

Goals

- We propose to integrate the data about focus realization in French within the general focus semantics.
- Following Féry (2001) we take phrasing to be the primary prosodic effect of focus in French.
- This will be done using two relational constraints: the **WEAK RESTRICTION** and the **STRONG RESTRICTION** of **UNALTERNATIVE SEMANTICS** (Büring 2015).

Background

- We assume with Féry (2001) that phrasing is the primary expression of focus in French.
- We assume *contra* Féry, but with Beyssade et al. (2004), Di Cristo and Jankowski (1999) and Jun and Fougeron (2000), that phrases following the focus are not **dephrased**, but **deaccented**. We re-analyse all her examples accordingly (with only one deaccented phrase each.)
- We write **fully accented phrases** as []_{FA} and **deaccented phrases** as []_{DA}.
- We assume that the phonetic correlates of phrasing are **intensity** and **duration** of the last full syllable, and, in fully accented phrases, tonal patterns.
- We expect the term “phrase”, which we adopt from Féry, to align with Jun and Fougeron (2000)’s Accentual Phrase (AP).

Data

The data can be generalized as follows:

- Focused elements are almost never phrased together with unfocused material.
- Postfocal material is deaccented.

We find:

- (1) What is the cook doing with the turnips?
[Le marmiton]_{FA} [caramélise]_{FA} [les navets]_{DA} (ex. (24a) Féry 2001)

We don’t find:

- (2) What is the cook doing with the turnips?
a. [Le marmiton]_{FA} [caramélise les navets]_{FA}
b. [Le marmiton caramélise]_{FA} [les navets]_{DA}

- A phrase almost never contains focused material and unfocused material at the same time.
- Focused elements can be split over several phrases as long as none of them contains unfocused material.

Unalternative Semantics

- We propose to model the data using the Unalternative Semantics (UAS; Büring 2015).
- We reformulate (and simplify) UAS’s relational constraints for the calculation of focus alternatives as follows:

- (3) **Weak restriction** $A \xrightarrow{wr} B$
The syntactic sister at the tail of the arrow can only be interpreted as focal if the sister at the tip of the arrow is.
- (4) **Strong restriction** $A \xrightarrow{sr} B$
The syntactic sister of the tail of the arrow cannot be interpreted focal. The sister at the tip of the arrow is interpreted as focal.

Additionally, we use the term *focal* in the following way:

- (5) **FOCAL ELEMENTS:**
A focal element introduces only **non-trivial focus alternatives**.

References

- [1] C. Beyssade, E. Delais-Roussarie, J. Doetjes, J.-M. Marandin, A. Riolland (2004). Prosody and Information Structure in French. In F. Corblin and H. de Swart, eds, *Handbook of French Semantics*, pages 477–499, CSLI publications.
- D. Büring (2015). Unalternative semantics. In S. D’Antonio et al., eds, *Proceedings of SALT 25*, pages 550–575, Linguistic Society of America.
- [3] A. Di Cristo and L. Jankowski (1999). Prosodic organisation and phrasing after focus in French. In *Proceedings of XIVth ICPHS*, p. 1565–1568.
- [4] C. Féry (2001). Focus and Phrasing in French. In C. Féry and W. Sternefeld, eds., *Audiatur Vox Sapientiae. A Festschrift for Arnim von Stechow*, pages 153–181. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag.
- [5] S.-A. Jun and C. Fougeron (2000). A Phonological Model of French Intonation. In Antonis Botinis, ed., *Intonation: Analysis, Modelling and Technology*, pages 209–242, Springer.

Proposal

Applying the UAS system to the French data:

- (6) Iff A dominates material that is part of a fully accented phrase, but B does not, then $A \xleftarrow{sr} B$. Otherwise, $A \xrightarrow{wr} B$.

Illustration

Focus ambiguities

Both (7-a) and (7-b) are possible phrasings.

- (7) a. [Le garçon]_{FA} \xrightarrow{wr} [peint le garage]_{FA} \xrightarrow{wr} [en noir]_{FA}
b. [Le garçon]_{FA} \xrightarrow{wr} [peint]_{FA} \xrightarrow{wr} [le garage]_{FA} \xrightarrow{wr} [en noir]_{FA}
‘The boy is painting the garage black.’

→ Possible foci: VP, PP, Sentence.

