

FOCUS IN THE IP: THE PARTICLE *MA* IN FLORENTINE*

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0. Introduction

Many works on the cartography of CP and IP (among others Rizzi 1997, Belletti 2001, Belletti 2004, Benincà and Poletto 2004) have shown that in standard Italian there are two types of Focus encoded in the syntax, a structurally high contrastive Focus and a structurally low informational Focus. Both types of Focus are associated with a dedicated projection: the high Focus is associated with a FocP in CP, between the Topic layer and FinP, the low Focus is associated with a FocP between IP and ν P. In both cases a constituent is moved to the specifier of FocP in order to check the [+Focus] feature.

In Florentine, a variety of Central Italy very similar to standard Italian, both Focus types are present, the high contrastive Focus (1a), signaled like in Italian by a special intonation indicated here in capitals, and the low informational Focus (1b):

- (1) a. [A MARIO]_{focus} ho dato i libro (non a Giorgio).¹
to Mario have given the book not to Giorgio
'TO MARIO I gave the book (not to Giorgio).'
- b. l'ho dato [a Mario]_{focus}, i libro.
it have given to Mario the book
'I gave the book to Mario.'

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¹ In this paper, I do not use the traditional Florentine orthography according to which forms that diverge from standard Italian should be written with an apostrophe to indicate the missing consonants (Florentine *i* 'the' vs. Italian *il*; Florentine *'un* 'not' vs. Italian *non*).

However, Florentine also displays a third type of Focus, which is contrastive and is marked by the particle *ma*:

- (2) l'ho dato *ma* [a Mario]_{focus}, i libro (non a Giorgio).
it have given *ma* to Mario the book not to Giorgio
'I gave the book to Mario (not to Giorgio).'

In this paper I will describe the syntax and the interpretation of this peculiar Focus type. The particle *ma*, homophonous with the conjunction *ma* 'but', precedes the focused item, like other focus markers like *solo* 'only', *anche* 'too' and *perfino* 'even'. However, it has a more restrictive syntactic behaviour (for instance, it must follow the inflected verb), hence it is possible to assume that it has a precise and unique position in the phrase structure. More precisely, I will propose that *ma* is the head of a projection associated with a [+Exhaustive Identification] feature, from which derives the contrastive interpretation of the focused item.

The paper has the following structure: in section 1 I will present some data about the syntax of the *ma* Focus and the position of *ma* in the clause; in section 2 I will take into consideration two specific properties of the syntax of *ma*, that suggest that the focused element is not in its basic position; in section 3 I will briefly describe some cases of focusing of CPs and other large constituents; in section 4 I will deal with the semantic side of the *ma* Focus, and show that an operation of exhaustive identification is involved; section 5 contains some conclusive considerations.

1. The position of *maP* in the clause structure

The particle *ma* is a head, since it cannot be modified nor focused itself. This is shown in the following examples. In (3a) *ma* is modified by *proprio* 'just, really', while in (3b) it is emphasized by the intonation. Both examples are ungrammatical:

- (3) a. *l'ho dato proprio *ma* [a Mario]_{focus}, i libro.
it have given just *ma* to Mario the book
b. *l'ho dato [MA]_{focus} a Mario, i libro.
it have given *ma* to Mario the book

I will call the projection headed by this particle *maP*. It is not possible to insert other elements like DPs, PPs or adverbs between *ma* and the focused item:

- (4) a. *ho dato *ma* i libro [a Mario]_{focus} (non a Giorgio).
have given *ma* the book to Mario not to Giorgio
'I gave the book to Mario (not to Giorgio).'
- b. *ho dato *ma* a Mario [i libro]_{focus} (non i giornale).
have given *ma* to Mario the book not the newspaper
'I gave to Mario the book (not the newspaper).'

- c. *I'ho dato *ma* subito [a Mario]_{focus}, i libro (non a Giorgio).
it have given *ma* immediately to Mario the book (not to Giorgio)
'I gave immediately the book to Mario (not to Giorgio).'

These data suggest that there is an adjacency constraint on the formation of this Focus structure. From this point of view *ma* is very similar to quantificational elements like *solo* 'only', *anche* 'also, too', *perfino* 'even'. Nevertheless, it has different syntactic properties.

First of all, *ma* can appear only in post-verbal position. It can focus-mark subjects, objects or adjunct PPs, but the complex *ma*+ [focused item] cannot precede the inflected verb:

- (5) a. Mario vende *ma* [mobili]_{focus} (non macchine).
Mario sells *ma* furniture not cars
'Mario sells furniture (not cars).'
- b. la ruppe *ma* [i tu fratello]_{focus}, sta finestra (non io).
it broke *ma* the your brother this window not I
'It was your brother who broke the window (not me).'
- c. c'andarono *ma* [le su amiche]_{focus} (non lei).
there went *ma* the her friends not she
'It was her friends who went there (not her).'
- d. ci vado *ma* [con Mario]_{focus} (non con Giorgio).
there go *ma* with Mario not with Giorgio
'I will go there with Mario (not with Giorgio).'
- a'. **ma* [mobili]_{focus}, Mario vende.
b'. **ma* [i tu fratello]_{focus} ruppe sta finestra.
c'. **ma* [le su amiche]_{focus} c'andarono.
d'. **ma* [con Mario]_{focus}, ci vado.

