On the Focusing Function of Focusing Adverbs: A Discussion Based on Italian Data

Anna-Maria De Cesare (Basel)

Abstract

This paper discusses the focusing function of the so-called focusing adverbs. Based on Italian data, drawn mainly from authentic linguistic corpora, I will provide evidence of the fact that, despite their name, focusing adverbs are not always focusing. They can have a weak, a strong or an anti-focusing effect. The different focusing effects of these forms will be accounted for by showing that they are determined modularly by the interplay of prosodic, syntactic and informational factors.

1 Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss the focusing function of the so-called focusing adverbs (a term used for instance by Taglicht 1984)[1] by raising the three following questions: (1) What do we mean by 'focusing function'?; (2) is the focusing function of focusing adverbs a stable or an occasional property of these forms?; and (3) in what linguistic contexts are focusing adverbs focusing? These questions have already been raised in several works on focusing adverbs (Jacobs 1983; Taglicht 1984; König 1991, 1993; Dimroth/Klein 1996; Dimroth 1998; Andorno 2000: 44–48, to mention but a few). They have not yet received a thorough and systematic answer, however, at least as far as the Italian linguistics literature is concerned.

In order to answer the question raised in (2), I will provide evidence of the fact that, despite their name, focusing adverbs are not always focusing (chapter 2): there are contexts in which they are not associated with the information focus of the utterance. In particular, there are instances in which the so-called focusing adverbs have an 'anti-focusing' effect: their mere presence in the sentence structure forces an interpretation of the constituent with which they are associated as background information. Consequently, the focusing function cannot be accounted for as a stable semantic feature of these forms. In order to assess when focusing adverbs are focusing and when they are not, i.e. determine the contexts and linguistic conditions that lead to one or the other possibility, I will distinguish two concepts of focus (cf. Moser 1992) – the **focus** of the (focusing) adverb and the **information focus of the utterance** – and provide the theoretical model this paper is based on (chapter 3). This section is followed by the main part of the paper (chapter 4), in which I comprehensively describe the contexts in which focusing adverbs are focusing and when they are not.

In the light of the complex linguistic behaviour of focusing adverbs, and in the light of previous research on Italian focusing adverbs (cf. De Cesare 2001, 2002a/b, 2004, 2006, 2008; Ferrari/De Cesare 2004), I will account for the different focusing effects of these forms by showing that they are determined modularly (cf. Roulet/Filliettaz/Grobet 2001; Ferrari et

[1] The terminology used in the linguistics literature varies: the forms in which we are interested have also been called *focus particles* (König 1991, 1993; Moser 1992), *focusing adjuncts/subjuncts* (Quirk et al. 1985), *scalar particles* (König 1981) and, in German, *Gradpartikeln* (cf. Altmann 1976, 1978, 2007). In the Italian linguistics literature, we find both *avverbi/particelle focalizzanti* and *focalizzatori*, which are not always equivalent. For Lonzi (1991: 342) for instance, there is a semantic difference between them: the *focalizzatori* 'focalizers' (*anche* 'also, too', *solo* 'only' and *perfino* 'even') belong to the broader class of the *avverbi focalizzanti* 'focusing adverbs', which also includes the *avverbi restrittivi* 'restrictive adverbs' (*meramente* 'merely', *esclusivamente* 'exclusively') and the *avverbi 'rafforzativi' dell'asserzione e della negazione* 'assertion and negation reinforcing/emphasizing adverbs' (*proprio, ben, affatto, mica* 'at all'). In this paper, we use the term *focusing adverb* to refer to items of both the *focalizzatori* and the *avverbi restrittivi* class (cf. the list of focusing adverbs provided by Andorno and reproduced in footnote 3).

al. 2008) by the interplay of prosodic, syntactic and informational factors. This approach is to be preferred to the ones that account for the focusing function of these forms by considering only one of their focusing effects, i.e. focusing adverbs are a linguistic means to select the information focus of the utterance (strong focusing effect), to emphasize the information focus of the utterance (weak focusing effect); focusing adverbs are not focusing, but rather sensitive to/dependent on the information focus for their interpretation (cf. Lonzi 1991: 360f.; König 1993: 978; Andorno 2000: 47).

Although the focusing function of the focusing adverbs is a property assigned cross-linguistically to these forms, in this paper I mainly look at data from the Italian language. Whenever possible, I have relied on real data, drawn from corpora of spoken and written Italian.[2] The focusing adverbs that I am most interested in are the Italian *anche* 'also, too', *proprio* 'just, precisely, of all people/places/times etc.', and *soprattutto* 'above all, especially, particularly, mainly'.

2 On the Focusing Function of Focusing Adverbs

Following a theoretical proposal made notably by German linguists (Altmann 1976, 1978; König 1977, 1981, 1991, 1993; Jacobs 1983), about thirty Italian adverbs[3] have been singled out and recognized as a separate lexical class labelled avverbi/particelle focalizzanti 'focusing adverbs/particles', or focalizzatori 'focalizers'. Amongst the most important studies to adopt this proposal for Italian, we find Lonzi (1991), Ricca (1999) and Andorno (1999, 2000). The avverbi focalizzanti, previously accounted for as being part of (more) traditional sub-categories of adverbs, have been distinguished on the basis of shared syntactic, semantic and informational properties. The main informational property of these forms is the focusing function (hence their name).

2.1 Syntactic and Semantic Properties of Focusing Adverbs

The syntactic and semantic properties of Italian focusing adverbs are well-known. They have been described thoroughly in various studies, which include Andorno (1999, 2000), Ricca (1999), Lonzi (2001) and De Cesare (2002a). Based chiefly on König (1991), the focusing adverbs *anche*, *proprio*, *soprattutto* etc. have been described as *paradigmatic cross-categorical operators*.

They are called cross-categorical operators because – in contrast to other parts of speech (noun, adjective, verb) – they are not bound to operate on a particular morpho-syntactic category. Focusing adverbs can modify noun phrases (NP's), prepositional phrases (PP's), verb phrases (VP's), adjective phrases (AP's) and adverbial phrases (AdvP's). Examples (1) to (6) illustrate the cross-categorical nature of the adverb *soprattutto* 'above all' (in brackets we find the adverb (from now on in bold face) and the constituent it operates on[4]):

(1) [**Soprattutto** Eva] ha parlato bene di te (NP)
'[Above all Eva] spoke well about you'[5]

(2) Eva ha parlato bene [**soprattutto** di te] (PP)
'Eva spoke well [above all about you]'

(3) Eva [ha **soprattutto** parlato bene di te] (VP)
'Eva [above all spoke well about you]'

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[2] The data from spoken Italian are drawn from Cresti 2000/2; the data from written Italian are retrieved from various corpora of functional (i.e. non-literary) texts, mainly from journalistic and academic prose. Each example is followed by parentheses in which the exact source of the example is provided.

