

Towards a universal model of interacting factors of 'Topicalisation'

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1. Basic Assumptions

Discourse Configuration: The systematic arrangement of the selection and the structuring of information and its integration in a larger (linguistic) context.

- (1) *Referential Linking* (Reinhart 1980; after Frey 2007: 239)

Two sentences are referentially linked only if there is an aboutness topic or a scene setting expression in the second sentence which is referentially controlled by an element of the first sentence.

- (2) *Topic* (Reinhart 1981; after Frey 2007: 231)

A topic is an expression whose referent the sentence is about.

- (3) *Familiarity* (Reinhart 1981; cf. Frey 2000: 138)

Topics are expressions the referents of which have been introduced in the discourse or are present to the discourse participants for other reasons.

- (4) *Scene Setting Expression* (cf. Reinhart 1980: 173)

The part of the sentence that specifies the spatial or temporal framework for the event reported in the sentence, or the particular world about the state of affairs in which the sentence asserts something.

- (5) a. Gustav hat die ganze Nacht nicht geschlafen. Studenten sind ja ununterbrochen am Arbeiten.
G. – has – the – whole – night – not – slept | students – are – PTC – uninterruptedly – at – work-INF
 b. Gustav geht gleich an die Uni. In der Mensa gibt es heute Glühwein.
G. – goes – shortly – to – the – University | in – the – refectory – gives – it – today – mulled-wine

- In the 1970ies' mainstream typological work on comparative syntax, it was common practice to divide languages into the types 'topic prominent' and 'subject prominent' .

(There are languages in which) 'the basic syntactic constructions manifest a topic-comment relation rather than a subject-predicate relation.' (Li&Thompson 1976: 459)

- Some characteristics of so called 'topic-prominent' languages (abstracted from Li & Thompson 1976: 466f; Gundel 1988: 222)

- (6) a. *canonical* topic positions (sentence initial ?)
 b. 'double subjects': aboutness topics not selected by the predicate
 c. predominantly SOV

- (7) a. *neì-chang huǒ xìngkuì xīaofang-duì lái de kuài* (Mandarin; cf. Li & Thompson 1976: 462)
 DEM-CLASS – *fire – fortunat – fire-brigade – come – AdvPTC – quick*
 'That fire, fortunately the fire brigade came quickly.'

- b. *neì-xie shùmu shù-shēn dà* (Mandarin; cf. Li & Thompson 1976: 468)
 DEM-CLASS – *tree – tree-trunk – big*
 'Those trees, the trunks are big.'

- (8) *sakana wa tai ga oisii* (Japanese; cf. Li & Thompson 1976: 468)
Fisch – TOP – Tai – NOM – delicious

2. Topicality: Configurational Accounts

2.1. EPP-Variation

É.Kiss (1995: 6f, 14): *notional vs. grammatical subject*.

- Obligatory SPEC-head-agreement in IP corresponds to positional licensing of the grammatical subject resp. a *canonical subject position*. The EPP is satisfied by the grammatical subject.

(9) A guest has telephoned.

- Information structuring is a restricted, secondary option (→ *intonation, permutation*).

(10) a. The students know /SYNTAX WELL\.

b. /SYNTAX, the students know WELL\.

- Languages without obligatory SPEC-head-agreement in IP do not have a canonical subject position. Phrases moved to higher positions to fulfil discourse-semantic functions satisfy the EPP.

(11) [_{IP} telefonált [_{DP} egy vendég]] (data from É.Kiss 2003b: 109)
telephoned - a - guest

(12)a. [_{IP} [_{I'} Van_v [_{VP} egy kutya *t_v* a szobá-ban]]] (data from É.Kiss 1995: 7f.)
is a dog DEF Room-in
 'There's a dog in the room.'

b. * [_{IP} Egy kutya_s [_{I'} van [_{VP} *t_s* a szobában]]]

c. [_{TOPP} A szobában [_{IP} [_{I'} van_v [_{VP} *t_v* egy kutya]]]]

(13) a. [_{TOPP} a diákok szerintem [jól [_{IP} tudják a szintaxist]]]
the - students-NOM - in-my-opinion - well - know - the - syntax-ACC

b. [_{TOPP} a szintaxist szerintem [jól [_{IP} tudják a diákok]]]
the - syntax-NOM - in-my-opinion - well - know - the - students-ACC

- In topic-prominent languages, *syntactic predication* corresponds to the *semantic predication* over the *notional subject*¹.

