Focus Projection and Default Prominence (Büring 2006)

Kordula De Kuthy
HS Neuere Arbeiten zur Fokusprojektion WS 09/10
December 10, 2009

Vertical Focus Projection Reexamined

1. Restricted vertical focus projection:
   Only heads and arguments can project focus.

   ⇒ F-marking on a phrase can never be licensed by an accent on an adjunct or specifier alone.

2. Unrestricted vertical focus projection:
   Any subconstituent can project focus.

To see of X can project focus to its mother F one needs to make sure that

- Y (or some node dominating Y) is the FOCus of the sentence (by the question-answer test), and
- that all other daughter of Y are Given.

⇒ A single accent on X should always suffice to make the sentence felicitous according to the unrestricted vertical focus projection.

Büring: Focus projection and default prominence

- Starting point: Selkirk (1995)
  - F-marking:
    - An accented word is F-marked.
    - Vertical Focus Projection: F-marking of head of phrase licenses F-marking of phrase.
    - Horizontal Focus Projection: F-marking of internal argument licenses F-marking of head.
  - Focus of the sentence (FOC):
    - F-marked node not dominated by another F-marked node.
  - F Interpretation:
    - constituent F-marked (but not FOC): New
    - constituent not F-marked: Given

- Büring (2006): eliminates focus projection rules
  - No restrictions on vertical focus projection, i.e., any accent within a phrase can project focus to the phrase.
  - Horizontal focus projection is the consequence of default prominence assignment, not focus projection.

⇒ No syntactic constraints on focus projection are needed.

Projection from APs

- Büring (2006, based on Schwarzschild 1999) uses de-accenting examples to argue: focus can always project.

(3) I know that John drove Mary’s red convertible.
   But what did Bill drive?

(4) a. He drove [his motorcycle]_F.
   b. He drove [her blue convertible]_F.

⇒ focus can project from adjectives/adjuncts
Projection from Transitive Subjects

(5) Why did Helen buy Bananas.
   a. [Because JOHN bought bananas]$_F$
   b. [Because JOHN is HUNGRY]$_F$

(6) What did Nepomuk say when you accused him of stealing the bananas?
   a. [That GWENDOLYN stole the bananas]$_F$
   b. [That he WANTED to PAY for them LATER]$_F$

(7) Q: Wo hast du denn den schönen Pulli her?
   A: Den hat mir [GERDA geschenkt]$_F$

Projection from Indirect Objects

(8) Q: Man warf Sinatra vor, er habe der Mafia Geld gegeben. Was hat Dean Martin getan, um nicht auch ein schlechtes Image zu bekommen?
   A: Er [hat der HEILSARMEE Geld gegeben]$_F$

Projection from Adjuncts

(9) Q: Zur Tatzeit hat Lolek mit seiner Frau einen Einkaufsbummel gemacht. Aber was ist Boleks Alibi?
   A: Bolek hat [mit seiner TOCHTER einen Einkaufsbummel gemacht]$_F$

Projection from Adverbs

(10) Q: What will she do if her call doesn’t go through?
    A: She’ll [call him AGAIN]$_F$
    A: She’ll [call her MOM]$_F$
    A: Sie wird [ihn NOCHMAL anrufen]$_F$

(11) Q: Why were you so upset about missing the bus?
    A: [Because one should NEVER miss the bus]$_F$.

(12) Q: You bought yourself flowers. I’m puzzled. Why?
    A: [Because you NEVER bring me flowers/oo]$_F$.
Projection from Other Minor Categories

(13) Q: Your competitor has lowered the prices on every other model. What do you plan to do to answer that?
A: We will [lower the prices on ALL models]\textsubscript{F}.

(14) Q: What will she wear if I make her return my sweater?
A: She’ll wear [her OWN sweater]\textsubscript{F}.

(15) Q: Bill has worn his anti-nuclear power shirt before. Why was he arrested this time?
A: [Because he was wearing ONLY his anti-nuclear power shirt]\textsubscript{F}.

Direct Projection from Arguments

(16) Q: What will you do if Bill doesn’t want to be hooked up with Mary?
A: I’ll [hook up JOHN and Mary]\textsubscript{F}.

(17) Q: What did Sue do when you teamed up with Bill?
A: She [teamed up with JOHN]\textsubscript{F}.
A’: She [asked JILL and ME to team up]\textsubscript{F}.

Conclusion

▶ All the previous de-accenting examples support focus projection from transitive subjects, indirect objects, adverbs, minor categories and headless structures—all of which had been claimed to not support focus projection.

▶ Büring’s general version of vertical focus projection:
  ▶ F-marking on X licenses F-marking on any category Y dominating X.

▶ There does not need to be an uninterrupted chain of F’s from the highest, FOC, to some terminal one. All that is required is that FOC dominates some F at all.
Horizontal focus projection

- Horizontal Focus Projection (Büring 2006)
  - In configuration \([A \, B]\), one of A, B can be unaccented, even though it is interpreted as F-marked.
  - Contentful lexical expressions such as verbs can be unaccented, despite F-marking, when adjacent to an accented argument.
- So far, these cases have been captured by focus projection rules (as for example in Selkirk (1995))
- Büring (2006) wants to derive this effect based on a theory of default prominence.
- Idea of default prominence: default accent placement, independent of whether focus or background.
- The idea is only sketched, not worked out. A default pattern suggested for English states that predicates don’t receive a pitch accent if an argument does.

A Simple Prominence-Based System

(19) **Focus Prominence:**

  Focus needs to be maximally prominent.

- Three levels of prosodic structure: the prosodic word, the accent domain, and the intonation Al phrase.
- To be prominent within a prosodic domain means to be the head of that domain.
- Accent domain formation is governed by three constraints:

  (20) \( \text{ADJ=AD} \gg \text{*STRESS PRED} \gg \text{XP=AD} \)
  - a. \( \text{ADJ=AD} \): Adjuncts form accent domains.
  - b. \( \text{*STRESS PRED} \): Verbs/predicates/heads don’t bear prominence.
  - c. \( \text{XP=AD} \): XPs form accent domains.
- Focus Prominence must be ranked higher than any of the above constraints.

Comparison to Selkirk’s Theory

- Büring’s system seems to be more adequate in allowing for ‘vertical focus projection’ from adjuncts, specifiers, and minor categories.
- Büring’s system also accounts for accent placement outside of the focus.
- Such ‘ornamental accents’ are not allowed in Selkirk’s account, since any accented word must be F-marked.
- On Büring’s account, default prosody will occur wherever it isn’t overridden by focussing.

Prominence-Based Theory of Integration

A sentence with ‘normal intonation’ can be used to answer different question.

(18) **Who did the lawyer send the request to?**

  *What did the lawyer do?*  
  *What happened?*

  The lawyer sent the request to their Office.

  - The verb remains unaccented due to integration.
  - The prominence-based account of integration predicts that the same patterns of accent placement will be found absent of focus.
Comparison to Schwarzschild’s approach

(21) Q: What did you do (to make him so angry)?
A: I [introducedF his friendF to a bassoon playerF from the islandF ]F.

- Under Schwarzschild’s approach, the VP must contain an accent and the accent must not be on the verb.
- This leaves open various possibilities: one accent on either friend or bassoon player or island.
- The correct result, according to Büring, is one where each of these words bears an accent.
- Schwarzschild’s system seems to be too unrestrictive when it comes to predicting accent placement within larger constituents.

References

