

## Mirative Fronting in Italian

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### ABSTRACT

In this presentation I will first give an overview of the recent findings and hypotheses on the interpretive properties associated with Focus Fronting (FF) in Romance, distinguishing between different types of focus (information focus, contrastive/corrective focus, and mirative focus). Not all types of focus allow FF. Rather, the presence or absence of this special syntactic device to mark narrow focus seems to depend on additional or concomitant requirements, leading to a wide range of analyses as for the syntactic, prosodic, or pragmatic nature of the trigger of this operation. It is generally assumed that *contrast* is the interpretive feature associated with FF in Romance (López 2009; see also Rizzi 1997). A different analysis is put forward in Samek-Lodovici (2006), according to which the initial trigger of the derivational steps that lead to the FF configuration is the *givenness* of the superficially postfocal material. Recent work, however, has highlighted that FF is not exclusively limited to contrastive interpretations, and that givenness of the background material is not a necessary condition for FF (cf. Cruschina 2012, Bianchi, Bocci & Cruschina 2014a). FF is also possible with an interpretation of emphasis, surprise or unexpectedness (i.e. mirative focus) in Sicilian, Sardinian, Italian and – arguably – in other Romance varieties such as Portuguese, Spanish, Romanian, and French (cf. Cruschina 2012, Remberger 2014).

Following Bianchi, Bocci & Cruschina (2014a,b), and concentrating on Italian, I will then show that the possibility of having FF with mirative focus goes against the traditional theories of FF based on the notion of contrast or givenness, and that FF must be ultimately analysed as triggered by conventional implicatures (cf. Frey 2010). FF with mirative focus conveys the conventional implicature that there is at least one alternative proposition which is *more likely* than the asserted proposition, and it is this implicature that gives rise to the interpretive effects that are generally described in terms of emphasis, surprise or unexpectedness. The mirative implicature belongs to an *evaluative dimension* of meaning which is supported by dedicated components of the discourse context (i.e. a contextually relevant modal base and a stereotypical ordering source shared by the conversational participants), but not by the common ground. This evaluative meaning differs from Potts's expressive meaning, although they are both separate from the at-issue meaning. I will finally discuss a possible syntactic implementation of this idea, which requires the *syntacticization* of conventional implicatures and their association with focus structures.

### References

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