(14) *Semantic Predication* (cf. Jacobs 2001: 647)

In P = (X ... Y), X is the *semantic subject* and Y das *semantic predicate* iff

a. X specifies a variable in the semantic valency of Y

b. there is no Z such that (i) Z specifies a variable in the semantic valency of an element in Y and (ii) Z is hierarchically higher in semantic form than X

(15) a. Der Poli/ZEI miss\TRAUT er. (Jacobs 2001: 648)
the - police-(DAT) - mistrusts - he

b. [THE-POLICE(y) & [HE(x) & MISTRUST(x,y)]]

(16) a. He mis/TRUSTS the police\.

b. The police, he mistrust.

¹ Vgl. auch Sasse (1987): Eine Sprache sei topikprominent, wenn *kategorische Urteile* als die primären Prädikationsstrukturen ausgedrückt werden, *thetische Urteile* jedoch als reine Prädikationsphrasen strukturiert sind. In einer subjektprominenten Sprache sei der Unterschied zwischen den beiden Arten von Urteilen verschleiert, da beide Arten von Subjekten prinzipiell in der gleichen strukturellen Relation zum Verb stünden. Diese Ansicht weist É.Kiss (2003a: 1447f) jedoch als Übergeneralisierung zurück.

2.2. Cartographic Approaches

Cartographic approaches try to relate topic positions to specific *functional projections* in a *structural hierarchy*.

- É.Kiss (2003b) for Hungarian: TopP>QP>FocP>VP

(17) a. Szerintem [_{QP} minden diák [_{FocP} a szintaxist [_{VP} szereti legjobban]]]
in-my-opinion - every - student - the - syntax - likes - best
 b. [_{TopP} A diádok [szerintem [_{VP} jól [_{VP} tudják a szintaxist]]]
the - students - in-my-opinion - well - know - the - syntax

- Öhl (2013) for Hungarian: TopP >FocP>PolP>VP

(18) a. [_{TopP} Mari [_{FocP} TEGNAP [_{IP} próbalt [_{VP} fel olvas-ni egy könyvet]]] (data from Farkas & Sadock 1989: 328)
Maria YESTERDAY tried V-ptc lread-INF a book
 b. [_{FocP} El [_{PolP} nem [_{IP} olvas-ná semmi pénz-ért]]]! (data from Péteri 2011: 5)
V-Ptc NEG read-KOND.3.sg no money-for
 'READ it, that's what he wouldn't at any price!'

⇒ Quantified and focalised expressions and negation precede the verb but follow the sentence adverbials.

⇒ Topics precede the sentence adverbials.

- Frey (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) for German:

(19) a. CP>ContrP>FinP>TopP (Frey 2004: 29)
 b. [_{ContrP} Mit dem Hammer [_{FinP} [_{Fin'} hat [_{TopP} Otto das Fenster eingeschlagen]]]]
with - the - hammer - has - Otto - the - window - smashed
 c. [_{CP} Den Otto₁ [_{FinP} den₁ [_{Fin'} mag [_{TopP} t'₁ jeder t₁ t₂]]]]]
the - Otto - him - likes - everyone
 d. Jeder glaubt, [_{CP} den Hans₁ [_{C'} dass [_{FinP} [_{TopP} den₁ jeder t₁ mag]]]]]
everybody - thinks - the - John - that - everyone - him - likes

(20) **Designated Topic Position** (Frey 2007: 232)
 In the middle field of the German clause, directly above the base position of sentential adverbials (SADVs), there is a designated position for topics (in the aboutness sense): all topics occurring in the middle field, and only them, occur in this position.

