

## THE SYNTAX – INFORMATION STRUCTURE INTERFACE IN KOREAN

REIKO VERMEULEN (GHENT UNIVERSITY)

**INTRODUCTION:** This talk provides empirical evidence for the view that the syntactic distribution of discourse related items such as topic, focus and contrast, should be explained in terms of mapping rules between syntax and information structure, and not in terms of designated functional projections, as proposed in the cartographic approach (Rizzi 1997). The evidence comes from new data concerning the behavior of phrases marked by the marker *-nun* in Korean.

**BACKGROUND:** The particle *-nun* encodes a contrastive interpretation, implicating that a relevant salient alternative may be false (C. Lee 2003, Kim 2009), similar to the so-called B-accent in English (Jackendoff 1972, Büring 2003, Hetland 2007) and the particle *wa* in Japanese (Hara 2006). The standard description of *nun*-marked phrases in the literature is that they function as contrastive topics in clause-initial position, but as contrastive foci elsewhere (Choe 1995, Han 1998, Choi 1999, Gill & Tsoulas 2003, M. Lee 2006). Some authors have argued for designated functional projections for topic and focus to capture this observation, proposing structures like (1) for the clausal left-periphery (e.g., Choe 1995, M. Lee 2006). A *nun*-marked phrase is interpreted as a contrastive topic if licensed by TopP, but a contrastive focus if licensed in FocP.

(1) TopP FocP TP ...

In this talk, I offer an alternative mapping-based approach.

**THE DISTRIBUTION OF NUN-PHRASES:** Closer examination of the behavior of *nun*-marked phrases in contexts requiring a contrastive topic or a contrastive focus on independent discourse grounds reveals that the interpretation of a *nun*-phrase is not tied to its position in the clause. All the sentences in (4) are felicitous as answers to (2) and as continuations to (3). An item that answers the *wh*-part of a preceding question is usually taken to be a focus (Rooth 1992). Thus, as answers to (2), the *nun*-marked phrases in (4) are contrastive foci. The contrastive reading is contributed by *nun*. On the other hand, the exchange in (3) requires a continuation with a topic, contrasting with 'that CD'. Thus, as continuations to (3), the *nun*-marked phrases in (4) are contrastive topics. The fact that the contrastive *nun*-marked phrase has the same distribution in both contexts shows that the discourse function of a *nun*-marked phrase is not linked to relative positions in the clause, as described in the standard literature.

(2) *What did John give to Sue?*

(3) *A: Did John give that CD to Sue? B: Well, I don't know about that CD, but*

- (4) a. John-i Sue-hantey I CHAYK-UN cwuesse  
*John-NOM Sue-to this book-NUN gave*  
b. John-i I CHAYK-UN<sub>i</sub> Sue-hantey t<sub>i</sub> cwuesse  
c. I CHAYK-UN<sub>i</sub> John-i Sue-hantey t<sub>i</sub> cwuesse

'John gave this book to Sue.' ('But, I'm not sure if he gave anything else to her')

**CONTRAST AT THE INTERFACE:** Neeleman et al. (2009) argue that a contrastive item is quantificational and therefore takes scope. The effect of scrambling by a contrastive item is that it transparently marks the scope of contrast, as illustrated below.

(5) [<sub>YP</sub> XP<sub>[contrast]i</sub> [<sub>YP=SCOPE OF CONTRAST</sub> ... t<sub>i</sub> ... ]]

The scope of contrast determines the material to be included in the set of relevant alternatives associated with the contrastive item. Thus, in (4b), the subject is not included in the scope, while in (4c), it is. In answering (2), for instance, the set of alternatives associated with (4c) is {John gave this book to Sue, John gave the CD to Sue...}, while that associated with (4b), after application of existential closure, is {someone gave this book to Sue, someone gave the CD to Sue}. Following Neeleman et

al., I assume that syntax freely generates an adjunction structure such as (5), which is then mapped to information structure with the instruction to interpret the constituent to which the contrastive item has adjoined as the scope of contrast.

