

# **Chapter 1**

## **Optionality at the Interface: triggering focus in Romanian\***

### **1. Introduction**

The present paper focuses on the construal of various focus effects in Romanian. The deeper questions relate to the triggers involved in what appear to be optional dislocation operations in various languages. Given that optionality of movement in one and the same language cannot be reduced to a choice between overt and covert movements, the paper proposes a solution that relies on the division of labour between displacement per se and chain formation/linking for feature valuation.

Some of the general questions addressed refer to the role of prosodic properties of phrases and information structure in triggering movement. I show that not all possible triggers for word order phenomena are morpho-syntactic in nature and argue that interface factors also play a role. While the main line of inquiry is concerned with contrastive focus operators, rhematic focus constructions are also investigated where appropriate for the general discussion.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces the puzzle with respect to focus operators and optional dislocation. Section 3 discusses some of the empirical and theoretical problems of optional displacement, while Section 4 focuses on the syntax of contrastive focus. Section 5 provides an analysis of the data from a minimalist perspective, which is strengthened by the discussion of rhematic focus and object shift presented in Section 6. Section 7 is a conclusion.

### **2. Focusing on focus operators**

Semantically, contrastive focus operators uniquely delimit a member of a presupposed or inferable set for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold. Syntactically, any focus operator that affects the truth conditions of a

sentence seems to require special licensing conditions which often include movement to an operator position and similar behaviour to wh-phrases in terms of their ability to license operator-variable chains (e.g. Brody 1995, Herburger 2000, Kiss 1995, 1998, Rizzi 1997, in press, Zubizarreta 1998). In some languages, for example Hungarian (see 1), the focus operator is obligatorily associated with a distinct structural position; this position is verb-adjacent and left-peripheral in the clause.

- (1) a. *Tegnap este MARINAK mutattam be Petert.*<sup>1,2</sup>  
 last night Mary.DAT introduced.1SG AUX Peter.ACC  
 ‘It was to Mary that I introduced Peter last night.’  
 (not to someone else)
- b. *Tegnap este be mutattam Petert Marinak.*  
 last night AUX introduced.1SG Peter.ACC Mary.DAT  
 ‘Last night I introduced Peter to Mary.’  
 ‘\* It was to Mary that I introduced Peter last night.’ (not to someone else)  
 (examples adapted from Kiss 1998)

In (1), the focused phrase *MARINAK* ‘to Mary’ cannot surface in-situ but has to move to the preverbal operator position; when in-situ, as in (1b), the phrase cannot be interpreted as contrastively focused. The obligatory dislocation of focus operators is not, however, cross-linguistic. In modern Greek and Romance languages, for example, it is well-known that the contrastively focused operator seems to be only optionally associated with a distinct left-peripheral structural position. Interestingly, prosodic marking (heavy stress/emphasis) on the contrasted phrase is obligatory independent of positioning. Various examples are shown in (2)-(4) below.

- (2) Modern Greek (examples from Tsimpli 1995):
- a. *To PETRO simbathi i Maria.*  
 the-ACC Petro likes the-NOM Maria  
 ‘It is Petro that Maria likes’
- b. *Dhanisan to vivlio sto PETRO.*  
 lent-3PL the-ACC book to-the Petro  
 ‘It is to Petro that they lent the book.’

- (3) Spanish (examples adapted from Zubizarreta 1998):
- a. *LAS PAPAS detesta Juan (y no las espinacas)*  
 the potatoes hates Juan (and not the spinach)  
 ‘It is potatoes that Juan hates (and not spinach).’
- b. *Juan detesta LAS PAPAS (y no las espinacas)*  
 Juan hates the potatoes (and not the spinach)  
 ‘It is potatoes that Juan hates (and not spinach).’
- (4) Romanian:
- a. *Pe MIHAI<sub>i</sub> l<sub>i</sub>-a strigat Victor t<sub>i</sub>*  
 PE Mihai<sub>i</sub> CL.3SG.ACC.M<sub>i</sub>-AUX.3SG called Victor t<sub>i</sub>  
 (,nu pe Ion).  
 (not PE Ion)  
 ‘It is Mihai that Victor called, (not Ion).’
- b. *L<sub>i</sub>-a strigat Victor pe MIHAI<sub>i</sub>*  
 CL.3SG.ACC.M<sub>i</sub>-AUX.3SG called Victor PE Mihai<sub>i</sub>  
 (,nu pe Ion).  
 (not PE Ion)  
 ‘It is Mihai that Victor called, (not Ion).’

The contrastively focused operator may surface in-situ, as in the (2-4b) examples, but it may also surface in the canonical preverbal verb-adjacent operator position, as in the (2-4a) examples.<sup>3</sup>

At this point, it would be worthwhile to ask what triggers displacement of the focused phrase and, furthermore, why optionality of displacement is permitted in some languages. The first question has been discussed extensively in the literature (Chomsky 1971, Kiss 1995, 1998 Rizzi 1997, Rochemont 1986, Zubizarreta 1998 inter alia) and, while there may be disagreement as to the presence or absence of a Focus head in an exploded CP configuration, there is in principle consensus in the current generative literature that the trigger for movement is a formal/morphosyntactic feature [Foc] present in the derivation and responsible for creating an operator-variable chain at some level of representation. However, if morphosyntactic imperfections are the culprits of dislocation, it follows that implementation of movement should be compulsory whenever [Foc] is present. Which brings us



English is perceived as a result of feature strength (Chomsky 1995), or the presence of an EPP feature on T (Chomsky 2000, 2001a). The exact status of the ‘EPP’ formal feature is still open to debate but, crucially, in this case it refers to the requirement that subjects (or their expletive associates) have to be in an intimate Spec-Head configuration with T. This is illustrated in (6).

- (6) a.  $[_{TP} \text{Mrs. Dalloway}_i \text{ is } t_i \text{ in the kitchen with the flowers}]$ .  
 b.  $[_{TP} \text{There are always } [_{vP} \text{some flowers in the kitchen}]]$ .  
 c. \*  $[_{TP} \text{Are always } [_{vP} \text{some flowers in the kitchen}]]$ .

No options of in-situ subject and absence of Merge in Spec,TP are permitted for English.

