Encoding varieties of topic and focus:
The role of contrast and information status

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Topic – focus – contrast – information status

Topic
the entity a sentence is about / the expression denoting that entity
The city of Bremen is hosting DGfS 2019

Focus
the expression for whose interpretation alternatives are relevant
BREmen hosts many conferences, too.

Information status
the availability of an entity / expression in a discourse representation
A city in Northern Germany / It is hosting DGfS 2019

Contrast
a relation between alternative entities / expressions / discourse moves
Bremen has a population of 567.000, Bremerhaven has a population of 114.000.

Most of these terms are not used uniformly in a semantic-pragmatic sense.

Topic – focus – contrast – information status

- To **encode** topic, focus, contrast and information status, languages use different
  - o morphological-lexical
  - o syntactic
  - o prosodic

  marking strategies

- Considerable body of research on marking strategies for the individual information-structural notions

- Prospering but by no means extensive body of research on marking strategies for combinations

  Many open questions, e.g.

  - o Contrastive topic – contrastive focus
    - - What is contrast in a topic? What is contrast in a focus?
    - - Is contrast marked in the same way in topics and foci?
  - o Given foci – new foci
    - - What if marking strategies conflict?

Where we come from: our research interests

- Johannes Mursell (Frankfurt)
  - evidence for information structural features as part of the syntactic computation (Mursell 2016)
  - impact of information structure on phi-agreement
    - Long distance agreement (Mursell subm.)
    - Object marking in Swahili (Bantu) and Tagalog verbal agreement as related to Givenness (Mursell 2018)

- Sophie Repp (Köln)
  - semantics and pragmatics of contrast (Repp 2010, 2016), topicality (Hinterwimmer & Repp 2008, Repp 2009, 2011) and focus (Haida & Repp 2012, 2013)
  - prosodic marking strategies (German):
    - contrast and information status in exclamatives and echo questions (Repp 2015, subm., Repp & Rosin 2015)
    - left-dislocated topics / foci (Repp & Drenhaus 2015)
  - syntactic marking strategies for different types of topics (German/ English) (Repp 2011, 2017)

This introductory talk

- Semantics/pragmatics of contrast

- Semantics/pragmatics of information status

- Contrast, topic and focus – the contributions in the workshop regarding

  - o syntactic encoding
  - o prosodic encoding
  - o syntax-prosody interface

- Information status, topic and focus – the contributions in the workshop regarding

  - o syntactic encoding
  - o prosodic encoding
  - o syntax-prosody interface

- A clipping from Johannes Mursell's work on the role of givenness for verb agreement in Tagalog

Two domains for contrast

First addressed in some detail in Umbach (2004), extended in Repp (2016)

[1] Contrastive constituents: What are the restrictions on the set of alternatives?

- o Many suggestions in the literature:
  - overt vs. implicit alternatives
  - identifiable vs. unspecific alternatives
  - restricted vs. unrestricted alternative set
  - excluded alternatives
  - …?

- o Systematic investigation of potential morphological, syntactic, phonetic-phonological effects of contrast in test contexts (Repp 2016)
  - no alternative in context
  - implicit alternative set in context (e.g. *wh*-question, indefinites, plurals)
  - explicit alternative set in context (e.g. coordinated definites)
  - explicit alternative in context
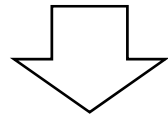
Two domains for contrast

First addressed in some detail in Umbach (2004), extended in Repp (2016)

