

(Re-)assessing the status of Second Occurrence Focus in information structure: Evidence from phonological processing and micropragmatic perspectives

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Second Occurrence Focus has traditionally been characterized as a focus unit resuming a previous focal unit in the linguistic context. Despite its intonationally flat contour, the focality of Second Occurrence Focus has been associated with non-tonal parameters such as duration and intensity. Discussing phonological, processing and micropragmatic evidence, it is suggested that the behavior of Second Occurrence Focus hardly resembles that of typical (narrow) foci since (a) it shows an intonation contour which is more akin to that of non-focal constituents, (b) it can associate with focus-sensitive adverbs in non-focal contexts as well, and, (c) similarly to non-focused elements, its truth value is resistant to variations involving the illocutionary force of the sentence or other evidential or epistemic meanings. The view suggested in the paper is thus to recast the status of Second Occurrence Focus as a ‘backgrounded’ information unit.

KEYWORDS: information structure, Second Occurrence Focus, focus-sensitive operators, sentence processing, background.

1. Introduction

This paper tackles the phenomenon of Second Occurrence Focus (SOF). In earlier and recent contention, a SOF has been outlined as a contextually-given focus preceded by a focus-sensitive operator. Partee (1999) originally inquired the status of SOF discussing examples like (1):

- (1) a. *Everyone already knew that Mary only eats [vegetables]*
 b. *If even PAUL knew that Mary only eats [vegetables]_{SOF}, then he should have suggested a different restaurant*

in which the SOF unit is represented by the second occurrence of *vegetables* in (1b).

Recent works aimed at defining the nature of SOF in information structure theory have inquired its micropragmatic behavior on both theory-driven and empirically-driven bases. In the present paper, these approaches will be addressed with the view to recasting SOF as an