Given that movement should be avoided when possible, we do not expect optional displacements in natural languages due to a simple syllogism: if displacement is required to avoid a crash, it should always occur; on the other hand, if lack of movement would not engender a crash, displacement should never occur. Hence the inconvenience of optional displacements.

Other possibilities come to mind with respect to optionality of movement. For example, we could assume that languages like Romanian have a choice in checking their [Foc] feature either at LF or pre-LF. This approach has been proposed by a number of authors (e.g. Kiss 1995, 1998, Motapanyane 2000, Tsimpli 1995) who have the merit of being the first to highlight the optionality phenomenon for these constructions. However, among other things, these analyses are faced with the problem of finding a way of explaining why certain languages can optionally avoid Procrastinate given a computational system functioning according to economy principles (see Chomsky 1995 et seq.).

In addition, there are other complications with LF feature checking insofar as contrastive focus operators are concerned. On the theoretical side, the first problem that comes to mind is of a general nature. Given that in minimalism narrow syntax is the only computational level available, it follows that all feature-checking/valuation operations should be resolved within this component (see Chomsky’s 2001a claim that all feature-checking is overt). The second theoretical problem is of a more specific kind. Given the Y model assumed in minimalism, and generative grammar more generally, which entails that PF and LF fail to communicate with each other, it follows that feature checking at LF should have no impact on PF; yet regardless of positioning, we have seen that contrastively focused operators require pro-

sodic stress, assigned within the PF component.<sup>5</sup> Yet, perhaps the most palpable problem with LF focus valuation comes from empirical data that show contrastive focus reconstructs at LF. Consider the examples in (7):

- (7) a. *Pe copilul SĂU<sub>i</sub> îl iubește*  
 PE child-the self<sub>i</sub> CL.3SG.ACC.M loves  
 orice mamă<sub>i</sub> *t*.  
 any mother<sub>i</sub> *t*.  
 ‘It is her own child that any mother loves.’
- b. \**Copilul SĂU<sub>i</sub> o iubește t*  
 child-the self<sub>i</sub> CL.3SG.ACC.F loves *t*  
 pe orice mamă<sub>i</sub>.  
 PE any mother<sub>i</sub>.  
 ‘\* It is her own child that loves any mother.’

In both (7a) and (7b), the anaphor *SĂU* ‘self’ is assigned heavy stress which forces a contrastive focus interpretation of the fronted direct object. The dislocated phrase containing the anaphor is not c-commanded by its appropriate binder in either (7a) or (7b). Note, however, that the trace of the focused phrase is felicitously c-commanded by an appropriate binder in (7a) though not in (7b). Given that (7a) is well-formed, while (7b) is ungrammatical, suggests that at LF - where binding relations hold (Chomsky 2000) - the focused constituent ‘reconstructs’ and the anaphor is thus appropriately licensed. Assuming the copy theory of movement developed in minimalism, the above facts show that for contrastively focused phrases it is the lower copy that is relevant at LF (i.e. the ‘tail’ of the chain in the sense of Hornstein 1995). In conclusion, if for LF purposes, it is the lower copy that counts, covert displacement for feature checking has to be ruled out as it would engender a contradiction at this level of representation.<sup>6</sup>

At this point, I conclude that focus feature checking at LF has to be ruled out and that either (i) feature checking/valuation is prior to LF or (ii) there is no feature-checking/valuation with contrastive focus operators in Romanian. The absence of a formal feature [Foc] with these constituents would imply the absence of A-bar effects typically associated with operator chains and would also leave unexplained the obligatory verb-adjacency requirement with fronted focused phrases. In the next section, I discuss syntactic properties of contrasted constituents and highlight two major facts: (i) focused constituents show identical syntactic behaviour irrespective of positioning

and (ii) focused constituents form operator-variable chains. These results point to the obligatory presence in the derivation of a formal [Foc] feature whenever a contrastive focus semantics is at stake.

#### 4. The syntax of contrastive focus

So far, we have established that for Romanian a contrastive focus interpretation obtains regardless of whether the heavily stressed phrase occurs in-situ or has moved to the verb-adjacent operator position. In addition, in the previous section I showed empirical evidence that for LF purposes it is the in-situ position that counts, which strengthens the theoretical conclusion that LF feature checking cannot be an option. The next step is to investigate syntactic properties of focused phrases in order to determine whether feature checking is involved and, if so, for which cases. Specifically, I discuss evidence from weak crossover and parasitic gap licensing that shows feature checking is operative with contrastive focus in Romanian regardless of surface positioning.

##### 4.1. Weak crossover effects

The data in (8) show that contrastively focused elements in Romanian induce weak crossover effects whether they surface in-situ, as in (8b), or in the preverbal verb-adjacent position, as in (8c):

- (8) a. *Mama lui<sub>i</sub> i<sub>i</sub>-a dat un măr*  
 mother-the his<sub>i</sub> CL.DAT<sub>i</sub>-AUX.3SG given an apple  
*copilului<sub>i</sub>.*  
 child-the.DAT<sub>i</sub>  
 ‘His<sub>i</sub> mother gave the child<sub>i</sub> an apple.’
- b. \* *Mama lui<sub>i</sub> i<sub>i</sub>-a dat*  
 mother-the his<sub>i</sub> CL.DAT<sub>i</sub>-AUX.3SG given  
*un măr COPILULUI<sub>i</sub>.*  
 an apple child-the.DAT<sub>i</sub>  
 ‘\* It is to the child<sub>i</sub> that his<sub>i</sub> mother gave an apple.’
- c. \* *Mama lui<sub>i</sub> COPILULUI<sub>i</sub> i<sub>i</sub>-a*

mother-the his<sub>i</sub> child-the.DAT<sub>i</sub> CL.DAT<sub>i</sub>-AUX.3SG  
*dat un mǎr t<sub>i</sub>.*  
 given an apple t<sub>i</sub>  
 ‘\* It is to the child<sub>i</sub> that his<sub>i</sub> mother gave sweets.’

