On Sentence Information Structure in Czech: the Usual Sentence Position of Particular Sentence Components

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Aim of Research

To find out how often the various types of sentence constituents are in the topic part of a sentence, how often in the focus part in Czech.

Results of the Research

The "Focus Scale" for Czech

Type of participant	How many participants are in the topic part of a sentence	How many participants are in the focus part of a sentence	How many % of participants are in the focus part of a sentence
Criterion	1507	426	22 %
Concession	132	51	28 %
Temporal when	9929	4623	32 %
Restriction	368	200	35 %
Temporal during	287	155	35 %
Actor	34490	20026	37 %
Temporal until when	538	398	43 %
Condition	456	367	45 %
Addressee	2475	2215	47 %
Substitution	116	112	49 %
Temporal since when	359	346	49 %
Benefit	1611	1619	50 %
Temporal how often	533	551	51 %
Temporal how long	736	891	55 %
Cause	578	742	56 %
Comparison	217	285	57 %
With regard to	1000	1357	58 %
Locative	6867	10081	59 %
Author	224	387	63 %
Origo	307	524	63 %
Means	743	1366	65 %
Temporal from when	46	85	65 %
Difference	232	471	67 %
Patient	20643	42685	67 %
Temporal for how long	98	197	67 %
Complement	370	814	69 %
Effect	736	1625	69 %
Temporal to when	42	95	69 %
Direction where from	1141	2687	70 %
Direction where to	1385	3289	70 %
Accompaniment	746	2133	74 %
Aim	373	1135	75 %
Direction which way	85	255	75 %
Intention	35	112	76 %
Result	42	133	76 %
Inheritance	5	18	78 %
Manner	952	6526	87 %
Extent	393	6029	94 %

Methods and Material

- The analysis was based on the data from the **Prague Dependency Treebank** (it contains more than 38,000 sentences usable for the analysis).
- The theory of **Topic-Focus Articulation** of the **Prague Functional Generative Description** was used.
- **Topic** elements are **contextually bound**.
- **Focus** elements are **contextually non-bound**.
- There is a tendency of the sentence constituents to appear more often in the topic or in the focus – for example, the free modifications expressing temporal "when" tend to be in the topic part in Czech:

V kvetnu prijede na navstevu do Prahy prezident USA.

Literally: *In May* arrives for a visit to Prague U. S. President.

Non-literally: *U. S. President arrives for a visit to Prague in May*.

Conclusion

Since the role of sentence participants in functional sentence perspective in Czech is strongly connected with word order (topic elements stand usually in the left, focus in the right), the focus scale indicates also (to some extent) the general (surface) word order tendencies of sentence participants in Czech (the sentence elements standing at the beginning of the scale tend to appear in the left part of the sentence, the elements standing at the end tend to be in the right part).

Acknowledgments

Data sources

Hajič, J. et al. (2006). *Prague Dependency Treebank 2.0*. Philadelphia: Linguistic Data Consortium.