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Focus Movement to a Low FocusP in Double Complement Constructions

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Abstract Drawing on Anna Cardinaletti's work on Italian and previous research by the author and by Adriana Belletti, this paper argues that focus movement to a low focus position above vP can explain some of the alternations between the DP PP and the PP DP orders in the double complement construction in Brazilian Portuguese. The study develops the idea that movement of a focused constituent to the specifier of a low FocusP is followed by the fronting of the remnant vP to the specifier of a functional head merged immediately above FocusP.

Keywords Focus Movement. Double complement constructions. Ditransitives. Brazilian Portuguese.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Focus Movement in Syntactic Theory. – 3 "Low" or vP-Peripheral Focus. – 4 A Low FocusP in Double Complement Sentences. – 5 Conclusions.

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1 Introduction[1]

Anna Cardinaletti's work on the low FocusP in Italian – especially Cardinaletti (2016) – serves as the main source of inspiration for this contribution. I begin by reviewing the evidence for focus movement more generally, with particular attention to arguments in favor of movement to a low position within the clause. I then turn to focalization in double-complement sentences, focusing on data from Brazilian Portuguese. The analysis proposed here extends the account of low focalization developed for other constructions in Shlonsky and Rizzi (2018) and Shlonsky (2024).

2 Focus Movement in Syntactic Theory

A central issue that continues to preoccupy syntacticians working on information structure is the syntactic status of discourse-dependent semantic/pragmatic properties: are phenomena such as focus and topic encoded in syntactic structure, and if so, in what way?

The major milestones in the syntactic study of discourse-related properties begin with Chomsky's (1977) seminal paper, "On Wh Movement". In this work, Chomsky analyzed 'topicalization' – a term then used ambiguously to cover both focus fronting and topic fronting, distinct from left dislocation – as a specific subtype of wh-movement. Chomsky posited that the topicalized or focused constituent is associated with a wh-operator that moves and subsequently deletes. Later research reinterpreted "movement followed by deletion" as movement of a phonetically null operator. This analysis naturally leads to a refinement in which the focalized or topicalized constituent itself undergoes movement. This approach reflects the standard implementation of Chomsky's original proposal in contemporary research.

(1) ?I believe that that book, John gave ___ away to some friends.

1 I would like to thank the audiences and participants at two conferences held at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Florianópolis: *Zoom na Cartografia: Brazilian Portuguese under Cartographic Lenses* (2023) and *Romania Nova* (2024). I am especially grateful to Sandra Quarezemin for hosting me and for the many stimulating conversations we shared during my stay and beyond.

This contribution is dedicated to my dear friend and colleague Anna Cardinaletti, who has listened to me talk about these topics over countless spritzes on the Zattere. Her presence and insight are woven into nearly everything I write.

In (1), the targeted constituent, 'that book', appears in the surface string displaced from the position in which it receives its θ-role. Within theories of grammar that espouse syntactic movement (whether conceived as transformations or internal Merge), word order permutations make it relatively clear that the focused or topicalized element has moved.

However, there are instances where a focalized constituent, despite appearing in situ, exhibits properties indicative of covert movement. Such cases offer significant theoretical insights.

Chomsky (1976) examined the pattern illustrated in (2). While coreference between 'he' and 'John' is permissible in (2a), it is blocked in (2b), mirroring the impossibility observed in (2c). This supports the generalization that Weak Crossover (WCO) – the syntactic constraint prohibiting wh-movement across a coindexed pronoun – applies not only to overt wh-phrases, as in (2c), but also to focused constituents, as in (2b). Chomsky argued that in both ungrammatical instances, wh-movement generates an illicit WCO configuration: overtly in (2c) and covertly in (2b)

(2) a. The woman he_i loved called $John_i$.
b. *The woman he_i loved called $JOHN_i$.
c. *Who_i did the woman he_i loved call t_i?

In related work, Horvath (1986) demonstrated that in Hungarian – as well as in certain other languages such as Basque, e.g., Irurtzun (2016) – the interpretation of a constituent as focus requires overt syntactic movement to a position immediately to the left of the verb.

