Focus, neg-concord, and negative postverbal subjects

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This paper concerns negative subjects occurring in the non-canonical postverbal position, where their distribution diverges from that of non-negative postverbal subjects (in contrast, both negative and non-negative subjects may occur in the canonical pre-auxiliary position frequently identified as SpecTP). The paper examines negative postverbal subjects with respect to contrastive focalization, right-dislocation, and neg-concord, showing how the constraints on these three operations fully determine their postverbal distribution. This achievement is dependent on an *in situ* analysis of postverbal contrastive foci. For this reason, the paper also examines the position of postverbal foci, providing several arguments in support of *in situ* focalization.

1. Introduction

This paper examines negative postverbal subjects (henceforth **NPV-subjects**) in Italian. These subjects are interesting because they occur postverbally, hence in a non-canonical position for subjects, and with a diverging distribution relative to non-negative postverbal subjects when considering their position relative to an independent postverbal contrastive focus. As I will show, their distributional quirkiness is determined by the need to satisfy neg-concord which requires them to remain c-commanded by a suitable licenser, typically a neg-marker in T. This prevents NPV-subjects from occurring in right-dislocated positions located outside the c-commanding domain of neg-concord, which in turn explains their divergence relative to non-negative subjects, which remain able to occur in right-dislocated positions.

I will also show that this principled analysis is only possible if postverbal contrastive foci occur *in situ* and right-dislocated items occur in a position outside the lowest TP node as argued in Samek-Lodovici (2015). Notably, forcing postverbal foci in a focus projection à la Rizzi (1997, 2004) or Belletti (2001, 2004) would leave the distribution of NPV-subjects unexplained.

The paper starts in §2 with a description of the distribution of NPV-subjects. In §3, it identifies the constraints responsible for such a distribution. In §4, it makes the case for an *in situ* analysis of postverbal focalization and discusses the problems associated with non *in situ* analyses.

Finally, §5 provides the conclusions, as well as a reflection on the notion of 'canonicality'.

2. The distribution of Italian negative postverbal subjects

Italian NPV-subjects must always be licensed by a suitable c-commanding licenser located in T or c-commanding T, such as the Italian neg-marker *non*. In this respect, NPV-subjects dutifully satisfy a more general constraint holding of Italian neg-concord and requiring that any negative phrase c-commanded by T – thus including any postverbal negative phrase contained in VP – be licensed by a neg-marker in T or another suitable licenser above T (Zanuttini 1991, Haegeman 1995, Penka 2011).[1] The relevance of neg-concord licensing for NPV-subjects is illustrated in sentences (1) and (2), where contrastive focalization is absent and the entire sentence expresses new-information focus. Sentence (1) is grammatical because the NPV-subject NESSUNO is licensed by the preverbal neg-marker *non*. When the neg-marker is absent, as in (2), licensing fails and the sentence is ungrammatical. For the sake of this paper, I assume that the neg-marker *non* is located in T (Belletti 1990). The item carrying main stress is shown in capitals.

(1) $Non_{Licenser}$ *aveva*   *parlato* $NESSUNO_{Licensee}$.
        not   have.IMPERF.3SG spoken   anybody
        'Nobody had spoken'.

(2)   *Aveva   *parlato* $NESSUNO_{Licensee}$.
          have.IMPERF.3SG spoken   anybody

The paper considers the distribution of NPV-subjects relative to lower generated constituents – e.g. an objects – whenever contrastive focus applies to a single constituent. I start with a schematic representation of the major components of this distribution and then continue with detailed examples for each component. The focused constituent is marked by the subscript F.

When NPV-subjects are focused, they remain postverbal and can both precede or follow a lower-generated unfocused phrase. This is schematically shown in (3), using the object *O* to represent any lower generated constituent; an indirect object would display the same linear order. The sentence displays a compound tense involving an auxiliary and a past-participle, but the constituent ordering would remain the same also in sentences with finite verbs and no auxiliary (the verb would move all the way to T, Italian being a V-to-T language).

(3)   Focused NPV-subjects:
    a.   ... aux V   NPV-subj$_F$ O
    b.   ... aux V   O   NPV-subj$_F$

When NPV-subjects remain unfocused, because contrastive focus applies to a different phrase or to the verbal head, they follow the distribution in (4). They may follow a focused verb or past-participle raised to higher head positions, as in (4a) where the NPV-subject follows the focused verb V_F which has raised to the head of the higher aspectual projection headed by the past-participle suffix (Belletti 1990). They may precede a lower-generated constituent that has been contrastively, as in (4b) where the NPV-subject precedes the focused object O_F. But they cannot follow a focused lower-generated phrase, such as the object O_F in (4c). They are thus more restricted in their distribution than non-negative postverbal subjects, which do occur after lower-generated postverbal foci, as I will later show.

