

## Dynamics of Focus interpretation – Focus as a Revision (Kiaer)

This paper aims to explain how focus effects contribute to building up interpretation in dialogue. As a model of the left-to right process of understanding as a tree growth process, Dynamic Syntax (Kempson et al 2001) is well-suited: my extending it to focus in dialogue will be new. First, I shall model focus as a revision device, essentially involving dialogue. Revision has functions of updating, correcting or emphasizing certain information to the ongoing dialogue. With the same goal as a revision, focus makes certain lexical items salient or contrastive with respect to the currently parsing context. Examples are given in (1). Some of these data as (1bB) and (1cB) are contra-indicated by eg. Buering 1997, Rooth 1996, whose analyses would predict that the focus in (1bB) and (1cB) should be on the first item, not the second. See also Korean data in (2). Korean examples in (2) support my claim that focus is a revision device: the duplication of *ani*'not' and *kukess*'it' in (2aB) and (2bB) indicates that focus is following them as a form of revision; substituting *kukess*'it' with *bagel* as shown in (2bB) also shows that focus is an incremental process of updating partial information; (2bB') and (2bB'') reveal that focus is essentially a step of updating information and thus it is sensitive to linearity effects. Based on Dynamic Syntax, I will capture syntactic properties of focus in terms of a pair of a context and a logical form: Both take the form of a tree structure, following the Dynamic Syntax concept of logical form as a decorated tree. The pair of context and logical form forms a pair of "linked" trees [Linked trees are defined in Kempson et al. as sharing a common term: the concept is used to characterize relative clauses and hanging topic constructions]. The focussed information involves re-use of the context tree to create a new linked tree, with the phonological focus signaling the appropriate site of update, correction or emphasis. In this analysis, all focus phenomena are defined in terms of such context/logical-form pairs: the phenomenon is defined in structural terms, and is not taken to be that of a sentence in isolation of any such context. This is in contrast to analyses of focus as a sentential property, definable in isolation (Rooth 1996) and in model-theoretic terms. The argument will include interaction of negation, and focus particles. In particular I shall analyze the effect of focus on negation also in terms of revision relative to context, so that (3) JOHN didn't hit Bill will be a well-formed continuation of a form such as Someone hit Bill, and only in this sense does the stressed form have an existential presupposition. As an extension of this analysis, I shall explore how updating by replacing one term with another, called "apposition", can take place during the construction of a single structure while contributing to the progressive build-up of logical form, a process which I will show is related to focus once focus is seen in the perspective of dialogue. (See 1bB, 1cB, 2bB'')

### (1) Focus as a Revision

#### a. correction

A: Who did you meet? Jen or Jem?

B: I met Jen, no [Jem]<sub>F</sub>. (cf ?? I met [Jen]<sub>F</sub>, no Jem.)

#### b. updating (yes/no question)

A: Have you had breakfast?

B: Cereal, [Crunchy Nut]<sub>F</sub>. (cf ?? [Cereal]<sub>F</sub>, Crunchy Nut.)

#### c. updating (wh-question)

A: What did John study at college?

B: Physics, [Statistical Physics]<sub>F</sub> (cf ?? [Physics]<sub>F</sub>, Statistical Physics.)

#### d. emphasis

A: Who did you meet? Jen or Jem?

B: I met [Jen]<sub>F</sub>, not Jem. (cf ?? I met Jen, not [Jem]<sub>F</sub>.)

### (2) Korean data

#### a. correction

A: John-i mwuess-ul mek-ess-ni?

John-NOM what -ACC eat-PAST-INTRG

'What did John eat?'

B: Yene, ani (ani ani) [songe]<sub>F</sub>. (cf ?? [Yene]<sub>F</sub>, ani songe.)  
Salmon not (not not) trout  
'Trout, not salmon.'

b. updating (wh-question)

A: John-i party-e mwuess-ul kaciwa-ss -ni?  
John-NOM party-to what-ACC bring -PAST-INTRG (question-ending marker)  
'What did John bring to the party?'

B: Kukess, (kukess kukess)[bagel]<sub>F</sub>. (cf ?? [Kukess]<sub>F</sub>, bagel.)  
It (it it) bagel  
'?? It, bagel'

B': ?? Bagel-ul, [ppang-ul]<sub>F</sub> kaciwa-ss-ta. (cf ?? [bagel-ul]<sub>F</sub> ppang-ul kaciwa-ss-ta.)  
Bagel ACC bread-ACC bring-PAST-DEC  
'?? Bagel, bread he brought.'

B'': Ppang-ul [bagel-ul]<sub>F</sub> kaciwa-ss- ta.  
Bread-ACC bagel-ACC bring -PAST-DEC  
'?? Bread, bagel he brought.'

c. emphasis

A: John-i mwuess-ul mek-ess -ni?  
John-NOM what - ACC eat-PAST-INTRG  
'What did John eat?'

B: [Yene]<sub>F</sub>, songe-ka ani - ko (cf ?? Yene, [songe]<sub>F</sub> -ka aniko.)  
Salmon trout-NOM not- CONJ  
'Salmon, not trout.'

(3) [John]<sub>F</sub> didn't hit the ball. (cf John did [not]<sub>F</sub> hit the ball.)