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 The Syntax of Information Structure
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Class Presentation of É. Kiss (1998)

(É. Kiss, K. (1998). Identificational focus vs. information focus. *Language* 74: 245-273.)

Introduction

- Main claims
 - identificational focus \neq information focus, based on syntactic and semantic criteria, with reference to English (ENG) and Hungarian (HU)
 - parametric variation in identificational focus w.r.t. the features [\pm exhaustive] and [\pm contrastive]

Overview:

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|----|--|-----|---|
| 1. | A neglected distinction | 7. | Focus interaction versus focus projection |
| 2. | Exhaustive identification versus new information | 8. | <i>Only</i> -phrases |
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| 4. | Scope | 10. | Conclusion |
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1. A neglected distinction¹

- Two different types of focus can be distinguished, i.e., the identificational focus and the information focus, e.g.:

- (5) a. Tegnep este **Marinak** mutattam be Pétert.
 last night Mary.DAT introduced.I PERF Peter.ACC
 'It was **to Mary** that I introduced Peter last night.'
- b. Tegnep este be mutattam Pétert **MARINAK**.³
 'Last night I introduced Peter **TO MARY**.'

- The distinction has been neglected in lg description.

¹ The numbering of the sections and examples on the handout is the same as the numbering in the paper.

- Identificational focus \neq information focus

	<i>Identificational focus</i>	<i>Information focus</i>
	Expresses exhaustive identification	Marks the nonpresupposed nature of the information it carries
<i>Restriction on the allowed types of constituents</i>	E.g., universal quantifiers, <i>also</i> -phrases, <i>even</i> -phrases barred	None
<i>Taking scope</i>	Yes	No
<i>Movement</i>	Yes (to Spec of a functional projection)	No
<i>Size</i>	Coextensive with an XP available for operator mvt	Can be smaller or larger than the XP
	Can be iterated	Can project
<i>Present in every sentence</i>	No	Yes

2. Exhaustive identification versus new information

- Performing exhaustive identification on a set of entities given in the context or situation vs. marking the nonpresupposed information it carries
 - Not interpretational variants; difference in structural position (identificational focus position in the left periphery of the sentence in lgs such as HU vs. no distinguished position for elements associated only with information focus)
- Semantic-communicative role of the identificational focus

(9) (=1) The function of identificational focus: An identificational focus represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold; it is identified as the exhaustive subset of this set for which the predicate phrase actually holds.

E.g.:

- (8) a. Mari **egy kalapot** nézett ki magának.
 Mary a hat.ACC picked out herself.ACC
 'It was **a hat** that Mary picked for herself.'
- b. Mari ki nézett magának EGY KALAPOT.
 'Mary picked for herself A HAT.'

- Tests of exhaustive identification

- Szabolcsi (1981): coordinate DPs test (i.e., the sentence with one of the DPs dropped is not among the logical consequences of the sentence with coordinate DPs → exhaustive identification), e.g.:

- (12) a. Mari **egy kalapot és egy kabátot** nézett ki magának.
 Mary a hat.ACC and a coat.ACC picked out herself.to
 ‘It was **a hat and a coat** that Mary picked for herself.’
 b. Mari **egy kalapot** nézett ki magának.
 ‘It was **a hat** that Mary picked for herself.’

(12b) not a logical consequence of (12a) → exhaustive identification
 Note the structure: preverbal position in HU; clefting in ENG

- (13) a. Mari ki nézett magának EGY KALAPOT ÉS EGY KABÁTOT.
 Mary out picked herself.DAT a hat.ACC and a coat.ACC
 ‘Mary picked **A HAT AND A COAT** for herself.’
 b. Mari ki nézett magának EGY KALAPOT.
 ‘Mary picked **A HAT** for herself.’

(13b) a logical consequence of (13a) → not exhaustive identification
 Note the postverbal position of the foci.