[3] Andorno (1999: 45) lists the following items: *anche*, *pure*; *altresì*, *parimenti*; *perfino*, *persino*; *addirittura*, *ben*; *soprattutto*, *principalmente*, *particolarmente*, *specialmente*, *in particolare*; *almeno*, *al massimo*, *al più*, *tuttalpiù*; *solo*, *soltanto*, *solamente*; *esclusivamente*, *unicamente*; *semplicemente*, *puramente*, *meramente*; *proprio*; *in persona*; *appunto*, *precisamente*, *esattamente*.

[4] In our view, focusing adverbs (or particles) form a constituent with the adjacent element that they modify. Such a view, however, is controversial for other languages, for instance for German. On the position of the verb in sentences like *Auch Maria liebt Kafka*, whether it is the second or the third one, see respectively Reis/Rosengren (1997) and Büring/Hartmann (2001).

[5] The Italian examples are followed by an English translation: to illustrate the function of the Italian focusing adverbs, this translation is often literal.

(4) Eva è [**soprattutto** simpatica] (AP)
'Eva is [above all friendly]'

(5) Eva scrive [**soprattutto** velocemente] (AdvP)
'Eva writes [above all fast]'

In some instances, focusing adverbs can also operate on entire clauses:[6]

(6) Eva è contenta, [**soprattutto** perché ha rivisto Stella] (Clause)
'Eva is happy, [above all because she saw Stella again]

Another important syntactic property shared by the items belonging to the focusing adverbs class – a property that distinguishes them from all other subclasses of traditional adverbs (König 1993: 981) – is mobility. As the following examples show, focusing adverbs can be placed in different positions of the same sentence structure and operate on different constituents of that sentence; on the subject (7), on the verb phrase (8) and on the verb complement (9):

(7) [**Anche** Eva] ha parlato di Stella
'[Also Eva] spoke about Stella'

(8) Eva [ha **anche** parlato di Stella]
'Eva [also spoke about Stella]'

(9) Eva ha parlato [**anche** di Stella]
'Eva spoke [also about Stella]'

Focusing adverbs do not, however, occur in all three syntactic positions with the same frequency. The data from our spoken and written corpora show that they tend to occur at the end of the sentence, i.e. before the last complement of the verb, as in (9). As we will see, this distributional preference of the focusing adverbs has important consequences for their association with information focus.

In turn, the term *paradigmatic* – used by Nølke (1983) – refers to the main semantic property of the items under discussion, i.e. the fact that they "relate the denotation of a focus to a set of denotations of the same type" (König 1993: 979), that they presuppose the existence of a paradigm of alternatives to the element on which they semantically operate and with which they are syntactically constructed. This element is called the *focus* of the adverb. In example (10), the focus of the adverb *anche* is the PP *di Obama*; depending on the situation, the paradigm of alternatives to the denotation of that PP can include a number of other referents, similar to the referent *Obama* – for instance the paradigm of alternatives can be based on the property 'being or having been a president of the United States of America', as shown in (11):

(10) Stella ha parlato **anche** di Obama
'Stella spoke also about Obama'

(11) Stella ha parlato di Clinton
Stella ha parlato di Bush
Stella ha parlato di Reagan
Stella ha parlato di ...

[6] Note that when they operate on entire clauses, *soprattutto*, *solo*, *addirittura* etc. do not necessarily function as focusing adverbs. In the following examples (from Andorno 2000: 99) *solo*, *soprattutto* and *addirittura* are used as discourse connectives: *Non vi biasimo*. ***Solo**, vorrei sapere cosa intendete fare* 'I do not blame you. Only, I would like to know what you intend to do'; *È stata una bella gita*. ***Soprattutto** non ci sono stati ingorghi per strada* 'It has been a nice trip. Above all there have not been any traffic jams'; *La situazione è allarmante*. ***Addirittura** si parla di Guerra* 'The situation is alarming. Even [= to the extent that] people are talking about war'. The connective rather then the focalizing function of *solo*, *soprattutto*, *addirittura* etc. occurs when they occupy the first position of the clause and are prosodically isolated in an independent intonation unit (in written communication, we occasionally find a comma after the adverb *solo* etc.). The prosodic break between the adverb and the following clause is fundamental especially when the clause starts with a constituent (Subject NP, Adverbial) on which the adverb could have narrow scope: ***Solo**,* [*Maria vorrebbe sapere cosa intendete fare*] (connective function of the adverb *solo*) vs. [***Solo** Maria*] *vorrebbe sapere cosa intendete fare* (focalizing function of the adverb *solo*).

2.2 Informational Property of Focusing Adverbs

2.2.1 The Focusing Function of Focusing Adverbs

As the name chosen for the entire class suggests, from an informational perspective, the main shared property of the focusing adverbs is the ability to "give prominence to selected parts of sentences or utterances" (Taglicht 1984: 7). Here are two examples from Taglicht (1984: 3), in which the highlighted part, i.e. the element focused on by *only* and *also*, is the portion of the clause that follows them directly (in the examples to come, the information focus will be underlined and followed by the label *focus*):

(12) John speaks **only** <u>English and Spanish</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$

(13) Peter speaks **also** <u>a number of very obscure Amerindian dialects</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$

According to definitions like these, the focusing feature is a stable property of the focusing adverbs. Therefore, similarly to the other semantic feature presented in chapter 2.1. (i.e. the paradigmatic feature), the focusing feature is to be interpreted as part of their 'instructional' meaning. Below are two other definitions that adopt this point of view (the first definition is provided in an Italian grammar, the other in a German grammar):

i. Semantisch-pragmatisch <u>heben</u> die Adverboide [the term used by Schwarze to refer roughly to the category we call focusing adverb] diejenigen Konstituenten <u>hervor</u>, an die sie angefügt sind. (Schwarze 1988: 236)

   'From a semantic and pragmatic perspective, the Adverboide highlight the constituents they are added to'.

ii. Sie [die Fokuspartikeln] verdanken ihren Namen der Eigenschaft, mit ihrem Beziehungswort (Skopus) eine gemeinsame Konstituente zu bilden, die den <u>Fokus im Satz darstellt.</u> (Hentschel/Weydt 1989: 11; 1994: 291)

   'They [the focusing adverbs] receive their name from the fact that they form a single constituent with the word they relate to (Skopus), and that this constituent is the focus of the sentence'.

