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# Discourse Functions of Fronted Foci in Italian and Spanish<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the discourse functions of fronted focus (FF) in Italian and Spanish. I propose that the peculiarity of FF is that the focus is unambiguously identifiable in the sentence, so the antecedent of the focus variable is accessible even when not explicitly present in previous context or not easy to recover, namely in contrastive contexts; when the focus goes against shared knowledge among the interlocutors; and when the focus answers an implicit question or a question that is too far away in the discourse.

By means of corpus data, I also show that FFs are frequently quantified expressions, expressions of predicative qualification, demonstrative pronouns, and expressions associated with focus sensitive particles. I explain how these expressions are compatible with the discourse functions of FF.

## 1 Introduction

Consider the boldfaced sentences in (1)-(2), taken from a corpus of spontaneous conversations in Spanish (1) and Italian (2).<sup>2</sup>

### (1) efamd120

UEL: [...] el argumento está muy bien, el Shakespeare este, es un tío [...] listo  
‘the plot was very good; that Shakespeare, he is a smart guy’

OÑO: lo mismo, le pagan de guionista, en Hollywood, una pasta  
‘they probably pay him a lot as a script writer in Hollywood’

UEL: Si se enteran de lo bien que escribe, pues seguro que le fichan  
‘if they realize how good he is at writing, they’ll hire him no doubt’

OÑO: Seguro que le fichan para Hollywood; [**un OSCAR**] *se lleva*, vamos.  
an Oscar RFL he.takes really  
‘They’ll hire him in Hollywood, no doubt; he’ll get an Oscar, I bet’

### (2) ifamd101

a. *De Niro [...] sa imporre solo se stesso, come un certo tipo di personaggio, e basta; cioè, in tutti i film che ho visto si comporta e agisce sempre allo stesso modo [...]; cioè, lui, sul set, può essere solo in quel modo [...]*

‘De Niro [...] can only impose himself, as a certain type of character, and that’s all; that is, in all movies I’ve seen, he always behaves and acts in the same way [...]; that is, on set he can only be that way [...]

b. *ed [**in QUESTO**] sta la sua bravura.*

and in that stays the his skill

‘and THAT is his strong point’

These sentences are characterized by a non-canonical word order: the Direct Object (DO) in (1) and the Indirect Object (IO) in (2) occupy a sentence initial, preverbal position instead of their canonical post-verbal position, and the subject occupies a post-verbal position rather than the canonical preverbal one. Furthermore, instead of descending intonation with main prominence at the end, which is typical of Italian and Spanish canonical sentences, main prominence (indicated with capital letters) falls on the displaced element (delimited by square brackets). In these languages main prominence – the so-called nuclear accent – is associated with the focus or part of the focus (see

Zubizarreta 1998, 1999, Cinque 1993, a.o.). Therefore, from a pragmatic point of view, these sentences have a *focus-background* structure.

As observed in the description made by Benincà (1988 [2001]) and Salvi (1988) (among others) for Italian, these constructions are further characterized syntactically by the absence of a resumptive clitic pronoun inside the clause, which distinguishes them from the so-called ‘Clitic Left Dislocation’ (cf. 3a vs 3b).<sup>3</sup> Still unlike a Clitic Left Dislocation, no more than one element can be fronted (see 4).<sup>4</sup>

- (3) a. [*Tuo FRATELLO*] *ho visto*.  
 your brother I.have seen  
 ‘(It’s) your brother (that) I have seen’  
 b. *Tuo fratello, l’ho visto*.  
 your brother him.CL I.have seen  
 ‘(As for) your brother, I have seen him’

- (4) \* [*Mio FIGLIO*], [*una POESIA*] *ha scritto*.  
 my son a poem has written

These constructions have instead some characteristics in common with wh-interrogatives, for instance the verb tends to be adjacent to the displaced element (cf. 5a and 5b).<sup>5</sup>

- (5) a. \**Che cosa Giorgio porta?*  
 that what Giorgio brings  
 b. \* [*Il DOLCE*] *Giorgio porta*.  
 the cake Giorgio brings

The Spanish construction has the same properties. The following examples from Zubizarreta (1999) show that the fronted element is not resumed by a clitic inside the clause (6a); it has to be adjacent to the verb (6b); and no more than one element can be fronted (6c).

- (6) a. [*El DIARIO*] (\**lo*) *compró Pedro*.  
 the newspaper it.CL bought Pedro  
 b. \* [*El DIARIO*] *Pedro compró*.  
 the newspaper Pedro bought  
 c. \* [*La MANZANA*], [*a EVA*], *le dio Adán*.  
 the apple to Eve to.her.CL gave Adam

Zubizarreta also points out that the fronted element can be separated from its sentence by several intermediate sentences (7a). The same is true for Italian (7b): though pragmatically rather odd, the sentence is syntactically fine.

- (7) a. [*MANZANAS*] *me aseguran que dijo María que compró Pedro*.  
 apples me.CL they.ensure that said María that bought Pedro  
 ‘It’s apples that they ensure that María said that Pedro bought’  
 b. [*MELE*] *mi confermano che abbia detto Maria che Pietro ha comprato*.  
 apples to.me.CL they.confirm that has said Maria that Pietro has bought  
 ‘It’s apples that they confirm that María said that Pedro bought’

Finally, the fronted element in both languages is subject to island constraints, namely it cannot be grammatically related to a position inside a relative clause (8), an adverbial clause (9), or a subject clause (10):

- (8) a. \**[A PEDRO] conoscemos la mujer que traicionó.*  
to Pedro we.know the woman who betrayed  
b. \**[PAOLO] conosciamo la donna che tradì.*  
Paolo we-know the woman who betrayed
- (9) a. \**[A PEDRO] terminemos la tarea antes de llamar.*  
to Pedro we.finish the assignment before to call  
b. \**[PAOLO] finiamo il compito prima di chiamare.*  
Paolo we.finish the assignment before to call
- (10) \**[A PEDRO] sorprendió a todo el mundo que María haya invitado.*  
to Pedro amazed to all the world that María have invited  
\**[PAOLO] ha sorpreso tutti che María abbia invitato.*  
Paolo has amazed everybody that María have invited

What exact position the fronted element occupies lies beyond the scope of this article. The word ‘fronting’ itself is a descriptive term and does not mean that the focused element has syntactically moved. Given the syntactic properties presented above, most accounts propose that the fronted focus occupies an A’ position (see Rizzi 1997, a.o.); however, a different account has been proposed where the focused element stays inside the clause and the background moves to a right dislocated position (see Samek-Lodovici 2006). The pragmatic analysis of FF that I am presenting in the following paragraph is compatible with both analyses. As we will see, what is crucial for pragmatic purposes is that the focus constituent be distinguishable from the background constituent.

## 2 The discourse functions of FF constructions

The *focus-background* order is quite rare in Italian and Spanish. The pragmatically most neutral configuration is a *topic-comment* one, where the topic is a referential element either given in the discourse or part of the interlocutors’ shared knowledge, and expresses what the sentence is about, while the comment is the information provided by the sentence about the topic. In the most unmarked case, the topic is represented by the preverbal subject and the comment coincides with the predicate (the verb followed by the other arguments, cf. 11a). In a *focus-background* configuration, on the contrary, the informative part – the left peripheral focus – is (generally) a referential element, typically represented by an argument of the verb, while the information already shared by the interlocutors – the background – coincides with the predicate and the remaining arguments (cf. 11b).

- (11) a. *[Paolo]<sub>Topic</sub> [ha dato un bacio a MARIA]<sub>Comment</sub>.*  
Paolo has given a kiss to Maria  
‘Paolo, he gave a kiss to MARIA’  
b. *[UN BACIO]<sub>Focus</sub> [ha dato Paolo a Maria]<sub>Background</sub>.*  
a kiss has given Paolo to Maria  
‘Paolo gave Maria a KISS’

Since in this paper I analyze sentences with a *focus-background* structure, I will include in the same group those sentences that, although *syntactically* canonical (in the sense that they display an SVO order), are *prosodically* non-canonical, because the preverbal subject bears main prominence (cf. *io* ‘I’ in the Italian corpus example below).

- (12) ifamcv21

- a. “[...] forse più che egoista sono individualista”.  
 ‘Rather than selfish, I would say I am an individualist’
- b. *Ho detto*: “No, [IO] sono individualista, tu invece sei egoista.  
 have said no I am individualist you instead are selfish  
 ‘And I said: “No, I am an individualist, you are just selfish””

Both Benincà (1988 [2001]:150) and Zubizarreta (1999:4240) define the pragmatic function of a fronted focus (from now on, FF) that of denying an explicit or implicit part of the context in which it is inserted. In other words, a FF provides a piece of information that *contrasts* with (or corrects) a previous one in the context. Contrast can also occur between the information provided by the FF sentence and an implicitly assumed belief, given the interlocutors’ shared knowledge of the world. In that case, the information provided by the FF sentence is felt to be unexpected.<sup>6</sup> Finally, as already observed in Brunetti (2004), the FF sentence can simply answer a question. The question, however, has either to be implicit or not present in the immediately preceding discourse, as we will see below.

In Brunetti (2008, submitted) I claim that the pragmatic function of a FF construction is related to the fact that the background in post-focal position is a *tail* in the sense of Vallduví (1992, 2002). I assume a tail to be background material that requires an antecedent in the context, and argue that the antecedent must be a shared belief among the interlocutors. In this paper, I assume that such a definition – reformulated within an Alternative Semantics framework – can also apply to pre-focal material. In fact, I argue that it is possible to explain the difference between pre- and post-focal material without assuming that they are two inherently different kinds of background. The difference between them would be due to the fact that pre-focal material is not unambiguously interpreted as background, while post-focal material is.

According to the Alternative Semantics framework (Rooth 1985, 1992) a sentence containing a focus, other than its semantic value, has an additional ‘focus semantic value’, which is a set of propositions obtainable from the semantic value of the sentence by making a substitution in the position corresponding to the focus. For instance, in a sentence like (13a) where *a book* is the focus, the set of propositions is of the kind in (13b).

