
The role of scalar meaning and emphasis in leftward association of the German focus particle *nur* ('only')

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According to the *Principle of Lexical Association* (PLA), “[a]n operator like *only* must be associated with a lexical constituent in its c-command domain” (Tancredi 1990: 30). Therefore, the example in (1) cannot mean ‘A professor and nobody else will come to the party’, as the focus particle *only* cannot associate with the leftward material *a professor*.

(1) *A [professor]_F will only come to the party. (Erlewine 2014: 12)

It is controversial, whether the PLA also holds for the corresponding German particle *nur*. While some linguists assume that *nur* behaves like *only* in constructions similar to the English sentence in (1) (e.g., Abraham 2005), others propose that leftward association (LeA) of *nur* is possible (e.g., Krifka 1999).

I conducted rating studies in order to answer the following research question: How strong is the c-command relation between the focus sensitive particle *nur* and its associated focus? Is their relation fixed or are there factors which can license LeA?

The results of my rating studies and the analysis of authentic data from spoken language show that the factors (i) prosody, (ii) scalar, evaluative meaning, and (iii) special emphasis characterized by the expression of speaker attitude can improve and license LeA of *nur*. I argue that LeA of *nur* is possible if it is used in a construction with focus fronting which yields an emphatic or mirative interpretation. In order for *nur* to be felicitous in these structures, the meaning of the particle has to support the evaluative interpretation of the construction.

References: • Abraham, W. (2005): *Deutsche Syntax im Sprachenvergleich: Grundlegung einer typologischen Syntax des Deutschen* (2nd ed.). Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag. • Erlewine, M.Y. (2014): Movement out of Focus. Ph.D thesis. MIT, Massachusetts. • Krifka, M. (1999): Additive Particles under Stress. In D. Strolovitch & A. Lawson (Eds.), *Proceedings of SALT 8*, pp. 111–128, Cornell: CLC Publications. • Tancredi, C.D. (1990): Not only even, but even only, Manuscript, Cambridge, MA.