

On a mismatch between the definiteness/specificity-hierarchy and topicality: The case of fronted bare quantifiers in Romance*

Organization of this talk

1. Topicality, givenness/specificity and indefinites	4. On the presence of verum focus: new proposal
2. Fronting of bare quantifiers (BQ)	5. Outlook: Proposal for a syntactic analysis
3. Properties of these topicalized BQ	

1. Topicality, givenness/specificity and indefinites

Which nominal expressions can be topics?

- ⇒ Different definitions of topics
- ⇒ Different types of topics

Aboutness-topic

- 'what the sentence is about'; *Aboutness* as a basic notion (Reinhart 1981, following Strawson 1964, Kuno 1972, Dik 1978);
- The topic can be discourse-new (see Reinhart 1981) but must carry a presupposition of existence;

(1) Ro. [out-of-the-blue]

Pe o vecină de-a mea a atacat-o un urs.
DOM a neighbor(F) of-GEN my has attacked-3FS.ACC a bear
'A neighbor of mine was attacked by a bear.'

(2) a. **A woman I know** is bald.

b. **The woman I met last night** got drunk.

(*the* shows that anchoring to the Speaker allows the accommodation of the presupposition of existence)

Discourse-Topic (DT)

- The *question-under-discussion* (QUD) (cf. Carlson 1983, von Fintel 1994, Büring 1999, 2003, van Kuppevelt 1995, Roberts 1996)
- The *Sentence Topic* (ST) is usually *part* of the material which can be taken to represent the DT (Vallduví 1993, Roberts 2011);
- This part can include non-referential elements, but such elements need to be construable as belonging to the DT:

(3) Ro. [general DT: surprising things on the public scene nowadays; title of the article: *Nimic din ceea ce fac politicienii nu ar trebui să ne mai surprindă* "Nothing politicians do should surprise us any longer"]

Mut rămâi și când analizezi pe ce arături a apucat-o vânătoarea
dumb remain.2SG also when analyze.2SG on what furrows has taken-it chase-the
partidelor după candidați.

parties-the.GEN after candidates (Revista 22, 10-17oct. 2016, in Giurgea 2017)

'Dumbstruck, too is what one feels when analyzing how much off the rails the parties' chase of candidates has gone.'

* Part of the data and theoretical considerations were originally presented by Ion Giurgea at the LSRL 41 in Ottawa, 5-7 May 2011, in a paper with the title "How can a bare quantifier be a topic?", followed by a joint paper at the SLE 2011 (cf. Giurgea & Remberger 2011); see also Giurgea (2015).

- Büring (1999, 2003): the DT can be divided into several questions, which form a set; the ST represents the element which varies across these sub-questions

(4) DT = What did the boys eat?

The set of sub-DTs = {What did John eat?, what did George eat?}
(assuming *the boys* = George and John)

A: What did the boys eat?

B: [Fred]_{ST} ate [the beans]_{Focus}, and [George]_{ST} ate [the eggplant]_{Focus}

Contrastive Topic (CT)

- The ST as defined by Büring (1999) is just a variety of topicality, called *contrastive*.
- CT-congruence Requirement: A clause with a contrastive Contrastive Topic (CT) must be the answer to a question belonging to a set of sub-DTs/QUDs (cf. also Bianchi & Frascarelli 2010:49).
- CTs need not be definite or specific (presupposed to exist) or referential either, but must be connected to the discourse topic.

Given-Topic/Familiar Topic and Topic hierarchies

(5) [Shift_P Aboutness-shift Topic [Contr_P Contrastive Topic [Fam_P Familiar Topic [IP]]]]] (Frascarelli & Hinterhölzl 2007)

(6) [A-Topic_P A-Topic [C-Topic_{PP} C-Topic [G-Topic_P G-Topic [IP]]]]] (Bianchi & Frascarelli 2010)

- G-topics need not be specific: they can even be non-referential.
- Giurgea (2017): G-Topics may be the result of fronting *a part* of the DT-material.¹

2. Fronting of bare quantifiers (BQ)

In our talk, we discuss a type of topicalization which is, given these various notions of topicality, an unexpected mismatch in information structure: **topicalization of bare quantifiers** (BQ):

(7) Sp. [Context: Juan didn't eat anything]
No; **Algo**, Juan sí (*lo) comió, pero no mucho.
no something Juan yes CL.3.MS.ACC ate but not much
'No, he ate something.' (Arregi 2003:4)

(8) Ro. **Ceva** el řTIE.
something he knows
'He knows something.' (Giurgea 2015)

(9) It. **Qualcosa** avrà fatto, nella vita. (Benincà et al. 1988:143)
something will-have.1SG done in-the live
'He will have done something in live.'

