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# Relational IS Notions

NATALIA SLIOUSSAR

## 1 Introduction

In this paper, I will argue that it is necessary and advantageous to introduce relational notions in the Information Structure (IS) field (such as *more / less accessible* instead of *given / new*). Importantly, such notions cannot be described by means of specialized IS features (Top, F(oc) etc.), which provides an important argument for configurational IS theories and against feature-based ones. I will show that the necessary syntactic configurations are best derived using edge features proposed in Chomsky 2008 after certain modifications are introduced in the framework. Based on that, a model capable of encoding and interpreting relational IS notions will be developed. Finally, I will demonstrate how relational notions can solve some persistent IS-related problems in Russian and other languages.

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## 2 Introducing relational IS notions

### 2.1 Feature-based and configurational approaches to IS

Formal IS theories can be divided into feature-based ones and configurational ones. The former rely on specialized IS features (Top, F(oc) etc.): if we put an F feature on an element, it will be interpreted as focused. Such theories are most widespread (Bródy 1990, Laka 1990, Tuller 1992, Ouhalla 1994, Bródy 1995a, Tsimpli 1995, Vilkuna 1995, Rizzi 1997, a.m.o.). Configurational models were developed in Reinhart 1995, Neeleman & Reinhart 1998, Szendrői 2001, 2005, Reinhart 2006, Neeleman & van de Koot 2008, a.o. In these models, the element should be in a particular configuration to be interpreted e.g. as focused.

For example, in Reinhart and Neeleman's theory (Reinhart 1995, Neeleman & Reinhart 1998, Testelefs 2001, Reinhart 2006) any constituent containing the main stress can be interpreted as the focus of the sentence. This explains why (1) is ambiguous between DP<sub>O</sub>, VP and IP focus, as possible questions in (2a-c) show (Neeleman & Reinhart 1998: 333). The actual focus is chosen from the set of possible foci at the syntax-discourse interface. The main stress in the examples is indicated by capital letters.

(1) My neighbor is building a DESK.

- (2) a. What is your neighbor building?  
 b. What is your neighbor doing?  
 c. What is this noise?

(1) has a neutral stress pattern defined by the Nuclear Stress Rule. But the main stress can be relocated, as in (3b) (Neeleman & Reinhart 1998: 334).

- (3) a. Who is building a desk?  
 b. My NEIGHBOR is building a desk.

What is perceived as stress shift in (3b) are in fact two different operations: stress strengthening and destressing. The former adds stress to an element, which is now included in the focus set. The latter removes stress from an element,

which is now interpreted as D-linked.<sup>1</sup> Stress strengthening is subject to interface economy. It can be used only if it gives rise to a new interpretation. Consequently wide focus in (3b) is ruled out.

While in English the stress is shifted, other languages reorder words to achieve the same results. Neeleman and Reinhart (1998: 310) argue that Dutch scrambling, as in (4b), is essentially about destressing the object, which bears the main stress in the canonical word order in (4a). Scrambled objects are interpreted as D-linked, as expected.

- (4) a. ...dat Jan langzaam het BOEK las.  
           that J. slowly the book read  
           ‘... that Jan slowly read the book’
- b. ...dat Jan het boek langzaam LAS.  
           that J. the book slowly read

Szendrői 2001 extended this approach to other reorderings in different languages. Some complications arising in these models are discussed in Slioussar 2007, but they are not crucial for the present discussion.

## 2.2 A novel perspective suggested by Russian data

Let us consider Russian sentences with a direct object (DO) and an indirect one (IO). Corpus studies (e.g. Sirotinina 1965) show that the neutral word order is ‘IO DO’ in Russian. The inverse ‘DO IO’ order is traditionally associated with DO givenness and with the narrow focus on IO. Among generative studies, this generalization is extensively discussed in Junghanns & Zybatow 1997. It can be

1 The notion of D-linkedness is wider than givenness, capturing cases like (ia-b) (Reinhart 1995: 74, due to Ladd 1980). *Slaughterhouse Five* in (ia) introduces the concept of book in the discourse context, so in (ib) *books* are D-linked (linked to an accessible discourse entity).