- Donka Farkas’s dialogue test (pc with É. Kiss)

- (15) a. A: Mari **egy kalapot** nézett ki magának.
 Mary a hat.ACC picked out herself.DAT
 ‘It was **a hat** that Mary picked for herself.’
 B: Nem, egy kabátot is ki nézett.
 no a coat too out picked
 ‘No, she picked a coat, too.’
 b. A: Mari ki nézett magának EGY KALAPOT.
 ‘Mary picked herself **A HAT**.’
 B: %Nem, egy kabátot is ki nézett.
 %‘No, she picked a coat, too.’

(15a): negation of exhaustivity

- In general: structural focus → exhaustive identification; pitch accent → information focus
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3. Distributional restrictions

- Elements excluded from functioning as identificational foci: universal quantifiers, *somebody/something*, *even*-phrases, *also*-phrases (except for contexts in which exclusion is expressed); same holds for HU equivalents
 - Semantic motivation: identification without exclusion
- Elements excluded from functioning as information foci: *somebody/something*; same holds for HU equivalents
 - Inherently incapable of bearing a pitch accent

4. Scope

- Identificational focus is an operator in a scope position; it marks its c-command domain as the scope of exhaustive identification
- Scope interaction, e.g.:

- (22) a. Minden fiú **Marival** akart táncolni.
 every boy Mary.with wanted to.dance
 ‘For every boy, it was **Mary** [of the relevant persons] that he wanted to dance with.’
- b. **Marival** akart táncolni minden fiú.
 ‘It was **Mary** [of the relevant persons] that every boy wanted to dance with.’

(22a): $\forall >$ exhaustive identification (22b): exhaustive identification $> \forall$

(23) It is always **Mary** that every boy wants to dance with.

(23): $\forall_{always} >$ exhaustive identification $> \forall_{every\ boy}$

- Information focus status has no impact on scope relations
- Weak crossover, e.g.:

- (26) a. ??It was **to a boy_i** that his_i mother spoke t_i.
 b. ??His_i mother spoke **TO A BOY_i**.

(26a): supports the hypothesis that the informational focus involves variable binding

(26b): discourse-semantic effect

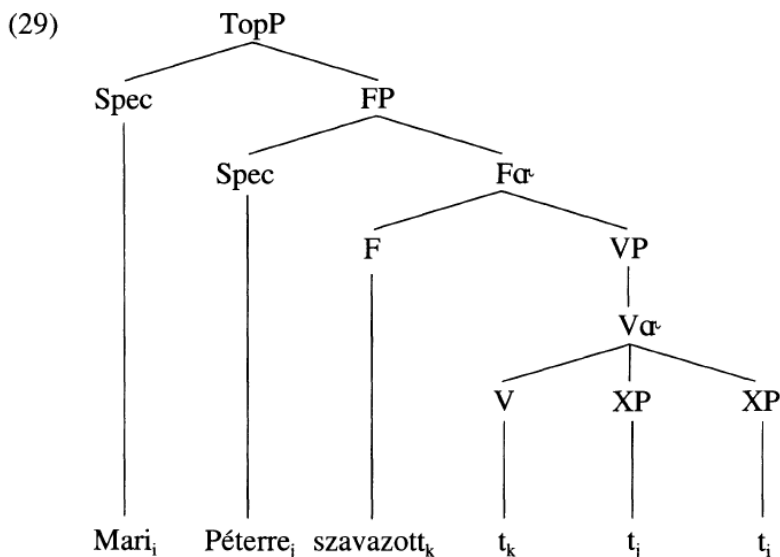
5. Position

5.1 The FP projection in Hungarian

- Identificational focus positioned in Spec,F (adopted from Brody 1990, 1995)
- Mvt to Spec,F can transgress clause boundary, e.g.:

- (28) a. [_{VP} Szeretném [_{CP} ha [_{FP} Péterre_i szavaznátok t_i]]]
 I.would.like if Peter.on voted.you
 ‘I wish it was **Peter** on whom you voted.’
- b. [_{FP} Péterre_i szeretném, [_{CP} t_i ha szavaznátok t_i]]
 Peter.on I.would.like if voted.you
 ‘It is **Peter** on whom I would like you to vote.’