Lasnik and Stowell (1991) argue that weak crossover is a distinctive characteristic of quantificational A-bar relations. The ill-formedness of both (8b) and (8c) indicates that the formation of a quantificational A-bar chain is equally involved with both in-situ and preverbal focus. Compare with the grammatical counterpart in (8a) where the indirect object *copilului* ‘to-the-child’ is left unfocused and, consequently, fails to induce a weak crossover violation as it does not create an operator-variable chain. I conclude that feature checking is involved regardless of surface positioning of the focus operator.<sup>7</sup>

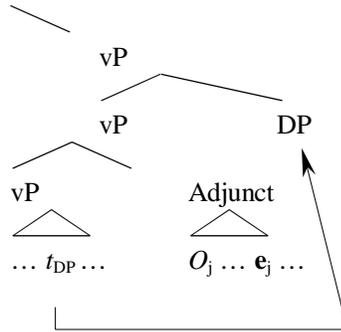
#### 4.2. Parasitic gap licensing

According to Engdahl (1983), parasitic gaps are licensed by a variable which is the result of overt movement. Engdahl’s (1983:22) examples in (9) show that *wh*-in-situ does not license parasitic gaps, which has been generalized as an implication that covert movement in general fails to license these empty categories.

- (9) a. *Which article<sub>i</sub> did you [file \_<sub>i</sub>] [without reading \_<sub>PG</sub>]*  
 b. *\*Who [filed which paper] [without reading \_<sub>PG</sub>]*

Engdahl’s empirical facts are strengthened by recent theoretical claims vis-à-vis the licensing of these gaps. Nissenbaum (2000) has argued that only a modified-predicate configuration, as in (10), can license parasitic gaps.

- (10) Modified-predicate configuration (Nissenbaum 2000:117)



The author further proposes that Engdahl’s generalization is explained by a general constraint on movement that forces this modified-predicate configuration to be derived in the *overt* syntax. Specifically, the DP has to adjoin to the vP prior to insertion of the adjunct or else it should ‘tuck in’ below it (following proposals in Richards 1998); however, due to the fact that merge of the adjunct is an overt operation, it follows that movement of the DP has to take place prior to Spell-Out too (i.e. within narrow syntax and not at LF).

Given that variables are the result of A-bar chain formation, licensing of parasitic gaps provides evidence for the construal of operator-variable chains. The Romanian data in (11) shows that parasitic gaps are licensed by both left-peripheral and in-situ contrastive focus which further strengthens the claim made in the previous section that [Foc] feature checking is involved regardless of word order.

- (11) a. \*A *mîncat supă* [fără să  
 AUX.3SG eaten soup [without SUBJ  
*încălzească* <sub>-PG</sub>].  
 heat <sub>-PG</sub>]  
 ‘\*S/he ate soup without heating.’
- b. *Nu, CHIFTELE a mîncat*  
 no, meatballs AUX.3SG eaten  
*[fără să încălzească* <sub>-PG</sub> (*, nu supă*)!  
 [without SUBJ heat <sub>-PG</sub> (*, not soup*)  
 ‘No, it’s meatballs that s/he ate without heating, not soup!’

- c. *Nu, a mîncat CHIFTELE*  
 no, AUX.3SG eaten meatballs  
 [fără să încâlzească \_PG] (, nu supă)!  
 [without SUBJ heat \_PG] (, not soup)  
 ‘No, it’s meatballs that s/he ate without heating, not soup!’

In (11), the presence of a parasitic gap only yields well-formed sentences in (11b) and (11c) which contain a contrastive focus and, consequently, an operator-variable chain. On the other hand, the ungrammaticality of (11a) suggests the absence of an operator-variable chain, expected given the absence of heavy stress on the direct object and any contrastive semantics.

Note that I have only taken licensing of parasitic gaps and weak cross-over phenomena with contrastive focus to indicate the construal of an A-bar chain due to the presence of an unvalued [Foc] feature that needs checking/valuation. However, I have said nothing so far about ‘movement’ per se. In the next section, I provide an analysis that explains focus feature valuation solely in terms of the operation Agree (see Chomsky 2000, 2001), without any recourse to movement within the domain of the Probe triggering Agree. However, due to cyclic Spell-Out, I suggest phasal movement is involved with both in-situ and left-peripheral contrastive focus, which is in line with Nissenbaum’s requirement that parasitic gaps are licensed via predicate modification. Last but not least, I propose an account of displacement to the preverbal operator position devoid of optionality construed as feature checking.

## 5. A minimalist analysis of contrastive focus

The present analysis relies on proposals made in Chomsky (2000, 2001a and 2001b) from which I shall be adopting the following assumptions with respect to feature checking/valuation. Uninterpretable formal features enter the derivation without a value and need to be valued in order to avoid a crash at the interface levels. Under this perspective, narrow syntax/the generative engine of language is driven solely by these interface conditions. Valuation (i.e., feature checking) can only occur against a matching feature with a value and is always the result of an Agree operation. The Agree operation is essentially a search and validation mechanism designed to hold between a probe with the unvalued formal feature and a goal with the matching valued feature. Nonetheless, in order for Agree to proceed felicitously, the goal

itself has to be ‘active’. Specifically, it has to have some unvalued feature which is valued by a feature within the probe initiating the search if the probe has a value for this feature ; if this is not the case, the goal remains active until it establishes an Agree operation with a probe that can value its feature. Crucially, note that feature valuation incumbent on Agree does not in and of itself entail any sort of dislocation mechanism, which is an important departure from earlier minimalist assumptions. However, I do assume that feature valuation via Agree establishes a chain/link with A or A-bar properties depending on the features valued.

Displacement to the specifier of the probe is the result of semantic effects due to an EPP/OCC feature present on the probing head. As discussed in section 3, this is in essence a requirement that a phrase must be an occurrence of some probe. Chomsky (2001b) argues that optimally, a head should only have this feature if displacement will yield new scopal or discourse-related properties. However, this is not the case for English subject related EPP, which is compulsory yet lacks any interpretive effect, though it is the case for topicalization phenomena derived by movement for example. In fact, I suggest below that EPP/OCC is only associated with an interpretive effect when optional.

