Proceedings XXXV Incontro di Grammatica Generativa
Università di Siena

Focus Fronting in Sardinian and Sicilian

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This paper analyses the common properties and differences in the interpretation as well as in the syntax of Sardinian and Sicilian Focus Fronting (FF) phenomena. In both varieties, FF is a syntactic device used to mark not only Contrastive Focus (CF), but also Informational Focus (IF). The fronted IF is often associated with a "special interpretation", such as a mirative value or *verum*. Fronting is not limited to DPs or PPs, but may also involve predicates. However, while Sardinian allows FF for all kinds of predicates, predicate fronting in Sicilian is only possible in copulative constructions, and marginally possible with infinitives. We claim that FF is always XP-fronting and that the difference between Sardinian and Sicilian emerges because in Sicilian the verbal predicate in the form of the active past participle is outside the VP and cannot thus be XP-fronted, whereas participles are always inside the VP in Sardinian.

1. Introduction

There seems to be general agreement that the interpretive effect associated with FF in Romance is contrast. According to this assumption, contrast is an essential requirement for FF in Italian and Spanish, and also in other Romance languages, where only CF can undergo FF (cf. Rizzi 1997, Frascarelli 2000, Belletti 2004, for Italian; Zubizarreta 1998, 1999, for Spanish; Motapanyane 1998, Alboiu 2002, for Romanian; Quer 2002 for Catalan).[2] IF must appear in a postverbal position, triggering subject-verb inversion when the subject is the focus constituent.

In the following examples, the context does not allow for a contrastive interpretation of the focus subject *Gianni* in (1)c' and the focus direct object *manzanas* in (2)c', since in these interrogative contexts only IF is appropriate:[3]

[1] Part of Eva-Maria Remberger's research presented in this paper has been supported by the DFG within the SFB 471 as well as by a Feodor-Lynen-Fellowship granted by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for a one year stay in Cambridge, which made this joint paper possible.

[2] For recent alternatives to this view, see Leonetti & Escandell Vidal (in press) for Spanish, as well as Brunetti (in press) and Cruschina (2008) for Italian.

[3] In all examples non-contrastive fronted elements are indicated in bold, and contrastive fronted elements are set in capital letters.

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(1) a. A GIANNI l' ho dato (non a Piero). *Italian*
to Gianni it.CL have.PRES.1SG give.PP not to Piero
'I gave it to John (not to Piero).'
b. Chi è partito / ha parlato?
who be.PRES.3SG left / have.PRES.3SG speak.PP
'Who left / spoke?'
c. È partito / ha parlato **Gianni**.
be.PRES.3SG leave.PP / have.PRES.3SG speak.PP Gianni
'John left / spoke.'
c'. #**Gianni** è partito / ha parlato.
Gianni be.PRES.3SG leave.PP / have.PRES.3SG speak.PP

(2) a. MANZANAS compró Pedro (y no pera *Spanish*
apples buy.PAST.3SG Piero (and not pears)
'Peter bought apples (and not pears).'
b. ¿Qué compró Pedro?
what buy.PAST.3SG Pedro
'What did Peter buy?'
c. Pedro compró **manzanas**.
Pedro buy.PAST.3SG apples
'Peter bought apples.'
c'. #**Manzanas** compró Pedro.
apples buy.PAST.3SG Pedro

Among the Romance languages, Sicilian and Sardinian share a peculiar word order pattern that features a more extensive use of the sentential left periphery in focus constructions. A contrastive interpretation of the focus constituent is not necessary in order for movement to the left periphery to be licensed, and thus FF is also possible in non-contrastive contexts. So, while in Italian and Spanish only CF can undergo movement to the left periphery of the sentence, in Sardinian and in Sicilian such a restriction does not hold and IF also commonly appears within the left periphery:

(3) *Sard.* a. **Custu libru** appo lessu. [Jones 1988: 185]
this book have.PRES.1SG read
'I read this book.'
b. **Fatu** l' at. [Conrad/Falconi 2002: 51]
do.PP it.CL have.PRES.3S
'He did it.'

