Problematic aspects of focalization

1. Outline

Issues in Italian focalization: (i) optionality of movement (see (1) and (2)); (ii) open issues concerning prosodic approaches (data regarding the asymmetries between a high and a low focus positions, see Bianchi 2013); (iii) open issues concerning a movement analysis (licensing data of n-words and parasitic gaps, see Samek-Lodovici 2016).

(1) a. Gianni ha mangiato UN PANINO, non una pizza.
   Gianni has eaten a sandwich, not a pizza
b. UN PANINO ha mangiato Gianni, non una pizza.
   a sandwich has eaten Gianni, not a pizza
   ‘John ate a SANDWICH, not a pizza.’

(2) a. Ma ci pensi?! Si è bevuto TRE BOTTIGLIE DI VINO!
   but of-that (you) think (he) has drunk three bottles of wine
b. Ma ci pensi?! TRE BOTTIGLIE DI VINO si è bevuto!
   but of-that (you) think three bottles of wine (he) has drunk
   ‘Can you believe it?! He drank THREE BOTTLES OF WINE!’

The main aim is to answer the following questions: (i) where is focus?; (ii) how many projections of focus (if any)?; (iii) do focused constituents move?

Proposal: focused constituents can occupy two positions, i.e. their base position (no dedicated projection when they are realized in situ) and a higher one in the LP. The availability of movement depends on feature bundles: focus is connected to (at least) one more feature (see corrective, mirative, exhaustive, contrastive and information), and such a combination is responsible for the displacement, depending on parametrization settings.

2. Asymmetries and prosodic approaches

Distinction based not only on semantic and pragmatic differences, but also on prosodic (see Bocci 2013, Bianchi & Bocci 2012 among others) and syntactic ones.

(3) Information focus:
   a. Chi ha incontrato Gianni ieri?
      who has met Gianni yesterday
      ‘Who did John meet yesterday?’
   b. (Gianni) Ha incontrato MARIA.
      Gianni has met Maria
   c. * MARIA (Gianni) ha incontrato.
      Maria Gianni has met
      ‘John met MARY.’
(4) Contrastive focus:
   a. Io vi saluto, devo rientrare a casa.
      ‘I greet, must to-go back home’
   b. Ti conviene prendere il TAXI, non la metro…
      ‘I’m off, I have to go back home’
   c. ??* Il TAXI ti conviene prendere, non la metro…
      ‘You’d better take the TAXI, not the underground.’

(Bianchi, Bocci & Cruschina, 2015:4, ex 4a,b)

(5) Corrective focus:
   a. Ieri Gianni ha letto un libro.
      ‘Yesterday John read a book.’
   b. Gianni ha letto UN ARTICOLO (, non un libro).
      Gianni has read an article not a book
   c. UN ARTICOLO ha letto Gianni (, non un libro).
      an article has read Gianni not a book

(6) Mirative focus:
   a. Pensa te! Marco è dimagrito DI VENTI CHILI!
      think you Marco of twenty kg (he) lost weight
   b. Pensa te! DI VENTI CHILI è dimagrito Marco!
      think you (he) lost weight of twenty kilos Marco
      ‘Guess what! Marco lost TWENTY KILOS!’

Syntactic asymmetry between focus in situ and focus in the left periphery: the latter option can be used only by corrective and mirative focus, whereas the former is always available.

Problem of prosodic approaches: the restricted availability of the fronted position cannot be due to prosodic requirements or to the right dislocated status of the constituents following focus (under Samek-Lodovici’s 2016 account), in particular in the case of mirative focalization.

Focus fronting is not an instance of contrast-related fronting (See Neeleman et al. 2009, Szendrői 2017): (i) contrast cannot cover fronting in the case of mirative focus, which is connected only to unexpected or surprising information; (ii) mere contrast is not enough in order to license focus fronting, given the impossibility of fronting contrastive focus in Italian (see 4c).

3. Position and movement

To explain these asymmetries, focus can occupy two different positions:
   - A higher one in the LP, which is somehow restricted and accounts for (i) general cases of fronted focused constituents; (ii) the presence of focus markers in some languages (Aboh, 2004); (iii) V2 phenomena in some languages, such as Armenian and Kashmiri (the head of the focus projection seems to be required as a landing site for the verb, see Giorgi & Haroutyunian 2016);
   - A lower one, possibly not dedicated to focus: assume that whenever focus is realized low it is actually in its in situ position rather than in a dedicated lower projection (as in Belletti 2004). In so doing, no movement could be applied and thus we can account for (i) licensing
relation of n-words and (ii) lack of licensing relation of parasitic gaps with corrective focus in situ.