- the BQ is an existential indefinite that is neither epistemically specific nor partitive
 - ⇒ no presupposition of existence, no ground for *aboutness-topicality*, mismatch with the Definiteness/Specificity Hierarchy (Aissen 2003:444)
- the BQ has no descriptive material
 - ⇒ apparently, no element that can be considered Given, unclear how one may connect this fronted element with the *discourse-topic*

¹ Giurgea (2017), examining various attested examples of non-referential topicalized phrases in Romanian, shows that in most cases they are Given, contain a Given part or some relation to the previous discourse, and proposes an analysis in terms of their contribution to the Discourse Topic.

- ⇒ some studies did not include the construction under topicalization:
 - ⇒ Cinque (1990): the fronted quantifier is base-generated in a dislocated position and forms an operator-variable chain; the informational-structural properties of this construction are not addressed;
 - ⇒ focalization (Zubizarreta 1998);
 - ⇒ focus-affected reading (Quer 2002);
 - ⇒ verum focus, with expletive focus on the bare quantifier (Leonetti & Escandell-Vidal 2009);

Arregi (2003) was the first to recognize this fronting as a type of contrastive topicalization.

3. Properties of these topicalized BQs

Syntax

- intervention of subjects between the BQ and the verb is possible in Spanish and Romanian, cf. (7), (8)
- ⇒ evidence against a Focus analysis, as focus requires adjacency with V (Arregi 2003, Giurgea & Remberger 2011, Giurgea 2015).
- the topicalized BQ is not clitic-doubled in Sp. and Ro., since it is not specific (cf. Arregi 2003; a doubling Cl occurs sometimes in Italian (Floricic 2013)

(10) It. A quel prezzo **qualcosa** **lo** puoi trovare
 at that prize something CL.3.MS.ACC can.2s find
 ‘At this price, there are things you can find.’ (attested ex., in Floricic 2013:263)

Prosody

- The fronted BQ has a topic-like intonation (Büring’s (1999) accent B)
- Emphatic focus on the verb, an epistemic element or negation

Pragmatics

- Interpretation of verum focus – which can occur on the verb or on negation (e.g. (16) below), but also on an epistemic modal element (cf. e.g. the modal future in (9)).
- Information structure: Contrastive topics: Contrastive topics require
 - the existence of a partition of the remainder of the sentence into focus and background, and
 - the existence of topic alternatives
 - sets of sets: topic sets of focal alternatives
- [Topic Topic [Comment Focus Background]]]
- Arregi (2003): the BQ may contrast with other BQs (see (7)).
- Giurgea & Remberger (2011), Giurgea (2011, 2015):

(11) The topic is the quantifier corresponding to the weakest claim in a series. The speaker asserts that this claim is certainly true or highly probable, contrasting it with stronger claims for which the truth value is unknown:

The alternatives need not contain other quantifiers, they can also contain entities, see (12b):

(12) a. all x P(x) |= MANY x P(x) |= $\exists x$ P(x) (for examples like (13))
 b. P(a) |= $\exists x$ P(x), P(b) |= $\exists x$ P(x), P(c) |= $\exists x$ P(x) (for examples like (14))

(13) Ro. **Ceva** (el) řTIE (el).
 something he knows he
 'He knows something.'

Topic	Background	Focus
$\lambda P \exists x P(x)$	$\lambda Q^{<<e,t>,>} Q(\lambda y \text{ knows}(he,y))$	for-sure
$\lambda P \text{ many } x P(x)$	$\lambda Q^{<<e,t>,>} Q(\lambda y \text{ knows}(he,y))$	maybe, I can't tell
$\lambda P \forall x P(x)$	$\lambda Q^{<<e,t>,>} Q(\lambda y \text{ knows}(he,y))$	maybe, I can't tell, perhaps not...

(14) Ro. **Cu cineva** s- a ÎNTÂLNIT Ion.
 with somebody CL.REFL-has met Ion
 'Somebody Ion DID meet.'