(4) *Sic.* a. Iddu **picciliddu** è. [Rohlfs 1969: 323]
he child be.PRES.3SG
'He is a child.'
b. **A frevi** aju. [Rohlfs 1969: 323]
the fever have.PRES.1SG
'I have a temperature.'

An important difference between FF in Sicilian and in Sardinian lies in Sardinian's ability to focalise past participles dependent on an auxiliary. However, we believe this difference to be connected to specific properties of the

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two languages, rather than to different properties concerning the FF process proper. Verbal predicate fronting is very common in Sardinian (cf. (3)b), but marginal or impossible in Sicilian (cf. *infra*). For these reasons, the similarities of FF in the two languages have sometimes been overlooked. Despite this difference, we claim that FF in Sardinian and FF in Sicilian are the same phenomenon. The differences between Sardinian and Sicilian with respect to verbal predicate fronting result from independent differences in the syntactic behaviour of Sicilian vs. Sardinian participles.

2. The position of the focus constituent: contexts and interpretation

In Sicilian and Sardinian, any syntactic category is in principle amenable to focalisation and movement to the left periphery of the sentence, not only (negative) quantifiers (cf. (5)a), but also predicative categories (cf.(5)b, (6)a), complements of lexical verbs (cf. (5)c and (4)b above), or other types of arguments (cf. (6)b and also (3)a above):

(5) *Sic*. a. **Nenti** jè chissu!
nothing be.PRES.3SG this
'That's nothing.'
b. Sissi, **cuntenti** sugnu! [Pirandello 2002, II: 203]
yes glad be.PRES.1SG
'Yes indeed, I am glad!'
c. **Ragiuni** aviti [Pirandello 2002, II: 91]
reason have.PRES.2PL
'You are right!'

(6) *Sard*. a. **Troppu grassu** est Juanne. [Jones 1993: 18]
too fat be.PRES.3SG Juanne
'Juanne is too fat.'
b. **A domo mea** venis. [Jones 1988: 185]
to house my come.PRES.2SG
'You come to my house.'

Despite the frequency of FF in these languages, the postverbal IP-internal position is still an available option for IF, cf. (7)b' and (8)b':

(7) *Sard.* a. Ita as bistu? [Sa-Limba 1999-2008]
what have.PRES.2SG see.PP
'What did you see?'
b. **Unu mariane** appo bistu.
a fox have.PRES.1SG see.PP
b'. Appo bistu unu mariane.
have.PRES.1SG see.PP a fox
'I saw a fox.'

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(8) *Sic.* a. Chi ci dasti a Mario?
what to-him.CL give.PAST.3SG to Mario
'What did you give to Mario?'
b. **Un libbru** ci detti.
a book to-him.CL give.PAST.1SG
b'. Ci detti un libbru (a Mario).
to-him.CL give.PAST.1SG a book to Mario
'I gave him a book.'

In answers to wh-questions, the post-verbal position is associated with a neutral interpretation of the new information conveyed by the focus constituent. FF, instead, is generally associated with a special interpretation and typically employed to convey a mirative value, expressing new and unexpected information (cf. *Mirative-Fronting*, Cruschina 2008), and/or an interpretation of *verum*, conveying emphasis on the truth-value (polarity) of the proposition (cf. Jones 1993: 256, Mensching and Remberger in press a, b, Remberger in press, Leonetti & Escandell Vidal 2008, in press, as well as Höhle 1992). With this interpretation, FF proves very common in answers to questions and in declarative and interrogative sentences with an exclamative flavour:

(9) *Sic*. **Na casa** s' accattà! [Cruschina 2006: 371]
a house REFL.CL buy.PAST.3SG
'He bought a house!'

(10) *Sic*. Chi **viglianti** sì? [Cruschina 2006: 372]
INT awake be.PRES.2SG
'Are you awake?'

