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A flexible approach to focus and the syntax-prosody interface

This paper addresses ‘a central question for [...] any theory of the syntactic prosodic constituency relation’ (Selkirk, 2011, 17): how to best characterize the notion of ‘clause’ in ALIGN/MATCH constraints related to the syntax-prosody mapping of the intonational phrase. It will be proposed that the notion of ‘clause’ should be determined in each construction by making reference to the overt position of the finite verb (or auxiliary). We show how this theory of the syntax-prosody mapping determines the typology of prosodically-driven word order variations associated with focus and topic. We will discuss data from the Bantu language, Bàsàá, and the Finno-Ugric language, Hungarian, as well as English and Italian.