The focusing feature of focusing adverbs is particularly clear in example (14) – containing the German focusing adverb *nur* 'only' – where the focus of the adverb *nur*, i.e. the subject *du*, coincides with the information focus of the utterance:

(14) <u>**Nur** du</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$ kannst mir helfen (Hentschel/Weydt 1989: 11)
'Only you can help me'

In contrast to examples (12) and (13), the information focus of utterance (14) is necessarily located at the beginning of the clause, and is dependent upon the presence of the focusing adverb *nur*. Note, however, that according to Hentschel/Weydt 1989, the information focus of the utterance (for them: the focus of the sentence) given in (14) extends over both the subject *du* and the focusing adverb *nur*. The extension of the information focus of the utterance is in fact context-dependent.

2.2.2 The Focusing Function as an Instable Feature of Focusing Adverbs

The focusing property of focusing adverbs is not always as clear and as important as in (14). For instance, in example (15), in which the information focus is not adjacent to the focusing adverb, the information focus could coincide with various items:

(15) He is **particularly** interested in Potawatomi

In examples like these, the prosodic pattern associated with the sentence as well as the discourse context plays an important role in determining both the focus of the adverb and the focus of the utterance. The question-answer pairs below show that the information focus of utterance (15) can coincide with the PP in Potawatomi (cf. as suggested by Taglicht's analysis and as can be seen in (16)), with the whole VP (17) or with the verb (18):

(16) A: What is John interested in?
B: He is **particularly** interested <u>in Potawatomi</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$ (Taglicht 1984: 3)

(17) A: How would you characterize John?
B: He is **particularly** interested in Potawatomi$_{Focus}$

(18) A: Does John like Potawatomi?
B: He is **particularly** interested$_{Focus}$ in Potawatomi

The examples given in (16)–(18) show that focusing adverbs do not necessarily mark the information focus of the utterance of which they are part. Therefore, definitions of focusing adverbs that do not recognize the focusing property as a stable semantic feature of these forms, but rather view it as a function of their use in discourse, and account for it in pragmatic terms, should be preferred. Two such definitions (cf. also Moser 1992) are given below:

iii. Focusing subjuncts [adverbs and focusing PP's] can draw attention to a part of a sentence as wide as the predication or as narrow as a single constituent of an element (such as a premodifying adjective in a noun phrase as subject, or an auxiliary within a verb phrase). [...] The item selected for being focused is generally ‹new› information. (Quirk et al. 1985: 604f.; emphasis added)

iv. le Focus existe indépendamment de la particule [= focusing adverb], même si, par son placement, elle peut participer à l'identifier dans certains cas. (Dimroth 1998: 15; cf. also Dimroth/Klein 1996: 82)

'the focus exists independently of the particle, even if, by its position, it can help to identify it in certain cases.'

Dimroth also refers to a very effective test to determine if in a given context the focusing adverb is indeed focusing or not. For instance, the focusing function of German *nur* in (14) can be determined by comparing (14) – repeated below for the sake of convenience – with (19), the latter pronounced with unmarked intonation, i.e. with no internal prosodic break: in (14) the information focus is necessarily located at the beginning of the clause; in (19), by contrast, the information focus is unmarked, and could coincide with the last syntactic item of the clause only (the verb *helfen*), or include another syntactic element appearing before the verb (the dotted line indicates the ambiguity of the location of the information focus):

(14) **Nur** du$_{Focus}$ kannst mir helfen
'Only you can help me'

(19) Du kannst mir helfen$_{Focus}$
Lit. 'You can me help'

We will return to this case later (cf. chapter 4.2.2.). For now, compare the different grammaticality judgements given to the answers B and C in response to A's question in (20), which show that the sentences in (14) and (19) cannot occur in the same discourse context because they have a different distribution of their information focus (again, in C there is no prosodic break after the subject *du*):

(20) A: Wer kann dir helfen?
'Who can help you?'

B: **Nur** du kannst mir helfen
'Only you can help me'

C: *Du kannst mir helfen
*'You can help me'

C can of course adequately answer A's question. For this to happen, there needs to be a prosodic break after the subject *du*. In other words, syntactic information is not enough in this case: prosody has to come into play to mark the special initial information focus of (14), as can be seen in (20D), where the slash indicates the prosodic break (capital letters indicate special prosodic emphasis):

(20) A: Wer kann dir helfen?
'Who can help you?'

D: DU / kannst mir helfen
'YOU can help me'

3 Two Concepts of *Focus*: *Focus of the Adverb* and *Information Focus*

In order to assess when focusing adverbs are focusing and when they are not, i.e. determine the contexts and linguistic conditions that lead to one or the other possibility, it is necessary first to distinguish two concepts of focus (cf. Moser 1992): the focus of the (focusing) adverb and the information focus or information focus of the utterance.

3.1 Focus of the Focusing Adverb

The term focus of the focusing adverb, or focus of the adverb tout court, refers to the "string of expressions which is set off from the rest of the sentence by prosodic prominence and which is specifically affected semantically by the particle" (König 1993: 979). Thus, the focus of focusing adverbs is defined on the basis of prosodic, syntactic and semantic properties alone. In example (14), given again below, the focus of the German focusing adverb *nur* is *du*:

(14) **Nur** du kannst mir helfen
'Only you can help me'

The concept of focus of the adverb is sometimes labelled differently. In Hentschel/Weydt 1989, 1994, for instance, it corresponds to the Skopus; in Moser 1992, it is called the associate of the adverb. In what follows, for the sake of clarity, we will avoid using the term focus of the adverb.

3.2 Information Focus

3.2.1 Common Features of Information Focus

In contrast to the notion of associate (focus) of the adverb, the information focus (Halliday 1967), or information focus of the utterance, as we will sometimes refer to it, is a pragmatic concept. In the literature on the subject, it correlates with both functional (informational) and linguistics features. From a functional point of view, information focus is typically defined as the most informative piece of the utterance, and is associated with 'newness'. From a structural point of view, it is described as the piece of information which carries a strong nuclear stress (prosodic feature) and which occurs in final position (syntactic property). Two of the most well-known definitions of information focus are from Halliday 1967 and Quirk et al. 1985:

v. Information focus reflects the speaker's decision as to where the main burden of the message lies. [...] Information focus is one kind of emphasis, that whereby the speaker marks out a part (which may be the whole) of a message block as that which he wishes to be interpreted as informative. What is focal is 'new' information; not in the sense that it cannot have been previously mentioned, although it is often the case that it has not been, but in the sense that the speaker presents it as not being recoverable from the preceding discourse. (Halliday 1967: 204)

vi. it is common to process the information in a message so as to achieve a linear presentation from low to high information value [...]. We shall refer to this as the principle of end-focus (Quirk et al. 1985: 1357). [...] we can regard focus [...] as most naturally and normally placed at the end of the information unit. (ibd.: 1361)

3.2.2 Information Focus as Part of the Main Information Unit

Information focus is necessarily located in the main information unit of the utterance. This is why we also refer to it as the *information focus of the utterance*, which stands – in short – for the *information focus of the main information unit of the utterance*. Following Ferrari et al.