(11) *Sard*. a. **Comporatu** l' as? [Jones 1993: 355]
buy-pp it.CL have.PRES.2SG
'Did you buy it?'
b. Emmo, **comporatu** l' appo.
yes buy.PP it.CL have.PRES.1SG
'Yes, I did buy it.'

Questions like those above are generally non-canonical yes/no-questions expressing either surprise and incredulity in relation to an unexpected constituent (rhetorical questions), or a request for confirmation against the unexpected information offered by the fronted constituent.

3. Predicate Fronting

As seen in the previous section, in Sardinian and Sicilian fronting involves not only DPs and PPs, but also predicates (cf. (3)b, (4)a, (5)b, (6)a, (10)-(11)). However, in this respect an important difference between Sardinian and Sicilian emerges: Sardinian allows FF of all kinds of predicates, i.e. nominal and adjectival predicates in copular constructions (cf. (12)a and (12)b), as well as verbal predicates like infinitives (cf. (12)c) and participles (cf. (12)d and (12)e) in auxiliary constructions:

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(12) *Sard.* a. **Mannus** sunt is pipius? [Lecca 1999: 30]
big be.PRES.3PL the children
'Are the children big?'
b. Ma **utopia** est? [Sa-Limba 1999-2008]
but utopia be.PRES.3SG
'But is it a utopia?'
c. **Cantare** keres? [Jones 1993: 144]
sing.INF want.PRES.2SG
'Do you want to sing?'
d. **Andada** si ch' este. [Archivi del Sud 1996: 35]
go.PP REFL.CL there.CL be.PRES.3SG
'She went there.'
e. **Torrande** sezis? [Pittau 1991: 142]
coming-back.PRES.PP be.PRES.2PL
'Are you coming back?'

In Sicilian, predicate fronting is only possible in copular constructions (cf. (13)a and (13)b). Verbal predicate fronting is marginally possible with infinitives (cf. (13)c), and completely disallowed with participles (cf. (13)d) or gerunds ((13)e):

(13) *Sic.* a. **Troppu bedda** jè a figglia di Mariu!
very nice be.PRES.3SG the daughter of Mariu
'Mario's daughter is very beautiful!'
b. **A figlia di Mario** jè chissa.
the daughter of Mariu be-3SG she
'She is Mario's daughter.'
c. ?**Nesciri** voli.
go-out.INF want.PRES.3SG
'S/he wants to go out.'
d. ***Mangiatu** assà aju!
eat.PP too-much have.PRES.1SG
e. ***Vinennu** sta!
come.GER stay.PRES.3SG

In what follows, we will give an account of the contrast in (12) and (13). In particular, we will put forward an analysis of the copular constructions (such as (12)a and (12)b vs. (13)a and (13)b), cf. 3.1, and then offer an explanation for the differences in grammaticality of the auxiliary + past participle constructions (such as (12)c and (13)c), cf. 3.2. Finally, we will sketch a possible solution for the difference involving the progressive construction (such as (12)e and (13)e), cf. 3.3.

3.1. Copular constructions

Since Stowell (1978) copular sentences have been analysed as expanded small clauses, with the copula *be* behaving as a raising verb that takes a small clause complement (SC). From this SC-complement, according to Moro (1997), one of the two constituents of the small clause must raise in order to eliminate the original symmetric configuration {XP, YP}. In nominal copular constructions it is the subject DP that raises, with the exception of inverse copular sentences for which Moro proposes the 'predicate raising' analysis. In the latter case, the

