Contrastiveness of Narrow Focus: Contrastive Focus vs. Contrastive Topic

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1. Introduction

$ The notion of contastiveness associated with a lexical item like >but= is a semantic core part of its conventional meaning.

$ The question to be explored in this paper is whether or not the phenomena of focus also includes the notion of contrastiveness as a part of its conventional semantic meaning in the same way as the word >but= does.

$ This paper will argue that contrastiveness is a conventional meaning for one type of focus and conversational meaning for another type of focus, assuming that there are more than one type of focus. the last option, and additionally attempt to show the borderline between the conventional meaning and the conversational meaning of the notion of contrastiveness involved with different types of focus.

1.1. Terminological clarification

(1)   a.   Topic: whatever corresponds to Korean nun-marker
      b.   Focus: i) accented word or constituent when used as a noun or
                  ii) assignment of an accent to a word or a constituent when used as a verb
      c.   Two types of accent: A-accent (H*LL%) vs. B-accent ((L+)H* LH%)
      d.   Narrow focus: non-sentential focused constituent whose scope is determined by
                  the previous discourse and is confined into a relatively small domain
                  (loosely defined)

This paper concerns two focal categories:

(2)

In English	Korean
i) A-accented narrow focus	H* accented narrow focus
ii) B-accented narrow focus.	contrastive topic marked focus, *i.e., nun*-marked constituent

A-focus refers to i)and B-focus or CT refers to ii), henceforth.

1.2. Contrastiveness and types of focus

(3) a. A: What did the three kids eat?@
     b. B: [Fred]_{B-focus} ate [the beans]_{A-focus}.

(3') A: 세 소년이 무얼 먹었니?
      B: [Fred-는]_{B-focus} [콩을]_{A-focus} 먹었어.

(4) A: Among the three boys, who ate the beans?
     B: [FRED]_{A-focus} ate the beans.
         H* L   L%
(4') A: 세 소년 중에 누가 콩을 먹었니?
      B: [Fred 가]_{A-focus} 콩을 먹었어.

$ The B-accenting of >Fred= in (3B) and its Korean counterpart in (3'B) on the one hand,
   and the A-accenting of >Fred= in (4B) and its Korean counterpart in (4'B) on the other
   hand both involve some notion of contrastiveness.
$ The contrastiveness of the two cases are not the same.
$ Because of the volatile characteristics of prosody as a means of marking a linguistic
   category, some people do not even acknowledge the categorical nature of this type of
   focus. Hence, the meaning due to the B-accented topic sometimes had often been
   analyzed as a pragmatic inference which does not have its own conventional meaning as
   in Rooth (1992).
$ It is a challenging task to precisely represent the difference of the contrastiveness
   associated with the A-focus and theB-focus.

1.3 Goal

$ To examine the notion of contrast to see if it can be a characteristic property of focus as
   assumed in the Alternative Semantics framework.
$ To show that contrastiveness is not conventional meaning of A-focus, whereas it IS of B-
   focus.
$ Some inadequacy of the Alternative Semantics approach as the theory of focus will be
   discussed in relation to the notion of contrastivenss.
$ It will be shown that an alternative approach is in need which would properly reflect
   these findings.

2. Notion of contrastiveness

How the notion of contrastiveness is incorporated into the Alternative Semantics, the most
widespread theory of focus.

2.1. A-Focus

2.1.1 Alternative semantics position (Rooth 1985, 1992)
In Alternative Semantics, by evoking a set of alternatives, a sentence with a focused

constituent is supposed to bring out the interpretation of contrast with the other alternatives in the set. A sentence with a focus as in (5) brings out the **contrast** between the actual sentence as one member of the set of alternatives and the other members of the set of the form *John introduced __ to Sue* as in (5').

