Co-occurrence and ordering constraints on topics and foci in Romance and beyond

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Plan

- Intro: co-occurrence and ordering constraints on sequences of functional elements, and explanation

- Generalization 1: One focus, multiple topics

- Possible explanatory ingredients: LF-interface, PF-interface, Syntactic locality; possible exceptions

- Generalization 2: Top > Foc.   An LF interface approach

- A possible exception in Romance

- Two possible exceptions in a Bantu language

Introduction: The discovery of sequences of functional elements.

- One of the significant empirical contributions of the cartographic program has been the discovery of cross-linguistically stable orders of functional elements in different zones of the syntactic tree:

- Cinque 1999 on the structure of IP, Rizzi 1997 on the structure of CP, many contributions on DP, but also on AP, PP, vP, etc..

For a review: Rizzi, L. and G. Cinque. 2016. Functional categories and syntactic theory. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 2, 2016, pp. 139-163.

A critique

Discussions in A.Gallego, D. Ott, eds. (2024) Cartography and Explanatory Adequacy, OUP.

- This discovery also led to controversies, partly on the empirical findings, partly on the theoretical interpretation.

- On the latter point, critical contributions argued along the following lines: cartographic work postulates **"structural templates"** expressing general ordering constraints of functional elements, ascribing them to the language faculty; but assuming such complex precompiled configurations of positions to be encoded in the language faculty **raises issues of evolvability**: why and how could the language faculty have evolved with such highly complex specifications?

- On the other hand, not assuming any guidance from the language faculty would lead to **learnability problems**: how could children invariably arrive at postulating such complex configurations on a purely inductive basis?

- Then, the critiques concluded, the approach leads to paradoxa and aporiae.

A way out

- These concerns are serious, but the specific critique of the cartographic program is based on a false premise: it misrepresents what is actually done in cartographic research, and overlooks a natural intermediate possibility to overcome the paradox.

- As far as I can tell, since its inception cartographic research assumed **the discovery of ordering properties to represent the starting point, not the end point of the explanatory process.**

- The natural subsequent step would be to assume that sequences of functional elements, when of general cross-linguistic validity, are **empirical generalizations to be deduced from the interplay of more abstract grammatical and interface principles** (Cinque & Rizzi 2010, Rizzi 2013).

- If addressed in this perspective, generalizations concerning the ordering of elements may become (and have become) **a powerful generator of empirical issues**, which can nourish the theoretical reflection on the principles governing the language faculty.

Where to look for explanatory elements relevant for cartographic properties

Given the architecture of the grammatical system, explanatory ingredients can come from:

- 1. Principles applying at the LF interface: principles interpreting criterial configurations, etc.

- 2. Principles applying at the PF interface: principles of linearization, principles assigning prosodic contour, etc.

- 3. Principles applying within the syntactic box: principles of locality, labeling, etc

Lex

PF ____ LF

syntax
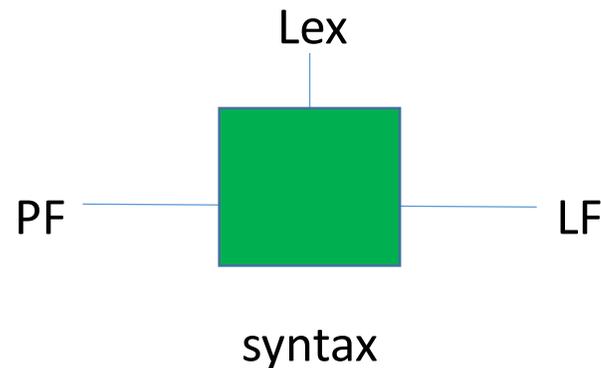
Generalisation 1: A fundamental difference between topic and focus

- Many languages admit **multiple topics** in the left periphery. In fact, either a given language admits a single topic, or it admits a multiplicity of topics.

- Languages typically admit **a single focus** in the left periphery.

A fundamental difference between topic and focus

(1) A Maria,   il tuo libro,   glielo   devi   dare   al più presto
    To Maria,   your book   you   should   give   ASAP

(2) A Parigi,   Mario,   la residenza, da Roma,   la sposterà l'anno prossimo
    To Paris   Mario   his residency from Rome (he) will move   next year

(3)a   A MARIA   devi   dare   il tuo libro   __   (non a Francesca)
        TO MARIA   (you) should give   your book   (not to Francesca)

   b   IL TUO LIBRO   devi   dare   __   a Maria   (non quello di Gianni)
        YOUR BOOK (you) should give   to Maria   (not Gianni's?

   c * A MARIA , IL TUO LIBRO   devi   dare   __   __ (non a Francesca, quello di Gianni)
        TO MARIA, YOUR BOOK (you) should give   __   __ (not to Francesca, Gianni's)

A single focus in the LP

(1) ABIDJI Topic

kòfí **ɛ́kɛ́**   òkókò ɛ   **ɛ́kɛ́**   è pìpjé   nì.
Kofi TOP   banana DEF TOP   ASP.peel. RES PRON
'Kofi, the banana, he peeled it. '

(2) ABIDJI Focus

* Kòfí$_j$ **bɛ́**   òkókò ɛ   **bɛ́**   è pìpjé
Kofi   Foc   banana Def. Foc   ASP.peel.
'KOFI, THE BANANA,   peeled .'   (Hager-Mboua 2014)

Context for corrective focus (Bianchi, Bocci, Cruschina 2016)

A: - *Dovremmo leggere il libro di Gianni...*

'We should read Gianni's book...'

B: - *No, IL TUO LIBRO dovremmo leggere, non quello di Gianni.*

'No, YOUR BOOK we should read, not Gianni's book'

A single corrective focus in the LP of Italian

A: – So che quest'anno Piero ha vinto le olimpiadi...
'I know that this year Piero won the Olympics...'

B: – * Ti sbagli: quest'anno, GIANNI, I MONDIALI ha vinto
'You are wrong: this year GIANNI, THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, won

non Piero, le olimpiadi
not Piero, the Olympics

B': – Ti sbagli: quest'anno, GIANNI ha vinto una competizione importante, non Piero;
You are wrong: this year GIANNI won an important competition, not Piero,

inoltre, I MONDIALI, ha vinto, non le olimpiadi.
moreover, THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP, he won not the Olympics

Some examples of uniqueness of LP focus

(1) Italian: * A MARIA (,) IL TUO LIBRO   devi dare (non a Giulia, il disco)   (Rizzi 1997)

(2) English: * TO MARY (,) YOUR BOOK you should give (not to Julie, the record)

(3) French: * C'est à Jean que c'est ton livre qu'il faut donner
                   It is to Jean that it is your book that we should give

(4) E. Armenian: * YEREK SALORN   ê SiranƏ kerel   (Giorgi & Haroutyunian 2016)
                   HIER   LA PRUNE   a Siran   mangé

(5) Hungarian: * EMÖKE   ATTILÁVAL   beszélt
                 EMÖKE -NOM   ATTILA-INSTR   parler-PAST-3SG   (Puskas 2000: 83)

(6) Hebrew: * le Maria (,)   et ha sefer Sel-xa kedai Se titen   (lo le Giulia et ha qaletet)
                  à M.acc   le livre of-2ms la peine que(tu) donnes   (non à G. acc le DVD)
                                                         (U. Shlonsky, p.c.. See also Shlonsky 2015)

(7) Tatar: *DAFTAR-NE   ALSUGA   birdem   Dinara tugel, kitapn.
                   THE NOTBOOKAcc TO ALSUDat givePast1sg Dinara not, the book
                   THE NOTBOOK, TO ALSU I gave the, not to Dinara, the book.   (Kashaeva 2022)

(8) Indonesian: * Surat itu,   kemarin   yang   aku baca,   bukan koran, besok
   Letter that, yesterday COP   1SG read, NEG newspaper tomorrow   (Pratama 2023)

Some examples of uniqueness of LP focus in languages with focus markers

(9) Jamaican: * **A**   di bami   **a**   di pikni   im gi
                FOC the bammy   FOC   the boy   he gives

                                               (Durrleman 2008:75)

(10)   Basaa':   *βi-dʒɛ́k   **gw-ɔ́n**   mu-daá$_i$ **njɛ́-n**   pro$_i$ a-bí-lâmb
                8-food   8-foc   1-woman   1-foc   1.sm-pst2-cook

                                               (Bassong 2014)

(11) Gungbe: * wémà lɔ   **wɛ̀**   Sɛna   **wɛ̀**   zé
                book the FOC   SENA FOC   took

                                               (Aboh 2004: 245)

(12)   Abidji: * òkókò ɛ́   **bɛ́**   Kòfi **bɛ́**   ____   pìpjé ____
               BANANE Def. Foc KOFI   Foc ___ ,   peel.RES___
               the BANANA, KOFI ___   peeled ___ '

