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## The influence of focus on word order: The case of French attributive adjectives

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Strategies of focus marking are widely discussed (Kügler & Calhoun, 2020, a.o.). Hardly differentiating focused and given elements by phonetic cues (Hamlaoui et al., 2012), French rather marks focus by means of phrasal cues using boundary tones (Féry, 2001). Syntactically, French tends to place focused elements in sentence-final position (Vander Klok et al., 2018). Whether this also holds inside the noun phrase (NP) has been proposed but not yet empirically proven. In fact, Nölke (1996) claims that (1a.) and (b.) differ as a function of information structure. While in (1a.) the adjective ‘excellent’ occupies the focus position, (1b.) would be appropriate either if only the noun is focused or if the entire NP is focused.

- (1) a. un livre excellent    b. un excellent livre  
      a *book excellent*        a *excellent book*    ‘an excellent book’

To investigate the relation between word order and focus, we conducted two studies to assess the comprehension of adjective-noun sequences that allow for variable linearization. In a 7-point Likert scale acceptability judgment task (adapted from van Leur, 2021), participants were presented with context-target sentence pairs. To test the effect of focus on the position of adjectives, focus was either on the noun, on the adjective or on the entire NP in the target sentence. The target sentence contained the adjective-noun pairs either in A-N order (prenominal adjective) or in N-A order (postnominal adjective). The second study consisted of a forced-choice task with the same context-target pair set-up. Showing two possible target sentences (A-N or N-A order), participants were asked to choose the one that (better) matched the context. If participants are sensitive to focus, our predictions are that for both experiments they prefer the A-N version, when the noun or the entire NP is focused. They would prefer the N-A version when the adjective is focused. The results of our experiments will contribute to the strategies of focus marking inside European French NPs.

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