Focus and Wh in Jamaican Creole: Movement and Exhaustiveness

SHLONSKY, Ur, DURRLEMAN, Stéphanie

5

Focus and wh in Jamaican Creole: Movement and Exhaustiveness

STEPHANIE DURRLEMAN AND UR SHLONSKY

1 Introduction

Wh and ex situ focus constructions in Creoles have been analyzed in terms of movement to the left periphery (Saramaccan: Aboh 2006; Papiamentu: Kouwenberg and Lefebvre 2007; Jamaican: Durrleman 2008) or as clefts (Haitian: Lumsden and Lefebvre 1990; Manfredi 1993; Jamaican: Patrick 2007; Veenstra 2008). Our goal is to defend the cartographically rooted left-peripheral account, along the lines of Rizzi (1997, 2004a) and related work.¹

We consider data from Jamaican Creole (JC) but we believe the analysis extends to other Creoles. Section 2 shows that JC focus and wh-questions involve internal rather than external merge. Section 3 explains why a cleft analysis cannot account for these properties. Section 4 summarizes and sharpens the arguments in favor of the left-peripheral approach, originally developed in Durrleman (2008), and discusses the driving force for movement and its interpretive correlates. Section 5 suggests that the formal difference between exhaustive and contrastive focus is at the root of some of their distributional properties. Section 6 is the conclusion.

2 Focus/wh in JC: External merge or internal merge in the left periphery?

Several considerations militate in favor of the thesis that the focused constituent in JC is internally and not externally merged.²

¹ Many thanks to our Jamaican Creole informants J. Farquarson, C. Forrester, M. Forbes, T. Tame, E. Miller, and in particular, T. De Lisser. Thanks also to H. Devonish for the Guyanese Creole data, to M. Finney for the Krio data, to D. Cserzo, G. Puskas, a Varga for the Hungarian data and to E. Biloa for the Tuki sentences. Comments by L. Haegem Bianchi and discussions with G. Bocci are gratefully acknowledged. Usual disclaimers apply.

The grammaticality of (1) is naturally explained if the focused constituent containing the anaphor *imself* reconstructs into a position c-commanded by the subject. Reconstruction is a signature property of movement.

(1) A *fi* *imself* Jan did tiif da mango de
   A Prep himself John Past steal Det mango there
   “It’s FOR HIMSELF that John stole that mango.”

Preposition stranding in JC is accompanied by modification in the form of the preposition, *fi* → *fa*, when followed by what is arguably a silent copy of the *wh* focus-moved constituent.

(2) a. Im bring aki *fi*/*fa* di pikni-dem
    3s bring ackee Prep Det child-pl
    “S/he brought the ackee for the children”

b. A (h)uu im bring dat *fi*/*fa*?
   A who 3s bring that Prep
   “Who did s/he bring that for?”

Durrleman (2008) proposes that JC *fa* licenses a *wh*-trace, while *fi* does not and hence must select an overt lexical object. 3

Rizzi (1997: 292) argues that fronted Focus is quantificational. One diagnostic for quantificational movement is weak crossover. (3) shows that fronted focus in JC is sensitive to this condition.

(3) A Jiemzi *i/k* muma lov bad
    A James 3s mother love bad
    “It’s JAMES his mother loves a lot”

Focalization cannot cross a *wh*-island, (4b) further evidence that it involves movement and not external merge in a peripheral position.

(4) a. Jan no nuo weda (ar nat) Piita wi gi im uman wan
    John neg know whether (or not) Peter will give 3s woman one
    Blakberi *fi* Krismas
    blackberry Prep Christmas
    “John doesn’t know whether (or not) Peter will give his companion a
    Blackberry for Christmas”

3 See da Cruz (1997) on a similar alternation in Fongbé prepositions.
b. "A wan Blakberi Jan no nuo weda (ar nat) Piita wi
A one Blackberry John Neg know whether (or not) Peter will
gi im uman fi Krismas
give 3s woman Prep Christmas
“John doesn’t know whether (or not) Peter will give his companion A
BLACKBERRY for Christmas”

3 JC focus is not a cleft

Having shown that the focused/wh constituent in JC is moved to an ex situ position as opposed to being merged there, we now turn to the question of its landing site.

