

Sabina Halupka-Rešetar. *Rečenični fokus u engleskom i srpskom jeziku*. Faculty of Philosophy, Novi Sad, Serbia, 2011.

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1. Introduction

While information structure and discourse functions have been at the center of attention of functional and cognitive linguists since the earliest days of these approaches, these domains had to fight their way into more formal schools of grammar, especially generative syntactic frameworks. Recent publications show that they have fully succeeded, as very strong arguments have been provided for the views that the relevant notions do figure as syntactic features, and moreover that such features enter the syntactic generation already at the zero level—the Numeration (see especially Aboh 2010). Even approaches that dispense with information structure in narrow syntax still treat it syntactically at its interface with phonology and/or semantics (see, e.g., Neeleman et al. 2009). The book under review takes on the challenging task of presenting two intersecting oppositions: an empirical one between the structural effects of information structure in what is traditionally labeled a configurational versus a non-/discourse-configurational language and one that is rather methodological, between a functionalist discourse-centered theoretical paradigm and one that is formal and syntax-centered. More precisely, it investigates the syntax of focus in English and Serbian from the perspectives of the functional Prague school and of the generative Minimalist Program. These oppositions are assessed in parallel, each of them receiving its own descriptive and theoretical treatment, and contrastive and comparative perspectives are only taken sporadically, where they are particularly feasible for the discussion of the respective issues. Finally, a hybrid model is presented, analyzing the relevant data with a combined inventory of methodological tools and architectural views of grammar.

The book is based on research that led to the author's doctoral dissertation. Its practical disadvantage with respect to the potential readership is that it is written in Serbian. This review is an attempt to at

least partially compensate, by summarizing and discussing the contributions that it makes.

The book is organized into six chapters. Alongside those aimed at introducing the problem and concluding the discussion (chapters 1 and 6, respectively), they include one that discusses the two types of approaches targeted (chapter 2), a chapter that presents the empirical situation and contours of the theoretical picture in each of the two languages (chapter 3), another one that makes a critical appraisal of the theoretical approaches discussed, pointing out their main problems and advantages (chapter 4), and finally a chapter that presents an original framework. This last combines the advantages of both the functional and the formal syntactic views of information structure and applies them to the two languages (chapter 5). There are also five appendices, which contain the questionnaires and other material used in the research experiments constituting the empirical basis of the book.

The following section of this review describes the contents of the book, chapter by chapter. This is followed by a section that critically assesses these contents.

2. Contents of the Book

The author explicitly announces in the Introduction chapter that she is a generative linguist. However, the presentation of several different functional approaches to the issues of information structuring that follows in chapter 2 is not only highly objective but also manifests a high level of understanding. It is along some dimensions even more exhaustive than the presentation of the generative syntactic theories. An overview of the treatment of information structure related issues before the 20th century is used to set the ground for a detailed overview of the Prague school, which is followed by a section presenting the views of Halliday's Systemic Grammar. Although these sections are limited to a presentation rather than a discussion, it is already made clear here that viewing sentential structure in relation to its immediate discourse context is considered the most important property of these approaches.

The next section presents the status of focus and discourse functions more generally within generative grammar. It also starts with a historical introduction, from Chomsky 1970 and 1976, through Jackendoff 1972 and Guéron 1980, to Minimalist Program-based theorizing.

The works of Erteschik-Shir (1997, 2006, 2007), Zubizarreta (1998), Bošković and Takahashi (1998), Kidwai (1999), Bailyn (2001), van Gelderen (2003), and Reinhart (2006) receive a thorough examination.

The remainder of chapter 2 presents analyses of the syntactic aspects of information structure in Serbian that is available in the literature. Traditional, structuralist, and functionalist views (mostly proposed by domestic Serbian scholars), on the one hand, as well as formal, mostly generative accounts, on the other, find their place in two separate subsections.

Chapter 3 is predominantly data-oriented. It first presents two main types of focus recognized in the literature—contrastive and information-focus—supported by a well-chosen set of examples from both languages under consideration. Next, each of the two languages receives a section in which the syntactic effects of focalization are thoroughly presented. As the author puts it, each of these two sections provide an exhaustive typology of structural means for expressing the focal nature of a constituent in the two languages.

Chapter 4 constitutes a well thought out and well argued critical assessment of both types of methodological approaches to the syntax of information structure. As the main shortcomings of the Prague school approach, the author points to the following:

- (i) the inability to relate semantically equivalent expressions distinguished only by their information structures;
- (ii) the inability to restrict the reordering possibilities of a string of words in ways in which they are empirically restricted (i.e., islands and other restrictions on movement, syntactic and phonological ordering restrictions in “free word order” languages);
- (iii) an empirically inadequate taxonomy of types of focus, which links contrastive relations only to the topic, and not to the focus, where they also can be realized; and
- (iv) insufficient attention to important notions such as contrastive focus and its “tectonic structure,” as well as clefts and pseudo-clefts as means of expressing focus.

In her discussion of generative approaches to focus the author explains how generativists avoid the problems attributed to the Prague school approach. They adopt an invariant structure up to the CP layer

for semantically equivalent sentences differing only in information structure, set explicit syntactic restrictions on movement as a source of word order variation, and offer an empirically more adequate taxonomy of discourse functions. Her critical assessment of approaches within the Minimalist Program is rather internally directed, towards recognizing the problems that some of the approaches encounter, and ways in which other, also generative analyses, overcome them.

The main contribution of the book comes in chapter 5. Here, the author first proposes a general syntactic structure for the Serbian sentence based on those proposed in Bošković 2008, Progovac 2005, and Stjepanović 1999 with certain modifications (e.g., the verb continues to move above T^0 , and in the ways the EPP is satisfied). This structure sets the stage for the analysis proposed for the expression of focus in Serbian that comes in the second section of the chapter.

