

Focus in Udmurt: Background

1. Question-Answer congruence

- (1) Q1: Does Ede want [tea] or [coffee]? (pronounced as an alternative question, not yes-no)
 Q2: Who wants coffee?
 (2) A1: Ede wants [coffee]F. cf. Q1 #A2
 A2: [Ede]F wants coffee. cf. Q2 #A1

→ The position of focus in an answer correlates with the disjoined alternatives in alternative questions, and with the wh-phrase in wh-questions (or more generally: the questioned element).
 → Focus may or may not involve explicit contrast, cf. Q1 vs. Q2, also corrective focus:

- (3) a. Ede wants tea.
 b. No, Ede wants [coffee]F.

Predicate focus:

- (4) a. What did John do?
 b. John [went to do the shopping]F (VP-focus)
 (5) a. Is John certain to [win]F? (V-focus)
 b. No, John is certain to [lose]F.
 (6) a. Did John win? (predicate focus as verum focus, or answer to yes/no-question)
 b. He [won]F.

Broad focus:

- (7) a. What happened?
 b. [John went to do the shopping]F

2. Prosody in intonation languages:

Focus is marked by nuclear pitch accent (NPA):
 The focus constituent must contain the NPA.

- (8) a. Who wants coffee?
 b. EDE wants coffee.

Ambiguity with the default placement of nuclear pitch accent:

- (9) a. Bill is reading a BOOK
 b. What is Bill reading? (narrow object focus)
 c. What is Bill doing? (VP-focus)
 d. What is going on? (broad focus)

3. Contribution of focus to interpretation

Contribution to truth conditional meaning

- (10) John introduced only Bill to Sue.

- (11) a. John only introduced [Bill]F to Sue.
 b. John only introduced Bill to [Sue]F.

→ Different truth conditions: possible to construct a scenario in which one is true and the other is false.

Contribution to presuppositional meaning

- (12) a. John also introduced [Bill]F to Sue.
 b. John also introduced Bill to [Sue]F.

Other adverbs: *even, too*

In (12a), it's presupposed that John introduced someone other than Bill to Sue.
 In (12b), it's presupposed that John introduced Bill to someone other than Sue.

- (13) A: Did anyone win the football pool this week?
 B: #I doubt it, because it's unlikely that it's [Mary]F who won it and I know that nobody else did.

Clefted focus: existential presupposition

- (14) A: Did anyone win the football pool this week?
 B: I doubt it, because it's unlikely that [Mary]F won it and I know that nobody else did.

Free focus (focus that is not associated with an overt focus adverb):

-- no existential presupposition

-- presupposes that there is an appropriate set of alternatives in the context (in this weak sense, focus is always contrastive)

This "set of alternatives" is the same thing as the meaning of a wh-question:

- (15) [[Did John leave?]] = {John left, John didn't leave}
 [[Who solved the problem?]] = {John solved the problem, Mary solved the problem, ...}
 [[Does Ede want coffee or tea?]] = {Ede wants coffee, Ede wants tea}

Question Under Discussion:

So free focus presupposes that there is a certain (implicit or explicit) question in the context: Question Under Discussion.

The sentence containing the focus presupposes that it is a congruent answer to the QUD at the time of its utterance.

If the QUD is not already in the common ground, the hearer may accommodate the QUD, using focus-marking itself as the main cue for it.

Some foci may be interpreted only as (explicitly) Contrastive focus:

- (16) a. [Questo Gianni] ti dira' (non quello che pensavi). (Italian)
this John you-dat say-fut.3 not which that thought
'This Gianni will say to you, not what you thought.'
- b. *Che cosa Gianni ti dira'?'
what John you-dat say-fut.3
'What will Gianni say to you?'