Elements like *solo* 'only' or *anche* 'too' do not display similar restrictions:

- (6) a. solo i tu fratello ruppe sta finestra.
'Only your brother broke the window.'
- b. anche le su amiche c'andarono.
'Also her friends went there.'

Secondly, *ma* can focus-mark PPs and adjectives only if they are verb complements:

- (7) a. quella casa gl'è *ma* [di legno]_{focus} (non di mattoni).
that house clit. is *ma* of wood not of bricks
'That house is made of wood (not of bricks).'

- b. Mario gl'è ma [paziente]_{focus} (non nervoso).
Mario clit. is ma tolerant not unquiet
'Mario is tolerant (not unquiet).'
- a'. *ho visto una casa ma [di legno]_{focus}
have seen a house ma of wood
'I have seen a wooden house.'
- b'. *Mario gl'è una persona ma [paziente]_{focus}
Mario clit. is a person ma tolerant
'Mario is a tolerant person.'

In similar contexts it is possible to use *solo* or *anche* that have scope on a PP or an adjective inside a DP:

- (8) a. ho visto una casa solo di legno.
b. Mario gl'è una persona anche paziente.

Finally, *ma* cannot focus-mark a DP inside a PP, while this is marginally possible with elements like *solo*²:

- (9) a. *quello gl'era un paese di ma [vecchi]_{focus}
that clit. was a village of ma old
b. quello gl'era ma [un paese di vecchi]_{focus}
a'. quello gl'era un paese di solo vecchi.
that clit. was a village of only old
'That one was a village inhabited only by old people.'

All these facts are evidence that *ma* is a clausal element and that *maP* has a unique position in the clause structure. In the following sections I will analyse the relationship between *maP* and the two FocPs assumed by the cartographic framework.

1.1 *MaP* is not in the left periphery

As I have shown in the preceding section, the complex *ma*+*[focused item]* cannot appear before the inflected verb. This fact suggests that *maP* is not in the left periphery of the clause and, thus, has nothing to do with FocP in CP. However, additional evidence is necessary, since we cannot exclude that the focused item is moved to [Spec, Foc] in CP and the rest of the sentence undergoes remnant movement

² For similar problems regarding the position of *only* in English, see Kayne (2000).

to a higher position, for instance the specifier of *maP*. This explanation is proposed by Belletti (2004) for post-verbal contrastive Focus in Italian.

I present two facts as evidence that *maP* is lower than CP. Firstly, consider that Florentine allows the use of the default subject clitic *gl'* and the lack of agreement on the verb with a post-verbal plural subject. While it is impossible to have this configuration with a pre-verbal focused plural subject, as in (10b)³, this option is perfectly acceptable with a post-verbal subject focused by *ma*, as in (10d):

- (10) a. [LE TU SORELLE]_{focus} le son venute (non le mie).
the your sisters clit.FEM.PL are come.FEM.PL not the mine
‘YOUR SISTERS have come (not mine).’
b. *[LE TU SORELLE]_{focus} gl’è venuto.
the your sisters clit.DEFAULT is come.MASC.SG
c. Le son venute ma [le tu sorelle]_{focus}
d. Gl’è venuto ma [le tu sorelle]_{focus}

Secondly, if the focused element is a Negative Polarity Item like *nulla* ‘nothing’, the pre-verbal negation is absent with a left periphery Focus, and it is obligatory with a *ma*-Focus; in other words, a Negative Polarity Item focused by *ma* cannot be the only negative element of a clause. Hence, it has not moved through a position c-commanding the finite verb (Laka, 1990; Zanuttini, 1991):

- (11) a. [NULLA]_{focus} hanno fatto.
nothing have done
b. *(un) hanno fatto ma [nulla]_{focus}
NEG have done ma nothing
‘NOTHING they have done.’

On the basis of these facts, it can be assumed that *maP* is not in the left periphery of the clause. This is a striking result, as it implies that there is a dedicated projection for contrastive Focus in IP.

