

Information Structure and Language Change

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The present article surveys how focusing and focus constructions are affected by language change. Focus in the sense of this handbook (Rooth 1985) is a universal pragmatic phenomenon: A form that indicates question-answer congruence, contrast and correction, and, on the meaning side, triggers alternatives. Focus in this sense does not change, arise or die out. What does change, however, is the range of *focus sensitive particles* of languages, the *focus related syntactic patterns*, and *alternative-based constructions* in languages that emerge from former focus constructions. We find the typical patterns of language change: emergence of new particles as well bleaching and loss of constructions. The pathway of focus change starts where words develop into focus sensitive particles and associate with focus, it continues where they foster into conventionalized alternative-based constructions, and it ends where reference to alternatives or focus-background structure is lost. We will refer to the later stages as *bleached focus*. There is to date no extensive literature about the language history of focus (to one exception, to which we turn presently). We therefore present a survey over observations and case studies which, taken together, provide evidence for a pathway of focus change.

There is one thriving field of diachronic linguistics which is tied to information structure: V2 movement in Germanic languages, and its loss between Middle English and Early Modern English. Research in this field traditionally refers to weaker terms of information structure (e.g., topic, framesetting). In part, this is justified by the subject of investigation: Many grammatical patterns are bleached focus constructions rather than compositional focus. Yet, parts of the history of Germanic languages can be rephrased in the more rigid terminology of focus in the sense of this handbook, which we will undertake in this article.

The article is organized as follows: The first section discusses the *focus cline* where fully compositional association with focus changes into alternative-based constructions that we call *bleached focus*. The second section investigates the emergence of focus sensitive particles, and in particular the semantic units that precede focus as part of semantic composition. The final section surveys information structure and syntactic change in Germanic languages, in particular the rise and loss of V2.

1. The focus cline

The following characteristics establish ‘independent focus’ in the sense in which we will use it (cf. also Rooth, this vol.): A sentence shows an independent focus construction if

- a word or phrase in a given sentence is highlighted in the way in which question-answer congruence is highlighted.
- the word/phrase could also have been used without highlighting.
- highlighting is interpreted as reference to alternatives of the same logical type. The actual set of alternatives is determined by context.

- the alternatives serve as an argument of some focus sensitive operator (the operator *discharges* the alternatives).
- the language has more focus sensitive operators, and the highlighted word/phrase could also have been associated with another operator.

A simple example of independent focus is given in (1), inspired by Rooth (1985).

(1) *Mary only introduced BILL_F to Sue.*

In (1), *Bill* is in focus (Rooth 1985, Beck, this vol.). The alternative semantic value of *Bill_F* is a set of individuals that count as alternatives to Bill in the given context. The focus associates with *only*. The word *Bill* could also have been used without focus. Focused *Bill_F* could also be discharged by other focus sensitive operators, like *even*, quantifiers, *too*, causal constructions, evaluatives (*luckily*, *sadly*). *Bill_F* can mark coherence with a preceding question or contrast. We include contrastive topic (CT) as a transparent focus construction (cf. Büring, this vol.).

We propose that independent focus must be distinguished from constructions that we will call *bleached focus*. *Bleached focus constructions* have one or more of the following characteristics:

- An item/phrase is interpreted as giving rise to alternatives. Possibly, the item is also highlighted.
- The alternatives are fully determined or restricted by lexical conventions beyond logical type and context.
- The alternatives can only be discharged by one or few operators which are specified in grammar.

We will use the emergence of negative polarity items (NPI) as our first example. Consider the German noun *Schwein*. In its common use, it means ‘pig’ and can be used unrestrictedly whenever the speaker wants to talk about pigs. In this use, it can also be put in independent focus, as in (2). It refers to alternatives which we have to infer from context. Sentence (2) could be about animals (*cows*, *dogs*, *cats*), but also about belongings in general (*car*, *bike*, *gold*).

(2) *Paul hat nur ein Schwein_F.*
Paul only owns a pig_F

However, *Schwein* can also be used in an NPI sense.

(3) *Hier hat nie ein Schwein was gekauft.*
Here has never a pig something bought.
‘Noone has ever bought anything here’

According to pragmatic theories of NPI licensing (Krifka 1995, Chierchia 2006), *Schwein* in the NPI use denotes the same as *human being* and moreover gives rise to more restricted alternatives (e.g., *human being*, *wealthy human being*, *poor human*). These alternatives are discharged by a tacit operator \emptyset_{even} which shares the meaning of *even*. \emptyset_{even} takes sentence wide scope. The logical structure of (3) is hence as in (4), where we use bF for *bleached focus*.

(4) \emptyset_{even} [*Hier hat nie [ein Schwein]_{bF} was gekauft.*]

The alternative-based analysis successfully predicts that the word can only be used in downward entailing contexts (Krifka 1995, Chierchia 2006, for minimizers see Eckardt & Csipak 2013). The interpretation of bF is the same as of independent focus F, but the construction is not a fully independent focus construction because (a) *Schwein* in the NPI sense must always carry bF, (b) the alternatives of *Schwein_{bF}* are conventional, not context-driven, and (c) no operator except \emptyset_{even} can discharge the emerging alternatives at the propositional level.