Independently, it is generally assumed that at the level of information structure, an utterance is first partitioned into topic and comment and the latter is then partitioned into focus and background, as shown below (Lambrecht 1994, also Rizzi 1997).

(6) [Utterance topic [Comment focus [Background ]]]

Neeleman et al. show that the combination of the ideas in (5) and (6) make several predictions regarding the distribution of contrastive topic and contrastive focus with respect to each other. Considering that the scope of a contrastive item is relevant for interpreting that contrastive item, and focus is interpreted with respect to its background, if XP in (5) is a contrastive focus, then the YP to which it is adjoined must contain only material taken from the background. It is predicted then that a contrastive focus cannot move to a position above a contrastive topic. Such a structure implies that a contrastive topic should be interpreted as part of the background, contrary to (6). The full array of the predictions is given below.

(7) a. CT CF                      c. CF CT                      e. CT<sub>i</sub> t<sub>i</sub> CF                      (CF = Contrastive Focus  
       b. \*CF<sub>i</sub> CT t<sub>i</sub>                d. CT<sub>i</sub> CF t<sub>i</sub>                      f. \*CF<sub>i</sub> t<sub>i</sub> CT                      CT = Contrastive Topic)

All the predictions are correct, but I illustrate only (7c,f) below due to lack of space. For contrastive focus, I use *Sue-hanthey-man* ‘Sue-to-only’, as an associate of ‘only’ is widely assumed to be an uncontroversial case of contrastive focus. *XP-man* is independently known to be able to undergo scrambling like (4) (Choe 1995).

(8) A: *To whom did John give this CD?* B: *Well, I don't know about this CD, but...*

a. John-i [Sue-hantey-man]<sub>CF</sub> [i chayk-un]<sub>CT</sub> cwuesse (CF CT)  
     *John-NOM Sue-to-only this book-NUN gave*

b. #[Sue-hantey-man]<sub>CF</sub> John-i t<sub>i</sub> [i chayk-un]<sub>CT</sub> cwuesse (#CF<sub>i</sub> t<sub>i</sub> CT)  
     ‘John gave this book only to Sue.’

On the cartographic approach, the observations in (4) can be explained as a *nun*-marked phrase optionally moving to either FocP or TopP depending on the context. (7b) may be explained as an intervention effect. However, the same line of analysis does not extend to (8b), as the contrastive focus does not move across the contrastive topic. I will discuss further difficulties in providing a coherent account for the observations in (7).

In terms of the overall architecture of grammar, I propose following the spirit of Jackendoff (1997) that information structure and the syntax generate structures separately and what ensures a successful derivation is that the two structures achieve a good match via mapping rules such as (5). Further advantages of attributing the motivation of syntactic displacement to effects at the interface is that it explains the optional nature of such movements and it avoids having to introduce topic- and focus-features in the syntax in violation of inclusiveness (Szendrői 2001).

**SELECTED REFERENCES:** Choi, H.-W. 1999. *Optimizing Structure in Context*. CSLI; Han, C.-H. 1998. Asymmetry in the interpretation of *-(n)un* in Korean. *Japanese/Korean Linguistics* 7; Hara Y. 2006. *Grammar of Knowledge Representation*. PhD Diss. Delaware; Hetland, J. 2007. The Korean particle *nun*, the English fall-rise accent andthetic/categorical judgements. In Schwabe & Winkler (eds.) *On Information Structure, Meaning and Form*. John Benjamins; Lee, C. 2003. Contrastive topic and/or contrastive focus. *Japanese/Korean Linguistics* 12.; Lee, M. 2006. *Overt Focus Movement and Minimal Information Marking*. PhD Diss. USC. Neeleman, A. et al. 2009. A syntactic typology of topic, focus and contrast. In van Craenenbroeck (ed.) *Alternatives to Cartography*. Mouton de Gruyter; Szendrői, K. 2001. *Focus and the Syntax Phonology Interface*. PhD Diss. UCL.