                                             (Hager-Mboua 2014)

Criteria and the assignment of Argumental and scope-discourse properties

Assignment of argumental (thematic) properties

(1)
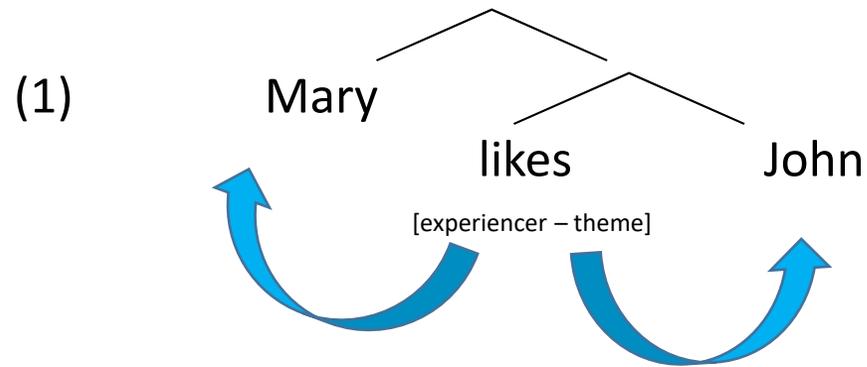
Assignment of scope-discourse properties

(2)

(3)
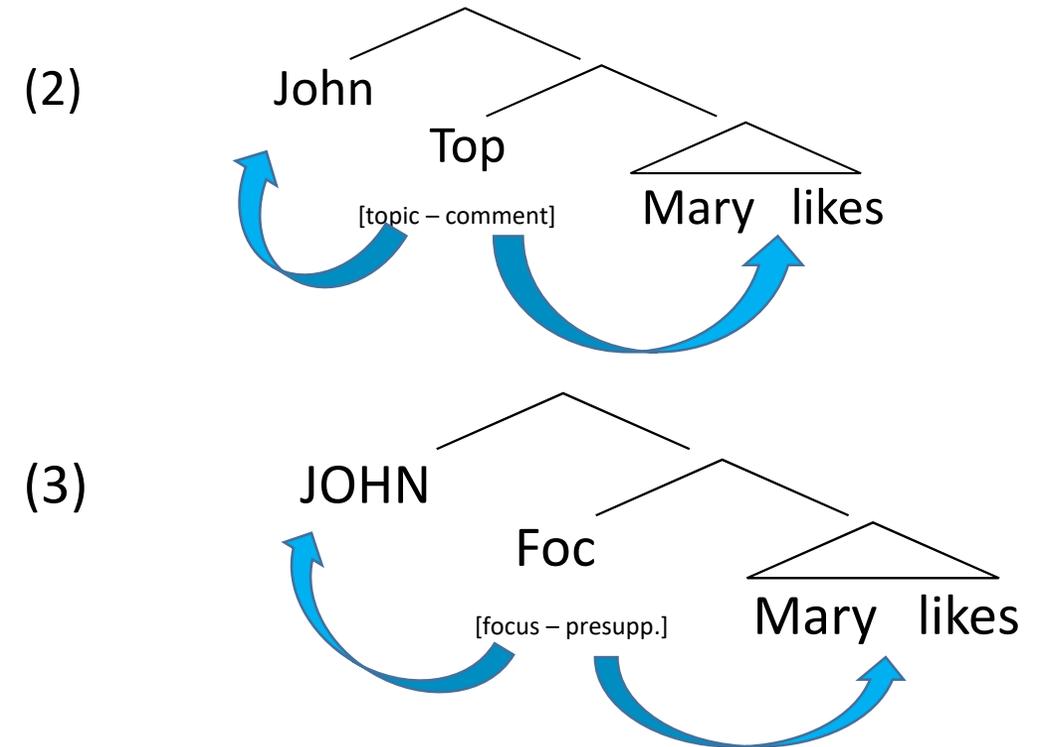
The interpretation of focus and presupposition

There is a school of thought connecting Focus-Presupposition to new-given information:
- Halliday, M.A.K. 1967. Notes on transitivity and theme in English, *Journal of Linguistics 3., 199-244.*,
- Chomsky, N. 1971. Deep Structure, Surface Structure and Semantic Interpretation.
- Lambrecht. 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.)
- Jackendoff (1971) *Semantic Interpretation in Generative Grammar*, MIT Press:

Focus: "the information in the sentence that is assumed by the speaker **not** to be shared by him and the hearer"
Presupposition: "the information in the sentence that is assumed by the speaker to be shared by him and the hearer"

NB: in the examples to be discussed, Focus is "**new information plus something else**" (correction, mirativity, etc.: Bianchi, Bocci, Cruschina 2016), but the basic insight of association with new information is shared with this tradition).

The criterial approach: Focus$_{corr}$ – Presupposition (Rizzi 1997)

NB: on the different types of left-peripheral focus: Belletti 2009, Bianchi, Bocci & Cruschina (2016)

IL TUO LIBRO

YOUT BOOK

Foc$_{corr}$

"Focus$_{corr}$" -"Presupposition"

dovremmo leggere __

we should read __
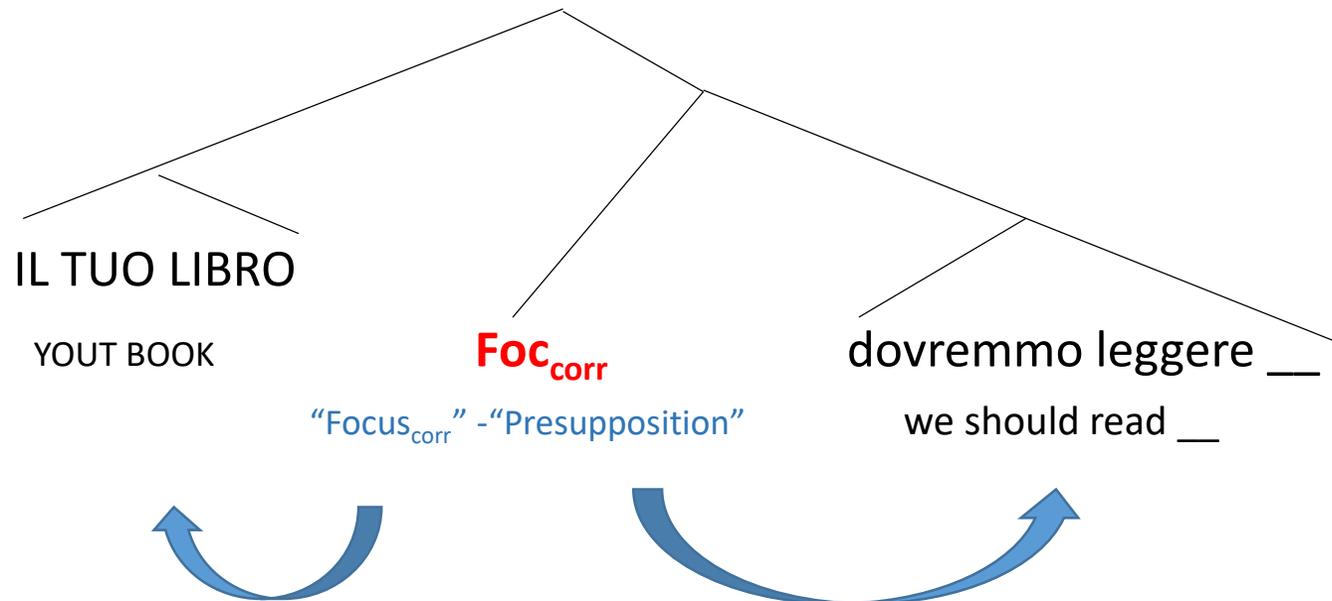
Generalisation 1. The LF Approach (Approach #1)
a recursive focus would determine an interpretive conflict (Rizzi 1997)

(1)   [   ] **Foc** [   ]

         "Focus"   "Presupposition"

(2) * [A MARIA]   **Foc1**   [[IL TUO LIBRO] **Foc2**   [devi   dare]]]

         TO MARIA   YOUR BOOK   you should   give

The "focus" of Foc2 would be part of the presupposition of Foc1, and this raises an interpretive conflict.

The interpretation of topics is compatible with Top recursion

(1)   [   ] Top   [   ]
              "Topic"   "Comment"

If a comment is a clausal content in an «aboutness» relation with the topic, nothing obvious precludes a comment having a topic – comment structure, hence topic recursion is allowed (if other conditions are met):

(2) [A Maria]   **Top1**   [[il tuo libro] **Top2**   [glielo   devi   dare]]]
      To Maria   your book   you   should give
      'To Maria, your book, you should give.'