1.2 The position of maP in IP

At this point, the question that has to be addressed is the exact position of *maP* in IP. If we check the relative order of the complex *ma*+*[focused item]* and the aspectual adverbs, it clearly emerges that *ma* must follow all these adverbs. In (12) it

³ Note that this data contrast with those presented by Brandi and Cordin (1981). However, the variety I’m taking into consideration here is Urban Florentine, spoken in the city of Florence, while Brandi and Cordin have analysed the conservative Rural Florentine of Vaiano, a locality 40 kms from Florence.

is shown that *ma*+ [focused item] must follow *più* ‘any more’, *ancora* ‘still’, *sempre* ‘always’ and *già* ‘already’:

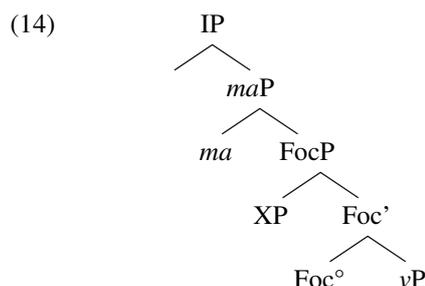
- (12) a. Mario un mangia più ma [formaggio]_{focus} (non carne).
 Mario NEG eats any-more ma cheese not meat
 ‘Mario does not eat cheese any more (not meat).’
 b. Mario gl’è ancora ma [in piazza]_{focus} (non a i bar).
 Mario clit. is still ma in square not at the bar
 ‘Mario is still in the town square (not in the bar).’
 c. Mario mangia sempre ma [carne]_{focus} (non formaggio).
 Mario eats always ma meat not cheese
 ‘Mario always eats meat (not cheese).’
 d. Mario gl’è già ma [in piazza]_{focus} (non a i bar).
 Mario clit. is already ma in square not at the bar
 ‘Mario is already in the town square (not in the bar).’
 a’. *Mario un mangia ma [formaggio]_{focus} più.
 b’. *Mario gl’è ma [in piazza]_{focus} ancora.
 c’. *Mario mangia ma [carne]_{focus} sempre.
 d’. *Mario gl’è ma [in piazza]_{focus} già.

Usually *ma* also follows *bene* ‘well’, but it should be pointed out that the adverb follows *ma* when is the focused item. This configuration is very frequent when *bene* is argumental, for instance with verbs like *sentirsi* ‘feel’ or *comportarsi* ‘behave’. On the contrary, if the focused item is different, *bene* must precede *ma*. In (13) it is shown that with a post-verbal subject focused by *ma*, only the order *bene-ma* yields grammaticality:

- (13) a. capisce bene ma [Giorgio]_{focus} (non Mario).
 understands well ma Giorgio not Mario
 ‘It is Giorgio who understands well (not Mario).’
 b. *capisce ma [Giorgio]_{focus} bene.

The data in (12) and (13) are evidence that the position of *ma*P in the IP is very low. *Ma* must follow aspectual adverbs, and even adverbs like *bene*, which occupy a very low position in the clause structure, according to the hierarchy of Cinque (1999). Since *ma*P is in a low position in the IP, it is adjacent to the low FocP proposed by Belletti (2001; 2004). On the basis of the observation of the data presented so far, it is possible to formulate a first hypothesis about the *ma* Focus: *ma* lexicalises the head of a projection associated with contrastive interpretation; in order to receive this contrastive interpretation, an element (DP, PP, adverb) has to

raise to a position adjacent to *ma*, say the specifier of the low Focus projection. This first hypothesis is exemplified by the structure in (14):



This first hypothesis implies that the contrastive interpretation encoded by *ma* requires also the checking of the [Focus] feature. In other words, “contrast” is a property given by *ma* to an element already marked as Focus.

Before adopting this hypothesis, some other facts must be considered.

2. More about the syntax of *ma*

In this section I will describe more in detail two properties of the syntax of *ma* that can be provided as evidence that the focused item is moved from its basic position, i.e. the focused item is not in VP or *vP*. The first one concerns Marginalization (“Emarginazione” in the sense of Antinucci and Cinque, 1977) and clitic Right Dislocation, the second one the focusing of the entire VP.

2.1 Marginalization and Right Dislocation

So far I have examined mainly sentences with only one internal argument. Consider now the case where there are two internal arguments, for instance a direct object and a dative PP. In this case, it is possible of course to focus by the particle *ma* one of them. However, the non-focused argument must appear as a clitic Right Dislocation. This is shown in (15):

- (15) a. l’ho dato *ma* [a Mario]_{focus}, i libro (non a Giorgio).
 it have given *ma* to Mario the book not to Giorgio
 ‘I gave the book to Mario (not to Giorgio).’
- b. gl’ho dato *ma* [i libro]_{focus}, a Mario (non i giornale).
 to-him have given *ma* the book to Mario not the newspaper
 ‘I gave the book to Mario (not the newspaper).’

On the other hand, Marginalization is not possible in the same contexts. In other words, the resumptive clitic of the sentences in (15) is obligatory:

- (16) a. *ho dato ma [a Mario]_{focus}, i libro (non a Giorgio).
b. *ho dato ma [il libro]_{focus}, a Mario (non i giornale).