(4)   Unfocused NPV-subjects:
    a.   ... aux V_F NPV-subj O
    b.   ... aux   V   NPV-subj O_F
    c.   * ... aux   V O_F NPV-subj

Once focus fronting is excluded, the patterns in (3) and (4) exhaust all possible orders where contrastive focalization applies to an item generated within the lowest VP-node, i.e. verbal heads, NPV-subjects, and any other lower-generated constituents such as objects and indirect objects.

Let us consider each pattern in detail. Examples (5-7) illustrate the distribution of focused NPV-subjects. Each example is a short dialogue between two speakers A and B, where A's sentence provides the context necessary to trigger the relevant focalization in B's reply. The postverbal subjects in (5)-(7) are maintained to occur *in situ*, as discussed in detail in §4. As mentioned, the lexical verb raises to the higher aspectual projection headed by the past-participle suffix. This explains why the subject follows the verb. Note that there is no requirement for verb-subject adjacency: in (7) the unfocused object moves above the focused subject, leaving the subject rightmost and non-adjacent to the verb, yet the sentence remains grammatical. This is just an instance of a fully general phenomenon where lower-generated unfocused constituents move above a postverbal higher-generated focused phrase, potentially giving rise to clause-rightmost focus as is the case in this sentence; for further discussion see Samek-Lodovici (2006, 2015, *forthcoming*), Belletti (2001, 2004), Zubizarreta (1998).

(5) A: *Gianni ha   protestato.*
         John   have.3SG complained
         'John complained'.

     B: *No. Non ha   protestato   NESSUNO_F.*
         no   not have.3SG complained   anybody
         'No. NOBODY complained'.

(6) A: *Qualcuno ha   preso i   soldi.*
         someone   have.3SG taken the   money
         'Someone took the money'.

     B: *No. Non ha   preso NESSUNO_F, i   soldi.*
         no   not have.3SG taken anybody   the   money
         'No. NOBODY took the money'.

(7) A: *Qualcuno   ha   preso i   soldi.*
         someone   have.3SG taken the money
         'Someone took the money'.

     B: *No. Non ha   preso i   soldi   NESSUNO_F.*
         no   not have.3SG taken the money anybody
         'No. NOBODY took the money'.

Turning to the distribution of unfocused NPV-subjects, examples (8) and (9) illustrate pattern (4a) where NPV-subjects follow focused verbal heads. In (8), the verb has raised to the aspectual projection headed by the past-participle suffix situated between VP and T (Belletti 1990). The NPV-subject, still *in situ*, inevitably follows the focused past-participle. Similarly, in (9), the *in situ* NPV-subject necessarily follows the focused verb, which has raised to T like any other Italian finite verb.

(8) A: *Alla   cena,   non ha   mangiato   nessuno.*
         at-the dinner not have.3SG eaten   anybody
         'At the dinner, nobody ate'.

     B: *No. Non ha   BEVUTO_F nessuno. (Mangiare, hanno   mangiato tutti.)*
         no not have.3SG drunk   anybody eat.INF   have.3PL eaten   all
         'No. Nobody DRANK. (As for eating, everybody ate)'.

(9) A: *Alle   feste   dell'associazione,   non balla   nessuno.*
         at-the parties of-the association   not dance.3SG anybody
         'At the association's parties, nobody dances'.

     B: *No.   Non CANTA_F nessuno.   (Ballare,   qualcuno ogni tanto   balla.)*
         no   not sing.3SG anybody dance.INF someone each much dance.3SG
         'No. Nobody SINGS. (As for dancing, some people occasionally dance)'.

Example (10) illustrates pattern (4b), where NPV-subjects precede lower-generated focused constituents, here the focused object *la TORTA*. Both the subject and the object occur *in situ* (see §4).

(10) A: *La   pasta   non   l'   ha   mangiata   nessuno.*
     the   pasta   not   it   have.3SG   eaten   anybody
     'Nobody ate the pasta'.

    B: *No. Non   ha   mangiato   nessuno   [la TORTA]ₐ.*
      no   not   have.3SG   eaten   anybody   the cake
      'No. Nobody ate the CAKE'.

Finally, sentences (11)-(13) illustrate the ungrammatical pattern (4c), showing that NPV-subjects cannot follow a lower-generated focus, be it an indirect object, a direct object, or an adjunct. Their non-negative counterparts, in contrast, can follow lower-generated foci, as demonstrated by the corresponding grammatical sentences in (14-16).

(11) A: *A   Gianni,   non   ha   telefonato   nessuno.*
     to   John   not   have.3SG   called   anybody
     'John, nobody called him'.

    B: **No.   Non   ha   telefonato   a   MARCOₐ,   nessuno.*
      no   not   have.3SG   called   to   Mark,   anybody
      'No. Nobody called MARK'.

(12) A: *Le   tigri,   non   le   ha   guardate   nessuno.*
     the   tigers   not   them   have.3SG   looked-at   anybody
     'The tigers, nobody looked at them'.