A problem: focalizing adverbs Quarezemin & Tescari-Neto (2022, 2023): *only, also, even,...*

- Quarezemin & Tescari-Neto address the problem raised for this approach by focalizing adverbs.

- The issue had been raised by Kiss (1998) on Hungarian:

(1) [$_{FocP}$ JÁNOS evett   meg   CSAK KÉT SÜTEMÉNYT]

          JÁNOS   ate   prt   only two cookies

In this Hungarian example, JÁNOS is focalized in the LP, as also the verb is moved to the LP, but it can co-occur with an *only* phrase.

In the assumption that the particle *only* is a focalizing adverb, which determines the focal interpretation of the phrase it modifies, we have two foci here.

Distinct notions of focus

- Kiss (1998) departs from the Halliday – Chomsky – Jackendoff tradition in that she does not associate focus with new information: for her, focus has to do with "exhaustive identification".

- Clearly, an only-phrase can be new information, but does not have to:

(1)   A: John solved only one problem

       B: no, BILL solved only one problem, not John

In B the *only* phrase clearly is part of the presupposition, in Jackendoff, etc. terms, and the sentence is perfectly felicitous. So, the *only* phrase does not express "focus qua new information".

As Quarezemin and Tescari-Neto point out, within the tradition of "focus as new information (plus something else)", the term "focalizing adverb" is a misnomer.

An "only" phrase can be focus or presupposition

(1)   Diranno solo questo a Gianni

   'They will say only this to Gianni

Given a base line like (1), the only-phrase can be corrective focus, as in (2), or part of the presupposition, as in (3), whereas double focus qua new information remains excluded, as in (4):

(2) SOLO QUESTO diranno __ a Gianni (non tutta la verità)

   ONLY THIS they will say __ to Gianni (not the whole truth)

(3) A GIANNI diranno solo questo __ (non a Piero)

   TO GIANNI they will say only this   (not to Piero)

(4) * A GIANNI, SOLO QUESTO diranno   __ __ (non a Piero, tutta la verità)

   TO GIANNI ONLY THIS they will say __ __ (not to Piero, the whole truth)

NB: This is not a critique of the notion of "exhaustive identification", or of the other traditions which do not associate focus with new information. But to avoid confusion, different terminologies should be used (Quarezemin & Tescari-Neto 2022, 2023).

Generalisation 1, The PF Approach (Approach #2): An intonation clash at PF with double focus

•In languages like Italian, a LP focus has a very special intonational contour, with a high prominence on the focus, followed by a flattened low contour in the postfocal material.

•So, a double LP focus would need a double high prominence violating the intonational requirement on the post-focal material.

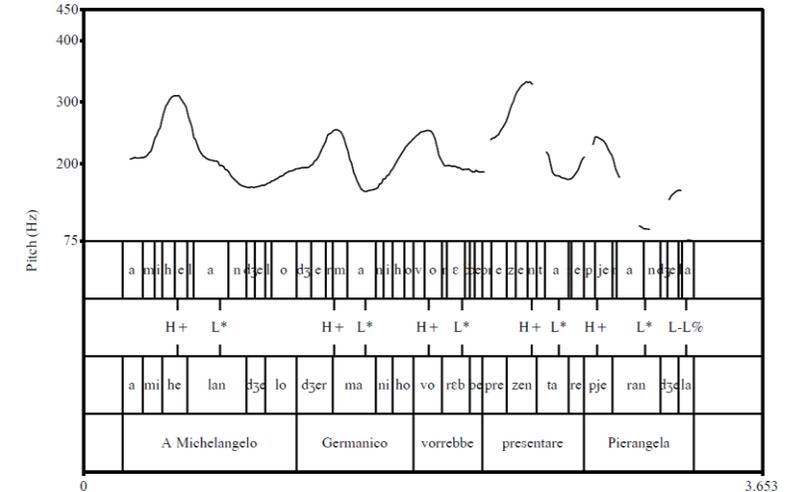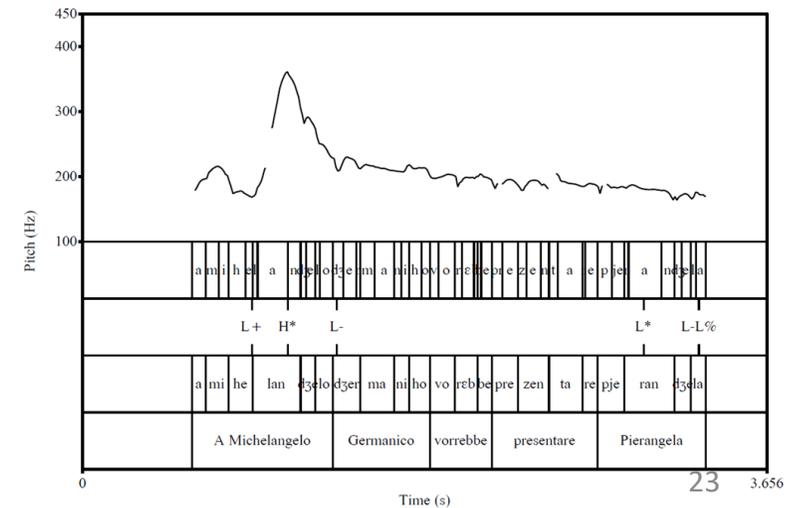(1)* A GIANNI, IL TUO LIBRO   ho dato
         TO GIANNI, YOUR BOOK I gave

• Bocci (2013)
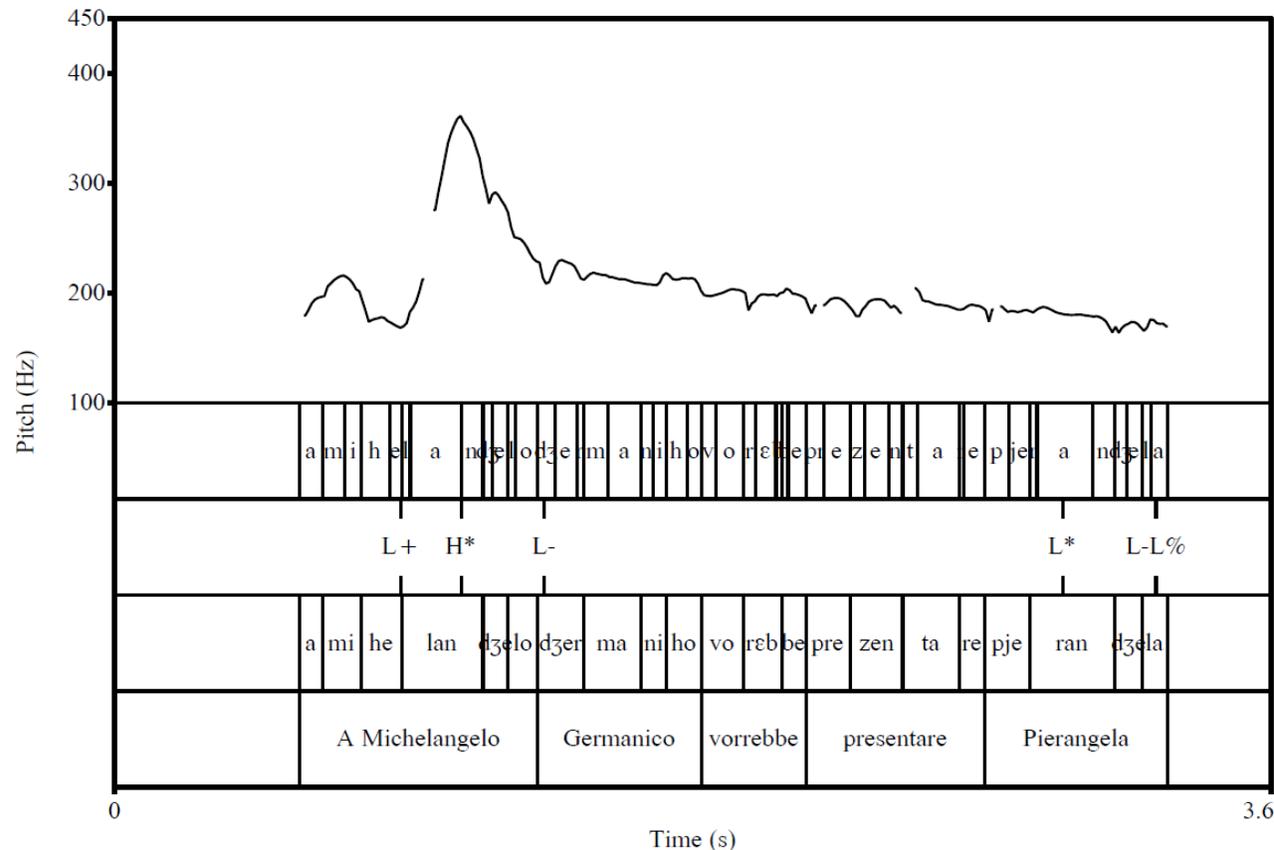
Topic vs Focus at PF

- On the other hand, the intonational contour associated to a topic-comment structure is "hilly" (a sequence of H and L: Bocci 2013), hence it is consistent with a topic in the comment of a higher topic

Topic contour

Focus contour

Generalisation 1, The PF-Approach is not general enough: A comparative counterargument

- An intonational clash clearly arises with double focus in languages like Italian. But can the intonational clash be the only causal factor excluding double focus in general? There are comparative reasons suggesting that the answer is no.

