

BARESE UNMARKED CONSTRUCTIONS AND THE CASE OF PREVERBAL INTRANSITIVE SUBJECTS

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1. Introduction

The present paper surveys the unmarked word orders available in simple declarative main clauses in Barese, a dialect of the Upper-South of Italy spoken in the city of Bari. In particular, a specific pragmatico-semantic behaviour can be observed with a subset of intransitive predicates licensing the fronting of usually post-verbal PATIENT subjects.

1.1. Information structure: (un)markedness

The concept of (un)markedness relies on the pragmatic weight borne by the informative content of a sentence or a constituent within the context of the discourse. Essential here is a brief introduction of the concepts of Topic (of the utterance; cf. Lambrecht 1994: 117–127) and Focus (informative comment on the Topic; cf. Lambrecht: 206–218). Following Lambrecht (1994: 127), Topic expresses a “pragmatically construed sentence relation” whereby a referent is related to a proposition about the referent itself, being this entity a “matter of standing current interest” of the utterance (see further §3). Conversely, Focus represents the informational novelty of the semantic relation that a constituent creates with the presupposition in the realm of the discourse. Non-contrastive, i.e. informational Focus can be identified in the answer to a WH-question (Krifka 2007: 21), usually implicit, yet derivable from the context. On the basis of the scope exerted on syntactic constituents, informational Focus can be subdivided into three types (Lambrecht 1994: 222–223):

– *argument-focus structure*, designating the identification of a specific referent within the utterance, i.e. narrow focus:

- (1) *cə* (*st' a*) *ccófə* *Colinə?* (*Colinə cófə*)
 what stay to cook Nick Nick cooks
 [FOCUS *u ppánə*] (*Colinə cófə*)
 the bread Nick cooks
 ‘What is Nick baking?’ ‘Nick bakes **bread**’

– *predicate-focus structure*, which provides a comment on the topic of conversation:

- cooks the bread Nick

[FOCUS

2.1.1. Barese subjects

Like other central-southern Italo-Romance varieties, Barese is a null-subject language. Hence, pronominal subjects in Barese can either be covert or overt in accordance with emphatic informational content in the discourse.

(7) SpecSubjP (SpecEPPP) SpecAgrSP* ... SpecVP/V-Comp

(8) a. [SubjP *Sisina*_i [AgrSP ~~*Sisina*~~_i *arrəggəttə*_j [V-VP ~~*Sisina*~~_i *tidies up* *arrəggəttə*_j (*la càsə*)]]]
 the house

b. [SubjP [AgrSP *pro*_i *arrəggəttə*_j [V-VP ~~*pro*~~_i *tidies up* *arrəggəttə*_j (*la càsə*)]]]
 the house
 ‘Teresina / Ø tidies up (the house)’

(9) [SubjP [EPPP Ø_{LOC} [AgrSP *arrivə*_i [V-VP ~~*arrivə*~~_i *u wuastafəstə*]]]
 comes the killjoy
 ‘The killjoy is coming’

2.2. Intransitive predicates: a brief overview

(10) a.	unergative / (<i>transitive</i>) 'John sings (<i>a gospel</i>)'	[S _A	[_{VP}	V	(O)]
b.	unaccusative 'John arrives'		[_{VP}	V	S _O]

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is reflected in their unmarked word order, permitting subject inversion, as in (11) for unergatives and (12) for unaccusatives:

- (11) *ha telefonato il dottore* (Unergative: VS_A)
 has telephoned the doctor
 ‘The doctor called (here)’
- (12) *è arrivata una lettera* (Unaccusative: VS_O)
 is arrived a letter
 ‘A letter arrived (here)’

We will return to the behaviour of these predicates in §2.2.2 and §2.2.3.