(i) a. Has John read *Slaughterhouse Five*?  
      b. No, John doesn’t READ books.

illustrated by (5b). Let me note that such sentences are commonly analyzed as resulting from movement.<sup>2</sup>

- (5) a. I Umka okazalsja zdes' slučajno.  
 'And Umka (a bear cub) ended up here by accident'
- b. Voobšče-to, Sergej Šojgu podaril medvežonka CIRKU.  
 in fact [S. Sh.]<sub>NOM</sub> gave [bear cub]<sub>ACC</sub> circus<sub>DAT</sub>  
 'In fact, Sergey Shojgu presented the bear cub to a circus'

This generalization can be readily deduced from Reinhart and Neeleman's theory discussed in the previous subsection. The moved direct object loses the main stress that would otherwise fall on it. As a result it can be interpreted as D-linked, as desired. However, certain cases indicate that this generalization is incorrect. Consider (6b) and (7b).

- (6) a. Nikogda ne dumal, čto moj načal'nik ljubit životnyx.  
 'I never thought that my boss likes animals'
- b. No segodnja on otdal svoj buterbrod  
 but today he gave [his sandwich]<sub>ACC</sub>  
 golodnoj DVORNJAGE!  
 [hungry mongrel]<sub>DAT</sub>  
 'But today he gave away his sandwich to a hungry dog'
- (7) a. Čto ty delaješ?  
 'What are you doing?'
- b. Pišu pis'mo mame.  
 write<sub>1PERS.SG</sub> letter<sub>ACC</sub> mom<sub>DAT</sub>  
 'I am writing a letter to my mom'

2 Double object constructions in many other languages are likely to be base-generated. A crosslinguistic comparison can be found in Emonds & Whitney 2005.

Why do direct objects move in these sentences? We cannot appeal to any familiar IS notions because both IO and DO are new and part of focus. And still, there is an interpretational difference between the two objects. To describe it, relational notions are required. In (7b), the DO is more accessible than the IO—by virtue of being more predictable. If *pis'mo* ‘letter’ were replaced e.g. by *kljauza* ‘complaint’ the example would have the ‘IO DO’ order.

Comparing (6b) and an analogous sentence without scrambling, one can appreciate that the IO is additionally stressed in (6b). (6b) suggests that in the speaker’s eyes, the mongrel seemed especially unlikely to receive the sandwich, while the sentence without scrambling would not have this interpretational effect. Another similar example, but with a different word order variation, is given in (8).

- (8) Redkij slučaj      v gubernii: čeloveka ukusila bešenaja LISA.  
       [rare case]<sub>NOM</sub> in province man<sub>ACC</sub> bit      [rabid fox]<sub>NOM</sub>  
       ‘A rare case in the province: a man was bit by a rabid fox’

In (8), the subject is stressed as the most unexpected information. I will use the term *salience* to describe this additional emphasis. Thus, the IO in (7b) and the subject in (8) are interpreted as more salient than other information in these sentences as a result of reordering.

What can we conclude from these examples? First, they show that not only categorical notions, such as *singular* or *interrogative*, but also relational notions, such as *less salient* or *more accessible*, can be encoded in the grammar. Second, these examples present an important argument against feature-based IS theories and for configurational approaches: features like *more accessible than* are clearly impossible.

Finally, noting that relational IS notions are necessary to account for certain examples, we can see that they can be easily extended to all other cases. If we believe in systematic and homogeneous grammatical encoding, this option must be taken. In section 3, I will present a configurational IS model capable of encoding and interpreting such notions.

### **3 Encoding relational IS notions**

In this section, I will aim to describe how relational IS notions can be encoded and interpreted.

#### **3.1 Syntax and prosody**

As I noted above, relational notions cannot be described by means of IS features, so a configurational model is required. One of the central problems is the relation of syntax and prosody in this model. Reinhart, Neeleman and Szendrői whose theories (Reinhart 1995, Neeleman & Reinhart 1998, Szendrői 2001, Reinhart 2006) were briefly presented in subsection 2.1 rely mainly on prosody. They assume that IS interpretation depends on the main stress and IS-related reorderings happen in order for some element to receive or to lose the stress.

However, Neeleman changed his mind after examining some reorderings in Dutch and other languages that do not lead to any prosodic effect (Neeleman & van de Koot 2008 etc.). His new model uses both syntactic and prosodic configurations. Of course, this makes it more heterogeneous than the previous versions, but was clearly unavoidable.

In Slioussar 2007, I also analyzed some cases where IS-related word order variation has no prosodic effects. A couple of examples are presented below in (9)-(12). Diverging from Reinhart and Neeleman's original configurational theory much more radically, I proposed a model based solely on syntactic configurations and tried to show that all IS-related prosodic phenomena can be deduced from some syntactic properties of the sentence, overt or silent.