Topic	Background	Focus
$\lambda P \exists x P(x)$	$\lambda Q^{<<e,t>,>} Q(\lambda y \text{ met}(John,y))$	for-sure
$\lambda P P(\text{Mary})$	$\lambda Q^{<<e,t>,>} Q(\lambda y \text{ met}(John,y))$	maybe, I can't tell
$\lambda P P(\text{Sophie})$	$\lambda Q^{<<e,t>,>} Q(\lambda y \text{ met}(John,y))$	maybe, I can't tell
...		

met(John, Mary) $\models \exists x \text{ met}(John, x)$,
 met(John, Sophie) $\models \exists x \text{ met}(John, x)$, etc.

Evidence: under negation, as the entailment relations are reversed, the fronted BQs are *all* or *many/much* (in the examples, negation takes scope over the quantifier):

(15) It. **Tutto** non lo si può avere.
 everything not CL.3MSG.ACC CL.IMPERS can.3s have
 'One cannot have everything.' (Floricic 2013, ex. (14b))

(16) Ro. **Chiar totul** NU řtie.
 right everything not knows
 'He does NOT know everything.'

(17) It. **Molti amici** non si is fatto, di sicuro.
 many friends not CL.REFL has done certainly
 'He certainly does not have gained many friendships.' (Benincà et al. 1988:106)

(18) Sp. **Mucho dinero** no ha ganado.
 much money not has won
 'He didn't win a lot of money.' (Leonetti & Escondell-Vidal 2009:fn. 22, (i))

(19) Cat. **Gaires estudiants** no deu haver aprovat, aquest professor.
 many students not must have passed this professor
 'This professor must not have let pass many students'. (Battlori & Hernanz 2011:24b)

4. On the presence of Verum Focus: new proposal

The obligatory presence of verum focus was not adequately accounted for in previous studies.

(20) Ro. *Ceva a mâncat ION.
 something has eaten Ion

Arregi (2003), fn.4: "In principle, given the right context, any other type of focus, not just verum focus, should be sufficient to make left dislocation of *algo* felicitous. [...] Although this seems to be the case, examples involving verum focus sound more natural. Thus, there seems to be something special about verum focus, as opposed to other types of focus, which makes left dislocation of quantifiers like *algo* easier. At this moment, I cannot find a completely satisfactory answer to this question."

Giurgea & Remberger (2011), Giurgea (2015): “the BQ cannot be contrasted with other entities or entities from a different class (having different properties) => it is difficult to have for each topic alternative different events or different participants to an event / participants characterized by different properties => the focus part of P (which must have different values across topic alternatives) cannot be a participant, property of the event or predicate => the focus part can only be the degree of certainty of the sentence.”

Our new proposal

First step: clarify the discourse topic (DT/QUD) in the BQ topicalization construction

(21) (i) For BQ topicalization, the DT (=QUD) allows the negation of *p* as a possible answer.
 ⇒ verum focus is really focus on polarity (cf. Höhle 1992; no epistemic modality component is necessary); the sentence at hand answers the QUD by eliminating one possible answer, the negative one (cf. Figure 1, or, for sentences with negation, the affirmative one, cf. Figure 2, below)

(ii) stronger alternatives were among the possible answers => the answer with a BQ is not complete because the stronger alternatives had to be resolved in order to answer the DT/QUD.

Examples (the contextual setting was checked with informants):

(22) Ro. **Ceva** TREBUIE să mână.
 something must.1P SBJV eat.1P
 ‘We must eat something’
 DT/QUD = whether we should eat and what we should eat

(23) Ro. **Ceva** ȘTIE el.
 something knows he
 ‘He knows something.’
 DT/QUD = whether he knows anything and what/how much he knows

(24) Ro. **Chiar totul** NU știe.
 right everything not knows
 ‘He does NOT know everything.’
 DT/QUD = whether he knows everything and what exactly he knows

⇒ The sentence at hand is a weak alternative in a series because otherwise it would count as a complete answer, and contrastive topicalization sentences must be *partial* answers to the DT/QUD.
 ⇒ the partial-answer condition of contrastive topicalization is satisfied => the BQ can be fronted as a CT.