Much of the debate surrounding wh interrogatives and fronted focus in Creole has centered on the properties of a particle that appears in these constructions, a in JC:

(5) a. (A)-huu put i de? (Bailey 1966)
    a-who put it there
    “Who put it there?”

b. (A)-we unu pudong unu kluoz? (op. cit.)
    a-where 2pl put-down 2pl clothes
    “Where have you (pl) put your clothes?”

(6) a. Mi tingk se a di buk Piita riid
    1s think se a Det book Peter read
    “I think that it’s A BOOK that Peter read”

b. Yu nuo se a nyam im nyam di mango
    2s know se a eat 3s eat Det mango
    “You know that what s/he did was EAT the mango”

In (5), a is optional with wh movement. In (6), which illustrates DP and predicate focus, a is obligatory. This distribution is discussed in section 4.

A number of authors argue that focalization in JC is akin to (perhaps biclausal) cleft formation and that, by implication, a is a copula. A is clearly a copula in equative constructions, such as (7). Cassidy (1961: 56, 59) and others believe that a is also a copula in (5) and (6).

(7) Mi muma a wan tiicha
    1s mother Cop one teacher
    “My mother is a teacher”
For us, $a$ in (5) and (6) is different from copular $a$ in (7). We argue that focus/wh $a$ is an exhaustiveness marker merged with a constituent that undergoes movement to the left periphery (see Horvath 2010, on which the core of our analysis is modeled).

Durrleman (2008) argues that if $a$ is a copula, then it requires a subject. Because there is no overt subject to the left of $a$ in these examples, one must assume that it is a null expletive. However, JC disallows null expletives in embedded contexts, as shown by the contrast in (8), but allows focus with $a$ in exactly the same context, (9).

(8) a. (I) komiin laik se di pikni a go ron we Expl seem like se det child Prog Prosp run away “It seems like the child is going to run away”

   b. Im tel mi se *(i) komiin laik se di pikni a go ron we 3s tell 1s se (Expl) seem like se Det child Prog Prosp run away “S/he told me that it seems like the child is going to run away”

(9) im tel mi se a di buk im riid (no di magaiin) 3s tell 1s se a Det book 3s read (Neg Det magazine) “S/he told me that he read THE BOOK (not the magazine)”

Another difference between copular $a$ and $a$ associated with focus/wh is that while a copula can easily be preceded by the tense-marker did in (10), focus/wh $a$ may not, (11).

(10) Mi muma did a di bes out a aal a unu 1s mother Past Cop Det best out of all of 2pl “My mother was the best out of all of you”

(11) Yu nuo se (?did) a mi muma (did) a di bes out a aal a unu 2s know se (?Past) a 1s mother (Past) Cop Det best out of all of 2pl “You know that MY MOTHER was the best out of all of you”

Copular $a$ occurs only with predicate nominals, but not with AP or PP predicates.

(12) Jan a wan tiicha /mi faada /*kris /*upa steidium John Cop one teacher 1s father /handsome /up.at stadium “John is a teacher/ my father/*handsome/*up at the stadium.”

Fronted focus constructions can all be preceded by focus $a$, independently of their category.
Another indication that these focus constructions do not fit into the “pro-expletive [equative copular] XP CP” mold comes from the absence of complementizers and relative pronouns. JC mesolectal varieties that optionally display the complementizer dat in relative clauses never manifest it in focus-background articulations (Roberts 1980: 34).

An English cleft construction such as (14a) may involve an embedded that, because the complement of the focused constituent is a full CP. In Italian focus-movement, however, the complement of Focus is not a full CP and hence, the complementizer cannot appear in (14b).