### 5.1. Contrastive focus valuation

All current studies on Romanian agree that Romanian is VSO in the sense that Spec,TP is not required to host subjects (see Alboiu 2002, Cornilescu 2000a, Dobrovie-Sorin 1987, 1994, Hill 2002). Specifically, Case is checked via long-distance Agree and there is no subject externalization to Spec,TP in the usual EPP sense. For example, in (12), the Nominative subject ‘the student’ can occur either postverbally (12a) or preverbally (12b), with no requirement of verb-adjacency when dislocated within the left periphery.<sup>8</sup> When preverbal, the subject is interpreted as topic and can precede *wh*-phrases (12c).

- (12) a.     *A            sosit    studentul.*  
           AUX.3SG    arrived student-the  
           ‘The student has arrived.’
- b.     *Studentul       (chiar acuma) a                sosit*  
           student-the    (just now)        AUX.3SG        arrived

(*chiar acum*).  
 (just now).  
 ‘The student arrived just now.’

- c.     *Studentul      cînd    a                    sosit?*  
        student-the    when    AUX.3SG        arrived  
        ‘When did the student arrive?’

Consequently, Spec,TP is assumed to host Romanian sentence-initial operators, such as for example contrastively focused constituents and *wh*-phrases (Alboiu 2002, Cornilescu 2002, Hill 2002). If present in the derivation, the uninterpretable/unvalued [Foc] formal feature parasitically incorporates onto T forming a syncretic category. From within T, it will initiate a search and ‘check off’ in the presence of a valued contrastively focused goal, via the operation Agree.

Let us consider example (13) in which ‘car’ is contrastively focused. The subject ‘Victor’ is topicalized and dislocated to the left periphery of the clause, while the contrasted constituent is shown both in the preverbal and postverbal positions.

- (13)    *Victor (MAȘINĂ)      vrea                    [vP (MAȘINĂ)],*  
        Victor (car)            want.3SG            [vP (car)]  
        *nu      casă.*  
        not    house  
        ‘It’s a car that Victor wants, not a house.’

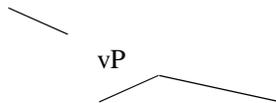
The lexical array for the derivation in (13) contains, among other features, an uninterpretable focus feature on T,  $u$ [Foc], and an uninterpretable focus feature on the lexical item ‘car’,  $u$ [Foc], which makes the lexical item active for match.<sup>9</sup>  $u$ [Foc] on T probes for a matching feature and finds  $u$ [Foc] on ‘car’ in its search space. The derivation converges at the interfaces which is synonymous to valuation of all uninterpretable features. However, neither [Foc] feature has a value, so how is convergence ensured given that valuation of an uninterpretable feature can only take place against a matching interpretable one (Chomsky 2001a)? Recall the obligatory heavy stress assigned to contrasted constituents and how in the absence of this stress the semantics and syntax of contrast are absent. Consequently, we need to assume that prosodic stress is the manifestation of the required *value* for the [Foc] feature on the lexical item. The problem is that the syntactic

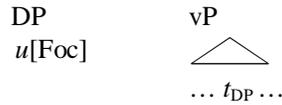
component is blind to phonological features such as ‘stress’, so valuation cannot proceed within narrow syntax; presumably the computational system can recognize formal features and distinguish between valued and unvalued cases but nothing more. In Alboiu (2003), it is suggested that [Foc] valuation has to apply *at* Spell-Out, specifically, at the intersection between syntax and phonology; this is contra to earlier proposals in Chomsky (2001a:5) which view Spell-Out occurring “shortly after the uninterpretable features have been assigned values”. However, it is in line with recent proposals which argue that all valuation has to occur at Spell-Out/TRANSFER (i.e., at the point where the derivation is handed over to the interface levels) for various technical reasons (Chomsky 2001b, Epstein and Seely 2002), among which the fact that “shortly” is not only ambiguous but also both too early and too late. Consequently, there is no problem with ‘stress’, a phonological feature, valuing [Foc], a formal feature.

Mapping to the phonological and semantic components proceeds cyclically (Chomsky 2001a,b, Epstein and Seely 2002, Uriagereka 1999, among others), where the cycles are phasal (i.e., vP and CP). Chomsky (2001a,b) suggests that the left-edge of the phase need not be spelled out together with the phase; specifically, only the domain of a phasal head has to be spelled out and thus becomes ‘impenetrable’ (PIC). I propose that the lexical item marked  $u$ [Foc] has to raise to the left-edge of vP to avoid being spelled out within the vP phase.<sup>10</sup> The reasons for this proposal are both empirical and theoretical. On the empirical side, if the lexical item with  $u$ [Foc] were not to raise, it would be spelled out within vP and thus incapable of ever being spelled out in Spec,TP (i.e., in the ‘canonical’ verb-adjacent operator position). On the theoretical side, PIC makes  $v$  and its sister inaccessible to probing by T, so if focused phrases are to enter Agree with T, they have to raise to the left edge of vP.

To sum up, I suggest that lexical items with  $u$ [Foc] vP adjoin in their ‘in-situ’ instantiation, as in (14). Once Agree is established with T, the relevant A-bar effects ensue regardless of whether displacement to Spec,TP occurs or not, in accord with Nissenbaum’s proposal.

(14)





## 5.2. Displacement to Spec,TP and OCC

I have shown that catering to contrastive focus is satisfied by the operation Agree which matches [Foc] features on probe and goal subsequently valued at the point of Spell-Out. Consequently, the [Foc] feature itself cannot trigger displacement of the focused phrase to Spec,TP. What then is responsible for the ‘optional’ movement operation into the left-periphery of these operators? The obvious candidate is an EPP/OCC feature associated with T. So, for instance, we can assume that T optionally enters the derivation with an OCC feature and in precisely those cases, the focused phrase will dislocate to Spec,TP. Leaving aside for the moment conceptual concerns with respect to the nature of the OCC feature, notice that if OCC is construed as a feature of T, it could in principle trigger movement of any XP valuing features of T. Given that the uninterpretable phi-features of T are valued by the subject, we may ask why the subject itself is incapable of valuing this feature when fronted as in (13) where we see that the focused phrase may also optionally front? One possibility is to assume that, in the presence of OCC on T, all goals of T undergo displacement to Spec,TP. But the availability of in-situ focus in (13) shows that this is not the case. A second possibility is to assume that OCC on T triggers displacement of the first goal, say the subject, but allows for optional displacement of any additional goals, for example focus. This is incorrect at least because of the following: (i) there is no reason to suspect phi-features in T check prior to the [Foc] feature, thereby granting the subject privileged status with respect to OCC on T. In fact, if feature valuation is a property of Spell-Out, tiered checking is ruled out. (ii) the behaviour of focused phrases in the presence of *wh*-phrases to be discussed below. I suggest that, in fact, the OCC feature is a sub-feature/property construed on features themselves as opposed to a feature of the lexical/functional items. We will see that such an approach helps explain cross-linguistic and intra-language idiosyncrasies, while at the same time conforming to Chomsky’s (2001b) proposal that OCC should be semantic in nature.