The analysis crucially relies on the ways syntax, semantics, phonology, and discourse can interact. Following approaches in which significant changes in the linear ordering of constituents may happen at PF, she adopts the view that the placement of clitics, as well as the linear order of constituents, is subject to prosodically conditioned reordering processes. These processes are guided by the properties of intonation phrases matching particular discourse functions. And these discourse functions are an integral component of the syntactic generation, whereby the well-formedness of a sentence is conditioned not only by the convergence of the derivation with respect to the syntactic formal features but also by the fitting of its information structure with the immediate discourse environment. Finally, prosodically (and, indirectly, information-structurally) conditioned reordering processes have an effect on the semantics of the expression, and hence semantics also imposes restrictions on its well-formedness. Having imported information-structure features into syntax, the model also crosses the gap between formal and functional approaches to syntax and integrates the rich tradition of theorizing in the domain of discourse functions and their dynamics. The analysis presented, which targets only focus, introduces different syntactic features for different types of focus ([if] for information focus, [kf] for contrastive focus). This enables both a specification of syntactic operations sensitive to the focal status of a constituent and of the information structure of an expression (in terms of mutual relations between certain discourse functions). The section further offers a detailed specification of the syntactic and pho-

nological effects of the focus features, with a large number of examples for different types and subtypes of some of the constructions typical for the expression of focus in Serbian.

The model developed for Serbian is then tested on English, showing it can be implemented on the English data without difficulty. Moreover, it is argued that some typological tendencies of strict word order languages such as English follow from the way the model defines the syntactic behavior of the feature [kf] (for instance, the emergence of different types of split and clefted structures). The main idea is that restrictions on syntactic movement in combination with the need to express information-structure features force the system into different kinds of constructions where neither type of restriction is violated, at the expense of phonological, lexical, and syntactic economy.

The final chapter recapitulates the book, repeating and stressing some of the conclusions made along the way.

3. Critical Assessment

The book is clearly written and for the most part well organized, even though some groupings of topics and sections remain puzzling (such as putting the discussion of the types of focus in the chapter on the empirical particularities of the expression of focus in the two languages under discussion). I found it especially inspiring to get almost parallel access to two very different but highly refined theories—the functional theory of the Prague school and the generative theory. And while it is rarely the case that these two traditions come so near each other, the analysis takes them even one step further in attempting to combine them into one model. Naturally, only certain aspects of their possible communication and interaction are highlighted and specified, but even just the attempt is very encouraging news, and to see that it can be put to work makes for real progress in theory.

While one may question the step of introducing discourse functions into the narrow syntactic engine—since both the set of syntactic features is expanded and also information belonging to a whole new module is introduced in syntax—the gain of doing so proves worth the cost. In the meantime, syntactic theory has actually seen even more radical proposals (cf. Aboh's 2010 strong arguments in favor of adding information-structure information into the Numeration). Empirically, the book offers plenty of well-presented data, which have been experi-

mentally verified on a large number of subjects. Even for a syntactician who does not share the theoretical views presented in the book, they certainly offer a lot of challenge and inspiration for refining his or her own views.

The book is an extremely rich source of data about the syntax of the Serbian language. It examines a broad range of formally available structures for grammaticality and, based on such a formally designed access to the empirical data, a highly objective picture emerges, next to a large set of empirical observations about the syntactic, semantic, and phonological effects they trigger. Even for a researcher interested in some other domain of syntax, the book is a useful companion to the empirical situation in Serbian syntax.

It is admirable how the author manages to keep an objective stance towards competing approaches such as functional and generative theories of syntax. The detail in which the functional theory is explained along most dimensions even exceeds that given to the formal views finally embraced by the author. This discipline is only broken at one point: where the discussion of the functional paradigm takes its object as a whole, and treats its disadvantages as irreparable, while generative approaches are presented as a plurality, with flaws of one approach being fixed by another.

Perhaps somewhat subjectively, I find the arguments in favor of a phonological treatment of clitics highly convincing and very nicely fitting with the book's overall approach to the placement of focal constituents. The way the model captures the main ordering tendencies of focus in Serbian is very neat and sufficiently simple. A native speaker comes up with types of examples that are not treated in the book, but no one can expect a fully exhaustive empirical treatment of such a broad topic. A natural reaction is to look forward to a further development of the theory.

In a more critical mode, I find that the elaboration of the technical sides of the model could have been more detailed and more formal. In particular, schematic and bracketed representations are often underspecified for some of the important elements, such as the focus features and their bearers, and many important examples fail to receive any representation whatsoever. This makes it difficult to make a full assessment of the model itself, and especially to find possible counterexamples or examples difficult to account for technically. A useful ad-

dition to the book would have been an overview of structures that the model predicts to be impossible in languages like Serbian.

Still dealing with the presentation, while repeating some important points is good in longer texts, at some point we get too much of it. Such is the case, for instance, with the fact that functional approaches look at a sentence from the discourse perspective, while (early) generative grammar tried to work in isolation from discourse factors.

One cannot fail to notice that the discussion of generative approaches to information structure fails to give sufficient attention to those approaches which are similar to the present theory in assigning an important role to the prosody and the phonological component but which explicitly argue that syntax itself proceeds without any discourse related features, such as Neeleman et al. 2009.

Finally, it is sometimes not sufficiently clear how the grammar assumed in this book is architecturally organized. My main concern relates to the fact that it keeps PF responsible for most of the ordering effects of information structure but allows for reordering operations also to have semantic effects (e.g., in affecting the scope of the reordered constituents). This implies that there is an interface between phonology and semantics independent of the narrow syntax—a feature of the model that needs more detailed elaboration.

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