    B: **No.   Non   ha   guardato   le   ZEBREₐ,   nessuno.*
      no   not   have.3SG   looked-at   the   zebras   anybody
      'No. Nobody looked at the ZEBRAS'.

(13) A: *Con   Gianni,   non   ha   giocato   nessuno.*
     with   John   not   have.3SG   played   anybody
     'John, nobody played with him'.

    B: **No.   Non   ha   giocato   con   MARCOₐ,   nessuno.*
      no   not   have.3SG   played   with   Mark   anybody
      'No. Nobody played with MARK'.

(14) A: *A   Gianni,   ha   telefonato   Maria.*
     to   John   have.3SG   called   Mary
     'John, MARY called him'.

    B: *No.   Ha   telefonato   a   MARCOₐ,   Maria.*
      no   have.3SG   called   to   Mark   Mary
      'No. Mary called MARK'.

(15) A: *Le   tigri,   le   ha   guardate Marco.*
     the tigers   them have.3SG looked-at Mark
     'The tigers, MARK looked at them'.

  B *No. Ha   guardato le   ZEBRE$_F$, Marco.*
     no   have.3SG   looked-at the   zebras   Mark
     'No. Mark looked at the ZEBRAS'.

(16) A: *Con   Gianni, ha   giocato Maria.*
     with John   have.3SG played   Mary
     'John, MARY played with him'.

  B: *No.   Ha   giocato con MARCO$_F$, Maria.*
     no   have.3SG   played   with Mark   Mary
     'No. Mary played with MARK'.

As we will see, the observed distribution follows from the *in situ* position of postverbal contrastive foci and the TP-external position of right-dislocation. NPV-subjects are grammatical in (5)-(10) because in these sentences they can stay *in situ* and hence remain within the c-command domain of the licencer *non* in T as is necessary for neg-concord to succeed. They become ungrammatical in (11)-(13) because in these sentences – as discussed in the next section – they are right-dislocated to a position outside the c-commanding domain of the neg-marker *non* and therefore they fail neg-concord.

3. Constraints governing the distribution of negative postverbal subjects

As argued in §4, Italian postverbal contrastive foci occur *in situ* (Samek-Lodovici 2015; Bianchi & Bocci 2012). They do so because focus is stressed, and Italian stress must occur as close to the right edge of the sentence as possible (Zubizzarreta 1998; Samek-Lodovici 2005, 2015, *forthcoming*; Bianchi & Bocci 2012). Since they can only move leftwards – as right-dislocation is restricted to unfocused discourse-given phrases – the *in situ* position is the rightmost position available to postverbal foci.

Like any other postverbal focus, NPV-subjects focalize *in situ* as well. Therefore, they require neg-concord licensing. In the example below, licensing is provided by the c-commanding neg-marker *non* located in T.

(17) *Non   ha   mangiato NESSUNO$_F$.*
     not   have.3SG   eaten   anybody
     'NOBODY ate'.

Italian also allows for an extremely productive right-dislocation process that optionally displaces unfocused discourse-given phrases to the right edge of a clause, and, crucially, to the right of postverbal foci (Cecchetto 1999, Cardinaletti 2001, 2002, Samek-Lodovici 2015). For example, in the sentence below the postverbal subject *Marco* has right-dislocated to the right of the focused object. For clarity, right-dislocated phrases are marked with the subscript 'R'.

(18) *Ha   mangiato [la PIZZA]$_F$, Marco$_R$. (Non il   pollo).*
      have.3SG eaten   the pizza   Mark   not   the chicken
      'Mark ate the PIZZA. (Not the chicken)'.

The position of right-dislocated phrases is crosslinguistically para-metrized. In Spanish and Catalan, right-dislocated phrases occur within TP (Villalba 2000: 189, Feldhausen 2008: 148, López 2009, Samek-Lodovici 2015: 157). In Italian, they occur above the lowest TP node (Cardinaletti 2001, 2002, Samek-Lodovici 2015).[2] This divergence cor-respondingly affects the availability of neg-concord for right-dislocated phrases across these languages. Consider the contrast between (19) and (20). In the Catalan example (19), the right-dislocated phrase lies in the c-commanding domain of the neg-marker in T, thus allowing for neg-concord licensing of the negative phrase *ningú* contained in it. Since neg-concord is satisfied, the entire sentence is grammatical. In the Italian example (20), instead, the right-dislocated phrase lies outside the c-commanding domain of the neg-marker in T. Consequently, neg-con-cord licensing for the negative subject *nessuno* fails and the sentence is ungrammatical. As expected, when right-dislocation is absent, as in (21), the sentence remains grammatical, showing that neg-concord licens-ing into the AP *responsabile di nessuno* is possible when occurring under c-command.

(19) *La Maria no ho és,   [(de) responsible de ningú]$_R$.* (from Villalba 2000)
      the Mary not it be.3SG of responsible of anybody
      'Mary is not responsible for anybody'.

