

Information Structure in Somali.
Evidence from the syntax-phonology interface

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In recent analyses evidence has been provided for a systematic connection between the discourse functions of constituents and their formal properties, which is encoded in a strict hierarchy in the C-domain. In other words, (different types of) Focus and Topic constituents are included in different prosodic domains and made prominent by different tonal events according to their specific discourse role. This crucial connection has been supported by data from typologically diverse languages (cf. Frascarelli 2000, 2004, Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007, Frascarelli 2008, Frascarelli 2010; cf. also Puglielli and Frascarelli 2007 for an investigation on signed languages).

The aim of this paper is to examine the intonational properties of (broad/narrow) Focus and Topic constructions in Somali, investigate the interpretation of these constituents and consider the complex interplay among different levels of analysis (i.e., the syntax-prosody-discourse interface) in order to check the validity of the aforesaid connection in a polysynthetic language, in which full DPs are obligatorily realized as extraposed constituents Topics. The relevant investigation is based on naturalistic data -- a basic element for a real understanding of information structure and its properties.