(21) a. Weil er müde war, hat *ein Student* leider während der Vorlesung geschlafen. (vgl. Frey 2007: 333)
because - he - tired - was - has - a - student - unfortunately - during - the - lecture - slept
 b. *Weil er müde war, hat leider *ein Student* während der Vorlesung geschlafen.

2.3. How to distribute multiple topics?

(22) [_{TopP} János [_{TopP} Marit [_{IP} tavaly [_{IP} [_{I'} vitte_v [_{VP} el t_v Páris-ba]]]]]] (data from É.Kiss 1994: 14; cf. Jacobs 2001: 650)
John Mary last-year took V-ptc Paris-to

- **Topics that can occur together**

Subject of predication + other addresses:

(23) a. **In der /Küche** hat **Peter** Ge\SCHIRR gespült. (cf. Jacobs 2001: 649)
in - the - kitchen - has - Peter - the-dishes - washed
 'In the kitchen, Peter did the dishes.'
 b. [IN-THE-KITCHEN(s) & PETER(x) & [THE-DISHES(y) & HAS-WASHED(x,y)]

(24) It was just last year that **John** took **Mary** to Paris.

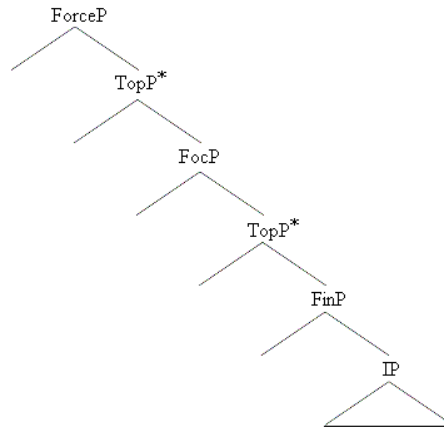
• Frame setting + subject of predication

- (25) a. **Im Falle eines Sieges** wird **die Mannschaft** eine Belobigung durch den Staatspräsidenten erhalten.
in-the - case - of-a - win - will - the - team - a - commendation - by - the - president-of-state - receive
- b. sùnglihal kyòngu-e-nùn tim-i taetonglyòng-ekesò pyochang-ùl pan-ùl kòsita. (cf. Jacobs 2001: 655)
win - case-in-TOP ...

• Addressation and frame setting

- (26) **In meinem TRAUM**, da war **Peter** ein Krokodil. (cf. Jacobs 2001: 662)
in - my - dream - there - was - P. - a - crocodile

(27) 'Split CP' (Rizzi 1997)



- (28) Credo [_{ForceP} **che** [_{TopP} a Gianni [_{FocP} QUESTO [_{TopP} domani [_{FinP} [_{IP} gli dovremmo dire]...]]]] (cf. Rizzi 1997: 295)
think-1stsg - that - to - G. - THIS - tomorrow - ObjCl - must-FUT-1stpl - say