- In certain West African languages (Kwa), focus is not marked by a special intonational contour, but just by the morphological marker (Aboh 2004).

- And still, a double focus in the same clause is impossible:

(11) Gungbe: * wémà lɔ   **wɛ̀**   Sɛ́ná **wɛ̀**   zé

                    book the FOC   SENA   FOC   took   (Aboh 2004)

So, here the PF interface approach could not work, whereas the LF interface approach remains valid, under the natural assumption that the interpretive properties of focus constructions are essentially constant in Romance and Kwa.

Foci in distinct clauses in complex sentences: Romance vs Kwa

•Italian disallows two corrective foci occurring simultaneously in a main and in an embedded clause of a complex sentence:

(1)* A GIANNI ho detto che IL TUO LIBRO dovremmo leggere
        TO GIANNI I said   that YOUR BOOK we should read   (Rizzi 1997, fn. 15)

In (1997) I tried to derive this from the same LF interpretive clash that excludes double focus in a simple clause.

But this view is made unlikely by Aboh's observation that Gungbe permits a double focus in a complex sentence (with 1 focus per clause):

(2)   Sέná **wὲ**   sὲ   ɖɔ hi   lɔ **wὲ** Rὲmí zé   __
        Sena Foc   heard that knife the Foc Remi took   (Aboh 2004: 245)

The comparative pattern

- Italian and Gungbe exclude double LP focus in a simple clause.

- Presumably, double focus is excluded in general by the LF-clash: something can't be at the same time focus and presupposition.

- The focus-presupposition structure is computed clause by clause (perhaps a property derived by phase theory). So, nothing at the LF interface excludes different foci in different clauses in a complex sentence.

- In Italian, a double focus in a complex sentence is excluded by the PF constraint.

- Gungbe has no PF constraint, hence double focus in a complex sentence is allowed.

	Double focus	
	simple clauses	complex sentences
Italian	*	*
Gungbe	*	OK

Generalisation 1. The Locality Approach (Approach #3): An intervention effect?

- In case of double LP focalization, one focused phrase would inevitably cross the other, thus violating intervention locality (Relativized Minimality):

(1)* A GIANNI, IL TUO LIBRO   ho dato   __   __
     TO GIANNI, YOUR BOOK I gave

Generalisation 1. A problem for the locality approach

- The hallmark of intervention locality is the existence of asymmetries, in particular argument-adjunct. For instance, an argument is more easily extractable from a wh-island by focus movement than an adjunct:

(1) ? IL PRIMO PROBLEMA mi domando se potranno risolvere __ rapidamente (non il secondo)

    THE FIRST PROBLEM I wonder if they could solve __ rapidly (not the second)

(2) * RAPIDAMENTE mi domando se potranno risolvere il primo problema __ (non lentamente)

    RAPIDLY   I wonder if they could solve the first problem __ (not slowly)

Generalisation 1. A problem for the locality approach

But double focalization is sharply excluded, whether the crossing element is an argument or an adjunct:

(3)a. IL PRIMO PROBLEMA hanno risolto __ rapidamente (non il secondo)
        THE FIRST PROBLEM they solved rapidly (not the second)

    b. RAPIDAMENTE hanno risolto il primo problema (non lentamente)
        RAPIDLY they solved the first problem (not slowly)

    c. *IL PRIMO PROBLEMA, RAPIDAMENTE hanno risolto __ __ (non il secondo, lentamente)
        THE FIRST PROBLEM, RAPIDLY they have solved __ __ (not the second, slowly)

    d. *RAPIDAMENTE, IL PRIMO PROBLEMA hanno risolto __ __ (non lentamente, il secondo)
        RAPIDLY, THE FIRST PROBLEM they have solved __ __ (not slowly, the second)

So, the absence of asymmetries suggests that a pure locality approach to the ban would be insufficient.
Indeed, there is also a locality violation (3)c-d, but presumably the interface clash effect is so strong that it wipes out whatever additional effects there may be.

Generalisation 1. A problem for a locality approach in West African

Aboh (2004): a double focus is strictly prohibited in Gungbe in simple clause, but possible in complex sentence (one focus per clause):

(1) Gungbe: * wémà lɔ   **wɛ̀**   Sɛ́ná **wɛ̀**   zé
              book the FOC   SENA FOC took   (Aboh 2004)

(2)   Sɛ́ná **wɛ̀** sè   ɖɔ hi   lɔ   **wɛ̀** Rɛ̀mí zé   __
              Sena Foc heard that knife the Foc Remi took   (Aboh 2004: 245)

In the case of a complex sentence, an argument can be focus-extracted from the embedded clause across a focus, but not an adjunct:

(3) hi   lɔ   **wɛ̀** Sɛ́ná sè   ɖɔ Rɛ̀mi **wɛ̀** zé   __   (Aboh 2004: 245)
   knife the Foc Sena   heard that Remi Foc took

(4) *gbɔjé   mè   **wɛ̀** Sɛ́ná sè   ɖɔ   Rɛ̀mí **wɛ̀** xɔ   hi   lɔ   __   (Aboh 2004: 246)
   Holidays during Foc Sena   heard that   Remi Foc bought knife the

So, focus extraction across a focus shows the asymmetries, double focus (1) is always excluded.

Generalisation 2: Top > Foc in the left periphery

(1) GUNGBE

Un lìn [ɖɔ̀ [wémà éhè **yà** Súrù **wɛ̀** [-- ɖɔ́-ná xíá-ɛ̀]]]

1SG think that book DEM **TOP** Suru **FOC** have-to read-3SG

'I think that this book, SURU should read.' (Gungbe, E.O.Aboh 2004, p.c. 22-5-2018)

(2) BASAA'

bikaat$_i$ **gwɔ́-ɵ**, malêt$_j$ **ɲɛ́-n** t$_j$ a-bí-tí gwɔ́$_i$ baúdú

8books 8-TOP 1teacher 1-FOC 1SM-PST2-give 8them 2student

'The books, tHE TEACHER (not the assistant) gave them to the students'

(Bassong 2014)

(3) MAORI

Ko te hipi **nā** Pita I fihore

Ko the sheep *nā* Pita T/A fleece

'As for the sheep, it was Pita who fleeced it' (Pearce 1999)

(4) HUNGARIAN

Kiváncsi vagyot hogy Zeta **Top** kit **Foc** keresett

Curious be-PRES-1p that Zeta-NOM who-ACC looked for

'I wonder whom Zeta looked for' (Puskas 2000:226)

(5) JAMAICAN CREOLE

Da bwaai-**de** **a** di mango im tiif

That boy Top Foc the mango he stole

That boy, THE MANGO he stole' (Durrleman 2008:100)

Explaining the generalization: An interpretive condition on comment?

(1)   XP   Top   YP
     "Topic"   "Comment"

There are certain interpretive conditions on Topic and Comment. The notion of "comment" is very broad: any clausal structure can express a comment of some sort about a certain referent.

But it makes sense to at least require that **a comment contains a focus**, intended as a position which expresses new information (Lambrecht 1988, Halliday 1967):

(2) A comment must contain a focus position.

Otherwise a comment would simply be redundant with respect to what already is shared information between the speakers in discourse.

So (2) may be part of a theory of efficient linguistic communication, possibly to be connected to Grice's (1975) conversational maxims.

The derivation of the Top > Foc order

But then (2), combined with the uniqueness of focus, derives the Top > Foc order:

(2) A comment must contain a focus position.

If we had the opposite order Foc > Top, condition (2) would be violated

(3) * ... Focus Foc   [Topic   Top {_{comment}   ...   }]

In (3) the comment does not contain the focus, so that the order Foc > Top violates (2)

The opposite order is fine:

(4)   ... Topic   Top {_{comment} [Focus   Foc presupposition] }

Here the comment should contain a focus, in accordance with (2), and it does. So the order Top > Foc is deduced from (2)

Italian: an exception?

Rizzi (1997):   Force … Top … Foc … Top … Fin

(1) Alla festa, QUESTO, a Gianni, gli avreste dovuto dire, non quello che gli avete detto
    'At the party, THIS, to Gianni, you should have said, not what you said to him'
        TOP   FOC   TOP

What status does this topic position lower than focus have?

