
Presupposed and Asserted Content
in Aspectual DPs

CONFERENCE VERSION
DO NOT QUOTE

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Preliminaries

- ❖ **Presupposition** P is information which **must** (be assumed to) be true in a situation s before a phrase IP can be evaluated in s as true or false.
- ❖ P is a valid / indisputable conclusion from IP and from IP 's negation, but it is not just true on basis of its logical vocabulary (*tautology*).
- ❖ P is assumed to be true in s , if it is not already known as true in s or otherwise familiar information (*accommodation*).

Preliminaries (2)

Examples of presuppositions in

Jane left her home at 7 am.

P1: Jane has a home.

P2: Before 7 am Jane was at home.

P3: It is now past 7 am.

BUT NOT

Jane left her home today.

Preliminaries (3)

- ❖ **Assertion A** is information, obtained in the interpretation of a phrase IP , which **may** be evaluated in situation s as true, false or neither, if the presuppositions of IP are true in s .
- ❖ If A is accepted as true, it serves to update the context to include its new, asserted information.
- ❖ A is not already known or otherwise accepted, and it is disputable.

Preliminaries (last)

Examples of assertions in

Jane left her home at 7 am.

A1: It was 7 am when Jane left her home.

A2: Jane has left her home.

A3: What Jane did at 7 am was leave her home.

Focus information (prosodically marked) is usually part of the asserted information, answering (implicit) *wh*-question.

Purpose of this talk

- ❖ Investigate the syntax and semantic consequences of raising aspectual adverbs (*already/still/not yet/no longer*) to IP left periphery in Dutch vs. English.
- ❖ Explain its distributional restrictions.
- ❖ Connect this analysis to a Dutch rhetoric phenomenon.

Aspectual DPs: Dutch vs English

Dutch (1a) is perfectly grammatical with the aspectual adverbs *nog/still* and *al/already*,

- 1) a. $[_{IP} \text{Niemand } [_{VP} [_{ASP} \text{heeft } \textit{nog/al/*nog niet/?*niet meer}] [_{vP} [_{DP} \textit{Maria}] \textit{gezien}]]$.
Nobody has still / already / not yet / no longer Mary seen.
Nobody has seen Mary yet / already / *not yet / *no longer.

but (1b) admits only *nog/still* to be fronted to IP

- 1) b. $[_{IP} \textit{Nog/*al/*nog niet/*niet meer niemand} [_{VP} \textit{heeft Maria gezien}]]$.
Still / *already / *not yet / *no longer nobody has Mary seen.
*Still / *already / *not yet / *no longer nobody / anybody has seen Mary.

Ambiguous (1a) with *nog/still* entails on only one of its readings (1b): FUTURE reading.

Both (1a) and (1b) describe a (prominent?) situation in which Maria **may** be seen, but no one has seen her yet (**P** *still*) or already (**P** *already*), although the speaker expects someone may do so (**A** *still* and *already*).

- ❖ PAST reading of (1a) describes a situation where anyone could have seen Maria after a contextually determined reference time, but no one did, and now the opportunity to see her is considered past.
- ❖ PAST reading of (1a) lost in IP fronting (seeing Maria is no longer possible).
- ❖ Unambiguously expressed in English by (2a) and in Dutch by a quantitative, VP-internal adverb *meer* in (2b), not IP fronted (2c), (2d), but acceptable in elliptical answer to *wh*-question (2e).

- 2) a. *Nobody has seen Mary anymore.*
- b. *Niemand heeft Maria meer gezien.*
Nobody has Mary more seen.
- c. **Meer niemand heeft Maria gezien.*
More nobody has Mary seen.
- d. **Niemand meer heeft Maria gezien.*
- e. *Wie heeft Maria nog gezien? Niemand meer.*
Who has Mary still seen? Nobody anymore.

- ❖ This second PAST reading of (1a) presupposes that someone had seen Mary already, whereas the first FUTURE reading of (1a) entails, like (1b), that no one has seen Mary yet within the given context, i.e. any prior sightings of Mary are discarded as irrelevant (non-prominent?) to the current context.
- ❖ Possibilities may arise in a context and may pass => context closure. (*Chronoscope*, ter Meulen 2000)
- ❖ Fronted aspectual adverb requires current possibility.

❖ The indefinite DP *someone/iemand* in (3a) does not entail (3b) with the aspectual DP.

❖ 3) a. *Iemand heeft Maria nog (niet) gezien.*

Somebody has Mary still (not) seen.

Somebody has still (not) seen Mary.

b. *Nog iemand heeft Maria (niet) gezien.*

Still somebody has Mary (not) seen.

Someone else has also (not) seen Mary.

❖ (3a) does not **presuppose** that other people had seen Maria, but it is **asserted** that someone has (not) seen her. But (3b) presupposes that someone had (not) seen Maria and it is asserted that *someone else* has (not) seen her later (*disjoint reference*).

- ❖ Since only temporal and aspectual adverbs can occur at IP edge and subject clitics are optional, it is predicted that proper names, definite DPs cannot occur in aspectual DPs.
- ❖ (4b) shows a left-dislocated informational topic DP with a demonstrative clitic.

- ❖ 4) a. *Peter/De boer heeft Maria nog gezien.*
- ❖ Peter has Mary still seen.
- ❖ Peter has still seen Mary.
- ❖ b. *Peter/De boer, DIE heeft Maria nog gezien.*
- ❖ Peter, dem pro has Mary still seen.
- ❖ Peter, HE has still seen Mary.
- ❖ c. **Nog Peter/De boer, die heeft Maria gezien.*
- ❖ Still Peter, dem pro has Mary seen.
- ❖ **Still Peter, he has seen Mary.*

Aspectual polarity reversal

❖ *Nog/al wel* (still +) / *nog/*al niet* (still -) asymmetry.

5) a. *Peter heeft Maria nog/al wel gezien* => negated focus alternative:

b. *Peter heeft MARIA nog/al wel gezien.*

Peter has still / already + (indeed?) seen MARY

c. => *Peter heeft iemand anders dan Maria niet meer/nog niet gezien.*

Peter has someone other than Mary not anymore seen

6) a. *Peter heeft MARIA nog/*al niet gezien.*

Peter has Mary still / *already not seen.

=> speaker expects positive polarity IP, preserves focus structure.

b. *Peter heeft Maria niet meer gezien.*

Rhetoric polarity

- ❖ A characteristic Dutch stylistic pattern with left-dislocated *nog* creates a contrastive topic, triggering subject / verb inversion and conveying prominently that the current state will soon be terminated by the event described in the second clause.
- ❖ 6) *Nog denkt hij dat Maria van hem houdt, maar dan komt haar brief.*
Still thinks he that Mary of him loves, but then arrives her letter.
He is still thinking that Mary loves him, but then her letter arrives.

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