(14) a. It’s an analysis of the left periphery that we propose.
   b. Una analisi della periferia sinistra (*che) propongono an analysis of the periphery left that propose-1pl

Perhaps JC focus is a case of (hidden) relativization? If so, one would expect the occurrence of the relative pronoun we of (15) in a focus construction.

(15) mi en si di uman we gaan a maakit (Bailey 1966:101)
   1s Past see Det woman Rel go to market “I had seen the woman who has gone to the market”

This is not what is found. A focus structure such as (6b) cannot manifest we.

(16) *Yu nuo se a nyam we im nyam di mango
    2s know se a eat Rel 3s eat Det mango “You know that what s/he did was EAT the mango”

In (17), a DP containing a relative clause is focused but we appears between the head of the relative and its modifier and crucially not after the entire relative clause.
Belletti (2009, ch. 10) observes that clefts functioning as answers manifest a subject-object asymmetry. In French, for example, a question targeting the subject can be answered by a cleft but not a question targeting an object. In JC, both subject answers, (18b), and object answers, (19b), are grammatical with a.

(18) Q: A huu tiif di bedfruut?
   a who steal Det breadfruit
   “Who stole the breadfruit?”
A: A yu breda (tiif i)
   a 2s brother (steal it)
   “YOUR BROTHER (stole it)”

(19) Q: A huu yu waan si?
   a who 2s want see
   “Who do you want to see?”
A: A Jan (mi waahn si)
   a John (1s want see)
   “JOHN (I want to see)”

The absence of a subject-object asymmetry in JC strongly suggests that a cleft is not involved. Rather, JC focalization resembles focus movement to the left periphery in, for example, Hungarian, where a subject-object asymmetry of this kind also fails to arise.

(20) Q: ki  lopta el a pénzt?
   Who-Nom stole-3s Perf Det money-acc
   “Who stole the money?”
A: a bátyád (lopta el)
   Det elder brother-poss-nom (stole Perf)
   “YOUR OLDER BROTHER (stole it)”

(21) Q: kit láttál?
   who-acc saw-2s-indef.object
   “Who did you see?”
A: a bátyádat (láttam)
   Det elder brother-poss-acc (saw-1s-def.object)
   “YOUR OLDER BROTHER (I saw)”
Clefts resist appearance inside a relative clause, while left-peripheral focus is possible in this context (Aboh 2006). In light of this observation, the JC examples in the following text once again strike a contrast with clefts and demonstrate an affinity with left-peripheral focus.

(23)  
\[ a. \quad \text{Mi tel yu bout di uman we a tiif im tiif fi sen im 1s tell 2s about Det woman Rel a steal 3s steal for send 3s pikni-dem go skuul child-Pl go school} \]

\[ "I told you about the woman who STEALS to send her children to school." \]

\[ b. \quad \text{Mi nuo dat gyal we a chrii difran man im ha pikni fə 1s know Dem girl Rel a three different man 3s have child Prep} \]

\[ "I know a girl who has children from THREE DIFFERENT MEN." \]

4 Obligatory and optional \( a \): The impact of exhaustiveness

The examples in (5) and (6) illustrate that \( a \) is obligatory with focus but optional with \( wh \). This was observed by Veenstra and den Besten (1995: 310): “in Jamaican Creole, the highlighter \( a \) is optionally used with \( wh \)-words, but due to decreolization it is disappearing.”

An account for the optionality of \( a \) with \( wh \) in terms of a decreolization process does not explain why it should be affected in this selective manner. We are therefore led to look for a different explanation.

Durrleman (2008) demonstrates that fronted focused constituents—obligatorily realized with \( a \)—are interpreted exhaustively. In situ focus is interpreted nonexhaustively.4 In other words, JC distinguishes the two structurally.5

(24)  
\[ a. \quad \text{A [wan bami an wan bredfrut] Mieri bai.} \]

\[ a \quad \text{one bammy and one breadfruit Mary buy} \]

\[ "What Mary bought was (only) ONE BAMMY AND ONE BREADFRUIT." \]

\[ b. \quad \text{≠> A wan bami Mieri bai.} \]

\[ a \quad \text{one bammy Mary buy} \]

\[ "What Mary bought is (only) ONE BAMMY." \]

4 The examples in (23) and (24) are based on one of Szabolsci’s (1981) tests for exhaustiveness: the entailment in (23b) does not go through because the set specified by the focused constituent must be maximal.

