encountered in the corpus are discourse connectives. Consider:

- (8) *Shinakpiga ansa llaki llaki tukunchi kuna tiempo.*
 shinakpi =**ga** ansa llaki llaki tuku-nchi kuna tiempo
 therefore=**GA** some feeling feeling become-1PL now time
 “So then these days we have become quite troubled.”
 [KICHB07AGOPEDROCHIMBO2 150]

- (9) *Mana. Ñukajpi randiga shuk tunu.*
 mana ñuka-k -pi randi =**ga** shu tunu
 NEG 1SG-BEN-LOC rather =**GA** one manner
 “No. In mine [the video I watched], on the other hand, it [was] different.”
 [el_05122014_01 045]

In the examples above, the discourse connectives establish a link between a proposition from prior discourse with the current utterance. Therefore, similarly to (7) above, the occurrences of =*ga* in these two examples could be interpreted as marking the relevance of the previously data show that =*ga* is judged ungrammatical co-occurring on the same host with the various enclitics related to the focal status of constituents.

In this section, I have shown that on nominal and pronominal hosts, =*ga* coincides with topical material. On other types of hosts, it co-occurs with different types of previously

mentioned – and hence presupposed – information, relevant to the current utterance. The occurrence of =ga on discourse connectives requires a more in-depth analysis involving more examples.

It should be underlined that in none of the contexts described above is =ga grammatically required to occur. Its occurrences seem to be motivated by discourse context and felicity conditions of utterances, rather than required for grammatical well-formedness of clauses. The meaning conveyed by =ga cannot be questioned or negated, which suggest that the marker makes no contribution to the truth-conditions of the utterance. Moreover, despite the marker’s imperfect alignment with topical material, the data show that =ga is judged ungrammatical co-occurring on the same host with the various enclitics related to the focal status of constituents.

In this section, I have shown that on nominal and pronominal hosts, =ga coincides with topical material. On other types of hosts, it co-occurs with different types of presupposed information, relevant to the current discourse.

5. The TK marker =ga and topicality

The previous section has shown that analysing the TK =ga as a marker of topicality is problematic, due to its low frequency in discourse, and to the fact that it does not always occur on topical material. In this section, I discuss the occurrence of =ga in naturalistic discourse (§5.1) and in picture-based elicitation tasks (§5.2). The aim of this discussion is to compare the distribution of =ga in such environments with that expected of a marker of topicality. On the basis of such comparison, I will draw further conclusions on the relationship between the marker =ga and topichood in TK.

5.1. Distribution of =ga in discourse

As discussed in §4, =ga only occurred in 7.3 percent of turns in the elicited discourse corpus. Nonetheless, as also mentioned in the previous section, a vast majority of the tokens of =ga occurred on topical hosts. Moreover, the marker is judged ungrammatical on constituents designating new, unanchored referents (Prince 1981). Example (10) shows a grammatical utterance which would typically be a beginning of a narrative ((10a)), as well as its ungrammatical, =ga-marked equivalent ((10b)). It also presents a context in which =ga can be used grammatically: (10c). The topical expressions are underlined.

- (10) a. *Shu kuti tiaka shu ruku runa...*
 shu kuti tia-ka shu ruku runa
 one time be-PST one old man
 “Once upon a time there was an old man...”
- b. **Shu kuti tia-ka shu ruku runa=ga*
 one time be-PST one old man=GA
- c. *Shu kuti tiaka shu ruku runa.*
 Shu kuti tia-ka shu ruku runa
 one time be-PST one old man
- Kay runaga sachay kawsaka.*
 kay runa=ga sacha -pi kawsa-ka
 D.DEM man=GA jungle-LOC live -PST
 “Once upon a time there was an old man. This man lived
 in [the] jungle.”

[elicited]

The above shows that, as would be expected of a marker associated with topicality, =*ga* is not permissible when the referent is first introduced into discourse. Discourse initial sentences, such as (10a), are usuallythetic – they only consist of new information and introduce new referents, rather than being ‘about’ them. On the other hand, =*ga* can occur when the referent is considered given, as shown in (10c). Such distribution is in line with properties of topical expressions as defined e.g. by Lambrecht (1994).