It is special in several respects:

But: the order Foc Top is hard to interpret for adults (and impossible for children)

Moscati, Manetti, Belletti, Rizzi (2016) Children's sensitivity to prosody and discourse-pragmatic conditions: the case of corrective focus in Italian. BUCLD Proceedings

Experimental subjects had to evaluate Pinocchio's correction of Alien's statement:

Condition 1: **Foc Top V**

(1) a. Alien. La giraffa ha battuto la tigre

 b. Pinocchio. No! LA ZEBRA la giraffa ha battuto

Condition 2: **Top Foc V**

(2) a. Alien. La giraffa ha battuto la tigre

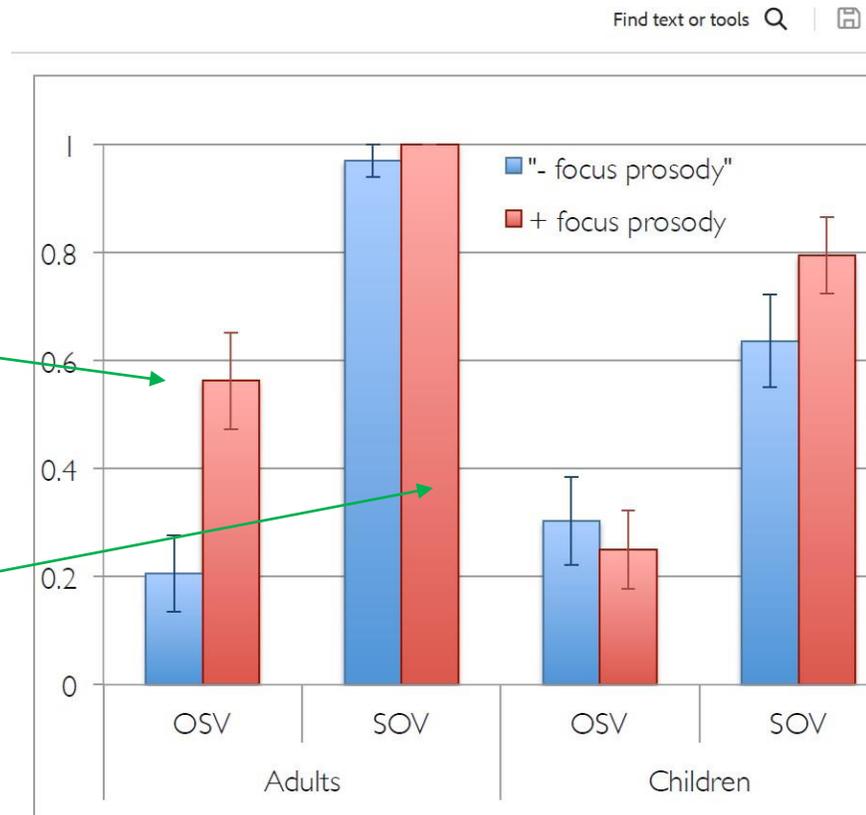 b. Pinocchio. No! la giraffa LA ZEBRA ha battuto

Fig. 4. Proportion of correct acceptances in each experimental condition. Error bars = 2.S.E

... the Top lower than Foc is hightly constrained: e.g., it cannot be contrastive

Rizzi, L. 2017. Locality and the functional sequence in the left periphery. In E. Aboh, E. Haeberli, G. Puskas, & E. Schoenenberger, eds. Elements of Comparative Syntax: Theory and Description. Mouton – De Gruyter. , building on Benincà é Poletto (2004).

(1)A: So che vorrebbero regalare un disco a Mario e un libro a Gianni...

     'I know that they would want to give a record to Mario and a book to Gianni...?

    B: No, a Mario UN LIBRO gli vorrebbero regalare, e a Gianni UN DISCO   **Top$_{contr}$ > Foc**

     'No, to Mario, A BOOK they would want to give, and to Gianni A RECORD'

    B':* No, UN LIBRO a Mario gli vorrebbero regalare, e UN DISCO a Gianni   ***Foc > Top$_{contr}$**

     'No, A BOOK to Mario they would want t ogive, and A RECORD to Gianni'

Only a **"familiarity topic"** (Frascarelli & Hinterhoelzl 2007, Bianchi & Frascarelli 2010) can occur after Foc. A contrastive topic cannot.

A possibility: a familiarity topic simply reiterates a higher topic, without projecting a full topic – comment structure.

Basaá conforms to the Top > Foc generalization…

Bassong, Paul Roger, Adriana Belletti & Luigi Rizzi. 2026. Topic and Focus in the Basaá left periphery: Apparent exceptions to the Top>Foc order and the 'Big DP' hypothesis. *Rivista di Grammatica Generativa,* 2026 Special issue (Festschrift for Carlo Cecchetto)..

In the Bantu language Basaá, a topic must precede the focus (here illustrated by a contrastive topic, marked by the class marker plus a zero morpheme; other types of topic have different markers; focus is marked by the class marker plus the morpheme –*n*))   NB Topic in blue, Focus in red

(1) **bikaat**$_i$ **gwɔ́-ø**,   *malêt*$_j$ *ɲɛ́-n*   a-bí-tí   **gwɔ́**$_i$ ɓaúdú
     books   8-TOP   1teacher1-FOC   1SM-PST2-give   8them   2students
     'the books, the TEACHER gave them to the students….'

(2)*malêt*$_j$ *ɲɛ́-n*   **bikaat**$_i$ **gwɔ́-ø**,   a-bí-tí   **gwɔ́**$_i$ ɓa-údú
     1teacher   1-FOC   books   8-TOP   1SM-PST2-give   8them   2students
     *The TEACHER, the books, gave them to the students

But there are two exceptions:

Two exceptions:

Exception 1: the Foc>Top order is possible when the contrastive topic is the subject:

(1) **ɓaúdú**ᵢ   **ɓɔ́-n**   *malêt*ⱼ   *ɲɛ́-ɵ*   a-bí-tí   bikaat
   2students   2-FOC   1teacher 1-TOP   1SM-PST2-give   books
   'It is to the students that the teacher gave the books (and the school director gave the pencils).'

Exception 2: A subject can be doubly market as focus and contrastive topic, with markers in the order Foc>Top:

(2) **malêt**ᵢ   **ɲɛ́-n**   **ɲɛ́-ø**   a-bí-tí   ɓáúdú   bikaat
    1teacher   1-FOC   1-CONTR   1SM-PST2-give   2students   8books
   'The teacher it is HIM that gave the students the books (whereas the parents gave them the pencils).'

With non-subjects, this order (and, more generally, double marking) is systematically barred.
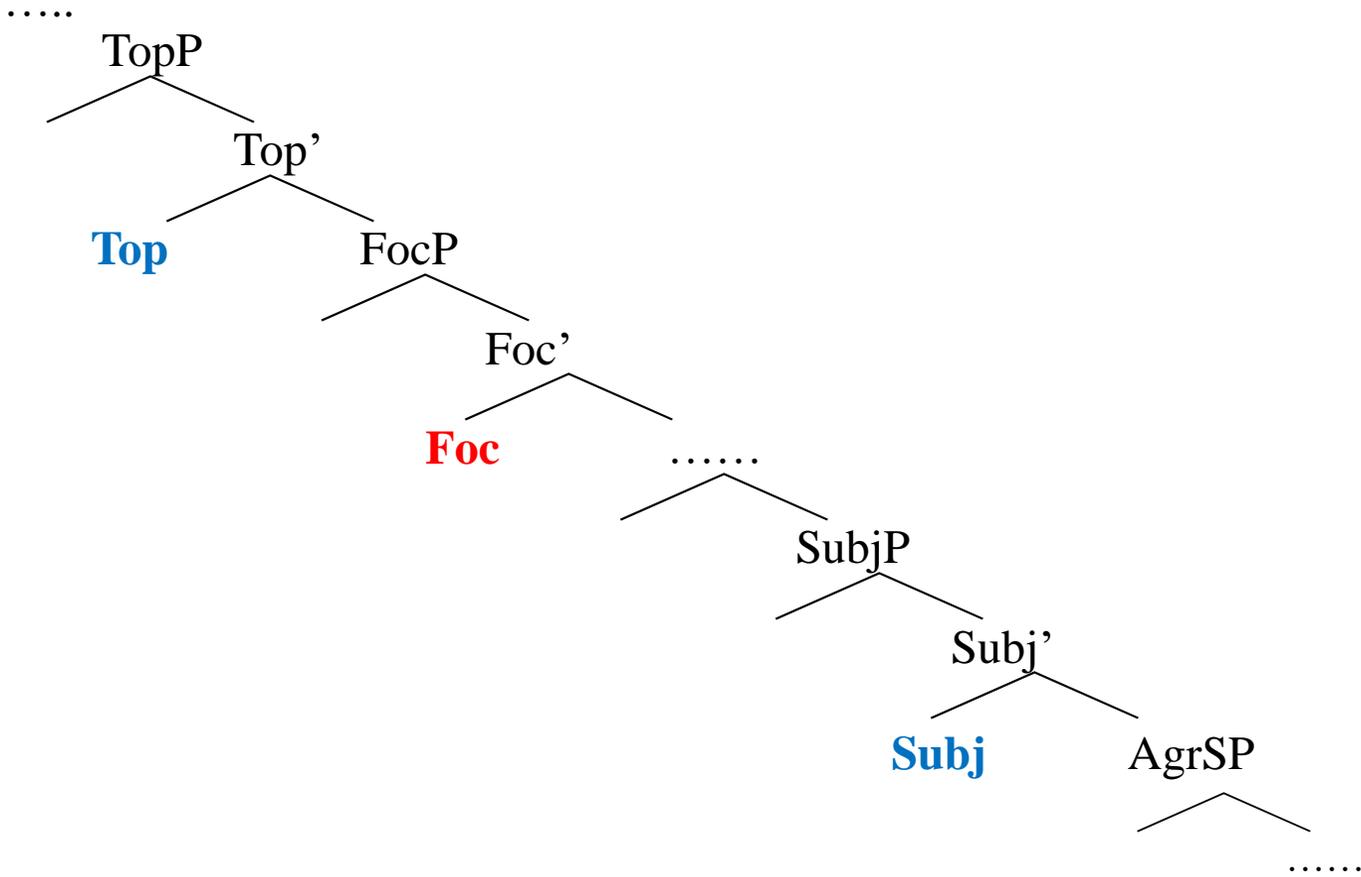
As both exceptions involve subjects, the analysis should plausibly capitalize on some specific property of subjects.