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small clause subject remains in situ and the small clause predicate raises instead. Moro (2008) expands this idea and discusses the possibility for either DP to raise to a Focus position (Belletti's 2004 clause-internal FocP), rather than to the subject position (which is filled through *pro*-insertion). This would be sufficient to eliminate the original symmetric configuration of the small clause and to resolve labelling problems: "there is no necessity to raise either DP to the copula: it is sufficient that either one is raised to *any* head that merges with {XP, YP}, neutralizing the problem given by the absence of a label. This prediction appears to be borne out, once we assume that the process of focalization involves raising to a specialized Foc° head, available in Italian in postverbal positions as suggested by Belletti (1999)" (Moro 2008: 2).
Adopting this unified analysis of copular sentences, we assume that in copular constructions in Sardinian and Sicilian the small clause predicate (be it a DP or an AP) can raise to FocP in the left periphery of the sentence, cf. (14) a and b:

(14) a. [$_{FocP}$[$_{AP}$ **Mannus**]] sunt [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ is pipius] *t*] (cf. (12)a)
b. [$_{FocP}$[$_{AP}$ **Troppu bedda**]] jè [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ a figglia di Mariu] *t*] (cf. (13)a)

3.2. Auxiliary + past participle
We believe that the difference between Sardinian and Sicilian concerning auxiliary + past participle constructions should not be attributed to different properties of the FF process per se, but must be instead connected to specific properties of the verbal system in the two languages. In Sardinian, there is no synthetic past; the compound perfect is the only past tense with a perfective value. There are only a few dialects that have a past perfective paradigm but these are "very untypical of the language as a whole" (cf. Jones 1993:80). In Sicilian, on the other hand, the use of the auxiliary *have* plus past participle is restricted to a particular aspect of the verb and does not serve any temporal distinction. Unlike Sardinian, Sicilian always employs the simple past form to express the past tense, regardless of the time and the relevance of the past event or action described (cf. Mocciaro 1978, Squartini and Bertinetto 2000). The present perfect compound form is instead used with a resultative value (cf. (15)a) or, more often, to make reference to a generic event in the past in order to highlight the temporal frame occurring between that time and the present time (including the Speech Time) within which the event could have happened once, several times, or continuously (cf. (15)b):

(15) *Sic.* a. Un ci aju jutu mai.
not there.CL have.PRES.1SG go.PP ever.
'I have never been there.'
(intended meaning: 'I don't know the place.')
b. L' amu circatu tutta a matinata.
him.CL have.PRES.1PL look-for.PP all the morning
'We have been looking for him all morning.'

As for Sardinian participle fronting, it has been claimed (first by Jones 1988, 1993, but see also Mensching & Remberger in press a, b, and Remberger in press) that it is movement of a maximal projection even in those cases where it looks like pure head movement (as e.g. in (11) or (12)d). Indeed, if the VP has a

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complement, this almost always moves along with the non-finite verbal form (as also noted by Jones 1993):

(16) *Sard*. [$_{VP}$ **Mandatu sa líttera**] appo *t*. [Jones 1993: 338]
send.PP the letter have.PRES.1SG
'I sent the letter.'

In a canonical Sardinian declarative clause, the participle raises, but only to a VP-internal position. This means that it always raises past the adverb *bene*, see (17)a and (17)b, but need not raise any higher (Jones 1993: 208-209, Cinque 1999: 46, 146). So in (17)c it is below the floating quantifier *tottu*, whereas in (17)d it is above:

(17) *Sard.* a. *Appo bene mandicatu.
have.PRES.1SG well eat.PP
b. Appo mandicatu bene.
have.PRES.1SG eat.PP well
'I ate well.'
c. Appo tottu mandicatu.
have.PRES.1SG all eat.PP
d. Appo mandicatu tottu.
have.PRES.1SG eat.PP all
'I ate everything.'

It has also been observed that the past particle cannot raise above adverbs like *semper* 'always' and *fintzas* 'also, even':

(18) *Sard*. a. An semper / fintzas / tottu ballatu. [Jones 1993: 154]
have.PRES.3PL always / even / all dance.PP
'They always/also/all danced.'
b. *Maria fintzas at cantatu. [Jones 1993: 156]
Maria even have.PRES.3SG sing.PP
'Maria even sang.'