2.2.1. Unergative Predicates

Unergatives share with transitives an identical underlying syntactic and thematic structure, i.e. SV(O), modulo the presence of an overt complement (Hale, Keyser 2002: 47). Consequently, the sole felicitous word order for sentential-focused unergatives is SV (13 / 14a), while VS (13 / 14b) yields argument focus on the S_A:

- (13) [*c’ha statə / ssəcciəssə?*]
 a. *Pasqualə ha ffadəgətə* S_AV
 Pasquale has worked
 ‘Pasquale worked’
 b. *≠ ha ffadəgətə Pasqualə* VS_A
 has worked Pasquale
 ‘It is Pasquale who worked’
- (14) [*c’ha statə / ssəcciəssə?*]
 a. *La sróchə ha sparagnətə* S_AV
 the mother-in-law has saved
 ‘The mother-in-law saved (money)’
 b. *≠ ha sparagnətə la sróchə* VS_A
 has saved the mother-in-law
 ‘It is the mother-in-law who saved (money)’

Below, however, we will observe that a limited set of null-LOC / TEMP unergative predicates allows VS in sentence-focus contexts.

2.2.2. Unmarked VS word order: ‘B-verbs’

Prior to Levin (1993), Benincà (1988: 123–125) already noted that the interpretation of a subset of Italian unergatives (and unaccusatives) was semantically tied to the speaker’s spatio-temporal coordinates, i.e. the ‘here and now’ (LOC / TEMP), causing subject inversion in sentence-focus contexts, as shown in (15) and (16):

- (15) *ha telefonato Masiero* (LOC)VS_A (Benincà 2001: 138)
 has phoned Masiero
 ‘Masiero called (here/now)’
- (16) *ha suonato il postino* (LOC)VS_A
 has rung the mailman
 ‘The mailman rung (here / now)’

I will refer to this subset of null-LOC / TEMP predicates as ‘Benincà verbs’ (B-verbs henceforth). Following Benincà’s intuition, Pinto (1997) suggests that the SV variants of (15) and (16) *Masiero ha telefonato* and *Il postino ha suonato* simply imply underspecification of time and place. Striking evidence in support of the claim that VS semantically entails a deictic reading is found in Borgomanerese, a Piedmontese dialect (Tortora 1997, 1998, 2001). In this dialect, the usually covert LOC argument (assumed for Italian in examples (15)–(16)) is overtly realised in the syntax:

- | | | | | | |
|------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| (17) | <i>ngh</i> | <i>è rivà</i> | <i>-gghi</i> | <i>na ffola</i> | LOC1-V-LOC2-S ₀ |
| | LocSCI | is arrived | LocCl | a girl | |
| | ‘A girl arrived (here)’ | | | | (Tortora 2001: 317) |
| (18) | <i>na ffola</i> | <i>l</i> | <i>è</i> | <i>rivà</i> | S ₀ V |
| | a girl | SCI | is | arrived | |
| | ‘A girl arrived’ | | | | (Tortora 2001: 318) |

Example (17) shows the VS order in which an overt LOC subject clitic (LocSCI) lexicalises the preverbal position and is doubled by the genuine LOC clitic (LocCl), encliticised onto the verb. By contrast, the SV configuration in (18) does not license the LOC clitic, which is replaced by the regular subject clitic (SCI).

In (19 / 20b) we see that sentence-focused Barese B-verbs license a covert LOC in VS configuration, beside the expected unergative SV orders in (19 / 20a):

- | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--|----------------------|
| (19) | [<i>c’hastatə / səcciəssə?</i>] | | | | |
| a. | <i>Giuwannə</i> | <i>ha ttələfonatə</i> | | | S _A V |
| | John | has called | | | |
| | ‘John called’ | | | | |
| b. | (<i>mo’ / ddó</i>) | <i>ha ttələfonatə</i> | <i>Giuwannə</i> | | (LOC)VS _A |
| | now here | has called | John | | |
| | ‘John called (now / here)’ | | | | |
| (20) | [<i>c’hastatə / səcciəssə?</i>] | | | | |
| a. | <i>Gisellə ha ttəzzuatə</i> | | | | S _A V |
| | Gisella has knocked | | | | |
| | ‘Gisella knocked’ | | | | |
| b. | (<i>mo’ / ddó</i>) | <i>ha ttəzzuatə</i> | <i>Gisellə</i> | | (LOV)VS _A |
| | now here | has knocked | Gisella | | |
| | ‘Gisella knocked (now / here)’ | | | | |

In §3, we shall see that Barese B-verbs in SV configurations do not merely convey locotemporal under-specification of the event, but that they also contribute to the pragmatic saliency of the pre-verbal subject.