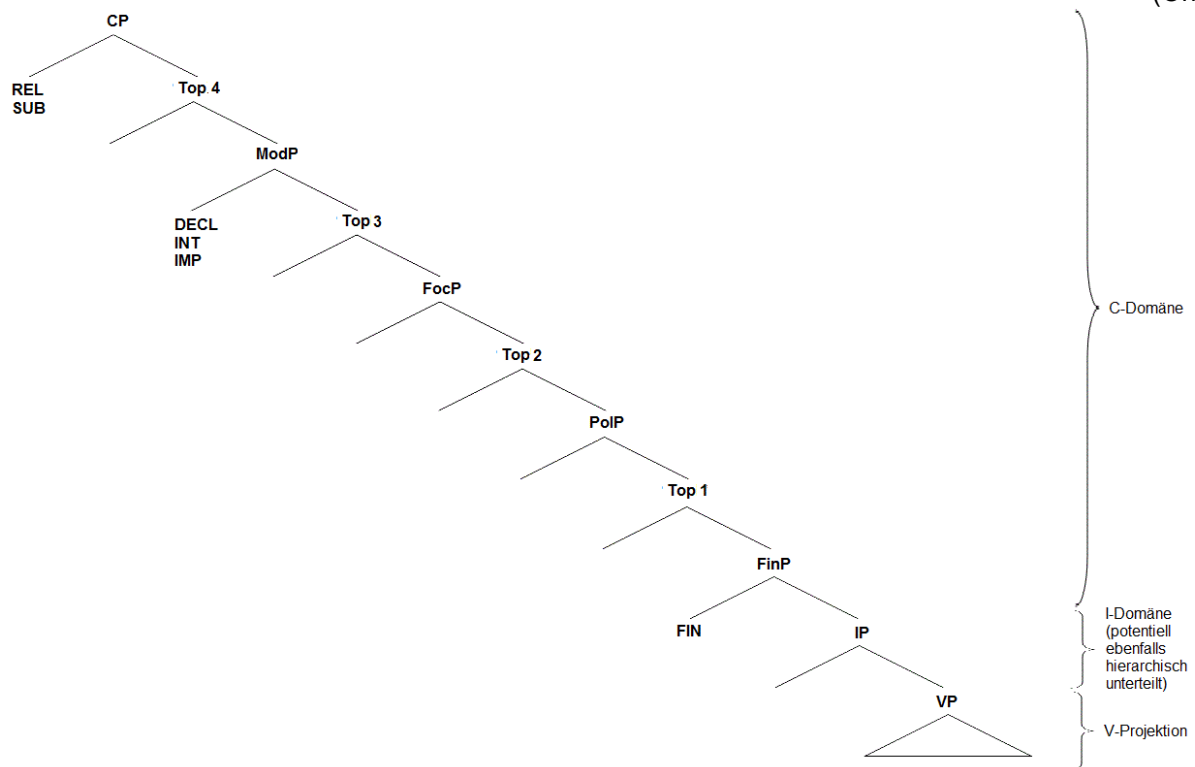
(29) **Sublayers of the C-Domain**

(Beninca/Poletto 2004: ex. 58)

[_{ForceP} [hanging topic [scene setter [left dislocation [list interpr. [contr.foc1 [contr.foc2 [inform. foc [_{FinP} ...]]]]]]]]]

⇒ Can't we instead just assume the adjunction of topics above functional phrases?

(30)



(Öhl 2019)

- Evidence for more functional heads, with topic positions between all of them:

(31) a. Ami n_ije-ke jiggEsh kori [CP **je** [TOPP chele-TA [ModP **ki** [FinP [IP lingwistiks pORE]...](Bengali; cf. Öhl 2004: 165)
ich – mir – Frage – tue – SUB – Junge-DEF – Q – Linguistik – studiert

'I wonder whether the boy studies linguistics.'

b. Nomízo [CP [TOPP (ta míla) [ModP **óti** [TOPP (ta míla) [NegP den [FinP **tha to** [IP fai o Pétros]...]
think-1.sg – DET – apples – COMP – NEG – FUT – ObjCl – eat-3rdsg – DET – Peter

'I do not think Peter will eat those apples.'

(cf. Roussou 2000: 79ff)

3. Arguments against 'canonical topic positions'

3.1. Syntax does not treat all topics alike

- Languages like Japanese and Korean are said to have morphological topic marking and fronting.²

! Not all topics are marked by *wa*.

(32) A: What did John do with the book?

B: John gave the book to Mary.

(33) a. John-**wa** sono hon-**o** doo sita no? (Japanese)
John-TOP – this – book-ACC – how – did – Q

b. John-**wa** sono hon-**o** Mary-ni ageta (yo).
John-TOP – this – book-ACC – Mary-DAT – gave – PTC

(34) a. John-**i** kũ-chaek-**ũl** kasiko muoš-ũl ha-i-ss-ni (Korean)
John-NOM – the-book-AKK – with – what-AKK – do-int.voc-PAST-Q

b. John-**ũn** kũ-chaek-**ũl** Mary-**eke** su-ošs-ta
John-TOP – the-book-ACC – Mary-DAT – give-PAST-DECL

! As soon as 'wa' and 'nũn' occur more than one time, these constituents are interpreted as contrastive. Contrasted constituents tend to be stressed.

