

Adverbial modification and (not-)at-issue content

Britta Stolterfoht
Universität Tübingen

In his influential book, Potts (2005) analyzed conventional implicatures, e.g., the content expressed by parentheticals, appositives and expressives, as *not-at-issue* content. That means, he drew a distinction between the asserted proposition (*at-issue* content), which is typically taken to be an answer to a *question under discussion* (e.g., Roberts 2012; Tonhauser 2012; Simons et al., 2017), and a range of other entailments and presuppositions conveyed in an utterance (*not-at-issue* content). Only recently, it has been shown that this division is relevant in language processing (see e.g., Dillon, Clifton, & Frazier 2014). With regard to adverbials, it has been observed that certain modifiers trigger a ‘presupposition-like’ inference: *John did not come late* implies that John came (see e.g., Bellert 1977; Simons 2001; Schlenker 2008; Chemla 2009). Abrusán (2013) argues for Hungarian that this is only the case if the modifier is focused. We experimentally tested this assumption for German, assuming that focus structure interacts with the position of a manner adverbial. In (1a) the adverbial is in the default focus position, whereas in (1b) the object NP fills this position.

- (1a) Susanne hat die Tante laut beschimpft.
Susanne has the aunt loud insulted
- (1b) Susanne hat laut die Tante beschimpft.
Susanne has loud the aunt insulted
'Susanne insulted the aunt loudly.'
- (2) Nein, das stimmt nicht. Sie hat die Tante nicht beschimpft.
,No, that's not true. She did not insult the aunt.'

The results of two acceptability rating studies, using tests for diagnosing *not-at-issue* content proposed by Tonhauser (2012; see the continuation in (2) for one of these diagnostics), revealed that the presence of a manner adverbial indeed makes the proposition it modifies *not-at-issue*: sentence pairs like (1) and (2) got lower ratings compared to a control condition with the manner modification at issue. So far, we did not find any evidence for an interaction with adverbial position. The results will be discussed in the light of further studies we are currently planning.