

# POSTVERBAL SUBJECTS IN ROMANCE AS *NON*-TOPICS AND NOT FOCI: INSIGHTS FROM CAMUNO\*

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Postverbal subjects (PS) in Romance intransitive structures have been analyzed as foci (Belletti 2004, Lobo and Martins 2017) or marginalized topics (Cardinaletti 2018), albeit representing the preferred order in, at least, Spanish and Italian (Leonetti 2018). I present here data from Camuno, an endangered Gallo-Italic variety, to show that the postverbal distribution of subjects in unaccusative structures results from the PF realization of the tail of a regular A-chain. Pragmatically informed restrictions on the phonological interface block, in fact, the pronunciation of the head of the movement chain to avoid an infelicitous interpretation of the subject as a contrastive topic.

## 1. Postverbal distribution of subjects in Romance

Postverbal subjects are consistently attested across the Romance group (1) since early stages of their development (2):

- |     |    |              |            |  |               |        |
|-----|----|--------------|------------|--|---------------|--------|
| (1) | a. | è            | arrivato   | Mario.   | ITALIAN       |        |
|     |    | be.3SG.PRS   | arrive.PRT | Mario  |               |        |
|     |    |              |            | ‘Mario arrived.’                                     |               |        |
|     | b. | ha           | ocurrido   | una desgracia.                                       | SPANISH       |        |
|     |    | have.3SG.PRS | happen.PRT | a misfortune   |               |        |
|     |    |              |            | ‘Something tragic has happened.’ (Leonetti 2018, 18) |               |        |
|     | c. | il           | est        | arrivé   | une problème. | FRENCH |
|     |    | CL.3SG       | be.3SG.PRS | arrive.PRT   | a problem     |        |
|     |    |              |            | ‘An issue emerged.’                                  |               |        |
|     | d. | va           | caure      | una forta pluja.                                     | CATALAN       |        |
|     |    | go.CL.3SG    | fall.PRT   | a heavy rain   |               |        |
|     |    |              |            | ‘A heavy rain fell.’                                 |               |        |

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- e. bea cupi-lul lapte. ROMANIAN  
 drink.3SG.PRS child.the milk  
 ‘The child drinks milk.’
- (2) a. allora andò uno de’ dodici. OLD TUSCAN  
 then go.3SG.PST one of-the twelve  
 ‘Then one of the twelve went.’ (Adapted from Ciconte 2018, 128)
- b. vino una gran tormenta. OLD SPANISH  
 come.3SG.PST a great storm  
 ‘A great storm came.’

The canonical ordering of transitive and unergative structures of most Romance varieties (but see the Romanian example in (1e)) is SV(O) (3a). Conversely, VS seems to be the canonical order for unaccusative constructions. Consider the alternates in (3):

- (3) a. Miriam ha organizzato la conferenza. TRANSITIVE S V O  
 Miriam have.3SG.PRS organize.PRT the conference  
 ‘Miriam organized the conference.’
- b. #un incidente è capitato. UNACCUSATIVE S V  
 an accident be.3SG.PRS happen.PRT  
 (int.) ‘An accident happened.’
- c. è capitato un incidente. UNACCUSATIVE V S  
 be.3SG.PRS happen.PRT an accident  
 ‘An accident happened.’ (adapted from Leonetti 2018, 17)

Traditionally, however, postverbal subjects have been associated with pragmatically marked interpretations, in particular, they have been analyzed as foci (Belletti 2001, 2004) or marginalized (right dislocated) topics (Cardinaletti 2018).

- (4) a. ha organizzato Miriam la conferenza. FOCUS  
 have.3SG.PRS organize.PRT Miriam the conference  
 ‘It was Miriam who organized the conference.’
- b. l’ ha sempre saputo, Miriam. TOPIC  
 CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS always know.PRT Miriam  
 ‘As for Miriam, she has always known about it.’

