

In this talk I propose a syntactic account of Information Structure (IS) encoding based on the cartographic approach to the Syntax-Pragmatics interface (Aboh 2010, Belletti 2004, Rizzi 1997) and the Derivation by Phase theory (Chomsky 2001, 2008). It is claimed that IS is encoded directly in narrow syntax. Adopting the feature checking model of Pesetsky and Torrego (2007), it is shown that [Topic] and [Focus] features must be recognized and that they are checked in essentially the same way other grammatical features are, namely by feature matching with dedicated functional heads Top⁰ and Foc⁰, respectively. Furthermore, it is argued that the point of junction between Syntax and Pragmatics exists at the level of the CP-phase as well as at the level of the vP-phase. In other words, heads associated with pragmatic information can project both within the Edge of CP as well as within the Edge of vP.

The present account was developed on the basis of IS encoding in Russian, a language in which IS is reflected primarily in the order of sentence constituents. Based on Russian data, I argue for the following: (i) the canonical clause-final focus is encoded in FocP of the lower, vP, phase; (ii) FocPs within vP and CP Edges can project simultaneously and interact with each other (iii) topical constituents fall into three distinct types, namely strong topic, weak topic, and frame, and the three exhibit distinct syntactic properties, (iv) the vP Edge has a less articulated internal structure as compared to the CP Edge, with FocP being the only obligatory constituent.

The assumptions made for Russian are tested on a number of typologically unrelated languages, with a special attention to Aghem (a Bantu language) and Kabiye (a Gur language). It is shown that cross-linguistic facts motivate the following generalized structures for the CP and the vP Edge:

- (1) *CP Edge Map*
 $[_{\text{ForceP}} \text{Force}^0 [_{\text{FrameP}} \text{Frame}^0 [_{\text{InterP}} \text{Inter}^0 [_{\text{TopP}} \text{Top}^0 [_{\text{FocP}} \text{Foc}^0 ([_{\text{topP}} \text{top}^0) [_{\text{FinP}} \text{Fin}^0]]]]]]]]]]$
- (2) *vP Edge Map*
 $([_{\text{topP}} \text{top}^0) [_{\text{FocP}} \text{Foc}^0 ([_{\text{topP}} \text{top}^0) [\text{vP}]]]]$

The conclusion to be drawn is that languages seem to have access to both the CP and the vP periphery. Variation comes from the extent to which the two are utilized for IS purposes.

References:

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