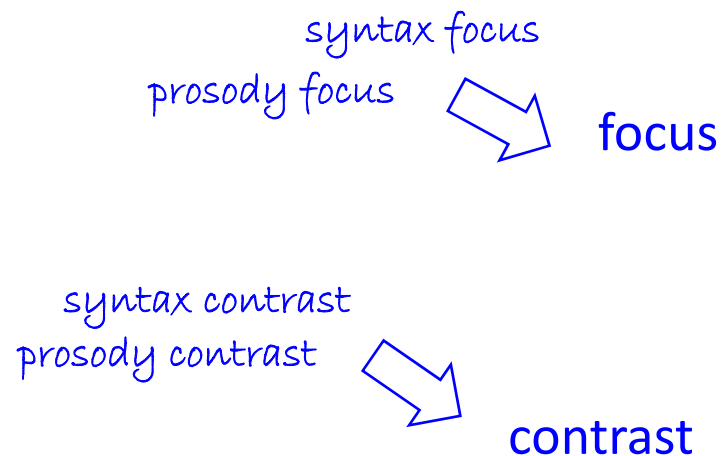**[2] Contrastive discourses**: When are discourses contrastive?

- o Some consensus in the literature: corrections are contrastive
  No consensus for many other discourse types:
  - parallel coordinations
  - unexpected discourse moves
  - …?

- o Systematic investigation of test contexts for potential effects (Repp 2016)
  - SMOOTH discourses: same kind of contribution to question-under-discussion (question-answer, parallel discourse moves)
  - OPPOSE discourses: opposing contribution to question-under-discussion (e.g. denial of expectation, possibly mirativity)
  - CORRECTION discourses: rejections, self-corrections

Contrast, focus and topic

- domain of **contrastive constituents**

    o no alternative in context
    o implicit alternative set in context (expressed by e.g. *wh*-phrase, indefinite)
    o explicit alternative set in context (expressed by e.g. coordinated definites)
    o explicit alternative in context

Except for the first, all these constituents also are focus

syntax focus
prosody focus → **focus**
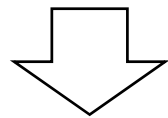
syntax contrast
prosody contrast → **contrast**

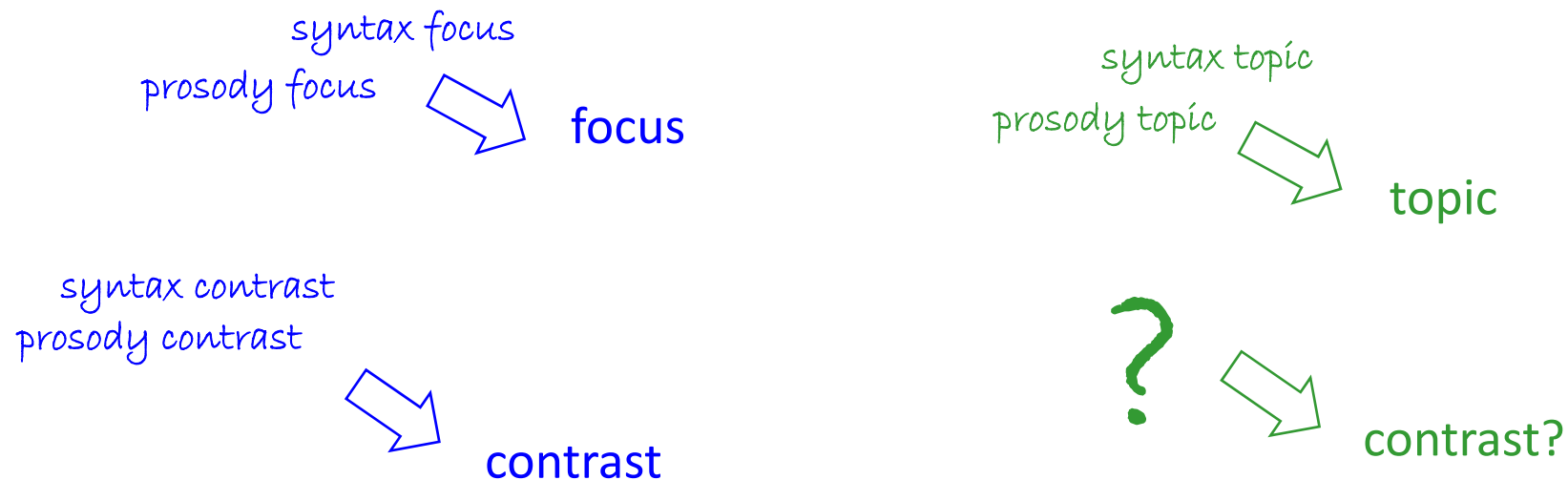Is there a cut-off point between focus and contrast?