### 5.2.1. OCC and *wh*-phrases

In section 2, I showed that *wh*-operators are obligatorily associated with the left-peripheral structural position in Romanian, while focus operators can surface either preverbally or in-situ. Let us suppose that this asymmetry is due to the obligatory presence of OCC with interrogation and its optional occurrence with [Foc] in Romanian. Cross-linguistically, *wh*-phrases are inserted in the Numeration with an interpretable [Q] feature and an uninterpretable [wh] feature (Chomsky 2000). Their uninterpretable feature makes them active for match with a functional head probing for interpretable [Q] (i.e., C or C/T, as in Romanian, with uninterpretable [Q]). The obligatory pronunciation of the upper copy with *wh*-movement in Romanian can be equated to the obligatory presence of EPP/OCC with [Q], presumably as part of the manner in which the [Q] feature is encoded in the Romanian lexicon.<sup>11</sup>

Consider next the behaviour of focus operators in derivations containing interrogative phrases in Romanian. The data in (15) show that you cannot have a fronted *wh*-phrase and a fronted focus simultaneously.<sup>12</sup>

- (15)  $Ce_i$  (\**COPILULUI*)  $i-a$   
 what<sub>i</sub> (\*child-the.DAT) CL.3SG.DAT.M-AUX.3SG  
*spus el COPILULUI t\_i* (*,nu vecinei?*)  
 said he child-the.DAT t<sub>i</sub> (,not neighbour.DAT)  
 ‘What is it that it is to the child that he said, not to the neighbour?’

Despite the impossibility of simultaneous pronunciation in the preverbal field, there is evidence from weak crossover effects that a [Foc] feature is present in the derivation, even in the presence of [Q]. This is shown in in (16):

- (16) a.  $Ce_i$   $i-a$   $spus$   $mama$   $lui_j$   
 what<sub>i</sub> CL.3SG.DAT.M-AUX.3SG said mother his<sub>j</sub>  
*copilului\_j t\_i ?*  
 child-the.DAT<sub>j</sub> t<sub>i</sub>  
 ‘What did his<sub>i</sub> mother say to the child<sub>j</sub>?’
- b. \* $Ce_i$   $i-a$   $spus$   $mama$   $lui_j$   
 what<sub>i</sub> CL.3SG.DAT.M-AUX.3SG said mother his<sub>j</sub>  
*COPILULUI\_j t\_i* (*, nu vecinei?*)

child-the.DAT<sub>j</sub>                    t<sub>i</sub>                    (, not neighbour.DAT)  
 ‘\*What is it that his<sub>j</sub> mother said to the child<sub>i</sub>  
 (, not the neighbour)?’

(16a) is grammatical, given that *copilului* 'to the child', which is coindexed with a pronoun to its left, does not form an A-bar chain and implicitly, does not leave behind a variable engendering a weak crossover effect. On the other hand, (16b) in which the indirect object *COPILULUI* 'to the child' is contrastively focused, is not well-formed. The ungrammaticality of this example shows that a weak crossover effect is triggered in the presence of the in-situ contrastive focus in interrogative clauses. This A-bar effect can only be explained if we assume that the focus operator enters an Agree operation with a higher probe, thus acting like a variable which in (16b) is illicitly coindexed with a pronoun to its left.

Example (16) highlights the fact that when both a *wh*-operator and a focus-operator enter a checking/valuation relationship with C/T, only the *wh*-phrase can and must undergo movement to the verb-adjacent operator position. The fact that Romanian has multiple *wh*-movement (see 5b) shows it allows for multiple occurrences of the probe and exclusion of fronted focus in (16) cannot be taken to represent a PF ban on multiple specifiers. The empirical facts can be captured under the present proposal that views OCC as an inalienable property of [Q] in Romanian, but an optional property of [Foc].

### 5.2.2. OCC as a property of SEM rather than PHON

It is not unreasonable to assume that languages differ as to whether the encoding of OCC is part of the lexicon, in which case displacement is obligatory and devoid of interpretive effects (e.g. subject related OCC in English, [Q] related OCC in Romanian<sup>13</sup>) or OCC is an instruction from the semantic component, in which case it is optionally inserted in the numeration/lexical array and has interpretive impact *independent* of the feature it encroaches on. This perspective requires a relaxation of Chomsky's view that OCC should only be present if it yields new scopal or discourse-related properties but it is closer to the empirical facts. At the same time, it maintains the spirit of Chomsky's proposal by assuming that whenever internal Merge (i.e. displacement to some Spec position) is optional, it should provide new interpretations.

In the case of contrastive focus, I assume that displacement to Spec,TP is triggered by an OCC feature encroached on [Foc] in T. In the presence of this feature internal Merge to Spec,TP becomes obligatory and the contrastively focused constituent is spelled out in the left periphery of the clause. What interpretive effect is associated with this displacement but not with the in-situ focus? While both preverbal and in-situ focus operators are interpreted as contrastive phrases, Hill (2002) suggests that in Romanian preverbal focus operators are stylistically more emphatic than their in-situ counterparts. Consequently, OCC on [Foc] serves a stylistic purpose and thus contributes to an outcome at semantics not otherwise expressible. Optionality then is not related to feature valuation but to the interfaces.

We could in principle assume the omnipresence of OCC with [Foc]. This would entail obligatory displacement and internal Merge of Spec,TP with contrastively focused operators (see discussion in Alboiu 2003). PF would then have two copies to choose from: the vP-adjoined copy and the copy merged as Spec,TP. Bobaljik (2002) and Bošković (2002) have both argued that PF has access to both copies derived via displacement. Among other things, evidence for this comes from languages with multiple *wh*-movement like Bulgarian and Romanian which require pronunciation of a lower copy to avoid a violation at the PF interface. Consider (17) from Bošković (2002:365) which the author argues to be a result of a PF constraint against consecutive homophonous *wh*-phrases:

- (17) a.     *Ce precede ce?*  
           what precedes what  
       b.     \**Ce ce precede?*  
           what what precedes  
           ‘What precedes what?’

