Discourse new, focused and given

Michael Rochemont

Focus is not a uniform notion, either grammatically or interpretively. Following Selkirk 2008 I motivate a distinction between discourse new and marked focus, the former grammatically unmarked, the latter F-marked. I show how default syntax/prosody mapping not only determines discourse new prosody, but also determines prosody in a variety of all-Given accent domains (Schwarzschild 1999, Büring 2006, Féry & Samek-Lodovici 2006) Following Kratzer & Selkirk 2007 and Selkirk 2008, I assume that F-marking is interpreted by alternative semantics (Rooth 1992), G-marking by a modification of Schwarzschild (1999)'s GIVENNESS. I also assume that F- and G-marking are freely assigned. In the resulting system, a node α is (i) F-marked only if the phrasal scope φ of the focus \sim operator corresponding to it has an antecedent in the discourse for its focus semantic value $[[\varphi]]^f$; (ii) G-marked only if $[[\alpha]]^o$ is GIVEN; (iii) F- and G- marked only if $[[\varphi]]^o$ is GIVEN; and (iv) unmarked only if $[[\alpha]]^o$ is not GIVEN. I argue that discourse new is not an Information Structure (IS) trigger for movement, consistent with the hypothesis that discourse new is grammatically unmarked. Finally, I speculate that IS triggers are restricted to just two information structure categories, focused and GIVEN, grammatically represented as F-marked and G-marked, respectively.

Büring, D. 2006. Focus projection and default prominence. In Molnar, V., Winkler, S., (Eds.), The Architecture of Focus. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 321-46.

Féry, C., Samek-Lodovici, V. 2006. Focus projection and prosodic prominence in nested foci. Language 82, 131-50.

Kratzer, A. & Selkirk, E. O. 2007 Phase theory and prosodic spell-out: the case of verbs. The Linguistic Review 24, 93-135.

Rooth, M. 1992. A theory of focus interpretation. Natural Language Semantics 1, 75-116.

Schwarzschild, R. 1999. Givenness, avoid F, and other constraints on the placement of sentence accent. Natural Language Semantics 7, 141-77.

Selkirk, E. O. 2008. Contrastive focus, givenness and the unmarked status of "discourse-new". Acta Linguistica Hungarica 55.3-4, 331-46.