(20) ** Maria non lo È,   [responsabile di nessuno]$_R$.*
        Mary   not it be.3SG   responsible   of anybody

(21) *Maria non è   responsabile di nessuno.*
      Mary not be.3SG responsible   of anybody
      'Mary is not responsible for anybody'.

For the goals of this study, it is sufficient to assume that Italian right-dislocated phrases are right-adjoined to TP, since this places them

outside the licensing domain of the neg-marker in T as required. The corresponding structure for sentence (18) then is as in (22). (For a more detailed analysis disallowing for rightward movement, see Samek-Lodovici 2015.)

(22)   Assumed structure for sentence (18)
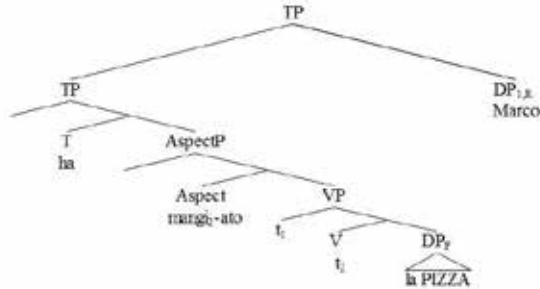
The distributional properties of negative postverbal subjects follow straightforwardly. Let us consider them in turn.

First, NPV-subjects can occur in postverbal position when focused, as in (5)-(7), because they are focused *in situ*. Since they are *in situ*, i.e. in specVP (or spec*v*P in a more articulated analysis), they necessarily follow any finite verb raised to T or past-participle raised to the head of AspectP. Since they are *in situ*, NPV-subjects also remain c-commanded by T, thus allowing for neg-concord licensing by a neg-marker in T. See for example (5), repeated in (23), and its structure in (24).

(23)   A: *Gianni ha   protestato.*   B: *No. Non ha   protestato   NESSUNO$_F$.*
         John   have.3SG complained   no not have.3SG complained anybody
         'John complained'.   'No. NOBODY complained'.

(24) $[_{TP}$ non-ha$_T$ $[_{AspectP}$ protest$_1$-ato $[_{VP}$ NESSUNO$_F$ t$_1]]]$

Second, NPV-subjects precede lower-generated foci as in (10)B, repeated in (25) with its structure in (26). This property, too, follows straightforwardly from the *in situ* position of postverbal foci. Since, by assumption, we are examining focused phrases that are generated lower than subjects and focalized *in situ*, any subject, NPV-subjects included, will necessarily precede them. In fact, they will do so even when the negative subjects themselves are stranded *in situ*, as required by their postverbal positioning. Furthermore, as (25) shows, neg-concord licensing is satisfied in this case as well, because *in situ* subjects remain in the c-commanding domain of the licensing neg-marker in T.

(25)   B: *No. Non ha   mangiato nessuno [la TORTA]ᴆ.*
            no   not have.3sɢ eaten   anybody the cake
            'No. Nobody ate the CAKE'.

(26)   [ᴛᴘ non-haᴛ [ₐₛₚₑcₜᴘ mangia₁-ato [ᵥᴘ nessuno t₁ [la TORTA]ꜰ]]]

Third, NPV-subjects follow focused finite verbs and focused past-participles as in (8)B and (9)B because these verbal heads respectively move to T and the head of AspectP even when focused. Since they are stranded in specVP, NPV-subjects inevitably follow them. As before, NPV-subjects remain c-commanded by the neg-marker in T and hence licensed with respect to neg-concord. Both properties are illustrated in (27) – repeating (9B) above – and the corresponding structure (28).

(27)   B: *No. Non CANTAꜰ nessuno. (Ballare,   qualcuno ogni tanto balla.)*
            no   not sing.3sɢ anybody dance.ɪɴꜰ someone each much dances
            'No. Nobody SINGS. (As for dancing, some people occasionally dance)'.

(28)   [ᴛᴘ non-[ᴛCANT₁-A]ꜰ [ᵥᴘ nessuno t₁]]

Fourth, NPV-subjects cannot follow focused constituents generated lower than themselves, see again (11)-(13) above. Since postverbal foci occur *in situ*, negative subjects could only follow them if displaced by right-dislocation. However, as mentioned, Italian right-dislocation is located above TP. Therefore, right-dislocated negative subjects lie out-side the c-commanding domain of the licensing neg-marker in T. They thus fail neg-concord and the corresponding sentences are ungrammati-cal. This is shown in (11)B, repeated below with its structure.