My main motivation can be summarized as follows. Most prosodic phenomena are known to have syntactic counterparts. Different intonational contours are characteristic for different types of questions or statements, prosodic phrases closely correspond to syntactic phrases, the position of the main stress can also be predicted in the majority of cases. For this reason, in the canonical generative grammar model, prosody belongs to the phonological interface, where syntactic structures are prepared for pronunciation. If we make prosody independent from syntax based on some apparently exceptional cases, we will greatly complicate this grammar model in many respects. Therefore, we should first try to deal with the exceptions.



Unfortunately, due to space limitations, I cannot go into further details here and explain how exactly IS-related prosodic phenomena can be read off from syntax. Therefore I will present my model in the next subsection as if it were heterogeneous: not deducing syntax to prosody or prosody to syntax. Let me conclude with (9a) and (11b) where IS-related reorderings have no prosodic counterparts (compared to (10) and (12b)).

- (9) a. Začety sdala xorošo vsja GRUPPA,  
 tests<sub>ACC</sub> passed well [whole group]<sub>NOM</sub>  
 ‘The whole group passed the tests well...’
- b. ...a na ekzamenax mnogie provalilis.  
 ‘...but many failed the exams’
- (10) Vsja gruppa xorošo sdala ZAČETY.  
 [whole group]<sub>NOM</sub> well passed tests<sub>ACC</sub>
- (11) a. Vse pozdravljali Natašu i Olju.  
 ‘Everybody congratulated Natasha and Olya’
- b. Paša otdal podarok Nataše ešče UTROM,  
 P<sub>NOM</sub> gave present<sub>ACC</sub> N<sub>DAT</sub> already in the morning  
 ‘Pasha gave his present to Natasha already in the morning...’
- c. ...tak čto teper’ emu ostavalos’ pozdravit’ Olju.  
 ‘...so now he only had to congratulate Olya’
- (12) a. Vse pozdravljali Natašu.  
 ‘Everybody congratulated Natasha’
- b. Paša otdal Nataše podarok ešče UTROM,  
 P<sub>NOM</sub> gave N<sub>DAT</sub> present<sub>ACC</sub> already in the morning  
 ‘Pasha gave Natasha his present already in the morning...’
- c. ...tak čto teper’ stojal v storonke.  
 ‘...so now he was standing aside’

### 3.2 A model relying on edge features

Most studies of IS-related movement do not specify how exactly it happens, leaving technical details aside. I will show that edge features (EFs) and free internal Merge (IM) introduced in the latest version of Phase theory (Chomsky 2008) become perfectly suited for creating IS configurations, after several important modifications are introduced.

The essence of EFs and free IM is the absence of feature matching and agreement. Hence, any constituent can be attracted by EFs if it is not prohibited for independent reasons. The final interpretation of the moved element depends on the position where it eventually ends up, as desired. Chomsky demonstrates how EFs can be used to analyze topicalization. He notes that ‘some special mark’ on the topicalized DP, i.e. a topic feature, is “superfluous even if feasible... What is raised is identified as a topic by the final position it reaches” (Chomsky 2008: 151).

First of all, what is the ‘right position’ for a certain IS interpretation? For Chomsky, it is a particular position in the syntactic hierarchy, e.g. a particular specifier in the C domain—in his discussion of topicalization, he refers to Rizzi’s (1997) view on the left periphery. Thus, his proposal does not involve IS features anymore, but does not introduce configurations either. Therefore, it retains many problems of feature-based IS theories and, in particular, offers no means of encoding for relational IS notions. For me, the ‘right position’ is a particular position with respect to other elements, and I will use EFs to build a configurational IS model.

Secondly, Chomsky (2008) argues that only phase heads (C and  $v^*$ ) and the heads selected by them (T and V) can trigger IM. Since the probing features that T and V inherit from the phase heads are  $\phi$ -features, all IS-related movement is expected to target the specifiers of C and  $v^*$ . However, Russian scrambling definitely involves reorderings of internal arguments (DPs and PPs) inside VP, as in (5)–(7), and also reorderings with respect to lower adverbs merged between  $v$  and T, as in (13) below.

Although Chomsky (2001, 2008) treats adverbs as adjuncts, various arguments point to the necessity of labels and positions inside their sequences.<sup>3</sup> But the nature of the relevant projections is hotly debated: Cinque (1999) relies on a long sequence of FPs, Nilsen (2003) suggests AdvPs etc. Since I cannot afford a serious discussion here, I will limit myself to the remark that the list of heads with EFs that can be targeted by IS-related movement has to be widened to account for Russian data.