I conclude this survey with unmarked unaccusative predicates in Barese, the majority of which function as B-verbs.

2.2.3. Unaccusative predicates

On a par with unergative B-verbs, Barese unaccusatives allow both word-order combinations with sentential focus. In Romance, unaccusatives generally display the neutral VS₀ order, whereas in Barese the opposite S₀V order also proves felicitous in unmarked contexts. This is shown in (21)–(22), accompanied by a context description.

(Two ladies, A and B, are both busy knitting on the streets. Suddenly, A stops and lifts her head up; B asks)

- (21) [pərcétə sì affərmàtə, c'ha statə / ssəcciàssə?]
 'Why did you stop, what happened?'
 a. Marìjə ha 'rrəvətə S_OV
 Mary has arrived
 b. ha 'rrəvətə Marìjə VS_O
 has arrived Mary
 'Mary arrived'

(A mother goes to visit her daughter to tell her some news about the American side of the family, whom the daughter has never met. The mother sits and starts to cry. The daughter asks)

- (22) [pərcé st'acchiàngə, c'ha statə / ssəcciàssə?]
 'Why are you crying, what happened?'
 a. U ddziànə ha mmuèrtə S_OV
 the uncle has died
 b. Ha mmuèrtə u ddziànə VS_O
 has died the uncle
 'The uncle died'

Both word orders are felicitous. However, The S_OV word order in (21a) and (22a) requires an in-depth discussion, which is undertaken in §3. As expected, the answers in (21b) and (22b) respectively convey a deictic locative and temporal reading (Pinto 1997: 24), which readily patterns with the general prediction for B-verbs VS_O configuration.

Benincà (2001: 139) claims that this silent deictic argument assumes the function of given theme, thereby satisfying the EPP-feature. This derives the post-verbal surface position of the subject which does not receive a narrow focus reading, but constitutes part of the sentence focus. Consequently, the utterance is still unmarked from a pragmatic point of view, despite effectively displaying syntactic markedness.

2.2.3.1. B-verb's null-LOC / TEMP as multiple-feature instantiations

Analysing Ibero-Romance inversion structures, Corr (2012) identifies the fine-grained features involved in null-LOC / TEMP constructions, which are in turn coded by dedicated syntactic projections in a multi-layered PP structure. These projections are: SourceP (e.g. 'to exit', 'to go away'), DeixisP (e.g. 'to come', 'to call'), GoalP (e.g. 'to enter', 'to die') and LocationP (e.g. 'to cry', 'to shout'):

Type of P	Projections / Features	Verbs
SourceP	Source, Deixis, Goal, Location	salir / sair; irse
DeixisP	Deixis, Goal, Location	venire / vir; llamar / ligar
GoalP	Goal, Location	entrar; morir / morir / morrer
LocationP	Location	llorar; gritar; dimitir

(Corr 2012: 40)

To convey one of these speaker-oriented loco-temporal readings, B-verbs c-select a subtype of LOC / TEMP feature, restricting subject movement. In Barese, on the other hand,

we see the availability of all such projections (i.e. SourceP, DeixisP, GoalP and LocationP), thus presenting the full range of possibilities for loco-temporal VS inversions shown in (23)–(26):

- (23) SourceP:
ha 'ssutə Pəppinə (LOC)VS_O
 has left / gone out Giuseppe
 'Giuseppe left (now / from here)'
- (24) DeixisP:
ha vvənùtə zittə-mə (LOC)VS_O
 has come girlfriend-my
 'My girlfriend arrived (now / here)'
- (25) GoalP:
ha ttrasùtə u professórə (LOC)VS_O
 has entered the professor
 'The professor came in (now / here)'
- (26) LocationP (unergative):
ha fksamàtə u pəsciarùlə (LOC)VS_A
 has shouted the fishmonger
 'The fishmonger shouted (now / here)'

Let us now focus on the case of preverbal subjects of B-verbs in sentential focus.