The Jespersen cycle of negation illustrates later stages in the focus cline: Transparent focus constructions turn into bleached focus constructions and develop further into constructions which are no longer alternative based but retain side messages which go back to the bleached focus stage. In Old French, like in any language, nouns such as *pas* (step), *goutte* (drop), *mie* (crumb) could be used in transparent focus constructions and be discharged by tacit or overt *even*. A sentence like (*Even*) *il ne marche pas_F* transparently denotes ‘Even: he doesn’t walk a (single) step’ (see Beck, this vol.). Next, these nouns developed an NPI use with a new grammar and meaning:

- i. *pas, goutte, mie* etc. continue to be used without a determiner while OF developed a determiner system
- ii. the nouns can be combined with predicates which would have been sortally unsuited for the noun in the old sense (e.g. ‘*ne mange pas* = ‘not eat ?a step/at all’)

At this stage, words like *pas* or *mie* are manner adverbials which require *bleached* focus, as in the *Schwein* example. They conventionally give rise to alternative, more specific manners of performing the eventuality at stake. For instance, (*ne*) *dormir pas* denotes ‘(not) sleep in any way’ and give rise to alternatives like ‘(not) sleep deeply’, ‘(not) sleep well’ etc. The alternatives must be discharged by \emptyset_{even} . Like for contemporary negative polarity items, the analysis predicts, firstly, that *pas, mie, point, ...* are only used in NPI licensing contexts, and secondly, that the sentence is presented as a particularly emphatic assertion. The sentence “*il ne dort pas*” in Old French must be paraphrased as “He doesn’t sleep in any manner, and this is worse than just deny that he sleeps well or sleeps long” (Kadmon and Landman 1993, on *any*).

However, the Jespersen cycle doesn’t end here. In a next step, the bleached focus construction was reanalysed into a syntactic co-occurrence pattern. We can tell this because over time, *pas, point, rien* etc. no longer occur in the full range of NPI contexts but are restricted to negation. In parallel, the Old French single negation *ne* vanishes from the sources. The two-part construction *ne ... pas* turned into the neutral expression of negation and no longer required bleached focus. *Ne* changed status from an NPI licenser to a word that, like *pas*, reflects the presence of negation on basis of agreement (Zeijlstra 2004). However, some French negations retain the flavor of the bleached focus stage. A case in question is (*ne*) *point*. Schweickhäuser’s classical study on negation reports: “Here is how it [the Académie Française] expresses itself in the article on *Ne*: ‘*Point* negates more strongly than *pas*. (...) [*P*]oint followed by particle *de* is an absolute negation; while *pas* leaves the possibility to restrict, for

reserve” (Schweickhäuser, 1852: 94). In the older bF construction, (*ne*) *point*_{bF} gave rise to an emphatic statement via alternatives. When this got lost, there remained a conventional implicature that the speaker “negates seriously”.

The Jespersen Cycle is a classical example of independent focus that gets bleached and finally lost, but there are more. Focus operators can develop uses in which they relate to alternatives that are no longer focus driven. We discuss two examples, *only* and *even*. The particle *only* associates with focus and contributes a uniqueness assertion, as illustrated in (1). However, *only* can also be used in optatives such as (5).

(5) *If only the soup was less hot!*

The sentence conveys that there are several things that would make the speaker happier, that the state ‘the soup is less hot’ is the least of her wishes, and that this already would content the speaker. In this use, *only* does not associate with focus. For instance, if we place a narrow focus on *soup*_F, the meaning of (5) changes and the optative interpretation is no longer available (“if the soup is the only thing which is less hot, then ...”). Optative *only* conditionals differ from focus sensitive (fs) *only* in various ways:

- fs *only* in sentence initial position requires a narrow focus on the subject DP, optative *only* does not.
- fs *only* is not stressed, unless in independent focus (*ONLY*_F). Optative *only* can be stressed without semantic consequences.
- fs *only* can associate with narrow focus. Optative *only* does not interact with narrow focus.

We cannot give a full semantic analysis of optative *only*. However, we anticipate that it must refer to alternative ways to make the speaker happy, and that these might be captured as *bleached focus*.

Another case is “exasperated” *even* in questions, as discussed in (Iatridou and Tatevosov, 2013).

(6) *Which restaurant should we go to? Would you like the APEX? — I don't know. Where is it, even?*

They argue that the use of *even* in (6) cannot be analysed as a transparent focus construction. The authors envisage a meaning that can be paraphrased like “the set of questions that I would have to ask before I can answer yours contains (even) the most elementary one: Where is APEX?”. Once again, this use of *even* refers to alternatives that cannot be computed transparently as focus alternatives, and that are obligatorily discharged by *even*. The construction offers another example of bleached focus. Incidentally, optative *only* and exasperated *even* both follow another major trend in language history, namely subjectification (Traugott and Dasher 2002). Bleached focus can be recruited in order to express the speaker’s subjective comments.

