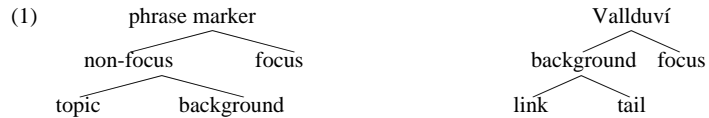


**Focus and Topic in a Complex Model of Discourse**



- (2) a. An F-marked constituent is prosodically realized by an F-accent on its most prominent syllable.
- b. A T-marked constituent is prosodically realized by a T-accent on its most prominent syllable.
- c. For any domain D,  $\sigma$  is the most prominent syllable of D iff
- i.  $\sigma$  bears the lexical accent of some word W in D
  - ii. W is lexical
  - iii. W is the head of the rightmost maximal projection in D (if YP dominates XP, XP is “to the right” of YP).

- (3) Every statement ever made is the answer to some (perhaps implicit) question. That question is the **Question Under Discussion** or **QUD**.

*Focus?*

For a sentence S with focus, replace focus with *wh*-word and form question. *Congruence requirement*: the question just formed must be the QUD.

*Topic?*

- Signals deviance from the QUD:

- (4) Q What did the pop stars wear?  
 A The **female** pop stars wore **caftans**. (...but that’s all I noticed)
- The female pop stars wore caftans* would not have been congruent (it answers the QUD *What did the female pop stars wear?*)  
 The deviation is replacing *pop stars* with *female pop stars*, so mark T.

- Induces implicatures.

- (5) Q Where were you at the time of the murder?  
 A I was at **home**.

*I was at home* would have been fine. But by saying *I was at home* you invite the question *Where was the gardener?*

- Does “funny things” to the truth conditions (via scope disambiguation).

- (6) Q Are all politicians corrupt?  
 A **All** politicians are **not** corrupt.

*All politicians are not corrupt* would allow either ‘all-not’ or ‘not-all’ readings (maybe preferring all-not, at least in German), but *All politicians are not corrupt* disambiguates to not-all). Or so Büring says, anyway.

*Question to ponder*: This is quite a different way to think of topics—it isn’t clear how it relates to topic as “old information”. Are we talking about the same thing we were talking about before?

**Basic idea, a pretty elegant theory circa 1997.**

Given a sentence A...

- Form the F-question  $A^f$  by replacing the F-marked constituent with a question word (and performing appropriate syntax).
- Form the T-value  $A^t$ , a set of questions obtainable as F-questions with type-identical things replacing the T-marked constituent.

- So: Q What did the pop stars wear?  
 A The **female** pop stars wore **caftans**.
- A [female]<sub>T</sub> pop stars wore [caftans]<sub>F</sub>.
- $A^f$  What did the female pop stars wear?
- $A^t$  { What did the female pop stars wear?,  
 What did the male pop stars wear?,  
 What did the male or female pop stars wear? }

*Congruence condition*:

- For A to be congruent to QUD,
- a. QUD must be an element of  $A^t$ , and
  - b. if A contains T-marking, some question in  $A^t$  must remain open to serve as the new QUD.

Pop stars—fine, the new QUD can be *What did the male pop stars wear?*

Murder—by using topic marking you communicate that something else in the set should be under discussion, e.g. *Where was the gardener at the time of the murder?*

Corrupt politicians—trickier:

Q Are all politicians corrupt?  
 A [All]<sub>T</sub> politicians are [not]<sub>F</sub> corrupt.

A<sup>f</sup> Are all politicians corrupt?

A<sup>t</sup> { Are some politicians corrupt?,  
 Are many politicians corrupt?,  
 Are most politicians corrupt?,  
 Are all politicians corrupt? }

To be congruent, the QUD must be an element of A<sup>t</sup> (it is), and A<sup>t</sup> – QUD has to be nonempty, leaving something open for discussion.

*All politicians are not corrupt* under the all-not ('all politicians are non-corrupt') reading implies the truth values of **all** of the questions in A<sup>t</sup>. (If all politicians are non-corrupt, *are some politicians corrupt?* No. *Are many politicians corrupt?* No. *Are most politicians corrupt?* Well, no.)

☞ Under the all-not reading, A fails to be congruent.

Under the not-all reading, though, all of those questions remain open to serve as a new QUD.

Hence, A is disambiguated to the not-all reading.

Here ends the pretty elegant theory, circa 1997.

### Problems and obnoxious questions

• Multiple questions

(7) Q Who bought what?  
 A [John]<sub>T</sub> bought [a plastic gorilla]<sub>F</sub>,  
 [Silvie]<sub>T</sub> bought a [a slimy monster]<sub>F</sub>, ...

A<sup>f</sup> What did John buy?

A<sup>t</sup> { What did John buy?  
 What did Silvie buy?  
 What did the gardener buy? }

Doesn't meet the current congruent condition—the QUD is *who bought what?* but that is not in A<sup>t</sup>.

• Focus—Topic exchange

(8) Q Who won at the race?  
 A<sub>1</sub> [Second]<sub>T</sub> was [I]<sub>F</sub>. (sounds better in German)  
 A<sub>2</sub>' [I]<sub>T</sub> was [second]<sub>F</sub>.

A<sub>2</sub>' is {*How did you place? How did John place? How did the gardener place?*} none of whose members are *Who won? (Who got first place?)*.

(A<sub>1</sub>' is supposed to be fine—{*Who got first place, who got second place, ...*}).

**Note:** I don't understand why topic marking is allowed really—since it fully answers the QUD, but whatever...

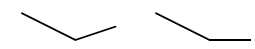
• Focus—Topic misfits


(9) Q Who did Anna smile at?  
 A [Me]<sub>T</sub> she did [not]<sub>F</sub> smile at. (again, better in German).

A<sup>t</sup> is then {*did Anna smile at you?, did Anna smile at John?, ...*}, none of whose members are *Who did Anna smile at?*.

So, we don't have the whole story yet.

### A and B accents, and discourse trees

(10) *What about Mary's doctorate? What is that in?*  
  
 Mary's doctorate is in chemistry.  
 (B) A

(11) *What about chemistry? Which degree of Mary's is that?*  
  
 Mary's doctorate is in chemistry.  
 A

Kind of hard to get the examples right, but the idea:

Focus: A accent (F-accent)  
 Background: B accent (T-accent)



(We wanted this in the first place to disambiguate  $[All]_T$  politicians are  $[not]_F$  corrupt.)

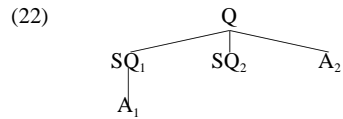
Maybe what's wrong is that 'all-not' answers not only the SQ *Are [all]<sub>F</sub> politicians corrupt?* but the Q as well *How many politicians are corrupt?...*

- (20) Q. How many politicians are corrupt?  
 SQ. Are all politicians corrupt?  
 A.  $[All]_T$  politicians are  $[not]_F$  corrupt.

Well, no, because if you don't have a T-accent, you can do that.. (T-accent indicates the need for a "residual topic")

- (21) Q. How many politicians are corrupt?  
 SQ. Are at least *some* politicians *not* corrupt?  
 A. *Some??*  $[All]_F$  politicians are  $[not]_F$  corrupt.

But wait—why do we consider A to be part of the SQ answer strategy? Why not the Q answer strategy?

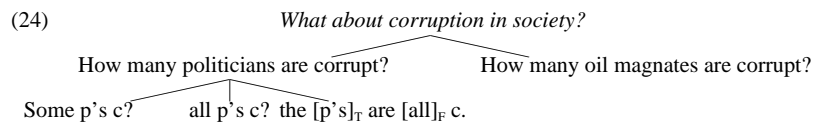


Idea: Put an move "as high as you can" in the tree—  
 If Q dominates A, A must not only be relevant to Q but there can't be a higher Q' dominating Q such that A is a complete answer to Q'.