(3) a. Attila felt a földerngéstől.
Attila feared the earthquake-from
'Attila was afraid of the earthquake.'
b. Attila A FÖLDERNGÉSTŐL felt.
Attila THE EARTHQUAKE-FROM Feared.
'Attila was afraid OF THE EARTHQUAKE'
or: 'It was THE EARTHQUAKE that Attila was afraid of.'
c. Attila felt A FÖLDERNGÉSTŐL.
Attila feared THE EARTHQUAKE-FROM

The major contribution of the cartographic perspective to this discussion lies in identifying a dedicated structural position for the moved focus and specifying its location within the clausal hierarchy. This was Rizzi's (1997) central insight: the proposal of a fully articulated, X-bar – compliant projection labeled FocusP, situated in what he termed the *left periphery* of the clause. Focus

movement – whether overt or covert – targets Spec/FocusP. The head of this projection, Focus^0, is phonologically null in English but overtly realized in many other languages. For Hungarian, the natural analysis is that the focused constituent moves to Spec/FocusP, while the verb obligatorily raises and incorporates into a phonologically null Focus^0 – precisely the structure argued for in Puskás (2000).

3 "Low" or vP-Peripheral Focus

Many Bantu languages exhibit a focus position referred to as 'Immediately After the Verb' (IAV) (see Watters 1979 on Aghem, and the references to many other languages in van der Wal 2015). Unlike Hungarian, where the verb is in Focus^0 – immediately following the focused constituent – the verb in IAV languages surfaces immediately to the left of, and thus structurally above, the focused constituent. Given that the Bantu verb follows the subject in unmarked declarative clauses, its movement is generally assumed to be restricted to the TP domain. IAV focus is therefore a reliable diagnostic for a low Focus phrase, as many specialists have pointed out (for example, in the references listed in Buell et al. 2011, 695).

(4) a. fɨ́l á mɔ̀ zɨ́ kɨ́-bɛ́ án 'sóm. Aghem: Watters 1979
friends SM P2 eat fufu in farm
'The friends ate fufu in the farm.'

b. fɨ́l á mɔ̀zɨ́ án 'sóm bɛ́-'kɔ́.
friends SM P2 eat in farm fufu-DET

The IAV pattern parallels Romance 'postverbal focus.' In Italian, for instance, new information focus – including that of subjects – is realized postverbally. A focused subject must appear in this postverbal position and cannot be interpreted as new information focus in the canonical preverbal position (5) (Belletti 2001; 2004; Calabrese 1992). Belletti and Shlonsky (1995) argue that this low, postverbal position is also exploited for the focalization of direct and indirect objects, patterns I discuss in greater detail below.

(5) a. Chi ha mangiato la mela?
who has eaten the apple

b. L'ha mangiata GIANNI.
3s=has eaten-sf GIANNI.

b'. *GIANNI l'ha mangiata.
GIANNI 3s=has eaten-sf

Sentences in which lexical material intervenes between the verb and the focused subject exhibit varying degrees of marginality, as illustrated in (6) (Belletti 2004), where the intervening material is bolded. Various deviations from the strict IAV pattern have also been documented in Bantu languages (see, e.g., Buell 2009). These parallels suggest that the Romance and Bantu patterns of low focalization are sufficiently similar to warrant close comparison.

(6) a. Capirà **tutto** MARIA.
'Maria will understand everything.'
b. ?Capirà **completamente** MARIA
'Maria will completely understand.'
c. ??Capirà **il problema** GIANNI.
'Gianni will understand the problem.'

The typological parallel between Bantu and Romance regarding postverbal focus has not gone unnoticed (see, e.g., Aboh 2007; Costa, Kula 2008). However, while the existence of a FocusP in the clausal left periphery – along with movement to its specifier – is now widely accepted, the status of a low, VP-peripheral FocusP, as proposed by Belletti (2001; 2004), Jayaseelan (2001), and Ndayiragije (1999), remains a subject of substantial debate. Bonan (2021) provides a detailed overview of this discussion.

