

Information Structure and the syntax of contrastive topics and foci in Brazilian Portuguese

Contrastive topics (CTs) are associated with foci, as usually assumed (a.o. Büring 2003). This paper investigates the *syntactic* properties of the contrastive topic and *focus* association (CTFA) in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and its consequences for Information Structure based on novel data involving a comparison of CTs located in the CP periphery (Rizzi 1997), as in (1)a, and CTs in the (postverbal) vP periphery (Belletti 2004), as in (1)b. I show that CTFA in BP is: (i) *clause-bound*: a CT and its focus must originate in the same clause; (ii) *read off structural adjacency*: a CT interprets the constituent structurally right-adjacent to it as being its associated focus.

- (1) a. Do Chomsky, o João resenhou só dois livros.
of-the Chomsky the John reviewed only two books
b. O João resenhou, do Chomsky, só dois livros.
the John reviewed of-the Chomsky only two books
'John reviewed *only two books* by Chomsky.'

CTFA is clause-bound: (2) shows that a CT generated in the embedded clause can move to the matrix or the embedded CP area while still felicitously associated with a focus pertaining to the embedded clause (same judgment for object foci). Crucially, however, as (3) shows, a topic from an embedded clause cannot be associated with a focus that belongs to a higher clause even if the topic moves to a position higher than the focus. Moreover, despite appearances, a CT cannot look for a focus across clauses downwards either. In (4), although the overt focus is *só pra Madri* in the embedded clause, the interpretation is that the whole complement CP is the focus of the higher CT (which involves focus projection): in the last meeting, the boss said A; in this meeting, the boss said B. Crucially, the CT and the complement CP are clause-mates. Note additionally that the embedded CP has its own CTFA between *de avião* and *só pra Madri*.

- (2) *My friends travel to Madrid every two years. Last year, everybody went to Madrid.*
a. Ano que vem, a Maria falou que só o João vai pra Madri.
year that comes the Mary said that only the John goes to Madrid
b. A Maria falou que, ano que vem, só o João vai pra Madri.
the Mary said that year that comes only the John goes to Madrid
'Mary said that *only John* will go to Madrid next year.'
- (3) *Almost everybody said John will go to Madrid this year.*
a. ?*Ano que vem, só a Maria falou que ele vai pra Madri.
year that comes only the Mary said that he goes to Madrid
b. *Só a Maria falou que, ano que vem, ele vai pra Madri.
only the Mary said that year that comes he goes to Madrid
'*Only Mary* said that he will go to Madrid next year.'
- (4) *In the last meeting, the boss said that we were going to many cities in Spain by plane.*
Nessa reunião, o chefe falou que, de avião, a gente vai só pra Madri.
in-this meeting the boss said that of plane the people goes only to Madrid
'In this meeting, the boss said that we are going *only to Madrid* by plane.'

CTFA is read off structural adjacency: Consider first low (vP) topics. Though (1)b shows that the CT appears in a dislocated position, I argue that its associated focus does not involve movement (e.g. to SpecFocP). The base order being DO-IO (Scher 1996), the IO cannot move past the DO to be the focus of the (vP) CT, as in (5). Focalization of the IO in the IO-DO order is possible, but is independently shown to involve right-dislocation (and deaccenting) of the DO. As the contrast in (6) shows, a neg-concord DO is ruled out in such position. In the alternative structure of (5) in (7), *pro/two* thus disrupts the structural adjacency I claim is required by CTFA

(the precise structure of R-dislocation is not crucial here). That this analysis is correct is shown by the fact that the IO cannot be the focus of the CT across the overt DO either, as in (8); an oblique argument can only be the focus of the vP-area CT in the absence of a DO, as in (9).

- (5) *Eu recomendei, do Chomsky, pra Maria_i dois livros t_i.
 I recommended of-the Chomsky to-the Mary two books
 ‘I recommended two books by Chomsky to Mary.’
- (6) a. Eu dei pra Maria, esse livro\ b. ??Eu não dei pra Maria, nenhum livro\
 I gave to Mary this book I not gave to-the Mary no book
 ‘I gave it to Mary, this book.’ ‘I gave it to Mary, no book.’
- (7) *[TP I recommended [TopP of-the Chomsky [pro/two to-the Mary]]] [two books]DO]
- (8) *[TP Eu recomendei [TopP do Chomsky [dois livros [pra Maria]]]]
- (9) Eu confio, pra esse tipo de tarefa, só na Maria.
 I trust for this kind of task only in-the Mary
 ‘I trust only Mary for this kind of task.’

I argue that in the CP area, the structural adjacency between CT and focus is met indirectly, via the CT and the operator OP_f that licenses overt focus (on focus operators, a.o. Drubig 2003), as in (10). The CP counterpart of (8) is thus predicted to be acceptable, according to fact, as in (11). The relevant structural adjacency holds between the CT and the focus operator, even though overt focus movement to the CP-area is banned: informational and contrastive foci must be in situ, as (12)-(13) show (despite other non-topic fronting operations being possible; so-called *focus movement* has been shown to have independent triggers elsewhere; e.g. Horvath 2010).

- (10) [CP [TopP C-topic [OP_f [TP ... Focus_f]]]]
- (11) Do Chomsky, OP_f eu recomendei dois livros pra Maria_f.
 of-the Chomsky I recommended two books to-the Mary
 ‘I recommended two books by Chomsky to Mary.’
- (12) A: What did John buy?
 B: {??Um carro,} (a Maria disse que) ele comprou {um carro}.
 {??a car} (the Mary said that) he bought {a car}
 ‘(Mary said that) he bought a car.’
- (13) A: John bought a motorbike.
 B: Cê tá errado... {??um carro} ele comprou {um carro}.
 you are wrong {??a car} he bought {a car}
 ‘You’re wrong... he bought a car.’

Final remarks: CTFA in BP is formalized in (14). (14) shows that a focus is associated with a CT via structural adjacency (hence the clause-boundedness), rather than overt focus movement to a dedicated position. CTFA is a complex Information Structure configuration that includes *at once* the notions of topic, focus, and contrast. The reduction of CTFA to a strictly local process sheds light on the locality of Information Structure itself. Despite superficial appearances (e.g. (1)a/(5)), what is crucial is structural adjacency, as revealed by the comparison between (high) CP-area and (low) vP-area contrastive topics.

- (14) CTFA: In the configuration [TopP XP [YP ...]], XP = topic and YP = *focus*
 (where YP is either a focus operator or a focalized element)

References: Belletti 2004. Aspects of the low IP area. Büring 2003. On D-trees, beans, and B-accent. Drubig 2003. Toward a typology of focus and focus constructions. Horvath 2010. “Discourse features”, syntactic displacement and the status of contrast. Rizzi 1997. The fine structure of the left periphery. Scher 1996. As construções com dois objetos no inglês e no português do Brasil.