

**FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS IN MESKWAKI (FOX)**

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## Focus constructions in Meskwaki (Fox)

### Abstract

In this paper I examine types of focus in the nonconfigurational language Meskwaki (Fox), using as a framework for description Lambrecht's configurational approach to information structure, particularly his three-way typology of predicate-focus, argument-focus, and sentence-focus. This typology of focus sheds light on the role played by various word order patterns in Meskwaki, but presents some challenges for recent proposals regarding an i-structure projection within an LFG model.

### 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Analyses within the LFG tradition have long emphasized the role played by discourse functions in syntax. F-structure representations include the grammaticalized discourse functions of TOPIC, FOCUS, and SUBJ, exploited, for example, in Bresnan and Mchombo (1987)'s demonstration that Chichewa object markers are anaphoric to TOPIC. In addition to the grammaticalized discourse functions of f-structure, it was suggested as early as Kaplan (1987) that a separate projection of discourse structure be included in the model, a suggestion developed in recent work by King, Butt, and Choi under the label of information structure, or i-structure (King 1995, 1997, Butt and King 1996, 2000, Choi 1997, 1999, 2001). An example which reveals the need for i-structure analysis may be found in Chichewa Locative Inversion, which Bresnan and Kanerva (1989) have shown is only possible when the theme argument of an intransitive verb is in presentational focus. Presentational focus cannot be equated with the grammaticalized discourse function FOCUS in f-structure, as Bresnan and Kanerva show; instead, it is the sort of information structure relation which belongs in an i-structure projection.

In this paper I examine presentational focus and other types of focus in the nonconfigurational Algonquian language Meskwaki, also known as Fox, using as a framework for description Lambrecht's constructional approach to information structure (Lambrecht 1994, 2000, 2001). In previous work (Dahlstrom 1993, 1995) I have proposed the word order template in (1), in which clause structure is flat, except for an external topic position:

- (1) [S<sup>c</sup> TOPIC [S NEG FOCUS OBL V {S, O, O2, COMP}]]

Also to the left of the verb are a Negative position, a Focus (i.e. argument-focus) position, and the unmarked position for Oblique arguments of the verb. In contrast to the well defined ordering of elements to the left of the verb, this template has little to say

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<sup>1</sup> Abbreviations in the examples: AOR = aorist prefix, DIM = diminutive, EMPH = emphatic, FUT = future, INAN = inanimate, LOC = locative, O = object, O2 = second object, OBV = obviative, PL = plural, QUOT = quotative, REDUP = reduplication, S = subject, SG = singular, X = unspecified subject. Boundary symbols: '=' clitic boundary, '- ' morpheme boundary, '—' preverb-verb boundary. Textual abbreviations: C= Kiyana (1996 [1912]), J= Jones (1907), M= Kiyana (1912), O= Kiyana (1914), R= Michelson (1925), W = Kiyana (1913). Examples with no textual citation are elicited examples.

about material to the right, only that post-verbal position is the unmarked choice for subjects, objects, second objects, and complement clauses which are neither topic nor argument-focus. The present paper, however, sheds more light on the roles played by the post-verbal elements in the template, and, in the final section, touches upon some theoretical questions of i-structure representation.

## 2 Lambrecht on focus constructions

Lambrecht (1994, 2000, 2001) has developed a constructional approach to information structure which includes the fundamental concepts defined in (2):

- (2) a. PRAGMATIC PRESUPPOSITION:  
The set of propositions lexico-grammatically evoked in a sentence that the speaker assumes the hearer already knows or believes or is ready to take for granted at the time the sentence is uttered.
- b. PRAGMATIC ASSERTION:  
The proposition expressed by a sentence that the speaker expects the hearer to know or believe or take for granted as a result of hearing the utterance.
- c. FOCUS:  
That component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the pragmatic assertion differs from the presupposition. The focus component is by definition an unpredictable part of the proposition.  
[Lambrecht 2001:474]

Every utterance is considered to have a focus component in its information structure, though, as will be seen below in the discussion ofthetic sentences, not all utterances include a pragmatic presupposition.

In saying that focus is the unpredictable part of the utterance, it is important to distinguish focus from the separate question of the given vs. new status of discourse entities. For example, if a question is asked “Who wants ice cream?” and I answer “I do!”, the first person pronoun is necessarily given or active in the speech situation; it is also here functioning as focus, since the identification of ‘I’ with ‘one who wants ice cream’ is the unpredictable and informative part of the utterance. Similarly, in (3) from Lambrecht (2001:477), the fact that Austin, Texas, is hot in the summer is surely known to both speakers: what is unpredictable is that it is this particular property of Austin that bothers speaker B.

- (3) One Austinite to another:  
A: What bothers you about Austin?  
B: What bothers me is that it’s so hot in the summer. [Lambrecht (2001:477)]

According to Lambrecht, focus is expressed crosslinguistically in three main types of constructions: predicate-focus, argument-focus, and sentence-focus. The three types are exemplified in (4)-(6), taken from Lambrecht (1994), with sample sentences

from English, Italian, spoken French, and Japanese. The small caps indicate prosodic prominence.