Focus (generating the alternatives) vs. FOCUS phrase:

- (17) Marinak [a KÉK szemű fiúk] tetszenek
Mary-to [the blue-eyed boys] appeal-3pl
'It's BLUE-eyed boys that appeal to Mary.'
Alternatives:
{Blue-eyed boys appeal to Mary, Brown-eyed boys appeal to Mary, ...}

Exhaustivity as part of semantic interpretation:

- (18) a. Nem [[IDA]F aludt a padlón]
'It wasn't Ida who slept on the floor.'
- b. Nem [[IDA]F aludt a padlón], hanem [[IDA és ILI]F (aludt a padlón)]
'It wasn't Ida who slept on the floor but it was Ida and Ili (who slept on the floor).'
- (19) a. János magával vitte [Marit és Évát]F.
John self-com took Mary-acc and Eva-acc
'John took Mary and Eva with him.'
- b. János magával vitte [Marit]F.
John self-com took Mary-acc
'John took Mary with him.'
- (20) a. János, elkölt 30 000 forintot egy hónapban t_i t_j
John prt-spends 30,000 forints-acc a month-loc
'John spends (at least) 30,000 forints a month.'
- b. János, 30 000 forintot költ el egy hónapban t_i t_j
John 30,000 forints-acc spends prt a month-loc
'John spends exactly 30,000 forints a month.'

Exhaustivity is not an implicature: it cannot be canceled (vs. denial/correction):

- (21) A SAJTOT ettem meg. #És a CSOKIT is.
the cheese-acc ate-1sg Prt. And the chocolate-acc also
'I ate the cheese. And the chocolate too.'

4. Focus and word order**Focus-verb adjacency:**

Focus-verb adjacency in Hungarian (VO):

- (22) Mari valószínűleg/hirtelen egy kanál sót *valószínűleg/*hirtelen
Mary probably/suddenly a spoonful salt-acc probably/suddenly
tett valószínűleg/hirtelen a kávéjába
put probably/suddenly the coffee-her-into
'Mary probably/suddenly put a spoonful of salt in her coffee.'

Focus movement:

- (23) Mari [a kávéjába]F tett egy kanál sót
Mary the coffee-her-into put-past a spoonful salt-acc
'Mary put a spoonful of salt in her coffee.'

Long focus movement:

- (24) a. [Londonba]F mondtad hogy méysz
London-loc said-you that go-you
'You said you were going to London'
- b. *[Az elnököt]F mondtad hogy hallottad [a hírt hogy
the president-acc said-you that heard-you the news-acc that
megérkezett __].
Prt-arrived
'You said you heard the news that the president had arrived.'

Focus movement may be optional, which may or may not make an interpretive difference:

- (25) a. Chi non hai presentato a nessuno?
who not have-you introduced to no one
- b. Non ho presentato a nessuno [Gianni].
not have-I introduced to no one Gianni
'I have introduced Gianni to no one.'
- b'. *[Gianni] non ho presentato a nessuno. (left-peripheral focus
Gianni not have-I introduced to no one is contrastive)
'I have introduced Gianni to no one.'

Russian: similar, but:

-- information focus is sentence-final (while contrastive focus is left-peripheral)

-- left-peripheral focus can function as an answer-constituent:

- (26) a. Kto dal Kate knigu?
who gave Kate.DAT book.ACC
'Who gave a book to Kate?'
b. Kate knigu dala ANJA.
Kate.DAT book.ACC gave Anna
'Anna gave a book to Kate'
- (27) a. Kto citajet knigu?
who reads book-ACC
'Who reads the book?'
b. SASHA citajet knigu (left-peripheral focus:
Sasha reads book-ACC unexpected alternative)
'(Out of all people) it is Sasha who reads the book!'
- (28) a. Kit hívtál meg?
who-acc invited-1sg Prt
'Who did you invite?'
b. [A kollégákat]F hívtam meg. (strongly exhaustive)
the colleagues-acc invited-1sg Prt
És Pétert is meghívtam. (self-correction of focus)
#Már évek óta nem találkoztam a többiekkel, akiket még meghívtam.
'#I haven't seen the others who I invited for a long time now.'
c. Meg hívtam [a kollégákat]F. (weakly exhaustive,
Prt invited-1sg Prt the colleagues-acc or non-exhaustive)
És Pétert is meghívtam. (addition to focus)
Már évek óta nem találkoztam a többiekkel, akiket még meghívtam.
'I haven't seen the others who I invited for a long time now.'

