AG 9: Focus marking strategies and focus interpretation

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The necessity of a strict distinction between focus as a category of information structure related to the presence of alternatives in the interpretation context and focus marking as the grammatical coding of focus has been widely discussed in the literature (Krifka 2007). Different focus marking strategies may, however, have some effect on focus interpretation.

A well known example is Hungarian in which in-situ and ex-situ focus differ with regard to exhaustivity and contrast (É.Kiss 1998). Similar findings have been reported on Finnish, Turkish etc. Such findings support the hypothesis that at least in languages in which several strategies of focus marking are possible focus interpretation depends on the marking strategy.

However, analyses on other languages suggested that the hypothesis may not hold universally. For instance in Hausa (Chadic, Afro-Asiatic) any interpretation available for ex-situ focus is also available for in-situ focus. Moreover, it has recently been argued that even in Hungarian the interpretation difference between in-situ and ex-situ focus is related to a specific syntactic position at the left periphery which may actually be independent of focus.

Given such observations the question arises whether cross linguistically

i)   a general notion of focus as a widely underspecified information structural category (often associated with prosodic prominence) with a unified semantic interpretation mechanism in terms of alternatives (e.g. Rooth 1992) can be maintained by deriving meaning differences related to different strategies of focus marking from the different grammatical structure of the respective sentences plus pragmatic principles or

ii)   more specific notions of information structure, such as e.g. *contrast*, *exhaustivity*, *newness* are required that fall into subclasses of a more general notion of focus such that languages would be expected to use different marking strategies for them?

The workshop invites syntactic, semantic and typological work on different strategies of focus marking and focus interpretation. In addition, we would also encourage the presentation of diachronic data related to the evolution of different strategies of focus marking.

References
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