- (13) a. *I gave a BOOK to John.*  
 b. Focus semantic value:  
 {I gave a book to John, I gave a cd to John, I gave a cookie to John, etc.}

Obviously, not all potential alternatives of the focus semantic value are relevant in the context in which the sentence is uttered. In fact, Rooth proposes that the focus value has to be restricted by a pragmatic process. Rooth’s idea is that focus interpretation introduces a free variable, whose antecedent is a discourse object that is either a subset or an element of the focus semantic value. The antecedent is fixed by the context, and determines what pragmatic function the focus has: contrast, correction, answering a question, etc. Consider for instance (13). The antecedent of the focus variable must be an element or a subset of the focus value *I gave x to John*. Therefore, the antecedent can be a sentence of the type in (14a) – in which case, (13a) will be in contrast with it – or it can be a wh-question of the type in (14b) – in which case, (13a) has the function of answering that question.

- (14) a. *You gave John a magazine.*  
 b. *What did you give to John?*

A FF is expected to behave as any other focus. Nevertheless, a FF has an additional property with respect to other foci, which has to do with the way Italian and Spanish – as well as other European languages – mark the focus domain linguistically (more precisely, prosodically). In these languages focus interpretation projects from the element bearing the nuclear accent up through the

main syntactic branching of the sentence, which in these languages is to the left (cf. Cinque 1993, Reinhart 1995, 2006, Zubizarreta 1998). Focus extension is therefore ambiguous if the constituent bearing the nuclear accent is embedded in larger constituents along the main syntactic branching. The most ambiguous case is when the nuclear accent is on the most embedded element of the sentence. For instance, the extension of the focus in (15B), with nuclear accent on the most embedded element *Maria*, may be any of the extensions given in square brackets, as shown by the fact that the sentence may answer any of the questions in (15).

- (15) A: *A chi ha dato un bacio, Paolo ?*  
 ‘Who did Paolo kiss?’  
 A’: *Che cosa ha fatto, Paolo?*  
 ‘What did Paolo do?’  
 A’’: *Che cosa è successo?*  
 ‘What happened?’  
 B: [*Paolo* [*ha dato un bacio* [*a MARIA*]<sub>Focus</sub>]<sub>Focus</sub>]<sub>Focus</sub>.  
 Paolo has given a kiss to Maria

From (15), it is clear that when a sentence has a narrow focus that is *low*, the sentence can be misinterpreted as having a wider focus or as being fully focused, and the context must help disambiguating the information structure. On the contrary, if the narrow focus is *high* and precedes the background, given that focus projects to the left, the post-focal background cannot be interpreted by any means as part of the focus. In other words, since the right edge of the focus is marked, the linguistic material following it cannot be but background. That means that a *focus-background* order in a sentence is not ambiguous. The extension of the focus does not have to be recovered from the context, like in (15). The focus is identifiable by means of the sentence alone.

Note that given Rooth’s definition of the focus semantic value and of the antecedent of the focus variable (cf. 13 and related discussion), the narrower the focus, the more constrained and therefore semantically defined the antecedent is. For instance in (15B), if the focus is *a Maria*, the antecedent will be of the type *Paolo gave a kiss to x*, while if the focus is the whole VP, the antecedent is of the less specific type *Paolo R-ed*. Consequently, the antecedent of the variable introduced by a *narrow* focus is harder to find in the context than that of a variable introduced by a *wide* focus, because the context has to be more specific. As a result, when the focus extension is ambiguous, a listener will tend to interpret the focus as wide by default, unless an explicit and easily accessible antecedent for the narrow focus variable is provided by the context. A FF construction, however, is not ambiguous, so the listener cannot interpret the focus as wide by any means. The listener is then *forced* to look an antecedent of the *narrow* focus variable, even when the context does not seem to contain it at all. In case of a context that does not provide the antecedent explicitly, the listener will make inferences in order to retrieve the antecedent implicitly.

The idea that the peculiarity of a FF is its unambiguous identification is compatible with an idea concerning the interaction between syntax and information structure presented in recent work by Neeleman and van de Koop (2007). Assuming that the focus moves to the left periphery, they propose that focus movement occurs in order to facilitate a transparent mapping between syntax and information structure. In fact, by displacing the focused element to the left, the *focus-background* partition of the sentence is perfectly reflected in the constituent structure, because focus and background are represented by two continuous constituents:

- (16) [ XP [  $t_{xp}$  ] ]  
 |      └──────────┘  
 focus    background

In my analysis, the syntax-information structure transparent mapping – whether triggered by focus movement or by other syntactic operations, such as right dislocation of the background – makes the

listener understand that, independently from any cues from the context, the focus of the sentence is narrow and corresponds to the fronted element. The unambiguous characterization of the focus extension makes a FF construction a better answer to a question whenever the question is implicit or has been uttered too far back in previous discourse and is not salient anymore. The content of the implicit question can in fact be recovered from the focus semantic value of the FF sentence, and the question that is far back in the discourse can be retrieved by matching its content with that of the focus semantic value of the FF sentence. For the same reason, a FF construction typically occurs in contrastive/corrective contexts. Unlike question-answer pairs, contrasting sentences are not tied to each other by a congruence requirement. Which part of previous discourse a speaker wants to contrast (or correct) is not necessarily predictable from the context. The possibility to identify the focus independently from the context helps the listener find the antecedent of the variable introduced by the focus, to which the sentence has to be contrasted. Finally, the unambiguous interpretation of the focus makes a FF sentence occur in contexts where the information it provides is unexpected. In fact, in that case, the sentence contrasts an *implicit* belief that is assumed by the interlocutors given their shared knowledge of the world. The focus value tells the listener what the form of the antecedent is, and the listener can recover that implicit belief.

The analysis of FF just presented can be compared with Prince's (1999) analysis of FFs in Yinglish, a variety of English spoken by Jewish communities in the US with a Yiddish linguistic background. Yinglish has inherited from Yiddish the possibility to front the focus – a construction generally not accepted in standard English. Prince argues that a FF sentence in Yinglish is possible if the information in the background – what she calls the 'open proposition', namely the proposition formed by substituting the focused element with a variable – is already known to or at least plausibly inferable by the hearer. For instance in (17), the FF construction is acceptable because it is considered to be a well known fact in the Yiddish community that sons ask parents to buy them things, so the open proposition 'my son wants x' is already part of the listener's knowledge store.

- (17) A: *Hello, Mrs. Goldberg. How's everything? How's your son?*  
B: *Oy, don't ask. [A SPORTSCAR] he wants - that's all I was missing.*

Within an Alternative Semantics framework, the definition of background as an open proposition can be assigned to background in any construction with narrow focus (cf. 13). As I have explained, what a FF construction additionally brings is that the narrow focus can be unambiguously identified, because focus marking (by means of the nuclear accent) projects to the left (which is true also for English, cf. Reinhart 1995, 2006). So in (17), it is not simply the case that the FF is used because the proposition 'my son wants x' is already part of the listener's knowledge store – which is expected if that part is the background. Rather, the FF construction is used because the sentence does not directly answer speaker A's question, so the antecedent of the focus variable is not directly recoverable from the question, but has to be inferred. With a FF construction, the listener knows what the focus semantic value is and hence what the antecedent must look like for the focus variable. The listener infers that a proposition of the type 'my son wants x' is present in the common ground. More precisely, I would like to suggest that the interlocutors share an implicit *question* of the type 'What does your son want?'. That implicit question, which Jewish mothers ask each other when they talk (and complain) about their sons, constitutes the antecedent of the focus variable.

A construction that is similar to a FF constructions but that is much more constrained with respect to the form of the antecedent of the focus variable is a cleft. Like a FF construction, a cleft has an initial narrow focus (the clefted element) followed by background material. Nevertheless, as already observed by Benincà (1988), clefts occur in a smaller number of contexts: if a FF sentence is possible in all contexts in which a cleft is possible, the opposite is not true. An anonymous reviewer has made an analogous observation for the data presented in this paper, noting that some FF sentences could be replaced by the corresponding cleft, while some others could not. The reviewer suggests that this fact be an indication that we are dealing with two different FF

constructions. I argue instead that a uniform analysis can be maintained for all FF constructions. Benincà observes that the displaced element of a cleft cannot be a quantifier (cf. 18).<sup>7</sup> Also, a cleft cannot be used as an answer to a negative polarity question such as (19):

- (18) a. A : *Hai fatto qualcosa?*  
 ‘Did you do anything?’  
 B: [*TUTTO*] *ho fatto.* / \**E’ TUTTO che ho fatto.*  
 everything I.have done is everything that I.have done  
 ‘I did EVERYTHING’ ‘It’s EVERYTHING that I did’
- b. A : *Tu vuoi invitare Giorgio.*  
 ‘You want to invite Giorgio’  
 B : [*NESSUNO*] *voglio invitare.* / \**E’ NESSUNO che voglio invitare.*  
 nobody I.want to.invite is nobody that I.want to.invite  
 ‘I want to invite NOBODY’ ‘It’s NOBODY that I want to invite’
- (19) A: *Ti a detto nessuno che dovevo partire?*  
 ‘Did anybody tell you that I had to leave?’  
 B: [*FRANCO*] *me l’ha detto* / \**E’ FRANCO che me l’ha detto.*  
 Franco to.me.CL it.CL has said is Franco that to.me.CL it.CL has said  
 ‘FRANCO told me that’ ‘It’s FRANCO who told me that’

These data suggest that the antecedent of the clefted element is a (semantically determined) existential presupposition. For instance in (19), the cleft triggers the presupposition that someone exists who told speaker B about speaker A’s departure. As Benincà explains, the NPI question does not trigger the same presupposition of existence, so it cannot provide an antecedent for the focus of the cleft. The FF sentence, on the contrary, simply implies that there is a proposition in the previous discourse (explicitly or implicitly given) or in the interlocutors shared knowledge, which can serve as antecedent for the focus variable.<sup>8</sup> The proposition can either be an element of the focus semantic value (e.g. cases of contrast/correction, unexpected information), or it can be a sub-set of the focus semantic value (e.g. a question). At any event, it does not need to presuppose that someone exists who ‘told the speaker about it’. A FF construction may in some contexts require an antecedent that is compatible with the presupposition triggered by a cleft. For instance, a presupposition of existence that someone (else) has the same property as the FF is generally compatible with the use of FF constructions in contrastive contexts. Indeed, in contrastive contexts a cleft can typically replace the FF construction. In other contexts, however, the implication triggered by the FF construction may not be compatible with the semantic presupposition of the cleft, which cannot therefore be used there.