(35) a. John **wa** sono neko **wa** pettosyopu **de** kat ta. (Japanese)
John – TOP – this – cat – WA – petshop – LOC – buy – PST

'It was this cat what John bought in the petshop.'

b. John **wa** sono neko **o** pettosyopu **de wa** kat ta.
John – TOP – this – cat – ACC – petshop – LOC – CONTR – buy – PST

'It was in a petshop where John bought the cat.'

⇒ The morphological marking by **wa/ nũn** seems to fulfil different discourse-semantic functions (contrastivity; singling out the *subject of predication* . . . ?).

! The phrases marked as 'topic' can also stay in base position.

(36) a. tasikani dare-**ni**-mo matigai-**wa** okoriuru. (Japanese)
surely – everyone-DAT – mistake-TOP – happen-can

b. sikasi sonoyouna hito-**ni-wa** sonoyouna matigai-**wa** okora-nai daroo.
but – such – person-DAT-CONTR – such – mistake-TOP – happen-NEG – guess

(37) a. Sesang-**e** oñjena nukunga-**eke** silsu-**ga** saengki-nũn koš-i maj-da (Korean)
world-LOC – always – someone-DAT – mistake-NOM – occur-ADNM – FN-NOM – stimmen-DECL

² I thank Yuko-Shige Tamura and Jiro Inaba for the Japanese data, Ki-Hyun Yoon for the Korean data.

- b. kuřae hajiman kuľuň silsu-**nuň** kuľuň saram-**eke-nuň** iloňa-soř-nuň andoi-n-da
yes – but – such – mistake-TOP – such – man-DAT-CONTR – happen-PTC-TOP – NEG-PRES-DECL

- *Syntactic movement* fulfils diverse purposes of 'perspectivation'.

(38) A: Do you know what will happen today?

B: To my pleasure, a student will probably record the whole lecture.

(39) kyo nani-ga okotta ka sitteiru?

(Japanese)

today – what-NOM – happen – COMP – know?

(40) a. kyoo-wa uresii-koto-ni osoraku **aru gakusei-ga** zenbu-no jugyoo-no nooto-o totte-kureru daroo.

today-TOP – to-my-pleasure-DAT – probably – some – student-NOM – all-GEN – class-GEN – note-ACC – take – PTC

b. kyoo-wa uresii-koto-ni **aru gakusei-ga** osoraku zenbu-no jugyoo-no nooto-o totte-kureru daroo.

today-TOP – to-my-pleasure-DAT – some – student-NOM – probably – all-GEN – class-GEN – note-ACC – take – PTC

c. kyoo-wa **aru gakusei-ga** uresii-koto-ni osoraku zenbu-no jugyoo-no nooto-o totte-kureru daroo.

today-TOP – some – student-NOM – to-my-pleasure-DAT – probably – all-GEN – class-GEN – note-ACC – take – PTC

(41) noř-nuň onuľ muoř-i iloňa+l-ji a-ni

(Korean)

you-TOP – today – what-NOM – happen-FUT-COMP-PTC – know-Q

(42) a. onuľ kippuķedo ama **han hansaeng-i** kanguľ joňche-luľ nokuľmha-l koř ida

today – to-my-pleasure – probably – a – student-NOM – lecture – whole-ACC – record-FUT – COMP – copula

b. onuľ kippuķedo **han hansaeng-i** ama kanguľ joňche-luľ nokuľmha-l koř ida

today – to-my-pleasure – a – student-NOM – probably – lecture – whole-ACC – record-FUT – COMP – copula

c. onuľ **han hansaeng-i** kippuķedo ama kanguľ joňche-luľ nokuľmha-l koř ida

today – a – student-NOM – to-my-pleasure – probably – lecture – whole-ACC – record-FUT – COMP – copula

d. onuľ kippuķedo ama kanguľ joňche-luľ **han hansaeng-i** nokuľmha-l koř ida

today – to-my-pleasure – probably – lecture – whole-ACC – a – student-NOM – record-FUT – COMP – copula

! Both the Japanese and the Korean informants prefer sentences b.