Bianchi & Frascarelli (2010:72):

“[...] it is perfectly possible to use a C-Topic in a single sentence, without any other conjoined sentence. However, as Büring (2003: 522–524) points out, such an «orphan» **C-Topic gives rise to a clear implicature**: the minimal implicature is that the predicate that holds true for the entity denoted by the C-Topic does *not* hold for the other members of the salient set. We surmise that in this case, the rest of the «complex proposition» is only partially specified via implicature (the speaker may be unable to provide information about the other members of the set, or a full specification may be deemed redundant for the purposes of the conversation).”

(the highlighting is ours)

Second step: let us come back to the examples with constituent focus

(25) Ro. # **Ceva** a mâncat ION. / Sp. **Algo** comió JUAN.
 Something has eaten Ion something ate Juan

Since contrastive topicality divides the QUD into smaller questions, for $[[_{\text{Foc}} \text{John}] \text{ ate O}]$, what QUD can we imagine?

- the QUD could be
 - (i) “Who ate the food?” or
 - (ii) “Who ate?” or
 - (iii) “Who ate the cookies?”
- In (i), *something* does not belong to a partition of the food; one would have to use a *partitive* indefinite – *ceva din mâncare* ‘some of the food’: *Some of it, it was John who ate it*. But this is not BQ topicalization.
- In (ii), *something* does not provide a *partial* answer, but a *complete* answer of the QUD.
- In (iii), *something* does not provide any answer to the QUD.

Summary

Figure 1: Information-structural partition in positive contexts

DT/QUD: ‘whether he knows anything and what/how much he knows’

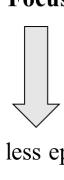
Contrastive Topic	Comment	
<p><i>something</i> ($\lambda P. \exists x. P(x)$)</p> <p>⇒ Partial answer to the QUD</p> <p>⇒ Minimal implicature that P doesn't hold for the other members of the salient set.</p>	<p>Focus polarity (affirmation)</p>	<p>Background ‘he knows x’</p>
<p>Salient alternatives to the topic</p> <p> <i>a</i> ($\lambda P. P(a)$) <i>b</i> ($\lambda P. P(b)$) <i>many things</i> \dots <i>everything</i> ($\lambda P. \forall x. P(x)$)</p>	<p>Focus  less epistemic certainty</p>	<p>Background ‘he knows x’</p>

Figure 2: Information-structural partition in negative contexts

DT/QUD: ‘whether one can have everything or what/how much one can have’

Contrastive Topic	Comment	
<p><i>everything</i> ($\lambda P. \forall x. P(x)$)</p> <p>⇒ Partial answer to the QUD</p> <p>⇒ Minimal implicature that $\neg P$ doesn't hold for the other members of the salient set.</p>	<p>Focus polarity (negation)</p>	<p>Background ‘one cannot have x’</p>
<p>Salient alternatives to the topic</p> <p> <i>many things</i> \dots <i>a</i> ($\lambda P. P(a)$) <i>b</i> ($\lambda P. P(b)$) <i>something</i> ($\lambda P. \exists x. P(x)$)</p>	<p>Focus  less epistemic certainty</p>	<p>Background ‘one cannot have x’</p>

BQ topicalization is indeed a verum focus construction in that focus is on polarity. The additional component wrt. verum focus sentence is that the QUD was richer, asking for more information than just *p* or *not-p*. The contrast between the partial answer with a BQ and other possible partial answers to the QUD licenses CT-marking of the BQ.

5. Outlook: Proposal for a syntactic analysis

At least in Romanian, although a preverbal S is not excluded, the postverbal position is preferred; pronouns are (marginally) allowed between the BQ and V:

(26) Ro. **Ceva** i-a ADUS Ion Mariei.
 something CL.3S.DAT-has brought Ion Maria.DAT
 ‘Ion must have brought Maria something.’

(27) Ro. a. **Ceva** el TREBUIE să-i fi adus Mariei.
 something he must SBJV-CL.3S.DAT PRF brought Maria.DAT
 ‘He must have brought Maria something.’