- (13) Vanja čitaet knigi      medlenno.  
       V<sub>NOM</sub> reads books<sub>ACC</sub> slowly  
       ‘Vanya reads books slowly’

Thirdly, Chomsky (2008) wants to dissociate agreement and IM (movement). Leaving a systematic analysis for further research, he discusses two examples. He claims that *wh*-movement happens without *wh*-feature matching and that EPP-driven movement to T is separate from agreement. As I show in detail in, Slioussar 2007 both claims appear problematic.

Unlike with topics, Chomsky’s new approach to *wh*-movement does not allow him to get rid of *wh*-features, does not clarify why IM to a particular position is crucial for the interpretation of *wh*-phrases and does not explain how they can be interpreted *in situ*. As for EPP-driven movement, Chomsky refers to the model of the Russian EPP by Lavine and Freidin (2002) that indeed involves no

- 3 Lower adverbs can be *wh*-moved and moved for IS reasons with subsequent reconstruction, as in (ii) below. This is an argument against late insertion. Constituents containing all/some/none of the adverbs can undergo remnant topicalization, as (iii) shows. This is an argument for labels. There is non-IS-related movement (clustering) in this domain in some languages, e.g. in Norwegian (Nilsen 2003). This is an argument for positions.

- (ii) Medlenno Vanja knigi      ne čitaet!  
       slowly V<sub>NOM</sub> books<sub>ACC</sub> not reads  
       ‘Slowly, Vanya does not read books this way’

Not something like ‘Vanya is slow in not reading books.’

- (iii) (Medlenno) čitat’ knigi      Vanja možet (medlenno).  
       slowly to read books<sub>ACC</sub> V<sub>NOM</sub> can slowly  
       ‘As for (slowly) reading books, Vanya can do that (slowly)’

agreement. However, a careful analysis of Russian data does not support this and similar theories and points to an agreement-based model instead Slioussar 2007. Consequently, I believe that free IM can be used only for IS and for scope taking—in the domains where no specialized features can be introduced and therefore agreement is impossible.

Starting to build a configurational IS model based on EFs, I will derive the ‘S V DO IO’ word order — like in (5b). I have already presented the approach to similar Dutch scrambling cases developed by Neeleman and Reinhart (1998). Other authors (e.g. de Hoop 1992) believe that Dutch objects move to a dedicated syntactic position where they can be interpreted as given. My IS model will go two steps further.

First, I associate IS movements with relational interpretations: if A moves over B, A is interpreted as more accessible or less salient than B. The necessity of relational IS notions was demonstrated in section 1, but this approach brings an additional advantage. In the previous movement accounts, it was necessary to define the syntactic position associated with a particular interpretation, which was always immensely difficult. Now the direct object can simply move to the first accessible position above the indirect one.

Such positions and triggers for movement are readily available in Chomsky’s (2008) theory: multiple specifiers of heads with EFs can be used. Thus, without introducing any additional heads or features, I can say that the DO moves to the second [Spec; VP]. Chomsky states that the final interpretation of the moved element depends on the position where it eventually ends up (although he never identifies an *exact* position for any interpretation in his examples). I can specify both the position of the moved DO (above the IO) and its interpretation (less salient than the IO).

We could stop here and formulate an interface rule pairing movement in syntax and its interpretation. To make the second step, let us see what happens if the relation between two objects is the opposite: if the IO is less salient or more accessible than the DO. Nothing: no movements, no prosodic effects. The neutral word order is ‘S V IO DO’, so the IO is already above the DO.

Thus, we have the following picture. When the DO is more accessible or less salient than the IO, this information is encoded. When the relation is the opposite, no information is encoded. First, it is truly strange: there is no principal difference between the two objects in the discourse. Second, it simply appears to

be wrong. When the word order is ‘S V IO DO’, we know that the IO is either less salient or more accessible than the DO or equal to it on these scales. Therefore, a rule interpreting configurations rather than movements, as in (14), is needed.

- (14) If X is (re)merged above Y, X is at least as accessible and at most as salient as Y. If X is remerged above Y as a result of IS-related movement,<sup>4</sup> X is more accessible and less salient than Y. Schematically:

X is merged above Y  $\Rightarrow$  accessibility:  $X \geq Y$ , salience:  $X \leq Y$

if by IS-related movement: accessibility:  $X > Y$ , salience:  $X < Y$

As I noted in subsection 3.1, due to space limitations I will not be able to show how prosody can be incorporated into this picture. So the following rule can be relied on instead. If IS-related movement is impossible or for some reason undesired, the main stress is relocated on the element that *would* receive it by default *if* movement had taken place.