In the following paragraphs, I present the two speech corpora from which my data have been retrieved, and provide corpus examples of the different pragmatic uses of FF constructions. In section 4, by means of my data, I will also present certain linguistic properties of FFs. We will see that some linguistic expressions tend to occur more often than others in a fronted position, and that their frequency is related to the discourse functions of FF.

### 3 The data

The data I will discuss are taken from two spoken corpora. The first corpus is the ‘C-Oral Rom’ (Cresti and Moneglia 2005), which consists of monologues, dialogues, and conversations with various degrees of spontaneity in different Romance languages. I have only considered a selection of dialogues and conversations with a rather high level of spontaneity in Italian and Spanish. For Italian, I have considered:



- 10 conversations and 11 dialogues that took place in a family/private environment,
- 3 conversations and 3 dialogues that took place in a public environment,
- 3 private telephone conversations,
- 1 conversation on the radio.

The total for Italian is 45,500 words of about 5 and a half hour of speech. For Spanish, I have considered:

- 10 conversations and 21 dialogues that took place in a family/private environment,
- 9 dialogues that took place in a public environment.

The total is 59,800 words of about 5 hours of speech. The reasons that led me to exclude some recordings were either the low quality of the sound, which affected the detection of a focal accent in the left periphery, or speakers using too marked a language variety, either geographically or because of the age of the speakers. In other words, I tried to gather a rather uniform set of data from a corpus that is, instead, characterized by a large variation of registers and styles. The examples taken from this corpus are labeled with a sequence of letters followed by a number. The first letter indicates the language (i for Italian, e for Spanish). The next set of letters indicates whether the speech takes place in a family/private environment (fam) or in a public environment (pub), and whether it is a dialogue (dl) or a conversation (cv). The number identifies the specific recording.

The other corpus is the ‘Nocando corpus’, which I have collected.<sup>9</sup> This corpus consists of oral narrations in Italian, Spanish, Catalan, English and German. The speech data were obtained by asking native-speakers to narrate a story based on the pictures of three textless books by Mercer Mayer. Mayer’s books had been previously used in linguistic research to elicit child and adult oral narrations (see Berman and Slobin 1994, Strömquist and Verhoven 2004). They describe the adventures of a boy and his pet frog. Each recorded story lasted between 2 and 9 minutes approximately, depending on the speaker. I examined the narrations of 15 Italian speakers and 8 Spanish speakers, with a total of about 26,800 words for Italian and about 17,200 words for Spanish. The examples taken from this corpus are indicated with iNoc (for Italian) and eNoc (for Spanish), followed by the narrator’s name.

The number of FFs found in the Italian corpus are 63, and in the Spanish corpus, 33. In addition, in the Spanish corpus I found 37 cases of polarity (fronted) focus that I will discuss separately. If we exclude those cases, the phenomenon is much less common in Spanish than in Italian. In the following paragraphs, I will present some of these data in order to show more clearly the different discourse functions of FF constructions.

### 3.1 Examples of contrast or correction

The Italian example in (12), repeated below, is a typical case of FF expressing contrast. The speaker is talking about a conversation she had been engaged in with a third person. She is quoting her interlocutor’s words (12a) and her own reply (12b). The interlocutor had said that he is an individualist. The speaker had replied that it is her (and not him), who is an individualist. The proposition the speaker challenges is explicitly expressed by the interlocutor’s utterance.

(12) ifamcv21

a. “[...] forse più che egoista sono individualista”.

‘Rather than selfish, I would say I am an individualist’

b. *Ho detto*: “No, [IO] sono individualista, tu invece sei egoista.

have said no I am individualist you instead are selfish

‘And I said: “No, I am an individualist, you are just selfish”’

Note that the FF sentence is preceded by *No, ...*. The negative particle indicates that the speaker denies the truth of the previous sentence. The subsequent FF sentence makes it clear where the falsity lies. What the speaker denies is the identity of the individual with the property of being individualist. The possibility to unambiguously identify the focus makes it easier to interpret the sentence as a clarification of *what part* of the previous sentence has to be corrected. Still, a low focus like (20) is equally acceptable in this context, because the initial negation gives a cue of the contrasting function of the subsequent sentence.

- (20) *No, individualista sono IO, tu invece sei egoista.*  
 no individualist am I you instead are selfish  
 ‘No, I am individualist, you are just selfish’

The Italian example below shows a case where the contrasted proposition is implicitly derivable from the context. Some friends are talking about the Italian actor Massimo Troisi. Previously in the conversation, various films he starred in were discussed. Some people had made positive comments on such movies. GIA then introduces a new film, *Il postino*. With the subsequent utterance, containing a demonstrative FF referring to *Il postino*, GIA intends to compare that film with the other films already introduced in the conversation. More precisely, with the FF sentence, he implies that his appreciation of *Il postino* contrasts previous statements of appreciation of different movies made by other speakers.

- (21) ifamcv12  
 GIA: “*Il postino*”... *C'era Troisi* ?  
 “‘The mailman’... Was Troisi (starring) in it?’  
 FAB: *Sì.*  
 ‘Yes’  
 GIA: *Vedi: [QUELLO] mi è piaciuto di Troisi.*  
 you.see that to.me.CL is pleased of Troisi  
 ‘See, it is THAT film of Troisi’s that I liked’

Note that in this example, if the fronting did not occur (see 22), the focus of the sentence would likely be held to be the whole VP (*mi è piaciuto quello*) because the verb *piacere* ‘to be pleasing’ is not explicitly given in previous discourse. The fronting makes it clear that the focus is just *quello* ‘that’, so it forces the listener to look for an antecedent of the type ‘I liked x’, and consequently to contrast *that* (movie) with other movies.

- (22) GIA: *Vedi, mi è piaciuto QUELLO, di Troisi.*  
 you.see to.me.CL is pleased that of Troisi  
 ‘See, I liked THAT one of Troisi’s’

An example of *correction* is given in (23) (Italian). The speaker is correcting a statement she made earlier in the conversation. She talked about the special events that an Indian restaurant offers on different days of the week, and said that on Saturday night the event that will take place is horoscope reading. Then the conversation focused on horoscope reading, and after 24 exchanges, the speaker corrects that former statement by saying that it is the fortune teller who is there on Saturday, not horoscope reading. The FF construction allows the listener to easily recover the proposition that has to be corrected – that on Saturday there is horoscope reading – which was uttered far back in the discourse.

- (23) ifamcv26  
*No, scusami, [la CARTOMANTE] c'è, i' sabato sera.*  
 no excuse.me the fortune.teller there is the Saturday night

‘No, sorry, on Saturday night there is a fortune teller’

Another example of correction is given below, still in Italian. The FF is a temporal noun phrase: *giovedì* ‘Thursday’. FRA corrects PAO’s (in this case, explicit) assumption that FRA has already started working at the library.

(24) ifamd112

PAO: *Ma te oggi c' ha' fatto ? Se' stata qui ? [...] Ah, t' ha cominciato alla Nazionale!*

‘But what did YOU do today? Were you here?’ [...] Ah, you started in the State library!’

FRA: *Giovedì, [GIOVEDÌ] comincio.*

Thursday Thursday I.start

‘It’s on Thursday, it’s on Thursday that I’ll start’

PAO wants to know what FRA did on that day, and after asking a direct question (*Ma te oggi c' ha' fatto ?* ‘But what did YOU do today?’), she guesses an answer by saying that FRA started to work at the State library. FRA is expected to say what she did on that day, and in particular to confirm whether she started to work at the library or not. Imagine now that FRA’s reply was (25), with a low focus.

(25) FRA: *Comincio GIOVEDÌ.*

I.start Thursday

‘I’ll start on Thursday’

The sentence would be interpreted as fully focused, because a focus value like ‘I start on day x’ is not given in prior discourse. But a fully focused sentence would sound pragmatically odd, because the information ‘I’m starting to work on Thursday’ is not an answer to ‘What did you do today?’. The sentence in (25) may be interpreted as narrow-focused (and therefore be more coherent) if it is preceded by a negation (*No, comincio giovedì*). In fact, the negation denies the correctness of PAO’s conjecture, so the subsequent sentence is understood as a clarification of where the mistake lies. In (24), the focus is unambiguously ‘Thursday’ thanks to the FF construction, so PAO knows that she has to look for an antecedent of the type ‘FRA starts working on day x’, and hence she can make the inference that FRA’s reply is intended to oppose ‘Thursday’ against ‘today’, namely that FRA is not confirming her conjecture and is further specifying where the mistake lies.

### 3.2 Examples of unexpected information

The literature recognizes the pragmatic function of a FF in the fact that it contrasts its value with another value present in the context, as seen in the preceding paragraph. We have seen that a FF is indeed useful in contrastive contexts because it helps to recognize the contrasting function of the focus (cf. for instance 24). However, in some cases the contrastive effect may be easily recognizable even with a *low* focus (cf. 12). A contrastive interpretation is then not necessarily tied to the fronted position of the focus. On the other hand, in the set of contexts that I am going to present, the pragmatic effect is not visible unless the focus is fronted. In these contexts, the discourse function of the focus is still contrastive, but the focus contrasts a belief shared among the interlocutors, taken from their *shared knowledge of the world* (knowledge of how things are, of how a certain event occurs, of the properties that a certain entity has, etc.). Since the antecedent of the focus variable is not in the discourse context, if the focus is *not* fronted, the listener cannot easily identify its antecedent. If the focus *is* fronted, the antecedent is identifiable independently from the context, so in the absence of an antecedent in the context, the listener will look for it elsewhere, and precisely in the interlocutors’ common ground.