However, given the availability of *both* preverbal and in-situ focus, choice of word order cannot be assumed to follow from a PF violation. Nonetheless, if pragmatics and the stylistic component are perceived as PF properties (see Chomsky 2000, Holmberg 1999, Kidwai 1999, inter alia), the omnipresence of OCC can still be maintained with [Foc]. I suggest this is not the correct avenue to pursue given evidence that pragmatic displacements (i.e., the presence of OCC) can affect binding relationships in Romanian, as discussed in Alboiu (1999) and the following section. OCC as a requirement of the semantic component can account for both interpretive effects and effects of the syntax-pragmatics interface to which PF is blind. It seems to me desirable to

maintain a uniform account of OCC and, consequently, displacements more generally.<sup>14</sup>

## 6. Independent evidence for optional OCC in Romanian: Object shift

In this section, I discuss evidence for object shift in Romanian and focus on the syntactic and pragmatic effects of constructions with displaced objects to the left edge of vP. I first present the data and next provide an analysis based on the occurrence of an optional OCC feature.

### 6.1. Romanian VOS sequences

First let us notice that in Romanian preverbal nominals are constrained semantically to discourse-linking (compare 18a with 18b), while postverbal nominals can be both definite and indefinite (see 18c). In addition, (18c) highlights the availability of two word order sequences for postverbal objects regardless of semantic type; specifically, VOS and VSO.

- (18) a. Inelul                    *l-a*    *găsit*  
ring-the    CL.3SG.ACC.M-AUX.3SG                    found  
*Smeagol.*  
Smeagol  
‘Smeagol found the ring.’
- b. \*Un inel                    *a*    *găsit*                    *Smeagol.*  
a                    ring                    AUX.3SG                    found                    Smeagol  
‘Smeagol found a ring.’
- c. (*Smeagol*)                    *a*    *găsit*                    (*Smeagol*)  
(*Smeagol*)                    AUX.3SG                    found                    (*Smeagol*)  
inelul / un inel (*Smeagol*).  
ring-the / a ring (*Smeagol*)  
‘Smeagol found the ring/a ring.’

Gierling (1997) and Alboiu (1999, 2002) independently show that, in Romanian, objects can undergo movement to a position outside of the vP domain but below T (i.e., not within the preverbal domain). Alboiu (1999,

2002) argues that VOS constructions are derived from VSO sequences and involve object raising across the subject and left-adjunction to vP for de-rhematization purposes. Let us briefly look at the data in (19).

- (19) a. *Mi-au* *dăruit* *mereu*  
 CL.1SG.DAT-AUX.3PL bestowed always  
*copiii mei florile din curte.*  
 children-the my flowers-the from garden  
 ‘My kids have always bestowed upon me the flowers in the garden.’
- b. *Mi-au* *dăruit* *florile*  
 CL.1SG.DAT-AUX.3PL bestowed flowers-the  
*din curte mereu copiii mei.*  
 from garden always children-the my  
 ‘My kids have always bestowed upon me the flowers in the garden.’

The VSO word order in (19a) is not pragmatically synonymous to the VOS word order in (19b). In VSO word order sequences, both the subject and the object are understood as new information, rhematic focus, while in VOS constructions, the object is de-focused and understood as part of the presupposition (i.e., the theme) together with the verb, while the in-situ subject is maximally rhematic.<sup>15</sup>

In conclusion, nominals that represent new information remain within their initial Merge position within the vP, while nominals that are part of the presupposition ‘evacuate’ the vP. While vP-adjoined nominals typically denote given information, contrastive focus stress and interpretation are also available (but not required) in this intermediary position. Consider (20), which confirms these facts:

- (20) a. *Îmi* *dăruie FLORI mereu,*  
 CL.3SG.DAT bestow flowers *always,*  
*(nu bomboane).*  
 (not sweets).  
 ‘It’s flowers that they are always bestowing upon me, not sweets.’
- b. *Îmi* *dăruie flori mereu,*

CL.3SG.DAT bestow flowers *always*,  
 (\* *nu bomboane*).  
 (\* not sweets).  
 ‘They are always bestowing flowers upon me.’

The vP-adverb ‘always’ shows that the object DP in (20) has undergone displacement outside its initial Merge domain. The contrastive focus interpretation obtains in the presence of heavy stress only (i.e., in 20a). The contrast in interpretation between (20a) and (20b) is correlated with a contrast in what triggers displacement. In (20a), displacement is triggered by the presence of an unvalued [Foc] feature on the object DP, which ensures movement of the lexical item outside of the vP phasal domain under cyclic Spell-Out. As discussed in section 5.1, the  $u$ [Foc] feature on the contrastively focused lexical item cannot be valued within the vP domain, and consequently, this constituent is not interpretable at the interface levels at this point but has to wait until the next phasal level.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, object raising in (20b) is triggered by the pragmatic requirement that the presupposed object evacuate the vP. Given that this type of movement need not have a contrastive focus correlate, it cannot be viewed as the result of focus feature movement and is not triggered by the presence of unvalued [Foc].

The object raising analysis argued for in Alboiu (1999, 2002) for VOS constructions is theoretically supported by a Kayne (1994) type approach which views linear order construed as hierarchical structure. Empirical support for an object shift/scrambling account is adduced from the reversal of binding interactions between the subject and the object DP, condition C effects, and stranded quantifier availability. In addition, effects on Principle A and the absence of weak crossover phenomena point towards properties associated with A-chains as opposed to A-bar chains. Note too that object raising in VOS constructions does not license parasitic gaps (see 21), which again points to an A-type (rather than a quantificational A-bar type) movement account, which is to be kept distinct from contrastive focus displacements.

- (21) \*A                    *mîncat bomboane*            *fata*  
 AUX.3SG            eaten    sweets                    girl-the  
 [*fără*    *să*    *desfacă*     $\_PG$ ]  
 [without SUBJ open     $\_PG$ ]  
 ‘The girl ate sweets without unwrapping them.’