Focus-verb adjacency in Basque (OV):

- (29) a. Jon herri honetara aurten etorri da.
John this town this year come has
'John came this year to this town.'
b. Jon AURTEN etorri da herri honetara.
'It is this year that John came to this town.'

Focus movement without Focus-verb adjacency:

- (30) Questo Gianni ti dira' (non quello che pensavi). (Italian)
this John you-dat say-fut.3 not which that thought
'This Gianni will say to you, not what you thought.'

Focus and "free" word order

Focus and "free" word order in SOV (German):

Displacement of non-focus elements (scrambling):

- (31) ...daß [Otto [[ein Buch über [WOMBATS]] liest]]
...that Otto a book about wombats reads
- (32) daß Otto immer [Bücher über WOMBATS] liest
that Otto always books about wombats reads
'...that Otto always reads books about WOMBATS'
- (33) daß Otto [Bücher über Wombats] immer LIEST
that Otto books about wombats always reads
'...that Otto always READS books about wombats'

Scrambling of O may be constrained by indefiniteness/nonspecificity of O:

- (34) Üc çocuk üçü yeni bir araba (*din) almış. (Turkish)
three child three new a car yesterday bought
'Three children bought three new cars.'

Scrambling of O is not obligatory if S is Focus, but in SOV with S=Focus, S has a contrastive focus reading:

- (35) ...daß [OTTO] Bücher über Wombats liest
..that Otto books about Wombats reads

Displacement of non-focus elements in SVO Spanish:

- (36) a. Quién te regaló la botella de vino?
who you-dat gave the bottle of wine
'Who gave you the bottle of wine?'
b. Me regaló la botella de vino MARIA.
me-dat gave the bottle of wine Maria
'Maria gave me the bottle of wine.'

5. Focus and Topic

Explicit contrast:

contrastive focus or contrastive topic

- (37) a. Kít vettek fel az egyetemre János és Mari közül?
who-acc accepted-3pl Prt the university-to John and Mary out.of
'Of John and Mary, who was admitted to university?'
- b. [Jánost]CT felvették
John-acc Prt-accepted-3pl
'As for John, he was admitted.'

- c. [Jánost]F vették fel
 John-acc accepted-3pl Prt
 'JOHN was admitted.'

Syntactic interaction of focus and topic:

- (38) a. *Focus Topic ...
 b. *[FOCUS [background TOPIC [Comment. ...]]

6. Focus in Udmurt: The basics¹

Basic word order (broad focus context):

- SOV (neutral)
 ? OSV (object topicalization?)

Subject OBJECT V: ambiguity:

- Narrow object focus
 --VP focus
 --Broad focus

Object focus:

- S Adv O V (basic order)
 S Adv [O]F V (basic order)
 ?? S [O]F Adv V (adjacency?)
 ? S Adv V [O]F (sentence-final focus position; Russian influence?)
 *[O]F S Adv V (marked word order, and marked prosody)

Subject focus:

- S Adv O V (basic order)
 O Adv [S]F V (object topicalization, Adv topicalization?)
 ?? Adv [S]F V O (Adv topicalization and object postposing?)

 [S]F Adv O V (OK only as contrastive focus, marked prosody)
 O [S]F Adv V (same as immediately above, +object topicalization)
 ?? [S]F Adv V O (same as immediately above, +object postposing)

 ? Adv O V [S]F (sentence-final focus position; Russian influence?)

Comments:

- Both O and S can be focused in the based word order SOV, but S can only be interpreted in such an order as contrastive.
 - OSV is highly marked in broad focus contexts, but is OK if S is focused

7. Focus in Udmurt: The real thing...

¹ This section draws on fieldwork carried out with Orsolya Tanczos, and with Csaba Olsvay, as well as on the testing we did during the workshop. My colleagues should not be held responsible for any errors I might be making in the comments on the different orders.