(29)   B: **No. Non ha   telefonato a   MARCOᴘ, nessuno.*
            no   not have.3sɢ called   to Mark   anybody

(30)   The structure of (11B)

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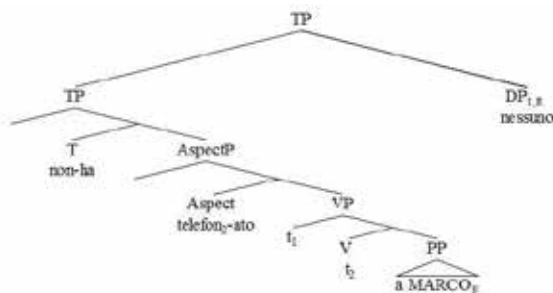
The distribution of Italian NPV-subjects thus follows from the structural restrictions imposed by (i) the *in situ* position of postverbal foci, (ii) the high position of right-dislocated phrases, external to the domain of neg-concord licensing by the neg-marker in T, and (iii) the need to satisfy neg-concord. These three factors allow NPV-subjects to occur postverbally when focused, precede lower generated foci, and follow focused verbal heads raised to higher projections. In all these cases, NPV-subjects remain able to satisfy neg-concord because they are c-commanded by the licensing neg-marker in T. NPV-subjects, however, cannot follow lower-generated foci because that would require their right-dislocation, which would put them outside the c-command domain of the licensing neg-marker and fail neg-concord. Non-negative subjects, in contrast, can follow lower-generated foci because they are not subject to neg-concord. Therefore, they remain free to right-dislocate to the right of lower generated foci with no prejudice for their grammatical status (cf. (14-16)).

4. *Postverbal foci occur* in situ

The analysis proposed so far crucially maintains that any contrastively focused phrase occurring in postverbal position is focalized *in situ*. This view is consistent with several different analyses of focalization, including those that assume the existence of dedicated focus projections. For example, Bianchi and Bocci (2012) maintain that postverbal foci occur *in situ* while also assuming that the corresponding constituents have raised to Rizzi's high focus projection. This creates a chain with multiple copies of the same constituent in different locations. The lowest copy is phonetically realized. Samek-Lodovici (2015), instead, pursues the opposite hypothesis, proposing that there are no focus projections and that postverbal foci never move from their *in situ* position. Despite their disagreement over the existence of focus projections, both analyses maintain that uttered postverbal foci occur *in situ*, which is the crucial point for the analysis proposed in this paper, since it is the *in situ* position of postverbal foci that leaves right-dislocation as the only possible way NPV-subjects might occur to the right of lower-generated postverbal foci.

This section provides further evidence for the *in situ* position of postverbal foci by examining the serious problems that arise when taking the alternative view that postverbal foci are located in a higher focus projection. Since we are looking at contrastive foci, I start with Rizzi's left-peripheral focus projection located above TP, which I will call FocusP$_{HIGH}$ (Rizzi 1997, 2004, Rizzi & Cinque 2016). Here, I consider two particularly problematic aspects, but see Samek-Lodovici (2015, 2016, 2017) for a

more detailed discussion covering several additional problems.

As pointed out in Belletti (2001, 2004), if postverbal foci occur in FocusP_HIGH, the material preceding the postverbal foci must have remnant moved to an even higher projection in order to preserve the observed word order. For example, in (31)B, if NESSUNO is located in spec FocusP_HIGH, then the remnant TP *non ha protestato* must have moved to a higher topic projection as shown in (32).

(31) A: *Gianni ha   protestato.*   B: *No. Non ha   protestato NESSUNO_F.*
          John   have.3SG complained   no not have.3SG complained anybody
          'John complained'.   'No. NOBODY complained'.

(32)   Structure under high focus projection hypothesis
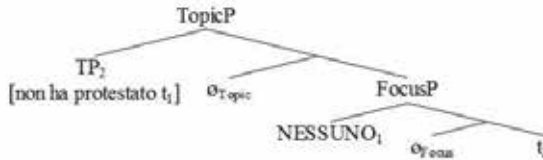
As pointed out by Cardinaletti (2002), Brunetti (2004) and Samek-Lodovici (2006, 2015), this structure is untenable because postverbal negative subjects require neg-concord licensing under c-command even when focused, but in this structure the licensing neg-marker *non* does not c-command the final negative subject.

Furthermore, in Italian neg-concord licensing cannot be satisfied under reconstruction. For example, even though Italian right-dislocation allows for reconstruction, neg-concord across right-dislocation fails (Samek-Lodovici 2015: 96-101). Consider the sentences in (33-35). In (33), the negative object *nessuno* inside the sentential complement *di vedere nessuno* remains licensed because the complement remains *in situ* and hence c-commanded by the neg-marker in the main clause. The same negative object *nessuno* is no longer licensed in (34) because the complement *di vedere nessuno* has been right-dislocated to a position above the lowest TP-node – such as the rightward TP-adjoined position proposed in the previous section – and thus it no longer lies within the c-commanding domain of the neg-marker. The lack of neg-concord licensing is responsible for the ungrammatical status of this sentence. If reconstruction could rescue neg-concord licensing, this sentence should be grammatical.