3.1 Licensing relations: interaction of focus and n-words

(7) a. Non ho visto NESSUNO.
   (I) not have seen nobody
   ‘I saw NOBODY.’
   b. * Ho visto NESSUNO.
   c. NESSUNO ho visto
      nobody (I) have seen
      ‘NOBODY, I saw.’

(8) a. Pensa te! Giulia non ha parlato con NESSUNO!
   think you Giulia not has spoken to nobody
   ‘Guess what! Giulia didn’t speak to ANYONE!’
   b. * Pensa te! Giulia ha parlato con NESSUNO
   think you Giulia has spoken to nobody
   c. Pensa te! Con NESSUNO ha parlato Giulia!
      think you Giulia not has spoken to nobody
      ‘Guess what! Giulia didn’t speak to ANYONE!’

Sentences in (7) and (8) are problematic under Rizzi 1997 (see Cardinaletti 2001 and Samek-Lodovici 2006, 2016). These kind of data can help us defining the position of focus: given that the focused n-word must be c-commanded by another negative item (see (7a) and (7b)), we can state that in such case it is low in the structure rather than in the LP.

3.2 Licensing relation: interaction of focus and parasitic gaps

(9) a L’ARTICOLO, Silvia ha recensito _ senza leggere _ (, non il libro).
   the article Silvia has reviewed without to-read not the book
   ‘Silvia reviewed the article without reading (, not the book).’
   b. * Silvia ha recensito l’ARTICOLO, senza leggere _ (, non il libro).
   Silvia has reviewed the article without to-read not the book
   ‘Silvia reviewed the ARTICLE without reading (, not the book).’

Given the absence of licensing of the parasitic gap in (9b), i.e. with corrective focus realized in situ, we can assume that in such cases there is no movement at all.

3.3 No co-occurrences of foci

Note that one focus per sentence can be used at most, no co-occurrences between different focus types are allowed. There should be only one dedicated projection

(10) a. * MARIA con GIANNI ha parlato, non Sara con Andrea.
       Maria with Gianni has spoken, not Sara with Andrea
       ‘MARY spoke to JOHN, not Sara to Andrea.’
   b. Non posso crederci! UN ANELLO, A LEO vogliono comprare!
      (I) not can believe it a ring to Leo (they) want to buy
      ‘I can’t believe it! They want to buy a RING for LEO!’
3.4 No double copy of the focused constituent

No copy pronunciation theory of the focused constituents (optionality attributed to the PF interface, as in Bianchi, Bocci & Cruschina (2015, 2016)): (i) licensing takes place in syntax, prior to PF: how to establish whether a n-word needs a licensor or not?; (ii) case of parasitic gaps, independently of the copy that gets spelt out, one of them undergo movement, hence licensing the parasitic gap; (iii) in Italian there are no other examples of the copy pronunciation theory (see wh- questions).

4. Focus and other features

(11) \[\text{ForceP [TopP [OpP_{foc} [FinP [TP [YP \ldots ]]]]]}\]

Consider Focus as a superclass (see superclass/subclass distinction in Rizzi 2004 and Abels 2012), with a subclass made of further distinctions: corrective, mirative, exhaustive, contrastive and information. The superclass has to be specified for (at least) another feature, thus forming feature bundles (Neeleman et al. 2009). Focus by itself stays in situ, whereas the combination with other features is subject to parametrization regulating their distributional properties: in some languages they can be moved to the left periphery, whereas in some others they have to stay in situ. This explains: (i) the presence of at most one focus per sentence; (ii) licensing relations seen above; (iii) cross-linguistic variation in the distributional properties of focus types. Some cases:

- Italian: [focus] + [information], [focus] + [contrastive] have to stay in situ, [focus] + [corrective], [focus] + [mirative] can either stay in situ or be fronted;
- Sicilian and Sardinian (Cruschina 2012, Jones 1993): [focus] + [information] moves to the LP, in a position adjacent to the verb;
- Hungarian: [focus] + [exhaustive] moves to the LP;
- Hausa: [focus] + [exhaustive] can either stay in situ or be fronted. Exhaustivity is marked with the particle nee/cee (Hartmann & Zimmermann, 2007).

Combination among members of the subset, creating more complex bundles of features?

(12) a. Chi ha vinto la gara?
   ‘Who won the race?’
   b. MARIA ha vinto.
   ‘Mary won.’

Under particular circumstances, a new information focus can be fronted as in (12b), as in the case in which I do not expect that information (see also Belletti & Rizzi, 2017). I claim that this is possible if we analyze Maria in (12b) as a mixture of [focus] + [information] + [mirative].

References


