

**Stony Brook University
The Graduate School**

Doctoral Defense Announcement

Abstract

Some Interactions of Focus and Focus Sensitive Elements

By

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It has been observed that focus affects the meaning of the sentence; different statements of surprise, different assertions, and different inquiries are expressed simply by shifting the position of focus. This indicates that the meanings of a sentence are determined by more than combinations of the meaning of lexical elements. This dissertation examines how focus contributes to the meaning of the sentence, exploring a compositional analysis of focus. Specifically, I investigate syntactic structures of focus constructions and their mappings to logical representations. According to Herburger (2000), focus imposes structure on event quantification, where the focused elements are interpreted in the scope of the event quantifier, and background information expressed by unfocused elements restricts the event quantifier. I extend this structured event quantificational analysis, arguing that focus introduces an additional event quantifier and an \mathfrak{R} -predicate which relates the original event and the event introduced by focus. This analysis explains otherwise mysterious entailment patterns found in *cause*-constructions. I then propose a syntactic structure of focus constructions, adopting Larson's (2002) mapping system of quantifiers, and examine how focus association takes place. Among several focus sensitive elements, I specially discuss negation and frequency adverbs (*always, mostly, usually*), which induce ambiguity in focus constructions, yielding a focus-associated reading and a non-associated reading, and examine the mechanism and conditions of association with focus. Based on the analysis of focus association, I discuss *because*-constructions and their interrogative forms, *why*-questions. I show that adverbial *because*-clauses not only behave as a focused element, but also associate with other focused elements. I propose that when it acts as a focus sensitive element, the *because*-phrase and the focused element form a syntactic and semantic unit. The focus sensitive property of the *because*-clause is preserved and inherited in its interrogative forms, and hence the answers to *why*-questions are affected by the position of focus. I suggest that *why*-questions quantify over predicates and explain focal effects on the interpretation of *why*-questions by arguing that the focused element and the predicate variable form a constituent in focus sensitive *why*-questions. I show that this analysis explains several unique properties of *why*-questions observed cross-linguistically.

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