

# **Packaging of ‘Information Blocks’ and Movement**

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# Introduction

- Native speaker of any given human language has an ability to form an infinite number of sentences.
- Each sentence carries with it packages of *information blocks* (Chafe 1976).
- These information blocks are layered or structured differently according to the kind of information each block carries, we refer to it as the Information Structure (IS) of the sentence.

# Blocks of the Information Structure: Topic and Focus

## Topic

- Stands for what a sentence is about
  - Need not always be an old, already *given* information as assumed earlier in the literature, for example Chafe (1976) before Reinhart (1981) cut apart the differences between two.
  - So, it can be used to show a new, not already given information.
1. [One of my teachers]<sub>Topic</sub> also [[failed the driving test]<sub>Comment</sub>]<sub>Given</sub>.
  2. [Tomba]<sub>Topic</sub>[ate mangoes]<sub>Comment</sub> and [Tombi]<sub>Topic</sub>[did[  
\_\_\_\_ ]<sub>Given</sub> too]<sub>Comment</sub>.

# Focus

- Indicates the presence of linguistically relevant alternatives
- In a general sense, when one talks of putting focus on something, it means that a concentrated undivided attention is given to that something.
- In grammar, when we talk about a focus of a sentence it is simply defined ‘as any constituent containing the intonation center of the sentence’ (Reinhart 1998)

- The information that the speaker will like to convey will depend on where the intonational centering is put in the sentence. So, (3) can have different versions as shown below (a-c):

### 3. Tomba hit Thoiba.

- a. [TOMBA]<sub>F</sub> hit Thoiba (and not *Chaoba* hit Thoiba or, *Thambou* hit Thoiba....)
- b. Tomba [HIT]<sub>F</sub> Thoiba (and not Tomba *kissed* Thoiba or, Tomba *hugged* Thoiba....)
- c. Tomba hit [THOIBA]<sub>F</sub> (and not Tomba hit *Tampha* or, Tomba hit *Chinglen*....)

The Meiteilon counterparts for (3a-c) are given as (3a', 3b', and 3c') where the subject, object, and verb mark the intonational focus respectively as answers for a typical Wh-question of the forms ‘Who hit Thoiba?’, ‘Who(m) did Tomba hit?’, and ‘What did Tomba do to Thoiba?’.

3a'. [tombə-nə]<sub>F</sub> t<sup>h</sup>oybə p<sup>h</sup>u-i  
Tomba-Subj Thoiba beat-Ind

[TOMBA]<sub>F</sub> hit Thoiba (and not *Chaoba* hit Thoiba or, *Thambou* hit Thoiba....)

3b'. tombə-nə t<sup>h</sup>oybə [p<sup>h</sup>u-i]<sub>F</sub>  
Tomba-Subj Thoiba beat-Ind

Tomba [HIT]<sub>F</sub> Thoiba (and not Tomba *kissed* Thoiba or, Tomba *hugged* Thoiba....)

3c'. tombə-nə [t<sup>h</sup>oybə]<sub>F</sub> [p<sup>h</sup>u-i]<sub>F</sub>  
Tomba-Subj Thoiba beat-Ind

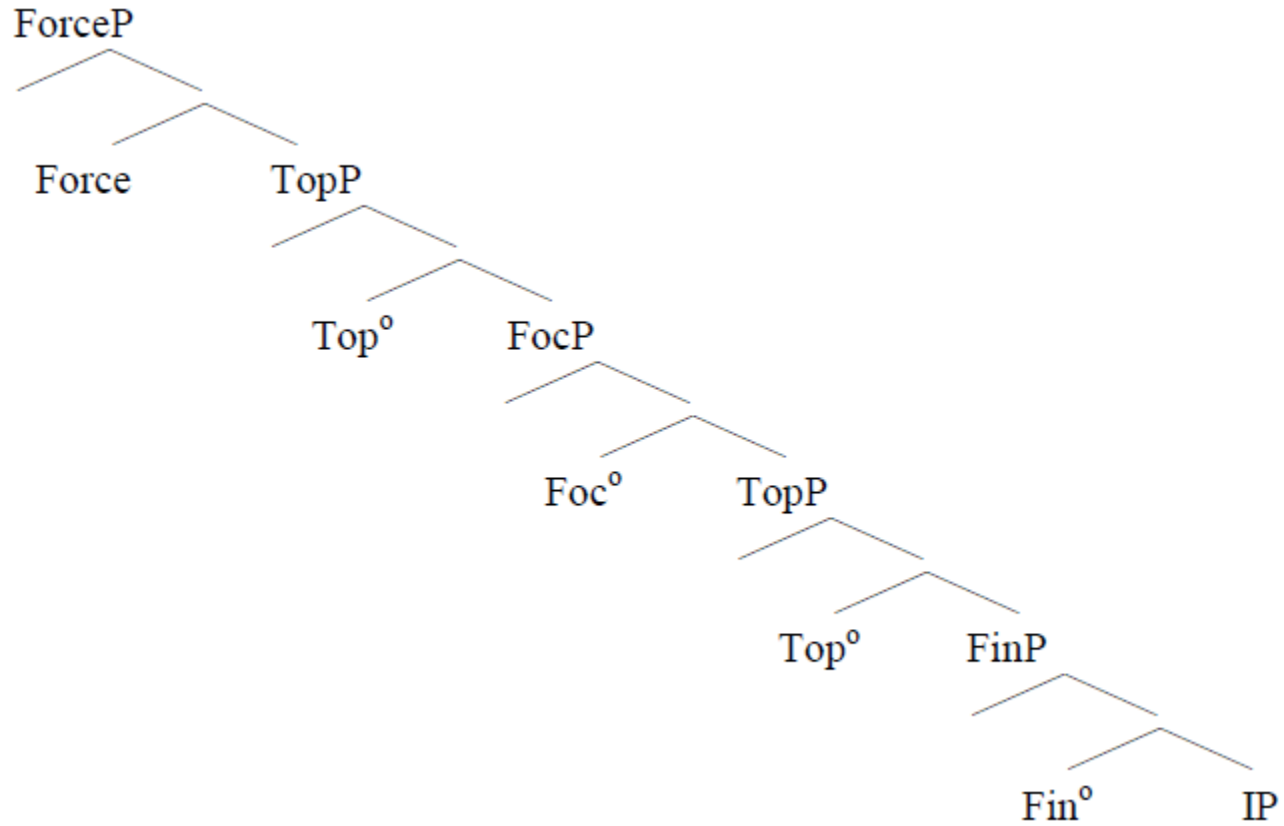
Tomba hit [THOIBA]<sub>F</sub> (and not Tomba hit *Tampha* or, Tomba hit *Chinglen*....)

