Information Packaging

linguistic realisation
acc. Vallduví & Engdahl

Overview

- What is Information Packaging
- Tripartite scheme
- Linguistic Realisation
- English
- Catalan

Information Packaging

Part of the information structure

Realisation of the needs of communication in some context:

Semantic meaning + Instruction

Terminology minefield

Two basic models:
➜ ground/focus
➜ topic/comment
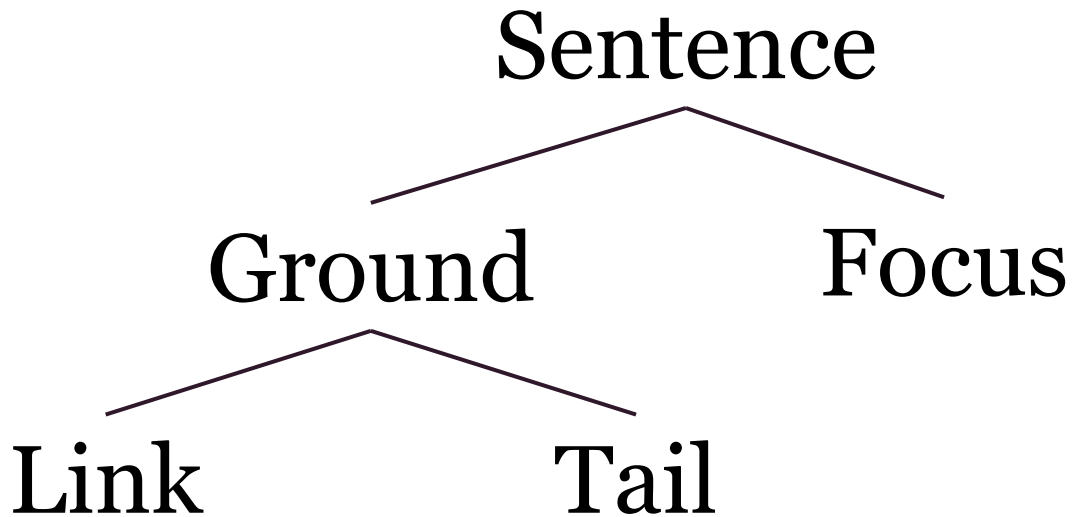
Focus / Ground

Informational vs non-informational

- The pipes are [$_F$ RUSTY]
- [$_F$ The PIPES] are rusty

Topic / Comment

Point of departure for the message "about"

➔ **John** saw the play yesterday
➔ **Yesterday** John saw the play

Tripartite Scheme

Sentence
 / \
Ground   Focus
 / \
Link   Tail

She gave [$_F$ a SHIRT] to Harry

Information Packaging

How to apply information to the cognitive state, modelled as a collection of "files"

- Focus: update potential of the sentence
- Link: *locus* of update (what file)
- Tail: mode of update (how to record)

Types of instructions

The president [$_F$ hates CHOCOLATE].
The president [$_F$ HATES] chocolate.
[$_F$ He hates CHOCOLATE].
[$_F$ He HATES] chocolate.

Linguistic Realisation

➔ Morphology
  ◆ Japanese: *John **wa** sono hon o yonda*
➔ Syntaxis
  ◆ Hungarian, Turkish, Catalan
➔ Prosody (intonation/stress)
  ◆ Dutch, German, English

Often combined/multiple strategy

English

(Mostly) fixed word order.

Information packaging realised with pitch accent.

Focus

Focus associated with nuclear stress (A accent, H* tone)

The pipes are [$_F$ RUSTY].
The pipes [$_F$ are RUSTY].
[$_F$ The PIPES are rusty].
[$_F$ The PIPES] are rusty.
The pipes [$_F$ ARE] rusty.

Ground

Link in B-accent (L+H* tune) (sometimes optional)

Where can I find the cutlery?
The forks are in the CUPBOARD,
but I left **the knives** in the DRAWER.

Tails not marked, and can remain in situ.

Ambiguity

John [$_F$ LEFT].
type 1 or type 4 instruction?

Focus-topicalisation

Did you get wet?
[$_F$ Bloody SOAKING] I was.

They named their dog [$_F$ FIDO].
[$_F$ FIDO] they named their dog.

Weak pro-forms

John [$_F$ LOVES] beer. vs   John loves [$_F$ BEER].
[$_F$ He LOVES it].   vs   He loves IT (?)

How does John feel about beer? [$_F$ He LOVES it].
What drink does John love? [$_F$ BEER].

   In Null-subject languages, 'He' would be dropped.

Catalan

Romance language
Null-subject
Underlyingly VOS
Pronominal clitics for dropped phrases
Right/left detachment

Focus

Focus and nuclear stress fixed in rightmost position of main clause.

El Joan$_1$ [$_F$ va deixar una nota damunt la TAULA t_1]
Joan   left   a note   on the table

Constituent movement

Non-focal elements are moved away from the focus position

El Joan$_1$ [$_F$ hi va deixar una NOTA t_2 t_1], damunt la taula$_2$.

El Joan$_1$ [$_F$ l$_3$'hi$_2$ va DEIXAR $t_3 t_2 t_1$], una nota$_3$, damunt la taula$_2$.

All-focus sentence

The constituents in the main clause conform the focus, the ground must be moved away.

[$_F$ Deu estar rovellada la CANONADA].
   must   be   rusty   the pipes
'The pipes must be rusty.'

Ground

Links are detached to the left, the tail is detached to the right:

On són, els coberts?

Les forquilles són a l'armari, però...

a. els ganivets$_1$ els$_1$ vaig ficar t_1 al CALAIX.

b. #vaig ficar els ganivets al CALAIX.

c. #els$_1$ vaig ficar t_1 al CALAIX, el ganivets$_1$.

Link contrast

La Sió$_1$ [$_F$ va insultar la COIA$_2$ t_1]
Sió   insulted   Coia

i   **ella**$_2$ [$_F$ li$_1$ va fotre una HÒSTIA t_2].
and   she   her   hit

'Sió$_1$ insulted Coia$_2$ and she$_2$ hit HER$_1$.'

vs weak pronouns

La Sió$_1$ [$_F$ va insultar la COIA t_1]. [$_F$ Li va fotre   una HÒSTIA].

'Sió insulted Coia. She hit her'

Who hit whom? Ambiguous

In English, too

Ann [F hugged SUE].
[F She would forever be GRATEFUL to her].
She [F would forever be GRATEFUL to her].

Other issues

➔ It-clefts:

  It is John who left ; [$_F$ JOHN] left.

➔ Deaccenting, recursiveness of ground-focus:

  The men in the hospital looked horrible.

  Especially the OLD men.

➔ Metalinguistic correction in catalan.

Conclusion

Information packaging is a cross-linguistic phenomenon.

It is realised with different tools in different languages.

Comment

Cross-linguistic analysis lets differentiate phenomena that are intrinsically independent but are realised through the same means in a particular language.