Let us come back to the dialogue in (3a-b): “Who is building a desk? My neighbor is building a desk.” *My neighbor* is the least accessible information, so, if movement were possible in English, this constituent would end up at the end of the sentence. This is the position where the neutral main stress falls in English. Hence, since movement is impossible, the main stress is relocated on this constituent. Finally, it should be noted that this system does not account for several special cases, e.g. for focus fronting. It is briefly discussed in Slioussar 2007.

Relying on relative accessibility and salience, we can account for the whole range of IS-related phenomena. What about traditional IS notions: givenness (D-linkedness), topic and focus? Givenness and D-linkedness become unnecessary after relative accessibility is introduced. As for topic and focus, I believe that these notions are not encoded in the grammar, but are relevant for semantics and pragmatics. Topicalization can be explained by fronting more accessible constituents.<sup>5</sup> Constituents that are low in accessibility and/or high in salience (due to

4 If IS and scope-taking are the only domains where free IM exists, IS-related movements will not be difficult to identify.

5 As is well known, being highly accessible does not make an entity topical. And according to Reinhart (1982, 2004) and other authors, being new does not prevent an entity from being

contrast or other emphasis), on the contrary, remain at the end of the sentence or the main stress is shifted to them. This explains the phenomena traditionally associated with foci. Moreover, I will show in section 4 that switching to relational IS notions in Russian and other languages allows us to solve several notorious problems in the IS field.

#### 4 Advantages of relational IS notions

In this section, I will show how introducing relational notions can solve several IS-related problems widely discussed in the literature.

##### 4.1 Problems associated with topics

A major problem associated with topics is an extreme diversity of formal means used to encode them. To give an example, there is a syntactic operation of topicalization, but subjects and pronouns are exempt from it, as Russian (15) and (16) show. Their translations illustrate that analogous examples exist in English.

- (15) a. Knigu Ivan pročel.  
           book<sub>ACC</sub> Ivan<sub>NOM</sub> read  
           ‘The book, Ivan read’

- b. Ivan pročel knigu.  
           Ivan<sub>NOM</sub> read book<sub>ACC</sub>  
           ‘Ivan read the book’

- (16) a. Čto slučilos’ s Petrom?  
           ‘What happened to Petr?’

- b. Ivan ego UDARIL.  
           Ivan<sub>NOM</sub> he<sub>ACC</sub> hit  
           ‘Ivan HIT him’

topical. However, the correlation (topical entities are the most accessible) is definitely present (Lambrecht 1994). In particular, if something is fronted as a topic, it is definitely the most accessible entity. A special case of contrastive topics is discussed in Slioussar 2007.

- c. Ivan      UDARIL ego.  
       Ivan<sub>NOM</sub> hit      he<sub>ACC</sub>  
       ‘Ivan HIT him’

Switching to relational IS notions to describe these phenomena resolves the problems. After relative positions with respect to other elements are introduced, it is unproblematic that object topics need to move — to cross the subjects, while subject topics can remain in the [Spec; TP].

Pronouns do not need to topicalize because they get on top of the accessibility hierarchy anyway — it is part of their meaning that their referents are the most accessible. However, their place on the salience hierarchy is not fixed. So, except for the rare cases like (17) when they are the most salient information in the sentence, pronouns move out of the most embedded position or lose the main stress as a result of stress shift, as in (16b-c).

- (17) Ivan always wondered why Maria chose HIM (and not Petr).

Once the notion of topic is not constrained by the necessity to account for grammatical phenomena, it becomes easier to use it in the discourse domain. Consider the fragment in (18) that was examined by Reinhart (1982) and then reanalyzed by Lambrecht (1994). It comes from a recorded conversation: a Jewish grandfather complains that his grandson is difficult to please and tells how he rejected very good oatmeal.

- (18) And it’s uh got ta good taste, it’s good. And the cereal — grandma e don’t like cereal but she finished to the last (dish) and I enjoy — I like it too. It’s tasty! And I uh (pause) He didn’t want the cereal, doesn’t eat. I said, “Todd, it wouldn’t kill ya, taste it!”...

Reinhart (1982: 19) claims that in all sentences before the pause, the topic is the cereal and after the pause the topic is the grandson. Lambrecht (1994: 150) argues that some pronouns (*it* in *it wouldn’t kill ya*, *I* in *I like it too*) and certain DPs (*grandma* in *grandma e don’t like cereal*) are topical too, although the cereal and the grandson are indeed the most prominent topics before and after the pause. If our definition of topic is not restricted by grammatical criteria, nothing precludes from introducing topics of different levels.