If there are two or more non focused arguments, they all must be right dislocated.

Following Cardinaletti (2001) I assume that clitic Right Dislocation and Marginalization are structurally different. In the case of Marginalization it is possible to demonstrate that what follows the focused element remains in its basic position. In the case of Right Dislocation, what follows the focused element is moved by some type of process outside its basic position. The main argument in favor of this analysis is that after a focused postverbal subject the order of objects is free if they are right dislocated, but it is the same as the unmarked order of arguments in the case of Marginalization. I report in (17) the relevant Italian examples in Cardinaletti (2001):

- (17) a. ce l'ha nascosto [il bambino]_{focus}, il libro, sotto il letto.
there it has hidden the child the book under the bed
'It is the child who has hidden the book under the bed.'
b. ce l'ha nascosto [il bambino]_{focus}, sotto il letto, il libro.
c. ha nascosto [il bambino]_{focus}, il libro, sotto il letto.
d. *ha nascosto [il bambino]_{focus}, sotto il letto, il libro.

In Florentine clitic Right Dislocation is obligatory in direct *wh* questions and with post-verbal informational focuses. This is shown in (18) and in (19) respectively:

- (18) a. chi *(l')ha nascosto, i libro?
who it has hidden the book
'Who has hidden the book?'
b. icché tu *(gl')hai dato, a Mario?
what you to-him have given to Mario
'What have you given to Mario?'
- (19) a. *(l')ha nascosto [i bambino]_{focus}, i libro.
it has hidden the child the book
'It is the child who has hidden the book.'
b. *(gl')ho dato [un libro]_{focus}, a Mario.
to-him have given a book to Mario
'I have given a book to Mario.'

Thus, *ma* Focus distributes like direct *wh* questions and Focuses in the IP: one element is moved outside its basic position to check some feature ([+Interrogative] or [+Focus]), while the other arguments must be right dislocated. This fact supports the idea that the focused element in a *ma* Focus structure is moved outside of VP or vP to a position lower than *ma*P, which is very likely the specifier of FocP.

Why Right Dislocation is obligatory in these structures is not clear. As for what concerns the *ma* Focus, the relevant fact is that it is similar to other constructions with feature driven movement. We may assume that obligatory Right Dislocation is related to the raising of the verb, which I will consider remnant VP (or vP) movement (in the spirit of Hinterhölzl's, 1997, proposal). Thus, the derivation of a *ma* Focus structure is the following: firstly, one of the arguments is moved outside VP to [Spec, Foc]; then all other arguments must be right dislocated; finally the "evacuated" VP is raised past *ma*P. This proposal is exemplified in (20):

(20) $[_{IP} \text{gl}'ho} [_{VP} \text{dato } y \ x]_z [_{maP} \text{ma} [_{SpecFoc} [\text{i libro}]_y [_{VP} z]]]] [_{a Mario}]_x$ (=15b.)

The DP *i libro* 'the book' is moved to the specifier of the Focus projection, enters in a *ma* Focus configuration and receives contrastive interpretation; the dative PP *a Mario* 'to Mario' is right dislocated and the evacuated VP is raised higher than *ma*P.

2.2 Focusing of the VP

When the verb occurs in an analytic form, the particle *ma* can appear between the auxiliary and the lexical verb. This is shown in (21); in (21a) *ma* is located between the auxiliary *avere* 'to have' and the past participle of the lexical verb; in (21b) it is located between the durative auxiliary *stare* 'to stay' and the gerunde of the lexical verb:

- (21) a. *ho ma letto un libro.*
 have ma read a book
 'I have read a book'
- b. *sto ma leggendo un libro.*
 stay ma reading a book
 'I am reading a book.'

These sentences are potential counterexamples for the hypothesis I have proposed at the end of section 1, and more in general they challenge the idea that *ma* has a precise and unique position in the clause structure. However, these cases of *ma* higher than the lexical verb (but not higher than the inflected verb) present further properties that must be taken into consideration.

Firstly, when *ma* is between the auxiliary and the lexical verb, and an adverb is present, *ma* must precede the adverb, while the opposite order yields ungrammaticality. This is shown in (22):

- (22) a. Mario ha ma sempre mangiato carne.
Mario has ma always eaten meat
'Mario always has eaten meat.'
- b. Mario sta ma digià andando in piazza.
Mario stays ma already going in square
'Mario is already going to the town square.'
- a'. *Mario ha sempre ma mangiato carne.
- b'. *Mario sta digià ma andando in piazza.

Note that this happens also with adverbs that occupy a very high position in Cinque's (1999) hierarchy, like *probabilmente* 'probably'. These adverbs can appear before the auxiliary or after *ma*, but not between them⁴:

- (23) a. ?Mario probabilmente ha ma comprato un libro.
Mario probably has ma bought a book
'Probably, Mario has bought a book.'
- b. ?Mario ha ma probabilmente comprato un libro.
- c. *Mario ha probabilmente ma comprato un libro.