(33) *Non ho   voglia [di vedere   nessuno].*
       not have.1SG wish   of see.INF anybody
       'I do not wish to see anybody'.

(34)   * [Non ne   ho   VOGLIA], [di   vedere   nessuno]$_R$.
          not of-it have.1SG wish   of   see.INF   anybody

Could we doubt the right-dislocated status of the complement in (34)? No, because it is confirmed by (i) the presence of the doubling clitic *ne*, (ii) the complement's position, located immediately after the item carrying main stress, and (iii) the fact that the complement's prosody matches that typically found with right-dislocated phrases, namely displaying an intonational break and an optional short pause right before the dislocated phrase.

We also know with certitude that neg-concord licensing is the condition failed by (34) because as soon as we repair it – as is the case in (35) where a second neg-marker that c-commands and licenses the negative object is inserted in the dislocated sentential complement – the sentence becomes grammatical, showing that the newly inserted neg-marker has eliminated the factor causing the ungrammaticality of (34).

(35)   [Non   ne   ho   VOGLIA] [di   non   vedere   nessuno]$_R$.
          not   of-it have.1SG wish   of   not   see.INF   anybody
          'I do not wish not to see anybody (=I want to see somebody)'.

Furthermore, sentence (35) has a double negative interpretation. This is exactly what we expect, because the sentential complement is right-dislocated and hence outside the c-commanding domain of the initial neg-marker in the main clause, which, in turn, makes neg-concord between the main clause and the sentential complement impossible. The presence of a double negation interpretation thus further confirms the right-dislocated status of the sentential complement and its position above TP. We may thus conclude this digression about the impossibility of rescuing neg-concord via reconstruction and, on the basis of this result, agree with Cardinaletti, Brunetti, and Samek-Lodovici that structure (32) fails neg-concord. Consequently, postverbal negative foci, subjects included, cannot be located in specFocusP$_{HIGH}$.

A second reason against locating postverbal foci in Rizzi's high focus projection follows from the observation that fronted negative foci normally claimed to occur in FocusP$_{HIGH}$ need no neg-concord licensing. For example, the fronted negative focused object in (36) needs no licensing and the same holds for the negative subject in (37).

(36)   NESSUNO$_F$, voglio   vedere.
          nobody   want.1SG see.INF
          'NOBODY, I wish to see'.

(37)   NESSUNO$_F$, ha   parlato.
          nobody   have.3SG spoken
   'NOBODY, has spoken'.

If focused NPV-subjects were in the same position as per structure (32), they, too, would need no neg-concord licensing. Instead, they obligatorily require it, precisely as expected if they are actually located *in situ*.

Having established that Rizzi's high focus projection is not a possible location for postverbal foci, let us consider whether they could instead be located in a low focus projection FocusP$_{LOW}$ located between T and VP as proposed in Belletti (2001, 2004) for new information foci. This hypothesis, too, runs into several difficulties. To begin with, positing a low focus projection for contrastive focus is theoretically undesirable within a cartographic perspective. The resulting model would allow for multiple projections for the same type of focus: namely Rizzi's FocusP$_{HIGH}$ for genuine left-peripheral contrastive foci, and FocusP$_{LOW}$ for postverbal contrastive foci. This is highly undesirable because it weakens the claim that focus projections exist in order to facilitate the mapping between syntax and semantics-pragmatics (Cinque & Rizzi 2009). Contrastive foci would no longer be all grouped in one location.

Positing a FocusP$_{LOW}$ projection also incorrectly predicts that unfocused NPV-subjects should be able to follow lower-generated foci, since the latter would raise to FocusP$_{LOW}$ and, therefore, occur to the left of *in situ* NPV-subjects. Consider for example (11B), repeated below in (38). If the focused PP a *Marco* were in specFocusP$_{LOW}$, the negative subject *nessuno* could remain *in situ* and still give rise to the word order provided. Neg-concord would be satisfied, too, because the negative subject would remain c-commanded by the neg-marker *non*. Since no other constraint is failed, the sentence would incorrectly be predicted to be grammatical.

(38) *Non ha   telefonato a MARCO$_F$, nessuno.
      not   have.3SG called   to Mark   anybody
      'Nobody called MARK'.

