

Focus Interpretation in Stressless Languages

In this talk, I will discuss the following questions: (i) (How) Does focus projection work in languages that do not use stress to indicate the focus exponent? I argue that focus projection is not possible with *in situ* focus unless the language uses alternative, e.g. morphological strategies to mark *in situ* focus. I will discuss the theoretical consequences of this. (ii) (Why) Is subject focus marking obligatory in many West-African languages? It has been claimed (e.g. Fiedler et al. 2010) that subject focus marking equals anti-topic marking, a claim which I will critically discuss. (iii) (How) Does *in situ* differ from *ex situ* focus wrt. interpretation? I will discuss new data from Dagbani (Gur), which support the claim in Titov (2018) on Akan that the alternative set represented by an *ex situ* focus is interpreted as discourse-salient but not exhaustively. (iv) (When) Do *ex situ* and *in situ* questions and answers combine freely? I will fathom the possibility of non-matching pairs of *ex situ* and *in situ* questions and answers in an array of Niger-Congo languages from Ghana and Nigeria. I argue that such pairs are possible only under specific pragmatic conditions.