More bleached focus constructions can be found in the wide range of constructions that have received an alternative-based analysis in recent literature, such as epistemic indefinites (Kratzer + Shimoyama 2002, Alfonso-Ovalle & Menendez-Benito 2010), free choice items (Menendez-Benito 2012), question pronouns (Hamblin 1978, Eckardt 2007), stressed and unstressed modal particles (Zimmermann 2011 on

doch/DOCH). A special case of lexically ruled focus are words which necessarily carry focus. Consider the German adverbial *eigentlich* (E ‘truly, really’). Used with an accent, *EIGENTLICH* highlights a contrast between what ‘really’ is the case and what ‘seems’ to be the case, like in (7) and (8).

- (7) *Der EIGENTLICHE Chef ist Frau Müller.*
The TRUE boss is Mrs. Müller.
... even though you might think that it is Herr Schulze, given how he acts.
- (8) *EIGENTLICH wollte ich einen Cappucino.*
Originally/ in fact, I wanted a cappucino
... even though, from what you serve me, one could think that I wanted an espresso.

Stressed *EIGENTLICH* can be analysed as an operator in obligatory focus. In terms of the focus cline, lexical fixedness indicates a *bleached focus* construction. Moreover, *eigentlich* has developed an unstressed use where it contributes emotional flavor.¹

- (9) *Peter ist eigentlich ein netter Typ.*
‘Come to think about it, Peter is a nice guy’

Example (9) doesn’t evoke contrasts like “how Peter looks” (... ugly) and “how Peter is” (... nice). Unstressed *eigentlich* conveys that the speaker makes the assertion after some reflection (Eckardt 2009). The two stages of *EIGENTLICH/eigentlich* pattern with the two stages of *point* as NPI/negation. The core item of a bleached focus construction turns into a focus-independent word that still echoes the pragmatic content of the preceding construction.

Sometimes, old focus constructions give rise to new focus constructions. Intensifying *SELB* (E *PRO-self*, G *selber*, F *soi-même*) has been described as relating a thing or person to an entourage. (10) reports that the king held the speech and suggests that some delegate of the king could have spoken instead (Edmonson & Plank 1978).

- (10) *The king gave the speech himself.*

Intensifying *self* must always be stressed. Eckardt (2001) analyses this as focus accent and proposes that *SELB* denotes the identity function *ID* in focus. Alternatives of *ID* are other functions which could map *x* onto other people (e.g. the king to any of his delegates). The focus requirement, as well as the conceptual content of focus alternatives of *ID* are lexical requirements of intensifying *SELB*. In this sense, intensifiers do not enter fully independent focus constructions. Unlike most other bleached foci, however, focussed *SELB* can freely associate with all kinds of focus sensitive operators. Intensifiers can develop various later uses. English *SELB*-utterances predominantly occurred in direct object position in reflexive constructions. From these emerged the reflexive pronoun paradigm, replacing a focus construction by the syntactic requirement to co-refer with a local antecedent (Levinson 2000).

¹ Unstressed *eigentlich* is restricted to root clauses. Its analysis requires a second meaning dimension (Potts, 2005).

German *selbst* was reanalysed from focus carrier to focus particle in potentially ambiguous uses in the late eighteenth century, as detailed in (Eckardt 2001, 2006).

The present section presented the focus cline: independent focus constructions can lead to bleached focus constructions and beyond. Our final example leads the way into Section 2 where we investigate the emergence of new focus sensitive items that can associate with focus.

3. The emergence of focus sensitive items

At the beginning, we distinguished between universal focus effects and language-specific focus operators, observing that language change can only affect the specific parts of the grammar of focus. The emergence of focus sensitive items requires a more detailed picture. Beaver and Clark (2008) propose to distinguish between indirect and direct association with focus. Indirect association takes place where operators are sensitive to contextual domain restrictions in general. For instance, the quantifier *always* like in *Tom is always busy* quantifies over a reasonably restricted domain of times, leaving out times of Tom sleeping, being ill and so on. Yet, these contextual restrictions can be reflected in the prosodic structure of the sentence. The operator is not focus sensitive (i.e. its lexical entry does not refer to focus alternatives) and still can exhibit readings which look like association with focus. Beaver and Clark offer intricate tests to distinguish such cases from cases of real association with focus, for instance in English *only*. Unfortunately, the distinction rests on unacceptability tests of a kind of example which is not likely to show up in historical corpora. The absence of such constructions is hence non-telling and it is impossible to distinguish real and indirect association with focus in historical stages.