3.2. What are the options of 'perspectivation'?

The speaker may choose very different 'perspectives' under which the entire information to be verbalised is put into sequential order. (Stutterheim&Klein 2002: 66)

- Marking of *topicality* and *relevance*: structural means and formal restrictions

(43) a. Caesar conquered Gaul in 52 BC.

b. Gaul was conquered (by Caesar) in 52 BC.

(44) a. Several people ate some hamburgers at McDonalds.

b. *Some hamburgers at McDonalds were eaten by several people.

- Structural restriction on sentence adverbials in English: two 'subject positions' (cf. É.Kiss 1996: 128ff).

(45) a. Boys will in most cases know the novels of Karl May.

b. *Boys will in most cases be born.

c. In most cases, boys will be born.

d. *The novels of Karl May will in most cases boys know.

⇒ Note that this is also evidence against one single canonical subject position in English.

- the 'point of view' (empathy; cf. Chafe 1976)

(46) A: Karl ist ja als geizig verschriehen. (Karl is said to be greedy.)

B: Aber Otto gegenüber ist er manchmal großzügig. (He is generous to Otto, however)

A: Du meinst die Geschichte, als sein neues Buch herauskam? (You mean the story when he published his new book?)

- (47) a. Weil ihm Karl das Buch angeblich geschénkt hat?
because - him - Karl - the - book - allegedly - given-as-present - has
- b. Weil ihm Karl angeblich das Buch geschénkt hat?
- c. Weil Karl ihm das Buch angeblich geschénkt hat?
- d. Weil Karl ihm angeblich das Buch geschénkt hat?
- e. Weil Karl das Buch ihm angeblich geschénkt hat?
- f. Weil das Buch Karl ihm angeblich geschénkt hat?
- g. Weil das Buch ihm Karl angeblich geschénkt hat?
- h. %Weil Karl das Buch angeblich ihm geschénkt hat?
- i. %Weil ihm angeblich Karl das Buch geschénkt hat?
- j. *Weil das Buch ihm angeblich Karl geschénkt hat?
- k. *Weil ihm angeblich das Buch Karl geschénkt hat?

⇒ The higher a topical element is in the semantic hierarchy, the lower is the acceptance if other elements precede it.

- specificity vs. unspecificity

(48) What did he say?

- (49) a. Auf der Welt sei wahrscheinlich **in genau einem Land** alles besser als hier. (Scheint'n Pessimist zu sein, hmm?)
on - the - world - be - probably - in - exactly - one - land - everything - better - than - here
- b. Auf der Welt sei **in genau einem Land** wahrscheinlich alles besser als hier. (Wahrscheinlich meinte er Taka-Tuka-Land, haha.)

- perfectivity vs. imperfectivity (Meinunger 2000: 94)

- (50) a. weil ich oft die Bibel gelesen habe.
because - I - often - the - Bible - read - have
- b. weil ich die Bibel oft gelesen habe.

- Indefinite NPs must not be scrambled (Lenerz 2000: 266).

- (51) A: Wem hast du ein Buch geschickt?
who - did - you - send - a - book
- B: *Ich habe ein Buch dem VerLAG geschickt.
I - have - a-ACC - book - the-DAT - publishers - sent

What determines the relative order of *topics* and *sentence adverbials*? Do sentence adverbials in fact have a common *base-position*?

- multiple sentence adverbials occuring with non-topics:

- (52) Du freust dich so – was erwartest du denn? (You look so glad – what do you expect)?
- (53) a. Heute wird erfreulicher Weise wahrscheinlich *ein Student* die ganze Vorlesung aufzeichnen.
today - will - fortunately - probably - a - student - the - whole - lecture - record
- b. Heute wird erfreulicher Weise *ein Student* wahrscheinlich die ganze Vorlesung aufzeichnen.
- c. Heute wird *ein Student* erfreulicher Weise wahrscheinlich die ganze Vorlesung aufzeichnen.

- multiple topics occurring with one sentence adverbial:

- (54) a. Weil sie ihn interessierte, hat *ein Student eine Vorlesung* überraschender Weise ganz aufgezeichnet.
because – it – him – interested – has – a – student – a – lecture – surprisingly – totally – recorded
 b. Weil sie ihn interessierte, hat *ein Student* überraschender Weise *eine Vorlesung* ganz aufgezeichnet.