Secondly, if there are more arguments, with *ma* between the auxiliary and the lexical verb, they must appear in the unmarked order. Direct objects must precede datives and adjuncts. Other orders of arguments result in ungrammaticality of the sentence. Crucially, in this case no resumptive clitic is present:

- (24) a. Mario (*gl')ha ma regalato un libro a Giorgio.
Mario to-him has ma given a book to Giorgio
'Mario has given as a gift a book to Giorgio.'
- b. Mario (*ci) sta ma portando i bambino da i medico.

⁴ The sentences (23a) and (23b) are marginal because the contrastive reading conflicts with the semantics of *probabilmente* 'probably'. However, they are perfectly acceptable when used to contradict a previous statement containing *probabilmente*, like:

- (i) A: Mario ha probabilmente comprato un profumo.
'Probably Mario has bought a perfume.'
- B: No. Mario ha ma probabilmente comprato un libro.
'No. Probably Mario has bought a book.'

See further for more details about the interpretation of *ma* Focus with *ma* between the auxiliary and the lexical verb.

- Mario there stays *ma* taking the child to the doctor
'Mario is taking the child to the doctor.'
- c. i bambino (*ci) ha *ma* nascosto i libro sotto a i letto.
the child there has *ma* hidden the book under to the bed
'The child has hidden the book under the bed.'
- a'. *Mario ha *ma* regalato a Giorgio un libro.
b'. *Mario sta *ma* portando da i medico i bambino.
c'. *i bambino ha *ma* nascosto sotto a i letto i libro.

Thirdly, these sentences are appropriate in different contexts. More precisely, a sentence like (24a) can be used to contradict all the following assertions:

- (25) a. Mario ha regalato un libro [a suo fratello].
'Mario has given as a gift a book to his brother.'
- b. Mario ha regalato [un profumo a sua moglie].
'Mario has given as a gift a perfume to his wife.'
- c. Mario ha [comprato i giornale].
'Mario has bought the newspaper.'

Answer: No. Mario ha *ma* [regalato [un libro [a Giorgio]]].
'No. Mario has given as a gift a book to Giorgio.'

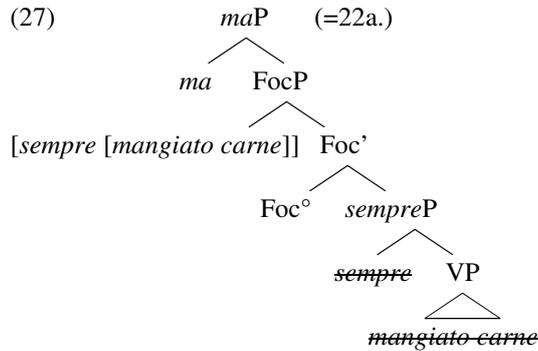
It seems that in similar *ma* Focus structures, it is possible to interpret as the contrasted item the most embedded constituent, or larger constituents of the predicate, up to the whole VP. However, it is not possible to interpret as the contrasted item a constituent of the VP excluding the most embedded ones:

- (26) a. Mario ha regalato [un disco] a Giorgio.
'Mario has given as as gift a record to Giorgio.'
- b. Mario ha [prestato] un libro a Giorgio.
'Mario has lent a book to Giorgio.'

Answer: #No. Mario ha *ma* [regalato [un libro [a Giorgio]]].

I will take all the data presented in this section as evidence that, in sentences where *ma* is inserted between an auxiliary and the lexical verb, the whole VP is moved to the specifier of FocP.

Ma, in these cases, must precede any adverb. I assume that these adverbs are generated in a lower position, as heads taking the whole VP as complement, and then moved with it to the specifier of FocP (see Cinque, 1999, 31):



As we have seen, multiple arguments must appear in the unmarked order. I will consider this fact a crucial piece of evidence suggesting that the VP is moved to a higher position. If it is not moved, it is very hard to explain why its arguments cannot be right dislocated, which is obligatory when [Spec, Foc] is occupied by only one argumental DP or PP.

To summarise, we have seen that in a *ma* Focus construction, the [+Focus] feature is checked by the raising of an element to [Spec, Foc] in the IP. If this element is an argument, all other eventual arguments must be right dislocated and the verb undergoes remnant movement to a position higher than *ma*. If this element is the whole VP, no remnant movement applies, and the arguments appear in the unmarked order.

We can now refine our first hypothesis by adding two details to it: firstly, in a *ma* Focus the verb undergoes remnant movement to a higher position; secondly, the [+Focus] feature can be checked not only by DPs or PPs, but also by the whole VP. This is not surprising if we consider the data I will present in the next section, where I describe some cases of “large” constituents marked as contrastive Focuses by *ma*.