(5)   John introduced [BILL]$_{A\text{-focus}}$ to Sue.
(5')   {John inroduced Fred to Sue, John introduced Mike to Sue, ...}

Vallduv8 & Vilkuna (1997) coin the term *kontrast* to refer to the category of focus distinguished from the other type of focus, which they call *rhematic focus*. They informally define the identificational *kontrast* as in (6) by adopting the basic semantic import of focus in Rooth=s alternative semantics and his interpretation of sentence (5).

(6)   Identificational *kontrast*: if M = {a,b,c} and P(x0 M), then P(a)
(6')   "If a proposition of the form *John introduced x to Sue* is true, then *John introduced Bill to Sue* is true.@

$ For both Rooth and Vallduv8 & Vilkuna, the notion of *contrast* is the core concept of the semantics of focus.
$ The notion of contrast is fundamental because it can justify the establishment of the set of alternatives as a part of the semantics of focus, since if there are no other members in the set, contrast would not arise.
$ This notion of contrast, however, seems to have a pragmatic effect only, arising only when we happen to pay attention to the unselected members. In order to pay attention to the unselected members, the members of the domain set should be known or closed as in (6), where the other members in the domain, *i.e.*, *b* and *c*, are contrasted with *a*.

2.1.2. Is Contrast a Necessary Condition?

Five instances of the same sentence with the same prosody associated with A-accent.

(7)   (You know what?) [JOHN left.]$_F$
(8)   A: Among the three boys, John, Bill, and Fred, who left?
        B: [JOHN]$_{A\text{-focus}}$ left.
(9)   A: Who left?
        B: [JOHN]$_{A\text{-focus}}$ left.
(10)   A: Mary left.
        B: No, [JOHN]$_{A\text{-focus}}$ left.
(11)   Somebody left. Specifically, [JOHN]$_{A\text{-focus}}$ left.

$ (7) is not narrow focus. (8) and (10) involve some notion of contrastiveness. But (9) and (11) do not involve contrastiveness.
$ For the focused sentence in (11), regardless of whether or not we know possible individuals that may have left, the semantic function of focus in this case should remain the same.

$ In (11), what licenses the focused sentence is the preceding existential statement, which does not have to provide any clue on the identity of possible members of the domain set, from which the focused individual can be chosen. In such a case, the contrastive effect does not occur.

$ The real requirement is the anaphoric relationship between one discourse referent for *somebody* and the referent for the focused expression *John* which commonly share the property described by the focus frame, that is, what is conveyed by the part with a flat intonation. --- The function of focus here is stating the identity of one presupposed referent, whose identity is unknown except that it satisfies the property described by the focus frame, and the referent for *John*.

Non-D-linked Wh-question

(12)   A: Who-the-hell left?
       B:[JOHN]$_{\text{A-focus}}$ left.

$ A *wh-the-hell* phrase guarantees that its domain is not discoursally linked (D-linked in Pesetsky's (1987) sense), *i.e.* the domain is unknown to the participants of the discourse.[1]

$ The domain for the *who-the-hell* phrase cannot be restricted into a smaller familiar set, but should be the universal set, or whatever set provided in the model. For instance, the alternatives of the focus in the sentence (12B) should be unknown and thus a universal set, *i.e.* other alternative members to the focused one, *John*, are not available to the speaker at all.

$ The contrasting effect becomes very vague, since everybody else in the world included in the universal set stands in the contrasting relation to Mary.

$ Shows that the notion of contrastiveness is conversationally evoked notion which is not conventionally associated with the type of focus of our concern, what we call A-focus.C When it happens to be selected from the familiar set, it tends to have a contrasting effect as in (8), and otherwise, it does not, as in (9) and (12). Thus, the contrasting effect originates from the familiarity with the members of the domain set, or the possibility of restricting the domain into a contextually relevant smaller set. And this is a non-linguistic pragmatic factor, extraneous to the semantic function of the focus of our concern, that is our A-focus.

$ There is no need to include in the semantics of focus the information of what other members than *John,* which should be the universal set minus *John*, are still in the domain.