Leonetti (2018), however, identifies several cases of postverbal subjects in Spanish that

are licensed in out-of-the-blue structures, regardless of the type of verb involved, a pattern partially overlapping with Romanian (Anda Neagu, p.c.) (5):

- (5) a. muchos libros se ha comprado ella.  
 many books REFL have.3SG.PRS buy.PRT her  
 ‘She bought plenty of books.’
- b. eso dijo ella.  
 that say.3SG.PST her  
 ‘That’s what she said.’ (Leonetti 2018, 13)

The postverbal distribution of subjects is thus often associated with specific marked readings, but the pattern is by no means generalized, nor transparent across the Romance group, especially in unaccusative structures, which are at the center of this paper.

## 2. Postverbal subjects in Camuno

The same distributional patterns for postverbal subjects described so far for the Romance group in general is attested in Camuno, an endangered dialect of Eastern Lombard spoken in Valcamonica, in the north of Italy (6):

- (6) a. al ka l’ a kurit dre al gat. TRANSITIVE  
 the dog CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS run.PRT behind the cat  
 ‘The dog chased the cat.’
- b. l’ è burlada do la Angela. UNACCUSATIVE  
 CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS fall.PRT down the Angela  
 ‘Angela fell.’
- c. i a ist LA HO FIOLA à hkola. FOCUS  
 CL.3PL have.3SG.PRS see.PRT the her daughter at school  
 ‘It’s her daughter who saw them at school.’
- d. la maja mia la carne, la Fulvia. TOPICS  
 3SG.PRS eat.3SG.PRS NEG the meat the Fulvia  
 ‘As for Fulvia, she doesn’t eat meat.’
- e. e-i riach i pì? INTERROGATIVES  
 be.3PL.PRS=CL.3PL arrive.PRT the kids  
 ‘Did the kids arrive?’

Importantly, differently from the vast majority of the other Romance varieties, the postver-

bal position in Camuno is highly active in that it hosts wh-phrases, foci, and focus associate particles (7):

- (7) a. è-l                      gnit        ki    gier        hera?                      WH-QUESTION  
 be.3SG.PRS=CL.3SG come.PRT who yesterday evening  
 ‘Who came yesterday?’
- b. l’        è                      gnit        al Valerio gier        hera.                      FOCUS  
 CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS come.PRT the Valerio yesterday evening  
 ‘It’s Valerio who came yesterday night.’
- c. al        gnierà        finamai al Valerio dumà.                      FOCUS PARTICLES  
 CL.3SG come.FUT even    the Valerio tomorrow  
 ‘Even Valerio will come tomorrow!’

In these cases, the nuclear stress aligns with the postverbal position, which is the *locus* of focalization, a widely accepted, long-standing cross-linguistic generalization (see Jackendoff 1972; Zubizarreta 1998; Arregi 2002).

## 2.1 Fronting and contrast

Studies on focus structures in Romance show a frequent association between fronting and marking of contrast which, for numerous languages, has been transparently connected with specific types of foci (see Cruschina 2012; Cruschina et al. 2015). For instance, information foci in Italian cannot be fronted (8a), while corrective ones can (8b):

- (8) a. ho                      guardato la partita IERI        SERA.  
 have.1SG.PRS watch.PRT the game yesterday night  
 ‘I watched the game yesterday night.’
- b. IERI        SERA ho                      guardato la partita.  
 yesterday night have.1SG.PRS watch.PRT the game  
 ‘It’s yesterday night that I watched the game (not this morning).’

While relatively uncommon, marked focus in Camuno, which always involves some level of contrast with an antecedent, an indexical element, or a previously held belief, can be fronted either via simple fronting (9a) or clefting (9b):

- (9) a. [**al ho om**]<sub>FOC</sub> l’        a                      fat        ho la hopa gier.  
 the her husband CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT up the soup yesterday  
 ‘It is her husband that made the soup yesterday.’