5 Several other Creoles manifest exactly this state of affairs. We have verified the data in Krio and Guyanese.
We now present additional arguments in support of Durrleman’s thesis, adapting diagnostic tests discussed in Horvath (2010). We then develop a syntactic implementation of focus movement, combining elements from Durrleman (2008) and Horvath (2010).

Horvath (2010) argues that it is not a focus feature as such that drives alleged "focus fronting," but a formal feature on an E(xhaustive) I(dentification) operator. This operator is optionally merged with a constituent and attracted by a left-peripheral functional head EI (as originally proposed in Durrleman 2008, using different terminology). Movement of the focused phrase is diagrammed in (25) (Figure 5.1) (adapting Horvath’s (34)).

\[ Mieri bai [wan bami an wan bredfruit]. \]
Mary bought one bammy and and breadfruit
“Mary bought ONE BAMMY AND ONE BREADFRUIT”

\[ => Mieri bai WAN BAMMY. \]
Mary bought one bammy
“Mary bought ONE BAMMY.”

We now present additional arguments in support of Durrleman’s thesis, adapting diagnostic tests discussed in Horvath (2010). We then develop a syntactic implementation of focus movement, combining elements from Durrleman (2008) and Horvath (2010).

Horvath (2010) argues that it is not a focus feature as such that drives alleged “focus fronting,” but a formal feature on an E(xhaustive) I(dentification) operator. This operator is optionally merged with a constituent and attracted by a left-peripheral functional head EI (as originally proposed in Durrleman 2008, using different terminology). Movement of the focused phrase is diagrammed in (25) (Figure 5.1) (adapting Horvath’s (34)).

\[ Mieri bai [wan bami an wan bredfruit]. \]
Mary bought one bammy and and breadfruit
“Mary bought ONE BAMMY AND ONE BREADFRUIT”

\[ => Mieri bai WAN BAMMY. \]
Mary bought one bammy
“Mary bought ONE BAMMY.”

We now present additional arguments in support of Durrleman’s thesis, adapting diagnostic tests discussed in Horvath (2010). We then develop a syntactic implementation of focus movement, combining elements from Durrleman (2008) and Horvath (2010).

Horvath (2010) argues that it is not a focus feature as such that drives alleged “focus fronting,” but a formal feature on an E(xhaustive) I(dentification) operator. This operator is optionally merged with a constituent and attracted by a left-peripheral functional head EI (as originally proposed in Durrleman 2008, using different terminology). Movement of the focused phrase is diagrammed in (25) (Figure 5.1) (adapting Horvath’s (34)).

In Hungarian, focus movement has the import of exhaustiveness. The EI operator is responsible for an identification operation performed on the membership set of a constituent lying within its c-command domain. It identifies the exhaustive, that is, maximal, proper subset of this set for which the predicate holds (see Szabolcsi 1981; Kenesei 1986; Horvath 2010).

In exhaustive focus, the exhaustiveness of the identification of the focused subset can be denied (É. Kiss 1998). The following discourse fragment, drawn from Horvath (2010: 1359), illustrates this effect. In A’s answer to the question in (26), John is focused. B challenges this answer by denying that John is the unique member of the set of persons called-up. In so doing, B challenges the entailment

---

6 She argues extensively that focus is not a computational feature at all, a point that is challenged by the Italian data in Rizzi (1997).

7 But see Beaver and Onea (2011) for a demurring view.
of exhaustiveness in A’s utterance. B’s utterance is infelicitous in this context because it does not constitute a denial of the exhaustive import.