This debate is unsurprising, given that the word-order effects of low focalization are more subtle than those of left-peripheral focus. Specifically, distinguishing between movement to a dedicated low FocusP and in-situ focalization proves challenging.

Low focus interacts intricately with verb movement, the internal ordering of arguments within the vP, adverb placement, and other structural factors, as illustrated by the varying acceptability of the sentences in (6). Belletti (2004), for instance, argues that these three intervening elements occupy distinct positions and interact differently with both Case assignment and verb (or VP) movement.

4 A Low FocusP in Double Complement Sentences

4.1 Focus and the Linear Order of Complements in Brazilian Portuguese Double Complement Sentences

Belletti and Shlonsky (1995) argue the order of postverbal complements in Italian and Hebrew is sensitive to information structure, and permutations of this order entail movement of one of the focalized complements to a clause-internal FocusP. Similar

analyses have been proposed for Brazilian Portuguese – which, for independent reasons, lacks the subject inversion configuration in (5b) and (6), characteristic of Italian subject focus.

The default, 'neutral' order of complements in a Brazilian Portuguese double complement sentence is DO IO (Cépeda, Cyrino 2020, among others). This order remains unchanged – though see §4.4 – when the IO is focused, as shown in (7b). However, when the DO is focused, as it is in (8b), the order of complements is reversed: the DO now follows the IO (Quarezemin 2009; Cépeda, Cyrino 2020; Lacerda 2023), data adapted from Quarezemin (2009, 117). The DO IO order in (8b) is not to be equated with English Dative Shift: the dative preposition is retained, and the DO must be focalized.

(7) a. Pra quem o João deu um presente?
To-the who the João gave a Present
'Who did João give a present to?'
b. O João deu um presente PRA MARIA.
the João gave a present to-the Maria
'João gave a present TO MARIA.'

(8) a. O que o João deu pra Maria?
the what the João gave to-the Maria
'What did João give to Maria?'
b. O João deu pra Maria UM PRESENTE.
the João gave to-the Maria a present
'João gave A PRESENT to Maria.'

Since IO focalization in (7b) entails no change in word order, it is consistent with focalization in-situ, without recourse to movement to Spec/Focus. This view is defended in Lacerda (2023; 2025) and challenged below.

(8b) might involve movement of the DO to a right-hand Spec/Focus position, as Ndayiragije (1999) argues for Kirundi. Whether such an option exists is tied to the more general question of whether rightward movement operations – such as right adjunction, rightward specifiers, extraposition, right dislocation, or Heavy NP Shift – are licit operations. In other words, the issue turns on whether *c*-command relations and linear order are, or are not, interdependent.

Kayne's Linear Correspondence Axiom (Kayne 1994) entails the impossibility of rightward movement, thus substantially narrowing the range of grammars available to the language learner. The unavailability of rightward movement is, moreover, supported by the robust typological fact that word order patterns are overwhelmingly asymmetric. A compelling set of arguments to this effect is presented

in Cinque (2023). Taken together, these considerations support the hypothesis – that I adopt – that movement is invariably leftward.

Putting the option of rightward movement aside, there are several other conceivable (partial) derivations for (8b): (9a) is proposed in Cépeda and Cyrino (2020). (9b) is an alternative derivation, in which focus movement is followed by vP movement above FocusP, after which the verb and the subject are extracted and moved to their respective positions within TP/SubjP.[2]

(9) Possible derivations of (8b)

a. Movement of 'a present' to a (left) Spec/Focus and movement of 'to Maria' over it to the spec of a Topic head above FocusP.
…[$_{\text{TopicP}}$ [to Maria] Top0 [$_{\text{FocusP}}$ [a present] Foc0 [$_{\text{vP}}$…t_{DO} t_{IO}]]]

b. Movement of 'a present' to a (left) Spec/Focus and movement of the remnant vP above FocusP.
[$_{\text{vP}}$…v [to Maria] t_{DO}] … [$_{\text{FocusP}}$ [a present] Foc0 t_{vP}]]

In section 4.4, I develop an argument in favor of the derivation (9b), in terms of vP remnant movement above the low FocusP. My argument requires that we backtrack and ask whether, aside from word order considerations, there is independent evidence that movement to a l*ow* FocusP above vP is a genuine UG option. If it is available in the learner's toolkit, it stands to reason that it manifests itself, albeit in different ways in different grammars. The independent evidence comes from English pseudogapping, §4.2 and from a focus construction found in regional/colloquial Spanish and Portuguese, §4.3.