3. Focusing of Modal complements and CPs

In this section I will describe some cases of focusing of large constituents. *Ma* can mark as contrastive Focuses also infinitival complements of modal verbs. Some examples are given in (28):

- (28) a. tu devi ma [stare zitto]_{focus}, in questi casi.
 you must ma stay quiet in these cases
 ‘You (S) must be quiet, in such cases.’
- b. vu lo potete ma [comprare]_{focus}

you it can ma buy
'You (P) can buy it.'

Note that some speakers accept (28b) also if the direct object clitic is reduplicated on the infinitive:

(28) b'. *vu lo potete ma [comprarlo]_{focus}*

This example shows that *ma* somehow blocks the deletion of the lower copy of the object clitic in a clitic climbing structure.

Ma can also focus whole CPs if they are complements of verbs like *volere* 'to want' or *dire* 'to say':

- (29) a. *Mario vuole ma [che noi si vada via subito]_{focus}*
 Mario wants ma that we clit. go away immediately
 'Mario wants that we leave immediately.'
- b. *Giorgio ha detto ma [che un ne sa nulla]_{focus}*
 Giorgio has said ma that NEG of-it knows nothing
 'Giorgio has said that he does not know anything about it.'

I leave a complete analysis of these sentences for further research. For now, it is sufficient to say that *ma* can focus-mark very different types of elements, but in any case it must follow the inflected verb. This fact cannot receive an adequate explanation if we do not assume that *ma* is IP internal and that there is a FocP in the low IP area.

4. Deriving the interpretation of the ma Focus

In the preceding sections I have proposed that *ma* takes scope on an element moved to [Spec, Foc] in order to check a [+Focus] feature. The presence of *ma* gives to this focused element a contrastive interpretation, similar to that of the left periphery Focus in Italian and Florentine. This contrastive interpretation is always present in a *ma* Focus structure, as it can be inferred by the fact that a *ma* Focus cannot be used to answer a *wh* question:

- (30) a. A: *a chi tu l'hai dato, i libro?*
 to who you it have given the book
 'Who have you given the book to?'
- B: *#l'ho dato ma [a Mario]_{focus}*
 it have given ma to Mario
 'I have given it to Mario.'
- b. A: *icché tu voi comprare?*
 what you want buy

‘What do you want to buy?’
B: #voglio comprare ma [un divano]_{focus}
want buy ma a sofa
‘I want to buy a sofa.’

Note by the way that a *ma* Focus cannot appear in isolation, even if it is used to contrast a wrong supposition of the addressee:

(31) A: icché tu voi comprare? (una poltrona?)
‘What do you want to buy? (An armchair?)’
B: *ma [un divano]_{focus}

This fact can be explained in two ways: either by assuming that the *ma* Focus does not allow ellipsis of the background part of the sentence, or by postulating that the fragment answer is not the Focus in IP (which is the Focus position in the scope of *ma*). This second solution is similar to some recent proposals, like the one advanced by Brunetti (2004), who identifies fragment answers as left periphery Focuses followed by sentence ellipsis.

A *ma* Focus is acceptable in contexts where an informational post-verbal Focus is marginal. As pointed out by Brunetti (2004, 122) among others, in Italian, post-verbal subjects are more acceptable if the event expressed by the predicate is related to an explicit or implicit locative:

(32) a. ha telefonato Gianni. (from Brunetti, 2004)
has telephoned Gianni
b. ??ha dormito il bambino.
has slept the child

(32a) is acceptable only if it means ‘Gianni called here’ or ‘Gianni called us’, while (32b) is not so good because *dormire* ‘to sleep’ has no implicit locative meaning. The sentence is better with an overt locative:

(33) in questo letto ha dormito il bambino.
in this bed has slept the child

Ma focus does not display a similar restriction. No implicit locative is needed to form a *ma* Focus structure with a post-verbal subject:

(34) ha dormito ma [i bambino]_{focus} (non io)
has slept ma the child (not I)
‘It is the child who has slept (not me).’

All the previous examples show that, even if FocP under *ma*P is activated, the presence of *ma* changes the contexts where these sentences with post-verbal Focus

can be used. In the following section I will try to individuate the precise contribution of the particle to the interpretation of the focused element.

4.1 *Ma* as a quantificational head

Consider now the interaction of *ma* with other focusing elements. In (35)-(37) it is checked the compatibility of *ma* with *solo* ‘only’, *almeno* ‘at least’ and *perfino* ‘even’:

- (35) a. *Mario ha ma solo dato un esame.
Mario has ma only given one exam
b. Mario ha ma dato solo un esame.
‘Mario has passed only one exam.’
c. *Mario ha dato ma solo un esame.
d. *Mario ha solo dato ma un esame.
- (36) a. *Mario ha ma almeno dato un esame.
b. ??Mario ha ma dato almeno un esame.
‘Mario has passed at least one exam.’
c. *Mario ha dato ma almeno un esame.
d. *Mario ha almeno dato ma un esame.
- (37) a. *Mario ha ma perfino dato due esami.
b. Mario ha ma dato perfino due esami.
‘Mario has passed even two exams.’
c. *Mario ha dato ma perfino due esami.
d. *Mario ha perfino dato ma due esami.

