

Features or filters? On the relationship between syntax and information structure

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How information structure (IS) and syntax interact is discussed widely. A major question is whether IS is part of narrow syntax or rather a post-syntactic interface (a filter of sorts). In the latter approach, syntax generates multiple structures and interface constraints filter out those that do not match a particular IS.

For alternative word orders (scrambling), both approaches have been argued to work. In this talk, we discuss agreement patterns that appear to be sensitive to information structure, however. To derive agreement alternations that depend on information structural properties, the filter view predicts that multiple structures with distinct agreement relations are generated by syntax. We argue that this is not in line with theoretical considerations about the nature of agreement and therefore consider narrow syntax views of IS to be preferable for modelling agreement sensitive to IS.