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Focalizers and discourse relations

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1. The analysis of the so-called focalizers, i.e. particles such as E. *also, only, even*, and their Czech counterparts *také, jenom, dokonce*, based on the data from the English–Czech parallel corpus PCEDT and studied from two aspects, namely (i) their position in the sentence surface word order, and (ii) their semantic scope has demonstrated that the interpretation of the semantic scope of these particles is highly dependent on the previous context and in several respects has an important influence on the interpretation of discourse relations. As a matter of fact, focalizers often act as discourse connectives.
2. In the present contribution we put under scrutiny three research questions, namely (i) in which respects and under which conditions the selected focalizers may be said to serve as discourse connectives, (ii) which particular discourse relations are indicated by the focalizers in question, and (iii) whether and in which way the two languages under investigation, Czech and English, behave in a similar or in a different way.
3. We have based our analysis on the following data resources: (i) for Czech, the Prague Dependency Treebank of Czech (PDT 3.5, Hajič et al. 2018) containing documents of the total of about 50 thousand sentences annotated on the underlying syntactic layer also for information structure (topic–focus articulation, TFA) and containing also annotation of discourse relations (in a slightly modified PDTB style); (ii) for English, the Pennsylvania Discourse TreeBank (PDTB, Prasad et al. 2008); (iii) for a comparison between Czech and English, the English–Czech parallel corpus (PCEDT, Hajič et al. 2012); (iv) the dictionary of Czech connectives (Mírovský et al. 2017, Synková et al. 2019).
4. We have focussed our attention on three focalizers in Czech (taking into account also their synonyms; the figures in brackets indicate their total frequency in the PDT if they occur as a non-compound connective in the “focalizing” function) *dokonce* (71), *jen/jenom/pouze* (29), *také/rovněž/těž/zároveň* (347) and their English equivalents *even, only, also/too* both in the PDTB and the PCEDT. As for discourse relations, *dokonce* indicates the relation of gradation or conjunction, *jen/jenom/pouze* serves to express correction, restrictive opposition and gradation, and *také/rovněž/těž/zároveň* indicates the relation of conjunction, gradation or synchrony. The total frequency of the types of discourse relations expressed by the above particles functioning as focalizers is as follows: by far, the most frequent relation is that of conjunction (352), followed by gradation (66), restriction (27), correction (2), synchrony (2) and opposition (1).

We have confronted the observations on the types of relations expressed by the three Czech focalizers as listed above with the English data taking into consideration (a) the word order position of the given focalizer in the surface shape of the sentence, (b) the occurrence of the focalizer in the topic (theme), in the contrastive topic or in the focus (rheme) of the sentence, (c) the semantic scope of the focalizer. We have ended up with a more detailed classification of the assigned discourse relations in dependence on these three factors. In the final version of the contribution, we illustrate the above aspects and their interplay by Czech and English examples taken from the mentioned resources.

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