Information-structural constraints on linearization in the DP

Johannes Mursell & Anke Himmelreich
Goethe-Universität Frankfurt
j.mursell@lingua.uni-frankfurt.de, himmelreich@lingua.uni-frankfurt.de

While information-structural (IS) constraints on linearization on the clause level as well as general constraints in the DP have each received considerable attention, the role of information structure in the DP remains underresearched. Here, we approach this topic from a comparative perspective.

We find much variation in the nominal domain when it comes to syntactic effects of information structure, ranging from very liberal reordering to basically no effects at all. Spanish, for example, shows movement in the DP caused by focus. Bernstein (2001) claims that certain elements like demonstratives require a focus interpretation when occurring post-nominal, while adjectives can occur in neutral contexts in this position. The movement is not free, however, as numerals, for example, cannot occur there (Hoot 2012:295). German, on the other hand, allows no or very little (Roehrs 2014) IS-driven movement inside the DP. However, it is possible to focus nearly any DP-internal element prosodicall. At the same time, syntactic operations that require focus are more problematic and require more structure, for example an AP (Bühring & Hartmann 2001).

Other languages, for example, the Mabia languages, a language family spoken in northen Ghana and surrounding areas, do not allow DP-internal focus marking at all. These languages mark focus morphologically by particles. Taking Likpakpaanl as example, focus is marked by the particle *lè/lá*. The particle is completely banned from occurring inside DP, and (1-b) is grammatical only with the focus marker following the whole complex DP.

(1) a. Peter aa-gbaŋ sɔ   b. *Aay, ni ye John lè aa-gban.
       Peter POSS-book here   no it COP John FOC POSS-book
       'This is Peter's book.'   int: 'No, this is JOHN's book.'

We will argue that the different behaviors of DP-internal focalization mirror the restrictions of focalization on a clausal level in the various languages. This suggests the existence of DP-internal information-structural projections and provides evidence for their syntactic impact. Starting with Spanish and German, both languages mark focus prosodically. However, the marking possibilities are much more restricted in Spanish (Swerts et al. 2002, Hoot 2012), with word order changes providing an additional marking strategy. In German, on the other hand, for a syntactic focus position to be available, more structure is needed, which could be taken as evidence for the old assumption that certain adjectives are based on reduced relatives in German (Kayne 1994). Lastly, for languages like Likpakpaanl, other evidence suggests that they host a DP-peripheral FocP, preventing any lower occurrence of the focus particles.