- b. l' è [al ho om]<sub>FOC</sub> ke l' a fat ho  
 CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS the her husband that CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT up  
 la hopa.  
 the soup  
 'It is her husband that made the soup.'

Contrast is also often associated with topicalization, resulting in a sub-type of topic labeled “contrastive” (Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007). In Camuno, an unstressed fronted element can only be interpreted as a contrastive topic as in (10b):

- (10) a. la erdura l' o ciapada ho en del me ort.  
 the vegetables CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS take.PRT up in the my garden  
 'As for the vegetables, I picked it up in my garden.'
- b. \*LA ERDURA l' o ciapada ho en del me ort.  
 the vegetables CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS take.PRT up in the my garden  
 (int.) 'It's the vegetables, that I picked up in my garden.'

Variations in the prosody and pragmatic context may help disambiguate an interpretation, but when presented in isolation, speakers' judgments are very solid in pointing towards a contrastive reading for unaccented XPs.

## 2.2 Interface-driven restriction on distribution

According to every implementation of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995, 2001, 2023), movement can only be motivated if an interpretative crash would otherwise occur at the interfaces. In other words, semantic and phonological requirements are solely responsible for the operations occurring during the syntactic derivation. Restrictions and operations purely at the phonological level, for instance, can account for a variety of morpho-phonological phenomena in Camuno.

Stress is the only dimension that differentiates the two possible meanings of the adverb *amò*: (i) 'already.PRF' and (ii) 'again' (11a):<sup>1</sup>

- (11) a. al a fat ho amò al kunitch.  
 CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT up again the rabbit  
 'He has made rabbit again.'

<sup>1</sup> Some German adverbial discourse particles have two different forms, a stressed and an unstressed one, with different pragmatic implications (see Reimer and Dimroth 2022). The distinction is not generally present in Gallo-Italic varieties, but notice that the stress *amò* in (11b) adds an aspectual (perfective) value to the interpretation, which resembles the role of a discourse particle and needs further investigation, out of the scope of this paper.

- b. al a fat ho AMÓ al kunitch.  
 CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT up already the rabbit  
 ‘He has made rabbit (at some point) before.’

Another construction where the phonological interface plays a key role at the distributional level is structures hosting the particle *po*, whose semantic values result in two alternative pragmatic readings. If stressed, the propositional content of the *po*-utterance is marked as “obviously true” while, if not, as “unremarkable” (see Fiorini 2022b). Since the particle cannot be independently stressed, the former meaning can only be obtained by right-adjointing *po* to the constituent bearing main sentence stress (12):

- (12) a. l’ a fat tcha **po** AL PAOLO al kunitch!  
 CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT here po the Paolo the rabbit  
 ‘Paolo made the rabbit (who else?).’
- b. l’ a fat tcha **po** al Paolo al kunitch!  
 CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS make.PRT here po the Paolo the rabbit  
 ‘Paolo made the rabbit (nothing special, he’s always the one making it).’

Finally, consider the morpho-phonological alternations with doubled wh-phrases in (13):

- (13) a. k’ e-t sumena kwè?  
 what have.2SG.PRS=CL.2SG sow.PRT what  
 ‘What did you sow?’
- b. \*kwè e-t sumena ke?  
 what have.2SG.PRS=CL.2SG sow.PRT what  
 ‘What did you sow?’
- c. ngo se-t nasciut ngont?  
 where be.2SG.PRS=CL.2SG born.PRT where  
 ‘Where were you born?’
- d. \*ngont se-t nasciut ngo?  
 where be.2SG.PRS=CL.2SG born.PRT where  
 ‘Where were you born?’

The two wh-phrases have different morphological forms and show superiority effects. Importantly, the lower wh-phrase is consistently phonologically heavier than the higher one. Indeed, the latter aligns with the main sentence stress, which in Camuno canonically falls on the rightmost edge of the utterance, and tends to resist movement (a common property

of Gallo-Romance varieties).

In some neighboring varieties like Bergamasco, which are characterized by optionality of fronting of *wh*-phrases (which is possible, but significantly less common in Camuno), the fronted *wh*-phrase has a heavier form than the clause-internal one (Manzini and Savoia 2005), arguably to be able to attract stress (14):

- (14) a.   coha o-l                                 la Franca?                                 FRONTED WH  
           what want.3SG.PRS=CL.3SG the Franca  
           ‘What does Franca want?’
- b.   o-la   kè la Franca?                                 CLAUSE-INTERNAL WH  
           want.3SG.PRS=CL.3SG what the Franca  
           ‘What does Franca want?’

In general, if two forms are available (as in most Lombard dialects), the one aligning with stress is consistently morpho-phonologically heavier in sentence-initial position.

In the next section, I built upon these findings to propose that the distribution of postverbal subjects in Camuno is due to pragmatically-informed phonological restrictions, rather than informational ones.

### 3. Postverbal subjects as *non*-topics

In Romance languages, the clause-initial position is often occupied by either de-accented topicalized items or stressed foci, both associated with a contrastive interpretation. There are cases where both elements introduce new propositional content to the discourse, often discussed as a defining property of foci, identifiable as the answer of multiple-*wh* interrogatives (15), which in Italian generally trigger a “list” reply:

- (15) a.   ki ha                                 fatto cosa?  
           who have.3SG.PRS do.PRT what  
           ‘Who did what?’
- b.   Giorgia ha                                 portato il vino e Fabio ha                                 cucinato.  
           Giorgia have.3SG.PRS bring.PRT the wine and Fabio have.3SG.PRS cook.PRT  
           ‘Giorgia brought wine and Fabio cooked.’
- c.   il vino l’                                 ha                                 portato Giorgia e Fabio ha  
           the wine CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS bring.PRT Giorgia and Fabio have.3SG.PRS  
           cucinato.  
           cook.PRT  
           ‘The wine, Giorgia brought it, while Fabio cooked.’

The ordering of the two *wh*-phrases is sensitive to superiority constraints, however, the two foci are ordered based on the informational load of the proposition, that is, either argument (or adjunct) can be fronted, and the choice is made based on which element the speaker wishes to highlight. Crucially, the fronted element is interpreted as a contrastive topic (Büring 1997, Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl 2007, Krifka 2008), despite *de facto* representing new information. Fronting seems thus to be associated with contrastivity alone, and the different informational role (i.e., focus or topic) is based on the stress pattern at PF: when stressed, a fronted XP is interpreted as foci. Otherwise, it is canonically interpreted as topic (16):<sup>2</sup>

- (16) a. LA ERDURA I' o ciapada ho en del me ort.  
 the vegetables CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS take.PRT up in the my garden  
 'It's the vegetables that I picked up in my garden.'
- b. la erdura I' o ciapada ho en del me ort.  
 the vegetables CL.3SG have.3SG.PRS take.PRT up in the my garden  
 'As for the vegetables, I picked it up in my garden.'

In Fiorini (2023), I discuss the derivation of focus constructions as resulting from obligatory fronting of all foci to mark contrast at the edge of the CP phase. At PF, only one of the copies in the A'-chain the movement creates is pronounced, in particular, the one aligning with the right edge of the vP phase. In a nutshell, the derivation proceeds as in (17):

- (17) a. movement out of VP to spec, vP > spec, OP<sub>con</sub>.  
 b. prosodic structure: [[<sub>CP</sub> ... C°][<sub>TP</sub> ... T°[<sub>vP</sub> ... v°][<sub>VP</sub> ... V°]]  
 c. stress assignment to vP

First, a focalized constituent XP moves to the edge of the vP phase to be visible to a contrastive operator in the CP area operating on focus alternatives (Chierchia 2013), which attracts XP (17a). Phonological phrases are built cyclically: the phase domain is sent to the PF interface, and a potential stress is assigned by a modified version of the nuclear stress rule (Cinque 1993, Arregi 2002, Zubizarreta and Vergnaud 2017), to the most embedded element in a Spell-Out domain (17b). At PF, a series of constraints ensures that the right stress is selected.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The canonical distribution of foci in Camuno is postverbal, therefore, (16a) represents in itself an exception.

<sup>3</sup>In particular, I propose four basic constraints: (i) RIGHTEDGE = align stress to the right edge of a phonological phrase  $\varphi$ ; (ii) MARKCONTRAST = align stress with a contrastive XP; (iii) ALIGN  $\iota$  = align stress with the intonational phrase (1 violation for every skipped edge); (iv) PRONOUNCE = Pronounce the higher copy in a chain.

The ranking is partially ordered as (iii) and (iv) can be re-ordered resulting in the pattern of optional visible fronting. The frequency data can be captured by a stochastic model employing, for instance, weighted constraints (see Smolensky and Legendre 2011; Coetzee and Kawahara 2013).



Contrastive topics undergo the same derivation, but no marked stress is required for the higher copy to be pronounced. The interpretation of these XPs as topics is transparent, also considering that foci are rarely fronted.

As mentioned above, the preferred ordering for unaccusative structures in Camuno is  $V > S$  and, when subjects appear in sentence-initial position, they are invariably interpreted as contrastive topics (18):

- (18) a.  $l'$        $\grave{e}$                       comenhada la meha.  
 CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS begin.PRT the mass  
 ‘Mass has begun.’
- b. la meha  $l'$        $\grave{e}$                       comenhada.  
 the mass CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS begin.PRT  
 ‘As for mass, it started.’

The relation between ordering and contrastive topicalization is very strong and, at least partially, independent from the sentence type. The same restriction over the interpretation of a preverbal subject is visible in *wh*-interrogative (19):

- (19) a. a-l                                      majat k\`e al ho p\`i?  
 have.3SG.PRS=CL.3SG eat.PRT what the his kid  
 ‘What did her kid eat?’
- b. al ho p\`i a-l                                      majat k\`e?  
 the his kid have.3SG.PRS=CL.3SG eat.PRT what  
 ‘What about his kid: what did she eat?’

Further evidence for the topic status of preverbal, unaccusative subjects comes from data like (20), which contains an indefinite subject. In this case *an p\`i* ‘a kid’, can only be interpreted as “a kid part of a defined group,” that is, a contrastive topic (20a), while an indefinite interpretation is only possible when the subject surfaces post-verbally (20b):

- (20) a. #an p\`i  $l'$        $\grave{e}$                       riat.  
 a kid CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS arrived.PRT  
 ‘One of the kid arrived.’ — (int) ‘It arrived a (unspecified) kid.’
- b.  $l'$        $\grave{e}$                       riat                      an p\`i.  
 CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS arrived.PRT a kid  
 ‘Some kid arrived.’

Finally, albeit only possible in highly specific contexts, if a contrastive fronted topic is

present, such as (21a), the subject can appear in the canonical preverbal position (21b):

- (21) a. CONTEXT: a group of friends is deciding in which town to go to the Christmas eve mass. You only know that you cannot go to the one in Cevo as it has already started.
- b. a Cevo la meha l' è comenhada.  
 at Cevo the mass CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS begin.PRT  
 'In Cevo, the mass has begun.'

### 3.1 Deriving unaccusative structures

The derivation of unaccusative structures in Camuno does not differ from the one traditionally accepted for other Romance languages and English (22):

- (22) a. al ho fredèl l' è burlat do  
 the his brother CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS fall.PRT down  
 'Her brother fell.'
- b.  $[_{TP} \text{ al ho fredèl } [_{TP} \text{ è } [_{VP} \text{ burlat do } [_{DP} \text{ al-ho-fredèt}]]]]$

In (22b), the subject is generated as the internal argument, in the object position and the specifier of vP remains empty as no external argument is introduced by the structure (Burzio 1986). In order to satisfy EPP and mark nominative case, the subject DP moves to TP, skipping the intermediate position in vP as  $v^{\circ}$  is not a phase head (Chomsky 2001, but see Legate 2003).<sup>4</sup> At PF, the higher copy is usually pronounced, resulting in (22a).

Consider now, however, the derivation of the same structure, where the subject *al ho fredèl* 'her brother' is a contrastive topic (23):

- (23) a. al ho fredèl l' è burlat do  
 the his brother CL.3SG be.3SG.PRS fall.PRT down  
 'As for her brother, he fell.'
- b.  $[_{CP} \text{ OP } [_{CP} \text{ al ho fredèl } [_{TP} \text{ al-ho-fredèt } [_{T} \text{ è } [_{vP} \text{ burlat do } [_{DP} \text{ al-ho-fredèt}]]]]]]$

The interpretation of (23) at the semantic interface differs substantially from (22), since the subject moves to a specifier in the CP area to enter the scope of a contrastive operator (in line with operations involving marked-focus structures) responsible for activating a presupposition for a preadjacent proposition part of the focus semantic values of (23a) with the form

<sup>4</sup>In (22b) I ignore a number of movements irrelevant to our purposes which includes subject clitics, auxiliary, and participle. Particles associated with verbs are common and can, in exceptional cases, be stranded.

[E(x)], where *E* is a member of an *Event Class* set representing a set of event with some common features, where *x* is focalized.

At PF, however, the two structures share the same form, and thus an ambiguity arises between the two interpretations. PF can solve such an ambiguity since it has direct access to pragmatic restrictions over the interpretation. Notice, in fact, that a commonly overlooked distinction between ungrammaticality and infelicity: the former results from a crash in the derivation, while the latter arises at the pragmatic level (cf., however, Reinhart 2006 for proposals to unified ungrammaticality and infelicity for pragmatically marked structures).

### 3.2 PF-constraints on pronunciation

Following the principle of economy of computation of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995, et seq.), it is generally assumed that only one of the copies is pronounced and that there is a strong preference for deleting the tail of the chain, a filter necessary for the derivation in (24) to converge:

- (24) a. [[Miguel] was fired [~~Miguel~~] on their first day]  
 b. \*[[~~Miguel~~] was fired [Miguel] on their first day]

Since the inception of copy theory, however, the anaphor ambiguity in (25) is observed.

- (25) a. Joe<sub>i</sub> wondered which picture of himself<sub>i/j</sub> Jim<sub>j</sub> bought.  
 b. UPSTAIRS READING:  
 Joe wondered [[which picture of himself] [Jim bought [~~which picture of himself~~]]]  
 c. DOWNSTAIRS READING:  
 Joe wondered [which picture of himself] Jim bought [~~which picture of himself~~]]

The issue can be solved by local bounding at LF, obtained by deletion of the tail (*himself* refers to *Joe*), or partial deletion of the head (*himself* refers to *Jim*), dispensing from the need of indexes, which are incompatible with the Inclusiveness Condition, as not an inherent property of lexical items (Chomsky et al. 2019).

In the same spirit, Bošković (2001, 2002), and Corver and Nunes (2007) present a convincing series of empirical evidence supporting the possibility of deleting the head of a chain at PF as well. Take, for instance, the case of multiple-wh construction in Romanian, which generally must be fronted (26), except for cases where homophony arises (27):

- (26) a. cine ce precede?  
 who what precede.3SG.PRS  
 ‘Who precedes what?’  
 b. \*cine precede ce?  
 who precede.3SG.PRS what

- (27) a. ce precede ce?  
 what precede.3SG.PRS what  
 ‘What precedes what?’
- b. \*ce ce precede?  
 what what precede.3SG.PRS

According to Bošković (2002), a PF constraint against consecutive homophonous wh-phrases is active in Romanian, so that phonology seems to override syntax, a situation incompatible with the Y-model of grammar. Bošković and Nunes (2007) thus proposed that PF considerations can force the application of a mechanism labeled Pronounce Lower Copy (PLC), which straightforwardly accounts for the ungrammaticality of (27b). In the proposed derivation, the structures for (27) is (28) (ignoring irrelevant copies):

- (28) a. [ce ce<sub>i</sub> precede ce<sub>i</sub>]  
 b. [ce ee precede ce]

All wh-phrases undergo fronting. since pronouncing the higher copy of non-homophonous wh-phrases does not violate any PF constraint, the head is generally pronounced. However, in (28), pronouncing the highest link of the wh-chain would result in a violation of this PF constraint. Consequently, at the interface, PLC applies, resulting in the deletion of the head of the chain, and the pronunciation of the tail.

PLS has proven successful in accounting for several phenomena cross-linguistically like Scandinavian Object Shift Bobaljik (1994); syllabic contraction in Romanian clitic (Bošković 2001); Greek imperative ban on negation (Bošković 2002); and more collected in (Bošković and Nunes 2007).

I take these analyses as evidence that, given the right conditions, either copy can be deleted at both interfaces, to prevent interpretability clashes.

My proposal is thus that PF is sensitive to pragmatical constraints that instruct the interface to block the pronunciation of the higher copy to avoid a contrastive interpretation. In particular, the derivation in (23) remains the same, reported here as (29), but in this case, it is the higher copy that it is pronounced:

- (29) [TP ~~al ho fredèl~~ [T è [vP *burlat do*[DP *al ho fredèl*]]]]

Pronouncing the lower copy of an A-bar chain is fairly common in Camuno, where the canonical clause-internal distribution of wh-phrase (Fiorini and Neagu 2023), and foci (Fiorini 2023) is directly connected to the prosodic properties of the language. The postverbal area of Gallo-Romance varieties is indeed particularly rich (Ledgeway 2019), possibly due to the same phonological restrictions on word order driving its diachronic development (Ledgeway 2012, Fiorini 2022a).

### 3.3 Postverbal subjects are *not* foci

As mentioned at the beginning, it has been proposed that postverbal subjects in Romance languages are interpreted as foci (Belletti 2001, 2004), or right dislocated topics (Cardinaletti 2018). From a derivational point of view, this allows us to explain the postverbal distribution by adopting Rizzi's (2010) Criterial Freezing. That is, a focalized item checking a [focus] feature in the specifier of a focus projection is "frozen in place". Dislocated postverbal subjects, following the definition followed in Cardinaletti (2018), are de-accented and belong to a separate phonological unit, and are opposed to a focus within the sentence as topics are given material that opposes the new information introduced by foci (Rizzi 1997).

Both these possibilities are indeed available to all postverbal subjects in marked structures. However, the distribution is the canonical one in unaccusative structures.

The postverbal position also aligns with the main sentence stress, a property typical of foci, so that potential interpretative ambiguities may arise. Postverbal subjects can, however, be perfectly felicitous out of the blue and answer a question like "what happened?" both contexts are incompatible with a narrow-focus reading.

## 4. Conclusion and future studies

The paper investigated the distribution of postverbal subjects in Camuno as resulting from constraints that pragmatics imposes on the phonological interface. In particular, I showed that sentence-initial subjects in unaccusative structures are invariably interpreted as contrastive topics. I thus proposed that postverbal subjects are the pronounced tail of the chain formed by movement of the subject to the specifier of TP. The unusual pattern of pronunciation of a lower copy in a chain is justified by filters in place to prevent a wrong interpretation of a preverbal subject as a contrastive topic. A welcomed by-product of the hypothesis is the ability to capture cases where subjects are indeed fronted as a transparent contrastive topic is already present in the structure.

Future works will explore the cross-linguistic validity of the proposal, discussing other Romance languages, also including heritage and L2 grammars, possibly less sensitive to pragmatic constraints.

### References

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