3. The case of preverbal subjects in Barese B-verbs

From my survey, we have seen that both pre- and post-verbal subjects of Barese B-verbs are felicitous in the scope of sentence focus. This is directly linked to two different pragmatic-semantic readings of the context. In this respect, let us reconsider the example in (27):

(A mother goes to visit her daughter to tell her news about the American side of the family, whom the daughter has never met. The mother sits down and starts to cry, and the daughter asks)

- (27) [*pərcé st'a cchiàngə, c'ha statə / ssəcciassə?*]
 'Why are you crying, what happened?'
- a. *u ddziànə ha mmuèrtə* S_OV
 the uncle has died
 'The uncle died'
- b. *ha mmuèrtə u ddziànə* (LOC)VS_O
 has died the uncle
 'The uncle died (recently in time)'

In the case of VS word order, Barese patterns with a wide range of Romance languages, implying a null-LOC / TEMP argument responsible for the deictic reading of the utterance. By contrast, SV obtains whenever the subject is mentally accessible (i.e. part of the common ground) to the interlocutors involved in the speech act. Here I argue that unmarked SV is licensed by the presence of a pragmatic-semantic feature encoded in these subjects: their overt pre-verbal position is determined on pragmatic grounds which activate a non-canonical subject position for Barese B-verbs within the core of the sentence. Further evidence for the

unmarked nature of SVC can be found in the sentence-focal prosodic stress placed on the whole utterance, and in the fact that no topicalised or other constituents (cf. 28a) can interrupt the adjacency between the preverbal subject and its finite verb. The only exceptions to this are clitics (28b), negation and intervening adverbs (28c):

- (28) [*c'ha statə / ssəcciaəssə?*]
- a. *≠U dʒiàɲə de tāmórə ha mmuèrtə*
the uncle of tumour has died
[< *Ccom'jé cch'ha mmuèrtə u ddziàɲə?*]
how is that has died the uncle
'The uncle died of tumour' 'How did the uncle die?'
- b. *u ddziàɲə ngə ha mmuèrtə (a Ccolìɲə)*
the uncle to him.DAT.CL has died to Nicola
'Nicola's uncle died'
- c. *màmətə angórə nònn' ha 'rrəvətə*
Mum-yours yet not has arrived
'Your mother hasn't arrived yet'

Given these facts, I argue that such preverbal subjects lexicalise an A-position, namely Cardinaletti's (2004) position for semantic subjects (SpecSubjP), instead of a A'-position. In fact, the evidence of (28a) excludes the possibility of a left-peripheral dislocation of the subject in the lowest topic projection of the CP domain, as described by Frascarelli, Hinterhölzl (2004: 4): the "familiarity topic", given and accessible (cf. Chafe 1987). Despite the deep conceptual similarities shared between the two types of topical information, these Barese subjects are exclusively fronted in the case ofthetic sentences¹, revealing no signs of pragmatic markedness.

3.1. A type of topic within a sentential focus

This pre-verbal position in examples such as (27a) is activated on the basis of the availability of the referent of the subject within the interlocutors' common ground. Conversely, the subject will prove infelicitous in pre-verbal position whenever one interlocutor is not able to trace any cognitive relationship of "givenness", "familiarity" or "referentiality" with the referent of the subject.

These pre-verbal subjects can be considered topical instantiations, despite their occurrence in the scope of sentential focus. Nonetheless, the type of topic dealt with here differs from the Clitic Left-Dislocation structures found in Barese or other Romance varieties (cf. Cinque 1990).

3.2. The 'Topic Acceptability Scale'

Lambrecht (1994: 165) individuates a "Topic Acceptability Scale", reproduced in (29), representing the different levels of acceptability for the computation of the topical information in the interlocutor's minds:

- (29) Active (Most acceptable)
Accessible

¹ This assumption does not exclude the correlation between the two adjacent positions, which is left open for further research.

– *Inferentially accessible*: a referent which is accessible through inference from some other active or accessible material in the discourse (both linguistic and extra-linguistic context):

- (32) A: *c'ha secciässə? Sə n'ha fütə la lùfə a ccässətə?*
 'What happened? A black-out in your place?'
 B: *la lambadinə s' ha fəttətə* S₀V
 the light bulb self= has exploded
 'The light bulb exploded'

In the case of (32), the previously unmentioned referent 'light bulb' becomes accessible to the hearer once the information 'black-out' (literally: 'electricity has left') is first activated, which renders the event of a 'light bulb exploding' accessible through deduction. Moreover, the pitch darkness in which the addressee finds himself / herself makes the *light bulb* an active / accessible referent.