- (4) [context: What happened to your car?]  
 a. My car/It broke DOWN. predicate-focus structure  
 b. (La mia macchina) si è ROTTA.  
 c. (Ma voiture) elle est en PANNE.  
 d. (Kuruma wa) KOSHOO-shi-ta.
- (5) [context: I heard your motorcycle broke down?]  
 a. My CAR broke down. argument-focus structure  
 b. Si è rotta la mia MACCHINA.  
    /E la mia MACCHINA che si è rotta.  
 c. C'est ma VOITURE qui est en panne.  
 d. KURUMA ga koshoo-shi-ta.
- (6) [context: What happened?]  
 a. My CAR broke down. sentence-focus structure  
 b. Mi si è rotta (ROTTA) la MACCHINA.  
 c. J'ai ma VOITURE qui est en PANNE.  
 d. KURUMA ga KOSHOO-shi-ta.  
 [Lambrecht (1994:223)]

Predicate-focus, as in (4), is the unmarked articulation of information structure in any language, according to Lambrecht; the subject of the sentence corresponds to the topic and the remainder, the VP, is a comment on that topic. As a topical subject, the NP is not surprisingly often pronominal or null, as shown in (4). From an LFG perspective, this characterization of predicate-focus fits perfectly with the assumption that the grammaticalized discourse function SUBJ is the default topic (cf. Bresnan (2001:98) and references there).

The argument-focus construction, exemplified in (5), is the one most often discussed in treatments of “focus”: the domain of focus is a single constituent (here the subject) and the remainder is an open, presupposed proposition. Strategies for expressing argument-focus vary across languages, including shifting the stress, as in English, inversion, as in the first Italian strategy, clefts, as in French and the second Italian strategy, and in Japanese, the use of *ga* rather than *wa* with a subject in argument-focus.

Finally, the sentence-focus construction, seen in (6), need not have any presupposed material at all. Both the subject and the predicate are included in the focus, distinguishing sentence-focus both from predicate-focus, where the subject is a topic and not part of the focus, and from argument-focus, where the predicate is part of the presupposed open proposition and hence not part of the focus. Sentence-focus constructions have been widely discussed under the label of ‘thetic constructions’ (Kuroda 1972, Sasse 1987, *inter alia*), and include existential and presentational sentences.

The schemas in (7-9) from Lambrecht (1994) summarize the information structure of each construction, using the English version in the (a) sentences above as illustrations:

- (7) predicate-focus  
 Sentence: *My car broke DOWN.*  
 Presupposition: “speaker’s car is a topic for comment x”  
 Focus: “broke down”  
 Assertion: “x = broke down”
- (8) argument-focus  
 Sentence: *My CAR broke down.*  
 Presupposition: “speaker’s x broke down”  
 Focus: “car”  
 Assertion: “x = car”
- (9) sentence-focus  
 Sentence: *My CAR broke down.*  
 Presupposition: ---  
 Focus: “speaker’s car broke down”  
 Assertion: “speaker’s car broke down”

[Lambrecht (1994:226, 228, 233); cf. Lambrecht (2001:475)]

### 3 Meskwaki word order

I now turn to a consideration of some of the major Meskwaki word order patterns from the point of view of Lambrecht’s typology. Before looking at specific examples, however, a little background information about the workings of the language is in order.<sup>2</sup>

#### 3.1 Background facts

Meskwaki verbs are inflected for features of both subject and object, in one of more than twenty paradigms of verb inflection. The choice of inflectional paradigm is sensitive to syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic factors, such as main vs. subordinate clause, negation, aspect, and evidentiality. In the glosses below I will largely ignore this aspect of Meskwaki morphology, indicating only the agreement features for subject and object.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the syntax of verb inflection, we can begin by observing that first and second person inflection on verbs always functions as subject or object; that is, as incorporated pronouns. Independent pronouns such as *ni·na* ‘I’ or *ki·na* ‘you (sg.)’ are used for shifting topic or for (argument-) focus, not as ordinary subjects or objects. Third person inflection, on the other hand, may function as agreement with a lexical subject or object; in the absence of such external arguments the third person morphemes also take

<sup>2</sup> In the present paper I will unfortunately not address the important issue of Meskwaki prosody and how it contributes to the identification of information structure components. See Goddard (1991) for an overview of Meskwaki stress and intonation, and Goddard (2003) for intriguing examples regarding contrastive focus in yes-no questions.

<sup>3</sup> Note too that where contraction has obscured the boundary between stem and affix no effort has been made to indicate the underlying forms of the stem and affix, in order to keep the examples as uncluttered as possible. For example, *nepi·ki* ‘in the water’ is segmented as *nepi·-ki* (water-loc), rather than */nepy·eki/*.

on a pronominal interpretation. (In other words, the third person forms include the optional equation of PRED = ‘pro’.)

Within third person Meskwaki and the other Algonquian languages make a distinction between the most central third person in the discourse, known as PROXIMATE and expressed by unmarked third person forms, and other, more peripheral third persons, expressed by marked OBLIATIVE forms.

