

## Degrees of discourse configurationality and beyond

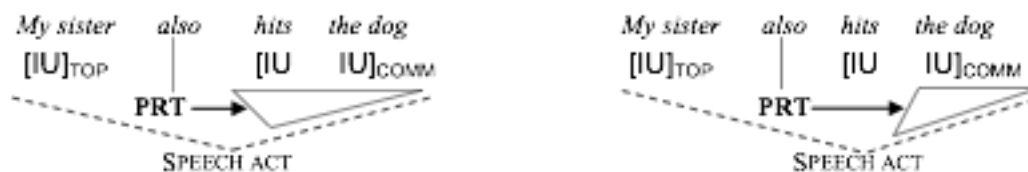
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The notion of ‘discourse configurational language’ was introduced by É. Kiss (1995) to describe languages like Hungarian in which clause-structure is organized in terms of discourse-related notions like topic and focus rather than grammatical relations like subject and object or traditional X-bar constituent structure. The preverbal field in Hungarian has a topic position, followed by a pragmatically more neutral position, followed by a contrastive focus position, while the post-verbal field is not subject to such constraints. Rizzi’s (1997) articulation of the left periphery of the clause included TopicP and FocusP functional projections, and while these are part of the grammar of every language, they play a central role in the grammar of discourse configurational languages.

Discourse configurationality is not an all or nothing phenomenon, and languages vary as to their degree of discourse configurationality. In particular, they vary in terms of what grammatical phenomena are sensitive to discourse functions like topic and focus, and to what extent these notions are ‘structure-building’. RRG is particularly well-suited to capture these effects, despite not having functionally-specific syntactic structures akin to TopicP and FocusP, as e.g. shown by Bentley (2008). The key to the RRG approach is the enhanced information-structure projection, which has represented the focus-background distinction by means of the contrast between the PFD and the AFD since 1993. Balogh (2019) adds a topic-comment notation to the information units; as illustrated in Fig.1.

Figure 1: Enhanced information-structure projection, following Balogh (2019)



So for Hungarian the first RP in the core would be ‘[IU]<sub>TOP</sub>’, and the remainder of the core would be within ‘[...]<sub>COMM</sub>’. The PFD would encompass the entire clause, and the AFD would include the pre-nuclear position. The position between the topic and the AFD would be part of both the background (PFD minus the AFD) and the comment, and accordingly it is pragmatically neutral, unlike the positions on either side of it. The information structure projection, thus, an overlay over the constituent projection, providing a rigid bracketing of the constituents that form the Hungarian prefield. This is a clear instance of structure building.

Another example of structure building comes from English, a language not considered to be discourse-configurational. RRG does not have VP as a part of the LSC, and denies that VPs are universal; nevertheless, some languages, e.g. English, clearly have them. Van Valin (2005) shows that one of the sources of VP-like groupings is information structure, where it imposes bracketings on the constituent projection (cf. the left diagram in Figure 1), yielding units that are involved in topical VP-fronting and VP-ellipsis constructions. This shows that even in a less discourse configurational than Hungarian, there are some traces of IS-driven structure building.

Note that not every instance of marked syntactic structure associated with a special IS-interpretation is viewed as IS-driven or IS-mediated in RRG. The *it*-cleft construction, which comes with a number of different IS-interpretations (cf. Declerck 1984), suggests that we need to assume more than one constructional schema with IS-specification.

The IS notions relevant to grammar and structure building may come with their own language-specific flavor. The topic-prominent languages Japanese and Korean both exhibit topic markers. However, while Korean restricts the marker to continued givenness topics, Japanese employs the topic-marker also for not yet explicitly given aboutness topics that may be assumed as part of the general common ground or as evocable from given linguistic material (cf. Lee & Shimojo). A further important difference is that in Japanese the *wa*-marked aboutness topic may only appear in sentence-initial position (non-initial *wa*-marked constituents are focal), while the *nun*-marked givenness topic may appear in different positions in the sentence. Therefore, the structure-building effect of the topic in Japanese is more pronounced than in Korean. The constraint on *wa* motivates the postulation of an LDP in Japanese, which would be a case of structure-building, while the lack of a comparable constraint in Korean may be indicative of the lack of an LDP.

(1) Vermeulen (2009: 352)

- |    |  |               |                |                  |                |                     |
|----|--|---------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------|
|    | <i>Hmm,</i>                                | <i>ano</i>    | <i>CD-wa</i>   | <i>doo-da-ka</i> | <i>Siranai</i> | <i>kedo...</i>      |
|    | Well                                       | that          | CD-WA          | how-COP-whether  | not.know       | But                 |
|    | „Well, I don’t know about that CD, but...” |               |                |                  |                |                     |
| a. | <i>#John-ga</i>                            | <i>Sue-ni</i> | <i>ano</i>     | <i>hon-wa</i>    | <i>Kinoo</i>   | <i>ageteita(yo)</i> |
|    | John-NOM                                   | Sue-to        | that           | book-WA          | yesterday      | gave(PRT)           |
| b. | <i>?John-ga</i>                            | <i>ano</i>    | <i>hon-wa</i>  | <i>Sue-ni</i>    | <i>Kinoo</i>   | <i>ageteita(yo)</i> |
|    | John-NOM                                   | that          | book-WA        | Sue-to           | yesterday      | gave(PRT)           |
| c. | <i>Ano</i>                                 | <i>hon-wa</i> | <i>John-ga</i> | <i>Sue-ni</i>    | <i>Kinoo</i>   | <i>ageteita(yo)</i> |
|    | That                                       | book-WA       | John-NOM       | Sue-to           | Yesterday      | gave(PRT)           |
- ‘As for that book, John gave it to Sue yesterday.’ [Japanese]

(2) Vermuelen (2009:353)

- |    |  |                     |                                 |
|----|--|---------------------|---------------------------------|
|    | <i>Hmm, ku</i>                         | <i>CD-nun</i>       | <i>molu-keyss-ko</i>            |
|    | well                                   | this CD-NUN         | not-know-but                    |
|    | ‘Well, I don’t know about this CD, but |                     |                                 |
| a. | <i>John-i</i>                          | <i>Sue-hantey i</i> | <i>chayk-un ecey cwuesse.</i>   |
|    | John-NOM                               | Sue-DAT             | this book-NUN yesterday gave    |
| b. | <i>John-i</i>                          | <i>i chayk-un</i>   | <i>Sue-hantey ecey cwuesse.</i> |
|    | John-NOM                               | this book-NUN       | Sue-DAT yesterday gave          |
| c. | <i>I chayk-un</i>                      | <i>John-i</i>       | <i>Sue-hantey ecey cwuesse.</i> |
|    | this book-NUN                          | John-NOM            | Sue-DAT yesterday gave          |
- ‘As for this book, John gave it to Sue yesterday.’ [Korean]

The differences with respect to the structure-building function of IS requires us to think about what exactly it means for IS to be an overlay of the constituent structure and how this is captured in the linking procedure. We assume that there are three different ways in which IS can interact with morphosyntax, which can be found to different degrees in all 3 language types: discourse-configurational, semi-discourse-configurational languages and non-configurational languages.

For canonical sentences that may receive more than one IS-interpretation, the IS-frame follows from the context and simply mirrors the interpretational calculation after the constituent structure-semantic structure linking. For IS-specific constructions IS is part of the constructional schema that describes the linking. If there is more than one IS-interpretation associated, IS determines construction choice, but not the linking per se. For certain aspects of discourse-configurational languages, IS dictates the linking.

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