

Focus encoding in Taravu Corsican: analysis of informational and contrastive focus

Lesia Collard-Buresi

Focus can be defined as the most informationally new and contextually relevant part of an utterance. In the Romance languages, focus lacks morphological markers (Lambrecht, 1994). The goal here is to understand how focus is marked through the analysis of Taravu Corsican, a variety spoken in Corsica, and which, as an understudied variety, constitutes a valuable testing ground for existing theories.

When encoding focus, Italian and French use different strategies. Italian licences the use of *in situ* position or postverbal focalisation for informational focus and the use of fronting for contrastive focus.

[UN LIBRO]CF ho comprato, non un giornale! (It)

a book have.1SG buy.PART NEG a newspaper

'It's A BOOK I bought, not a newspaper!'

While French presents more constraints, especially in the case of contrastive focus which is marked by the use of cleft constructions.

C'est [UN LIVRE]CF que j'ai acheté, pas un journal! (Fr)

it.is a book that have.1SG buy.PART NEG a newspaper

'It's A BOOK I bought, not a newspaper!'

As a language in contact with both Italian and French we are trying to understand if that contact could manifest through favouring certain strategies of one of these languages or if a hybrid strategy presenting aspects from both French and Italian could occur in focus marking in Corsican.

Building on Cruschina's (2022) multi-level framework, which analyses focus at the intersection of syntactic, prosodic and pragmatic encoding, this study investigates the syntactic and prosodic strategies used to mark informational and contrastive focus in spontaneous speech data. The corpus is annotated using the QUD-based framework of Riester, Brunetti & De Kuthy (2018), and preliminary observations are used to design a controlled fieldwork experiment targeting informational and contrastive focus in naturalistic production contexts.

Preliminary corpus analysis reveals a distinction between informational focus and contrastive focus in Taravu Corsican, with the two focus types showing different distributions of syntactic strategies. At this point, no occurrence of focus fronting has been observed for contrastive focus in the corpus so far, which raises questions about the status of this strategy in the variety and its alignment with the Italian model.

References

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