- (10) *metemo·h-e·h-a e·h-neškim-a·či i·n-ini ihkwe·w-ani*  
 old.woman-DIM-SG AOR-scold-3S:3OBVO that-OBV woman-OBV  
 ‘The little old lady (proximate) scolded that woman (obviative)’ [W31C]

In (10) the (topical) subject, ‘little old woman’ is proximate and is inflected with an unmarked third person suffix. The object, ‘that woman’, is obviative, marked by obviative suffixes on the demonstrative and on the noun. The verb is inflected with a suffix indicating that a third person singular proximate subject is acting upon a third person obviative object.

Among the grammatical functions of Meskwaki, it is worth noting that OBL<sub>o</sub> plays an especially prominent role. The unmarked position for an oblique argument is immediately to the left of the verb, as seen in the following examples illustrating obliques of goal, stationary location, source, and manner :

- (11) *wi·sahke·h-eki k-i·h-iši—mawi—wi·seni-pwa* **Obl<sub>goal</sub> V**  
 W-LOC 2-FUT-thither—go—eat-2PL  
 ‘You (plural) should go to Wi·sahke·ha’s place to eat’ [W258A]

- (12) *i·nahi net-apih-api* **Obl<sub>loc</sub> V**  
 there 1-REDUP-sit  
 ‘I was sitting there’ [Dahlstrom 2003b:150]

- (13) *wa·wi-tawiškwa·te e·h-oči—nowi·-wa·či neswi neniw-aki*  
 doors.on.both.ends AOR-from—go.out-3PL 3 man-PL  
**Obl<sub>source</sub> V S**  
 ‘Three men went out from the doors on both ends’ [W163K]

- (14) *wi·h-koči—nes-a·wa·či e·h-inowe·-wa·či.* **Obl<sub>manner</sub> V**  
 FUT-try—kill-3PLS:3OBVO AOR-declare.thus-3PL  
 ‘They declared that they would try to kill him’ [Dahlstrom 2003a:16M]

The manner type of oblique is especially frequent in Meskwaki because all direct and indirect quotes are oblique arguments of the quoting verbs. (Note, by the way, that the long dashes indicate phonological word boundaries between a preverb and a verb, while the short hyphens indicate morpheme boundaries.)

Besides the familiar types of obliques seen in (11-14), however, Meskwaki has more exotic varieties as well, including an oblique type expressing number or quantity, which will be seen in section 3.4, one for spatial or temporal length, one for height or

depth, one for size, and another for all other scalar notions such as age, weight, speed, or strength. The latter is illustrated in (15):

- (15) *a-wasi-mehi e-h-ahpi-hčiki-či kwi-yese-h-a,* **Obl<sub>extent</sub> V S**  
 a.little.more AOR-be.so.old-3 boy-SG
- iškwe-se-h-a atena-wi* **Foc Obl<sub>extent</sub>**  
 girl-SG less  
 ‘The boy was a little older, the girl younger’ [O58B]

### 3.2 Predicate-focus

According to Lambrecht, the predicate-focus construction is the unmarked articulation of information structure, where the focus is a comment on an already given topic. In Meskwaki, as in many other languages, new or shifted topics appear utterance-initially, as seen in (16) and (17):

- (16) *wi-sahke-h-a=ke-hi wa-natohka=meko e-h-kehči—nepa-či* **Top Adj V**  
 W-SG=and peacefully=EMPH AOR-greatly—sleep-3  
 ‘As for Wi-sahke-ha, he was peacefully sound asleep.’ [W163P]
- (17) *ni-na=’yo a-kwi kosetaw-akini ke-meso-ta-n-aki* **Top Neg V O**  
 I=of.course not fear-1S:3(PL)O your-parent-PL  
 ‘As for me, I’m not afraid of your parents’ [R312:34]

(16) shows that both the overt topic and the first word of the comment can be hosts for second position enclitics: this is one piece of evidence for a topic position outside of the core clause. In (17), note that the topic precedes the negative word *a-kwi* ‘not’.

In texts one finds long sequences of clauses in which a continuing topic is coreferential to one of the arguments of the clause, nearly always the subject. The subject is thus expressed only by the inflection on the verb, here functioning as an incorporated pronoun. For example, consider the textual excerpt given in (18). A new topic is introduced in line (a) with an overt NP, ‘that young teenage boy’, and the boy continues as topic throughout lines (b) through (e). The context here is that the boy is living apart from his family as he fasts for a vision; his father comes every day to check on him. The previous topic was the father, when the narrator explained that the father made his son fast all the time.

(18) [text excerpt from Dahlstrom (1996:130)]

- a. *o-ni=’na oškinawe-h-e-h-a* **Top**  
 and.then=that young.man-DIM-SG  
 ‘And then that young teenage boy,

- b. “*nahi, natawi-po-ni-mahkate-wi-no,*”    *e-h-in-eči*                      *e-h-ina-hpawa-či*  
 okay, time.to-stop-fast-2/IMPERATIVE    AOR-say.thus.to-X:3    AOR-dream.thus-3  
**[Obl V]<sub>Obl V</sub>**

“Okay, it’s time for you to stop fasting,” he dreamed that he was told.