- F: functional head; bears the strong V feature → V-to-F mvt, e.g.:

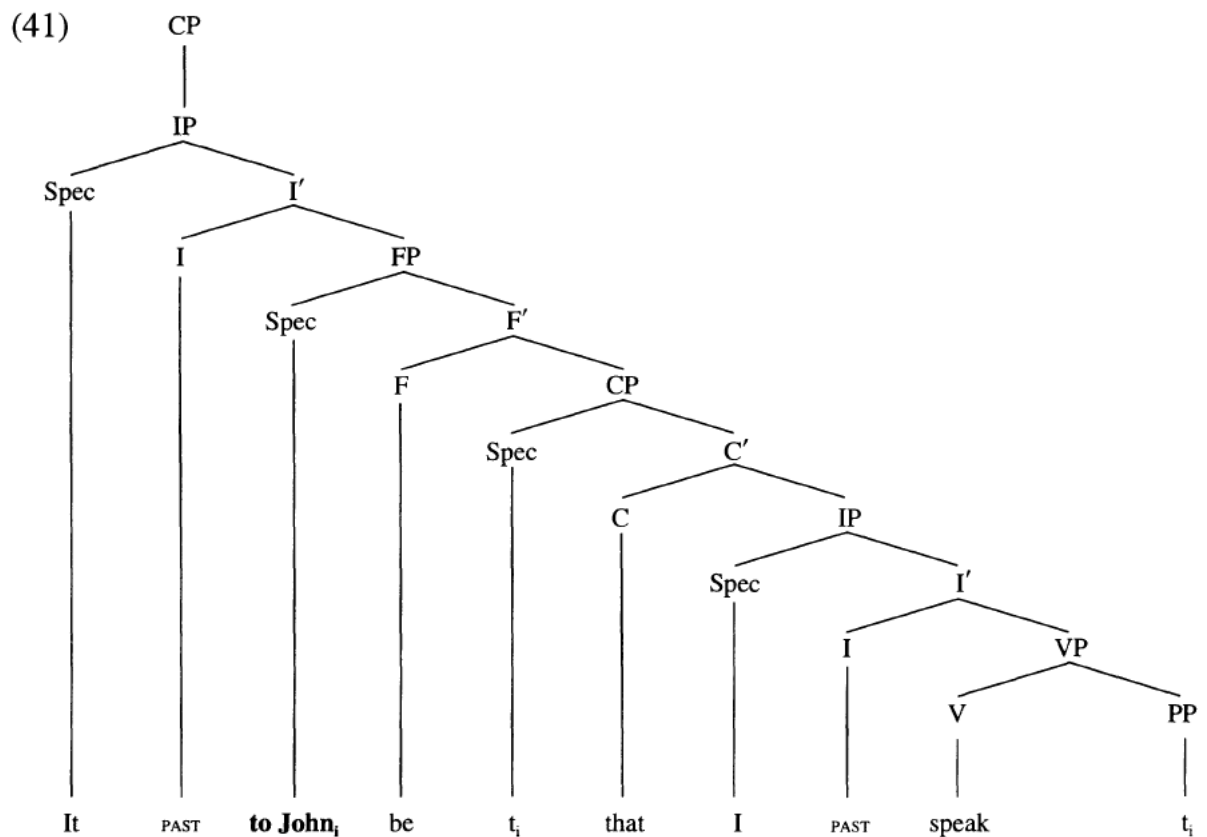


- Quantifier projections > Topic projections > FP > AspP > VP
- V-to-F mvt explains adjacency between V and the identificational focus and the placement of the verbal particle (on the assumption that the particle is in Spec,Asp/Spec,V)
- Identificational focus scopes over the complement of F
- *Focus criterion*: Spec,F must contain a +f phrase and all +f phrases must be in Spec,F

5.2 The FP projection in English: the cleft construction

- The cleft constituent is in Spec,F

- The proposal provides a way to derive the cleft construction, cf. the structure in (41):



