Separating focus and contrast in Romance: insights from Camuno

Matteo Fiorini
University of Utah
matteo.fiorini@utah.edu

Preliminaries

- Focus = grammatical category introducing new, contrastive or surprising information
- Focus in Romance: syntactic and phonological marking [3]
- SYNTACTIC ACCOUNTS:
  - A focus feature on the head of a FocP is checked by a focus operator indirectly interacting with an XP which is interpreted as the focus of the sentence [5]
- INTERFACE ACCOUNTS:
  - Focus evacuation movement: unfocalized YPs dislocate to its specifier [9]

Pattern under investigation

(1) Focus structures:
   a. l’ a fat ho a ho om la hopa.
   CL.3SG has made up the her husband the soup
   ‘It is her husband that made the soup.’
   the her husband CL.3SG has made up the soup
   ‘It is her husband that made the soup.’
   c. l’ è a ho om ke l’ a fat ho la hopa
      CL.3SG is the her husband that CL.3SG has made up the soup
      ‘It is her husband that made the soup.’

- Focus in Camuno:
  - Immediately after the verb (IAV) position:
    - Short movement [2]
    - In-situ interpretation [7]
    - Left peripheral interpretation [8]
  - Aligns with the main sentence stress (MSS):
    - Assigned by nuclear stress rule [1]
    - Assigned at PF [9]
    - Selected at PF [10]

Question

Can the distributional and prosodic properties of focus structures be captured by a single operation?

Hypothesis

Two correlated but independent operations co-occur in the derivation of focus structures.

Focus is marked syntactically, contrast with discourse-antecedent or beliefs is marked, independently, at the PF-interface.

Contrast (without) focus

(2) Corrective (a) and Mirative (b) focus:
   a. “[Valeria waited for her mum on the curb at the airport”]
      al la mamà ha det-to al la hopa
      has seen in church
      ‘She waited for her mum inside (not on the curb)’
   b. [with the new law, 52 years old Valeria can retire at 53.]
      la Paola la andarà l’ an ke e en penfù
      Paola CL.3SG go.FUT the year that come in retirement
      ‘Paola will retire next year (can you believe it?)’

Post-verbal distribution = contrastive interpretation without (narrow) focalization

(3) a. l’ o mia ist en fza
    CL.3SG have seen in church
    ‘I didn’t see him in the church.’
   b. l’ o ist MIA en fza
    CL.3SG have seen NEG in church
    ‘No, I didn’t see him in the church (why would I?)’

(4) a. l’ a fat fza amò al kuniʧ
    CL.3SG have made up again the rabbit
    ‘He made rabbit again.’
   b. l’ a fat fza AMÒ al kuniʧ
    CL.3SG have made up again the rabbit
    ‘Of course he has already made rabbit (at some point)!’

Default stress = alignment with prosodic phrase ı
Marked stress = alignment with phonological phrase Φ [4]

Conclusion

- Movement + Interface = focus.
- PF + Context = contrast.
- Different interpretations → unified analysis.
- Non-focus contrast accounted for.
- Non-contrast focus (wide focus) accounted for.

References: