

Corrective Focus in Italian Wh-Questions

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Current cartographic models claim that in root questions wh-phrases and corrective foci compete for the specifier of a left-peripheral FocusP projection. This also holds for in-situ corrective foci because they, too, are assumed to move to specFocusP, albeit covertly (Rizzi 1997, Rizzi & Cinque 2016, Rizzi & Bocci 2017). Consequently, wh-phrases and corrective foci are predicted to never co-occur in root interrogative clauses.

This talk presents a class of questions in Italian that systematically challenge this prediction. For example, in dialogue (1), the focus *GIANNI* in question A2 determines a corrective move that leads to the replacement of question B with A2. Native speaker informants find A2 grammatical and natural despite the simultaneous presence of the wh-phrase *Chi* and the corrective focus *GIANNI*. ('F' marks the corrective focus, SMALL CAPS nuclear stress, CAPITALS emphatic stress, and parentheses optional material.)

- (1) A1: *Chi_{wh} hai invitato alla FESTA?*
'Who did you invite to the party?'
- B: *Chi_{wh} ho invitato alla festa di SANDRO?*
'Who did I invite to Alexander's party?'
- A2: (No.) *Chi_{wh} hai invitato alla festa di GIANNI_F.* (Non di Sandro.)
(No.) Who (you) have invited to-the party of JOHN. (Not of Alexander.)
'(No.) Who did you invite to JOHN's party. (Not Alexander's).'

The talk will test whether Italian corrective questions are a genuine challenge to current cartographic assumptions by closely examining their key properties in detail.

To begin with, Italian corrective questions will be shown to share the properties of root questions, thus showing that they are not subordinate questions in disguise. Specifically, I will show that (i) they are not rhetorical questions; (ii) they are not echo questions (A2 mentions *GIANNI* for the first time); and (iii) they demand an answer (this being a distinctive property of root interrogatives, see Schwabe 2007).

Second, the corrective foci in Italian corrective questions will be shown to share the same properties of other corrective foci typically claimed to move to specFocusP in the cartographic literature. For example, they force the replacement of a previous question – namely B in dialogue (1) – exactly like corrective foci in declarative clauses force the replacement of a previous statement, see (2). Furthermore, they trigger the same optional negative tags that Leusen (2004) associated to corrective foci in declarative clauses; compare the parenthesized negative tags in (2.B) with the identical ones in (1.A2) above.

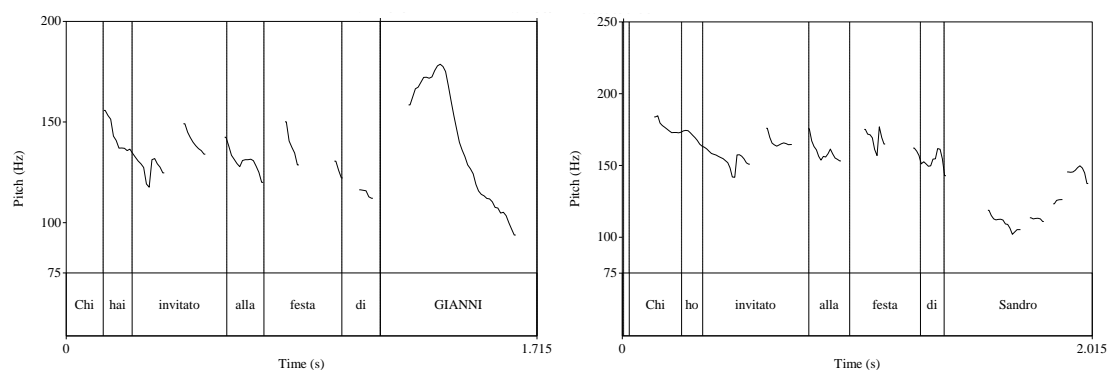
- (2) A: *Lucia ti ha invitato alla festa di SANDRO.*
'Lucy invited you to Alexander's party.'
- B: (No.) *pro mi ha invitato alla festa di GIANNI_F.* (Non di Sandro.)
(NO). (She) me has invited to-the party of JOHN. (Not of Sandro.)
'(No.). She invited me to JOHN's party. (Not Alexander's).'

Third, I will show how a minor extension to Rooth’s model of focalization, which assumes focalization in-situ, enables the co-occurrence of corrective foci and wh-phrases in the Italian corrective questions being considered (on in-situ focalization, see also Brunetti 2004, Costa 2013, Samek-Lodovici 2015, Rooth 2016, and Wagner 2020). Specifically, I will propose that the focus value of corrective questions consists of a set of alternative questions, much like the focus value of declarative clauses consists of a set of alternative propositions. For example, the focus value of A2 in (1) contains questions of the form ‘who did you invite to X’s party’, with X ranging over *Sandro*, *Gianni*, etc.

Under this analysis, corrective exchanges involving questions like (1) parallel corrective exchanges involving declaratives like (2). In both, corrective foci are interpreted in-situ as per Rooth (1992, 2016), thus allowing their co-occurrence with wh-phrases in the Italian corrective questions examined in this talk.

If time remains, I will also show how corrective questions like (1.A2) systematically lack the terminal rise found in non-corrective questions (D’imperio 2002). For example, A2 displays emphatic stress on the first syllable of the focus *GIANNI* and no terminal rise. By contrast, B leaves the first syllable of *Sandro* unstressed but shows a terminal rise on the second syllable, even though word-level stress falls on the first syllable across both names.

(3) Pitch contours for (1.A2) and (1.B)



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