## 6.2. Object shift and OCC

Holmberg (1999) has recently discussed various object shift constructions from a minimalist perspective. The author extensively argues for movement of non-focused (understood as non-rhematic) constituents into the Diesing (1992) type presupposition domain outside the vP. Given that the properties of these dislocated constituents do not indicate either A-bar or consistent A-movement effects in Scandinavian, Holmberg (1999) concludes, following insights in Chomsky (1995), that object shift is best viewed as a PF-operation within the stylistic component.<sup>17</sup> Chomsky (2001a), on the other hand, argues against object shift as a PF phenomenon and proposes that this movement is to be kept within the syntactic component (i.e., narrow syntax) given its interpretive effects.

In Romanian, non-focused object shift to the vP edge cannot be viewed as a PF operation due to the effects it has on Principles A and C, both of which are operative at LF. In this language object shift in VOS constructions is best viewed as an instance of EPP/OCC valuation.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, our discussion here is not only in line with recent minimalist proposals (Chomsky 2001a,b) in arguing against object shift as purely PF, but also has the merit of clarifying the somewhat erroneous empirical assumption made in Chomsky (2001a) with respect to the general unavailability of object shift in Romance. Not only is object shift available in certain Romance languages but where present it cannot be construed as a PF operation.<sup>19</sup>

Object shift in Romanian is to be construed as an instantiation of a v-related OCC feature inserted into the lexical array due to an instruction from SEM. In the presence of this feature, the direct object valuing phi-features of v will also value the OCC feature and undergo displacement to the extra edge position of v. The new interpretation resulting from checking of OCC by internal Merge is that of de-rhematization of the object. In the absence of the OCC feature associated with v (or, rather, phi-features of v), the uninterpretable phi-features of v will be valued by the direct object solely via the operation Agree; in this case there is no dislocation and no interpretive effect of presupposition associated with the object.

## 6.3. In sum

The discussion in the previous two sections has focused on the optional availability of an OCC feature encroached on v in Romanian, availability cons-

trued as a requirement of the semantic component rather than PF, in view both of the interpretive effects associated with displacements to the vP edge and resulting syntactic effects reminiscent of A-chains. Given that the OCC feature on v is intimately linked to phi-feature valuation of this head, it is not surprising that displacement effects associated with object shift should show A-movement properties.

In a similar vein, contrastively focused constituents can value the [Foc] formal feature in-situ (understood as outside of the initial Merge phase) or in Spec,TP. This dual availability was correlated in Section 5 to the absence versus presence, respectively, of an OCC feature associated with the  $\mu$ [Foc] feature in T. In the absence of this feature, no displacement with internal Merge as Spec,TP is possible, while the presence of this feature triggers obligatory preverbal movement of the contrastively focused operator. However, regardless of this feature the [Foc] formal feature is valued at Spell-Out in the presence of heavy stress, thereby inducing the expected effects of A-bar chains.

Semantico-pragmatic displacements are thus triggered by the optional presence in the lexical array of an OCC feature which has to be valued at the point of Spell-Out/TRANSFER on a par with any other feature. Crucially, OCC is responsible for any displacements that are not PF-related and for interpretive effects beyond what is made available by the other formal features valued in that cycle.<sup>20</sup>

## 7. Conclusions

This paper sets out to investigate the triggers behind optional displacements in natural languages by concentrating on various focus effects in Romanian. Much of the discussion centralizes on properties of focus operators whose semantic and prosodic effects are quite stable in spite of (at least) two linearization possibilities available in this language. Specifically, I show that contrastively focused phrases may but need not dislocate to a preverbal operator position despite evidence that the syntactic component treats both occurrences in the same manner. I argue that A-bar chain/linking effects with both in-situ and dislocated focus operators indicate the presence of an uninterpretable [Foc] feature valued at Spell-Out regardless of word order.

I next discuss why optional displacements are problematic in a theory of feature checking which views the syntactic component as nothing more than a generative engine of language whose sole attribute and ability should be to

identify unvalued features and to establish linking between probes and goals with the outcome of ensuring valuation and well-formed objects at the two interface levels. I assume the EPP/OCC feature to be the trigger of displacements and suggest that, in fact, there is no optionality of feature checking or of displacements per se but solely optionality of what is inserted into the lexical array.

In order to explain cross-linguistic and intra-linguistic asymmetries, I propose a split between features which are parametrically defined as encoding OCC within the lexicon and features which do not encode OCC in their build up. For the former, valuation will of necessity be incumbent on dislocation and consequently, trigger obligatory displacement devoid of interpretive effects, as illustrated by subject related OCC in English and [Q] related OCC in Romanian. For the latter, feature valuation proceeds felicitously regardless of OCC but novel interpretive effects will arise in the presence of OCC (e.g., OCC related to contrastive focus or object shift in Romanian). Specifically, I argue that optional displacements are due to the optional association of an OCC feature with a specific formal feature, which formal feature establishes an A or A-bar link between the probe and goal *regardless* of the presence of OCC. The presence of an OCC feature simply ensures that the goal becomes an occurrence of the probe via internal Merge and in so doing is interpreted within the probe's semantico-pragmatic domain. Given that all optional displacements are associated with interpretive effects, I argue that the optional insertion of the OCC feature in derivations is an outcome of interface requirements which cannot be due to PF but have to be related to the semantic component of language. Hence optionality at the interface in triggering various focus readings in Romanian.

## Notes

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1. I use upper case letters to mark contrastively focused elements.
2. The abbreviations used in the example sentences are: AUX: auxiliary, SUBJ: subjunctive, CL: pronominal clitic, SG: singular, PL: plural, NOM: Nominative case, ACC: Accusative case, DAT: Dative case, M: masculine, F: feminine. 'PE' is a preposition associated with Romanian direct objects that have an <e> type denotation (see Cornilescu 2000b).
3. That this preverbal position is adjacent to the verbal complex (i.e., verb and clitic cluster) is shown in (i) for Romanian, which is ungrammatical given that the subject phrase intervenes between the focused phrase and the verbal complex.