4.2 Focus Movement in English Pseudogapping

Surprisingly, English provides a robust source of evidence, despite the fact that focus movement of the type illustrated in (1) is only marginally acceptable and strictly limited in distribution compared to languages like Italian or Spanish, as Haegeman (2012) meticulously demonstrates. Indeed, the unmarked strategy for focus in English is intonational: under appropriate discourse conditions, all three arguments in (10) can bear focal stress.

2 Bošković (2018) argues that there are systematic exceptions to the ban on movement out of moved constituents, the 'freezing ban': Movement is tolerated of elements that are either base-generated at the edge of the moved constituent or obligatorily moved there. See also Bošković 2021. In the fronted vP in (9b), both the subject and the verb are on the edge of vP. Their movement out of the fronted vP doesn't therefore violate the freezing ban.

(10) a. JOANNA gave the book to Marta.
b. Joanna gave THE BOOK to Marta.
c. Joanna gave the book TO MARTA.

Focus movement in English can be detected in some ellipsis phenomena. In particular, pseudogapping is often analyzed as involving a step of low focus movement. Consider the examples in (11), all drawn from the literature: Gengel 2013; Jayaseelan 2001; Sailor, Thoms 2014; Thoms 2016.[3]

(11) a. Cathy didn't bring beer, but she did **whiskey**.
b. This should make you laugh, it did **me**.
c. The DA will prove Jones guilty, and the assistant will **Smith**.
d. Although John wouldn't give Bill the book, he would **the paper**.

Assuming that ellipsis invariably targets a constituent (i.e., that there is no scattered deletion), a straightforward analysis of (11) would have the remnant in pseudogapping moving out of vP, after which vP undergoes deletion. This was Jayaseelan's (2001) proposal, which has been adopted with slight variations in much of the current literature and is schematized in (13).

(12) a. Move some vP-internal constituent to a vP-peripheral FocusP.
b. Delete the complement of Focus°.

(13) Cathy didn't bring beer, but she did $[_{\text{FocusP}}$ **whiskey** Foc0 $[_{\text{~~vP~~}}$ ~~bring~~ ~~t~~$_{\text{~~whiskey~~}}]]$

As first argued by Larson (1988) and widely adopted in subsequent research, double-complement VPs are layered: the verb originates in the lowest VP and moves successively to the highest verbal head (presumably *v*), positioning it above both the direct and indirect objects. Pseudogapping occurs when one or both complements move out of the VP to a FocusP prior to VP ellipsis.

In (14a), the indirect object moves to Spec/FocusP, and the remnant VP – comprising the verb, the direct object, and the trace

3 Focus in pseudogapping is contrastive: the remnant is contrasted with an expression in the main clause (Konietzko, Winkler 2010; Stockwell 2020 and references cited.) Postverbal focus in Italian and Brazilian Portuguese is essentially new-information focus (although it may also be contrastive, depending on the context). I assume that the properties distinguishing these and other types of focus are not themselves coded in the low Focus head. High Focus0 appears to be more selective, as Cruschina (2011) argues on the basis of Sicilian focus movement. See also Bianchi, Bocci, Cruschina 2015.

of the focused indirect object – is elided. In (14b), the direct object undergoes focus movement; consequently, the elided VP contains its trace, the verb, and the indirect object. Finally, in (14c), the VP containing both complements (and presumably the verb traces) moves to Spec/FocusP, leaving a remnant VP that undergoes deletion. In all three cases, the target of ellipsis is the VP; what varies is the constituent extracted to Spec/FocusP prior to deletion.[4]

(14) a. I would give a Kindle to my son with less hesitation than I would to my daughter.
b. I would give a Kindle to my son with less hesitation than I would an iPad.
c. I would give a Kindle to my son with less hesitation than I would an iPad to my daughter.