- Note: ..._{[FP F [CP C ...} in ENG vs. ..._{[FP F [VP V...} in HU
- Either mvt to Spec,F (cf. (41)) or base generation in Spec,F plus linking to a WH-pronoun in the embedded CP at LF, as in, e.g., (43), where the identificational focus in the subject (in which case the mvt strategy is ruled out by ECP):

- (43) a. It is **me**_i [_{CP} who_i \emptyset _{[IP} t_i is sick]]
 or
 b. It is **me**_i [_{CP} \emptyset _i that [_{IP} t_i is sick]]

- Optional mvt of *only*-phrases → satisfaction of the focus criterion at LF plus the assumption that LF mvt to Spec,F does not require the lexicalisation of F (alternatively: mvt to Spec,PolP)

6. Syntactic category

- Identificational focus is in Spec,F → it must be an XP

- Identificational focus is a major XP (i.e., NP/AP/VP, to be qualified below)
- Exhaustive identification holds of the whole constituent in Spec,F. Consider (46):

- (46) a. János [_{Spec-FP} **EGY angol könyvet**] kapott ajándékba.
 John one English book.ACC got as.present
 ‘It was **ONE English book** that John got as a present.’
- b. János [_{Spec-FP} **egy ANGOL könyvet**] kapott ajándékba.
 ‘It was **an ENGLISH book** that John got as a present.’
- c. János [_{Spec-FP} **egy angol KÖNYVET**] kapott ajándékba.
 ‘It was **an English BOOK** that John got as a present.’
- d. János [_{Spec-FP} **egy ANGOL KÖNYVET**] kapott ajándékba.
 ‘It was **an ENGLISH BOOK** that John got as a present.’

Value of the variable bound by the focus operator the same; difference in the set of entities presupposed (different information foci within the identificational focus)

- Further elements unable to function as identificational foci: *that*-clauses, infinitival clauses, VPs, predicative NPs/APs, e.g.:

- (47) a. *János [_{Spec-FP} [(**azt**), **hogy Mari elkésik**]_i] súgta nekem t_i.
 John that.ACC that Mary is.late whispered me
 *‘It was **that Mary would be late** that John whispered to me.’
- b. *János [_{Spec-FP} [**minden évben egy új autót venni**]_i] akart t_i.
 John every year a new car.ACC to.buy wanted
 *‘It was **to buy a new car every year** that John wanted.’
- c. *János [_{Spec-FP} [_{VP} **megnézni a filmet**]_i] fogja t_i.
 John to.see the film will
 *‘It is **see the film** that John will.’
- d. ??János [_{Spec-FP} [_{AdjP} **fáradt**]_i] volt ritkán t_i.⁹
 John tired was seldom
 *‘It was **tired** that John was seldom.’

- Identificational focus: quantification over a set of individuals (exhaustive identification (identification of a subset and exclusion of the complementary subset) requires complement formation, which can operate only on unordered sets (cf. Szabolcsi 1983 and Szabolcsi and Zwarts 1993), extended later in the text to scales))
- Clauses, VPs, and predicates do not denote individuals

7. Focus interaction versus focus projection

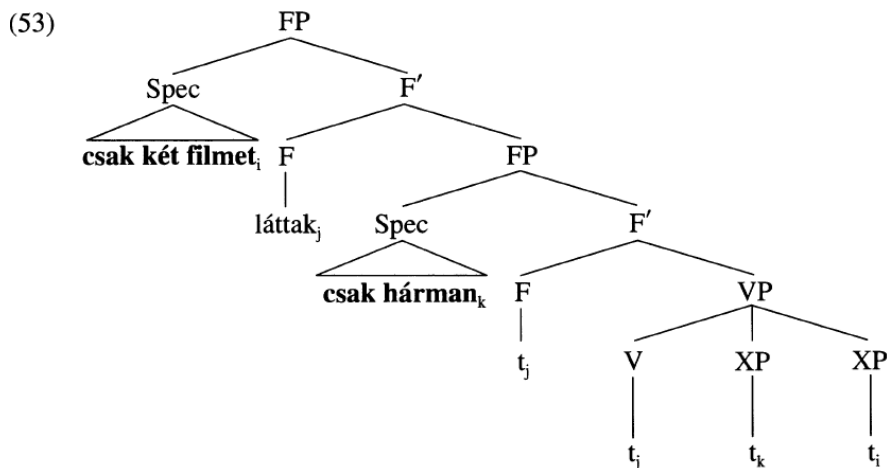
- Focus iteration: identificational focus