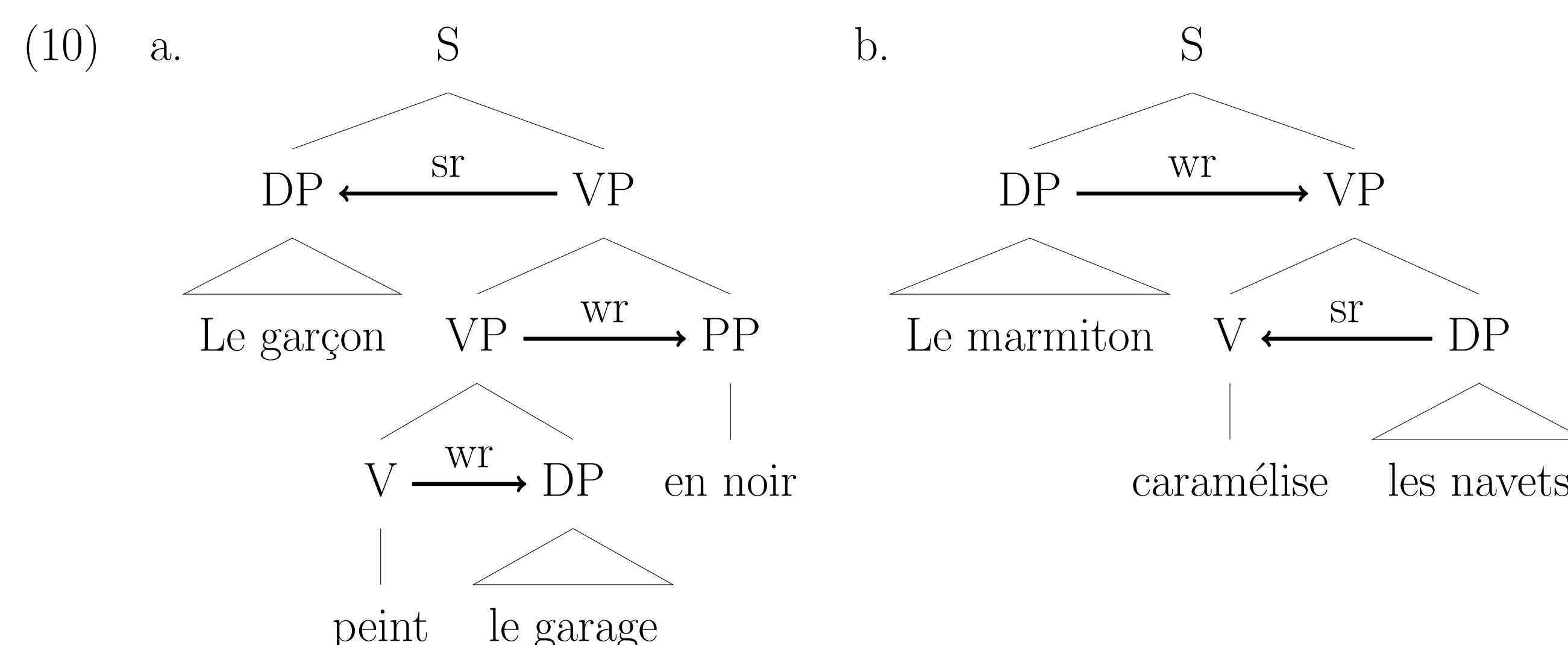
Deaccented phrases

- (8) Who is painting the garage black?
[Le garçon]_{FA} \xleftarrow{sr} [peint le garage en noir]_{DA}
‘The boy is painting the garage black’. (ex. (21) Féry 2001)

→ Possible foci: Subject

- (9) What is the cook doing with the turnips?
[Le marmiton]_{FA} [caramélise]_{FA} [les navets]_{DA} (ex. (24a) Féry 2001)

→ Possible foci: Verb, S+V



Left alignment?

Is focussed material not only cut off from unfocused material on the right by a phrase break, but also necessarily on the left?

There is one clear counterexample:

- (11) What is Jean doing?
[Jean conduit sa mère]_{FA} [à Bordeaux]_{DA}
‘Jean is driving his mother to Bordeaux’. (ex. (20c) Féry 2001)

Jean is phrased with V, but only V is part of the focus, *Jean* isn’t. We don’t know whether *Jean* gets incorporated in the same phrase as *conduit* in spite of focus alignment constraints because there is another constraint forcing very short subjects to integrate, or whether this is in line with focus alignment constraints and there is no left alignment of focus and phrasing. For now we assume the latter.

Summary

- Based on the data in Féry (2001), we put forward a formal analysis of focus in French.
- This analysis intends to contribute to the general focus semantics, since to our knowledge there hasn’t been an account for modeling focus semantics in French.
- We propose to do that using the Unalternative Semantics framework, where only two relational restrictions apply between phonological phrases in French.