Is it the same cut-off point for syntax and prosody (in a given language / cross-linguistically)?

Contrast, focus and topic

- domain of **contrastive discourses**: corrections, unexpectedness etc.

  - SMOOTH discourses: same kind of contribution to question-under-discussion (question-answer, parallel discourse moves)
  - OPPOSE discourses: opposing contribution to question-under-discussion (e.g. denial of expectation)
  - CORRECTION discourses: rejections

The first two could be topis, the last one infolves focus.

syntax focus
prosody focus
focus

syntax topic
prosody topic
topic

syntax contrast
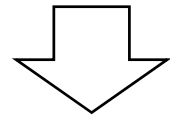prosody contrast
contrast

?
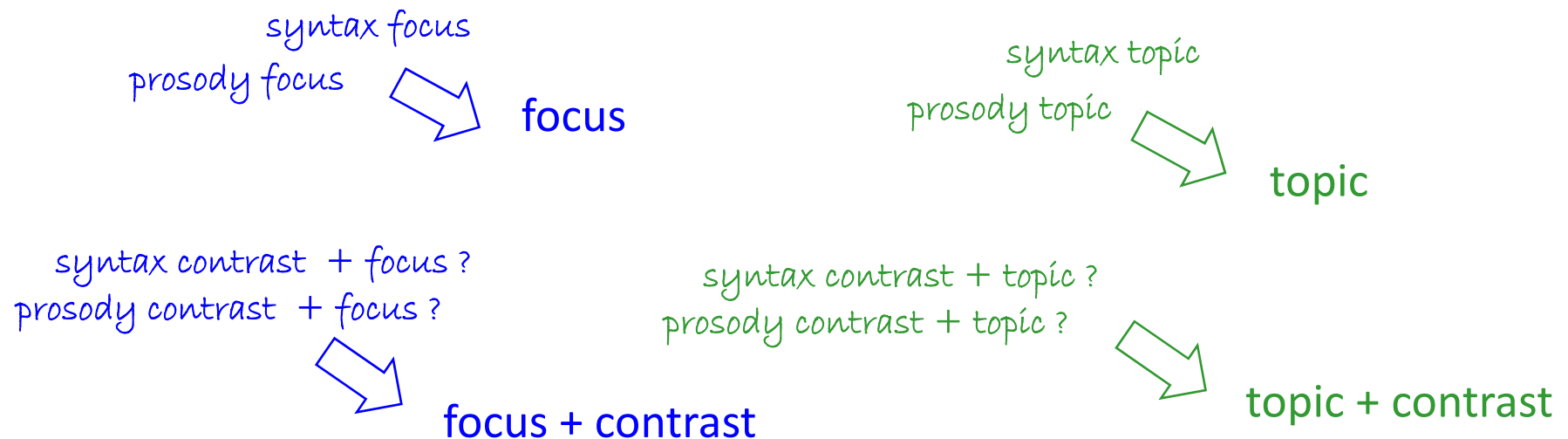contrast?

Contrast, focus and topic

- domain of **contrastive discourses**: corrections, unexpectedness etc.

  o SMOOTH discourses: same kind of contribution to question-under-discussion (question-answer, parallel discourse moves)

  o OPPOSE discourses: opposing contribution to question-under-discussion (e.g. denial of expectation)

  o CORRECTION discourses: rejections

Is contrast marked the same in topics and foci?

What is the relevant notion of contrast?