Instead, we propose to concentrate on focus sensitive items which don't start out from words which are likely candidates for indirect association with focus. In such cases, it is at least more likely that we witness the emergence of direct association with focus. According to this strategy, the history of focus sensitive *only* ('one-ly') or *allein* ('solely', lit. 'all-one'), which emerge from quantifiers, can tell us little about how focus alternatives enter the lexicon: The most plausible (and least interesting) hypothesis being that indirect (pragmatic) association with focus became lexicalized as direct association with focus. Interesting as such changes may be for our general understanding of language change, they don't tell us how focus is recruited as a semantic argument of an item (see Traugott 2006). We therefore leave aside a range of items such as *only*, *allein*, *bloss* ('bare-ly') and, for similar reasons, words of exact hit (German *gerade*, *eben*, *just*, *ausgerechnet*, but also early stages of English *even*). Instead, we will present two case studies which are conducted with the specific aim to understand the predecessors of focus: German *nur* ('only') and *sogar* ('even').

The word *nur* draws on the exception construction *ni uuári* = 'not' + 'was/were/would be' in OldHG. Texts show many variants (*ne wâr*, *newas*, *niwan*, *niuwan* ... see DW, Graff+Massmann) which phonologically reduced to *nur* in MHG. *ni uuári* combines with a full clause or a DP and follows a negative clause. The following examples are typical.

(11) *wir ne habin andrin chuninch ne uuán den romcheiser.*

- we not have other king *ne uuán* the Rome-Kaiser
 ‘we have no other king, only the Roman emperor’
 (12) *ich ne sprach mit dem munde. niewar hu^on unde spot.*
 I not talked with the mouth. *niewar* scorn and mock
 ‘I didn’t say anything with my mouth, except (only) scorn and mock’

(11) starts with a negative statement ‘we do not have X’ where X cataphorically resolves to ‘any ruler except the Roman emperor’. It corresponds to the modern (13) with the indicated meaning.

- (13) *Wir haben nur [den Kaiser in Rom]_F.*
 We only have the Roman emperor.
 a. Presupposition: ‘We have a Roman emperor’
 b. Assertion: ‘For all x which are alternative (kinds of) rulers: It is not the case that we have an x’

These propositions match exactly with the bi-clausal sentence in (11). The first clause in (11) conveys (b.). The (enriched) exception phrase under *ne uuári* adds the proposition which corresponds to (a.).

A detailed data record demonstrates that OHG *niwan* behaves exactly like modern English exceptive *but* (Gajewski, 2013). The turning point from exceptive to ‘only’ is marked by uses without syntactic or semantic correlate, such as (14).

- (14) *Si enkunnen niewan triegen vil menegen kindèschen man.*
 they not-can *niewan* betray many many childish man

The verb *kunnen* lacks an obligatory complement (*what is it that they cannot?*). Speakers at the time could either assume a tacit $\emptyset_{\text{something}}$ complement clause, or reanalyse the entire *niewan*-clause as the complement of *kunnen*. The reanalysed sentence rests essentially on a new meaning for *niewan*, its modern ‘only’ sense. (Negation *ne* turns into a negation concord marker in the new reading; see Iatridou and Zeijlstra, 2012/t.a.) The modern structure of (14) uses focus alternatives to determine the domain of quantification of *nur*. Focus alternatives take over the function of the correlate in the earlier exceptive construction. E.g., the correlate *andere chuninch* (‘other kings’) denotes the set from which *niewan* (‘but’) subtracts one element, *den Romcheiser* (‘the emperor in Rome’). In other words, focus alternatives replace overt domains.

However, focus alternatives can also take over the function of discourse context, as illustrated by German *so-gar* (‘even’). It goes back to German *gar*, which originally meant ‘finished, ready’ (particularly of food: cooked ready, ready to eat). The adjective *gar* can be found in a variety of abstract uses ranging from *gar* = *very* (*much*) to *gar* as a reinforcement of negation (see DW for details) which set the scene for the emergence of *sogar* in 18th century. The focus particle arises from a “culminative” *gar*, combined with *so* ‘so, such’ (between 1700 and 1800; the same

gar remains an—archaic—particle in ModHG). This *gar* shows the following characteristics:²

- gar* occurs in a host sentence S_n .
- S_n is preceded by one or more antecedent sentences $S_{n-1}, S_{n-2} \dots$
- gar* relates the proposition p_n asserted by S_n to those of S_{n-1}, S_{n-2}, \dots
- gar* expresses that p_{n-2}, p_{n-1}, p_n are ordered on a scale, and that p_n is the culmination point of that scale.