Unlike Romance, English provides meager evidence for a low focus position. The fact that it is exploited in the relatively exotic environment of pseudogapping argues that UG makes it available. In English pseudogapping, the complement of Focus° undergoes ellipsis. I now discuss a case in which focus-movement of a constituent to the low FocusP is followed by *movement* of the complement of Focus°, not by deletion.

4.3 The Focalizing 'ser' Construction

Some varieties of Latin American Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese exhibit a focus construction known as the focalizing *ser* 'be' construction (FSC), see e.g., Bosque 1999; Camacho 2006; Curnow, Travis 2004; Kato, Mioto 2016; Méndez Vallejo 2009; 2015; 2019; Mioto 2012; Resenes, den Dikken 2012; Sedano 1990 and Toribio 2002. This construction is characterized by the presence of the verb 'be' immediately preceding a clause-internal focalized constituent and thus resembles the Bantu IAV construction discussed above. To express their meaning in English, some of the sentences in (15) are translated as clefts and pseudoclefts. However, there are significant differences between focalizing *ser* sentences and genuine clefts and pseudoclefts in these languages (see, e.g., Mioto 2012 and Kato, Mioto 2016).

4 It is likely that the target of deletion is actually vP (or VoiceP, see Merchant 2008) and not VP, since the subject moves out prior to deletion, but this is tangential to the main point.

(15) a. Eu vou comer **é** um cachorro-quente. Brazilian Portuguese
I going eat.INF be.PRES a hotdog.
'It is a hotdog that I'm going to eat.'
'What I'm going to eat is a hotdog.'

b. Juan comió **era** papas. Spanish
John eat.PST be-IMPERF potatoes
'It is potatoes that John ate.'
'What John ate is potatoes.'

c. Nosotras llegamos **fue** cansaditas Spanish
we.F arrive.PST be.PST tired.DIM.F
'We arrived TIRED.'

d. Mamá tenía que ir **era** Spanish
Mom need.IMPERF that go.INF be.IMPERF
al mercado.
to.the market
'It was to the market that Mom had to go.'

e. Me da miedo **es** la arena. Spanish
me give.PRES fear be.PRES the sand
'It is sand that frightens me.'
'What frightens me is sand.'

Example (16) – from Camacho (2006) – shows that the focalizing 'be' is not the copular 'be', as the two may cooccur.

(16) Mi hermano estaba era triste.
My brother be.IMPERF.COP be.IMPERF sad
'It was sad that my brother was.'
What my brother was was sad.

Following discussions with Luigi Rizzi, I would like to suggest that the derivation of the FSC involves the following steps.

(17) a. Movement of a constituent to Spec/Focus above vP.
b. Merge of the 'special', focus-related 'be'.
c. Movement of the remnant vP – the complement of Focus0 – to Spec/'be'
d. Movement of the verb and the subject out of the extracted vP to T and Spec/Subj, respectively.

Steps (a-c) of the derivation of an FSC such as (18b), are schematized in (19).

(18) a. ¿Qué trajó Laura? Méndez Vallejo (2015, 68)
what bring.PST Laura
'What did Laura bring?'
b. Laura trajó fue Sangría.
Laura bring.PST be.PST sangria
'It was sangria that Laura brought.'
'What Laura brought was Sangria.'