The first two could be topis, the last one infolves focus.

syntax focus
prosody focus
focus

syntax topic
prosody topic
topic

syntax contrast + focus ?
prosody contrast + focus ?
focus + contrast

syntax contrast + topic ?
prosody contrast + topic ?
topic + contrast

Information status (Givenness)

- Givenness is a gradual information-structural notion but not all types of givenness have a place on the same scale

- Referents as well as lexical expressions can be more or less given (e.g. ***RefLex*** scheme of Riester/Baumann 2013, Baumann/Riester 2013)

- **Information status of referents**

  - R-given (coreferential anaphors: *he, they*)
  - R-bridging (non- coreferential context-dependent expression: *the house – the door*)
  - R-unused (definite discourse-new expression and names: *John*)
  - R-new (specific indefinite: *There is <u>a man</u> outside*.)
  - R-generic (<u>*The lion*</u> *has a mane.*).

- **Information status of lexical expressions**

  - L-given (same word, synonym, hypernym, holonym, superset)
  - L-accessible (hyponym, meronym, subset, co-hyponym, related)
  - L-new (unrelated expression)

Information status, topic, focus

syntax focus
prosody focus

focus

syntax topic
prosody topic

topic

syntax contrast + info status ?
prosody contrast + info status?

focus
+ information status

syntax contrast + info status ?
prosody contrast + info status ?

topic
+ information status

Contrast in our workshop: Syntax

- SILVIO CRUSCHINA (HELSINKI): ITALIAN AND SPANISH **focus fronting**

  o **Not triggered by contrast**

  o Triggered by the conventional implicature that is associated with certain types of focus (mirative import)

  [contrastive discourse in our terms]

- KATHARINA HARTMANN (FRANKFURT): DAGBANI (GUR, GHANA) **focus fronting**

  o **Not related to contrast**

  o Related to the discourse-salience of alternatives: Alternatives to *ex-situ* focus are interpreted as salient; alternatives to *in-situ* focus are not

  o The relation between the alternative also plays a role for **question-answer congruence** when combining *ex-situ* with *in-situ* strategies

  [contrastive constituents in our terms]

Contrast in our workshop: Syntax

- KATHARINA HARTMANN (FRANKFURT), IRIS LEGELAND, ROLAND PFAU (AMSTERDAM): SIGN LANGUAGE OF THE NETHERLANDS (NGT): **focus fronting** in coordinations (= SMOOTH discourses; parallel discourse moves)

  o **Related to contrast**: Parallelism of structures can be broken by fronting of contrastive focus in second conjunct

  [contrastive constituents in our terms]

- LEAH BAUKE (WUPPERTAL): L2 ENGLISH OF GERMAN SPEAKERS – exhaustivity interpretation of **fronted objects**

  o English: clause-initial objects ('topicalization') typically associated with exhaustive reading of fronted object

  o German: clause-initial objects (pre-field position) not typically associated with exhaustive reading

  o L2 English of German native speakers: fewer exhaustive interpretations than L1 English

  [contrastive constituents in our terms]

Contrast in our workshop: Morphosyntax

- LAURA BECKER (ERLANGEN-NÜRNBERG), GERTRUD SCHNEIDER-BLUM (KÖLN): TIMA (NIGER-CONGO, SUDAN) has **independent morphological contrast marker**

  o Compatible with fronted **topics** or in-situ **foci**

  o Not only used to mark sentence-internal overt alternatives, but also to mark opposing discourse topics mentioned before

  [contrastive constituents and contrastive discourse in our terms]

- THUAN TRAN (POTSDAM): VIETNAMESE has **independent morphological contrast marker**

  o in *wh*-questions and their answers (**focus** context): marker signals that there is an implicit alternative about which no enquiry is made

  o contexts with **contrastive topics**: marker signals that there is an implicit or explicit alternative for which no statement is made.