(26) Q: Who did they call up?
   A: [JÁNOST] hívták fel John-ACC called-3PL up “They called up JOHN”
   B: Nem igaz. MARIT is felhívták Not true. Mary-ACC also up-called-3PL “Not true. They also called up MARY.”
   B’: #Igen. Es (felhívták) MARIT is Yes and up-called-3PL MARY-ACC also “Yes. And (they called up) MARY too.”

Fronted focus in JC also induces an exhaustiveness entailment, as we saw in (23) and (24). (27)—modeled on the Hungarian exchange in (26)—further illustrates this.

(27) Q: A huu di bwai kaal?
   a who Det boy call “Who did the boy call?”
   A: a MIERI a Mary “MARY (is who).”
   B: Na sa. Yu stei de fiil so! Im kaal di oda gyal tu. Neg sir. 2S stay there feel so! 3S call Det other girl too.
   Wa im neim agen? LATOYA. What 3s name again? LATOYA.
   “No way. You go ahead believing that! He also called the other girl. What’s her name? LATOYA.”
   B’: #Yes. An a Latoya im kaal tu.
   Yes. And a Latoya 3s call too “#Yes. And LATOYA (is who) too.”

In situ focus in JC, (see (24)), resembles in situ focus in English. Thus, (28b) is a logical consequence of (28a), as Szabolsci (1981) notes. The discourse in (29) is infelicitous because A’s answer does not entail that John was the only person called up and hence B’s assertion is inappropriate (Horvath’s (28) and (29)).

(28) Q: Who did they call up?
   A. They called up JOHN AND MARY.
   B. They called up JOHN.
Consider now the exchange in (30) (modeled on Horvath’s (22) and (23)).

(30) Q: we yu tingk mi kyan fain out bout di bus shedul? Where 2s think 1s can find out about Det bus schedule “Where do you think I can find out about the bus schedule?”

A: yu kyan luk pan intanet far instans ar yu kyan cal mi fren 2s can look on internet for instance or you can call 1s friend we tek dat-de bus aal di taim who take that-there bus all Det time “You can look on internet for instance or you can call my friend who takes that bus all the time.”

B: #a pan intanet far instans ar bai mi fren yu kyan fain out a on internet for instance or by 1s friend 2s can find out “#It’s ON INTERNET for instance or from my friend (that) you can find out”

B’s utterance is inappropriate. The question in (30) can be answered by supplying some but not all values. A’s answer, in this context, does not entail exhaustiveness and is implemented by focus in situ (without a). B’s answer is infelicitous because the use of a entails that the two options provided, namely, looking for the schedule on the Internet or asking a friend, are the only two options. Expressions such as far instans “for instance” are distinctly infelicitous with a, because they precisely reinforce the nonexhaustive property of a given list.

Adapting Horvath’s analysis (see (25)) to JC is straightforward. Take a to be EI-Op, optionally merged with some constituent inside the clause. Movement to the left periphery is driven by the need to satisfy the Exhaustiveness Criterion—modeled on Rizzi’s (2006) discussion of Criteria—by moving the a-marked constituent to Spec/EIP. This yields an immediate explanation for the position of a to the left of the focused constituent in the left periphery. It transpires that there is no focus movement per se in JC and hence no Focus Phrase in the left periphery. Movement is driven by the need to satisfy the Exhaustiveness Criterion, not a putative Focus Criterion.

Unlike focalized constituents, wh phrases obligatorily move to the left periphery; JC does not have nonechoic single wh in situ.

Durrleman (2008) notes that the presence of a in a wh question requests a maximal and exhaustive answer. Without a, the question does not require the
maximal set, as any contextually relevant subset will do. It is inaccurate to describe *a* as optional.8

In JC, as in Krio and Guyanese, negative existential “nobody” can felicitously answer a question in which the *wh* expression is not preceded by *a* but not when it is: (31b) is an appropriate answer to (31a), unlike (31c).

