Focus, stress assignment, and Spell-Out in Camuno

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Overview. The paper discusses the syntax-prosody interface in Camuno (Gallo-Italic). In particular, I argue that the non-canonical stress associated with narrow foci is selected at PF among the potential stresses assigned by a phase-based version of the nuclear stress rule.

Main pattern. In Camuno, foci (1-a) appear in a clause-internal, immediately postverbal position, and can only be fronted via clefting (1-b). Focus also aligns with the main sentence stress (Σ), which in unmarked structures (1-c) falls on the right-edge of the clause (σ).

(1)   a.   l'   a   fat   tcha [**AL HO OM**]Φ la   hopa
           CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT here the   her   husband the soup
           'It was her husband who made the soup.'

      b.   l'   è   [**AL HO OM**]Σ ke   l'   a   fat
           CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS the   her   husband that CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT
           tcha la   hopa
           here the soup
           'It was her husband who made the soup'

      c.   al   ho om   l'   a   fat   tcha [**la hopa**]σ
           the her husband CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT here the soup
           'It was her husband who made the soup.'

Analysis. Focus in Camuno generally occupies the immediately postverbal position (IAV), which I identify, structurally, as the low focus position at the edge of vP (Belletti, 2004, *i.a.*). The position is typologically known (Zubizarreta, 2010 for a comparison between Italian and Bantu languages), and cross-linguistically often characterized by association with specific prosodic markings (Kula and Hamann, 2016), which in most Romance languages correspond to a specific stress. Differently from other approaches, I consider this non-canonical stress assignment as a contextually-dependent, post-syntactic operation interacting with, but independent from, (narrow) focus marking (cf. Kratzer & Selkirk, 2007; Samek-Lodovici, 2015).

In particular, I propose that in narrow focus structures, stress aligns with the right edge of a phonological phrase Φ rather than with the larger prosodic phrase ι (Féry, 2013), i.e., the default pattern of Camuno. I argue that phonological phrases are parsed by phases (Chomsky 2001; Kahnemuyipour 2009; Dobashi 2019), and I thus claim that at each Spell-Out cycle, a potential stress (Reinhart 1995) is assigned to the most embedded node of the Spell-Out domain by an adapted version of the Nuclear Stress Rule (Zubizarreta 2014 for an overview).

Following Szendrői (2017), I suggest that PF selects the stress at the edge of the phonological phrase containing the lexical verb, which can adjoin to projections higher than FocP, but lower than higher insertion verbs and adverbials. This stress alone is thus correlated to the syntactic focus-marking, but can independently introduce different pragmatic values.

Consider for instance (2), where the negative marker *mica* appears in post-participial position, and not, as default, after the inflected verb. The distribution in (2) introduces a counterfactual reading that may be an instance of verum focus (Roland Hinterhölzl, p.c.) which, however, I do not consider a standard alternatives-activating focus (Gutzmann et al., 2020). In these cases, stress-selection merely marks contrast, a primitive of information structure, (Neeleman & Vermeulen, 2009), rather than focus.

(2) la   htceta l'   a   {**mia**} majat   {**mia**} la   carne
     the girl   CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS NEG   eat.PRT mia   the meat

     '(No,) the girl didn't eat meat.'

Further evidence for the independence of stress as a contrast-marking operation comes from (3), where the post-participial adverb *amò* 'again' has a counterfactual interpretation that can be translated as 'before (unspecified)' when aligning with stress (indicated as]Σ):

(3) [[al' a   fat   ho **amò**]Σ al   kunitch.]σ
     cl.3sg have.3sg.prs make.prt up already the rabbit

     '(Of course,) he has made rabbit before.'

These elements cannot be interpreted in the scope of focus-associate particles like *even* or *only* and they are compatible with another focus in the clause, i.e., they are not foci themselves. **Conclusion.** The question regarding the mapping of syntactic structures to PF is a prominent one (Cinque 1993; Reinhart 1995; Arregi 2002), and extremely relevant for the discussion of narrow focus structures (Szendrői 2017). Future studies will investigate the quality of the non-default stress, and explore the similarities with the IAV position in other languages.

For the time being, the analysis correctly predicts the distribution of focal-stress in Camuno, which is due to interpretative constraints at the interfaces. Variations in the pattern are explained without positing further operations: the additional readings in (2) and (3) are pragmatic consequences of stress assignment. The analysis can also account for the fronting via clefting (1-b): the copula (lexical verb) ensures that the focus, in the most embedded position of the spelled-out CP-phase, aligns with stress.

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