2.1.3. Technical problem of Alternative Semantics: Generation of a wrong alternative set

Krifka (1998) points out a problem of the Alternative Semantics account of focus with the following examples:

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[1] Wee (1999) argue for a different view from Pesetsky about *wh-the-hell* phrases.

(13)   a. A: What did Mary do with Ulysses?
                        {R(Ulysses)(Mary)|R0DIRECTED ACTIVITY}
                        ={read(Ulysses)(Mary), bought(Ulysses)(Mary)}
       B: Mary [READ] Ulysses.
       B1: *Mary [read ULYSSES]: over-focused answer
                        {P(Mary)| P0 ALT(read(Ulysses))}
                        ={read(Ulysses)(Mary), bought(Ulysses)(Mary)}

       b. A: What did Mary do?
                        {P(Mary)| P0 Directed ACTIVITY, PORESTR}
                        ={read(Ulysses)(Mary), bought(Ulysses)(Mary)}

       B: Mary [read ULYSSES].
       B1: *Mary [READ] Ulysses: under-focused answer
       {R(Ulysses)(Mary)| R 0ALT(read)}
                        ={read(Ulysses)(Mary), bought(Ulysses)(Mary)}

In (13a, b), not only a congruent Q-A pair, *i.e.,* A-B pair in each, but also an incongruent pair, A-B1 pair is allowed: over-focused answer and under-focused answer.

2.1.4. Conclusion:
$ the notion of contrastiveness is not a necessary condition for A-focus
$ (8)-(11) are all the same category of focus:
  -   The common denominator of all four cases: Each occurrence of focus functions to IDENTIFY something (in various contexts, *i,e,* by answering (as in 8,9), specifying (as in 11), or correcting (as in 10)). Cf.) Lambrecht (1994).
  -   Singling out those cases involving the notion of contrastiveness from the other cases of A-focus is not a good option.
$ The notion of contrastiveness is conversationally evoked notion which does not have to be included as the semantic part of focus.
$ The Alternative Semantics approach cannot reflect this property of A-focus and further it does not have a strong motivation to incorporate the alternative set into the semantics of focus. Furthermore, Alternative Semantics can generate wrong alternative set.
$ The problem is due to the lack of an access to the sentence-internal information structure, that is, the proper bipartition of presuppositional information and the asserted information of a sentence: A general problem of 'Structured Discourse approach'

2.1.5. My approach (Wee 1999): Structured Sentence approach

$ Since Chomsky (1976), it has been customary to represent the logical form of (14a) as in (14b).
(14)   a. [JOHN]$_{A\text{-focus}}$ left.
       b.   □x [x left] (presupposition)
             and x= John (assertion)

$ Taking basically same presupposition/assertion partition as in (14) and taking anaphoric nature of the referent of a narrow focus into consideration, I treat the presupposed entity x as a definite discourse referent not as a variable as in (15).

(15)   a..b is a definite referent with the property 8x [x left] ; (*presupposition*)
      b. b = a   ; (*assertion*)

(16)   The one who left is John.
      Presupposition   Assertion

$ The uniqueness triggered by the definite presupposed part is relativized to an event.

2.2. B-focus

Contrastive topic (Roberts 1996, Lembrecht 1994);
Contrastive focus (Gundel 1999);
Sentence topic (S-topic) (Buering 1994, 1999)
  C   Henceforth, the symbols \ and ~ will be used to represent the A-focus and the B-focus, respectively

2.2.1 Contrastiveness of B-focus or CT

2.2.1.1. Universal quantifier as B-focus

(17)   ?[~ Everybody] came.
(17')   [\ Everybody] came.
      ? 다는 왔다. (except for the floating CT discussed in Lee 1998)

(18)   A: Fred and John ate something. Who ate what?
      B: [~Fred] ate [\the beans]
      B':[~John] ate [\the beans.]
      B":? [~Fred and John] ate[\ the beans].
      B"': ? [~Both] ate [\the beans].

$ A universal quantifier in (17) or >both= in (18B''') is impossible as a B-focus whereas it is possible as A-focus.
$ Suggests contrastiveness of B-focus.