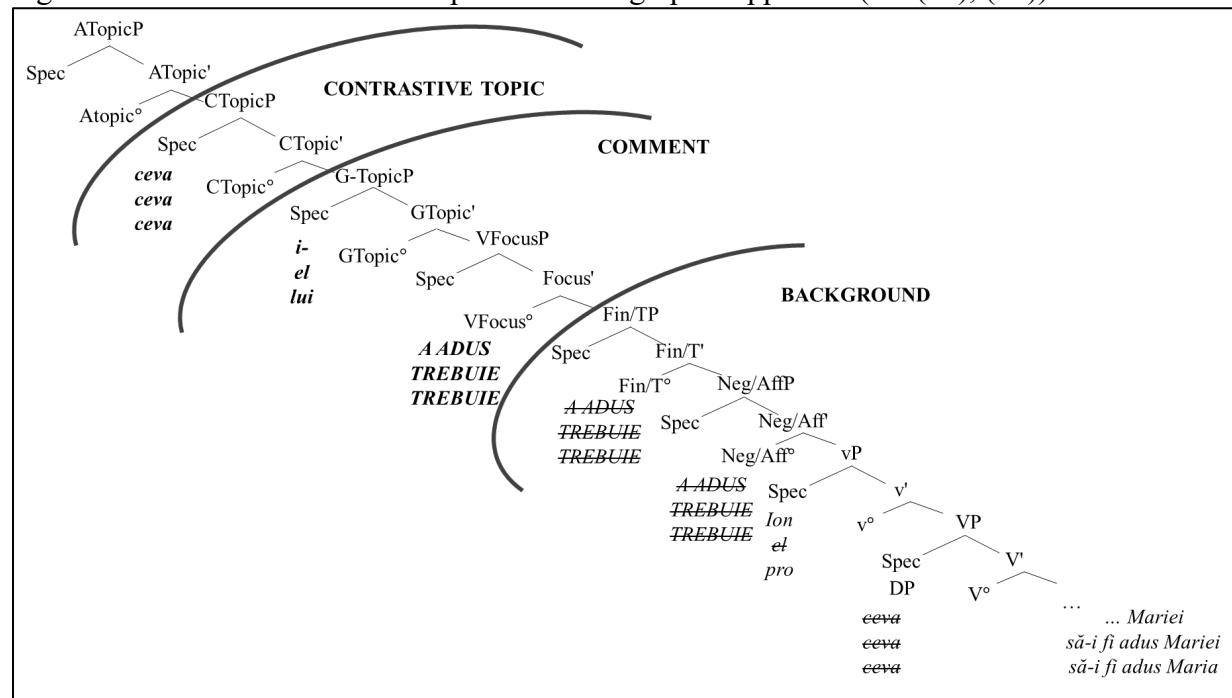
 b. **Ceva** lui TREBUIE să-i fi adus Maria.
 something him.DAT must SBJV-CL.3S.DAT PRF brought Maria
 ‘Maria must have brought him something.’

Syntactic implementation:

- The topicalized BQ is in the position of contrastive topic (CT);
- Further G-topic positions are possible in the Comment partition => (27)
- For the preferred VS-order (see (26)): V moves to a verum focus (VFocus) position.
- Different from Aboutness-Topics (ATopic), clitic doubling is not necessary, because the fronted bare quantifiers are not referential; if there is clitic doubling (cl), it is not correlated with referentiality (cf. Floricic 2013).

Syntax: [ATopicP (ATopic°) [CTopicP [QP bare quantifier] CTopic° [Comment [G-TopicP (G-Topic°) [vFocusP (Neg/Aff°) (cl-)V°_i vFocus° [Background [Fin/TP Fin/T° ... [vP subject (cl-)V°_i v [VP V°_i [QP bare quantifier]]]]]]]]]]] (abridged)

Figure 3: Indefinite contrastive Topics in a cartographic approach (ex. (26), (27))



References

Aissen, Judith. 2003. Differential Object Marking: Iconicity vs. Economy. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 21, 435-483. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024109008573>

Arregi, Karlos. 2003. Clitic Left dislocation is contrastive topicalization. In E. Kaiser and S. Arunachalam (eds.), *Proceedings of the 26th Annual Penn Linguistics Colloquium, U. Penn Working Papers in Linguistics* 9 (1): 31-44.

Bianchi, Valentina & Mara Frascarelli, 2010. Is topic a root phenomenon? *Iberia* 2(1): 43-88.

Benincà, Paola, Salvi, Giampaolo, Frison, L. 1988. L'ordine degli elementi della frase e le costruzioni marcate. In Luigi Renzi and Giampaolo Salvi (eds.), *Grande grammatica italiana di consultazione*, 115-225. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Büring, Daniel. 1999. Topic. In P. Bosch & R. van der Sandt (eds.), *Focus*, 142-165. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Büring, Daniel. 2003. On D-trees, beans, and B-accents. *Linguistics & Philosophy* 26: 511-545.