- c. “*wi-kiya-p-eki=meko*            *pe-hki k-i-h-awi,*”                      *e-h-in-eči*            **Obl V**  
 house-LOC=EMPH                      really 2-FUT-be.[there]            AOR-say.thus.to-X:3  
 “You should be in the main house,” he was told.

- d. *pye-ya-niči*                      *o-s-ani,*    **V S**  
 come-3OBV                      his.father-OBV  
 When his father came,

- e. *e-h-a-čimoh-a-či*                      *e-na-hpawa-či.*    **V Comp**  
 AOR-tell-3S:3OBVO                      how.he.dreamed  
 he told him what he had dreamed.’

In line (b) the rightmost verb is the matrix verb, with a subject coreferential to the overt topic of line (a). The matrix verb in (b) takes a clausal oblique argument to its left; the verb of that clause also takes an oblique argument, which is the quoted material. In line (c) the matrix verb is again rightmost in the clause, taking the preceding quoted material as an oblique. The matrix verb in (c) is inflected for an unspecified subject acting on a third person object. Here the argument coreferential to the overt topic of line (a) is syntactically an object, not a subject. However, since the topical third person object is the most prominent argument in the clause, we can still consider this clause an example of “predicate-focus”. Line (d), with the boy’s father as subject, is an adverbial clause identifying the time of the following matrix clause in (e), which is again a predicate-focus construction providing information about the overt topic of line (a).

In (18) the new topic is proximate when first mentioned, and remains proximate throughout. Another pattern is to introduce the new topic in relation to the previous topic, which requires the new topic to be obviative on first mention. In subsequent clauses, however, the new topic gains proximate status:

(19) [text excerpt from Dahlstrom (2003b:7F-H)]

- a. *i-ni=ke-hi='pi='na*                      *o-s-ani*                      *e-h-a-nawapwi-h-ekoči.*                      **Top V**  
 then=and=QUOT=that                      his.father-OBV    AOR-fail.to.wait.for-3obvS:3O  
 ‘And then, it’s said, that [boy]’s father got tired of waiting for him.

- b. *i-tepi*                      *e-h-a-či.*    **Obl V**  
 there                      AOR-go-3  
 He went there.

- c. *e-h-anemi--meko*                      *-a-hkwe-wite-he-či,*    **V**  
 AOR-away--EMPH                      -feel.angry-3  
 He went off feeling angry,



- d. *"ne·w-ake, n-i·h-kehči-neškim-a-wa," e·h-in-a·či* *ow-i-w-ani.*  
 see 1S:3O 1-FUT-greatly-scold 1S:3O aor-say.thus.to-3S:3OBVO his-wife-OBV  
 telling his wife, "When I see him, I'm really going to scold him." **Obl V O**

### 3.3 Argument-focus

We now turn to the argument-focus construction, in which the focal constituent fills in the gap of a presupposed open proposition. In Meskwaki, argument-focus may be expressed by putting the focal element in Focus position, or by using a cleft. In clefts, the focal element may also be analyzed as appearing in the Focus position, equated to a following headless relative clause. Meskwaki has a zero copula for equational sentences.

The minimal pair in (20) and (21) illustrates the difference between a shifted overt topic and an element in focus position:

- (20) *ni-na a·kwi wi·h-na·kwa-ya·nini* **Top Neg V**  
 I not FUT-leave-1  
 'As for me, I'm not leaving'

- (21) *a·kwi ni-na wi·h-na·kwa-ya·nini* **Neg Foc V**  
 not I FUT-leave-1  
 'I'M not leaving; it's not me who's leaving'

In (20), the pronoun *ni-na* 'I' is in topic position; the comment about this topic is that the speaker is not leaving. There is no presupposition that anyone else is leaving. In (21) the pronoun is in the focus position, to the right of the negative. Here there is a presupposition that someone is leaving, but the assertion is that it is not the speaker who is leaving.

In the remainder of this section I give a brief overview of the various types of argument-focus constructions in Meskwaki.

3.3.1. *Argument-focus expressing contrast.* As (21) shows, a common function of the argument-focus construction is to express contrast between the focal argument and other possible candidates for that role. Another example of this contrastive function may be seen in (22):

- (22) *a·kwi=na·hkači* *[ni-na nešihka]* *ota·hi·nemi-ya·nini* **Neg Foc V**  
 not=also I alone possess.O2-1SG  
  
*[ki·na e·ye·ki]* *ke-tepe·net-a* **Foc V**  
 you also 2-own-INAN.O  
 'I do not possess them alone, you also own them' [W244NO]

Again, the argument-focus in the first clause of (22) follows the negative word *a·kwi*, as schematized in the template of (1).