(2008),[7] based on a term used in particular by Blanche-Benveniste et al. (1990), we will call the main unit of the utterance the Nucleus or the *nuclear unit of the utterance*.[8]

An informational Nucleus is necessary and sufficient for an utterance to be expressed. Here is an example of a text written with nuclear information units only (the succession of the same type of information unit and syntactic structure leads to the list-effect of the text):

(21) Gioia
30 cose che le donne dovrebbero sapere
Come far riuscire una dieta. Come farsi un trucco "tiramisù". Come scegliere il reggiseno giusto. Come apparecchiare secondo il galateo. Come vestirsi quest'inverno. Cosa non dire mai un uomo. Come fare una valigia perfetta. Buone idee evergreen per facilitarsi la vita (*Gioia* 9.9.2006)

'Gioia
30 things women should know
How to have a diet succeed. How to perform a "tiramisù" make-up. How to choose the correct bra. How to set the table according to the galateo. How to dress this winter. What you should never say to a man. How to pack a perfect suitcase. Good, evergreen, ideas to make your life easier.'

Normally, however – that is, if we consider most of the Italian written texts (scientific and technical texts, as well as journalistic and bureaucratic ones) – the Nucleus is accompanied by other informational units, which provide secondary background information. These units, which are optional and repeatable, have been given the names of *frame* and *appendix*. The frame and the appendix units may express the same semantic contents. The contribution they make to textuality, however, is very different.

The *frame unit* (It. 'Unità di Quadro') linearly precedes the Nucleus. From a functional perspective, it indicates the general denotational domain of relevance of the Nucleus, which often holds in the following utterances. The frame unit typically indicates the circumstances (usually spatial, temporal, and modal) in which the event described in the Nucleus takes place, as is for instance the case in the following example:[9]

(22) // / **Negli ultimi anni**,/[Frame] le tensioni tra i cinesi han e gli uiguri si sono deteriorate /[Nucleus] // (*L'espresso* 23.7.2009)

'In the past few years, the tensions between the Chinese Han and the Uyghur people have deteriorated.'

The *appendix unit* (It. 'Unità di Appendice') adds secondary information to the Nucleus and/or the frame unit(s). The appendix may be located within the Nucleus and the frame, or placed immediately after them. From a functional perspective, the appendix has a local impact in the text, i.e. its function is typically restricted to the utterance in which it is expressed. The appendix can be used to repeat given (simple or complex) information, or to reactivate semi-given information. When it provides new (or almost new) information in the text, the appendix may be used by the speaker/writer to specify the meaning of his/her words, or simply to add information that is relevant but not textually 'vital', i.e. that is not capable of functioning as a semantic reference framework in the following co-text. An example of an appendix unit located within the nuclear information unit is given in the following text:

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[7] For a description in English of the model we adopt here, which we partly repeat, see also Ferrari/De Cesare (2010). This model was inspired particularly by the work of Cresti (cf. Cresti 2000/1) on the informational articulation of the spoken utterance and has been developed for the written text in particular in Ferrari (2003, 2005) and Ferrari et al. (2008).

[8] In the linguistics literature, what we refer to as Nucleus is sometimes called *focus* (cf. Lombardi Vallauri 1998). This has led to some confusion between the concept of focus as an informational unit and the concept of focus as the most salient part of the main informational unit of the utterance (not to mention here the concept of *focus of the adverb*, and the semantic concept of *focus*, complementary to the notion of *presupposition*). Others, for instance Cresti (2000), have yet another (misleading) term for the Nucleus: the *Comment*.

[9] From now on, in line with Cresti 2000 for the spoken and Ferrari 2003 for the written language, we indicate utterance boundaries with a double slash (//) and information unit boundaries (Nucleus, frame, appendix) with a single slash (/). Boundary indications will not be provided in every example or throughout the example: we will provide them only when they are necessary for the discussion.

(23) / L'economista americano Thomas Dee, / **che insegna a Stanford**, /^{Appendix} sostiene che il sesso dell'insegnante incide sull'apprendimento. /^{Nucleus} [...] (*Gioia* 9.9.2006)

'/ The American economist Thomas Dee, / **who teaches at Stanford**, /^{Appendix} claims that the sex of the professor has an impact on the learning process. /^{Nucleus}'

3.2.3 Information Focus and Illocutionary Act

In formulating an utterance with communicative intentions, the speaker/writer accomplishes an illocutionary act (assertive act, interrogative act, command, etc.). Simultaneously, if the utterance is part of a co-text, the speaker/writer also accomplishes an act of textual composition (an act that can function, for instance, as explanation, reformulation, or justification of a preceding piece of text). Not all the information expressed in an utterance is equally relevant, i.e. has the same communicative prominence (or dynamism) in determining the illocutionary and/or the textual act performed by the utterance in the message: the Nucleus is the only relevant part in that process.

In the spoken language, information focus can be roughly equated with the portion of the sentence that defines the illocutionary act performed by the utterance, whereas in the written language, information focus can be equated with the portion of the sentence that defines the textual act performed by the utterance. In the light of this account, it has been suggested that the information focus should be defined as the "most important semantic component of the main information unit of the utterance, i.e. of the Nucleus" (Ferrari et al. 2008: 95–99). The following example from Halliday, based on a question-answer pair, illustrates this point. The information focus of B's utterance coincides with the part of the sentence that directly answers A's question:

(24) A: When did John paint the shed?
B: / John painted the shed <u>yesterday</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$/^{Nucleus}

Following a basic principle of linguistic economy (cf. Grice's 'maxim of quantity'), in question-answer pairs such as (24) the information focus is normally the only linguistic material coded in the answer, with the result that the information focus of the utterance, the Nucleus and the utterance extend over the same linguistic expression:

(25) A: When did John paint the shed?
B: / <u>Yesterday</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$ /^{Nucleus}

4 The Interplay of Syntax, Prosody and Information Structure in the Association between Focusing Adverbs and Information Focus

In the light of the theoretical model outlined in the previous section of the paper, let us now determine more precisely: (a) the contexts in which a focusing adverb is or is not associated with the information focus of the utterance of which it is part; (b) the focusing role focusing adverbs play in determining the information focus status of the constituent they associate with; and (c) the linguistics factors (syntax, prosody) and informational properties that come into play in determining (a) and (b).