(19) a. [$_{vP}$ Laura trajó sangría] Merge of Foc and move of *sangria*:
b. Sangría Foc0 [$_{vP}$ Laura trajó __] merge of *be*:
c. *be* [$_{FocusP}$ sangría Foc0 [$_{vP}$ Laura trajó __]] vP movement
d. [$_{vP}$ Laura trajó __] *be* [$_{FocusP}$ sangría Foc0___]

In this analysis, FocP is the complement of the 'focalizing' *ser*. I take the head lexicalized by *be* to both select FocusP and attract its complement to its specifier. In Shlonsky (2024), I argue that this analysis is valid for other constructions involving a clause-internal FocusP such as inverted copular constructions (on which, see also Rizzi 2015 and Shlonsky, Rizzi 2018) and Bantu subject-object inversion. FocusP is selected by a head that I label SelF° "Select Focus", which also attracts the complement of Foc°, triggering its movement to Spec/SelFP.

4.4 Focus Movement and vP/VP fronting in double complement sentences

Extending this analysis to focalization in the double complement construction is straightforward, under the assumption that a (null) 'be' – of the sort that is overtly realized in FSCs – is merged above FocP, and attracts vP to its spec.

Consider first focalization of the indirect object, as in the exchange in (7), repeated below. Focus movement of the PP *pra Maria* to Spec/FocusP is followed by vP movement. As a result, the DO ends up to the left of the IO, re-establishing the default order. The (relevant part of the) derivation of (7b) is given in (20).

(7) a. Pra quem o João deu um presente?
To-the who the João gave a present
'Who did João give a present to?'
b. O João deu um presente PRA MARIA.
the João gave a present to-the Maria
'João gave a present TO MARIA.'

(20)	a.	[$_{vP}$ …DO …IO…]	Base order is DO IO. Merge Focus0 and move IO to Spec/Focus:
	b.	[$_{FocusP}$ IO Foc0 [$_{vP}$…t_{IO}…DO…]]	Merge BE (null 'be') and move vP to its spec:
	c.	[[$_{vP}$…t_{IO}…DO…] BE [$_{FocusP}$ IO Foc0 t_{vP}]]	

Since the order of complements in the output of step (20c) is the same as in the default DO IO order, one might wonder whether the IO here is simply focalized in situ. Let us leave this question pending while we turn to focalization of the direct object, as in the exchange in (8). The proposed derivation of (8b) is in (21).

(8)	a.	O	que	o	João	deu	pra	Maria?
		the	what	the	João	gave	to-the	Maria
		'What did João give to Maria?'						
	b.	O	João	deu	pra	Maria	UM	PRESENTE
		the	João	gave	to-the	Maria	a	present
		'João gave A PRESENT to Maria.'						

(21)	a.	[$_{vP}$ …DO …IO…]	Base order is DO IO. Merge Focus0 and move DO to Spec/Focus:
	b.	[$_{FocusP}$ DO Foc0 [$_{vP}$…t_{DO}…IO…]]	Merge BE (null 'be') and move vP to its spec:
	c.	[[$_{vP}$…t_{DO}…IO…] BE [$_{FocusP}$ DO Foc0 t_{vP}]]	

In the output of (21c), the direct object is carried along by vP-fronting to Spec/BE. The order of the two complements in (8b) reverses the base order. If focalization occurred in situ, the reversal of the complements would be unexpected.

Quarezemin (2009) observes that IO DO in (8b) is not the only possible word order in the answer to (8a); DO IO in (22) is also an option.

(22)	O	João	deu	UM	PRESENTE	pra	Maria.
	the	João	gave	a	present	to-the	Maria
	'João gave A PRESENT to Maria.'						

(22) cannot be derived in the way I have suggested: If vP is fronted over FocusP, the IO should end up to the left of the focus, as it effectively does in (21c). Prima facie, the grammaticality of (22) alongside that of (8b), suggests that focalization of the complement in Brazilian Portuguese double complement sentences can *either* incur focus movement and vP fronting – in (8b) –, or occur in-situ – in (7b) and (22).

I now argue that neither (7b) nor (22) exemplify in-situ focalization. Rather, the derivation of both depends on the dual operations of focus movement to a vP-external focus position and of vP fronting above it.

Quarezemin (2009) also notes the ungrammaticality of (23), (as an answer to (7a)).

(23) ??O João deu PRA MARIA um presente.
the João gave to-the Maria a present
'João gave Maria a present.'