3.3.2. *Argument-focus with ‘only’, ‘even,’ etc.* Argument-focus constructions are also frequently used with adverbs such as ‘only’ and ‘even’:

(23) *a·kwi* [*mo·hči*        *nekoti*]        *nes-akečini*        **Neg Foc V**  
 not    even            one            kill-1PLS:3O  
 ‘We didn’t kill even one’        [Dahlstrom 2003b:24B]

(24) *a·kwi* [*še·ški wi·h-taneneko-ya-ni*] *wi·to·hkaw-ičini*        **Neg Foc V**  
 not    only    FUT-play-1SG            allow-3S:1O  
 ‘She [speaker’s mother] didn’t allow me to just loaf’ [R298.34]

In (24) the argument in focus is the complement clause of ‘allow’. Clauses bearing the Comp GF are otherwise to the right of the matrix verb, as in (25):

(25) *a·kwi* *wi·to·hkaw-ičini*        *wi·h-mawi—wa·pake-ya-ni*        **Neg V Comp**  
 not    allow-3S:1O            FUT-go—look.on-1  
 ‘He didn’t allow me to go to watch [dances]’ [R322:8]

3.3.3. *Unexpected information.* Another type of argument-focus construction is motivated by a contrast between what might be expected given knowledge about the world and what is actually found. The following example is from a story about the culture hero and trickster, *Wi·sahke·ha*:

(26) *ke·htena=meko*        *ašewa·pikone·h-i*        *e·h-no·ša·t-aki*        **Adj Foc V**  
 surely=EMPH            little.squash-SG            AOR-give.birth.to-3S:INANO  
 ‘Surely she [the trickster’s wife] gave birth to a little squash.’ [W923]

3.3.4. *Question words, answers, quantifiers.* Question word questions in Meskwaki appear in cleft or noncleft argument-focus constructions depending on the choice of question word. The question words beginning in *k* (*kaši* ‘how?’, *ke·swi* ‘how many?’, and *ke·senwi* ‘how many times?’) generally appear in nonclefted argument-focus constructions, while the other question words, such as *we·ne·ha* ‘who?’, *we·kone·hi* ‘what?’, *ta·ni* ‘where?’ must appear as the focus of a cleft:

(27) *ke·swi=ča·hi* *i·nahi* *awi·waki?*        **Foc Obl V**  
 how.many=so there    be.[there]-3PL  
 ‘How many [people] were there?’

(28) *kaši=ya·pi*        *išiso·waki*        *k-o·šisem-aki?*        **Foc V S**  
 how=may.I.ask        be.thus.named-3PL    your-grandchild-PL  
 ‘What are your grandchildren’s names?’ [W573]

Notice that the non-focused arguments of (27) and (28) appear in their unmarked positions: to the left of the verb for obliques and to the right of the verb for subjects.



### 3.4 Sentence-focus

Turning now to Lambrecht's third type of focus construction, sentence-focus, we should first of all note that little has been said in the description of Meskwaki or other Algonquian languages regarding the expression of such constructions. These are the constructions which function to introduce a new referent into the discourse or report on an event. The verb involved is typically intransitive, with a nonagentive subject.

In this section, like the preceding, I present a brief overview of types of sentence-focus constructions in Meskwaki. In terms of word order, we can observe that subjects in such sentences are expressed by lexical NPs to the right of the verb, as opposed to the topical subjects of predicate-focus constructions or the focal argument in argument-focus constructions.

3.4.1. *Weather/temporal verbs.* In many languages, descriptions of the weather are sentence-focus constructions, such as the Russian example in (35), taken from King (1995):

- (35) *Šel dožd'.*  
go rain  
'Rain was falling.' [Russian: King (1995:97)]

In Meskwaki, however, weather reports are expressed with simply an intransitive verb, inflected for an impersonal inanimate singular subject. No external NP subject is possible with such verbs, so the word order pattern is trivial: simply a verb.<sup>4</sup>

- |      |    |                      |                  |   |
|------|----|----------------------|------------------|---|
| (36) | a. | <i>kemiya-wi</i>     | 'It's raining'   | V |
|      |    | rain-INAN.SG         |                  |   |
|      | b. | <i>mehpo-wi</i>      | 'It's snowing'   | V |
|      |    | snow-INAN.SG         |                  |   |
|      | c. | <i>ni-pen-wi</i>     | 'It's midsummer' | V |
|      |    | be.midsummer-INAN.SG |                  |   |

Impersonal verbs are similarly used to specify times of the day or seasons of the year, as in (36c).

3.4.2. *Predicating number.* Turning now to more interesting cases, we can note that a predication of existence is often accomplished with one of a set of verbs expressing the number of the subject:

- |      |    |                   |                       |
|------|----|-------------------|-----------------------|
| (37) | a. | <i>nekoti-hi-</i> | 'be one [diminutive]' |
|      | b. | <i>ni-ši-</i>     | 'be two'              |
|      | c. | <i>nesi-</i>      | 'be three'            |
|      | d. | <i>nye-wi-</i>    | 'be four'             |

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lambrecht (2000:619), who points out that such verbs without lexical subjects should not be classified as sentence-focus in his terms.