– *Situationally accessible*: a referent which is present in the text-external world:

- (33) (*There's a car accident: a car with a French registration has crashed and the driver is lying on the ground without moving. Both A and B paid attention to both these details while driving in the other direction*)
 A: *mado', c'ha secciässə?*
 'Oh my God, what happened?'
 B: *nu frangésə ha mmuertə* S₀V
 afrenchman has died
 'A Frenchman died'

Morphologically, we would expect a non-topical subject such as "a Frenchman", indefinite and 'unanchored' to any focal determiner, to be inactive and therefore barely acceptable whenever occurring in athetic answer. However, in this case the „Frenchman” does have a referent in both interlocutors' minds since they were both eyewitnesses, as part of text-external world, to the fact that such a Frenchman died in a car accident.

Consider now the case in which only the driver (34B) realises that the car registration is foreign and the passenger (34A) only notices a person lying dead on the ground but not his geographical provenance:

- (34) A: *c'ha stətə?*
 'What happened?'
 B: *nu crəstianə / ʔnu fərstiərə ha mmuertə* S₀V
 A person a foreigner has died
 'A person / a foreigner died'

The only felicitous preverbal subject turns out to be *nu crəstianə* 'a person', being the only easily-accessible referent activated in the hearer's mind through text-external information, i.e. eye-witnessing of the event. In the reply with *nu fərstiərə* 'a foreigner', the hearer would not be able to individuate the referent in question, as s/he does not share the sufficient amount of extra-linguistic information, i.e. [+foreigner], to be able correctly qualify the person who died in the car accident. Thus, the answer *nu fərstiərə* 'a foreigner' is not be

sufficient for the hearer to substantiate the additional inaccessible information, unlike the more readily “situationally accessible” *nu crăstiănă* ‘a person’: the former is contained in the superset of ‘people’, and if this semantic property [+foreigner] is no longer shared by both interlocutors, it will produce an identifiable referent in the mind of the hearer.

3.2.3. ‘Unused’ information

Let us now test the ‘unused’ topical information: these types of referent are still – remotely – identifiable in the mental imagery of the interlocutors, but they are not active.

(35) (*The nephew notices that his grandfather, a fan of Mina (Italian singer of the '60s), is sad for some reason*)

- A: *c'ha stată?*
 ‘What’s the matter?’
 B: *Mina ha sparăfută* S₀V
 Mina has disappeared
 ‘Mina disappeared (i.e. is missing)’

The preverbal subject *Mina*, completely inactive and stored distantly somewhere in the memory of the nephew, can felicitously occur in sentence-initial position only because the nephew knows who the grandfather’s favourite singer is, and thus access the unused topical information his grandfather is referring to. Were the grandfather referring to the disappearance of one of his long-forgotten school friends, the nephew would encounter difficulties in recognising the referent in question and would need to ask for further clarification to individuate her, i.e. the sentence in (35B) would be infelicitous.

As a final example of non-accessibility of a preverbal subject, consider the bizarre context in which ‘the light bulb’ in (36B), were to be introduced out of the blue, during a mountain hike: one interlocutor is pensive, then suddenly stops walking and the other one asks:

- (36) A: *c'ha stată?*
 ‘What’s the matter?’
 B: *¶na/la l ambadină s'ha fcatătă* S₀V
 a / the light bulb self=has exploded
 ‘A / the light bulb exploded’

Speaker A can by no means have the referent ‘light bulb’ active or accessible in his mind and the utterance in B would in fact be contextually nonsensical to speaker A.

3.3. The Syntax of Barese preverbal subjects of B-verbs

So far, we have seen that only those (active, accessible and unused) topical subjects will be able to surface in preverbal position, in contrast to the more common prediction of post-verbal subject placement with B-verbs. Here I argue that Barese preverbal subject position is activated due to the [+accessible] feature encoded in the subject: this feature is the main driving force for the subject to be pied-piped to the specifier of ‘subject-of-the-predication’ projection.