  [contrastive constituents and contrastive discourse in our terms]

Contrast in our workshop: Syntax & Prosody

- FRANCESC TORRES-TAMARIT (PARIS) & MARIA DEL MAR VANRELL (BALEARIC ISLANDS):
  CATALAN: **production** of different **focus types**

  Focus **fronting** available for different types of focus but **intonation** differs

  o Information focus: low nuclear tone followed by rising-falling boundary
     tone extending to the postfocal region

  o Contrastive focus (corrections): rising nuclear tone and postfocal
     compression

  [contrastive constituents (syntax) and OPPOSE discourse (intonation)]

Contrast in our workshop: Syntax & Prosody

- MARIA DEL MAR VANRELL (BALEARIC ISLANDS) & INGO FELDHAUSEN (FRANKFURT): CASTILIAN SPANISH (L1/L2) **production** of different **focus types**

  - o focus **fronting** available for different types of focus but preferences differ for L1

    - L1: information focus: in-situ and fronted (pseudo-clefts, p-movement)

    - L1 contrastive focus: fronted (clefts and inverted pseudo-clefts)

  - o L1 **intonation**: focus need not be stressed, prosodic alignment sufficient; Pitch accent type depends on position in clause

  - o L2 (German) intonation: stress shift for both types of focus

  [we are curious]

Contrast in our workshop: Syntax & Prosody

- ALEXANDRA NAVARRETE-GONZÁLEZ (BARCELONA): CATALAN SIGN LANGUAGE: Similar contrast marking for **topics** and **foci**

  - o Contrast mainly expressed through **combination of non-manual markers** and is always marked when salient contextual alternatives are present

  - o Three different types of contrast distinguished, related to exhaustivity and expectation/correction

  [SMOOTH and CORRECTION discourses]

Contrast in our workshop: Prosody

- FRANK KÜGLER (FRANKFURT): **Contrastive focus** perception

    o HINDI: necessary cue = **post-focal lowering**, partial register lowering

    o GERMAN: necessary cue = **enhancement of prosodic cues on the focused constituent**; almost complete post-focal register lowering; no complete deaccentuation of post-focal constituents, instead separate phrasing

    [we are curious]

- CHRISTINE RÖHR, MARTINE GRICE, STEFAN BAUMANN & PETRA SCHUMACHER (COLOGNE): GERMAN: Expectation-guided **perception** of **focus** marking (prominence) in short discourses

    o Prosodic **prominence relations** in a sentence trigger expectations for prosodic prominence relations in subsequent sentence in discourses involving unexpectedness: parallel contrast marking is expected

    [contrastive constituents in our terms?]

Contrast in our workshop: Prosody

- STEFAN BAUMANN & JANE MERTENS (COLOGNE): GERMAN: **Production** of sentences with **topic** constituents

    o Topics with explicit alternative in non-contrastive SMOOTH discourses were prosodically less prominent (flat hat pattern) than new topics without explicit alternative

    [contrastive constituents in our terms]

Information status, topic, focus – Reminder

syntax focus
prosody focus

focus

syntax topic
prosody topic

topic

syntax contrast + info status ?
prosody contrast + info status?

**focus
+ information status**

syntax contrast + info status ?
prosody contrast + info status ?

**topic
+ information status**

Information status in our workshop

- STEFAN BAUMANN & JANE MERTENS (COLOGNE): GERMAN – **Prosody**: **Production** of sentences with **topic** constituents

  o **New, accessible** and **given topics** are realized with the same accent but their **phonetics** differs: **range, steepness of rise**

- SILVIA SCHAEFER (FRANKFURT): ITALIAN DIALECTS VENICE AND GAZZOLO – **Morpho-syntactic** effects of **Givenness (topicality)**

  o Agreement of postverbal subjects seems optional but is associated with **Givenness**

  o Given subjects **move to a dedicated low topic position** and are available for agreement while non-given subjects remain in the VP and are unavailable for agreement with the verb