Here is a classical example from Hoffman's *Struwwelpeter*:

- | | | |
|------|---|---|
| (15) | <i>Der Friederich, der Friederich</i>
<i>Das war ein arger Wüterich,</i>
<i>Er fing die Fliegen in dem Haus</i>
<i>Und riß ihnen die Flügel aus.</i>
<i>Er schlug die Stühl' und Vögel tot,</i>
<i>Die Katzen litten große Not.</i>
<i>Und höre nur, wie böse er war:</i>
<i>Er peitschte, ach, sein Gretchen gar!</i> | Frederick, Frederick
that was a bad boy,
he caught the flies in the house
and ripped off their wings
he beat chairs and birds to death
the cats suffered great distress.
And hear how bad he was:
He whipped, ach, his Gretel gar . |
|------|---|---|

The little text shows the typical discourse environment of *gar*. It starts with $S_1 - S_3$ listing Frederick (a) torturing flies, (b) destroying chairs, (c) killing birds and (d) teasing cats, and culminates in S_4 which reports Frederick whipping his sister—worse than any of his other misdeeds.

We used the DTA to assess the use of *gar*, *so + gar* and *sogar* around 1800 in more detail. First, we searched for *gar* in order to see whether it could be used without antecedents. Excluding irrelevant uses, we manually searched the first 190 hits of *gar* in the crucial sense. Of these, we got:

- 51 culminative bare *gar* uses **with discourse antecedents**
- 4 culminative bare *gar* uses **without antecedents**
- 14 interesting uses of *so gar*, all dating between 1780 - 1800.
- rest: degree adverbs, words in other languages, adjectives a.o.

Of those uses without antecedent, one occurred in an elliptic title of a chapter, and another in the verse of a poem which was quoted in a footnote, again out of context. We can hence conclude that *gar* requires antecedents in discourse almost obligatorily.

The DTA search for '*so gar*', spelled in two words, yields an interesting result. Before 1800, we find uses with or without discourse antecedent. After 1800, we only found (rare) uses with *so + gar* with discourse antecedents whereas the single word *sogar* is used for all culminations ('even') without a series of preceding alternatives in the text. Obviously, editors in 1800 adopted the convention to write *sogar* in the 'even' sense as one single word. While some still occur in a context which mentions other elements on a scale, we find antecedent-less uses with higher frequency:

- (16) (...) *Alles war schön, besonders das Essen.* — "*Exzellent. **Sogar** Taube und Beefsteaks.*" (Hit #4, Karl May, *Durchs wilde Kurdistan*.)

² We confidently state this, as no other uses of *gar* in the relevant period are ever used in a remotely 'even'-like sense.

(...) Everything was fine, especially the meal.” — “Excellent. **Even** dove and beefsteaks.”

In (16), *sogar* relates to the range of food served and expresses that dove and beefsteak are exceptional in this domain. The passage does not report a scale of *food* (even though it establishes other qualities of a visit).

In summary,

gar S_n relates to S_{n-1} , S_{n-2} and expresses
that S_n , S_{n-1} , S_{n-2} are on a scale, and
that S_n is extremal on this scale.

Sogar S_F expresses

that the focus alternatives $[[S]]$ ^f are ordered (with respect to likelihood, or surprise) and
that S is extremal on this scale.

In other words, focus serves to compute alternative propositions which previously had to be provided by discourse context.

Our case studies illustrate that direct association with focus can potentially come about in more ways than lexicalized indirect association with focus. These cases complement the case of SELB in the preceding section where focus alternatives replaced other focus alternatives—focusing is reanalysed to a different position. The research literature at this point is rather fragmentary, and more case studies are needed for a comprehensive survey of predecessors of focus.

3. Information structure in syntax: English and German

Languages can use specific syntactic patterns to host focus, or to associate with focus. While English and German do not possess specific focus phrases, it has frequently been pointed out that the preverbal position in German main clauses (prefield) serves multiple purposes, all having to do with information structure in the wide sense. English does not have V2 syntax but likewise uses various types of movement for old material, framesetters, aboutness topics, contrastive topics and “stressed elements” which, as we will argue, might offer further cases of bleached focus. While the terminology in this research area clearly deviates from the notions *focus*, *alternatives*, *contrastive topic* and *background* as used in the main body of the present handbook, there seems sufficient overlap and historical continuity to include these data in our overview of language change and information structure.

Roughly speaking, there are three ways of encoding focus syntactically (cf. Weinert 1995). We list the cases which are illustrated in the examples below.

- i. We can use a special focus construction, thus accommodating the whole macro-structure of the sentence to the marking of focus. An example for this are cleft-sentences in English (17.a), Old Irish or German (although here clefts are somewhat marked), or pseudo-clefts, as in the English example (17.b; from Weinert 1995:354) and the German example (17.c; from Weinert 1995:355).

Moreover, we can use movement operations, usually to the left periphery. Movement for marking focus has been described in two subcategories:

- ii. Firstly, movement to designated focus positions, such as in Italian (18a, from Rizzi 1997: 286) or other languages such as Hungarian (18b, from Molnár 1991:154), Albanian or Modern Greek (see ref. in Rizzi 1997:286).
- iii. Secondly, movement to other positions that are not designated to any information structural content, such as English ‘topicalization’ in double focus constructions (19a; cf. e.g. Prince 1981; Speyer 2010) or prefield-movement (19b) or Left Dislocation (19c) in German. Here, the interpretation of the moved constituent as focus is achieved by non-implicational reasoning processes, perhaps implicature.

