Unfrontable Foci and Left-Peripheral Focus

Under the cartographic analysis of left-peripheral foci, contrastive foci must eventually all move to a left-peripheral FocusP projection (Rizzi 1997, 2004, Rizzi & Cinque 2016). Unfrontable contrastive foci should not exist. Under the right-dislocation analysis of left-peripheral foci, instead, contrastive foci are forced leftwards whenever the clause containing them right-dislocates (Samek-Lodovici 2015). Focus-fronting here hinges on the licensing of right-dislocation. If right-dislocation of the entire clause is unlicensed, as is the case when a clause is not discourse-given, fronting should become impossible. Which analysis is supported and which refuted by the empirical data?

At first, the data in Bianchi (2013:200) and Bianchi, Bocci, & Cruschina (2015) appear to favor the right-dislocation analysis. Consider (1B)-(1D), all replies to (1A) focusing 'MILANO'. As Bianchi noted, fronting is only possible when focus is followed by a discourse-given clause (1B). When new information is present – here the object *fisica* (physics) in (1C) and (1D) – fronting is ungrammatical (1D), and focus only occurs in-situ (1C). Under the right-dislocation analysis, this is expected. The proposition 'John studies somewhere' is entailed by (1A) and hence counts as discourse-given. Right-dislocation of the corresponding clause 'studia' (he studies) in (1B) is thus licensed, resulting in focus-fronting (for details, see Samek-Lodovici 2015). When new information is added in (1C) and (1D), instead, right-dislocation is unlicensed because the proposition 'he studies physics somewhere' is not discourse-given. Consequently, focus-fronting cannot occur, accounting for (1D). By contrast, under the cartographic analysis, the contrastive focus in (1C) should remain able to front in (1D), yet this is not the case.

(1) A: Gianni studia a Roma.
         John studies in Rome.
         'John studies in Rome.'

     C: No. Studia fisica a MILANO$_F$.
         No. (He) studies physics in Milan.
         'No. He studies physics in MILAN.'

     B: No. A MILANO$_F$, studia.
         No. In Milan, (he) studies.
         'No. He studies in MILAN.'

     D: * No. A MILANO$_F$, studia fisica.
         No. In Milan, (he) studies physics.
         'No. He studies physics in MILAN.'

Bianchi (2013:209) and Bianchi, Bocci, & Cruschina (2015), however, propose an analysis of the above data that is consistent with the cartographic analysis. For them, (1B) and (1C) involve distinct focus types: *corrective* focus in (1B) and *contrastive* focus in (1C), with only *corrective* focus allowed to occur left-peripherally. Furthermore, they maintain that the clause following *corrective* foci is always discourse-given because corrections semantically require the correcting proposition to match the corrected one but for the focused phrase. Merely *contrastive* foci like (1C), on the other hand, are assumed to not need fronting and to allow for non-given material.

This talk closely examines this analysis, henceforth called the *two-foci* analysis, showing that it is untenable under several respects, including the two problems highlighted here below:

Problem 1 – As mentioned above, under the two-foci analysis focus will have a corrective interpretation only if the rest of the clause is entirely discourse-given. Therefore, the unfrontable focus in (1C), where discourse-givenness is violated by the presence of new material, should be unable to express a corrective interpretation. Yet this is not the case: (1C) is as effective as (1B) in conveying a corrective interpretation that successfully leads to the elimination of proposition (1A) from the common ground. This is unexpected and refutes the existence of the very interpretative difference that is supposed to distinguish the two focus types being proposed.

Problem 2 – I will also present new data not yet discussed in the focus literature that show how the alternation between fronted and unfronted foci in (1) is replicated with foci that lack a corrective import, such as confirmative and additive foci. Consider the confirmative focus paradigm in (2), where replies (2B)-(2D) focus 'ROMA'. Exactly as in (1), focus can be fronted when the rest of the clause is discourse-given (2B), but it becomes unfrontable when new information is added (2D). Yet focus is always confirmative here. Since there is no corrective interpretation, the unfrontable focus in (2D) cannot be accounted for on the basis of the semantics of correction the way (1D) was.

(2) A: Gianni studia a Roma.
     John studies in Rome.
     'John studies in Rome.'

     C: Sì. Studia fisica a ROMA$_F$.
     Yes. (He) studies physics in Rome.
     'Yes. He studies physics in ROME.'

     B: Sì. A ROMA, studia.
     Yes. In Rome, (he) studies.
     'Yes. He studies in ROME.'

     D: * Sì. A ROMA, studia fisica.
     Yes. In Rome, (he) studies physics.
     'Yes. He studies physics in ROME.'

The key factor determining the availability of focus fronting, shared across (1) and (2), is the discourse-given status of the clause following the fronted focus. This is precisely the factor also identified as key by the right-dislocation analysis. Fronting is possible in the (B) sentences alone because these are the only cases where the clause containing focus is discourse-given in its entirety, thus licensing its right-dislocation and, therefore, also the associated focus fronting. In contrast, the discourse-new material in sentences (C) and (D) leaves right-dislocation of the entire clause unlicensed, which in turn prevents focus-fronting in (D). The type of conversational move expressed by focus – be it corrective or confirmative – plays no role, explaining why we observe identical grammaticality patterns across both types of focus.

Besides considering additional problematic aspects of the two-foci analysis, my talk will show how the above results also extend to additive focus alternations, again presenting new data not yet considered in the focus literature. Overall, the talk will show how the right-dislocation analysis explains the presence of unfrontable foci while keeping a unified interpretation of the examined fronted and unfrontable foci; a highly desirable result.

Selected references – Bianchi, V. 2013. On 'focus movement' in Italian. In M. V.a Camacho, Á. Jiménez-Fernández, J. Martín-González, & M Reyes-Tejedor (eds.), *Information Structure and Agreement*, 193–216. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins. **Bianchi, V., & G. Bocci**. 2012. Should I Stay or Should I Go? Optional Focus Movement in Italian. In *Empirical Issues in Syntax and Semantics 9*. **Bianchi, V., G. Bocci, & S. Cruschina**. 2015. Focus Fronting and Its Implicatures. In E. Aboh, A. Schaffer, & P. Sleeman (eds.), Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2013: Selected Papers from "Going Romance" Amsterdam 2013, Romance Language and Linguistic Theory. John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam, pp. 1–20. **Bocci, G.** 2008. On the Syntax-Prosody Interface: An analysis of the prosodic properties of postfocal material in Italian and its implications. Nanzan Linguistics 5, 13–42. **Rizzi, L.** 1997. The fine structure of the left periphery. In *Elements of Grammar. Handbook of Generative Syntax*. L. Haegemann (ed), 281-337. Dordrecht: Kluwer. **Rizzi, L.** 2004. Locality and the left periphery. In *Structures and Beyond: the Cartography of Syntactic Structures*, A. Belletti (ed), 3:223-251. Oxford: Oxford University Press. **Rizzi, L., & G. Cinque**. 2016. Functional Categories and Syntactic Theory. In M. Liberman, B.H. Partee (eds.), Annual Review of Linguistics, Vol 2. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, pp. 139–163. **Samek-Lodovici, V.** 2015. *The Interaction of Focus, Givenness, and Prosody. A Study of Italian Clause Structure.* Oxford: Oxford University Press (open access).