And, look—you can topic mark in a complete answer to get at an even higher question

- (23) Q. How many politicians are corrupt? Some?  
 Yes, some are.  
 Most?  
 Even most.

SQ<sub>3</sub>. Are perhaps *all* politicians corrupt?  
 A<sub>3</sub>. Yes, the  $[politicians]_T$  are  $[all]_F$  corrupt.



**Informativeness, implicit moves and precedence, AvoidF, and so forth**

We need to figure out when and why T-marking is obligatory—so far, we haven't said anything about that. We do, however, have the following data points, where italics indicate implicit moves.

- (25) a. Q SQ A F-accent obligatory. T-accent optional.  
 (ex.  $[Fred]_T$  ate the  $[beans]_F$ .)  
 b. Q SQ A F-accent obligatory. T-accent obligatory.  
 (ex.  $[I]_T$  was at  $[home]_F$ .)  
 c. Q SQ A F-accent obligatory. T-accent obligatory.  
 (ex. the  $[female]_T$  pop stars wore  $[caftans]_F$ .)

With (b) "obligatory" means "to get the implicatures."  
 With (c) "obligatory" is really obligatory (again, where SQ is implicit).

Alternative approaches to congruence:

*Match the Question!*  
 (MTQ): Focus in the answer must match the *wh*-word in the question!

*Deaccent as must as possible!*  
 (DAMAP): Do not focus what is contextually Given!

We've been really following a MTQ kind of approach, but we need DAMAP too:

- (26) Q What did Mary's husband do?  
 A He  $[KISSED$  Mary]<sub>F</sub>. *Mary* is deaccented because it's old.  
 A' He  $[kissed$  SUE]<sub>F</sub>.  
 A'' He  $[kissed$  MARY]<sub>F</sub>.

So, if we need DAMAP anyway, can we get by with *just* DAMAP?

**Next time:** Schwarzschild and Avoid F, as we continue with Büring..

## Schwarzschild and AvoidF

Don't mark Given constituents with F.

- (27) Who drank Martin's beer?  
[OfTillie]<sub>F</sub> drank Martin's beer.  
  
[<sub>IP</sub> O<sub>F</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> [<sub>V</sub> drank] [<sub>NP</sub>[<sub>NP</sub> Martin's ] beer ] ] ]

- (28) Q What did Mary's husband do?  
A He [KISSed<sub>F</sub> Mary]<sub>F</sub>.

Mary is given, kissed is not given...

...is [kissed<sub>F</sub> Mary] given?

Well, is [do something to Mary] in/implied by the context?

No. So [kissed<sub>F</sub> Mary] is not given, and so we F mark it.

- (29) Rule of interpretation:  
If a constituent is not F-marked, it must be Given.

A case where a Given thing must nevertheless be F-marked:

- (30) Q Who did Mary's husband kiss?  
A He kissed MARY.

Mary is F-marked. Why?

Suppose it weren't: consider the VP [kissed Mary].

Is *someone kissed Mary* deducible from context? No.

So the VP is not Given. But if it is not F-marked it must be.

Can we F-mark [kissed Mary]? Not without F-marking something inside.

Ok, so suppose *kissed* is F-marked.

Now is [*kissed* Mary]? Given?

(i.e. is *someone did something to Mary* implied by context?)

Well, no. So the VP is not Given, but if it is not F-marked it must be.

So

- (31) **Avoid F**  
All else being equal, F-mark as little as needed to be consistent with the Rule of Interpretation.

- (32) Q What did the pop stars wear?  
SQ *What did the female pop stars wear?*  
A #The female pop stars wore [caftans]<sub>F</sub>.

The proposal: Relate congruence with *explicit predecessor*, not just IQUD(M).

- (33) For any move M, **PRED(M)** is the move M' such that:  
a. M' precedes M  
b. M is explicit  
c. There is no M'' such that M' precedes M'' and M'' meets (33a-b).