Given that the FF in these cases is in contrast with shared knowledge among the interlocutors, the information provided by the focus is felt to be unexpected.<sup>10</sup> Consider again (2), repeated below.

In the discourse preceding the FF-sentence, MIC says that any role De Niro plays is strongly affected by his personality, namely De Niro basically always plays himself. Given that acting is a skill where a person pretends to be someone else, MIC's observation may lead the listener to conclude that De Niro is not a good actor. This fact justifies the FF sentence: contrary to what the listener is led to infer, it is precisely the fact that De Niro always represents the same character that makes him a good actor. The FF *in questo* 'in this' refers to the fact that De Niro always plays the same character in his movies.

(2) ifamd101

a. *De Niro [...] sa imporre solo se stesso, come un certo tipo di personaggio, e basta; cioè, in tutti i film che ho visto si comporta e agisce sempre allo stesso modo [...]; cioè, lui, sul set, può essere solo in quel modo [...]*

'De Niro [...] can only impose himself, as a certain type of character, and that's all; that is, in all movies I've seen, he always behaves and acts in the same way [...]; that is, on set he can only be that way [...]

b. *ed [in QUESTO] sta la sua bravura.*

and in that stays the his skill

'and THAT is his strong point'

If the focus was low (see 26), no effect of unexpected information would be conveyed by the sentence. In fact, the focus value 'his strong point is x' does not have an antecedent in the discourse, so the sentence would likely be interpreted as fully focused.

(26) *E la sua bravura sta in QUESTO.*

and the his skill stays in that

'And his strong point is THAT'

With a FF construction, on the contrary, the focus value is necessarily 'his strong point is x', so if the context does not provide an antecedent of that sort, the listener will look for it among the beliefs shared by the interlocutors (in 2, such a belief is of the type: 'His strong point as an actor is to be able to perform many different characters'). The fact that the antecedent is part of the interlocutors' shared knowledge gives rise to unexpectedness.

Further examples of FFs introducing unexpected information will be given in section 4, where different types of FF linguistic objects are presented.

### 3.3 Examples of answer to question

It is generally assumed in the literature (cf. Benincà 1988 [2001], Rizzi 1997, Zubizarreta 1998, 1999, etc.) that a FF cannot answer a wh-question. The explanation given is that a FF is inherently contrastive. In Brunetti (2004, 2008) I provide some evidence that the contrastive interpretation of a FF focus is not obligatory. As the data below further show, the problem is not that a FF answers a question, but that it answers an *immediately preceding* question. If the question is far back in the discourse or it is implicit, not only it is possible, but even required, that the answer be a FF sentence. In fact, the FF construction helps to find the antecedent of the focus variable (the question) by providing the exact extension of the focus.

Consider (27) (Italian). The speaker wants to tell her friends a funny thing that somebody said on TV. She starts her story by saying that she heard someone saying a funny thing, but she does not recall who this person was. She hesitates trying to remember, and eventually utters the FF sentence where she says who she thinks he was.

(27) ifamcv23

a. *L'ho sentito alla televisione da uno... ora non mi ricordo come si chiama... 'nsomma...*

- ‘I heard it said on TV by a guy... now I don’t remember his name... anyway...  
 b. [*un politico dei DIESE*] *mi sembra che fosse.*  
 a politician of.the DS to.me.CL seems that he.was  
 ‘I think he was a politician of the DS party’

The FF sentence is licensed by the fact that the listeners share with the speaker an implicit question about the identity of the person. The question is induced by the speaker’s words preceding the FF sentence: the listeners understand that the speaker wants to say who this person is, but is hesitating because she cannot remember. The FF construction is also favored by the fact that the semantic content of the non-focused part in (27b) is minimal: the content of the implicit question representing the antecedent is minimal as well, namely the question simply asks who that person is, and therefore it is easy to recover.

The Italian example in (28) shows a FF sentence that answers a question that is uttered far back in the discourse. The FF is the nominal expression *quaranta bianchi* ‘forty whites’. The speaker (WOM, a goldsmith’s employee) is about to leave the goldsmith’s atelier to go buy some material. The antecedent for the focus variable is the question that the woman asks at the beginning of the discourse segment (*fammi vedere quanti ne servono* ‘let me see how many we need’). Five exchanges follow between the woman and the goldsmith (AND), after which she answers her own former question with a FF sentence. The focus fronting allows the listener to interpret the sentence as the answer to that previously asked question.

- (28) ifamcv28  
 WOM: *okay, se lui ce li ha sfusi... Fammi vedere quanti ne servono.*  
 ‘Ok, if he has them unpacked... Let me see how many we need’  
 AND: *sì*  
 ‘Ok’  
 WOM: *ma non credo che ce li ha sfusi*  
 ‘But I doubt he has them unpacked’  
 AND: *questo grigio, dove l' hai preso ?*  
 ‘This grey one, where did you take it from?’  
 WOM: *Dieci, dieci ... mah, un mi ricordo, comunque sento. [...]*  
 ‘Ten, ten... er, I don’t remember; in any case I’ll ask’  
 WOM: a. *Io sento dove vado, intanto dal Celerini, e poi dipende dove devo andare.*  
 ‘I’ll ask wherever I go: first at the Celerini’s, and then, depending on the place I have to go’  
 b. *Dieci, venti, trenta, quaranta... [quaranta BIANCHI] mi servono, all’incirca*  
 ten twenty thirty forty forty whites to.me.CL are.needed at.the about  
 ‘Ten, twenty, thirty, forty... it’s FORTY WHITE ONES that I need, roughly’

In (29) (Spanish) the FF is a verb phrase: *ir a nadar* ‘to go swimming’. BEA starts that conversation segment by commenting on the importance of having leisure activities. The two speakers then start talking about what activity they could do after their aerobics class ends. After considering prospective aerobic classes available in different gyms, BEA concludes that she would like to go swimming. Since the discussion had only focused on aerobics until then, BEA’s statement is coherent in the discourse only if we interpret it as referring to the general topic of finding a leisure activity, and in particular as an answer to an implicit question of the type ‘What leisure activity would you like to do when the aerobics class ends?’, which is recoverable from the part of conversation reported in (29).<sup>11</sup>

- (29) BEA: *no está mal tener actividades de ocio [...]*  
 ‘It’s not bad to have leisure activities’  
 VIT: *sí, como el aerobio, por ejemplo*  
 ‘yes, like aerobics, for instance’

- BEA: a. *que se nos acaba. Tendremos que buscarnos otra cosa, no ? [...]*  
 ‘which is about to end. We’ll have to look for something else, don’t you think?’ [...]  
 b. *sí que nos tendremos que buscar algún sitio... a mí sí que me apetece seguir...*  
 ‘We definitely should look for some place... I do want to continue...’  
 c. **[ir a NADAR] me gustaría**  
 to.go to swim to.me.CL would.please  
 ‘I would like to go SWIMMING’

Finally, the sole case in the two corpora where a FF sentence answers an *explicit* question is given below. The example is in Spanish and the FF is the NP *la energía solar* ‘solar energy’.

(30) epubdl03

ALM: *Y ahora mismo, cuál es la que menos oposición tiene por parte de la gente ?*

‘And right now, which is the one that encounters less opposition by the people?’

JAV: *Yo no sé cuál será, probablemente [la energía SOLAR] será la que menos oposición tenga.*

I not know which will.be probably the energy solar will-be the.one that less opposition has

‘I don’t know which one; probably solar ENERGY will encounter less opposition’

The reason for a full FF answer is not clear to me. I suggest that it depends on the fact that JAV reformulates ALM’s question before uttering his answer, and the reformulated question is elliptical (*la que menos oposición tiene* ‘the one that encounters less opposition’ is missing). It may be the case that the elliptical question legitimates a full answer rather than just a fragment answer (*la energía solar*).

### 3.3.1 Request of confirmation

A sub-set of FF constructions with an implicit question as antecedent are those that ask for *confirmation* about some piece of information expressed by the FF. The sentence can either be a declarative followed by a tag question (...no?, see 31) or a y/n question (see 32). The implicit (wh-) question is precisely the one concerning the piece of information the speaker is not sure about. In the Spanish example in (31), NIV and her husband are going to rebuild part of their apartment. RIC asks for confirmation that the part they are going to renovate is the kitchen. Since NIV has been talking about the building work (*la obra*), and since the interlocutors know that this work is being done in NIV’s apartment, it is easy for the listener to retrieve from the FF sentence with focus on *cocina* ‘kitchen’ an implicit question of the type: ‘What rooms of your apartment are you going to remake?’.

(31) efamcv14

NIV: *[...] y el sábado viendo [...] cosas para la obra [...]*

‘And Saturday looking at [...] things for the building work’

TER: *la vais a hacer ya, por fin ? [...]*

‘So you are going to do it, in the end?’

NIV: *sí, ya lo tenemos*

‘Yes, we are on it already’

RIC: **[COCINA] ibais a hacer, no ?**

kitchen you.were.going to do no

‘It’s the kitchen you are going to remake, right?’

In the Italian example in (32), the conversation takes place one more time at the goldsmith’s atelier and AND (the goldsmith) is describing to a worker how the jewel has to be cut. AND wants to point out that the faceting on the jewel does not have to be on the entire surface, but the lower

part has to be smooth. DOM's utterance is for DOM to check whether he understood correctly. More precisely, DOM asks for confirmation about the place where the faceting has to be done. The implicit question is then of the type 'Where does the faceting have to be done?'

(32) ifamcv28

AND: *Poi qui, non liscio, ad esempio: qui una limata, una sfaccettatura, come questa [...] qui, una limata, cioè: partire liscio ...*

'Then here, not smooth; for instance: here you file it, you make a facet, like this one [...] here, a filing, that is: starting smooth...'