(39)   Structure of sentence (38) under a low focus projection analysis
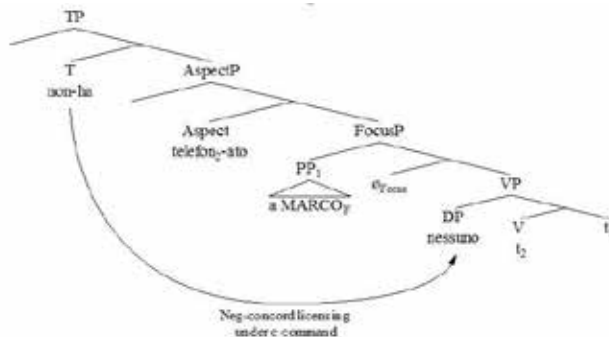
Note, incidentally, that intervening foci are no barrier to neg-concord licensing and hence cannot be the cause for the ungrammaticality of (38). We already saw in (8) and (9) that neg-concord successfully spans across focused verbal heads intervening between the licensing neg-marker and NPV-subjects. The same holds for intervening phrasal foci. For example, neg-concord between the neg-marker and an *in situ* negative indirect object remains possible even across an intervening focused object, see (40). Crucially, in this case the focused item is genuinely higher than the postverbal item requiring neg-concord licensing even when focused *in situ*, because objects can be generated higher than indirect objects.

(40) A: *Non hai   presentato Lucia a   nessuno.*
        not have.2SG introduced Lucy to   anybody
        'You did not introduce Lucy to anybody'.

     B: *No. Non ho   presentato MARIA$_F$ a   nessuno.*
        no   not have.1SG introduced Mary   to   anybody
        'No. I did not introduce MARY to anybody'.

Assuming that postverbal foci occur in FocusP$_{LOW}$ has problematic consequences even for the grammatical sentences where NPV-subjects precede a lower focus like (10)B, repeated below in (41). If the focused object had raised to FocusP$_{LOW}$, the negative subject at its left must have raised even further. But where to? According to Belletti (2001, 2004), FocusP$_{LOW}$ is topped by a low topic projection also located below T, and the negative subject could have moved to this projection. As (42) shows, however, negative phrases are unable to occur as left-peripheral topics, most probably because their interpretation is incompatible with the semantics of topichood. This strongly suggests that they would be equally unable to occur in Belletti's low topic projection.

(41) *No. Non ha   mangiato nessuno   [la   TORTA]$_F$.*
     no   not have.3SG eaten   anybody   the cake
     'No. Nobody ate the CAKE'.

(42) *Marco$_{Topic}$ /   * nessuno$_{Topic}$, credo   che   partirà   DOMANI.*
     Mark   /   nobody   believe.1SG that   leave.FUT.3SG tomorrow
     'As for Mark / * nobody, I believe that he/they will leave tomorrow'.

Finally, as Belletti (2001: 79) pointed out, we may test the position of focused subjects by applying '*ne*-cliticization' to the focused postverbal subjects of unaccusative verbs. As Belletti explains, '*ne*-cliticization' should be successful only if these subjects remain *in situ* in object posi-

tion, and unsuccessful otherwise. To enhance the parallelism with Belletti (2001), I consider examples where the NPV-subject follows a raised prepositional phrase.

As (43) and (44) show, '*ne*-cliticization' is successful, confirming the *in situ* position of focused postverbal subjects. Nor is these subjects' focused status in doubt, as it is triggered by the context provided in sentence A, and further confirmed by the optional presence of the focalizing operator *solo* ('only').

(43) A: *Sono   caduti   dalla   giostra   tre   bambini.*
           be.3PL fallen   from-the merry-go-round three   kids
           'Three kids fell from the merry-go-round'.

    B: *No. Ne   sono   caduti dalla   giostra   (solo) DUE$_F$.*
       no   of-them   be.3PL fallen from-the merry-go-round only   two
       Il terzo era   un adulto che voleva   aiutarli.
       the third be.IMPERF.3SG an   adult who want.IMPERF.3SG help.INF-them
       'No. (Only) TWO of them fell from the merry-go-round. The third one was an adult who wanted to help them'.

(44) A: *Quel pomeriggio sono uscite   dalla   scuola   tre   ragazze.*
           that   afternoon   be.3PL gone-out from-the school   three girls
           'That afternoon three girls left the school'.

    B: *No. Ne   sono   uscite   dalla   scuola (solo) DUE$_F$.*
       no   of-them   be.3PL gone-out from-the school   only   two
       La terza era   ancora in classe.
       the third be.IMPERF.3SG still   in class
       'No. (Only) TWO of them left the school. The third one was still in her classroom'.

Belletti's (2001: 79) original discussion reaches the opposite conclusion on the basis of the following three examples, the last one concerning an object. They are provided here exactly as they appear in Belletti (2001).

(45) a. ?? Ne è arrivato al giornale uno.
         Of-them + has arrived at the newspaper one
    b. ?? Ne è entrato dalla finestra uno.
         Of-them + has come in from the window one
    c. ?? Ne ho dato a Gianni uno.
         (I) of-them + have given to Gianni one

In her discussion, Belletti assumes that these sentences contain a focused subject (or object, in (c)), but no context is provided in her paper that forces such focalization. Without such context, the three sentences are inevitably interpreted as out-of-the-blue sentences. This

matters, because out-of-the-blue sentences are interpreted as new-information foci, with the entire sentence being in focus. Belletti's judgments are thus uninformative as far as the position of contrastively focused postverbal subjects, because the *ne*-cliticization test is being applied to postverbal subjects participating to a sentence-wide new-information focus, rather than to contrastively focused postverbal subjects. Belletti's judgments signal that in her variant of Italian the PPs *al giornale* and *dalla finestra* in (45)(b)-(c) cannot raise above an *in situ* unaccusative subject when both participate in a sentence-wide new-information focus. A more appropriate test of the position of contrastively focused postverbal subjects needs to include examples like (43) and (44) above, which confirm that focalization occurs *in situ*.