As it can be observed only the sentences in (b) are acceptable. In the grammatical sentences the focusing element modifies an argument, while *ma* marks the whole VP, since it is between the auxiliary and the lexical verb. All the other combinations are excluded: it is not possible to have *ma* and *solo/almeno/perfino* both as VP modifiers (sentences in (a)), both as argumental modifiers (sentences in (c)), and *solo/almeno/perfino* as VP modifier with *ma* as argumental modifier. I argue that this incompatibility derives from the fact that *ma* is a quantificational head. The elements corresponding to ‘only’, ‘at least’ and ‘even’ are quantificational heads, and it is not possible for the same element to undergo similar quantificational operations, as those encoded by these elements and by *ma*.

The ungrammaticality of the sentences in (d) is crucial: as we have seen, *ma* has a precise position in the clause structure, and its presence prevents the insertion of similar quantificational elements in a higher position, even when it focuses only an argument and not the whole VP.

Ma Focus is similar from this point of view to the so-called Identificational Focus of Hungarian, studied by Brody (1990), É. Kiss (1998), Horvath (1986; 2000; 2007) among others. This Focus is associated with a precise position in the clause structure and diverges from the Informational Focus in expressing exhaustive identification: the Focus identifies a particular subset of the contextually relevant set of alternatives and excludes all the others.

In a recent paper, Horvath (2007) has claimed that the syntactic position occupied by the Identificational Focus is not a Focus position at all, but a quantificational position, and Focus movement is not driven by a [+Focus] feature, but by an [+Exhaustive Quantification] feature. While it is not clear whether the CP Focus in Italian or Florentine expresses exhaustive identification (see Rizzi, 1997, and Brunetti, 2004, for some discussion about this problem), the *ma* Focus distributes exactly like the Identificational Focus of Hungarian. This can be observed in the following examples.

Firstly, É. Kiss (1998) observes that Hungarian Identificational Focus is not compatible with universal quantifiers:

- (38) *Mari [minden kalapot]_{focus} nézett ki magának.
Mari every hat picked out herself.DAT
*‘It was every hat that Mari picked for herself.’

Ma Focus displays a similar restriction. A universal QP cannot be focused by *ma*:

- (39) *Maria ha scelto ma ogni cappello.
Maria has chosen ma every hat

Secondly, É. Kiss points out that the Identificational Focus is not compatible with *even*-phrases and *also*-phrases:

- (40) a. *Mari [egy kalapot is]_{focus} nézett ki magának.
Mari a hat also picked out herself.DAT
?‘It was also a hat that Mary picked for herself.’
b. *Mari [még egy kalapot is]_{focus} nézett ki magának.
Mari even a hat also picked out herself.DAT
*‘It was even a hat that Mary picked for herself.’

I have already shown in (37) that *ma* and *perfino* ‘even’ cannot modify the same constituent. (41) shows that a similar restriction is observable also with *anche* ‘also, too’:

- (41) *Maria ha scelto ma anche un cappello.
Maria has chosen ma also a hat

Finally, É. Kiss argues that Identificational Focus takes scope, as it is shown by the fact that exhaustive identification interacts with other scope-taking elements, like universal quantifiers. Take a sentence like (42):

- (42) minden fiú [Marival]_{focus} akart táncolni.
every boy Mari-with wanted to-dance
'For every boy, it was Mari that he wanted to dance with.'

In (42) the universal quantifier takes scope over exhaustive identification, and the sentence means that every boy wanted to dance with Mari and not with any other girl. If we compare two sentences with a universal quantifier in topic position⁵, the first with a standard Informational Focus, the second with a *ma* Focus, they diverge precisely in this respect: only the sentence with the *ma* Focus means that for every boy it was only one specific girl that he liked. The other sentence does not exclude that some boys liked also other girls:

- (43) a. a ogni ragazzo piaceva [Maria]_{focus}.
to every boy liked Maria
'Every boy liked Maria.'
- b. a ogni ragazzo piaceva ma [Maria]_{focus}.
to every boy liked ma Maria.
'For every boy, it was Maria that he liked.'

On the basis of these data I propose that *ma*P is associated with an [+Exhaustive Identification] feature. At this point it is possible a further refinement of the first hypothesis about the *ma* Focus.