The marker =*ga* can also occur on expressions designating referents/concepts which have not been textually evoked in recent discourse and are not active, but can be assumed to be identifiable for both the speaker and the hearer. Example (11) illustrates the perhaps most frequent use of =*ga* in everyday TK discourse:

- (11) *Jennyga?*
 Jenny =**ga**
 NAME=**GA**
 “What about Jenny?” / “Where is Jenny?”

[attested]

Such questions are often used discourse-initially, to enquire about someone or something known to both interlocutors. The responses that follow such utterances often omit the subject constituent altogether. Another use of =*ga* common in everyday discourse is to mark constituents designating discourse participants, who are inherently given:

- (12) A: *Kawsanguichu?*
 kawsa-ngui=chu
 live -2 =Q/NEG
- B: *Allimi kawsani. Kanga?*
 alli =mi kawsa-ni. Kan=**ga**
 good=FOC live -1 2SG=**GA**
- A: “How are you?”
 B: “I am well, and you?”

[attested]

In examples such (12), =*ga* could be interpreted as marking the change of topic. In fact, it is also often used in parallel structures, where there is more than one ‘candidate’ for topicality:

- (13) *Shujka apasha rin bicicletay*
 shu =**ga** apa -sha ri -n bicicleta -pi
 one =**GA** bring-SS go-3 bicycle -LOC
- churasha, shi wawawnaga randi*
 chura-sha shu wawa-guna=**ga** randi
 put -SS one child -PL =**GA** rather
- chayta rinun kinrira anaj purara*
 chay -ta ri -nun kinri -ta anak pura-ta
 D.DEM-ACC go-3PL across-ACC above side -ACC

“One [the boy] is taking [it] having put [it] on the bike one....the children,
on the other hand, go there, across towards the top...”

[el_18092014_02 032]

Example (13) is an excerpt from a retelling of the Pear Story (Chafe 1980). The speaker is describing the final moments of the story, where the boy who stole the pears and the group of boys whom he met on the road go their separate ways. Therefore, both the pear-thief and the group of three boys are potentially topical. The referents designating them are both marked with =*ga*, which can be an indicator of topic change. The occurrence of =*ga* in parallel structures is further discussed in §5.2.

The examples above are of frequent discourse contexts in which =*ga* tends to occur in TK. These examples reinforce the suggestion the conclusion presented at the end of §4, that while =*ga* cannot be interpreted as a topic marker due to its low frequency, and certain distributional evidence, it does exhibit an association with topichood. This claim is further examined in the following section.

5.2. Distribution of =*ga* in elicitation tasks

In this section, I describe the preliminary results of an elicitation tasks based on QUIS (Skopeteas et al. 2006) – the ‘Questionnaire on Information Structure’. As mentioned in §1.2, the original questionnaire was adapted for my fieldwork conditions, which involved, above all, adapting the visual stimuli for the social context of the Ecuadorian Amazon. I have worked on the questionnaire with two consultants, and have conducted elicitation sessions for both one and two participants. While I acknowledge that two is a very small number of consultants to be involved in such tasks, these elicitations were not envisaged as the sole source of information about how topical referents are coded in discourse. Rather, they were aimed at corroborating patterns attested in naturalistic discourse. Moreover, the authors of QUIS have assumed that the consultants will be familiar with certain mental constructs and abstractions which are acquired in particular educational contexts, mostly absent from my field site. As a consequence, finding consultants who would be willing and able to work through a lengthy and complicated questionnaire like QUIS was by no means a trivial task.

For reasons of space, I only report here on selected aspects of the elicitation tasks. I report the outcomes of three tasks in which sequences of images were used to check how topical referents were encoded in discourse. While the entire task involved both transitive and intransitive verbs, no major differences occurred in the ways in which given and new referents were marked in transitive and intransitive predicates. I also discuss the issues related to the overall frequency of =*ga* in the QUIS elicitation tasks.

The first task on which I report here consisted of presenting the consultant with four pictures, and telling them they were meant to form a sequence (QUIS task 1: Changes). While the agent and the action performed by the agent were the same in all four pictures, the patient referent changed in each one. The assumption behind the task was that the agent should acquire topical status and be encoded adequately. Below, I present the pictures in sequence in which they were given to the consultants (in single-consultant sessions), and, below each picture, provide the descriptions provided by one of the consultants. The expression designating the intended topical referent is underlined in each of the examples.