(31) a. *huu nyam di aki we mi mek?*  
   Who eat  Det ackee Rel 1s make  
   “Who ate the ackee that I made?”

b. nobadi neva nyam i caw i tu mash-op mash-op.  
   Nobody never eat it because it too mashed-up mashed-up  
   “Nobody ate it because it is exceedingly mushy.”

c. ??a nobadi neva nyam i caw i tu mash-op mash-op.  
   a  nobody never eat it because it too mashed-up mashed-up

To account for obligatory *wh*-movement in JC, independently of exhaustiveness, we assume that a specialized *wh* head attracts a *wh*-phrase to its specifier. When the *wh*-phrase is preceded by *a*, it must move to Spec/EIP. Both *wh* movement and exhaustive focalization are quantificational and the question arises why movement of the *wh*-phrase from one specifier to the other does not violate *Critical Freezing* (Rizzi 2006; Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007). A suggestion in Rizzi (2004b, 2006) and further developed by Bocci (2007) provides a technical solution to this problem. The idea is that heads containing multiple features can be formed through head movement. In the case at hand, the *wh* head incorporates to the EI head (or vice versa). This complex head probes EI and *wh* simultaneously, attracting the *wh* phrase.9 This implementation correctly predicts that exhaustive *wh* and exhaustive focus cannot co-occur in the left periphery as they target the same position.

(32) a. *a wen a di bami im kyari*  
   a when a Det bammy 3sg carry  
   Lit: “When THE BAMMI did he bring?”

b. *a di bami a wen im kyari*  
   a Det bammy a when 3s carry  
   Lit: “THE BAMMI when did he bring”

*Wh* phrases in the left-periphery block long focalization, (4b), and left peripheral focus blocks long *wh*-movement, (33). These are clearly cases of intervention, in

---

8 See Muysken (1977) for similar observations regarding the Papiamentu question particle.

9 Unlike JC, Hungarian *wh* questions are always exhaustive, Brody and Szendrői (2010). It is as if *wh* questions were always preceded by *a*. Perhaps this means that in Hungarian, the *wh* head invariably moves to EI.
the sense of Relativized Minimality, attributable to the quantificational feature shared by focus movement and wh movement (Rizzi 2004a).

(33) *(a) hu yu tingk se a di bami im gi?
   (a) who 2s think that a Det bammy 3s give

Left peripheral focalization in Italian and English is not exhaustive (É. Kiss 1998; Brunetti 2004), yet, both wh movement and focus movement are mutually exclusive (at least in root clauses). Rizzi (1997) argues that they target the same position and Rizzi (2004a) that they share a quantificational feature. Pursuing the latter idea, suppose that the head that is activated in both wh movement and focus fronting in Italian-like languages is not a focus head, per se, but a quantificational head, that is, a criterial probe for a quantificational feature, the superclass feature that can be further specified [wh] or [focus]. A clause containing [wh] is “typed” as a question by a [Q(uestion)] feature, presumably merged in a higher head and accessible to selection in embedded contexts (see Lipták 2001) and, in a different framework, Cable (2010), who develop Baker (1970).

Contrastive/corrective focus, which is non-truth-functional (generating different implicatures but not different entailments from its nonfocus counterpart), receives its particular flavor pragmatically. For Bianchi and Bocci (2012), corrective focus requires contrast across utterances. For this reason, they suggest, it must have access to the root of the clause. However this is implemented, such an approach to left peripheral focus in Italian would consist of a syntactic quantifier that is linked to the root of the clause and to the discourse.

Exhaustive focus does not require comparison across utterances and is licensed without access to the root of the clause. Unlike contrastive/corrective focus, it is associated with a specialized functional head in the left periphery.

5 On some differences between exhaustive and contrastive/corrective focus

We now turn our attention to the following tentative generalization.

(34) Exhaustive focus is licit in (central) adverbial conditional clauses while corrective/contrastive focus is not.

10 This feature is responsible for their sensitivity to weak crossover and their capacity to license parasitic gaps.
Haegeman (2010, 2012) attributes the ungrammaticality of (35) to Relativized Minimality. She argues that temporal and central conditional clauses are formed by operator movement to the left periphery. The operator associated with adverbial clauses cannot cross over the quantificational fronted phrase (a topic or focus in English, only a focus in Italian).