DOM: *Ah, [solo sul BASSO] iniziano ad esserci le sfaccettature?*

ah only on.the low start to be.there the facets

'Ah, so it's only in the lower part that the faceting begins...?'

In his analysis of FF constructions in Serbo-Croat, Albanian and Modern Greek, Matic (2003) proposes that focus in the majority of FF sentences evokes a binary set of alternatives. He also argues that certain phrases such as quantifying phrases, sentence adverbials of polarity, 'only'-phrases, given their intrinsic meaning, trigger a binary set of alternatives when focused. A confirmation y/n question is another case where, for Matic, focus is inherently binary: the two alternatives are the sentence with FF, and its counterpart with opposite polarity. If Matic were right, then the antecedent of the confirmation FF sentence would not be a wh-question but rather the proposition with opposite polarity. I argue instead that when a y/n question has a narrow focus, the speaker does not simply want to know whether her assertion or the one with opposite polarity is correct, but also what the value of the focus is in case her assertion is not correct. In other words, what the speaker is really doing is asking an implicit wh-question and at the same time trying to guess a possible answer. As for the other cases that Matic mentions, I only consider sentences with focus on the polarity as truly binary. They will be discussed in par. 4.5.

#### 4 Types of FFs

In the corpus data I have collected, FFs tend to be linguistic expressions with certain characteristics. A classification of the expressions preferably occurring in a fronted position is presented below. I follow rather closely the classification done by Matic (2003) for his study of FFs in Serbo-Croat, Albanian and Modern Greek, although my classification is shorter and less detailed.<sup>12</sup> Also, I have added point e, which is not present in Matic's list. FFs with additive particles are in fact largely present in my data (as already observed in Brunetti 2008).

- (33) a. Quantified expressions  
b. Predicatives of qualification  
c. Demonstrative pronouns  
d. Focal expressions associated with 'only' and 'just/precisely'  
e. Focal expressions associated with 'also/even/not even'

The presence of the linguistic expressions listed in (33) will be explained on the basis of the pragmatic functions of FFs (contrast/correction, unexpected information, answering a question).

##### 4.1. Quantified expressions

Eight cases of fronted quantifiers are present in Italian and two in Spanish. The two Spanish sentences have a particular chiasmus structure and will be discussed apart (par. 4.1.1). Italian quantifiers are *tutti* 'all' and *nessuno* 'nobody', and six out of the eight examples are subjects. We can assume that in Italian and Spanish, despite the word order freedom that

characterizes these languages, subjects tend to stay in a preverbal position whenever possible. However, a preverbal subject position is interpreted, in most contexts, as a topic position (see beginning of par. 2). Considering that non-referential expressions such as ‘all’ and ‘nobody’ are not possible topics, it could be the case that quantified subjects are more acceptable in a preverbal position because they cannot possibly be mistaken for topics.<sup>13</sup>

More generally, I propose that focused quantifiers that express an extreme value in a scale of quantities, such as ‘all’ and ‘nobody’, are frequently fronted because they provide unexpected information. The alternative set introduced when the focus is a quantifier is a set of quantities. For instance, focus on ‘all’ introduces an alternative set of the type: {all, some, few, one, etc.}. When the antecedent is not given in the discourse, the listener looks for an antecedent in the interlocutors’ shared knowledge. The antecedent is a quantity that is expected, because it is part of the shared knowledge. If the FF is ‘all’ or ‘nobody’, the quantity will be (respectively) lower and higher in a scale of quantities than the extreme value expressed by the focused quantifier, and that extreme value is interpreted to be unexpected with respect to the quantity assumed by the interlocutors as antecedent.<sup>14</sup>

Some examples are given below. In the Italian one in (34), the speaker says that his professor of physics was very good. He also says that the professor used to give very low grades. Then he states with a FF sentence that none of the students were against him. Such a statement is unexpected, because students usually dislike professors who give low grades. So the implicit assumption at the moment of the utterance, shared by the interlocutors given their world knowledge, is that all or at least some students were against the professor. What is particularly unexpected is the fact that among the students *none* – that is, the smallest possible amount in a scale of quantities – was against the professor.

(34) ifamcv23

a. *Io ho avuto un professore bravissimo di fisica [...] e lui era veramente bravo [...] e infatti, nonostante la bassezza dei voti che metteva [...]*

‘I had a very good physics professor [...] and he was really good [...] and in fact, despite his low grades [...]

b. **[NESSUNO] ce l' aveva con lui**

nobody CL it.CL had with him

‘Nobody had it in for that’

In the Italian example in (35), the speaker is contrasting a shared belief that men usually try to hook up with young, pretty women. Cuban men, the speaker says, try to hook up with women of any kind. The antecedent is not explicitly given in the discourse, but is clearly recoverable from the interlocutors shared knowledge of the world, and it is also hinted at by what the speaker says before, namely that Cuban men try to hook up with foreign middle-aged women. Note that *loro* ‘they’ is not part of the FF, but is a pre-focal left dislocated subject.

(35) ifamd116

a. *Così fanno gli omini cubani con le signore italiane*

‘And so do Cuban men with Italian ladies’

b. [...] *le straniere d' una certa età, che le vanno lì;*

‘middle age foreigners who go there;’

c. **loro [con TUTTI] provano, capito.**

they with everybody try understood

‘They try (to hook up) with ANYBODY, you know’

The Italian example in (36) is taken from a meeting of the city council. The speaker is a council member who is inviting the other members to vote against a certain proposition. He first uses an impersonal construction (*bisogna votar contrario* ‘it is necessary to vote against’), and then he



makes clear that he does not mean that only his party members have to vote against, but rather that everybody has to, as the proposition is bad not just from the point of view of his political views, but from any perspective. With the FF sentence the speaker intends to contrast a potential implicit belief that he was only speaking for his party members. By saying that his invitation to vote against is not a matter of political color (36b), the speaker is suggesting that he is contrasting that potential implicit belief, which constitutes the antecedent for the focus variable in (36c).

(36) ipubcv04

a. *Io penso bisogna votar contrario, a questo punto;*

I think it.is.necessary to-vote against at this point

b. *ma ma non è una questione di politica, di colore, eh?*

but but not is a matter of politics of color

c. **[Tutti QUANTI] dobbiamo votare contrario.**

all as.many we.must to.vote against

‘I think we have to vote against, at this point; but it’s not a matter of political colour, you see?’

EVERYBODY has to vote against’

Quantifiers may also be used in contrastive contexts. An example is (37) (still Italian). The FF sentence has a contrasting alternative in the discourse, when MIC says: ‘I have to impose my ideas’. MAR’s FF sentence is in contrast with that statement. In particular, the subject *ognuno* ‘everybody’ is in contrast with *io* ‘I’, namely the speaker challenges the interlocutor’s statement by saying that it is not him alone who wants to impose his ideas, but everybody.

(37) ifamd101

MIC: *È chiaro, perché io devo imporre le mie idee [...] se credo nelle mie idee*

‘Of course, as I have to impose my ideas [...] if I believe in my ideas’

MAR: **[OGNUNO] vuole imporre le sue idee, però...**

each.one wants to.impose the his ideas but

‘ANYONE wants to impose their own ideas, but...’

Matić (2003) gives also examples of comparative and metaphorical quantification, such as ‘like a thunder’, ‘in waves’ etc. I have not found any in my corpus. We must note that even in Matić’s corpus, these FFs occur only in Modern Greek, and this language appears to have a syntactically fossilized FF construction, which therefore occurs in a larger set of contexts than Albanian and Serbo-Croat, where the construction is pragmatically, not syntactically motivated. Italian and Spanish behave more like Albanian and Serbo-Croat than Modern Greek.

#### 4.1.1 Chiasmus constructions

The two fronted quantifiers that I have found in the Spanish data are inserted in special constructions that deserve some attention. The examples are reported below. The quantifiers are *un poco de todo* ‘a little bit of everything’ and *todo el mundo* ‘everybody’.

(38) efamecv05

*Fuimos [...] a despedirnos y eso, y ya nos vinimos; pero bueno, no sé, nos cundió bastante, la verdad, porque.. para ir un día y medio, vimos a todo el mundo, [a todo el MUNDO] vimos.*

‘We went [...] to say goodbye and all, and then we left; but well, I don’t know, we actually did a lot, as... in just a day and a half, we saw everybody, EVERYBODY we saw’

(39) epubd111

ANT: *[...] ahí están los mejores traductores o...[...] o simplemente es una clase especializada ?*

‘Is it the case that the best translators are there, or it is simply a specialized class?’

OLG: *Pues, hay un poco de todo, eh? [Un poco de TODO] empieza a haber.*

a little of everything it starts to have

‘Well, there’s a little bit of everything, you know? It’s a little bit of everything that we are starting to have’

In both cases, the FF sentence is preceded by a canonical sentence with the same meaning. In (38), the two sentences (*vimos a todo el mundo* and *a todo el mundo vimos*) are identical except for their word order. In (39), the background of the FF sentence is slightly more informative than the background of the canonical sentence (instead of *hay* ‘there is’, the speaker says *empieza a haber* ‘is starting to be’).

The strategy of uttering a FF sentence in the second part of a chiasmus construction has also been observed for French by Abeillé et al. (2008), who report the following example from a spontaneous speech corpus:

- (40) a. *Mon père il va m’acheter un petit mouton;* [Corpaix : Agenet, Gr3,6]  
my father he goes to-me.CL to-buy a little sheep  
b. [***Un petit MOUTON***] *il va m’acheter.*  
a little sheep he goes to.me.CL to.buy  
‘My father is going to buy me a little lamb; a little lamb he’s going to buy me’

These scholars use the construction as evidence that the fronted element is not *focused*, because it is not informative in the discourse. I propose, on the contrary, that it is precisely the fact that the two sentences have two different information structures that legitimates the repetition. The former is an *all-focus* sentence, and the latter is a *focus-background* sentence. The *focus-background* sentence indicates that the speaker intends to highlight one part of the previous statement by uttering it again as focus. Since a FF does not need the context to be recognized, that part is interpreted as focus even against the expectations created by the context (in this case, the full-focus sentence). Re-focussing that part makes the listener infer that the information provided by it is particularly important with respect to the rest of the sentence. The reason of its importance may be that the focus value goes against implicitly assumed expectations. For instance, in (38) the antecedent of the focus variable could be the implicit assumption that the speaker and her friends saw *few* people, because the speaker says that they did not spend much time in that place.

