

Only: Raising Alternatives

Herman Hendriks

Rooth (1992) distinguishes between what he calls a strong and an intermediate version of the theory of alternative semantics. The strong version of the theory entails—among other things—that there is no construction-specific stipulation of a focus-related effect in constructions containing focusing adverbs and predicts that association with focus is always optional. The intermediate alternative, on the other hand, does allow lexical stipulation of focus effects, for instance in the presence of focusing adverbs. Though Rooth (1992) seems to have a light methodological preference for the stronger version, the intermediate position is the one defended in Rooth (1996).

In this position paper it is argued, however, that a modified version of Rooth's strong theory of focus interpretation is to be preferred. On such a strong theory, focus interpretation essentially involves a special kind of (presuppositional) anaphora. More specifically, we claim that association with focus is an epiphenomenon of the fact that, due to the particular lexical semantics of focusing adverbs, this anaphora is non-trivial if and only if it is 'non-monotonic'. This is more or less obvious for items such as *only* and *even*, where the non-monotonic anaphora displays the characteristics of the contextual restriction that is known to play a role in the interpretation of quantificational determiners and adverbs, but with items such as *also*, *too* and *not* it surfaces as a contrast with a parallel element in the 'active context'.

First, we propose two considerably simplifying modifications, which eliminatively affect both the 'individual case' clause in the interpretation of Rooth's focus operator and his requirement that the contextually restricted focus semantic value always contain the ordinary semantic value. In addition to this, we argue that the resulting simplified theory of focus interpretation should be raised to the level of *sets* of Roothian alternatives. Motivation for this type shift can be based on general considerations regarding the semantics of questions and the pragmatics of answers. But, moreover, the resulting theory has the advantage of providing a fully uniform analysis both of topic and of focus interpretation that is also capable of accounting for cases where focusing adverbs do NOT associate with the focus of the sentence in which they occur. Thus, given raised alternatives, the hypothesis of lexically induced non-monotonic anaphora turns out to be able to provide a unified explanation, not only for the ubiquity of association with focus but also for the various cases of association with non-focus, where focusing adverbs express their semantics on partitions other than the focus-ground one: besides the phenomenon of association with 'second occurrence focus', these include instances of association with subsegments of the informational focus, with non-focal topics and with other parts of the ground.