Before concluding, it is worth noticing that even out-of-the-blue sentences appear to allow for '*ne*-cliticization' as soon as the stranded numeral signaling the position of the subject is different from *uno* ('one'). This is confirmed by the following grammatical sentences collected amongst many other similar ones found in online newspapers articles. These three examples were respectively extracted from the Corriere del Veneto, Treviso, e Belluno, 8/6/2018; CentroPagina, 5/7/2017; and La Repubblica, 29/3/2017.

(46)   a. *Ne   sono   arrivati   al   traguardo   solo   25.*
            of-them be.3PL arrived   at-the   finish-line   only 25
            'Only 25 arrived at the finish line'.

      b. *Ad Ancona ne   sono   saliti   a   bordo 43 dai   16 ai*
            at   Ancona of-them be.3PL climbed on board 43 from-the 16 to-the
            18   anni.
            18   years
            'In Ancona, forty-three 16 to 18-year-olds have come on board'.

      c. *Di bambini e ragazzi soli,   ne   sono   arrivati in Italia sui*
            of children and boys   alone of-them be.3PL arrived in Italy on-the
            barconi   più   di   25 mila   nel   2016.
            large-boats   more than 25 thousand in-the 2016
            'As for lone children and boys, 25 thousand of them arrived in Italy on large boats in 2016'.

In conclusion, Italian postverbal contrastive foci are best analyzed as being located *in situ*. This conclusion holds independently from the existence or non-existence of dedicated focus projections à la Rizzi (1997, 2004) and Belletti (2004). Their existence has been questioned in Samek-Lodovici (2015, 2016, 2017), but as this section showed, even allowing for these focus projections we still cannot assume that post-

verbal foci – or at least their phonetically realized copies – are located there. We can conclude that Italian postverbal foci occur *in situ*, as required by the analysis of postverbal negative subjects provided in section 3.

5. Conclusions

NPV-subjects are non-canonical due to their postverbal position. They also display a more restricted distribution than non-negative postverbal subjects, since, like them, they are grammatical when focused postverbally, but, unlike them, they are ungrammatical when following lower-generated postverbal foci.

As this paper showed, their restricted distribution follows from the interaction of neg-concord, focalization, and right-dislocation. As argued in §4, Italian postverbal foci occur *in situ*, therefore a subject will only be able to follow a lower-generated postverbal focus if the subject is right-dislocated. Since Italian right-dislocated phrases occur outside the c-commanding domain of T, this option is open to non-negative subjects but not NPV-subjects, because NPV-subjects need neg-concord licensing under c-command by a neg-marker in T (or any other suitable licenser above T).

It is also worth asking what do we intend to say when we label a group of subjects sharing some properties as 'non-canonical' or 'marked' (thanks to an anonymous reviewer for her/his comments on this issue). These terms signal that the class of subjects at issue diverges in one or more properties from the class of subjects that we consider 'canonical' or 'unmarked'. The terms 'canonical' and 'unmarked' thus stand for the bundle of properties that we deem prototypical of a certain class of items, here preverbal, possibly specTP, subjects. 'Non-canonical' or 'marked' subjects lack some of these properties and the terms 'non-canonical' and 'marked' conveniently describe this state of affairs. If this is the case, the terms 'non-canonical' and 'unmarked' could also be viewed as ultimately representing an implicit question about why a specific class of items diverges from another class of similar items that we consider more prototypical. Correspondingly, the notions of 'canonality' and 'unmarkedness' represent a second, more complex, implicit question about what causes a certain set of properties – for example, for (Italian) subjects, topicality, agreement, specTP positioning, to name a few – show the propensity to be bundled together in, and be expressed by, the class of prototypical subjects.

This paper takes a step towards answering the first of the two

implicit questions just mentioned, as it identifies the syntactic positions available to NPV-subjects and the constraints that determine their distribution, including how and why it differs from the distribution of non-negative post-verbal subjects.

Notes

¹ For example, unfocused preverbal negative subjects in specTP lie above T and, therefore, need no licensing. Furthermore, they can act as licensers because they c-command T. Similarly, yes/no question operators may also act as licensers. For a quick survey of the Italian neg-concord distribution see appendix 1 in Samek-Lodovici (2015: 297).
² See also Fernández-Sánchez (2017), who provides a bi-clausal analysis of Italian right-dislocation. The claims made in this paper remain valid even under his analysis.

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