Finally in (39), the repetition of the sentence is further justified by the fact that the background is slightly different. The sentence does not just say that there is a little bit of everything, but that there *starts* to be a little bit of everything. In order to highlight the phrase *un poco de todo*, the speaker could have just uttered it again, without the post-focal background. The function of the background resembles here one of the functions of Clitic Right Dislocation: it provides some additional attributive meaning that is not present in its antecedent (cf. Ziv and Grosz 1998 for English and Mayol 2002 and Villalba 2007 for Catalan).<sup>15</sup> In (39), the speaker provides additional information concerning the status of the event, namely the fact that it is at its initial state.

#### 4.1.2. Further scalar effects

Further examples in the corpus, although not quantifiers, are worth mentioning at this point because they display, as well as quantifiers do, the effect of introducing a measure that is an extreme of a scale. In the Italian example (41), the FF is the temporal expression *domattina* ‘tomorrow morning’.

- (41) ipubcv01  
[***DOMATTINA***], *se mi rendo conto che... che non è giusto, cioè, ci ripenso.*  
tomorrow if RFL I.realize that that not is right that.is of.it.CL I.rethink  
‘Right AWAY, if I realize that I’m wrong, I’ll give it a rethink’

The speaker is arguing with her interlocutor, and she strongly disagrees with him, but she wants him to know that she has no prejudice against his opinions. She says that if she realizes that she is

wrong, she is ready to change her mind ‘the morning after’, where the morning after is considered as a very short time, basically meaning ‘immediately’. The speaker contrasts her utterance with an implicit belief shared by the interlocutors that people are unwilling to change their minds and don’t do so immediately, and that the morning after is an exceptionally short time to change one’s mind, in a scale of possible times. By uttering (41), the speaker wants to emphasize the fact that she has no problem admitting she is wrong, if she realizes that she is.

In the Spanish example (42), the FF is a prepositional phrase indicating a time: *a las nueve y media* ‘at nine thirty’.

(42) efamcv05

a. [...] *estuvimos un rato y nos fuimos, porque [...] nos queríamos levantar a las ocho o las nueve para venirnos [...]*

‘We stayed a little and then we left, because we wanted to get up at eight or nine to leave...’

b. [*a las nueve y MEDIA*] *nos levantamos al final.*

‘At half past NINE we got up, in the end’

PAT’s discourse preceding the FF sentence is all about her vain attempt to have her friends get up at eight or so. PAT says that her insistence on having everybody get up early did not bear any fruit and she concludes that they eventually (only) managed to get up at nine thirty. The fact that they got up at nine thirty is unexpected given the expectations generated by the previous discourse. ‘Nine thirty’ is in fact considered by the speaker as a high value in a scale of times at which these people could have got up in those circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.2 Predicatives of qualification

A small group of fronted elements with partly similar characteristics and function as the group of quantifiers is that of predicatives of qualification. In Matic’s corpus they usually indicate a subjective judgment. This is also the case of the examples reported in (43) and (44) (Italian and Spanish respectively), which are copula sentences with a nominal predicative. In (43), the speaker is quoting a character in the story who is negatively judging the frog’s behaviour. This character says that the frog is made of stone, meaning that he is very insensitive.

(43) iNoc Caterina

*Ma che cuore ha? Un cuore di pietra, [una rana di PIETRA], sei.*

but what heart has a heart of stone a frog of stone you.are

‘But what a heart does he have? That’s a heart made of stone, you are a frog made of stone!’

In (44), the speaker is making an ironic comment on the tendency of RIC to always be in a hurry and always short of time, by calling him ‘the timeless man’.

(44) efamcv14

RIC: *Es que no tengo tiempo, tengo otras cosas que hacer, y siempre lo voy dejando...*

‘The problem is that I have no time, I have other things to do, and I always postpone it...’

TER: [*El hombre sin TIEMPO*] *es.*

the man without time is

‘He is the timeless man’

These two subjective comments can be considered as cases of unexpected information. The implicit antecedent is a less strong qualification than that attributed by the speaker to the frog in (43) and to RIC in (44), which are in fact hyperbolic statements. The listener assumes that the sentence is uttered as in contrast with that less strong statement. In addition to this reason, I suggest that the characteristics of the post-focal material favor the fronting as well. When a nominal predicative is

fronted, the material that follows the focus is just the copula verb. As I already observed above, a copula is semantically light and therefore more easily recoverable than a richer background. Finally, in (43), it is possible that the sequence of linguistic expressions that are uttered by the speaker favors focus fronting. The speaker first asks a rhetorical question (*Ma che cuore ha?* ‘What a heart does he have?’), answered by the fragment *un cuore di pietra* ‘a heart made of stone’. The fragment is then followed by the FF sentence *Una rana di PIETRA sei* ‘A frog made of STONE, you are’. The speaker seems to correct herself by changing ‘a heart made of stone’ into ‘a frog made of stone’. Then, in order to give the new expression a grammatical role, she adds the copula verb post-focally.

The two Spanish examples below are copula sentences with an *adjectival* predicative. In (45), the FF is the adjective *contaditos*, which means ‘scarce’, ‘limited in number’. The speaker’s point is that polite schoolchildren are extremely rare, rarer than one might expect.

(45) efamd115

a. *y hay mucho problema con eso; yo los míos son grandecitos, pero educación no tienen ninguna;*

‘and there are many problems because of that; mine are rather old, but still, they have no manners at all’

b. [CONTADITOS] *los tienes con educación: siete por clase [...]*

few them.CL you.have with manners seven per class

‘There are really few who behave: seven per class...’

Note that the subjective comment in this example is a quantity: the speaker thinks that polite pupils are extremely few in each class. The antecedent to this quantity will be a more expected (in this case, higher) quantity in a scale, analogously to what we have seen above for quantifiers. (46) is instead an example of *contrast*. The interlocutors are talking about a logo that CHI is creating. Earlier on in the conversation, NEN had asked CHI why he colored the logo yellow. CHI replies that the color is orange, and NEN insists that it is dark yellow. So NEN is contrasting CHI’s claim that the logo is orange. Note that *eso* ‘that’ at the beginning of NEN’s utterance is not part of the FF, but rather it is a pre-focal (left-dislocated) subject.

(46) efamcv08

CHI: *Este es naranja, qué amarillo? dónde has sacado tú el amarillo?*

‘This is orange, what yellow are you talking about! Where did you see yellow?’

NEN: *Eso [amarillo OSCURO] es, esto no es naranja.*

that yellow dark is this not is orange

‘That is dark yellow, not orange’

#### 4.3 Demonstrative pronouns

Six fronted demonstratives are present in the Italian corpus (of which four are subjects), and seven in the Spanish corpus (of which three are subjects). While in Italian I found examples with *quello* ‘that’, *questo* ‘this’, and the dialectal (Tuscan) deictic *costì* ‘there’ (denoting a place close to the listener and far from the speaker), in Spanish I only found cases with *eso*, ‘that’ (denoting a referent close to the listener and far from the speaker).

The presence of demonstrative pronouns in a FF position can be explained as follows. We have seen that an FF construction is used in contexts where the referent of the focus is already known, as shown clearly by the chiasmus constructions in (38) and (39). The strategy there was to first introduce the referent of the focus, and then to focus it again in a subsequent FF sentence.

Analogously with demonstratives, the speaker first introduces the referent, and then uses the FF sentence just to highlight the referent again, but instead of repeating the whole phrase, she uses a demonstrative pronoun.

Two examples of demonstrative FFs are (2) and (21). Another example is the Spanish one below. The conversation is about the fact that PAT and MIG have just bought an apartment. With her first utterance, ROS intends to give importance to the fact that her friends will soon be owners of an apartment. PAT's reply mitigates ROS's enthusiasm with ironic words that are made clearer by MIG's subsequent statement. PAT and MIG's point is that they won't be owners until they pay the entire mortgage, which will take a long time.

- (47) efamcv01  
 ROS: *¡Jo! y luego ya vais a ser propietarios, ahí*  
 'Wow! And then you are going to be owners, there'  
 PAT: *Sí, propietarios de una mierda*  
 yes owners of a shit  
 'Sure! Owners of a shit!'  
 ROS: *hhh*  
 PAT: [*de ESO*] *vamos a ser propietarios.*  
 of that we.are.going to be owners  
 'That's what we are going to be owners of.'  
 MIG: *Proprietarios de una hipoteca.*  
 'Owners of a mortgage'

PAT first introduces the referent that she intends to contrast with the apartment (a shit). Then, she utters a FF sentence whose focus has the same referent, but is represented by a demonstrative pronoun. The FF construction does not identify that referent again, but is left with the sole function of contrasting it with an alternative referent in the discourse.

Matić notes that another context in which a demonstrative occurs is when the FF sentence expresses a conclusive note to prior discourse. In my data, this case is exemplified by (48) (Spanish), where *ese* 'that one' refers to what the speaker has said in (48a), namely that Raquel does not realize what a stupid person her friend is.

- (48) efamd104  
 a. *Pero el problema es que Raquel no es consciente de que ella es una gilipollas,*  
 'But the problem is that Raquel is not aware that she is a jerk'  
 b. [*ESE*] *yo creo que es el problema.*  
 that I think that is the problem  
 'THAT ONE is the problem, I think'

The antecedent is not given in previous discourse, but is simply inferable as a conclusive statement that summarizes the previous discourse. The antecedent can for instance be interpreted as an implicit question ('What is the problem?').<sup>17</sup> The interlocutors' previous conversation was in fact an attempt to understand the negative aspects of the fact that their friends are going on a trip with a particularly annoying person. The negative aspect – the problem – is what the speaker says in (48a), and is referred to in (48b) by the demonstrative.

