Talks on “Topic and Focus in Italian”
at the SFB632 on “Information Structure”
Universität Potsdam and Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

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Frau Frascarelli wird drei Vorträge zur Syntax/Phonologie Schnittstelle halten.
Die Vorträge finden in der Woche vom 27. Juni bis 1. Juli statt:
Mo und Mi 17h und am Freitag um 14h im Raum 045 (kleiner Senatssaal)
im Haus 24

Monday, 27th June 2005
Focus Interpretation and Information Structure
Though “Focus” is a discourse notion, it is also unquestionably a product of grammar
and many studies have been dedicated to the analysis of its formal correlates.
This talk is concerned with the intonational properties of Focus in Italian, in its diverse
realizations (broad vs. narrow, informational vs. contrastive), in order to show the
connection between syntactic properties, phonological interpretation and discourse
requirements. The analysis of pitch accents and tone boundaries will provide evidence for
a systematic relation between syntax and prosodic mapping in the identification of Focus,
especially in the definition of extrapoosed (i.e., non-focused) constituents and the scope of
focussing operators (like solo “only” and anche “also”).

Wednesday, 29th June 2005
Different types of Topics
This talk focusses on the correlation between the syntactic and phonological realization
of Topics in Italian and their discourse properties. In particular, I will analyse the
connection between discourse roles and formal properties in sentences containing
multiple Topics. Evidence will be provided that different types of Topics show different
intonational properties and are realised in a specific order in the CP-system. A “free
recursion analysis” will thus be refuted and a hierarchy will be proposed in which
different functional projections are distinguished in terms of prosodic and syntactic
properties.

Friday, 1st July 2005
Pronominal Subjects in a pro-drop Language: Discourse requirements and
interface interpretation
The Null Subject parameter and general Economy requirements (“Avoid Pronoun”) lead
to the expectation that, in a pro-drop language like Italian, overt subjects are only realised
to guarantee recoverability in the discourse. However, the study of spoken corpora show
that this is not the case and overt pronouns are often realised, even when coreference
interpretation is not at stake. This talk will show a crucial connection between intonation
and discourse requirements in the realization of pronouns, when an analysis in “different
types of Topics” is assumed.