Information status in our workshop

- RAMONA WALLNER (KONSTANZ): FRENCH – **Syntax-Prosody-Interface:** *wh-in-situ* **questions** (*She's going where with John?*)

  o *Wh-in-situ* questions are not only acceptable if the non-*wh*-part ist **given / evoked**

  o Rather, the *wh*-phrase has to appear at the right boundary of the first accent phrase, getting first **focus** stress [*wh*-words are focused].

  o This is easier with clitics than with full noun phrases because the latter form their own accent phrases:

    …clitic…wh]…

    …full noun phrase] wh…

Contrast **and** information status: Prosody & Syntax

- CAROLIN HARTHAN (MÜNCHEN): ENGLISH: correlation between **adverb placement** and **topic** interpretation in academic register

  o Different medial adverb positions, depending on type of topic

    - adverb right-adjacent to topic: **contrastive** topic

    - adverb in other positions: **non-contrastive, given**

  o Prosody: tba

- FABIAN BROSS (STUTTGART): GERMAN SIGN LANGUAGE: **Cartographic ordering of information structural projections iconically reflected**

  o Bodily Mapping Hypothesis: the higher an operator is located (above T) in the syntactic tree, the higher the articulator expressing it will be

  o Several interesting interactions between different categories, i.e. moved and base-generated **topics** and **contrastive** **foci**

Information status – A syntactic effect of Givenness

Tagalog (Austronesian, Phillipines, ~24Mio speakers)

- Different VP-internal elements can determine verbal morphology, depending on being marked by **ang**

- Difference between (1a-c) contextual: depending on what is assumed to be in the common ground, i.e. given (making **ang**-marking obligatory for pronouns and proper names)

(1) a. B<um>ili   ang bata ng   tela sa   palengke
        <PERF.AG>buy   ANG child GEN   cloth OBL   market

     b. B<in>ili-∅   ng   bata ang tela sa   palengke
        <PERF>buy-TH   GEN   child ANG cloth OBL   market

     c. B<in>ilih-an   ng   bata ng   tela ang palengke
        <PERF>buy-LOC   GEN   child GEN   cloth ANG market

   'The child bought the cloth at the market.'

Information status – A syntactic effect of Givenness

- Most previous analyses are problematic

  - Nom-Acc/Erg-Abs: some orders are derived by passive or antipassive, but all arguments are always obligatory (*modulo* pro-drop) (Kroeger 1993, Aldridge 2004, and many others)

  - Information Structure: *ang*-marking **does not correlate with focus** (Q-A test) **or Aboutness-Topicality** (Richards 2000)

  - Rackowski (2002) links *ang*-marking to specificity: specific objects undergo object shift into pre-subject position

  - Sabbagh (2014) shows that it is not about specificity

Information status – A syntactic effect of Givenness

- Jennifer Tan (Alcalá) and I have argued that **ang**-marking is actually due to Givenness, movement into the specifier of a phrase that encodes Givenness (low topic phrase (Bax & Diercks 2012), secondary topicality (Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011))

