

Univ.-Prof'in. Dr. Caroline Féry

Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main

Information structure and prosody in typological comparison

Languages differ a great deal in the way they express information structure, especially focus and givenness. In the past, the emphasis of research has been put on languages using prominence in form of pitch accents, like in all Germanic and in most Romance languages. In the last decades a number of languages have been described that do not use any prosodic prominence for information structure, but rather morpho-syntactic means or no means at all (see for instance Lambrecht 1994, Zerbian 2006, Fiedler et al. 2010). In Féry (2013), I proposed that focus is preferably aligned with the right or left edge of a prosodic constituent, a prosodic phrase or an intonation phrase, and that *in situ* prominence in the form of pitch accents is rather exceptional from a typological perspective. Many languages prefer to form prosodic phrases around information structural roles and use syntax-prosody interface to guarantee the best alignment. French, for instance, uses cleft constructions on subjects to obtain alignment and thus ‘information packaging’ (Chafe 1976).

In the second part of my talk, tonal structure of languages will be addressed and a typology of intonation will be proposed (following Féry 2016). A correlation between kind of focus marking and intonation types will be established. Some languages have no Germanic-like pitch accents, and rather use tonal boundaries and phrase tones to achieve compositional intonational melodies. The result is a relationship between information structure marking and tonal properties of the individual languages.

Chafe, Wallace, L. 1976. “Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics, and point of view” In: Li, Charles N. (ed.). *Subject and topic*. New York: Academic Press. 25-55.

Féry, Caroline. 2013. “Focus as prosodic alignment” In: *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 31.3. 683–734.

Féry, Caroline. 2016. *Intonation and prosodic structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fiedler, Ines, Katharina Hartmann, Brigitte Reineke, Anne Schwarz & Malte Zimmermann. 2009. “Subject Focus” In: *West African Languages*. In: Zimmermann, Malte & C. Féry (eds.). *Information Structure from Different*

Perspectives. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 234-257.

Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zerbian, Sabine. 2006. *Expression of Information Structure in the Bantu Language Northern Sotho*. PhD dissertation, Humboldt University of Berlin.