Moreover, in Sardinian we can see that, with FF of a verbal predicate, these VP-internal adverbs also move along with the verbal participle, thus inside and together with the whole VP (cf. (19) and (20)):

(19) *Sard*. [$_{VP}$ **Tottu arrivatos**] deven éssere. [Jones 1993: 155]
all arrive.PP must.PRES.3PL be.INF
'They must all have arrived.'

(20) *Sard*. [$_{VP}$ **Bènniu torra**] sesi? [Lepori 2001: 96]
come.PP again be.PRES.2SG
'Did you come back?'

In Sicilian VP-fronting is possible with infinitives (cf. (13)c), but participles are excluded from FF. This is because in Sicilian the participle raises to a higher VP-external position and thus is no longer within the VP. Once again, direct evidence comes from the position of the participle with respect to adverbs. As the following examples in (22) show, the participle must raise at least to the left

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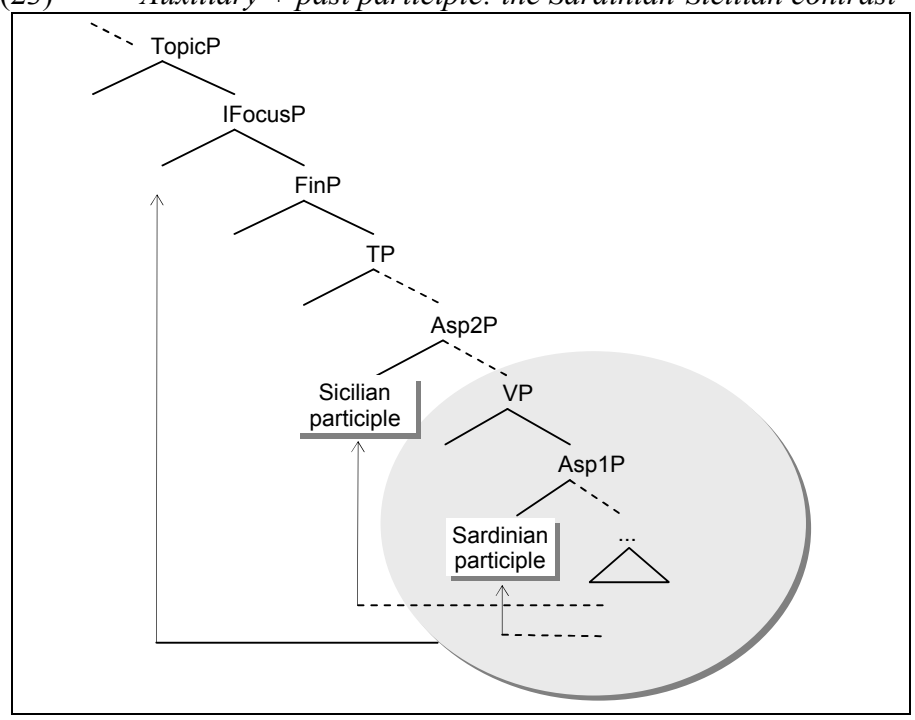
of the adverb *completamenti*, cf. the hierarchical order, following Cinque (1999), as given in (21):

(21) già > cchiù > ancora > sempri > completamenti > tutti cosi > beni/bonu

(22) *Sic.* a. Annu (già) ballatu (già).
have.PRES.3PL already dance.PP already
'They have already danced.'
b. Unn' annu (cchiù / ancora) ballatu (cchiù / ancora).
not have.3PL anymore yet dance.PP anymore / yet
c. Annu (sempri) mangiatu (sempri) dintra.
have.PRES.3PL always eat.PP always at-home
'They have always eaten at home.'
d. Unn' ha (*completamenti) scumparutu completamenti.
not have.3SG completely disappear.PP completely
'It hasn't completely disappeared.'
e. Annu (*tutticosi / *bonu) mangiatu tutti cosi / bonu.
have.3PL all things / well eat.PP all things / well
'They have eaten everything / well.'