(3)
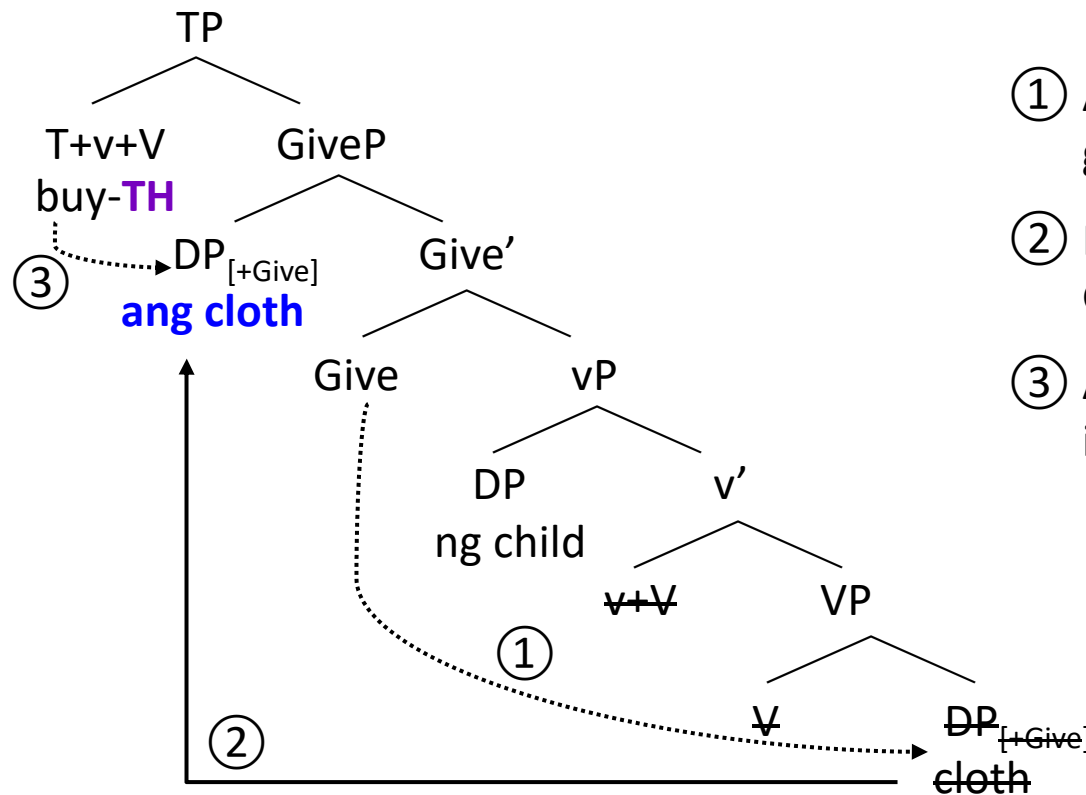
① Agreement between Give° and given DP

② Movement of given DP to spec-GiveP

③ Agreement of T with closest DP in c-command domain

Information status – A syntactic effect of Givenness

- Further movement to the left periphery (CP) shows sensitivity to **ang**-marking:

  o VP-internal constituents can occur in the left periphery only if **ang**-marked

 o VP-external adjuncts can occur in the left periphery without **ang**-marking

(4)   a. Ang   babae   **ay** k<um>ain   ng   talong
              SUBJ   woman   **TOP**<PERF.AG>eat GEN   eggplant
              'As for the woman, she ate eggplant.'

          b. *Ng talong   ay   k<um>ain   ang babae
              GEN   eggplant TOP   <PERF.AG>eat SUBJ woman
              'As for the eggplant, the woman ate it'

          c. Sa umaga   ay   k<in>ain   ng   babae   ang talong
              OBL morning TOP <PERF.TH>eat GEN woman SUBJ eggplant
              'As for the morning, the woman ate eggplant.'