- Obligatory mvt of arguments modified by *csak* ‘only’ and negative existential quantifiers in HU (note the difference with ENG (cf. section 5)) → assumption: these elements have an inherent identificational focus feature plus HU does not have the option of satisfying the focus criterion at LF, e.g.:

- (51) a. *Két filmet [_{VP} meg néztek CSAK HÁRMAN]
 two film.ACC PERF saw only three
 ‘Only THREE PERSONS saw two films.’
 b. [_{VP} Csak hárman néztek meg két filmet]

- Focus iteration possible in HU, e.g. :

- (52) Csak két filmet láttak csak hárman.
 only two film.ACC saw only three
 ‘It was **only two films** that **only three persons** saw.’



Relative scope determined by c-command (in (overt) syntax) →
 in (53): ‘only two films’ > ‘only three persons’
 *‘only three persons’ > ‘only three films’

- Focus iteration impossible in ENG (follows from the difference in structure in comparison to HU), e.g.:

- (57) *It was [_{FP} to Mary_i [_{CP} that [_{IP} it was [_{FP} John_j [_{CP} that [_{IP} we introduced
 t_j t_i]]]]]]]

- Focus projection: informational focus, e.g.:

- (58) [_{TopP} Péter [_{VP} 'meg rendelt [_{DP} egy 'könyvet]]]
 Peter PERF ordered a book.ACC
 [_{IP} Peter [_{VP} ordered a 'book]]
- (59) a. What did Peter order?
 b. What did Peter do?
 c. What happened?

8. *Only*-phrases

- *Only*: a quantifierlike element adjoined to an XP; assigns an identificational focus feature to the XP
- HU: *csak*
 - Q-floating, e.g.:

(61) a. János **csak Marit** hívta meg.
 John only Mary.ACC invited PERF
 'It was **only Mary** that John invited.'

b. János **Marit** hívta **csak** meg.
 c. János **Marit** hívta meg **csak**.¹¹
 - *Csak* introduces an evaluative presupposition into the meaning of the sentence: low value on a scale

9. Parametric variation in the feature content of identificational focus

- Uniform structural distinction: identificational focus preposed; informational focus in situ
- Cross-linguistic difference in the feature content of identificational focus
 - [\pm exhaustive], [\pm contrastive]
 - Strength of the feature complex (\rightarrow optional vs. obligatory focus mvt in syntax)
- HU: [+ exhaustive], [\pm contrastive]
 - [+ exhaustive] is strong
 - [+ contrastive]: focus operates on a closed set of entities whose members are known to the participants of the discourse
 - [- contrastive]: focus operates on an open set of entities; complementary subset with identifiable members not delineated, e.g.:

- (67) a. **Ki** írta a Háború és békét?
 who wrote the War and Peace
 ‘Who wrote *War and Peace*?’
- b. [_{TOPP} A Háború és békét [_{FP} **Tolsztoj** írta]]
 the War and Peace.ACC Tolstoy wrote
 ‘It was **Tolstoy** who wrote *War and Peace*.’

- ENG: [+ exhaustive], [± contrastive]; where [+ exhaustive] can be weak when the focus is unambiguously identifiable at PF (by the presence of *only*) but is strong otherwise
- Rumanian, Italian, and Catalan: [+ exhaustive, + contrastive], either strong or weak
- Greek and Arabic: [+ exhaustive, + contrastive], strong
- Finnish: [± exhaustive], [+ contrastive], where [+ contrastive] is strong

10. Conclusion

- Two types of focus
 - Identificational: operator; mvt
 - Informational: carrier of new information, no mvt
- *Only*-phrases: identificational foci; evaluative presupposition
- Parametric variation: positive value of either or both [± exhaustive], [± contrastive] features, optionally or obligatorily strong

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