The Sardinian-Sicilian contrast with respect to the extension of the movement of the past participle is illustrated in (23):

(23) *Auxiliary + past participle: the Sardinian-Sicilian contrast*



Verbal predicate fronting is fronting of the VP to the left-peripheral focus position in Sardinian. In Sicilian, by contrast, the participle has left the VP and thus can no longer be moved along with the VP.[4]

[4] Recent theories on Past Participle (PstPrt) agreement assume that it occurs within the VP. Belletti (2006) follows Kayne's (1989) idea that PstPrt agreement with preceding clitics results

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3.3 Progressive constructions

As far as the contrast in the progressive constructions (12)e vs. (13)e is concerned, where verbal predicate fronting is possible in Sardinian but not in Sicilian, three observations can be made. First, in Sicilian we have the auxiliary *stari* 'stand' + gerund whereas in Sardinian we have *èssere* 'be', i.e. the same verb as in the copular constructions for which FF is possible in both varieties. Second, in Sicilian the main verb *vinnennu* is in the form of the gerund, whereas the morphological form *torrande* in Sardinian is still a true present participle which can also be used e.g. in perceptive constructions (cf. Jones 1993: 286). The third observation concerns the interpretation of the Sardinian periphrasis which "is extremely common and is often used in preference to the simple present or imperfect when describing actual (rather than typical or habitual) situations in the present or past, sometimes even with stative verbs" (Jones 1993: 83-84). This means that the interpretation of the construction copula + present participle in Sardinian does not have the same interpretation as the true progressive of the Sicilian *stari* + gerund construction. Although we do not have a detailed analysis, we suggest that two solutions are possible and that the Sardinian construction is analysable either (i) as a sort of copular sentence involving the copula *be* and an adjectival Small Clause (SC) including the present participle, which then has an adjectival meaning, or (ii) as involving the raising of the present participle to a special VP-internal (progressive) AspP ([$_{VP}$ … [$_{AspP}$ …]]), but again not to an VP-external position. Either solution is compatible with our analysis.

4. IF-CF Distinction

Let us now come to another interesting observation. As has already been shown, Sicilian and Sardinian allow not only contrastive FF, but also informational FF. Whereas IF simply evokes a set of alternatives, which includes the focus itself, CF identifies by contrastive exclusion the complement of the focus within the set of alternatives (cf. Cruschina 2008). We claim that when fronted, these elements occupy two distinct positions within the left periphery of the sentence. According to Rizzi (1997), CF targets a dedicated position within the left periphery of the sentence, and we assume that IF also moves to such a position. If we compare the syntax of CF vs. IF in Sicilian and Sardinian, two main differences can be established. Firstly, non-contrastive focus fronted elements, including wh-phrases, must always be adjacent to the verb, whereas contrastive

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from a Spec-Head configuration: the clitic, on its way to a functional projection adjacent to the finite verb, passes by the specifier of the projection headed by the PstPrt and triggers agreement. Under this view, Belletti claims that AgrPstPrt, i.e. the landing position for the PstPrt where agreement obtains, is a projection within the VP (possibly connected to the perfective aspectual projection identified by Cinque (1999)). This analysis predicts that if the PstPrt moves out of the VP, the Spec-Head configuration in AgrPstPrt will not be created and agreement will not obtain. This prediction is borne out by our analysis. Indeed, in no contexts does PstPrt agreement obtain in Sicilian (except with passives, see below), whereas, in Sardinian, as well as in Italian, where the PstPrt remains within the VP, agreement is present. In addition, in passive constructions the PstPrt is assumed to be very low within the VP (cf. Cinque 1999, Belletti 2006) and agreement is therefore expected to be obligatory. Although passives are very rarely used in Sicilian, they do show agreement on the PstPart; and indeed, Sicilian passive participles, which obviously remain in a VP-internal position, can be fronted together with the VP.