4.1 Contexts in which Focusing Adverbs are not Associated with Information Focus

4.1.1 Focusing adverbs in background information units

Focusing adverbs are never associated with the information focus of an utterance, and therefore cannot be considered as focusing, when they are part of a secondary information unit, i.e. when they belong to the information units of frame and/or appendix.[10] This rule holds true regardless of the position of the adverb in the frame or the appendix units. The focusing adverb is not associated with the information focus of the utterance either in its

[10] For König (1993: 979, 986), the contribution focusing adverbs make to the sentence meaning also depends on their *scope* within that sentence. In turn, the scope focusing adverbs take within a sentence is determined inter alia by "the division into tone groups ('tonality')". In this paper, I prefer to determine the contribution focusing adverbs make to the sentence of which they are part by identifying directly and more precisely the (informational) nature of the tone groups in which the adverbs occur.

occurrences at the beginning or within the frame or the appendix units or when it occurs at the end of these secondary information units. To illustrate this point, here are some examples of focusing adverbs occurring at the beginning, the middle and the end of an appendix unit:

(26) Il problema delle punture da insetto va diventando argomento di notevole interesse biomedico. // / In particolare, / **soprattutto** nelle annate nelle quali la stagione è particolarmente secca, /^{Frame} si registrano numerosi casi di punture. /^{Nucleus} // (ex. taken from De Cesare 2008: 399);

'The problem of insect stings is becoming a topic of great biomedical interest. In particular, above all in the years during which the season is particularly dry, there have been numerous cases of stings registered.'

(27) // / Pedro Matta,/ $^{\text{Nucleus–}}$ "Alberto" per i compagni di clandestinità degli anni '70, / il giorno dopo l'annuncio del probabile rimpatrio del dittatore, /^{Appendix} s'è riunito con altre ex vittime a Villa Grimaldi, /$^{\text{–Nucleus}}$ la cattedrale delle sevizie cilene dove torturavano **anche** i bebè per far parlare i genitori. /^{Appendix} // (*la Repubblica online*)

'Pedro Matta, "Alberto" to the underground companions of the Seventies, the day after the announcement of the probable repatriation of the dictator met with other ex-victims in Villa Grimaldi, the cathedral of the Chilean physical abuses where they tortured even babies to make the parents talk.'

(28) Se Stella mangia una fetta di torta, una fetta **anche** piccola, non ne avremo più.
Lit. 'If Stella eats a piece of cake, a piece even small, we will not have any left.'

It is clear, however, that when the constituent modified by *anche* occurs at the end of the appendix unit, it is associated with a higher level of communicative dynamism than when it is located within or at the beginning of the appendix.

The same holds true for the focusing adverbs located at the beginning, within and at the end of the frame unit:

(29) **Anche** perché ha mangiato una grande fetta di torta, Stella non si è sentita bene.
'Also because she ate a big piece of cake, Stella did not feel well.'

(30) Se **anche** Stella mangia una fetta di torta, non ne avremo più.
'If Stella too eats a piece of cake, we will not have any left.'

(31) Se Stella mangia **anche** una fetta di torta, non avrà più fame.
'If Stella also eats a piece of cake, she will not be hungry any more.'

In examples (26)–(31), although the focusing adverb occurs in the frame or in the appendix units, the information focus is invariably located in the main information unit (the Nucleus).[11]

4.1.2 Focusing Adverbs in the Main Information Unit

Focusing adverbs are not necessarily focusing even when they are part of the main information unit of the utterance, i.e. the Nucleus. This is obviously the case when focusing adverbs occur alone, i.e. without a co-constituent, in the nuclear information unit of the utterance, as shown for instance in:

(32) A: è intelligente Eva?
'is Eva intelligent?'

B: **anche/solo/soprattutto**
'also/only/above all'

When focusing adverbs do occur with a co-constituent in the Nucleus, the association of the adverb with the information focus of the utterance depends in particular on the position the focusing adverb and its co-constituent occupy within the Nucleus. Again, when the adverb and its co-constituent occur within the nuclear information unit, as in the example given below, they are generally not associated with the information focus of the utterance, and thus cannot be considered as having a focusing effect:

[11] In (26)–(31), we have not indicated the location of the information focus, as it is sometimes not clear over which constituent(s) it extends.

(33) Pare proprio che una nuova generazione di ingegneri nata nell'era della comunicazione e figlia dei computer non nutra più alcun amore né interesse per l'auto del Novecento. Il vecchio e obsoleto oggetto di metallo a cui si cercava, bene o male, di dare una bella linea e una funzionalità **anche** piacevole è un reperto senza significato$_{Focus}$. (*la Repubblica online* 2000)

Lit. 'It really seems that a new generation of engineers born in the communication era and sons of the computers does not have any love for or interest in the car of the twentieth century. The old and obsolete metallic object which car makers tried, successfully or otherwise, to give nice lines and a functionality also pleasant is an object without meaning'

Sometimes – but quite rarely – the adverb fails to be associated with the information focus of the utterance even when it modifies the last constituent of the Nucleus. This is for instance the case in example (34), where the information focus coincides with the non-final personal pronoun io, which precedes the last constituent of the Nucleus, i.e. the adverbial phrase of space anche lì:

(34) Dovevo fare 4 recite di *Bohème*, per preparare l'arrivo del gran divo Di Stefano. Ma quando arrivò, non stava bene; cantai io e i giornali cominciarono a parlare di me. Di domenica poi, Di Stefano doveva fare lo show più importante, il *Sunday Night*. // / Finì che andai io$_{Focus}$ **anche** lì /^{Nucleus} //. (ex. taken from De Cesare 2004: 200f.)

'I had to give 4 recitals of *Bohème*, to prepare for the arrival of the great singer Di Stefano. But when he arrived, he was not well; I sang [in his place] and the newspapers started talking about me. On Sunday then, Di Stefano had to do the most important show, the *Sunday Night*. It happened that I went there too.'

In both (33) and (34), the focusing adverb fails to associate with the information focus of the utterance, i.e. to be focusing, because there is another, more powerful focusing device in play, which overrules the potential focusing effect of the adverb. In the first case, the information focus is determined by the syntactic principle of 'end-focus' (cf. Quirk et al. 1985). In the second case, the information focus is determined semantically, by the contrast which holds between the referent (of the non-final constituent) of the personal pronoun *io* and the referent *Di Stefano*.