- (17) a. *It is JOHN whom you forgot to invite.*
 b. THAT’s what I thought you were talking about.
 c. DAS ist GENAU, was ich meine.
 that is exactly what I mean
 ‘That is exactly what I mean.’
- (18) a. *IL TUO LIBRO ho letto (, non il suo)*
 the your book have-I read not the his
 ‘I read your book, not his book.’
 b. *Attila a FÖLDrengéstól félt*
 Attila the earthquake-from feared
 ‘It was the earthquake Attila was afraid of (not anything else).’
- (19) a. *JOHN he liked, but BETTY he hated.*
 b. *SCHILLY bezeichnete er als Unruhestifter, SCHRÖDER nannte*
 Schilly denoted he as troublemaker Schröder called
er gar ,Volksverhetzer‘.
 he even rabble-rouser
 ‘He referred to Schilly as trouble-maker, and to Schröder even as rabble-rouser.’
 c. *Den JÖRG, den hab ich allerdings gesehen. Der Max, der war aber nirgends.*
 the Jörg the have I indeed seen the Max the was but nowhere
 ‘Yeah, Jörg I’ll say I saw. But Max was nowhere to be seen.’

Especially the last case of movement to positions that are not designated for focus would be prone to misrepresentation without additional intonational clues (on their importance for focus see e.g. Zubizarreta, this volume). For instance, prefield-movement in German can serve to establish a topic-comment structure (20a) or a frame-proposition structure (20b; see Speyer 2008); Left Dislocation can serve a whole array of discourse functions, most notably thematization (14c; cf. to German Left Dislocation e.g. Altmann 1981; Frey 2004).

- (20) a. *(Was macht Susanne?) Susanne hat ihr Examen jetzt in der Tasche.*
 what makes Susanne Susanne has her exam now in the bag
 ‘How is Susan? – Susan practically made her exam.’
 b. *Am Nachmittag machte er einen Spaziergang.*
 at-the afternoon made he a walk

- ‘In the afternoon he went for a walk.’
- c. *Den Jörg, den hab ich gestern gesehen. Er saß mit Max in der Kneipe.*
 the Jörg the have I yesterday seen he sat with Max in the pub
 ‘I saw Jörg only yesterday. He was sitting with Max in the pub.’

We will start with a survey of possible functions of prefield movement in Modern High German, assessing that at least some are relevant for focus. The term prefield denotes the constituent preceding the finite verb form in the Modern German declarative clause. Examples are given in (21).

- (21)
- | | | | | | |
|----|---|--|--------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | prefield | | finite verb | | rest of clause |
| a. | <i>Gestern</i> | | <i>haben</i> | | <i>wir viel gearbeitet</i> |
| | yesterday | | have | | we much worked |
| | ‘Yesterday we worked a lot.’ | | | | |
| b. | <i>(Du fragst nach deiner Tasche?)</i> | | | | |
| | you ask | | about your | | bag |
| | <i>Die</i> | | <i>hat</i> | | <i>Annette gestern noch gesehen.</i> |
| | the-ACC | | has | | Annette yesterday yet seen |
| | ‘(You ask about your bag?) Annette saw it only yesterday.’ | | | | |
| c. | <i>Schilly</i> | | <i>bezeichnete</i> | | <i>er als Unruhestifter,</i> |
| | Schilly-ACC | | denoted | | he as troublemaker |
| | <i>Schröder</i> | | <i>nannte</i> | | <i>er gar ‚Volksverhetzer‘.</i> |
| | Schröder-ACC | | called | | he even rabble-rouser |
| | ‘He referred to Schilly as trouble-maker, and to Schröder even as rabble-rouser.’ | | | | |
| d. | <i>(Was hat Hans gegessen?)</i> | | | | |
| | (what did Hans eat?) | | | | |
| | Spaghetti | | hat | | Hans gegessen. |
| | Spaghetti | | has | | Hans eaten |
| | ‘Hans ate spaghetti _F ’ | | | | |

The examples illustrate the functions of prefield movement. (21.a) shows a frame-setter (*gestern*), (21.b) illustrates an aboutness topic (*die*) and (21.c) demonstrates that contrastive topics CT can be located in the prefield, with an associated focus coming later in the clause (cf. Speyer 2008). (21.d), finally, shows that question-answer focus can occupy the prefield. Given that question-answer focus is *the* universal criterion to detect focus in languages, it seems justified to state that the prefield is a focus-friendly position. Yet, the variety of examples proves that the prefield is not a focus position; we should more appropriately call it a position in the service of information structure. Other Germanic V2 languages exhibit similar patterns.

If we look into the history of German, we see that fewer functions seem to have been compatible with prefield-movement (see Speyer in prep.). In Old High German, we find frequent examples in which a topic (22.a: *mit imu*) or a scene-setting element occurs in the prefield. Examples in which the prefield hosts a contrastive element are sparse. The few examples are all such that the sentence constitutes a double focus construction (22.b).

- (22) a. *(dhanne ir [...] abgrundiu [...] umbihringida [...])*

then he abysses encompassed
mit imu was ich danne al dhiz frummendi
 with him was I then all this creating
 ‘(Then he encompassed the abysses.) I then created all this together
 with him.’

(Isidor 2,2)

- b. *In dhemu druhtines nemin archennemes chiuuisso fater,*
 in the Lord’s name recognize-we surely father
in dhemu uuorde chilaubemes sunu
 in the word believe-we son
in sines mundes gheiste instandemes chiuuisso heilegan gheist
 in his mouth’s spirit understand-we surely holy spirit
 ‘We surely recognize the Father in “the name of the Lord”, we believe
 that the Son is “the word”, we understand that the Holy Spirit is “the
 spirit of His mouth”.’

In terms of focus theory, the structure of (22.b) shows contrastive topic in the preverbal position and an associated focus in the verb phrase.

The historical record suggests that the prefield is mostly a topic-position in Old High German. Hinterhölzl & Petrova (2010) take this observation as their starting point for an account for the emergence of German V2 syntax. They propose that the prefield position originated by reanalysis of an orphan topic constituent before verb-first clauses (which were used for all-new sentences). The result was a hanging topic construction without resumptive pronoun in the core clause, as topic pronouns used to be mute well into Old High German (cf. Volodina 2011). Over time, the preposed constituent was reanalysed as a displaced element from the clause. At that point, the ‘prefield’ changed its status from a clause external position to SpecCP, an integral part of the clause. The schematic example in (23) demonstrates these stages, using a mock-Westgermanic sentence.

- (23) Stage 1:
 meri_i [CP t₁yeti₁ [IP kuninyáz₂ [VP t₂ pro_i bráðeri sîni t₁]]].
 sea-ACC shows king-NOM brother-DAT his
 Stage 2:
 [CP meri₃ t₁yeti₁ [IP kuninyáz₂ [VP t₂ t₃ bráðeri sîni t₁]]].
 sea-ACC shows king-NOM brother-DAT his
 ‘The king shows the sea to his brother.’

According to this theory, verb-second syntax is in fact grammaticised discourse, where a referent is named and commented on. In reanalysis, the underlying syntax underwent a change, in that a left-peripheral position was newly recruited that had not been active in declarative clauses before.

Once SpecCP was available in declarative clauses, it could in principle be used for other purposes as well. We find that the prefield position lost its original topic-marking force and was used for other information structural content, most notably contrastive topics. Contrastive topics systematically associate with another focus, i.e., another stressed element. We could argue that the movement of contrastive elements to the prefield originally served prosodic purposes: A contrastive topic in preverbal

position is less likely to occur directly adjacent to the focus. As languages have a tendency to avoid adjacent stressed elements ('clash avoidance', see Speyer 2010), movement to a preverbal position optimizes the prosodic form of the sentence. It is natural to assume that an existing position in the C-architecture was targeted by such movement (cf. Rizzi 1997, Aboh, this volume, and Frey 2006 for a proposal for Modern German). These two kinds of prefield movement are distinct both in motivation and syntactic structure and should be kept apart: Topics and framesetters inhabited SpecCP for pragmatic reasons, whereas contrastive topics inhabited SpecCP for reasons of prosody.

By the Early New High German period, however, movement of contrastive elements to the prefield was possible even without there being a second focus in the sentence. Contemporary German allows for focussed elements in the prefield (contrast, but also question-answer focus and other focus constructions). We have a clear example for the focus cline: Prefield-movement of the second kind originally was motivated by the focal accent, which meant that the moved phrase must have been marked as focus. This phase prevailed in Old High German. Speculating, we could claim that from Early New High German on, the frame setters in the prefield constitute a bleached (contrastive topic +) focus construction. When stating *Gestern haben wir viel gearbeitet* (= 21.a), the speaker loosely seems to contrast 'yesterday' with other days. Unlike true CT constructions, however, the speaker is not obliged to continue this train of thought explicitly in discourse (e.g., by reporting on today's activities). In this case, the bleaching process might have been promoted by the fact that the first kind of prefield movement, topic in prefield, was already established in the language. A language learner saw the prefield position as a multifunctional information structure position. The generalization to bleached CT was an easy step. The same multifunctional prefield, however, led to different developments in English language history. Language learners in Britain failed to see any system in the prefield position, except the function to host the subject, which led to SVO syntax in contemporary English. Yet, a multitude of fossilized and specialized fronting patterns in English emerged, each of which serves its own function in information structure.