#### 4.4 Focus sensitive particles

Matić (2003) says that in the three languages in his corpus, the focus sensitive particles 'only' and 'just/precisely' are often associated with a FF. The same is true for Italian but not Spanish, at least in my data. In this language, the only focus particles that are associated with the 6 FFs found are additive particles (*también* 'also', *hasta* 'even') or their negative counterpart (*tampoco*). In Italian, additive particles like *anche*, *pure* 'also', *persino* 'even', or their negative counterparts (*neanche*, *nemmeno*, *neppure*) are also very common. In effect, they are more frequent than the other particles. Out of 29 FFs associated with a focus sensitive particle, 24 are associated with additive ones. The

expression associated with the particle is mostly the subject (23 cases), so the word order is not marked; only the position of the focal accent is. In Spanish, 4 of the 6 FFs are subjects. The large presence of subjects might be due to the following reason. A preverbal subject in a sentence with a normal intonation is interpreted as the topic of a *topic-comment* structure. In order to be focused, it has to be placed in a post-verbal position (cf. Pinto 1997, Belletti 2001, a.o.). However, the argument that is adjacent to a focus particle is expected to be focused, so a subject associated with a focus particle may stay in its canonical preverbal position without the risk of being interpreted as a topic. The presence of the particle favors a focus interpretation of the subject, despite its preverbal position.

Focus particles trigger a presupposition that there is (or there is not) an alternative value for which the proposition holds. More precisely, additive particles imply that there is an alternative value for which the proposition holds (cf. König 1991, a.o.). ‘Only’ and other restrictive particles imply that there is no alternative value for which the proposition holds (cf. Roberts submitted). The antecedent of the variable introduced by a focus is constrained by the semantics of the particle. When a FF is associated with an additive particle, the context must provide an antecedent stating that the proposition applies to some other entity (49a). In the case of restrictive particles, the context must provide an antecedent stating that the proposition applies to both the entity expressed by the focus and another entity (49b).

- (49) a. [*Anche a MARIA*] *ho svelato il segreto.*  
 also to Maria I.have revealed the secret  
 ‘I also told the secret to Maria’  
 a.’ Antecedent: I revealed the secret to someone different from Maria  
 b. [*Solo a MARIA*] *ho svelato il segreto.*  
 only to Maria I.have revealed the secret  
 ‘I only told the secret to Maria’  
 b.’ Antecedent: I revealed the secret to Maria and to someone different from Maria

Focus particles in Italian and Spanish are adjacent and precede the focus (unless the focus is fronted, in which case certain particles can follow it), so the particle delimits the focus phrase to the left. Therefore, even if the focus is low, the sentence cannot be interpreted as fully focused, as the particle blocks projection of the focus further up. This means that the extension of the focus is not ambiguous, as in the other cases seen above. Note, however, that like normal cases of contrast and unlike question-answer pairs where the extension of the focus is immediately predictable from the question (when the question is explicit and salient), the context does not help predicting what the focus will be in a subsequent sentence and whether it will be associated with a focus particle. Even if the context provides an antecedent and the listener can predict the extension of the focus, she can hardly predict the *restrictions* on the antecedent imposed by the particle until the particle is uttered. For this reason, fronting with focus particles occurs in the great majority of contexts.<sup>18</sup>

Some examples are given below. Consider the Italian one in (50). The additive particle *anche* is associated with the focus *la donna* ‘the woman’. The implication triggered by the particle is that someone other than the woman felt like eating. The listener can infer from the context that such an individual is the frog, as the speaker says that the frog decides to go into the picnic basket (where supposedly food is stored).

- (50) iNoc Caterina  
 a. *La rana decide di entrare nel cestino. [...]*  
 the frog decides to enter in-the basket  
 b. *E contemporaneamente [**anche la DONNA**] aveva voglia di mangiare un poco.*  
 and at.the.same.time also the woman had desire to eat a little  
 ‘The frog decides to go into the basket, and at the same time, the woman too felt like eating a little’

In (51) (still Italian), the additive particle *pure* (which can either precede or follow the focus) is associated with *il gatto* ‘the cat’. The implication triggered by the particle is that someone other than the cat is interested in the bottle. That individual is clearly the frog, whom the speaker had said before had grasped the bottle (cf. 51a).

- (51) iNoc Andrea
- a. *Però la rana è [...] un po' più veloce, e zacata! Si prende il biberon.*  
 ‘But the frog is a little faster and zac! She grabs the bottle’
- b. **[Il gatto PURE] è un po' interessato al biberon**  
 the cat too is a little interested at.the bottle  
 ‘Even the cat has some interest in the bottle’

In the Spanish example in (52), the focus is associated with the particle *tampoco* ‘not even’, which can either precede or follow the focus. When it follows it, it bears main prominence. The focus expression is *ahí* ‘there’, and it contrasts with other places mentioned in the story from which the frog had been sent away. The implication triggered by the particle is that the frog is not loved in other places. The listener can infer it by the fact that the frog had to leave the other places.

- (52) eNoc Carmen
- Bueno pues que la rana se tiene que volver a ir, y [ahí TAMPOCO] la quieren.*  
 ‘So well the frog has to leave again, neither is she loved there’

Another Spanish example is (53). The particle is *hasta* ‘even’, which always precedes the focus, so the focus is *los propios chinos* ‘the very Chinese people’, and the accent falls on *chinos*. *Hasta* triggers the implication that the proposition holds for some values and that it is more likely that the property hold for such values than for the value expressed by the FF. In (53), the implication is that non-Chinese people usually give the English name ‘Beijing’ to the capital of China. This can be inferred from what PAS says in the preceding exchange.

- (53) efamev04
- ANA: Sí, es que allí todo el mundo habla de Shanjai  
 ‘Yes, because everybody there says ‘Shanjai’’
- PAS: [...] con la manía de Beiking en lugar de Pekín  
 ‘and the mania of saying ‘Beiking’ instead of ‘Pekin’’
- ANA: *Es que allí [hasta los propios CHINOS] muchas veces dicen ‘Beijing’*,  
 is that there even the very Chinese many times say ‘Beijing’  
 ‘The point is that even Chinese people themselves often say ‘Beijing’’

In the Italian example in (54), which is a chunk of conversation between two siblings and their mother, ANT (the sister) says that MIC (the brother) is overconfident. Then the mother says that overconfidence is an hereditary fact, meaning that it is a common aspect of all members of the family. This statement invites MIC to claim that his sister too is overconfident. The implication triggered by the particle is that there are other people who are confident apart from ANT. This implication can be inferred from ANT’s first utterance (*lui è troppo presuntuoso...*) or from what the mother says, namely that everybody in the family is overconfident.

- (54) ifamd101
- ANT: *e poi lui è troppo presuntuoso perché io ci lasci stare [...]*  
 ‘And he is too overconfident for me to let it go’
- MAR: *Va bene, in quanto alla presunzione, è un fatto ereditario di famiglia*  
 ‘Well, as for overconfidence, it’s an hereditary fact’
- MIC: Sì.

- ‘It is’  
 ANT: Eh, purtroppo, sì.  
 ‘Eh, unfortunately it is’  
 MIC: [*Anche LEI*] è *presuntuosa*, anche *LEI* è *presuntuosa*.  
 also she is overconfident also she is overconfident  
 ‘She too is overconfident, she too is overconfident’

The Italian example in (55) is the only example with ‘even’ (*perfino*). The speaker says that everybody was very happy, and then specifies that even the frog was happy. Since the frog is unlikely to be happy in those circumstances (the little frog she was jealous of has come back after being lost for some time), *tutti* ‘all’ in the first utterance may be interpreted by the listener as all *but* the frog. So the speaker feels obliged to explain that the frog is included in the set of happy people. The implication triggered by the particle is that there are other people who are happy and that these people are more likely to be happy than the frog. The first utterance in (55) clearly allows the listener to make such an inference.

- (55) iNoc Caterina  
*Erano tutti contentissimi. Eh sì, [perfino la RANA] era contenta.*  
 ‘They were all happy. Yes, even the frog was happy’

Finally, in the Italian example in (56), the FF is associated with the restrictive particle *soltanto* ‘only’. The speaker and her interlocutor are talking about certain changes that could be made to a law that regulates TV advertising in Italy if a proposal submitted for popular vote passed. The speaker explains that one change provides that the advertisements during a film on TV will be prohibited, except for the time slot between the first and the second half of the film. The speaker argues that this will make that single time slot more expensive than it is now, so only few advertising agencies (the bigger and more powerful ones) would be able to buy a part of it.

- (56) ifamd13  
 a. [...] *se lo spazio tra il primo e il secondo tempo [...] costa di più*  
 ‘if the slot between the first and the second part costs more’  
 b. *perché non puoi... a questo punto è uno solo*  
 ‘because at that point there’s just one...’  
 c. per cui [**soltanto poche PUBBLICITÀ**] **possono comprarsi quello spazio lì [...]**  
 ‘then only few advertising agencies can buy that one slot’

Since *soltanto* associates with *poche pubblicità* ‘few advertising agencies’, the implication triggered by the particle is that all, or many, advertising agencies will be able to buy a part of it. The implication can be inferred from the fact that the whole conversation was about the idea that the law aims at making life easier for all (even small) agencies.

