
Variability in syntactic focus marking: a flexible approach

Kriszta Eszter Szendrői¹

¹Universität Wien, Institut für Sprachwissenschaft

kriszta.szendroi@univie.ac.at

My talk will be concerned with focus movement in languages where a focal constituent can be displaced to what looks like a designated focus position. I will start by raising some empirical and theoretical issues facing the main-stream idea that the grammar would encode a syntactic Focus feature and a corresponding designated functional position for focal elements to derive these cases, the cartographic theory (Rizzi 1997, Cinque and Rizzi 2008). I will then present an alternative proposal based on joint work with Fatima Hamlaoui (Hamlaoui and Szendrői 2015) that puts a flexible syntax-prosody mapping of clauses into a central position. I will show that this approach makes certain predictions regarding (i) the interactions between the syntactic position of moved foci, (ii) the presence or absence of verb movement and (iii) the directionality of prosodic prominence assignment. For instance, we will see that the proposal makes slightly different predictions for the kind of positions that can be targeted by moved foci in languages with right-aligned prosodic edges vs. languages with left-aligned prosodic edges. I will also show that the emerging typological space is supported by the empirical facts from different languages. The final part of the talk will be concerned with the role of finiteness in determining the relevant domain for intonational phrases and consequently with the role of finiteness in prosodic focus marking.

References: • Cinque, Guglielmo & L. Rizzi (2008). The cartography of syntactic structures. *STiL Working papers*, Vol. 2, 43-59, CISCL, University of Siena. • Hamlaoui, Fatima & K. Szendrői (2015). A flexible approach to the syntax-phonology mapping of intonational phrases. *Phonology* 32(1). 79–110. • Rizzi, Luigi (1997). The Fine Structure of the Left Periphery. In L. Haegeman (ed.) *Elements of Grammar*. Kluwer, 281-337.