Topics and subjects

- Topics and Subjects notoriously share important properties (e.g. Li & Thompson 1976 and much subsequent literature) as subjects may carry topic–like properties such as specificity and D-linking, possibly associated to dedicated positions in the higher zone of the IP structure (Cardinaletti 2004, Shlonsky & Rizzi 2007).

- Rizzi (2005) proposes that both topics and subjects are configurationally represented by dedicated functional heads of the clausal spine, Top and Subj, thus expressing the Topic-Comment and Subject-Predicate articulations, respectively. Both heads define criteria, the Topic Criterion and the Subject Criterion, respectively.

- The two configurations remain clearly distinct for numerous reasons. For instance, their positions are different, as subjects are part of the IP structures whereas topics are higher, in the CP space, so that when subjects and topics co-occur, the order invariably is **Top>Subj**. Moreover, Spec-Subj is the terminal point of an **A-chain**, with its stringent locality conditions, whereas Spec-Top is the terminal point of an **A'-chain**, subjected to less stringent locality conditions. So, the two positions should be kept distinct.

- Still, they share an important constitutive property, the **"aboutness"** relation connecting complement and specifier: **the predicate is about the subject much as the comment is about the topic** (Rizzi 2005 and much subsequent work).

- Following Cardinaletti (2004), we assume SubjP to occur immediately on top of AgrSP, the layer that deals with verb agreement. The thematic subject moves through Spec AgrSP, where morphological agreement is checked, and then to Spec SubjP, the criterial position.

The map

(23)   .....

```
          TopP
         /    \
            Top'
           /    \
        Top     FocP
               /    \
                  Foc'
                 /    \
              Foc    ......
                    /    \
                       SubjP
                      /    \
                         Subj'
                        /    \
                     Subj    AgrSP
                            /    \
                               ......
```
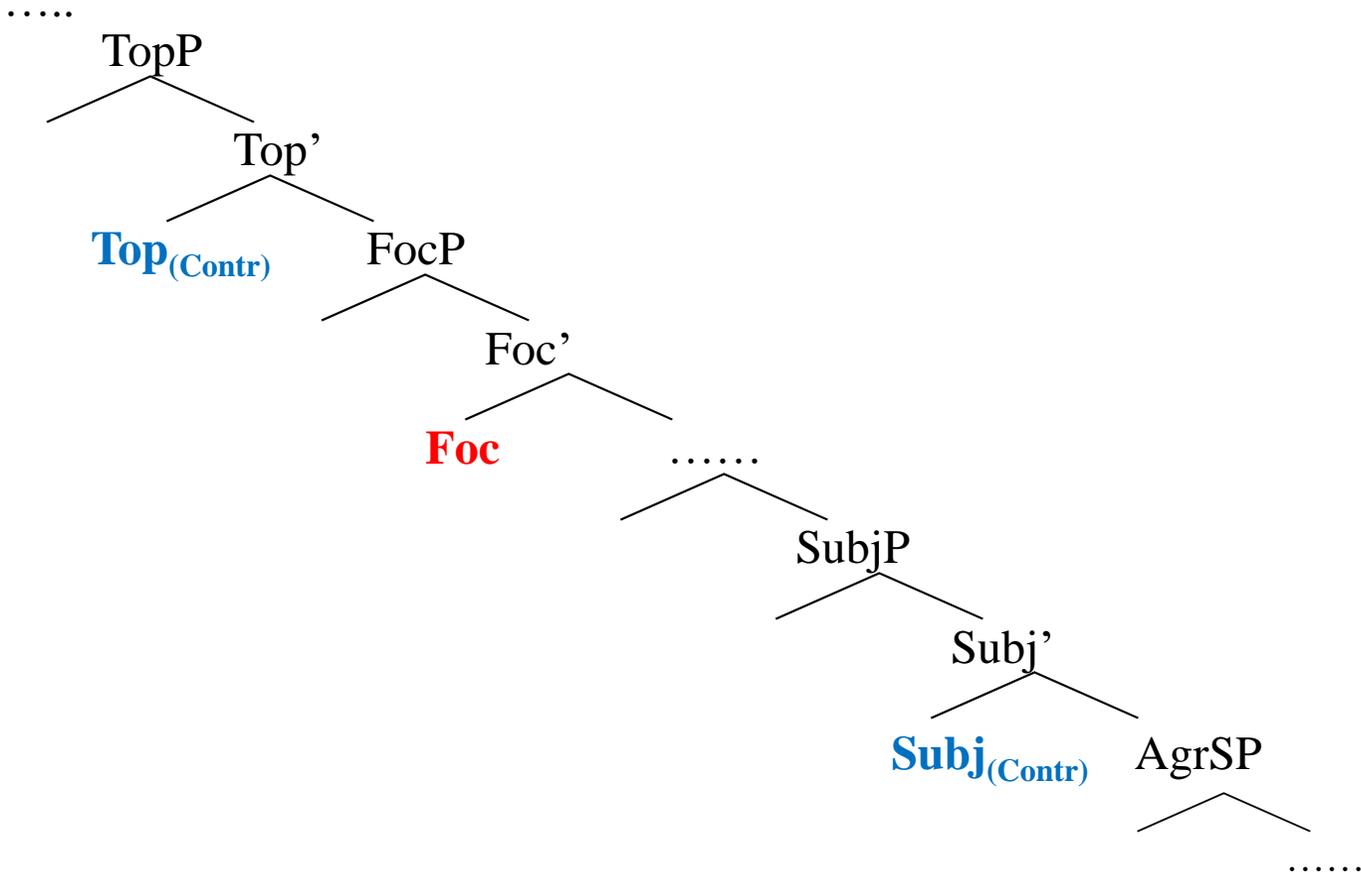
Hypothesis

- It is plausible Topic – Comment and Subject - Predicate, sharing the fundamental defining properties of aboutness, may share other properties as well, formally expressed in the morpho-syntax as features, and carrying interpretive contents visible at the interfaces.

- **Hypothesis**: Certain auxiliary features like [Contrastive], with their respective morphological manifestations, may be associated with both heads related to 'aboutness', Top and Subj.