Image 1

- (14) *Kaybi* *shu...shu warmi* *pujllawn* *pelotawa.*
kay -pi *shu shu warmi* *pujlla-w-n* *pelota-wa*
 D.DEM-LOC one one woman play -PROG-3 ball -INSTR
 “There, a...a woman is playing with a ball.”

[el_27112014_01 48]



Image 2

- (15) *Kaybi* *randiga* *chi* *warmillara*
kay -bi *randi=ga* *chi* *warmi =llara*
 D.DEM-LOC rather=GA one woman=ID.REF

llachapawnara *nijtawn.*
llachapa-guna-ta *nijta-w-n*
 cloth -PL -ACC kick-PROG-3

“Now on the other hand, that same woman is kicking [some] clothes.”

[el_27112014_01 049]



Image 3

- (16) *Kaybiga* *magnara* *nijtawn* *pi ñarisha.*
 kay -bi =ga manga-ta nijta-w-n, pi ña -ri -sha
 D.DEM-LOC=GA pot -ACC kick-PROG-3 be.angry-ANTIC-SS
 “There now, [she] is kicking [a] pot, annoyed.”
 [el_27112014_01 050]



Image 4

- (17) *Kaybiga* *ashangara* *nijtawn.*
 kay -bi =ga ashanga-ta nijta-w -n
 D.DEM-LOC=GA basket -ACC kick-PROG-3
 “Here, [she] is kicking [a] basket.”
 [el_27112014_01 051]

The consultant whose responses are presented above encoded the intended topical subject first with an indefinite NP in example (14), then with definite NP in example (15), and then elided the topical constituent altogether in (16) and (17). Such encoding is in line with the subject’s given/topic status, but what requires further consideration is the fact that the enclitic =ga occurs not on the intended topical referent, but on the demonstrative referring to the sheet of paper with the picture. Therefore, a question arises whether it was indeed the women in the picture who was interpreted as the topic of the sequence of pictures, or whether it was rather each new sheet of paper which was considered to be the topic of the utterance. If the latter is the case, the sentence-initial locative pronouns could be analysed as ‘frame-setting

topics', mentioned in §2. In fact, the locative pronouns were the most frequent hosts for =*ga* in the QUIS elicitation data.

The overall frequency of =*ga* in the QUIS elicitation data was much higher than in other parts of the corpus: almost 38 percent (n=347) of all utterances elicited during the QUIS sessions were marked with =*ga*. This distributional difference can be explained with a much higher frequency of 'frame-setting' topics in the QUIS elicitations, compared to naturalistic discourse. In the QUIS elicitation, 347 clauses contained 353 instances of =*ga*. Of those, almost 74 percent (n=261) occurred on frame-setting, clause external topic expressions, listed in Table 2:

Table 2: QUIS data: =*ga* on clause-external topical expressions

Host	kay-bi	kay-ma	kay	chi- manda	randi	kuna	ALL
Gloss	P.DEM- LOC	P.DEM- DAT	P.DEM	D.DEM- ABL	rather / on the other hand	now	
No of tokens	242	10	3	3	2	1	261

Most often, =*ga* occurred on the locative pronoun *kaybi* (P.DEM-LOC). The occurrence of =*ga* on this type of hosts is exemplified in (16) and (17) above. Note that one of the clause-external topical expressions listed in Table 2 is the discourse connective *randi*, shown in (15) and in discussed in §4 (example (9)). The other 'frame-setting' topical hosts of =*ga* are not discussed here in more detail for reasons of space.

The second task I discuss is similar to the one presented above. This time, in the sequence of four pictures both the subject/agent and object/patient remained the same throughout. This could potentially give rise to a primary/secondary topic articulation. The images are, again, presented in the same order in which they were shown to the consultants.



Image 5

- (18) *Kaybi* *shu warmi*, *awawn* *ashangara*
 kay -pi shu warmi awa -w -n ashanga-ta,
 P.DEM-LOC one woman weave-PROG-SS basket -ACC

asisha tian, rikusha paywa tasara awawsha.
 asi-sha tia-n riku-sha pay-pa tasa-ta awa-w -sha
 laugh-SS be-3 see -SS 3SG-GEN basket-ACC sew-PROG-SS
 “Here, a woman is weaving a basket, she is sitting, laughing, looking,
 weaving her basket.”