- e. *meta·ši-* ‘be ten’  
 f. *taši-* ‘be so many’ [for other numbers; the number is an OBL]  
 g. *ma·ne-* ‘be many’

Indeed, one of the main functions of the verbs of number is to express existence. If one wants to say, for example, ‘there are three young women here’ the construction is literally “young women are three here”:

- (38) *ayo·hi=ya·pi*            *nesi-waki*            *še·škesi·h-aki*            **Adj V S**  
 here=may.I.say            be.three-3PL    young.woman-PL  
 ‘There are three young women here.’ [J52.10]
- (39) *e·h-nye·wi-nič*            *o-ni·ča·nes-ahi*            **V S**  
 AOR-be.four-3OBV    his-child-OBV.PL  
 ‘His children are four’ [i.e., he has four children] [J234.22]
- (40) *e·h-ma·ne·-niči=’yo=ke·hi*            *ketiw-ahi*            **V S**  
 AOR-be.many-3OBV=of.course=and    eagle-OBV.PL  
 ‘There were, of course, many eagles.’ [W1F]

In (38-40), the subject of the existential verb occurs to the right of the verb. This accords with the observation by Lambrecht (2000:622) that the subject in a sentence-focus construction must be marked as non-topical. In (39) the subject of the existential verb is possessed, so a more idiomatic gloss in English is with a verb of possession.

3.4.3. *Expressing location.* Another typical sentence-focus construction is one in which the existence of the subject is predicated relative to a location. In Meskwaki this may be expressed with a simple locative verb, as in (41), or with a verb specifying the posture of the subject (that is, standing, sitting, lying, etc.), as in (42). All such verbs are subcategorized for a subject and an oblique of stationary location.

- (41) *nepi·ki=koh*            *awi-wa*            *ne-mise·h-a*            **Obl V S**  
 water-LOC=certainly    be.[there]-3    my-elder.sister-SG  
 ‘My elder sister is in the water’ [J108.5]
- (42) *ahkwič*            *asen*            *e·h-či·tapi-niči*            *wi·sahke·h-ani*            **Obl V S**  
 on.top            rock    AOR-sit.upright-3OBV    W-OBV  
 ‘On top of a rock sat Wisahkeha.’ [J332.12]

3.4.4. *Verbs of emerging.* The emergence of a new character onto the scene is also accomplished by a sentence-focus construction using the verb (or preverb) ‘come’. In (43), the subject NP ‘his cousin’ is the first mention of this character in the story:

- (43) *o·ni=’pi*            *nye-wokonakateniki*            *e·h-pya·-niči*            *o-to·te·m-ani*  
 &.then=QUOT    when.it.was.4.days    AOR-come-3OBV    his-cousin-OBV  
 ‘And then, it’s said, four days later his cousin came.’ [W37K]            **Adj V S**

- (44) *e·h-pye·či—pi·tike·-niči*      *o·hkomesē·hwa·w·ani*      **V S**  
 AOR-come—enter-3OBV      their.grandmother-OBV  
 ‘Their grandmother came inside.’ [W233H]

The directional preverb *pye·či* ‘come’ in (44) indicates that the deictic center is inside the house, the location of the main characters, who are the source of point of view here.

3.4.5. *Setting a scene.* A narrative might begin by presenting a scene using the V S order of the sentence-focus construction:<sup>5</sup>

- (45) *nekotenwi*      *e·h-nakiška·ti·-wa·č*      *ke·ka·nwikaše·w·a*  
 once      AOR-meet.each.other-3PL      grizzly.bear-SG
- na·hka*      *šeka·kw·a*      **Adj V S**  
 and      skunk-SG  
 ‘Once a grizzly bear and a skunk met each other.’ [J112:7]

3.4.6. *Reporting an event.* Sentence-focus constructions may also report an event at any point in a narrative, not just at the beginning of a story:

- (46) *o·ni*      *kapo·twe*      *e·h-we·pi—pehki·nawi·či*      *wi·čawiwaka*  
 and.then      at.some.point      AOR-begin—act.differently-3      one.who.I.live.with  
 ‘Then soon my husband began to act differently.’ [R320.2]      **Adj V S**  
 [previous context: speaker’s experiences in childbirth]
- (47) *po·hkwi*      *neme·siwi·wa*      *ne·sese·h·a*      **Adj V S**  
 half      be.fish-3      my-elder.brother-SG  
 ‘My elder brother turned into a half-fish’ [C4N]

3.4.7. *Locative/emergence verbs can also occur in argument-focus constructions.* The verbs of location and emergence do not, of course, occur only in sentence-focus constructions. They may also be found in argument-focus constructions, with the subject in argument-focus position to the left of the verb. In (48) the context is that two boys see the tracks of a raccoon in the snow, leading to a tree. One boy climbs the tree to get the raccoon:

<sup>5</sup> However, many other Meskwaki stories begin with a sentence using SV order, as in (i), or even SOV order, as in (ii):