From the two cases examined in (33) and (34) it follows that neither being part of the main informational unit nor modifying its last constituent is a sufficient condition for a focusing adverb to associate with the information focus, hence to be focusing on the information focus of the utterance.

4.1.3 Focusing Adverbs with Anti-Focusing Effect

In addition to what has been seen so far, there is another piece of evidence for the assumption that focusing adverbs such as *anche, proprio, soprattutto* etc. are not focusing (neither strongly nor weakly) in all their occurrences. This piece of evidence is based on instances in which the adverb has an 'anti-focusing' effect. One example of this particular instance is given in (35), where the adverb *soprattutto* occurs at the end of the utterance. In this example, the adverb modifies the last constituent of the utterance (the adjective *europei*). There is no overruling focusing device which operates on a previous clause constituent, and yet the information focus is necessarily located before the AP *soprattutto europei*:

(35) Il libro sottolinea il contributo della Rockefeller Foundation allo sviluppo della ricerca biomedica e all'ammodernamento delle scuole di medicina di molti paesi **soprattutto** europei. (adapted from De Cesare 2008: 402)

'The book underlines the contribution made by the Rockefeller Foundation to the development of biomedical research and to the modernization of the medical schools of a lot of countries, especially European ones.'

In spite of a missing comma before the AP *soprattutto europei*, in (35) the mere presence of the adverb *soprattutto* forces us to interpret the constituent it is part of as background information, specifically as part of an appendix unit. Thus, the information structure of (35) is (36):

(36) // / Il libro sottolinea il contributo della Rockefeller Foundation allo sviluppo della ricerca biomedica e all'ammodernamento delle scuole di medicina di molti paesi /^{Nucleus} **soprattutto** europei. /^{Appendix} //

By contrast, in (37), where the adverb *soprattutto* is missing, the final adjective *europei* is necessarily to be interpreted as part of the same information unit as the preceding linguistic material, i.e. as nuclear information, and is part of the information focus of that utterance:

(37) // / Il libro sottolinea il contributo della Rockefeller Foundation allo sviluppo della ricerca biomedica e all'ammodernamento delle scuole di medicina di molti paesi europei. /^{Nucleus} //

'The book underlines the contribution made by the Rockefeller Foundation to the development of biomedical research and to the modernization of the medical schools of a lot of European countries.'

A different interpretation of the information structure of the clause in (37), for instance (38), where the final adjective *europei* functions as appendix, is not possible:

(38) * // / Il libro sottolinea il contributo della Rockefeller Foundation allo sviluppo della ricerca biomedica e all'ammodernamento delle scuole di medicina di molti paesi /^{Nucleus} europei /^{Appendix}. / //

'The book underlines the contribution made by the Rockefeller Foundation to the development of biomedical research and to the modernization of the medical schools of a lot of countries / Europeans.'

4.2 Contexts in which Focusing Adverbs are Associated with Information Focus

4.2.1 Weak Focusing Effect

Focusing adverbs associate with the information focus of the utterance in most of their occurrences (in both the spoken and the written discourse). The most frequent context in which the association holds is when focusing adverbs modify the last constituent of the Nucleus. Here are three examples with the adverbs *persino, anche* (note that in (40), the focusing adverb operates on a subject constituent placed after the verb, which increases its focal status) and *soprattutto*:

(39) Si mira alla diversità in termini puramente quantitativi: // / capita **persino** <u>agli artisti</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$, /^{Nucleus} la cui prima preoccupazione è spesso commerciale, /^{Appendix} riassumibile in un "quanto vendi?". /^{Appendix} // (*Il Sole 24 ORE*, 1.12.2002)

'One looks at diversity in purely quantitative terms: it even occurs to artists, the first preoccupation of whom is often commercial, and can be summarized as "how much do you sell?'

(40) Nella Bibbia, Abramo si prostra a terra e ride. // / Ride tra sé **anche** <u>Sara</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$, /^{Nucleus} che stava ascoltando. /^{Appendix} // (*Corriere della Sera*, 2.12.1997).

Lit. 'In the Bible, Abraham prostrates himself to the ground and laughs. Laughs also Sara, who was listening.'

(41) // / I metaboliti attivi della vitamina D impiegati sono **soprattutto** <u>l'alfacalcidolo e il calcitriolo</u>$_{\text{Focus}}$. /^{Nucleus} // L'alfacalcidolo è assorbito a livello intestinale e idrossilato a livello epatico. È disponibile in capsule da 0.25 e 0.50 mcg e in gocce alla concentrazione di 2 mcg/ml. Il calcitriolo (1-25 (OH)2D3) è il metabolita attivo e non richiede alcun processo di attivazione. (ex. adapted from *Italian Journal of Pediatrics* 2001, 27: 1).

'The active metabolites of the vitamin D involved are above all the alfacalcidol and the calcitriol. The alfacalcidol is absorbed at... The calcitriol ([...]) is the active metabolite and...'

Contrary to our expectations, however, in cases like (39)–(41) focusing adverbs do not play a crucial role in determining the information focus of the utterance. Rather, they interact with an information focus that is determined independently (cf. Dirmoth's claim, chapter 2.2.2.), by other linguistic means, in particular by the end-focus principle and by the discourse context. Thus, if we compare (39) and (41) with (42) and (43), we find that in the case where the focusing adverb has been deleted, the outcome is not much different from the original versions. The utterances in (42) and (43) have the same information focus as (39) and (41) respectively, and can therefore be used in the same context without clashing with the textual organization of the piece. This is particularly evident in example (43), where the two salient referents that function as information focus – *l'alfacolcidolo* and *il calcitriolo* – are resumed

in the ensuing text, where they serve as Topics (i.e. according to Lambrecht's 1994 definition, 'what the proposition is about') of the utterances of which they are part:[12]

(42) Si mira alla diversità in termini puramente quantitativi: // / capita agli artisti$_{Focus}$, /^{Nucleus} la cui prima preoccupazione è spesso commerciale, /^{Appendix} riassumibile in un "quanto vendi?". /^{Appendix}//

'One looks at diversity in purely quantitative terms: it occurs to artists, the first preoccupation of whom is often commercial, and can be summarized as "how much do you sell?'