(35)  
a. "If these exams you don’t pass, you won’t get the degree." (Haegeman’s (9a))

b. ??Se LA PROVA ORALE non supera, non otterra il THE EXAM ORAL not pass.3S not obtain.FUT.3S the diploma!
   "If he/she doesn’t pass the oral exam, he/she won’t get the diploma!"
   (Bocci 2007:15, (32); Haegeman’s (13))

Such sentences, however, are grammatical in languages with fronted exhaustive focus, such as JC (36), Hungarian (37), and Tuki (Bantu) (38).

(36)  
a. If a pur likl pikni de bout di pleis tonait, yu naa get fi if a purely little child there about Det place tonight, 2s Neg get to plie aal yu ruud sang-dem!
   play all your rude song-PL
   “If there will be ONLY LITTLE CHILDREN around the place tonight, you will not get to play all your rude songs!”

b. Yu fail agen, bwai? Wel, wen a pas yu pas di eksam, mi wi 2s fail again, boy? Well, when a pass 2s pass Det exam, 1sg will yu bak yu baisikl.
   you back 2s bicycle
   “You’ve failed again, boy? Well, when you DO PASS the exam, I’ll give you your bicycle back.”

(37)  
a. Amikor EZT AZ DALT hallottam, (akkor) emlékeztem When this-acc the song-acc heard-1s-past then remembered-1s az első Szerelmemre
   Det first love-poss-iness
   “When THIS SONG I heard, I remembered my first love.”

b. Amikor tavaly EZT A KÖNYVET írt, (akkor) when last-year this-acc the book-acc write-3s-past then gondoltam hogy jól van thought-1s that well is
   “When THIS BOOK she wrote last year, I thought she was fine.”
Fronted focus in JC, Hungarian, and Tuki is exhaustive, while in Italian, it is not. Yet fronted focus in all these languages is quantificational, so it is not clear how to state the selectivity of the alleged intervention effect.

A suggestion that comes to mind is that it is not the focus that intervenes for Haegeman’s (2010, 2012) conditional operator but the opposite. If corrective focus requires access to the root, as in Bianchi and Bocci (2013), and if access to the root is implemented syntactically (albeit non-overtly), it stands to reason that the conditional clause (perhaps the conditional operator) is a barrier to movement, in much the same way as conditional clauses are islands for overt syntactic movement. Exhaustive focus does not require access to the root and is both syntactically and semantically interpretable in the left periphery of the conditional clause.

6 Conclusion

This contribution has attempted to make the following points:

a. JC focus/wh constructions involve movement to the left periphery.

b. Although JC focus and wh-questions share with clefts the interpretation of exhaustive focus, these constructions are not clefts.

11 Bianchi (2013) shows that left-peripheral focus in an embedded clause is constrained by negation in the matrix. Although she interprets this fact in terms of scope, it is suggestive to consider this as a case of intervention in the movement of the focus from the embedded clause to the root.

("Non) ti avevo detto [che a TE lo avrei dato] (ma a Lucia)!
“I had not told that to you I would give it (but to Lucy)"

Lahousse (2012) argues that English and French clefts that are interpreted as “narrow contrastive focus” are acceptable in all types of embedded clauses (while clefts with a new information focus are restricted to a subset of embedded clauses [p. 1]). The examples she provides seem to us to yield exhaustive readings and, as such, their distribution is predicted by our approach.
c. Homophony notwithstanding, a is not an equative particle but an operator of exhaustive identification.

d. Two distinct features drive movement to the JC left periphery: [wh] and [EI].

e. Although JC focus movement resembles Italian focus movement, it differs from it in some important details that can be understood once the difference between exhaustive and nonexhaustive focus is brought into the picture.

References


Lahousse, Karen. 2012. *Intervention at the Left Periphery.* 38th Incontro di Gramatica Generativa, University of Verona.