A *ma* Focus structure is formed by two syntactic processes: the first one is the syntactic movement of a constituent to the specifier of FocP in the IP, the second one is the insertion of the particle *ma*, bearing the [+Exhaustive Identification] feature, in the low IP area. The syntactic domain of the particle is the focused constituent in [Spec, Foc]. Under this configuration, the element in [Spec, Foc] receives the exhaustive identification interpretation, and VP undergoes remnant movement to a higher position.

⁵ See Cardinaletti (2004) for some discussion about the precise position of "dative subjects" of verbs like *piacere* 'to like'.

4.2 *Ma*, ‘only’ and ‘even’

From what I have said so far, the only difference between *ma* and *solo* ‘only’ seems to be that *ma* has a precise and unique position in the clause structure, while *solo* can appear in different positions, similarly to its English equivalent. However, it should be pointed out that an element focused by *solo* can but does not have to be a contrastive Focus, while *ma* Focus is always contrastive. I think that this distinction derives from the fact that the quantification processes operated by *solo* and *ma* are slightly different.

Consider the opposition of elements like ‘also’ and ‘even’. From the point of view of quantification, they are similar, since they indicate that some property is true for an element *x*, and that the same property is true for elements other than *x* (Bayer, 1996, 51). Both the sentences in (44) mean that John invited his sister, and that he invited also someone else:

- (44) a. John invited also his sister.
b. John invited even his sister.

However, the sentence in (44b) has a further meaning: John’s sister is less likely to be invited by John than others are.

I think that a similar difference exists between *ma* and *solo*. More precisely, *solo* indicates that some property is true for an element *x* and that the same property is not true for elements other than *x*. On the other hand, *ma* indicates that some property is true for an element *x*, that the same property is not true for elements other than *x*, and that these other elements are less likely to be associated with the property. This is why the *ma* Focus is contrastive and is used to express that some explicit or implicit supposition of the addressee is wrong.

- (45) a. Giorgio ha invitato solo la su sorella.
Giorgio has invited only the his sister
b. Giorgio ha invitato ma la su sorella (non la su mamma).
Giorgio has invited ma the his sister not the his mother

The relation between *ma* and *solo* can be observed in diachrony. In some northern Italian varieties, the word for ‘solo’ derives from the Latin *non magis quam* ‘no more than’: Piedmontese *mak*, old Paduan *nomé*, old Lombard *nomà*. In Florentine, like in many other Italian varieties, the word for ‘only’ has a different origin. I propose that Florentine *ma* derives from (*non*) *magis (quam)*, that has been preserved with this particular meaning.

5. Conclusive remarks

In this paper I have presented some data about the syntax and the interpretation of the focusing particle *ma* in Florentine. This particle is the head of a dedicated projection in the low area of IP. Since *ma*P is associated with a [+Exhaustive Identification] feature, these data from Florentine confirm that quantificational heads can have a precise position in the IP.

A *ma* Focus structure requires the movement of the focused constituent to the specifier of a lower projection, which is the syntactic domain of the particle, and which I have proposed to identify with the low FocP of Belletti (2001) and subsequent works. Since *ma*P cannot be located higher than IP, my proposal assumes that Belletti's postulating a Focus position in the IP is correct. This idea has been recently confuted by Brunetti (2004), who claims that there is not a Focus position in the IP, and that constituents can be focused *in situ* by entering in an Agree relation with the [+Focus] feature in CP. The data presented here cannot be directly compared to Belletti's and Brunetti's data, which are mainly from standard Italian. However, the peculiar configuration required by *ma* Focus implies that at least in Florentine there is a Focus position in IP.

On the other hand, these data about *ma* show, contra some of Belletti's conclusions, that a contrastive Focus is not necessarily in CP.

Some words should be spent on the notion of Contrast. É. Kiss (1998) argues that Identificational Focus is characterised by the features [\pm Exhaustive] and [\pm Contrastive], and that languages vary in the value of these two features. A [+Contrastive] Focus "operates on a closed set of entities whose members are known to the participants of the discourse" (É. Kiss, 1998, 267). I think, following Brunetti (2004), that "contrast" is not an appropriate syntactic feature. For instance, a left periphery Focus in Italian (or in Florentine) is usually contrastive, but in some cases it is informational (Benincà and Poletto, 2004). Thus, [+Contrastive] does not seem a movement driving feature. In the case of *ma* Focus, contrast is a pragmatic effect derived from the quantificational operation associated with *ma*. As I have proposed, this operation is exhaustive identification (and, thus, *ma* is similar to *solo* 'only') accompanied by a sort of "evaluation" about the non-identified subset of the contextually relevant set of alternatives. This type of quantification is worth of further research. As it has been noted by Cinque (1999, 180n), *perfino* 'even' does not allow its complement to raise past it, while this is possible with *solo*. As we have seen, the same holds for *ma*, which must precede the focused constituent. In these cases a distinctive semantic feature seems to correlate with distinctive syntax.

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