ON CORRECTIVE FOCUS IN ITALIAN

1. **High vs. low focus**. In Italian (as in English) focus can be realized by making prominent an element either in a displaced position (1B) or *in situ* (1B'):

(1) A: So che Gianni ha studiato l'arte giapponese …   [I know John studied Japanese art]
    B: L'arte ciNESe ha studiato (non quella giapponese).   [Chinese art he studied]
    B': No, ha studiato l'arte ciNESe (non quella giapponese).   [No, he studied Chinese art]

The apparent optionality of movement raises an obvious problem for feature-driven approaches: why should the [focus] feature trigger overt movement only in a subset of cases? (On low focus in Italian see a.o. Frascarelli 2000, Belletti 2004, Brunetti 2004).
Horvath (2008) and Neeleman & van de Koot (2008) propose a non-feature driven analysis: optional movement is driven by an interface strategy aimed at identifying the remnant constituent as the background. Suppose, for the sake of the argument, that overt movement as in (1B) creates a transparent structure to be mapped into a structured proposition; but then, how is (1B') interpreted? Either we fall back on covert movement, or we have to assume two distinct mapping procedures at the interface. A weaker position (Brunetti 2009) is that overt movement merely blocks focus projection.
A different line of attack is to link the two positions to distinct interpretations. In Hungarian, fronted focus is licensed by an exhaustivity operator (Horvath 2008, Kiss 1998). In English and Italian, left-peripheral focus is (mainly) contrastive, but this interpretation is not confined to the fronted position: both (1B) and (1B') are instances of contrastive focus, and both are marked by the same L+H* pitch accent. Notably, the low position can express new information focus when associated with an H+L* pitch accent.

2. **Asymmetries**. (1) exemplifies the *corrective* use of contrastive focus (van Leusen 2004; Umbach 2004), whereby a speaker corrects a previous assertion. Limiting our discussion to this use, we show that fronted focus and focus *in situ* differ in a number of respects:
(i) In the answer to a genuine question, fronted focus is inappropriate:

(4) A: Gianni è andato a Londra?   [Did G. go to London?]
    B: No, è andato a BerLIno (non a Londra).   [No, he went to BerLIN]
    B': # No, a BerLIno è andato (non a Londra).   [No, to BerLIN he went]

(ii) When the contrastive set of alternatives does not coincide with that of the previous assertion, but is linked to it by an inferential relation, fronted focus is inappropriate:

(5) A: Gianni adora il sushi.   [Gianni likes sushi]
    B: Adora la cucina ciNESe, in realtà, non quella giapponese.
        [(He) likes Chinese cooking, actually, not Japanese cooking]
    B': # La cucina ciNESe adora, in realtà, non quella giapponese.
        [Chinese cooking (he) likes, actually, not Japanese cooking]

(iii) The background of focus *in situ* can contain additional material w.r.t. the corrected assertion (*classical dance* in (6C)), whereas the background of fronted focus is "frozen":

(6)A: Dove studia Gianni ora?   [Where does Gianni study?]
   B: Studia all'SOAS di Londra.   [(He) studies at the SOAS in London]
   C: No, studia (danza classica) alla Royal Ballet SCHOOL. [No, he studies (cl. dance) at RBS]
   C': (No), alla RBSCHOOL studia (#danza classica). [(No), at the RBS he studies (#cl. dance)]

3. **The corrective move.** We argue that corrective fronted focus introduces a complex conversational move which rejects a proposed update of the common ground, and at the same time proposes a different update (cf. van Leusen 2004). In particular, the speaker replaces the focus part of the previously asserted proposition, while leaving unaffected the background. This is why (i) the previous conversational move must have assertive force (or at least induce accommodation of the relevant proposition), cf. (4), and (ii) the contrastive set of alternatives of the correction must be congruent with that of the relevant previous assertion, cf. (5).

Van Leusen (2004, §5) argues that for a correction to be felicitous, there must be an «antecedent» proposition in the context such that the corrective claim is *incompatible* with it. However, not all of the corrective claim is incompatible with the antecedent, but only the focus is. Van Leusen (2004, §2) also argues that in case of a non-monotonic update, like a correction, the participants are required to retract from the common ground the minimal amount of information that is sufficient to guarantee consistency. In a structured proposition format ((1B) = ⟨CHINESE.ART, [λy.STUDIED(y)(GIANNI)]⟩), we may assume that only the focus element is marked as incompatible with the antecedent, whereas the background element is *validated*. Thus, the participants will retract from the common ground only a proper part of the antecedent (structured) proposition. Since the background of the corrective claim validates the background of the antecedent, the two must be semantically parallel (property (iii) cf. (6)). As focus *in situ* does not share properties (i)-(iii), we are led to conclude that it does not implement a corrective move in the same way: in particular, it does not "break up" the proposition into an incompatible part and a validated part. We speculate that focus *in situ* is just contrastive; by using a contrastive focus structure whose second element is overtly negated, the speaker indirectly achieves a corrective effect.

4. **Overt movement**. The non-equivalence of fronted focus and focus *in situ* suggests that there is no real optionality. But why must corrective focus be fronted? One possibility is to link overt movement to exhaustivity (*pace* Horvath 2008, §6 on Italian). Van Leusen (2004, §5) argues that incompatibility may arise from information structure if focus not only is contrastive, but also triggers an exhaustivity presupposition (e.g. in (1), the only discipline that Gianni studied is Chinese art); in this way, the antecedent need not be overtly denied.

Another possible answer is to link this type of focus to illocutive force. Correction has a clear impact on the management of the common ground (Krifka 2007): therefore, it seems plausible to assume that corrective focus gets licensed in the neighborhood of a root illocutive operator (cf. Haegeman 2004). Recall that in the corrective move focus and background play a different role in updating the common ground; we speculate that this is why they must be overtly separated.

Selected references: Belletti, A. 2004. In L. Rizzi (ed.), *The Structure of CP and IP*,16-51. Oxford University Press. **Brunetti, L. 2004.** *A Unification of Focus*. Padova, Unipress. **Brunetti, L. 2009**. In A. Dufter & D. Jacob (eds.), *Focus and Background in Romance Languages*, 43-82, John Benjamins. **Frascarelli, M. 2000**. *The Syntax-Phonology Interface in Focus and Topic Constructions in Italian*, Kluwer. **Haegeman, L. 2004**. In: *Proceedings of the Dislocated Elements Workshop*, Berlin, ZAS. **Horvath, J. 2008**. lingBuzz/000860. **Kiss, K. É. 1998**. *Language* 74, 245-273. **Krifka, M. 2007.** In Féry, Fanselow & Krifka (eds.), *Interdisciplin-ary Studies on Information Structure* 6, 13-56, Univ. Potsdam. **Neeleman, A. & van de Koot, H. 2008**. *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 11.2, 137-189. **Umbach, C. 2004**. *Journal of Semantics* 21.2, 155–175. **van Leusen, N. 2004**. *Journal of Semantics* 21.4, 415-442.