Semantic features determine the interpretation of certain semantic properties encoded in the elements of the discourse and are usually triggers for movement (e.g. ‘specificity’ in the

Intuitively, accessibility entails “referentiality” and “specificity”, though it relates to the discourse-external world rather than being confined to the text-internal domain. Cardinaletti (2004: 121) suggests that “referentiality” be encoded in the semantics of the preverbal highest subject position (SpecSubjP), where ‘strong’ semantic subjects are attracted. On the basis of these intuitions, I claim that the semantic prominence, i.e. [accessibility], of the subjects of B-verbs is structurally reflected / marked in Barese syntax by subject raising to a dedicated semantic-related preverbal position. I argue that the head responsible for [+accessible] feature checking is Subj^o, which heads the SubjP projection in (37). The fact that the syntax of Barese B-verbs overtly encodes the accessibility of subjects via raising could be extended to all strong subjects of other verb classes raising to SpecSubjP.

(37) [SubjP [EPPP Ø_{LOC} [AgrSP *ha mmuèrtə*_i [_{v-VP} ~~*mmuèrtə*~~_i *u ddziànnə*]]]
 has died the uncle
 ‘The uncle died (in recent times)’

The lack of a loco-temporal reading does not entail the underspecification of direction of motion (a rather poor option as far as semantic content is concerned), but, rather, the semantic property of the subject being interpreted as accessible to the interlocutors.

(38) *u ddziàənə ha mmuèrtə*
the uncle has died
'The uncle died'

(39) [SubjP *u ddziàənə*_i [+ accessible] [EPPP *u ddziàənə*_i [AgrSP *u ddziàənə*_i *ha mmuèrtə*_j
[_u-VPP *u ddziàənə*_i *mmuèrtə*_j]]]

We conclude by noting that Barese syntactically encodes the semantic feature of [\pm accessibility] of referents by means of overt subject raising to a preverbal position: once the subject is attracted to preverbal position, it will be interpreted as accessible. In this respect, it is striking to note how Barese differs from other Romance varieties, such as Italian and Spanish, in which the [accessible] feature in such contexts is systematically overridden by the LOC / TEMP reading, without being accessible to the narrow syntax as a single, individual feature. These facts lead us to consider Barese as more inclined to discourse-configurationality (Topic-oriented) than other Romance varieties: we have seen that SubjP, normally left unused in most Romance varieties with a specific subset of intransitive predicates, in Barese serves as an alternative to host subjects receiving a particular pragmatico-semantic reading indicating accessibility in the interlocutor's knowledge.

Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Prof. Adam Ledgeway for the precious comments, helpful suggestions and unconditional support provided during the first year of my Ph.D. in which the ideas and the hypotheses presented here were developed. I would also like to thank Dr. Theresa Biberauer and Dr. Michelle Sheehan for their valuable feedback on the linguistic material and the ideas presented in this paper, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council for the funding provided to present this paper at 'Al 13-lea Colocviu Internațional al Departamentului de Lingvistică', held at the University of Bucharest.

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BARESE UNMARKED CONSTRUCTIONS AND THE CASE OF PREVERBAL INTRANSITIVE SUBJECTS

(Abstract)

In the survey of pragmatically unmarked sentential word orders of Barese, a dialect of the Upper-South of Italy, we come across a pragmatico-semantic phenomenon involving the fronting of a subset of intransitive subjects, which generally surface post-verbally in many (Italo-)Romance varieties. I argue that the availability of both pre- and post-verbal intransitive subject positions in Barese responds to two different semantic requirements: the ability to access the relevant information by both interlocutors, which triggers subject-fronting, and the covert presence of a pre-verbal loco-temporal deictic argument, which blocks subject-fronting. The latter situation is extensively discussed in the literature, whereas the former has always gone unnoticed. I discuss the fine-grained semantics of such fronted subject by means of Lambrecht's (1994) 'Topic Acceptability Scale', in order to capture the pragmatico-semantic mechanism that determines the fronting of 'accessible' information to both interlocutors.