[el_27112014_02 019]

**Image 6**

(19) *Kaybi awasha tukuchisha paywa ahangara.*
 kay -pi awa -sha tuku-chi -shka pay-pa ashanga-ta
 P.DEM-LOC weave-SS finish-CAUS-ANT 3SG-GEN basket -ACC
 “Now [she] has finished weaving her basket.”

[el_27112014_02 020]

**Image 7**

(20) *Kuna mayllawn yachin kayta.*
 kuna maylla-w-n yachi-n kay-ta
 now wash -PROG-3 seem-3 D.DEM-ACC
 “Now it seems [she] is washing [it].”

[el_27112014_02 022]



Image 8

- (21) *Kaybi* *pay* *tasara* *tukuchisha* *ña*
 kay-pi pay tasa-ta tuku-chi -sha ña
 P.DEM-LOC 3SG basket-ACC finish-CAUS-SS well
- chagrama* *apasha* *riwn,* *lumu* *apangaj.*
 chagra-ma apa -sha ri-w-n lumu apa-ngaj
 field -DAT take-SS go-PROG-3 manioc bring-PURP
 “Here, having finished her basket, now she goes to [the] field to bring manioc.”

[el_27112014_02 024]

In the task reported above, the woman is the topic, while the basket could be considered the secondary topic (cf. Nikolaeva 2001). Responses to the questionnaire show that in TK, the syntactic means of expressing topicality are consistent with those common cross-linguistically; topical referents are referred to with definite NPs, or constituents designating them are elided altogether. In TK discourse, topical NPs are often right-dislocated. Note that in examples (18) through (21) =*ga* was not used even once. The primary topic – the woman – was treated similarly as in the previous task – first introduced with an indefinite NP (18), then referred to with a possessive pronoun (19) in the NP designating the secondary topic, elided altogether in (20), and again designated by a possessive pronoun in (21). As for the secondary topic – the basket – it was either referred to with a lexical NP, as in (18), (19) and (21) or with a demonstrative pronoun, as in (20). Although =*ga* did not occur in the responses to this task, both primary topics, as shown above, and secondary topics in TK can be marked with =*ga*. I come back to the issue of secondary topic marking below.

In both elicitation tasks discussed above, the intended topical referents were not marked with =*ga*. However, the marker did appear in the third task, which I report below (QUIS Task 18: Who does what). In this task, the consultants were presented with one picture (see Image 9), in which two agents were involved in different activities. This picture was aimed to elicit parallel structures, where more than one referent which could potentially be topical:



Image 9

- (22) *Kay* _____ *runa* *naranjara* *llushtiwn.* (4s) *Shu warmiga*
 kay runa naranja-ta llushti-w-n shu warmi =ga
 P.DEM man orange -ACC peel-PROG-3 one woman=GA

palandara yanungarawn yachin, mikungawa.
 palanda-ta yanu-nga ra-w-n yachi-n miku-nga-wa.
 plantain-ACC cook-FUT AUX-PROG-3 seem-3 eat-FUT-PURP

Kariga *naranjara.*
 kari=ga naranja-ta
 man=GA orange -ACC

“This man well...is peeling [an] orange, as for [the] woman, she will cook [the] plantain, it seems, to eat, as for the man, [an] orange.”

[el_27112014_04 044-46]

Example (22) is a description of Image 9. Note that the topic which is introduced first is not marked with =ga. The second topic, the woman, is introduced with =ga-marking, and when the speaker switches back to the man, she uses =ga again to re-introduce him as topical.

In fact, in response to stimuli similar to Image 9, both consultants consistently marked the constituent designating the second referent with =ga, while the referent they mentioned first was generally unmarked. Over the course of the elicitation tasks, they were presented with multiple images resembling Image 9, and the results were always similar. When I asked whether it would be possible not to mark the second subject referent with =ga, the response was affirmative, but the consultant immediately proceeded to produce an example to illustrate such a sentence, and he did nonetheless mark the second subject NP with =ga. The marker can also be used to indicate which one of the competing secondary topics is under discussion:

- (23) Q: Pedro charindzu chibillara y shinallara palandara?
 Pedro charin=chu chibilla -ta y shinallara palada -ta
 NAME have =Q/NEG pineapple-ACC and also plantain-ACC

A: *Pedro chibillallara charin. Palandaraga*
 Pedro chibi=lla -ta chari-n palanda-ta =ga
 NAME chibi=LIM-ACC have-3 plantain-ACC=GA

mana charin kaybi, illaj.
 mana chari-n kay -bi illa -k
 NEG have-3 P.DEM-LOC lack-AG.NMLZ

Q: “Does Pedro have a pineapple and also plantain?”