(1) Top → Top$_{Contr}$

(2) Subj → Subj$_{Contr}$
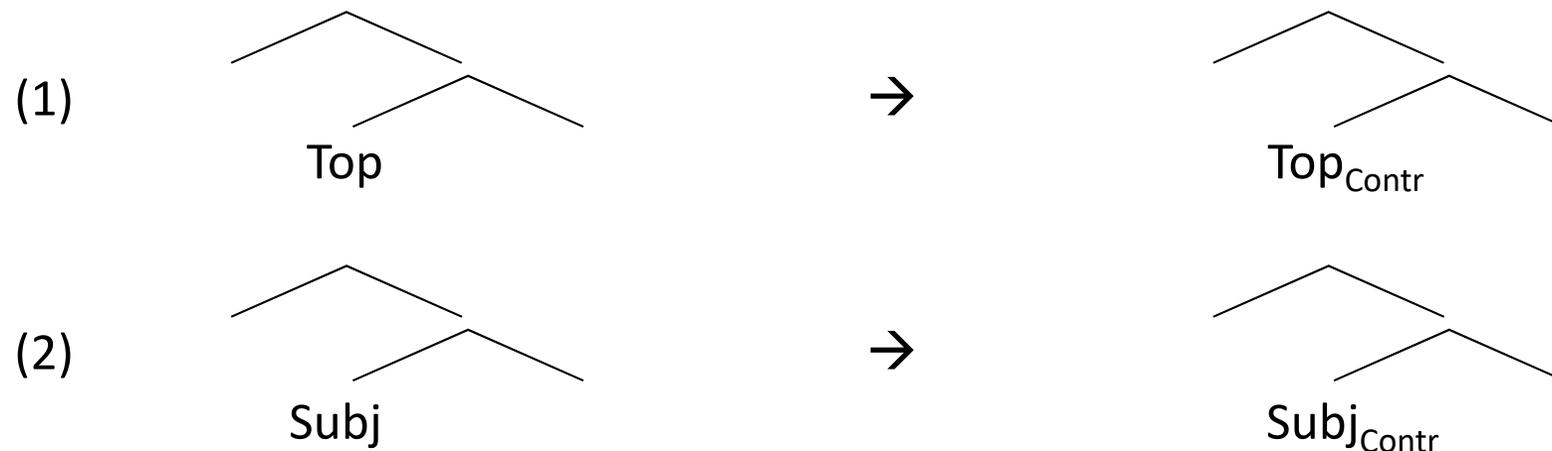
NB: I leave open here how the association is made (it could be through head movement, if Contr defines an independent functional head: see Lahousse, Laenzlinger, Soare 2014, Castiglione 2019) 41

The map

(23)   …..

TopP
    Top'
        Top(Contr)   FocP
                Foc'
                    Foc   ……
                                SubjP
                                    Subj'
                                    Subj(Contr)   AgrSP
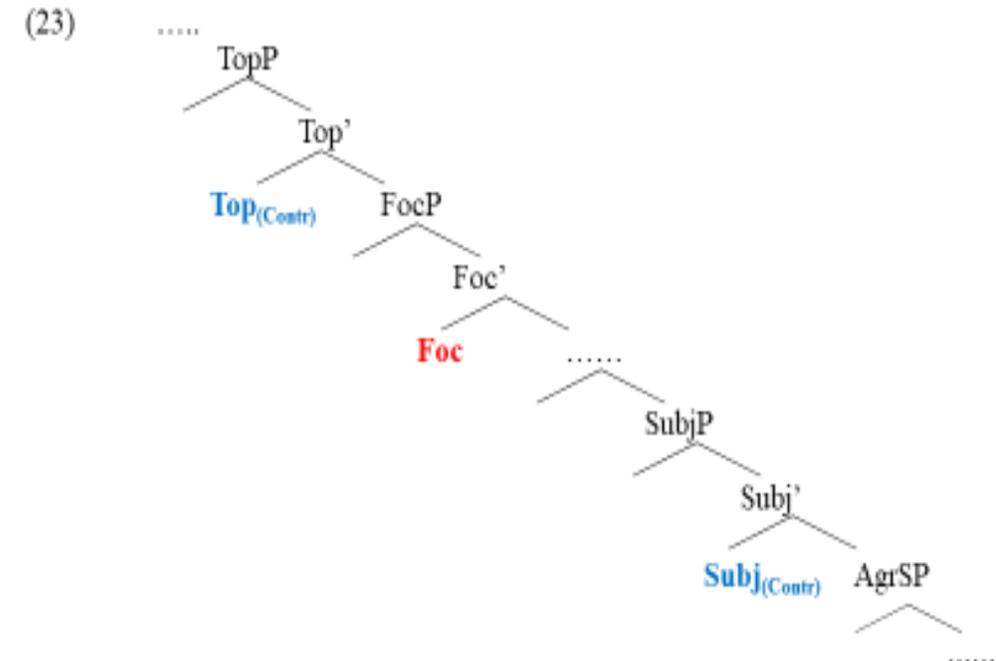   ……

Exception 1: Analysis

- For non-subjects, the only option to have a contrastive topic is to use the LP Top position, which always occurs higher than Foc, whence the order Top_{Contr} > Foc.

- When a subject is involved, the apparent order Foc > Top_{Contr} could in fact involve a contrastive subject, hence the ordering would actually be the expected Foc > $Subj_{Contr}$

The map

(23)   .....

TopP

Top'

$Top_{(Contr)}$ FocP

Foc'

Foc   ......

SubjP

Subj'

$Subj_{(Contr)}$ AgrSP

......

Exception 1: Analysis

Exception 1: the Foc>Top order is possible when the contrastive topic is the subject:

(1) **ɓaúdú**ᵢ **ɓɔ́-n** *malêt*ⱼ ɲɛ́-ɵ a-bí-tí bikaat

   2students 2-FOC 1teacher 1-TOP 1SM-PST2-give books

   'It is to the students that the teacher gave the books (and the school director gave the pencils).'

(25) FocP   DP$_{Foc}$ > DP$_{Subj}$ (Contr)

```
        FocP
       /    \
      DP      Foc'
   ɓaúdúⱼ    /    \
   students Foc    SubjP
           ɓɔ́-n    /    \
                  DP      Subj'
               malêtᵢ    /    \
               teacher  Subj   ArgSP
                        ɲɛ́-ø   /    \
                              DP    AgrS'
                            malêtᵢ  /    \
                                  AgrS    TP
                                   a     /  \
                                        T    vP
                                        bí   /  \
                                           DP    v'
                                         malêtᵢ  / \
                                                v   VP
                                                tí  /\
                                         give ɓaúduⱼ bikaat
                                                     books
```

44

Two exceptions:

Exception 1: the Foc>Top order is possible when the contrastive topic is the subject:

(1) **ɓaúdú**ᵢ   **ɓɔ́-n**   *malêt*ⱼ   *ɲɛ́-ө*   a-bí-tí   bikaat
   2students   2-FOC   1teacher 1-TOP   1SM-PST2-give   books
   'It is to the students that the teacher gave the books (and the school director gave the pencils).'

Exception 2: A subject can be doubly market as focus and contrastive topic, with markers in the order Foc>Top:

(2) **malêt**ᵢ   **ɲɛ́-n**   **ɲɛ́-ø**   a-bí-tí   ɓáúdú   bikaat
    1teacher   1-FOC   1-CONTR   1SM-PST2-give   2students 8books
   'The teacher it is HIM that gave the students the books (whereas the parents gave them the pensils).'

With non-subjects, this order (and, more generally, double marking) is systematically barred.

As both exceptions involve subjects, the analysis should plausibly capitalize on some specific property of subjects.

Exception 2: Analysis (first approximation)

- Exception 2: Double marking of a subject Foc – Contr.

(2) **malêt$_i$**   **ɲɛ́-n**   **ɲɛ́-ø**   a-bí-ti   báúdú   bikaat
   1teacher 1-FOC 1-CONTR   1SM-PST2-give 2students 8books

    'The teacher it is HIM (not the parents,) that gave the students the books.'

- The same structure could be exploited

- But a direct step-wise movement analysis would violate Criterial Freezing in Spec-SubjP