- As the intonational centering is changed in (a-c), we have come across that each sentence focus is showing its possible corresponding focus alternatives. The said intonational centering is typically put on a constituent that a Wh-question is asked about. Thus, the intonationally centered constituent typically marks the answer to a prior Wh-question (4a-d).

#### 4. What did Tomba see?

- a. #[TOMBA]<sub>F</sub> saw *ache din*.
- b. #Tomba [SAW]<sub>F</sub> *ache din*.
- c. Tomba saw [ACHE DIN]<sub>F</sub>.
- d. [ACHE DIN]<sub>F</sub>.

# Where is the movement and Why? Rizzi (1997)





# Topicalization

Topicalization is a syntactic operation which is considered throughout to be a fronting operation. So, by fronting, it involves a syntactic movement operation which takes place either overtly or, covertly (therefore, as in the case of an in-situ-WH-movement there is a possibility of an in-situ-topicalization).

5. [John]<sub>Topic</sub> [will eat the apples]<sub>Comment</sub>.

6. [[JOHN]<sub>Focus</sub>]<sub>Topic</sub> [will eat the apples]<sub>Comment</sub> [Contrastive Topic]

7. The apples, John will eat \_\_\_\_\_. [Object topicalization]

8. Eat the apples, John will do \_\_\_\_\_. [VP topicalization]

# Topicalization in Meiteilon

## Subject Topicalization

9. əy-di            yu            t<sup>h</sup>ək-le  
I-Top            liquor    drink-Perf

‘I have drunk liquor (but You or S/he has/have not drunk liquor)’

- The subject being essentially the unmarked topic of a sentence can be topicalized when it needs to be more prominent in the structure.
- Here, the in-situ topicalization is introducing the possibility of other alternatives of the subject.

# Object Topicalization

10. əy yu-*di*                    t<sup>h</sup>ək-le  
I    liquor-Top            drink-Perf

‘I have drunk liquor (but, I have not drunk other drinks)’

- Meiteilon Object topicalization, unlike English, does not illustrate a word order change.
- Shows presence of in-situ object (and subject) topicalization in the language.
- However, when the verb undergoes topicalization, an interesting thing takes place.

- When the verb undergoes topicalization, it is observed that an obligatory verb doubling construction occurs.

## Verb Topicalization

11. əy yu *tʰək*-pə-di toynə \*(*tʰək*)-le (verb doubling)  
 I liquor **drink**-Nzr-Top often **drink**-Perf  
 ‘I have often DRUNK liquor (but clause...)’

# Focalization with focus sensitive particles (*only, even, just, also*)

## Subject Focalization with ‘*only*’

12. əy-**dəŋ**          yu          tʰək-le  
    I-**only**          liquor      drink-Perf

‘Only I have drunk liquor (but not any other person has drunk liquor)’

## Object Focalization with ‘*only*’

13. əy    yu-**dəŋ**                  tʰək-le  
    I      liquor-**only**              drink-Perf

‘I have only drunk liquor (but I have not drunk any other drink)’

## Verb Focalization with ‘*only*’

14. [əy    yu          tʰək]-pə-**dəŋ**                          tʰək-le  
    I      liquor      drink-Nzr-**only**      drink-Perf

‘I have *only* DRUNK liquor (but clause...)’

## Focalization with *even, just, also*

15. [əy        yu        t<sup>h</sup>ək]-pə-**p<sup>h</sup>aw**        t<sup>h</sup>ək-le  
      I        liquor drink-Nzr-**even**        drink-Perf  
‘I have *even* DRUNK liquor (but clause...)’

16. [əy        yu        t<sup>h</sup>ək]-pə-**k<sup>h</sup>ək**        t<sup>h</sup>ək-le  
      I        liquor drink-Nzr-**just**        drink-Perf  
‘I have *just* DRUNK liquor (but clause...)’

17. [əy        yu        t<sup>h</sup>ək]-pə-**su**        t<sup>h</sup>ək-le  
      I        liquor drink-Nzr-**also**        drink-Perf  
‘I have *also* DRUNK liquor (and/but I have also done *x-action*)’

Thank you