

Information Structure in Italian Clauses

Current cartographic analyses of Italian propose the designated topic and focus projections in (1) below (Rizzi 1997, Belletti 2003). They also assume, in some cases, that the higher focus projection specializes for contrastive focus and the lower one for new-information focus. In contrast, Samek-Lodovici (2006), building on Zubizarreta (1998) and Valduví (1992), maintains that focus is always final in its clause –thus always following left-peripheral topics– and that Cardinaletti’s (2002) focus-in-situ cases aside any constituent following focus is discourse-anaphoric and dislocated clause-externally as illustrated in (2).

(1) [... [Topic* [Focus_{Contr.} [Topic* [... [TP ... [Focus_{New} [VP

(2) [... [Topic* [... Focus_{Contr./New}]] [Right-dislocated discourse-given phrases]

In this talk, I will examine a rich set of empirical properties that distinguish the above two analyses and converge in supporting the right-dislocation analysis (henceforth ‘RD-analysis’). Some of the properties that I will discuss are briefly introduced below.

Distribution – In linear order terms, Italian focus may occur in almost any position of the clause. For example, the focused indirect object in (3) may also occur in any of the preceding ‘Foc’ positions listed below. This distribution applies to both new information focus and contrastive focus. For example, sentence (3) and the alternative sentences identified by each ‘Foc’ position are all valid answers to the question “who did John give the medal to?” as well as valid corrections of the statement “John gave the medal to Mark”. This overlapping distribution calls into question the presence of distinct projections for contrastive and new-information focus that are expected under a strict cartographic perspective. The same distribution is instead expected under the RD-analysis, since right-dislocation may apply to available discourse-given phrases independently of the type of focus expressed in the clause.

(3) (Foc) Gianni (Foc) ha dato (Foc) la medaglia A LUCA_{FOCUS}
John has given the medal to LUKE

NPI-Licensing – In Italian, focus cannot intervene between a negative polarity item and its licenser; see for example (4) where the ‘Foc’ positions preceding the NPI-object are not viable positions for the focused indirect object. This is unexpected under cartographic approaches, where the c-commanding relation between the licensing verb ‘*dubito*’ and the object ‘*alcunchè*’ necessary for NPI-licensing remains unaltered whatever the position of focus. The licensing failure is instead predicted by the RD-analysis where the constituents following focus are dislocated clause-externally, thus destroying the c-command relation between ‘*dubito*’ and the NPI-object.

(4) Dubito che (*Foc) Gianni (*Foc) abbia dato (*Foc) alcunchè A LUCA_{FOCUS}
(I) doubt that John has given anything to LUKE

Clitic-doubling – In focus-neutral cases, left-peripheral object-topics require clitic-doubling (Rizzi 1997). Under cartographic analyses, these topics may occur in any of the topic projections surrounding focus in (1) above. Therefore clitic-doubling should remain obligatory independently of whether the topic precedes or follows a fronted focus. As (5) and (6) show, however, clitic-doubling is required with pre-focus topics but disallowed with post-focus ones (Benincá & Poletto 2004). This divergence is again expected under the RD-analysis where only pre-focus topics constitute genuine left-peripheral topics, whereas post-focus objects constitute dislocated discourse-given phrases. Clitic-doubling in this latter case is blocked because what is left of the main clause –namely ‘[TP [A MARIA] t_{RightDislocatedTP}]’ for (6) below– does not contain a clitic-hosting head, making the presence of a clitic impossible.

- (5) **I fiori**, a MARIA_{FOCUS}, li_{clitic} abbiamo dati. (obligatory clitic)
The flowers, to Mary, (we) them have given
 ‘As for the flowers, we gave them to MARY’
- (6) A MARIA_{FOCUS}, **i fiori**, abbiamo dato. (clitic obligatorily absent)

The talk will also examine additional differences between pre- and post-focus topics that are unexpected under a cartographic approach but predicted by the RD-analysis. They will include (i) the sensitivity to strong-islands, which is absent with base-generated pre-focus topics but present with dislocated (hence extracted) post-focus topics; (ii) the availability of a contrastive interpretation, which is possible with pre-focus topics (hence matching the properties of left-peripheral topics in other languages, cf. Vallduví 1992, Büring 2005, Vermeulen 2007, Neeleman & Van de Koot, to appear), but absent with post-focus topics which match the obligatory non-contrastiveness of Italian right-dislocated constituents (Benincà & Poletto 2004); (iii) the licensing of *pro* subjects in following sentences, which is possible with pre-focus topics but absent with post-focus ones, with post-focus topics again matching the properties of right-dislocated constituents in focus-neutral contexts.

Overall, the examined empirical data and properties confirm the impossibility of having discourse topics within discourse-given constituents that contribute to the focus background, thus supporting the similar restriction proposed in Neeleman & Van de Koot (to appear). They also support a unified analysis of Italian focus where focus always occurs rightmost in its clause. This in turn makes it possible to extend Zubizarreta’s (1998) prosody-driven analysis of Italian focus to instances of (linearly) non-final focus. Focus and stress occur non-finally because as is typical of discourse-given phrases in many languages the right-dislocated constituents resist stress. Stress thus falls rightmost modulo the destressed dislocated phrases, forcing focus to occur rightmost in its clause but not sentence-finally and not necessarily always in the same position as it would be expected under a cartographic perspective.

Selected References

- Belletti, A. 2003. Aspects of the Low IP Area. In Luigi Rizzi (ed.), *The Structure of IP and CP. The Cartography of Syntactic structures*. Vol. 2. Oxford: OUP.
- Benincà, P., and C. Poletto. 2004. Topic, Focus and V2: defining the CP sublayers, In L. Rizzi (ed.), *The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*. Vol. 2, Oxford: OUP.
- Büring, D. 2005. *Intonation, Semantics, and Information Structure*. Ms. UCLA. (Later appeared in: G. Ramchand and C. Reiss (eds.) *Interfaces*. OUP. 2007)
- Cardinaletti, A. 2002. Against Optional and Null Clitics. Right Dislocation vs. Marginalization. *Studia Linguistica* 56 (1):29-57.
- Neeleman, A., and H. van de Koot. (to appear). Dutch Scrambling and the Nature of Discourse Templates. *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 11.
- Rizzi, L. 1997. The Fine Structure of the Left Periphery. In L. Haegemann (ed.), *Elements of Grammar. Handbook of Generative Syntax*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 281-337.
- Samek-Lodovici, V. 2006. When right-dislocation meets the left-periphery. *Lingua* 116.
- Vallduví, E. 1992. *The Informational Component*. Garland Publishing Inc.
- Vermeulen, R. 2007. *On the topic of wa-phrases in Japanese*. Talk at LAGB 2007, London.
- Zubizarreta, M.-L. 1998. *Prosody, Focus, and Word Order*. Cambridge: MIT-Press, MA.