

Triggering Factivity: Prosodic Evidence for Syntactic Structure

Factive and non-factive verbs differ in that the former presuppose the truth of their CP-complements, as in (1), while the latter assert it, as in (2) (Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1970). However, also for non-factive verbs factivity can be triggered, e.g. by a modal, as in (3), and/or by a so-called pleonastic or correlative pronoun “doubling” the CP, as in (4). The same pattern is replicable in German, as in (5) – note the presence of the correlative *es* in (5b). Similarly, across several so-called clitic doubling languages, factivity is triggered by clitic pronouns doubling the CP complement, as in (6b) (vs. (6a)) for Albanian.

Strikingly, as Fig.1 through Fig.6 clearly show, the prosodic structuring of the sentences with a verb used once as factive and once as non-factive is comparable in all the three languages under scrutiny – English, German, Albanian. Crucially, all the sentences with factive *believe/glauben/besoj* have a nuclear pitch accent on the matrix verb. (For lack of space, I have left out the prosodic structures of (3a,b), but these are also rather similar to the one in Fig.2.) Moreover, while correlative pronouns and/or modals are sufficient to trigger factivity in English/German, they are not necessary. Factivity in both languages can also be induced in the absence of these elements, provided that the matrix verb carries nuclear stress. This is shown in Fig.7 and Fig.8 – the prosodic structure of the underlined part of the examples in (7) and (8) in the given contexts, respectively – note also the similarity of the prosodic structures in Fig.2 and Fig.7 for English, and in Fig.4 and Fig.8 for German. (The contexts in (7) and (8) were provided to the speakers of the underlined sentences in order to elicit the factive reading, since of course accent on the verb can also come about because the verb is focused; crucially, however, deaccenting of the CP and focus on the verb do not exclude each other.)

It is obvious from Fig.2,4,6,7 and 8 that the (factive) embedded clauses are deaccented, and deaccenting is one means of expressing presupposition, or discourse binding (see e.g. Krifka (2001) on the role of deaccenting in determining the restrictor of an adverbial quantifier). Importantly, I contend that a proposition can shift from being contextually given to being presupposed. That is, to say that a sentence is “presupposed” can mean one of two things: either it is true, or the proposition expressed by the sentence (“*der Gedanke*”, in the sense of Frege) has been mentioned before. For instance, it seems that the correlate *es* in German is not satisfied with a situation in which the proposition is just given in context; it must also be true, as shown in (9). But in spite of this, this distinction mostly seems to be blurred, in the sense that propositions that are presupposed to be true are “given” (either in the immediate context, or via world knowledge), and that contextually “given” propositions are most often taken to be true.

The central claims of this paper are: (i) the [+presupposed] status of an embedded CP must be expressed; (ii) this can be done via a doubling clitic/(correlative) pronoun and/or deaccentuation; (iii) the (clitic) pronoun is a probe for the goal (here: CP) with an OCC feature – see also Kallulli (2000, 2001) for the idea that doubling is an anti-focussing operation, i.e., an operation that licenses topichood on its doubled associate, and topichood is in turn defined in terms of presupposition (Chomsky 1972); (iv) the clitic head can be overt or covert (see also Sportiche 1995), yielding the various patterns described here. Numerous ramifications follow, some of which I will discuss in detail.

Examples

- (1) I regretted that John left (*but in fact he didn't).
- (2) I believed that John left (but in fact he didn't).
- (3) a. Can you believe that John left? *In fact, he didn't.
b. I can believe that John left (*but in fact he didn't).
- (4) I didn't believe it that John left [in the sense: It's incredible that John left] *In fact he didn't.
- (5) a. *Er glaubte, dass Peter_i verstarb (aber tatsächlich lebt er_i noch).*
he believed that Peter died (but factually lives he still)
'He believed that Peter died (but in fact he is still alive).'
- b. *Er glaubte es, dass Peter_i verstarb (*aber tatsächlich lebt er_i noch).*
he believed it that Peter died (but factually lives he still)
'As for Peter dying, he believed it (*but actually he is still alive).'

(6)a. *Besova se Beni shkoi (por në fakt ai nuk shkoi).*
 believed-I that Ben left (but in fact he not left)
 ‘I believed that Ben left (but in fact he didn’t leave)’

b. *E besova se Beni shkoi (*por në fakt ai nuk shkoi).*
 CL_{ACC,3P,S} believed-I that Ben left (but in fact he notleft)
 ‘I believed the fact that Ben left (*but he didn’t leave)’

(7) I didn’t see John leave my party, but then he called me from his home phone. Now it was obvious.
I believed that John left.

(8) *Ich erzählte die Tatsache, dass Peter verstarb. Zuerst wollte Hans nichts davon wissen. Dann zeigte ich ihm die Todesanzeige, und nun sah er die Sache anders. Er glaubte, dass Peter verstarb.*
 ‘I stated the fact that Peter died. At first Hans didn’t want to hear of it. Then I showed him the death certificate and now he saw the matter differently. He believed that Peter died.’

(9) Context: Hans has certainly heard in his geography class that Sydney is not the capital of Australia and that Toronto is not the capital of Canada.
Dennoch GLAUBT er (??es), dass Sydney die Hauptstadt von Australien ist.
 still believes he it that Sydney the capital of Australia is
 ‘Still, he believes that Sydney is the capital of Australia.’