- (i) *našawaye*      *nenō·te·w·a*      *e·h-ma·-mahkate·wi·-či*  
 long.ago      Indian-SG      AOR- REDUP-fast-3  
 ‘Long ago an Indian was fasting.’ [M1A]
- (ii) *našawaye*      *nekoti*      *neniw·a*      *o·kwis·ani*      *e·h-mahkate·wi·n·a·či*  
 long.ago      one      man-SG      his-son-OBV      AOR- make.fast-3S:3OBVO  
 ‘Long ago a certain man made his son fast’ [Dahlstrom 1996:129.1]

- (48) *i·ya·hi e·h·pye·ta·si·-či,* **Obl V**  
 there AOR-come.climbing-3
- kaši, mya·nahiw·ani=či·hi i·nahi e·h·šekiši·niči!* **Foc Obl V**  
 why, catfish-OBV=exclam there AOR-lie-3OBV  
 ‘When he came climbing up there,  
 why, there was a catfish lying there!’ [C2IJ]

In (48) there was an expectation that a raccoon would be in the tree; instead, the boy finds a catfish. This contrast motivates the use of an argument-focus construction, in which the focal element, the catfish, is in Focus position to the left of the verb and to the left of the oblique argument

The textual passage in (49) also illustrates the difference between sentence-focus and argument-focus. The context here is that a bear has killed the fasting boy of example (18) above, and no one has been able to kill that bear. Finally a boy nicknamed Lazybones declares he can kill it, and specifies the time and place. In the sentence preceding the one in (49) the other people of the tribe appear as an overt proximate topic; they build fires outside to watch for the boy and the bear:

- (49) [text excerpt from Dahlstrom 1996:153]
- a. *aškači e·nemi—meškošawe·-niči ki·šeso·-ni,* **V S**  
 later become—glow.red-3OBV sun-OBV  
 ‘Later when the sun started to glow red,
- b. *e·h·pye·či—keta·ška·-niči mahkw·ani,* **V S**  
 AOR-come—run.out-3OBV bear-OBV  
 the bear came running out into view,
- c. *ahkowi·-me·h=meko pačan·ani e·h·pye·či—keta·ška·-niči,*  
 behind-DIM=EMPH Lazybones-OBV AOR-come—run.out-3OBV  
**Adj S V**  
 and Lazybones came running out into view just a little ways behind,
- d. *e·h·wa·pam·a·wa·či.* **V**  
 AOR-look.at-3PLS:3OBVO  
 and they [the other people] watched them.’

Compare (49b) and (49c): in (b) the emergence of the bear is reported with sentence-focus, while in (c) the additional, contrasting information that Lazybones ran out is expressed with argument-focus.

We may sum up the findings regarding focus constructions in Meskwaki as follows. Overt topics are utterance initial; there is a separate position for argument-focus to the left of the verb (and to the left of oblique arguments). NPs to the right of the verb may be part of predicate-focus, or a subject in the sentence-focus construction, or may be part of the presupposed portion of the argument-focus construction. The verb itself is

part of the focus in the predicate-focus and sentence-focus constructions, but is part of the presupposed material in the argument-focus construction.

#### 4 I-structure representation

With the above summary of Meskwaki word order patterns in mind, let us now turn to the question of how the encoding of information structure relations might be represented formally. Space does not permit a full examination of the issues involved in formalizing all the Meskwaki constructions presented above. I would instead like to concentrate on a single construction, the sentence-focus construction. How can we ensure that both the verb and the subject in this construction are in the scope of focus?

Recent work in LFG has proposed a variety of ways to represent discourse functions and information structure. King (1995), on Russian, and Butt and King (1996), on Turkish and Urdu, locate discourse information within f-structure, adding new DFs to the familiar TOPIC and FOCUS. Specifically, King (1995) uses E(xternal)-TOP, (internal) TOP, C(ontrastive)-FOC, Q-FOC, and FOC (new information focus), while Butt and King (1996) use TOP, FOC, BACK (background information), and COMPLETIVE. However, King (1997) shows convincingly that such enhanced f-structures run into a number of scoping problems. That is, if a discourse function such as contrastive focus is assigned to an f-structure head, the wrong scope results (e.g. the whole clause is focused, not just the verb). Moreover, the scope of focus may be the verb plus its object, which is not a constituent in f-structure. King (1997) concludes that a separate projection of i-structure is needed, in which predicates are represented without their argument structure, avoiding at least some of the scoping problems encountered in f-structure.

Butt and King (2000), on Hindi/Urdu, present one possible realization of i-structure. They take the four DFs that they had posited in Butt and King (1996) (TOP, FOC, BACKGROUND, and COMPLETIVE INFORMATION) and represent them in a separate attribute-value matrix, similar to that of f-structure. For example, the two Urdu sentences in (50) have an i-structure representation as in (51):<sup>6</sup>

- (50) a. [mãĩ] bais                      barf=se                      yahãã rah                      rah-aa                      hũ  
 I.NOM twenty-two                      winter=from here                      live                      Stat=MSG                      be.PRST.1.SG  
 ‘I<sub>topic</sub> have been living here for 22 years.’
- b. rozaanaa                      is                      hii                      sarak=se                      guzar-taa                      hũ  
 daily                      this                      EMPH street.F=from                      pass-IMPF.MSG                      be.PRST.1.SG  
 ‘Daily (I<sub>cont.topic</sub>) go through this street.’  
 [Butt and King (2000) [their example (22)]]

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<sup>6</sup> In (51) I have indicated identity between the two topics with a subscript, rather than with the arrow employed by Butt and King (2000).