(43) // / I metaboliti attivi della vitamina D impiegati sono l'alfacalcidolo e il calcitriolo$_{Focus}$. /^{Nucleus} // L'alfacalcidolo è assorbito a livello intestinale e idrossilato a livello epatico. È disponibile in capsule da 0.25 e 0.50 mcg e in gocce alla concentrazione di 2 mcg/ml. Il calcitriolo (1-25 (OH)2D3) è il metabolita attivo e non richiede alcun processo di attivazione.

'The active metabolites of the vitamin D involved are the alfacalcidol and the calcitriol. The alfacalcidol is absorbed at ... The calcitriol ([...]) is the active metabolite and ...'

In cases like (39)–(41), however, it would be wrong to assume that the contribution made by the focusing adverb to the utterance it occurs in should be accounted for only semantically, in terms of their paradigmatic function (i.e. the creation of a paradigm of alternatives to the items they modify). In addition to their paradigmatic function, and as a consequence of it, in (39)–(41) the focusing adverbs *persino, anche* and *soprattutto* also play a role in the information structure of the utterances of which they are part. In these examples, the focusing adverbs indicate the extension of the focus within the Nucleus. Specifically, they mark the left boundary of the information focus, which coincides with the adverbs themselves.

As we have already seen on the basis of (15), the left boundary of the information focus of examples like (39)–(41) does not necessarily coincide with the adverb itself. The context – which ultimately determines both the extension and the location of the information focus of an utterance – can also select an information focus that includes linguistic material placed at the left of the adverb and its co-constituent. Consider the following case, where the broad information focus of utterance B is determined by the generic question asked by speaker A:

(44) A: com'è Eva?
'how is Eva [= how would you characterize her]?'

B: / parla **solo** di cibo$_{Focus}$./^{Nucleus}
'[Eva] only speaks about food'

Thus, in instances like (39)–(41), focusing adverbs can be considered to have a weak focusing effect.

4.2.2 Strong Focusing Effect

Focusing adverbs can also play a more important role in the information focus status of the constituent with which they are associated. In other words, they can also have a strong focusing effect. This is for instance the case in example (14), given previously but repeated below for the sake of convenience, and in the Italian text (45), where we find the adverb *anche*:

(14) **Nur** du$_{Focus}$ kannst mir helfen
'Only you can help me.'

[12] In example (40) the alternative to the referent associated with the adverb *anche* (*Sara*) is expressed in the previous sentence (*Abramo*) and therefore refers back to it. Consequently, for reasons of coherence, in (40) it is not possible to delete the adverb.

(45) Con il microscopio, possiamo osservare le parti delle piante. Cominciamo con una pelle di cipolla: essa infatti è sottile e si osserva con facilità. Vista attraverso il microscopio, la pelle di cipolla appare formata di piccoli 'mattoni' detti cellule. // Queste cellule sono simili ma non identiche: // alcune sono più lunghe e altre più larghe; // **anche** la forma$_{Focus}$ varia, /^{Nucleus} anche se assomiglia sempre molto a quella di un rettangolo. // (ex. from Ferrari/Zampese 2000: 354; but the interpretation is mine).

'With the microscope, we can observe the parts of the plants. Let us start with the skin of an onion: it is thin and can be observed easily. Seen through the microscope, the skin of the onion appears to be formed by small 'blocks' called cells. These cells are similar but not identical: some are longer and others are larger; Lit. also the form varies, even if it always looks a lot like that of a rectangle.'

This time, when we compare the utterance with the adverb *anche* with the one where the adverb has been deleted (cf. (46)), we find that the information focus of the latter utterance has changed. Whereas the information focus of the utterance containing *anche* in (45) is restricted to the NP *la forma*, i.e. necessarily corresponds to a narrow information focus, in the utterance given in (46), following the 'end-focus principle', the information focus coincides intuitively with the verb *varia*, but could also be interpreted as a broad focus extending over both the verb and the subject *la forma*:

(46) // Queste cellule sono simili ma non identiche: // alcune sono più lunghe e altre più larghe; // / la forma varia$_{Focus}$, /^{Nucleus} anche se assomiglia sempre molto a quella di un rettangolo. //.

'These cells are similar but not identical: some are longer and others are larger; the form varies, even if it always looks a lot like that of a rectangle.'

Cases like (45) show that the occurrence of a focusing adverb in an utterance can play an important role in the determination and the delimitation of the information focus of that utterance, as it can change its location within the Nucleus. Examples (14) and (45) show that, instead of being located at the end, as is usually the case, the information focus can be anticipated at the beginning of the Nucleus by the presence of the focusing adverb. Thus, instead of coinciding with (part of) the predicate, the information focus overlaps with the subject phrase.[13] So far, this seems to be the only linguistic configuration in which a focusing adverb plays a major role in the determination of the information focus of the utterance. For this to happen, the following syntactic and informational conditions have to be met: the adverb must occur in an initial position of the Nucleus, it must operate on the subject, and the verb should coincide with given or at least easily recoverable information on the context.

Examples (14) and (45) can be compared with the case provided in (35): in both instances the mere presence of the focusing adverb forces the interpretation of the item it modifies as having a different informational status from the one it has in the utterance in which the adverb is missing. On the other hand, however, in both cases, the contribution of the focusing adverb to the information structure of the utterance is quite different. In (14) and (45), the focusing adverb forces to interpret the item it modifies as information focus, where the version with no adverb would have it as non-focal material or as part of a broad information focus, extending also over the rest of the clause. In (35), by contrast, the version with the adverb forces interpretation of the item it modifies as non-focal information, whereas the version without the adverb would have it as part of the information focus of the utterance.

To conclude this section, let us briefly discuss the informational status of the predicate involved in the clause containing the focusing adverb in examples such as (14) and (45). In our account of the information structure of the clause *anche la forma varia* (cf. 45), the predicate (here the verb *varia*) placed at the end of the nuclear information unit plays a secondary role. Specifically, it provides background or residual information (cf. Taglicht 1984: 3–7 on the concept of *residue* and Apothéloz/Grobet (2005), who account for these cases in terms of *intonational residue*). This interpretation is supported by data from spoken

[13] Of course, the overlap of the co-constituent of the adverb and the information focus of the utterance does not occur in all the occurrences where the adverb precedes the subject and the subject occurs in its canonical position, before the verb. The overlap does not take place for instance in B's answer to A's question: A: **Solo** lui può tradirti! 'Only he can betray you'. B: **Solo** lui può AIUTARMI 'Only he can HELP me'. In B's answer, the information focus is on the verb, and is determined by the presence of the contrastive focus.

corpora of Italian, where we find that the sequence '*anche* + subject + predicate' is often pronounced as a single intonation unit (indicated by the slashes):

(47) LUC: Rui Costa dov'è ? [...]
'Rui Costa where is he?'