2.2.1.2. Theory of question-answer dialogue game

$ Roberts (1996), Buering (1994, 1997, 1999), and Wee (1998) for Korean CT on the basis of Carlson=s (1983) language game approach.
      C   **CT provides a partial answer to a big question.**

(19)   A: Who ate what?

B: [~Fred] ate [\ the beans]

$ The reason for CT-marking for *Fred* is that it provides just a partial answer to the question (19A). In other words, the answer in (19B) constitutes an answer to a sub-question of a structured question as illustrated in the following:

(19')   a. Who ate what?

           /   \

What did Fred eat?   c. What did John eat?

      | |

b. Fred ate beans   d. John ate .....

$ the function of *contrastive topic* is regarded to provide a partial answer to a big question, indicating that the sentence could serve as the answer to a sub-question which is a part of a super question.

$ This language game theoretic approach is certainly revealing some very important aspect related to CT, especially an aspect governed by a general pragmatic strategy employed by an informative cooperative communication.

$ Contrastiveness is conventionally associated with B-focus, and the partiality is the source of contrastiveness involved with B-focus.

$ Problem C

Cannot capture some important sentence internally available information: the asymmetric dependency between A-focus and B-focus

2.2.2. Asymmetric dependency between A-focus and B-focus

(20)   A: There were beans and corns. What did the kids eat?

B: [~Fred] ate [\ the beans]. And [~Bill] ate [\ the corns.]. And [~John] ate [\ the beans]. And [~Mike] ate \ [the corns].

        Fred 는 콩을 먹었고

        Bill 은 옥수수를 먹었고

        John 은 콩을 먹었고

        Mike 는 옥수수를 먹었어.

B=: ? [~Fred] ate [the beans\]. And [~Bill] ate [the corns]. And [~Fred] ate [the potatoes\]

        ? Fred-는 콩을 먹었고

         Bill 은 옥수수를 먹었고

         Fred 는 옥수수를 먹었어...

$ In (20B) even after one uttered that B-focused (*i.e.,* CT-marked) Fred ate the beans, one can felicitously add that someone else also ate the same thing. But in (20B'), it becomes very odd to try to add that Fred ate something after saying that Fred ate something other

thing already.

$ The information of this asymmetric dependency between the A-focus and the B-focus within a sentence must be available directly from the sentence itself without considering the discourse structure. In other words, the semantic structure of a sentence with a B-focus and an A-focus must reflect this property of those two different types of accenting. But, in the Alternative Semantics framework based on language game theoretic approach , such distinction between the two is not able to be represented as the structure of the sentence.

$ In the Alternative Semantics, the exhaustivity of the A-focus with respect to B-focus would avail itself by stipulation as in Buering (1994, 1999).C This does not provide any account of why the A-focused item must be the exhaustive list with respect to the B-focused item.

$ A good theory of B-focus must reflect i) the property of contrastiveness due to the partiality of the answer and ii) the asymmetric dependency between A-focus and B-focus.

2.2.3. Sketch of a representation of B-focus

$ The asymmetric dependency between A-focus and B-focus is due to a functional reading from the B-focus to the A-focus.

$ Implicational logical structure of a sentence with an A-focus and a B-focus can capture the functional reading.

For (20),

(21) In an event e of 'eating',
the agent = Fred in e$\rightarrow$ the theme = the beans in e
the agent = Bill in e $\rightarrow$ the theme = the corns in e,
etc.

$ The partiality which is the part of the conventional meaning of B-focus can be capture by the identification occurring in the antecedent clause, which corresponds to the input value for the desired functional reading. – Contrastiveness becomes available, too.

$ This analysis is possible under my 'definite focus hypothesis'.

3. Conclusion

$ In the 'Structured discourse approach' such as Alternative Semantics approach, the sentence-internal information structure is not available, which is necessary for proper representation of focus.

$ 'Structured Sentence approach', which show the sentence internal information structure, is preferred over Structured discourse approach.

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