(51) I-structure:

TOPIC	{[PRED ‘I’] <sub>i</sub> }	
FOCUS	{[PRED ‘here’]}	
COMP.INF	{[PRED ‘twenty-two years’]}	
TOPIC	{[ ] <sub>i</sub> }	
FOCUS	{[PRED ‘street’]}	
COMP.INF	{[PRED ‘daily’]}	

Notice that the values in i-structure are sets, allowing the discourse functions to have scope over material which does not form a constituent in f-structure or c-structure. Where discourse functions are associated with specific constituent structure positions, the c-structure node is annotated for that i-structure function: for example, in Hindi/Urdu, the constituent immediately to the left of the verb is in focus. For arguments which are null in c-structure, a-structure information is used to fill in a pronominal value; only (continuing) topics and background information are permitted to be null.

Choi (1997, 1999, 2001), on the other hand, has developed a different view of i-structure based on data from English, German, and Catalan. She uses the binary features [+/- New] and [+/- Prom], giving the four-way distinction in (52). She further assumes an OT implementation in which ranked constraints are sensitive to the i-structure features (as well as to grammatical functions), conspiring to produce optimal c-structures. In the simple example given in (53), the high ranking constraint PROM-L ensures that the [+Prom] constituent *the knife* appears at the left of the clause.

(52)	[+Prom, -New]	(shifted) topic, link	
	[-Prom, -New]	continuing topic, tail	
	[+Prom, +New]	contrastive/emphatic focus	
	[-Prom, +New]	completive/presentational focus	[Choi (2001:21)]

(53)	Where did you put the knife?	–	The knife I put on the table.	
	[I]	[put]	[the knife]	[on the table]
	[-New]	[-New]	[-New]	[+New]
	[-Prom]	[-Prom]	[+Prom]	[-Prom] [Choi (2001:47)]

With this brief overview of recent work on i-structure in mind, let us return to the problem of ensuring that both the verb and the subject in a sentence-focus construction are marked as focal. If we try annotating the c-structure nodes, as Butt and King (2000) do for other types of constructions in Hindi/Urdu, we run into the problem that neither the verb nor a postverbal subject is uniformly a focus position. This is in contrast to the topic

position and the argument-focus position in Meskwaki, which can be seen as dedicated to specific functions.<sup>7</sup>

In Choi's framework, sentence-focus, or "all-focus", sentences are assigned the single feature [+New] to the whole sentence. None of the i-structure to c-structure mapping constraints apply; instead the word order pattern that emerges is assumed to be the canonical one (at least for Catalan). Choi's approach could be made to work for Meskwaki sentence-focus as well, if we assume that the order Verb Subject is the "canonical" order.

But there is more to information structure than simply getting the word order right. Recall the example of Chichewa Locative Inversion, which is licensed only in sentence-focus constructions. We cannot capture the conditions under which Locative Inversion applies merely by saying that the theme must be [+New]; rather, we need access to the whole construction that is being used. Here perhaps a propositional representation such as those given by Lambrecht (1994) in (7-9) may be of value in an i-structure representation: we could say that the sentence-focus construction is identified by having a null value for the presupposition, as in (9), repeated below, and where the focus is equal to the assertion.

(9)	sentence-focus	
	Sentence:	<i>My CAR broke down.</i>
	Presupposition:	---
	Focus:	"speaker's car broke down"
	Assertion:	"speaker's car broke down"

A constructional approach would avoid some of the problems that arise when trying to fit sentence-focus constructions into existing proposals for i-structure. For example, Butt and King's (2000) approach of annotating c-structure nodes for i-structure functions works well for overt topics, or for pre-verbal foci, since the scope of such functions is typically a single constituent, but is difficult to extend to the sentence-focus construction. Choi's solution, to treat such constructions as [+New] with no [+Prom] element, unfortunately confuses the discourse relation of focus with the separate issue of given vs. new information (see the discussion of example (3) above), and further entails that the word order pattern of sentence-focus constructions must be taken as the canonical word order of the language as a whole. While such a position may be justifiable for some languages, it seems hard to accept that conclusion for the spoken French example of sentence-focus in (6c) above.

In conclusion, I have surveyed a number of word order patterns in Meskwaki and found evidence supporting Lambrecht's typology of focus: distinct constructions for predicate-focus, argument-focus, and sentence-focus. The properties of the sentence-focus construction in particular pose challenges for existing theories of i-structure representation, suggesting that constructional information may be required in at least this projection of grammatical structure.

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<sup>7</sup> King (1995) discusses similar issues in Russian, and it should be pointed out that Butt and King (2000) do not treat sentence-focus constructions. They also explicitly put aside the question of the verb's discourse function for later work.

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