## 4.2 Problems associated with foci

Turning to foci, we can see that different definitions and criteria for identifying them often do not allow us to pinpoint a single constituent as the focus of the sentence. To give an example, two most widespread diagnostics are givenness and question-answer test. According to the former, a focused constituent cannot be given information; according to the latter, it replaces the *wh*-element in an appropriate answer to a *wh*-question. It is well known that these diagnostics do not always converge — (19) can serve as an example (Selkirk 1984: 216).

- (19) a. Did John give a book to Bill?  
       b. No, this time he grew a pot of NARCISSUS for him.

Krifka (1991) analyzes similar cases as ‘discontinuous foci’. E.g. in (20) (Krifka 1991: 35), the topic appears to sit inside the focus.

- (20) John only turned it OFF.

Many authors adopt alternative semantics for focus developed by Rooth (1985, 1992). According to this theory, focus essentially introduces a set of alternatives: informally, ‘Mary likes Sue’ with the focus on *Mary* introduces the set of propositions of the form ‘*x* likes Sue’. Rooth relies on the question-answer test to identify foci in actual sentences. However, consider the sentence in (21), which “is to be thought of as the beginning of a joke” (Rooth 1992: 80). According to all focus tests, the whole sentence is in focus, but Rooth argues that only *American* and *Canadian* are because it explains the stress pattern in the sentence.

- (21) An AMERICAN farmer was talking to a CANADIAN farmer.

Neeleman and Szendrői (2004: 149) discuss the example in (22) with ‘nested foci’. They invite the reader to imagine that a father comes home from work and finds the mother in obvious distress.

- (22) a. Father: What happened?  
       b. Mother: When I came home, rather than doing his homework,  
               [<sub>IP</sub> Johnny was [VP reading [DP SUPERMAN] to some  
               kid]].



Neeleman and Szendrői claim that (22b) contains a contrastive focus inside a contrastive focus inside an all-focus sentence. The VP is contrasted with doing homework, while the DP *Superman* implies the contrast with decent books.

All these examples can receive a natural explanation if we adopt relational IS notions to describe grammatical phenomena, while focus is left to the domain of semantics and pragmatics. Relying on scales rather than on a yes/no label (*in focus* or *not in focus*) we become flexible enough to account for (19)–(22) and other similar cases. Stress patterns with pronouns, as in (19b) and (20), were explained in the previous subsection. Stress shifts in (21) and (22b) result from the difference in salience: additionally contrasted information is more salient than the rest of new information. Finally, if focus is a purely semantic notion it does not have to correspond to a particular continuous constituent, so (20) does not pose a problem anymore.

This approach also resolves several other problems. For example, it is well known that elements like *only* or *even* associate with focus in the majority of sentences, as (23a–b) show. However, there are some exceptions — consider (25b) (Partee 1991: 165) or the fact that (23b) can also have a wide focus, being a felicitous answer to (24).

- (23) a. Who can afford buying cars?  
b. Only MAX can afford buying cars.
- (24) Why are you crying?
- (25) a. Eve only gave Xerox copies to the graduate STUDENTS.  
b. No, PETER only gave Xerox copies to the graduate students.

Under my approach, associates of focus particles are highly salient because they are contrasted with (unnamed) alternatives. This is why they usually receive the main stress of the sentence. However, in (25b) *Peter* is also contrasted, while the associate of focus particle was previously mentioned and thus is more accessible, so the main stress goes to *Peter*.

Finally, consider an English or Russian ‘S V O’ sentence with the stress on the object, as in (1). In Reinhart, Neeleman and Szendrői’s models (Reinhart 1995, Neeleman & Reinhart 1998, Szendrői 2001, Reinhart 2006) this and many other constructions are ambiguous with respect to their focus. If focus is not

encoded in the grammar, this is unproblematic. However, ambiguity is undesirable for grammatical notions. Notably, if we turn to relative accessibility and salience, the ambiguity is gone. The order of Merge and stress pattern in this SVO sentence unambiguously encode that the object is at least as salient as the verb, the verb is at least as salient as the subject and that the object is at most as accessible as the subject.

## **5 Conclusion**

I demonstrated that relational notions, relative accessibility and relative salience, are necessary to describe some IS-related phenomena in Russian and help to solve many persistent problems in the IS field. A configurational model based on Chomsky's (2008) free internal Merge was developed to show how these notions can be encoded and interpreted.

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