Information status – A syntactic effect of Givenness

(3)
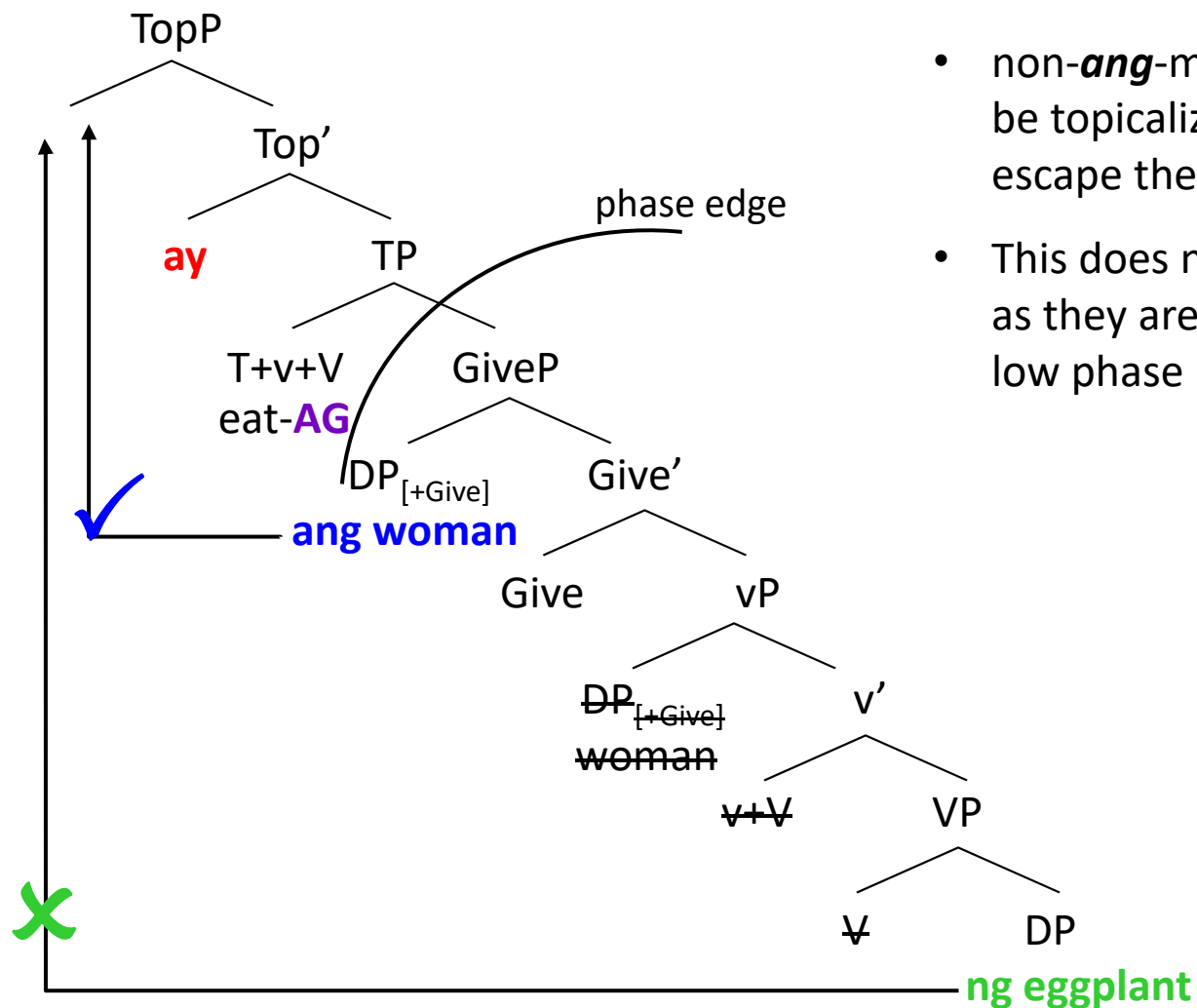
- non-***ang***-marked phrases cannot be topicalized as they cannot escape the low phase

- This does not hold for adjuncts as they are merged outside the low phase

Information status – A syntactic effect of Givenness

- Other interactions, also stemming from the fact that spec-GiveP is the phase edge

  o Interactions with wh-questions and clefts in general (restrictions on extraction from vP and occurrence of ***ang***)

  o Interaction with focus and ***ang***-marking (combining the two seems to suggest a contrastive interpretation [contrast in our sense?])

  o No ***ang***-marking of negative quantifiers

- Many open questions but **in general**:

  o low information structural projections which encode information different from the high ones

  o Allow for a rather straightforward analysis of otherwise puzzling phenomena

  o Different Example: DOM as related to Givenness (secondary topicality in the terms of Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011)

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