A: “Pedro has only pineapple. As for plantain, [he] doesn’t have it,
 [he] lacks [it] here.”

[el_05122014_04 079-80]

In the exchange in, the primary topic is Pedro. His possessions are secondary topics, since both utterances are about Pedro’s relationship to them. The primary topic is the same throughout, and coded as null in the second clause of the answer. However, since there is more than one candidate for secondary topichood, the change of secondary topic is marked with =*ga* in the second clause of the answer.

In fact, parallel structures are the most frequent context for occurrence of =*ga* on nouns and personal pronouns in the QUIS elicitation data. These constructions are widely considered contrastive (cf. Repp 2010: 1339 and references therein) because they involve a restricted set of explicit, identifiable alternatives.

The examples above show that TK makes use of cross-linguistically common syntactic strategies of topic marking for both primary and secondary topics, including use of demonstratives (allowing establishing unique reference), expressing established topics by means of pronominal phrases, deletion of the topic constituent etc. However, it is only in very specific cases such as parallel structures that the use of the marker =*ga* occurs spontaneously in elicitation contexts. This is in line with the examples discussed in §4, where it was shown that =*ga* tends to occur in context where it signals a change of topic, or presupposed material relevant to the current discourse. Thus, if we take into account the definitions introduced in §2, =*ga* can be expected to occur on contrastive and aboutness-shift topics, it is not likely to surface on familiar topics. The marker can also occur on background material, frame-setting topics, and on (contrastive) secondary topics.

6. Summary and conclusions

In this paper, I have focused on the TK topic marker =*ga*. I have shown that, unlike in other varieties of Quechua, =*ga* cannot be interpreted as a marker of topicality. This is due to its low frequency in natural discourse, showcasing its non-obligatory occurrence on topical expressions. This non-obligatoriness was also shown on the basis of elicitation data, in which =*ga* did not attach systematically to topical expressions. Another argument against analysing the enclitic =*ga* as a marker of topical status is that it can also occur on non-referential expressions, such as subordinate and finite verbs.

Nonetheless, I have shown that =*ga* occurs on primary and secondary topics, as well as on frame-setting topics and backgrounded constituents. Thus, the TK =*ga* could be analysed as a marker associated with topichood, attaching to presupposed content which the speaker wishes to make active again in the mind of the addressee, or which contrasts with other presupposed information. However, further research is needed to spell this analysis out in more detail.

A more detailed investigation into the occurrence of =*ga* and syntactic strategies used to mark topicality would be beneficial for our understating of how topicality is marked in TK, and of the discourse functions of the enclitic =*ga*. An additional hypothesis to be considered is that, similarly to what has been described for Bolivian Quechua (cf. Muntendam 2015), the

morphological marking of topic and focus in TK is gradually lost, and the low frequency of =ga is the result of this process of language change.

Abbreviations

1: first person; 2: second person; 3: third person; ABL: ablative; ACC: accusative; AG: agent; ANT: anterior; ANTIC: anticausative; AUX: auxiliary; BEN: benefactive; CAUS: causative; CONT: continuative; D: distal; DAT: dative; DEM: demonstrative; DIM: diminutive; DS: different subject; EMPH: emphatic; FOC: focus; FUT: future; GEN: genitive; INF: infinitive; IDREF: identity of reference; INSTR: instrumental; INTER: interrogative; LOC: locative; LIM: limitative; NAME: proper name; NEG: negation; NMLZ: nominaliser; OBJ: object; PL: plural; PROG: progressive; PST: past; PURP: purpose; Q: question; SG: singular; SS: same subject.

Note on conventions: Since in Tena Kichwa the nominative case and present tense are zero-marked, they are not glossed in the examples given in this paper. The same obtains for zero-marked 3SUBJ verb agreement. Markers combining person and number features are only glossed for number in the plural. When person agreement occurs on the verb it refers to the subject of the verb.

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