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focus fronted elements, need not to be adjacent. In the case of IF-fronting, the verb is endowed with the relevant focus feature. Thus, verb movement to FocP has to take place in order to bring the focus feature into a specifier-head configuration with the fronted focus constituent (in the same manner as for wh-phrases, cf. Rizzi 1991). As for CF-fronting, there is no verb movement since the focus projection is inherently endowed with the relevant feature; this analysis has been formulated by Rizzi (1997) for Italian, but can be easily extended to Sicilian and Sardinian to explain the lack of adjacency requirement with CF, cf. (24)b and (25):

(24) *Sic.* a. A: Chi cci riciisti a tò niputi?
what to-him.CL say.PAST.2SG to your nephew
'What did you say to your nephew?'
B: **A virità** (*a mè niputi) cci rissi.
the truth to my nephew to-him.CL say.PAST.1SG
'I told the truth (to my nephew).'
b. NA LITTRA, a Pina, cci scrissi (no un pizzinu)
a letter to Pina to-her.CL write.PAST.1SG not note
'I wrote a letter to Pina (not a note).' [Bentley 2007]

(25) *Sardinian*
SOS DURCHES, a su pitzinnu, appo comporadu, no sos puliches.
the sweets to the child have.1SG buy.PP not the fleas
'I bought sweets for the child, not fleas.' [Sa-Limba 1999-2008]

Secondly, only CF can stay in the left periphery of a complement clause, whereas IF cannot be partially moved to the intermediate periphery, but must move on to the left periphery of the matrix clause:

(26) *Sicilian*
a. Dissi ca NA MACHINA s' accattà, no un muturinu.
say.PAST.3SG that a car REFL.CL buy.PAST.3SG not a moped
'He said he bought a car, not a moped.'
b. *Dissi ca **na macchina** s' accattà.
say.PAST.3SG that a car REFL.CL buy.PAST.3SG
c. **Na machina** dissi ca s' accattà.
a car say.PAST.3SG that REFL.CL buy.PAST.3SG
'He said he bought a car.'

(27) *Sardinian*
a. Appo nadu chi SA MÀCCHINA mi comporat, no sa bricicheta
have say.PP that the car me buy.PRES.3SG not the bicycle
'I said he would buy me the car, not the bicycle.'
b. *Appo nadu chi sa **màchina** mi comporat.
have.1SG say.PP that the car me.CL buy.PRES.3SG
c. **Sa màchina** appo nadu chi mi comporat.
the car have.1SG say.PP that me buy.PRES.3SG
'I said he would buy the car.' [Sa-Limba 1999-2008]

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There is also cross-linguistic evidence for this claim. The characterisation of IF-fronting as a matrix phenomenon, as it is, has been independently discussed and argued for in Frascarelli (2005) and Frascarelli and Puglielli (2008), mainly for other languages that allow IF-fronting (e.g. Hungarian, Somali). Frascarelli (2005: 17-18) explicitly argues that the focus constituent within an embedded C-domain is inappropriate as an answer to a wh-question, i.e. where IF would apply, and states that "languages that realize Focus in a fronted position do not allow informational Focus in embedded C-domains." These differences thus provide crosslinguistic evidence for the claim that IF and CF, when fronted, must be kept separate not only on an interpretive level, but also on a syntactic level, i.e. they target distinct projections within the left periphery of the sentence. As pointed out by several researchers, there is a higher projection for CF (cf. also Benincà & Poletto 2004, Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007, Cruschina 2008).

5. Conclusions

We have analysed the common properties and differences both in the interpretation and in the syntax of Sardinian and Sicilian FF-phenomena. We have shown that FF in Sicilian and Sardinian need not be contrastive, that FF is associated with a special interpretation, and that FF is always movement of a maximal projection, that is, verb-fronting is always VP-fronting. Contrary to Sardinian, Sicilian does not allow past participle fronting given that the past participle moves out of the VP for independent reasons. Finally, we presented and discussed some strong pieces of evidence in favour of the claim that Contrastive FF and Informational FF target two distinct positions within the left periphery of the sentence**.**

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