Carlson, Lauri. 1983. *Dialogue Games. An Approach to Discourse Analysis*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Cinque, Guglielmo, 1990. *Types of A'-dependencies*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Cresti, Diana. 1995. Extraction and reconstruction. *Natural Language Semantics* 3:79-122.

Dik, Simon. 1978. *Functional grammar*. Amsterdam: North Holland.

Erteschik-Shir, Nomi, 1997. *The dynamics of focus structure*. Cambridge: CUP.

von Fintel, Kai. 1994. Restrictions on quantifier domains. PhD dissertation, University of Massachusetts.

Floricic, Franck 2013. Bare quantifiers and topics in Italian. In J. Kabatek & A. Wall (eds.), *New Perspectives on Bare Noun Phrases in Romance and Beyond*, 255-282. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Frascarelli, Mara & Roland Hinterhözl. 2008. Types of topics in German and Italian. In S. Winkler & K. Schwabe (eds.). *On information structure, meaning and form*. Amsterdam: Benjamins, 87-116.

Giurgea, Ion. 2015. Bare quantifier fronting as contrastive topicalization. *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* 17(2), 2015, 23-38

Giurgea, Ion. 2017. Non-referential topical phrases in Romanian and the theory of topicality. *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* 19, 1, 35-67

Giurgea, Ion & Eva-Maria Remberger. 2011. Indefinite pronouns as contrastive topics. Talk at the SLE - 44th Annual Meeting of the Societas Linguistica Europaea, Universidad de la Rioja, Logroño, 11.9.2011.

Höhle, Tilman, 1992. Über Verum Fokus in Deutschen. *Linguistische Berichte Sonderheft* 4, 112-141.

Kiss, Katalin É. & Gyuris, Beata. 2003. Scope inversion under the rise fall contour, or something else? *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* 50: 371-404.

Kuno, Susumu. 1972. Functional sentence perspective: A case study from Japanese and English. *Linguistic Inquiry* 3: 269-336.

van Kuppevelt, J. 1995. Discourse structure, topicality and questioning. *Journal of Linguistics* 31: 109-147.

Lechner, Winfried. 1998. Two kinds of reconstruction. *Studia Linguistica* 52: 276-310.

Leonetti, Manuel & Vicki Escandell-Vidal. 2009. Fronting and *verum focus* in Spanish. In Dufter, Andreas & Daniel Jacob (eds.) *Focus and Background in Romance Languages*, 155-204. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.

Leonetti, Manuel. 2013. Information structure and the distribution of Spanish bare plurals. In Johannes Kabatek & Albert Wall (eds.): *(New Perspectives on/from) Bare Noun Phrases in Romance: Theory and (Empirical) Data*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013, 121-155.

Leonetti, Manuel. 2014. On contrastive readings in the interpretation of NPs/DPs, in S. Chiriacescu (ed.): *Proceedings of the VI NEREUS Workshop 'Theoretical implications at the Syntax / Semantics interface in Romance'*. Arbeitspapier 127. Fachbereich Sprachwissenschaft, Universität Konstanz, 2014, 99-116.

Reinhart, Tanya. 1981. *Pragmatics and Linguistics: An Analysis of Sentence Topics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University.

Rizzi, Luigi (1997). The fine structure of the left periphery. In Liliane Haegeman (ed.): *Elements of Grammar*. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 281-337.

Roberts, Craige. 1996. Information structure in discourse: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics. In J. H. Yoon and A. Kathol (eds.). *Papers in Semantics (OSU Working Papers in Linguistics* 49), 91-136. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University.

Romero, Maribel, Han, C.-H. 2002. Verum Focus in negative yes/no questions and Ladd's $p/\neg p$ Ambiguity. In B. Jackson (ed.), *Proceedings of the 12th Semantics and Linguistic Theory Conference*, 204-224. Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications.

Strawson, Peter F. 1964. Identifying Reference and Truth-Values. *Theoria* 30: 86-99.

Zubizarreta, María Luisa. 1998. *Prosody, focus and word order*. Linguistic Inquiry Monographs 33, MIT Press.