#### 4.5 Polarity focus

Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal (this volume) present another type of fronting in Spanish (existing also in Italian), which they call Verum Focus Fronting (VFF). The main formal difference with FF is the fact that the fronted element does not bear the nuclear accent. In fact, according to Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal’s proposal, the fronted element of a VFF construction is not focused: the fronting is a strategy to unambiguously identify the focus on the polarity of the sentence by eliminating the possibility to interpret the sentence as a *topic-comment* or a *focus-background* structure (the latter being a FF construction). Assuming as they do that focus on the polarity is a particular case of narrow focus (cf. Féry 2007), a VFF construction does in effect have, like a FF construction, a focus part and a background part: the polarity is the focus and the whole sentence is



the background. However, unlike FF constructions, the *focus-background* partition is not linearly represented in the sentence. As Leonetti and Escandell-Vidal observe, a transparent representation of the *focus-background* order when focus is on the polarity is given by sentences introduced by *sí que* ‘yes that’. The focus is *sí*, representing the polarity, and the background is the entire sentence after it. I found 37 of these constructions in the Spanish corpus. *Sì che* ‘yes that’ constructions exist in Italian as well, but none was found in the corpus, so this strategy is clearly not exploited in the same way as it is in Spanish. The difference is striking because Italian and Spanish share all other polarity focus constructions: focus on the auxiliary or on the verb, expressions like ‘it is true that’, and VFF.<sup>19</sup> Two examples of *sí que* constructions are given below.

(57) epubd11

OLG: a. *porque una novela no me apetece traducir,*  
 ‘Because I don’t like to translate a novel  
 b. ***pero sí que me apetece traducir un***  
 but yes that to.me.CL appeals to-translate a...  
 ‘but I do like to translate a...’

ANT: ***un libro de lo que sea***  
 ‘...a book of no matter what’

(58) epubd11

ANT: *Y eso cómo se repercute en la factura del traductor ? [...]*  
 ‘And how does this affect the translator’s salary?’

OLG: *[...] normalmente lo que ocurre es que al mal traductor [...] no se le vuelve a llamar [...];  
 al que eh no es demasiado malo [...]*

***pues a.lo.mejor sí que se le descuenta un porcentaje, de la traducción que ha hecho***

well probably yes that PASS to.him.CL deducts a percentage of the translation that has done

‘Usually what happens is that the bad translator is not contacted again; if he is not too bad, well in that case, perhaps it *is* the case that a percentage is deducted from the translation that he did’

The focus semantic value of a sentence with a polarity focus is made of two alternatives: the positive and the negative form of the sentence. Since there are just two alternatives, the antecedent is automatically retrievable from the focus value: it is the remaining alternative of the set. Given that the characteristics of the antecedent are already known, the link between it and the context can be looser. The examples above show that. Consider (57). The speaker – a translator – says that she does not like to translate novels. Then she says that she *does* like to translate a book about no matter what. The antecedent for the focus variable (the positive polarity) cannot be but the negative polarity (that she does not like to translate a book about no matter what). The negative proposition is implicitly recoverable from the fact that the speaker has said that she does not like to translate novels. The listener can infer that the speaker does not like to translate books in general, and the *sí que* sentence contradicts that inference. Since the listener knows what the antecedent has to look like, the inference is easy to make. In (58), the antecedent with opposite polarity (the assertion that the translator’s salary is not reduced) is inferable from the context in the following way. OLG first answers ANT’s question by saying that the translator is usually not contacted again if he has done a bad job. So OLG implies a negative answer to ANT’s question: it is not the case that the translator’s salary is reduced. Then, OLG additionally says, by means of the *sí que* construction, that translators who are not *too* bad may indeed see their salary reduced. OLG’s statement then contrasts with her previous implicit answer to ANT’s question.

## 5 Conclusions

In this paper I have analyzed the discourse functions of fronted foci (FF) in Italian and Spanish. Within an Alternative Semantics framework (Rooth 1992), I have assumed that the antecedent of the variable introduced by the focus is determined pragmatically, and I have analyzed the pragmatic strategies to determine the antecedent in sentences with a FF. I have argued that a FF sentence is characterized by the fact that the focus is unambiguously identifiable, so its antecedent is recoverable even if not explicitly present in the discourse context. This favors the use of FF sentences in contrastive/corrective contexts, in contexts where the information provided by the focus is felt to be unexpected, and in contexts where the sentence answers an implicit question or a question that is far back in the discourse. In contrastive contexts, a FF is used to help the listener understand that the sentence is uttered in contrast with a previous one and what the contrasting parts are. The FF construction is preferably used when the contrasted proposition is far back in the discourse or is not explicitly given. In fact, the FF construction identifies the focus and therefore facilitates the recovering of the antecedent for the focus variable. In contexts where the information is felt to be unexpected, the focus contrasts with an implicit belief shared among the interlocutors, taken from their world knowledge. That belief is recoverable only if the sentence disambiguates the focus. In fact, if the focused element is identified, the listener will search for the right antecedent for it and therefore, in absence of that antecedent in the discourse, she will infer it from the interlocutors' shared knowledge. Finally, the FF is used as an answer to a question when the question is far back in the discourse or is only implicitly recoverable. In fact, the extension of the focus allows the listener to recover the question antecedent.

In this paper I have also shown that FFs are frequently – although not always – quantified expressions, expressions of predicative qualification, demonstrative pronouns and expressions associated with focus sensitive particles. These characteristics are compatible with the discourse functions of FF described in the paper. Focused quantifiers like 'all', 'nobody' are fronted to provide unexpected information. The antecedent of the quantifier is in fact a quantity shared by the interlocutors that is lower (or higher) with respect to the extreme value expressed by the quantifier in a scale of quantities. Predicatives of qualification expressing a subjective judgment can also be used to express an extreme value of a scale of judgments. I suggest that their fronting is facilitated by the fact that the post-focal predicate is just the copula and hence semantically light. Focused demonstrative pronouns occur in a fronted position because a speaker may first introduce a referent in a full-focus sentence, and then use the FF sentence just to highlight the referent again for pragmatic purposes. Since the referent is already given, a demonstrative pronoun is used the second time. Furthermore, a FF construction is used with focus sensitive particles in order for the specific antecedent required by the particle to be immediately retrieved by the meaning of the particle itself. *Sí que* polarity sentences in Spanish are finally mentioned because they display an unambiguous *focus-background* structure, like other FF constructions.

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## Notes

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2 Interruptions, repetitions, and other typical imperfections of spontaneous speech have been mostly eliminated for the sake of simplicity and for space reasons. Dots between square brackets indicate the cuts I have made, which can also include speech turns.

3 Benincà calls this construction ‘topicalization’, but as noted by Salvi (1988), the term is inappropriate and misleading: the displaced element does not have a topic (that is, thematic) function, but rather it is the focus of the sentence.

4 In effect, multiple fronting seems to be possible in certain cases. In Brunetti (2004:91-92) I analyze them as cases of incorporation of two foci into one.

5 In Brunetti (2004:39-40), this tendency is related to the discourse-linking properties of the fronted element.

6 For the idea that FF conveys unexpected information see also Vallduví (1992) for Catalan and Matić (2003) for Albanian, Serbo-Croat and Modern Greek.

7 Although the difference is not clear-cut. See Brunetti (2004:70-72) for examples where a cleft with a quantifier is acceptable.

8 There is ample discussion in the literature on the difference between semantically vs pragmatically determined presupposition. See for instance the debate on the Special Issue of *Theoretical Linguistics* (2004), where different authors comment on Geurts and van Der Sandt’s paper ‘Focus interpretation’.

9 The corpus was created within the project *Nocando, Construcciones no-canónicas en el discurso oral: estudio transversal y compartivo*, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona (principal investigator Enric Vallduví), funded by the Spanish *Secretaría de Estado de Universidades e Investigación del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia*, n. I+D HUM2004-04463.

10 Matić (2003) unifies the notions of ‘contrast’ and ‘unexpectedness’ by defining contrast as going against the listener’s expectations. The two effects can be set apart if we take into account where the antecedent is found: either in previous discourse (contrast) or in the shared world knowledge (unexpectedness). There are also some midway cases though: when the information of previous discourse has become a new piece of shared knowledge or belief among the interlocutors, and the FF sentence goes against the expectations deriving from it. See examples (29) and (42).

11 Alternatively, we could interpret the antecedent as ‘I would like to go to aerobics class’, and the FF sentence would go against the expectations created by the previous discourse (see previous footnote).

12 Matić’s corpus is very different from mine, both from a quantitative and a qualitative point of view. It is a very large written corpus (about 15,000 clauses per language), whose sources are daily journals, ladies’ and teenagers’ magazines, samples of narrative prose writing, and three translations of the same English novel. Despite this diversity, the similarity with my data is striking, so the classification is also useful to describe my data.

13 See Endriss (2006) for an account of the restrictions on different types of quantifiers as topics.

14 On the fact that the alternatives to these FFs are ordered in a degree scale, see also Matić (2003:288-289).

15 For instance in (i), the referent of ‘my dog’ is recovered by the right dislocated epithet ‘the mangy old beast’:

(i) a. I took my dog to the vet yesterday.

b. He is getting unaffordable, the mangy old beast.

See Brunetti (2006, submitted) for an explicit parallelism between the discourse function of right dislocation and that of the post-focal background in FF constructions.

16 This is a case where the previous discourse contains a shared belief among the interlocutors. See footnote 10.

17 Within a model of discourse such as the one proposed by Roberts (1996), an implicit question summarizing the previous discourse would be the most general (hierarchically, the topmost) ‘question under discussion’ among those that form the structure of that discourse segment.

18 The unanimous reviewer argues that the syntactic position of elements associated with focus particles is different from that of a FF, at least from what we see in some languages (e.g. Hungarian). This can be true, given that focus particles trigger a presupposition that is more constrained than that triggered by the focus alone. My analysis, however, is not affected. In fact, when the focused element is fronted, sentences with focus sensitive particles share with the other FF sentences the fact that they display a *focus-background* structure, and the consequences of having such a structure are the same for both types of sentences.

19 Matic (2003) also presents cases of fronted adverbials denoting the polarity of the sentence, such as ‘really’, ‘without doubt’, ‘with certainty’, etc. There weren’t any of such expressions in my corpus, neither in Spanish nor in Italian.