

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):

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| <p>(1) A: Cuir síos é. send down it ‘Drive it down.’</p> | <p>B: Ní rachaidh SÉ síos. NEG.FIN go.FUT it down ‘It won’t GO down.’</p> |
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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 (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 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):

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| <p>(2) A: Irune ez da etorri. Irune NEG has arrived ‘Irune has not arrived.’</p> | <p>B: IRUNE da etorri. Irune has arrived ‘(Actually,) Irune HAS arrived.’</p> |
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Recall that Bennett et al.’s analysis of Irish relies on prosodic incorporation of the subject into a prosodic complex with Pol^0 . The Basque data in (2) is crucially different: full DP subjects do not form prosodic words with 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

e.g. a gradable adjective). Given the semantics of these exclaimatives, which all remark on the degree of excellence, it is plausible that this null operator is under semantic focus. In this way, there is a constant LF representation (focus on the degree operator), with multiple possible associated PF forms, which we can explain as a result of the types of ‘repair’ mechanisms the grammar can appeal to. These mechanisms place the prosodic focus on elements that do not bear semantic focus, similar to Irish and Basque. Like Basque, it is not obvious how to appeal to prosodic incorporation to account for this Afrikaans data – this time because of the variety of prosodic hosts for the focal accents in (3a–c).

Another apparent semantics-prosody mismatch can be found in the domain of English reflexive anaphors (see Ahn 2012). In these cases, when a reflexive anaphor is focused, it yields an interpretation of focused reflexivity (i.e. focusing on the co-identity between two arguments of the predicate):

- (4) A: Lynn₁ assigned Ryan to Kim. (5) A: Lynn assigned Liam₁ to Kim.
 B: No. She₁ assigned LIAM to Kim. B: No. He₁ assigned HIMSELF to Kim.

In (5), the focused reflexive yields an interpretation of “*when someone assigned Liam to Kim, it was a reflexive ‘assigning’ event*”. Notably, syntax constrains where this type of reflexive-focus interpretation is available; e.g., the clause cannot be in the passive voice:

- (6) A: Kim was assigned to Liam₁.
 B: #No. He₁ was assigned to HIMSELF. B’: No. HE₁ was assigned to HIMSELF.

What is semantically focused in (5) must be something besides the content of the reflexive anaphor itself (otherwise (6B) is predicted good). Ahn posits a focused silent reflexivizing operator (unavailable in (6)). In this way, deriving these effects based solely on prosodic structure is insufficient, and these English mismatches require appeals to syntax and how it mediates semantic and prosodic structures.

Within the nominal domain in Standard Italian, certain corrective contexts (see Siemund 2000 on *centrality effects*) can be realized prosodically on the determiner (or the P+D complex):

- (7) A: Questa è la macchina del figlio del boss.
 this is the car of.the son of.the boss
 ‘This is the car of the son of the boss.’
 B: No, questa è la macchina DEL boss.
 no this is the car of.the boss
 ‘No, this is the car of the boss HIMSELF.’

Speakers uniformly report that it is the identity of the NP (versus plausible discourse alternatives) that is the semantic focus. This identity function does not map onto any phonological content in (7B), and one grammatical possibility is to map the prosodic focus onto the P-D complex. Similar to the English example, this Italian example involves a focal accent arising on an element which is discourse-given (*del*, the genitive P and definite D), adding Italian as a language where such semantics-prosody mismatches can be found.

Outlook and conclusions. These semantics-prosody mismatches seem to compose a natural class: all plausibly involve semantic focus on an element (a head or perhaps a phrase) that happens to be an inappropriate host for phonological stress (e.g., because it lack its own phonological content). As such, when determining whether semantic and prosodic structures are appropriately matched (adhering to QAC), these cases do not allow a perfectly faithful linkage. The system is faced with a dilemma: semantic focus must have a prosodic realization, but the focal accent cannot be realized *in situ*. It therefore occurs *ex situ*, surfacing conspicuously on some given (non-semantically-focused) element.

The remaining question is: in mismatch contexts, what if any principles dictate where precisely the focal accent may (not) occur? In the talk, we explore various (possibly language-specific) mechanisms that the grammar can employ, as briefly mentioned for each language above. One tentative observation that we make is that where focal accent occurs appears to on an element that is higher in the syntactic structure, perhaps suggesting some feature matching/agreement.