

**Introduction.** It has been established that generalizations such as Question Answer Congruence (QAC; e.g., Büring 2016), which state that phonological focus must manifest (e.g., as a focus pitch accent) within the domain of semantic focus (i.e. the domain of focus alternatives), are quite robust. At the same time, phonologically silent but semantically contentful functional heads are now widely assumed to exist in generative theory: such elements facilitate a compositional semantics while also introducing necessary positions for particular syntactic operations. In this talk, we raise a simple but relatively unexplored question: how is QAC met and/or violated when semantic focus falls on a silent syntactic head that has no phonological content? More broadly: What options do grammars have when the bearer of semantic focus is an unsuitable host for the prosodic focus?

We provide evidence that such configurations are widespread in natural language, exhibiting apparent ‘mismatches’ between the locus of prosodic focus and semantic focus. A primary goal of this talk is to describe a range examples from Irish, Basque, Afrikaans, English, and Italian. We provide a general characterization of the languages and environments in which such semantics-prosody mismatches arise, and we explore potential analyses that could capture this phenomenon.

**Background.** Irish exhibits such a mismatch, as described in Bennett, Elfner, & McCloskey (2017). In certain clauses with emphatic polarity (i.e. *verum focus*), a discourse-given weak pronoun unexpectedly bears the focal accent (indicated throughout with BOXED SMALL CAPS):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(1) A: Cuir síos é.<br/>send down it<br/>‘Drive it down.’</p> | <p>B: Ní rachaidh <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">SÉ</span> síos.<br/>NEG.FIN go.FUT it down<br/>‘It won’t <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">GO</span> down.’</p> |
|--|---|

Bennett et al. propose an analysis of this semantics-prosody mismatch that appeals to aspects of Irish’s prosodic phonology and word formation rules: in a nutshell, the weak pronoun (*prima facie* unexpectedly) bears the focal accent because it prosodically incorporates into the verbal complex, which also contains the polarity head ( $\text{Pol}^0$ ). In cases like (1b), the minimal requisite phonological structure to host the focal accent in Irish is the prosodic word that contains both the semantically-focused  $\text{Pol}^0$  and the weak pronoun; the weak subject pronoun in Irish bears the accent due to prosodic incorporation, and general accent placement principles within a prosodic word.

**Prosody-semantics mismatches: novel data.** An open question is whether an appeal to prosodic structure (as in Bennett et al.’s analysis of Irish) is always the solution that a grammar will take, across languages. Basque provides a good comparison to Irish, as a nearly identical ‘mismatch’ phenomenon occurs in its *verum focus* expressions. In retorts (semantically *verum-focus*; Sailor 2014), the focal accent falls on the discourse-given subject in Basque. Unlike Irish, the Basque focal accent can appear on a full DP subject (adapted from Laka 1990:86, 105):

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>(2) A: Irune ez da etorri.<br/>Irune NEG has arrived<br/>‘Irune has not arrived.’</p> | <p>B: <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">IRUNE</span> da etorri.<br/>Irune has arrived<br/>‘(Actually,) Irune <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">HAS</span> arrived.’</p> |
|--|---|

Recall that Bennett et al.’s analysis of Irish relies on prosodic incorporation of the subject into a prosodic complex with  $\text{Pol}^0$ . The Basque data in (2) is crucially different: full DP subjects do not form prosodic words with  $\text{Pol}^0$  (realized on the auxiliary: see Laka 1990), yet they similarly (*prima facie*) unexpected focal accents. We take this to mean that Basque employs a solution that does not rely on prosodic incorporation/restructuring.

Additional examples of semantics-prosody mismatches can be found in Afrikaans, for example in its verb-initial polar exclamatives (see Biberauer 2010). These involve a focal accent, but this accent may be realized in one of (at least) three positions, crucially with no semantic difference among them:

- (3) a. HET jy (nou) ’n uitstekende opstel geskryf!  
b. Het JY (nou) ’n uitstekende opstel geskryf!  
c. Het jy (nou) ’n UITSTEKENDE opstel geskryf!  
have you now an excellent essay written  
‘Wow, what an amazing essay you’ve written!’

Exclamatives express surprise at the extent of some degree. Rett (2008) argues that this involves a degree operator – null in polar exclamatives such as (3) – which originates clause-internally (local to