2.2 Preposing in English

There are several non-canonical word order patterns in Modern English, such as the preposing of temporal and local adverbials, locative inversion and the preposing of an argument, in the following referred to as Object Preposing (ObjPrep). Preposing constructions in Modern English serve to express information structural content; object preposing, in particular, serves to mark the object as contrastive topic which associates with a second focus in the clause. Earlier authors such as (Prince 1981), (Kuno 1982), (Speyer 2010) offer detailed characterizations in terms of posets and alternatives which, as data show, correspond to CT + F as used in this book (see Büring). Consider (19.a), repeated as (24) below.

(24) *JOHN_{CT} he liked_F, but BETTY_{CT} he hated_F.*

'John' and 'Betty' refer to sets of alternatives which are evaluated with respect to the question "what is his attitude towards x?". The verbs 'liked' and 'hated' provide

answers to the two subquestions. They constitute the focus in either clause. The preposed objects ‘John’ and ‘Betty’ constitute the sorting key.

Turning to the history of ObjPrep in English, there are two phenomena that are interesting in the context of this chapter. Firstly, ObjPrep in Old English was less restricted and could serve to encode several information structural concepts. In this respect, it was comparable to German prefield-movement. Secondly, once ObjPrep came to be restricted to CT + F constructions, its use dwindled out as a consequence of an independent syntactic change, namely the loss of the verb second syntax in English. As detailed in Speyer (2010), the preposing of a non-subject constituent was subject to information structural requirements even in Old English, but the movement at that time was compatible with several information structural functions. Most common were scene-setting elements, contrastive phrases and topics (compare the ModHG prefield). The number of pragmatic functions of ObjPrep decreased until, in Early Modern English, it became virtually impossible to prepose a non-focused topic and ObjPrep became restricted to the well-known CT + F construction that we find in contemporary English.

The details of the development allow for an elegant explanation of this specialization. If we compare English to the German development, the loss of V2 syntax in Middle English is certainly the most striking difference (cf. van Kemenade 1987). Movements of non-subject topics to the left periphery decreased in language use, thus obliterating evidence for the language learner of a topic position. Over time, the pragmatic functions of the initial position came to be replaced by the syntactic requirement of subject-hood. A situation emerged in which ObjPrep was a) no longer possible for non-contrasted topical objects, and b) automatically led to V3 sentences of the type shown in (18).

In a secondary development, ObjPrep in V3 sentences became moreover restricted for prosodical reasons. In its remaining function as CT, it required a focus on some second element in the sentence. If the subject was chosen as that focus, it newly had to occur directly adjacent to the object (Obj_{CT} Subj_F V) which leads to prosodic clash between two adjacent accents (Speyer 2010). Speakers of Middle and Early Modern English tended to avoid these clashes and in modern usage, ObjPrep is virtually only possible if the sentence contains an (unstressed) pronominal subject. As a result of a conspiracy of factors, we find a *specialization* of Object Preposing—an uncommon trend in language history.

In addition to ObjPrep, English allows for the preposing of adjectival phrases and negations.

- (25) *So excited they were that they couldn't sit still.*
(26) *Never have we seen such a breathtaking view.*

While preposed adjectives follow the modern English XP, Subj V ... pattern, preposed negations still look like V2 syntax. To our knowledge, there is no detailed survey that offers evidence as to which of these patterns could be captured in terms of bleached focus: Which constructions can be analysed by making reference to alternatives, which are then discharged in a conventionalized way? (25) could be viewed as contrasting degrees (of excitement); (26) seems to evoke alternative frequencies which are contrasted with *never*. A comprehensive investigation of this

potential link between focus, bleached focus and fossilized syntactic patterns in English is beyond the limits of the present article.

4. Summary

A closer look at focus in language history reveals a clear pathway of focus change. Focus as a universal pragmatic pattern in languages can influence semantic composition indirectly (pragmatic association) or directly (lexical association). Focus sensitive constructions can change to bleached-focus constructions. We proposed that these are characterized by *conventional alternatives*, the use of *one specific associating item* and, possibly, *lexical requirement for a word to be focused*. Bleached-focus constructions can develop into focus-free expressions where traces of earlier focus-triggered content remain as implicature (*if-only*, “exasperated” *even*, (*ne point*)). Focus alternatives can replace earlier explicit domain arguments (exceptive *niewan*) or earlier discourse patterns (*sogar*). We suspect that more source constructions can be found in history.

In the final section, we proposed that the syntax of Germanic languages, specifically leftward movement, can be described on basis of focus and bleached focus, in addition to the established aboutness topic. In German, the original prefield function of *topic* marking was extended to *contrastive topic marking* in the CT sense of this handbook, as well as a bleached CT marking, traditionally classed as *framesetting*. English grammar lost the multi-purpose prefield of V2 grammar; however, Modern English has a variety of fossilized patterns in the left periphery that are specialized for various bleached focus and CT constructions.

The term ‘bleached focus’ can bridge the gap between the formal focus and informal notions of information structure (also Velleman and Beaver, this vol.). We hope to invite alternative-based analyses of contemporary and past language use which profit from the explicitness of formal description without being forced into compositional focus constructions.

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