Preverbal foci are syntactically disparate but prosodically uniform

Lena Borise[1], Andreas Schmidt[2] & Balázs Surányi[13]
[1]Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics, [2]University of Potsdam, [3]Pázmány Péter Catholic University

In many V-final languages, narrow foci appear immediately preverbally, preferentially or obligatorily (Kim 1988; Kidwai 1999, a.o.). Syntactically, focus-verb adjacency has been derived (i) either via a functional Spec-Head configuration (= raised), or (ii) via displacement of intervening material (= in-situ). In (i), the focused constituent moves to a dedicated Spec, FP, and the verb raises to F^0, thereby creating adjacency (Hungarian: Bródy 1990; Malayalam: Jayaseelan 1996; Persian: Karimi 2008). Alignment of focus with nuclear stress, which targets Spec, FP, has been hypothesized to trigger movement (Hungarian: Szendrői 2003). In (ii), focus-verb adjacency results from the displacement of intervening material to the left or right periphery (Hindi: Mahajan 1990; Turkish: Şener 2010; Basque: Arregi 2002), motivated either by the information-structural properties of the displaced material (Şener 2010) or by the need for the focused constituent to carry nuclear stress (Arregi 2002). Whether (i) or (ii) is used in a given language can be determined based on e.g., scope facts, the position of the *focus+verb* string within the clause, and verb-inversion phenomena. The availability of two disparate derivations suggests that preverbal focus placement is not a grammatical primitive, but instead represents coincidentally identical outcomes of two different syntactic processes.

In this paper, we offer a unified account of preverbal focus placement of (i) and (ii) types, rooted in the requirements of prosodic structure. Following Hamlaoui & Szendrői (2015), we take an Intonational Phrase (ι) to correspond to the highest syntactic projection that hosts verbal material (HVP), including its specifier, which is enforced by ALIGNHVP-L and ALIGNHVP-R constraints, Optimality Theory-style. Following Féry (2013), we assume that focused constituents align with ι-edges (Focus-as-Alignment=FA), via ALIGN-FOC-ι-R or ALIGN-FOC-ι-L constraints. Nuclear stress, in languages that have it, in the FA approach is also aligned with an ι-edge, enforced by H-ι-R or H-ι-L.

Bringing these analytical components together, we propose that preverbal foci in OV languages are aligned with edges of ι. Raised foci, (i), align with the left edge of ι, being housed in the specifier of XP that also attracts the raised verb (ALIGN-FOC-ι-L; Féry 2013). There, in languages that have nuclear stress, they receive prosodic prominence associated with the left edge of ι (H-ι-L). We illustrate this language type with Hungarian and extend the analysis to Iron Ossetic (Iranian) and Eastern Armenian. In-situ foci, (ii), align with the right edge of ι and receive prosodic prominence there (ALIGN-FOC-ι-R and H-ι-R, if applicable). The material intervening between the focus and the verb is displaced, allowing for the focused constituent to satisfy ALIGN-FOC-ι-R. The verb to the right of the focused constituent routinely undergoes prosodic integration, and does not interfere with right-alignment of focus (Truckenbrodt 2006, Büring 2012). We use Turkish as the illustration and extend the analysis to other Turkic languages (Uyghur, Kazakh) and Georgian (Kartvelian). Overall, bringing together the FA and HVP approaches allows for a unified account of syntactically disparate preverbal foci – a theoretical contribution that, to the best of our knowledge, has not been made before.

References

Arregi, Karlos. 2002. *Focus on Basque movements*. Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Doctoral dissertation.

Bródy, Michael. 1990. Some remarks on the focus field in Hungarian. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 2(20). 1–25.

Büring, Daniel. 2012. Predicate Integration – Phrase Structure or Argument Structure? In: Ivona Kucerova and Ad Neeleman (eds.), *Contrasts and Positions in Information Structure*. Cambridge University Press. 27-47.

Féry, Caroline. 2013. Focus as prosodic alignment. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*. Springer 31(3). 683–734.

Hamlaoui, Fatima & Kriszta Szendrői. 2015. A flexible approach to the syntax-phonology mapping of intonational phrases. *Phonology* 32(1). 79–110.

Jayaseelan, Karattuparambil A. 1996. Question-word movement to focus and scrambling in Malayalam. *Linguistic Analysis* 26(27). 63–83.

Karimi, Simin. 2008. *A minimalist approach to scrambling: Evidence from Persian*. Vol. 76. Berlin; New York: de Gruyter.

Kidwai, Ayesha. 1999. Word order and focus positions in Universal Grammar. In Georges Rebuschi & Laurice Tuller (eds.), *The grammar of focus*, 213–244. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Kim, Alan Hyun-Oak. 1988. Preverbal focusing and type XXIII languages. In Michael Hammond, Edith A. Moravcsik & Jessica Wirth (eds.), *Studies in syntactic typology*, 147–169. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing.

Mahajan, Anoop Kumar. 1990. *The A/A-bar distinction and movement theory*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology PhD Thesis.

Şener, Serkan. 2010. *(Non-) Peripheral Matters in Turkish Syntax*. University of Connecticut Doctoral dissertation.

Truckenbrodt, Hubert. 2006. Phrasal Stress. In *The Encyclopedia of Languages and Linguistics*. Ed. by Keith Brown, vol. 9. Oxford: Elsevier. 572-579.