⇒ Topics tend to move out of the scope of sentence adverbials. However it seems that

- they do not have to.
- not all fronted constituents are topics.

3.3. Middle field partitions interacting with discourse-semantic functions

- The base VP contains the sentence focus. *Normal order* and *normal stress* license 'maximal focus projection' (cf. Höhle 1982)³.

- (55) a. Was hat er gesagt? (What did he say?)

- b. ... dass [_{VP} in Wuppertal [_{VP} eine Olympiade stattfinden] soll
 ... *that – in – Wuppertal – an – Olympic-game – take-place – shall*

- (56) a. ... dass [_{VP} schon zwei Mal [_{VP} in Wuppertal [_{VP} eine Olympiade ausgetragen worden]] ist]

- b. [_{VP} schon zwei Mal [_{VP} in Wuppertal [_{VP} eine Olympiade ausgetragen worden]] ist seiner Ansicht nach.

⇒ VP-fronting may be taken as a test for *maximal focus projection*.

- Elements that are discourse-semantically marked tend to leave the sentence focus.

- (57) Was hat er gesagt? (What did he say?)

- (58) a. ... dass [_{VP} schon zwei Mal [_{VP} eine Olympiade an Wuppertal vergeben worden]] ist]

that – already – two – times – an – Olympic-game – to – Wuppertal – given – AUX-pass – AUX-perf

- b. ? ... dass [_{VP} schon zwei Mal [_{VP} die Olympiade an Wuppertal vergeben worden] ist (definiteness effect)

- c. ... dass die Olympiade [_{VP} schon zwei Mal [_{VP} an Wuppertal vergeben worden] ist

- d. ?[_{VP} Die Olympiade an Wuppertal vergeben worden] ist seiner Ansicht nach schon zwei Mal

- e. [_{VP} schon zwei Mal [_{VP} an Wuppertal vergeben worden] ist die Olympiade

⇒ Sentence adverbials, frame setters, topical expressions, specific expressions (a.o.) and occupy positions outside of VP.

- (59) A: Was weißt Du über Wuppertal? (What do you know about Wuppertal?)

B: Ich weiß, dass ... (I know that ...)

- (60) a. ... angeblich in Wuppertal schon zwei Mal eine Olympiade stattgefunden hat.

- b. ... anlässlich der Schwebelbahnerweiterung in Wuppertal eine Olympiade stattgefunden hat.

- c. ... in Wuppertal schon zwei Mal eine Olympiade stattgefunden hat.

- d. ... in Wuppertal [éin bedeutendes Sportereignis] schon einmal stättgefunden hat. Und zwar die Olympiade.

- e. ... angeblich schon zwei Mal in Wuppertal eine Olympiade stattgefunden hat.

- f. ... eine Olympiade in Wuppertal noch nicht stattgefunden hat. (Sie haben aber schon mal ein Schwébelbahnrennen gemacht.)

³ I.e. base order and sentence stress on the constituent left to the predicate.

4. Conclusion

- Interface conditions that are variable w.r.t. the interaction between *syntax*, *semantics* and *pragmatics* both allow and constrain various positions for information structurally marked constituents.
- Precedence rules (or rather c-command restrictions) based on various criteria may account better for the data than any attempt to use a cartographic approach for German.

(61) *Relations potentially marked by precedence cross linguistically*

- Scope (cf. Endriss/Hinterwimmer 2007: 86ff.)
- addressation (Reinhart 1981: 24; Jacobs 2001: 650)
- familiarity/accessibility (Vallduví/Engdahl 1996: 498)
- relevance/point of view (Chafe 1976)
- the subject of predication (Reinhart 1981: 54; Jacobs 2001: 647)
- specificity (Pafel 1997: 31ff.)
- defocusing (Lambrecht 1994).
- ... and others

(62) *Prototypical features of sentence topics*

(Öhl 2010: 272)

- being an address or delimitation for information storage
- accessibility
- being the point of view
- being the subject of predication
- specificity
- defocusing
- ...

5. References

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