(35)
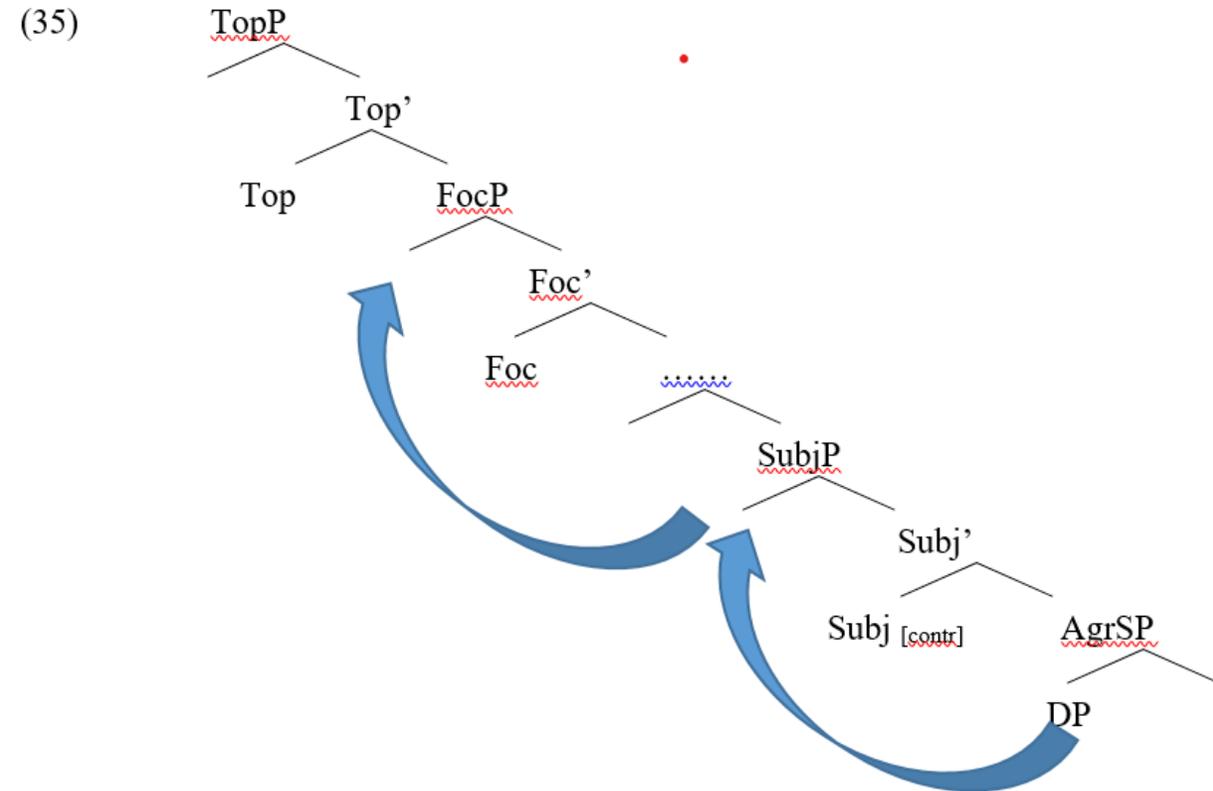
Exception 2: The Big-DP Hypothesis

- A more refined version can be based on the hypothesis that the subject DP can involve a complex structure as in (41) (Kayne 1972, Cecchetto 1999, 2000, Belletti 2005: The Big DP Hypothesis):

- DP1, headed by pro (Basaa is a null subject language) satisfies the Subject Criterion and remain there, so that Criterial Freezing is not violated.

- DP2 can be subextracted and moved to Spec-Foc. In the surface string we have
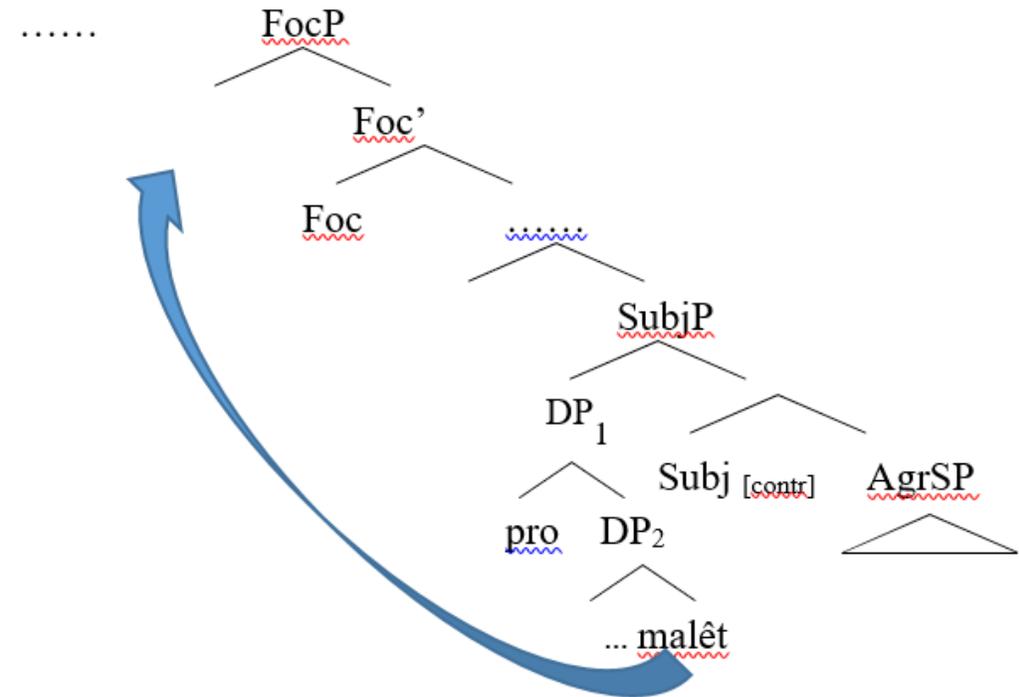
(1)   DP2 **Foc°** pro **Subj**_{Contr} …

Conclusion

Three factors converge to capture generalization 1: the exclusion of a double LP focus in languages like Italian:

    -An LF clash

    -A PF clash

    -A locality violation

The three factors can be teased apart across languages and in particular environments.

The PF clash is not general enough to cover the incompatibility across languages: languages like Gungbe do not assign special intonational contours to focus structures, and still double focus in simple clauses is excluded.

The locality factor leads to expecting Argument – Adjunct asymmetries, which are not found in simple clauses. Therefore, it is plausible **that the LF clash is the fundamental factor excluding double focus in simple clauses across languages.**

Moreover, the PF clash is the only factor excluding double focus in complex sentences in Italian.

And the locality violation is the only factor involved in constraining extraction of a focus across another focus in complex sentences in Gungbe, which manifests argument – adjunct asymmetries, as expected.

Conclusion

Generalization 2:   Top > Foc

A possible derivation from an interface condition on possible comments.

Exceptions in Romance: special properties of topic in Foc > Top configuration.

Two exceptions in Basaá restricted to topical subjects, which can follow a focus.

A possible solution based on the similarity of topic and subject, both accessible to an association with auxiliary features like contrast.

Thank you!

The criterial approach:
Focus - Presupposition

A'-Criterial heads assign interpretive scope-discourse properties to their dependents, much as   **theta-assigners** assign theta-roles to their dependents.

So, the Foc head assigns the interpretive property of «Focus» to its Spec, and of «Presupposition» to its complement:

(1)   [   ] **Foc** [   ]

         "Focus"   "Presupposition"

- **«Focus»** expresses **new information (**Halliday, M.A.K. 1967. Notes on transitivity and theme in English, *Journal of Linguistics 3., 199-244.*, Lambrecht. 1994. *Information Structure and Sentence Form*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.), and may be combined with an additional specification like **correctiveness** (the speaker corrects something that the interlocutor just said), **mirativity** (the speaker says something that falls outside previous natural expectations, etc.

- **«Presupposition»** expresses shared knowledge.

# An empirical argument supporting the computation of the presupposition clause by clause

A : –   Dopo due ore di riunione, Maria ha detto che si doveva finire…
        'After two hours of meeting, Maria said that we should stop'

 B: – Ricordi male! GIANNI ha detto qualcosa, non Maria;
        'You don't remember well! GIANNI said something, not Maria:

        e poi mi sembra che abbia semplicemente detto che voleva fare una pausa
        moreover I think he simply said that he wanted to take a break.'

* Here the presupposition seems to stop at the main VP (somebody said something): the subordinate clause does not have to be included in what is presupposed.

The computation of presupposition

This suggests that in Italian, much as in Gungbe, the computation of the presupposition stops at the simple clause which contains Foc:

Foc
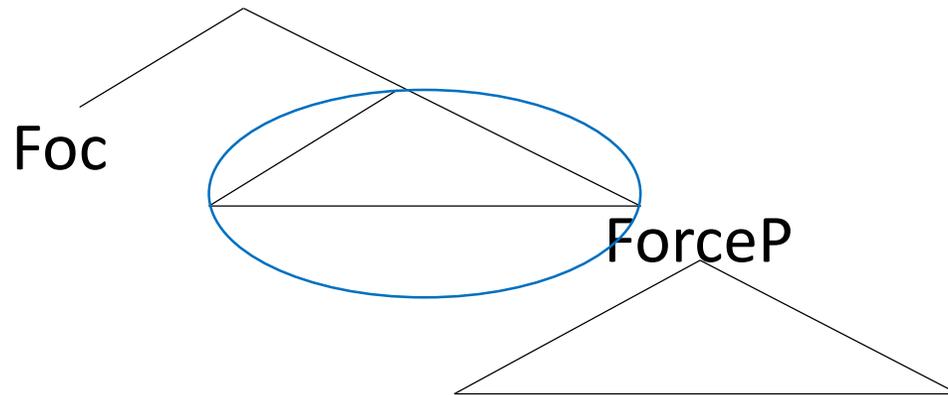
ForceP

This is expected under **phase theory**. If the presupposition is computed at the end of a phase, the system only sees the content of the current phase, not including the subordinate ForceP.