(i) \* *Pe MIHAI<sub>i</sub> Victor<sub>j</sub> l<sub>i</sub>-a strigat t<sub>j</sub> t<sub>i</sub>*  
 PE Mihai<sub>i</sub> Victor<sub>j</sub> CL.3SG.ACC.M<sub>i</sub>-AUX.3SG called t<sub>j</sub> t<sub>i</sub>  
 (,nu pe Ion).  
 (not PE Ion)  
 'It is Mihai that Victor called, (not Ion).'

4. Chomsky (2001b) is a departure from this view.
5. Kidwai (1999) also questions LF focus feature checking and claims that PF cannot 'see' into LF and 'know' it has to assign heavy stress.
6. As highlighted by the reviewer, this argument applies in the same way to *wh*-movement, which strengthens the claim that dislocation for feature-checking should be dealt with prior to the LF component.
7. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the quantificational versus non-quantificational nature of all A-bar chains involved with various operators in Romanian - for such a discussion and the requirement that definite direct objects must be clitic doubled in this language, see Alboiu (2002).
8. Given that the lexical verb always raises to T in Romanian (e.g. Dobrovie-Sorin 1987, 1994 et seq.), 'postverbal' refers to material below T.
9. Hill (2002) maintains Spec,CP as the locus of *wh*-movement in Romanian, while Alboiu (2002) and Cornilescu (2002) argue that *wh*-phrases are hosted in Spec,TP on a par with proposals made for Spanish in Zubizarreta (1998). It is not unreasonable to assume that finite T forms a syncretic category with C given the lack of distinctness between the two in Romanian and the other-

wise phasal status of finite TP. This in turn might be correlated to the interpretive properties of EPP/OCC in T, unavailable, for example in a language like English, where T and C are distinct heads.

10. Note that the [Foc] feature on the lexical item cannot be assumed to be interpretable, as the information with respect to contrastivity is not part of what is stored in our mental lexicons (see also discussion in Alboiu 2002, 2003).
11. This is no different from what must be the behaviour of other active lexical items with uninterpretable features assuming a cyclic system. In addition, it helps explain why sentences like (i), highlighted by the reviewer, are well-formed and void of any weak crossover effects:

(i) *PRINȚULUI<sub>i</sub> (i<sub>i</sub>)-a dat [v<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> [v<sub>VP</sub> prince-the.DAT<sub>i</sub> (CL.3SG.DAT.M<sub>i</sub>)-AUX.3SG given [v<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> [v<sub>VP</sub> un inel<sub>j</sub> [v<sub>VP</sub> mama lui<sub>i</sub> t<sub>v</sub> [v<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>v</sub> t<sub>j</sub> ] (nu cerșetorului). a ring<sub>j</sub> [v<sub>VP</sub> mother-the his<sub>i</sub> t<sub>v</sub> [v<sub>VP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> t<sub>v</sub> t<sub>j</sub> ] (not beggar-the.DAT<sub>i</sub>)*  
 ‘\*It is to the prince<sub>i</sub> that his<sub>i</sub> mother gave a ring (, not to the beggar).’

The VP-internal trace coindexed with the pronoun to its left is *not* a variable, while the vP-adjoined trace (in bold) is. The VP-internal copy of the focused constituent is in a cycle which undergoes Spell-Out *prior* to [Foc] feature checking and the creation of an A-bar relation.

12. Chomsky (2001b) argues that each language makes a one time selection of a subset [F] of formal features and a one time assembly of [F] as its lexicon. I take the obligatory encoding of OCC on various features to occur at this stage.
13. Rizzi (p.c.) notes the obligatory ‘echo’ reading of this example. Nonetheless, the *wh*-phrase undergoes movement to the preverbal operator position and, in doing so, obviates optionality of focus pronunciation site.
14. Note that, just as Nominative Case cannot be due to EPP/OCC, neither can the semantics of *wh*-phrases be due to OCC given the occurrence of *wh*-in-situ languages.
15. Relegating pragmatics to the PF component has always been suspicious to my mind. Why would the articulatory perceptual level care about linearizations with an interpretive effect? Chomsky (2001a,b) represents a welcome renunciation of this perspective and a more robust proposal with respect to the syntax-pragmatics interface.
16. Clarification of concepts is required at this point. New information/presentational/rhematic focus is to be kept distinct from contrastive focus discussed so far. The former category of focus covers material that represents information newly introduced in the discourse and is the opposite of given/old information, realized by the theme. Contrastive focus, on the other side, is presupposed information, part of what is given and consequently, part of the thematic domain. The distinct semantico-pragmatic properties are paralleled by distinct syntactic properties, as shown in Table (i).

Table 1. Contrastive focus versus rhematic focus

	A-bar chain effects	[Foc] formal feature	Prosodic marking	Affects truth-functional values of S
contrastive focus	+	+	+	+
rhematic focus	-	-	-	-

Languages use various ways of encoding sentence pragmatics (i.e., the theme-rheme distinction). For example, English uses intonation to differentiate different theme-rheme partitions, but preserves a constant syntactic structure. Catalan (Valldví 1995) and Romanian (Alboiu 2002), on the other hand, exploit syntactic structure to package discourse information.

17. Recall that the functional head bearing the feature [Foc] in Romanian is T. In addition, note that (20a) is an instance of contrastive focus ‘in-situ’ given that the focused constituent does not undergo internal Merge to Spec,TP.
18. Holmberg (1999) is careful to note that absence of parasitic gap licensing and lack of Principle A effects is just a manifestation of object shift properties in Scandinavian, while acknowledging that in other languages object shift may manifest other properties.
19. See also proposals in Molnárfi (2002), where an EPP feature is taken to be responsible for triggering object raising in Afrikaans and West Germanic.
20. Note that other Romance languages also seem to allow for vP-adjoined object raising with specific semantico-pragmatic and syntactic properties: for Catalan, see discussion in Valldví (1995), for Portuguese, see Costa (1999), and for Spanish, see discussion in Ordóñez (1998). It seems then that the v-related OCC feature is available more consistently within Romance.
21. Recall that for v-related OCC ‘other formal feature’ valuation refers to phi-features of v and Case of direct object, while for T-related OCC connected to contrastive focus, it refers to phi-features of T, Case of subject and [Foc] as a formal feature.

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