(23) cannot be derived if vP is fronted over FocusP, as the DO appears stranded to the right of the IO. But note that (23) is also problematic for an in-situ analysis of focalization, since the unmoved order of complements is DO IO and not IO DO.

Lacerda (2023), moreover, shows that if the DO in (23) is definite, the sentence is grammatical.

(24) O João deu PRA MARIA o Programa Minimalista.
the João gave to-the Maria the Program Minimalist
'João gave Maria the Minimalist Program.'

The contrast between (23) and (24) leads Lacerda to argue that the DO in these examples is a Topic. A distinctive property of Topics that Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007) name 'familiar topics' is that they must be definite. This is the reason for which (24) is grammatical and (23) is not, as Lacerda (2023) proposes.

Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (2007) demonstrate that in the Italian (clausal) left periphery, familiar topics occur only to the right of and hence below FocusP, as opposed to contrastive or aboutness shift topics, which occur above FocusP. Cardinaletti (2016) – the source of the examples in (25b) ((25a) is from Benincà and Poletto 2004) – provides several additional arguments in favor of this cartography.

(25) a. A GIANNI, un libro di poesie, lo regalerete,
to Gianni, a book of poetry, 3MS.DAT.CL give-FUT.2PL,
non a Maria
not to Maria.
'A book of poetry, you'll give GIANNI, not MARIA.'

b. A GIANNI, questo libro di poesie, lo regalerete,
to Gianni, this book of poetry, 3MS.DAT.CL give-FUT.2PL,
non a Maria.
not to Maria.
'This book of poetry, you'll give GIANNI, not MARIA.'

Cardinaletti (2016) further argues that familiar topics are the only kinds of topics that can appear 'right dislocated' in Italian. Right dislocation, for her, involves movement of the entire SubjP above the left-peripheral Familiar TopicP (presumably to a higher TopicP, since familiar topics can be recursive).[5]

Cardinaletti's analysis can straightforwardly accommodate the Brazilian Portuguese data discussed above. (24) and (22), include 'right-dislocated' topics, the DO in the first example and the IO in the second. In both examples, the topics are merged in the clausal left periphery, and SubjP raises above them.

Arguably, then, (22) is *not* a case of in-situ focalization. The only examples of focalization *without* topicalization are (7b) and (8b), where the focused constituent appears clause-finally. I conclude from this discussion that the focalization + vP fronting operations yield a valid description of the data and one does not need to assume that focalization in-situ is an option in this environment.

5 Conclusions

In the preceding sections, I have presented new evidence in favor of focus movement to the low, vP-peripheral FocusP proposed in recent work (e.g., Shlonsky 2024; Shlonsky, Rizzi 2018). I argued that movement to this FocusP is systematically followed by fronting of the complement of Focus° to the specifier of a head merged immediately above FocusP.

This final step plays a central role in the proposed analysis of focalization in double complement sentences. The analysis leads to the question of whether vP (remnant) movement is optional or a general property of the derivation. Specifically, does the merger of a Focus head inherently trigger the subsequent merger of a higher head that attracts the remnant vP to its specifier?

I have suggested that the low Focus head is selected by such a higher head – one that not only attracts the verbal/predicative complement of Focus but also carries a semantics related to focus structure. A natural hypothesis is that this head encodes *givenness* (see Kratzer, Selkirk 2020 on givenness as a functional category).

In support of this view, I proposed that the head is morphologically realized by the verb 'ser' in the Focalizing 'Ser' Construction discussed in §4.3, and that comparable configurations can be observed in other grammars where the focused constituent appears below the head that determines its position – such as the immediately-after-verb (IAV)

5 For Cardinaletti (2002), (2016), Italian does not make use of a vP-peripheral TopicP, of the sort assumed in Belletti 2001, 2004 and Cépeda, Cyrino 2020.

focus position in Bantu languages. Finally, the logic of the proposed architecture leads to the suggestion that in English pseudogapping, the constituent targeted for deletion is first moved to the specifier of the Focus-selecting head, prior to ellipsis.

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