CAR: l'è lì in terra / vedi! [CAR indica il giocatore in campo]
'he's there on the floor / see!' [CAR indicates the player on the field]

LUC: ah / è vero è vero // [...]
'ah / it's true it's true'

SUP: infatti / prima l'ho visto tirare //
'indeed / before I saw him shoot'

CAR: sì sì **/ anch'io l'ho visto //** (adapted from Cresti 2000/2)
'yes yes / also I [= me too I] saw him'

This is not, however, the only possible account of the informational status of the predicate in examples like (45). In our data from spoken Italian, there are also instances in which the predicate is part of an independent intonation unit, as in (48):

(48) già / **anche tu / canti** // (from Cresti 2000/2)
right / also you / sing //

In cases like (48), depending on the previous discourse context, the sequence '*anche* + subject' could coincide either with a frame unit or with a Nucleus. In turn, the predicate would coincide with a Nucleus, i.e. with foreground information and an appendix unit respectively. The two possible accounts of the information structure of (48) are given in (49):

(49) a. // già / **anche** tu /^{Frame} canti /^{Nucleus} //
b. // già / **anche** tu /^{Nucleus} canti /^{Appendix} //

The ultimate status of the predicate is determined by the interplay of several factors. Roughly, and hypothetically (as some of the following statements still need to be verified): (i) by a morpho-syntactic factor: a 'light-weight' predicate structure can more easily be prosodically integrated in the intonation unit of the sequence '*anche* + subject'; by contrast, a 'heavy-weight' predicate will tend to function as independent intonation and information unit; and (ii) by informational factors: at the '*given-new* informational level', which has to do with the cognitive status of referents (cf. for instance Chafe 1994), a predicate that provides given information tends to be integrated in the same unit as the sequence '*anche* + subject'; by contrast, a predicate that provides new information will tend to build its own intonation and information unit; at the '*Topic-Comment* informational level' (cf. Lambrecht 1994), a subject which coincides with a discourse Topic – i.e. serves as Topic of a group of utterances, of an entire paragraph and so on – generally occurs in an independent intonation and information unit. Specifically, when the sequence '*anche* + subject' coincides with a Topic that holds for more than one utterance, it is typically promoted to function as frame unit (cf. Ferrari/De Cesare 2010).

5 Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that focusing adverbs are best accounted for as having different focusing effects. There are (fairly numerous) occurrences in which focusing adverbs are not associated with the information focus of the utterance in which they occur, and therefore cannot be considered to play a role in its determination. That is why the focusing function of focusing adverbs cannot be accounted for as a stable semantic feature of these forms. In some instances, which I have been referring to as 'anti-focusing', it is even the focusing adverb itself which determines the background status of its co-constituent. On the other hand, there are contexts in which focusing adverbs are indeed associated with the information focus of the utterance. In these contexts, they can have two different focusing effects: a weak focusing effect – when they serve to mark the extension (left boundary) of the information focus – or a strong focusing effect – when their mere presence in the utterance determines a different information focus from the one in the version without the adverb. In our view, then, focusing adverbs cannot be accounted for simply by answering the question *are they or are they not focusing?* As we have seen, both answers are correct. The answer is in fact more complex: in some instances they are not, in others they are focusing, with different focusing effects.

The contribution (i.e. non-focusing vs. focusing: strong vs. weak) adverbs such as *anche, soprattutto, proprio* make to the information structure of the utterance of which they are part is determined modularly, by the interplay of prosodic (locus of nuclear stress), syntactic (position of the focusing adverb in the clause, function of its co-constituent) and informational factors (cognitive status of the co-constituent; nature of the information unit it belongs to).[14] Focusing adverbs are not focusing when they occur in a secondary information unit (frame or appendix), regardless of their position within that unit, and when they operate on a constituent located within the nuclear information unit of the utterance. By contrast, focusing adverbs are focusing when they occur, with their co-constituent, in the nuclear information unit of the utterance and when they operate on the last constituent of the Nucleus. They are also focusing when they occur alone with their co-constituent in an information unit (frame or Nucleus units, cf. examples (14) and (45)). In the first case, they have a weak focusing effect, in the second they have a strong focusing effect.

On the basis of their preferred syntactic and informational distribution, viz. before the last constituent of the nuclear information unit of the utterance, it is possible to say that focusing adverbs typically function as weak focusing markers: in most of their occurrences, they are sensitive to and interact with the information focus of the utterance (cf. König 1993, Andorno 2000). Again, there are, however, also cases in which focusing adverbs do not associate with the information focus of the utterance in their typical linguistic context. Consider for instance the following example, with the adverb *solo* occurring before the last constituent of the sentence structure *Mario ha bevuto due birre / È Mario che ha bevuto due birre* (from Andorno 2000: 47):

(50) A: Chi ha bevuto **solo** due birre?
'Who only drank two beers?'

B: // / (È) MARIO /^{Nucleus} (che) ha bevuto **solo** due birre/^{Appendix} //
'(it was) MARIO / (who) drank only two beers'

Given the general tendency of the focusing adverbs to interact with the information focus of the utterance, cases like these occur in very particular linguistic contexts. They occur when the phrase containing the focusing adverb coincides with given information (in (50) the phrase *solo due birre* is activated by A's question) and when there is another, stronger focusing marker in the utterance: it can be a contrastive focus, an interrogative pronoun, a syntactic focusing structure, for instance a cleft construction (Andorno 2000: 47).

Finally, from a terminological point of view, the results of this paper show that the term *focusing adverbs* can be misleading. One could argue that, in some works, the adjective *focusing* is used to refer to the fact that these adverbs extend their semantic effect over another constituent. This conception is not convincing either, however, since there are other linguistic structures – other adverbials (for instance intensifying adverbs, like *very* in *he is very nice*) and other word classes (cf. adjectives) – which extend their semantic content over another constituent and yet are not considered to be *focusing*. Consequently, we suggest avoiding use of the term *focusing* to refer to adverbs such as *anche, soprattutto, proprio* etc. and use instead, following Nølke (1983), the term *paradigmatic adverbs*, which is based on a stable semantic property of these forms.

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[14] Cf. also König (1993: 978), who recognizes that the "location of the nuclear tone does not clearly and unambiguously identify the focus of the particle". If it is true that the "focus constituent is the typical locus of the sentence stress", there are also cases where this is not so: "the stress may also be on the particle itself, if it follows its focus" (König 1993: 982). Therefore, for König (1993: 978) as well "a clear delimitation of the focus is only possible on the basis of the context".

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