

## A syntactic feature [Focus]: The P-side

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This paper argues that a constituent bearing the property of contrastive (alternatives) focus is represented with a morphosyntactic feature [Focus] in syntactic representation. This [Focus] feature is *not* present in the syntactic representation of constituents that are merely discourse-new. [Focus]-marked constituents receive a distinctive semantic interpretation (according to the Rooth 1992 alternatives semantics). On the P-side, it is shown that, cross-linguistically, the [Focus] feature may be spelled out with a range of morphological realizations, including various types of prosodic morphology. It would seem, then, that the feature [Focus] is similar to a morphosyntactic feature like [plural] in its interfaces with phonology and semantics.

The first part of the paper presents evidence from English that the theory of grammar makes a distinction between the *contrastive focus* and *discourse-new* status of constituents. The evidence comes from a phonetic investigation which compares the prosody of all-new sentences with the prosody of sentences combining contrastive focus and discourse-new constituents. While the distribution of pitch accents and phonological phrase organization in these different sentence types is the same, their patterns of *phonetic prominence*—duration, pitch and intensity-- vary according to their composition in terms of contrastive and/or new constituents (Katz and Selkirk 2011). A notable, novel, but unsurprising, finding is that – within the same sentence—a [Focus]-marked constituent shows greater F0 prominence than a merely discourse-new constituent. These distinctions in phonetic prominence are arguably the consequence of distinctions in the phonological representation of *phrasal prosodic prominence (stress)* for contrastive focus and discourse-new constituents in English. It is proposed that in English the constraint spelling out [Focus]-marking with maximal local prosodic prominence (cf. Jackendoff 1972, Truckenbrodt 1995) is a morphological Spell-Out constraint.

The second part of the paper makes a typological survey of the phonological and phonetic realization of [Focus], and localizes three distinct sources for crosslinguistic variation within the “P-side” of the standard model. It is shown, first, that language-particular morphological Spell-Out constraints of the general types exploited in the realization of morphosyntactic features like [plural]—including zero morphology, segmental morphology, tonal morphology and various types of prosodic morphology— are attested as phonological reflexes of the property of contrastive Focus. Secondly, it is shown that properly phonological constraints may interact with a language’s Spell-Out constraint for [Focus] in determining whether, or just how, the phonological property called for by Spell-Out is actually realized. Third, phonetic interpretation is subject to language-particular variation, and as a consequence a phonological property realizing [Focus], e.g. local maximal prosodic prominence, may not be identically manifested in one language or the other.