

The method used here follows the theoretical FRAMEWORK by Lambrecht1994, particularly important are the three main types of information structures he points out based on types of focus domains, i.e. parts conveying new information in a sentence:

*predicative-focus*, its function is to comment something about the sentence topic through the focus;

*constituent-focus*, this structure identifies the missing element from an open and incomplete topic expression through the focus;

*sentence-focus*, the subject and the predicate together form the focus domain, introducing an entity or state of affairs in the speech without it being connected with a previously established topic.

- (1) La foresta era quel mattino tutto un aggrovigliarsi di sentieri e di pensieri di persone smarrite.
- (2) Curvaldo tese l'orecchio. – Odo passi come di un esercito in marcia. Ferdibunda aguzzò lo sguardo. – Cielo! È il re mio marito alla testa delle sue truppe! Nascondiamoci!
- (3) Ma se questa è la reggia, dov'è mia figlia Verbena?  
[La Foresta Labirinto', Italo Calvino]

#### References

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## Existential Sentences with 'to Be' in Italian

This work in progress aims to present my research on the predicative use of to Be in its existential meaning with a functionalist pragmatic approach. The analysis of utterances containing to Be seems to indicate a certain semantic gradualness of the verb, directly corresponding to the information structure of the sentence in which it occurs, scaling from empty copulas to full existentials. Generative approaches have been used before (cf. Moro2010), and it could be useful to reconsider the subject in a pragmatic view.

A short novel by Calvino was used as a small corpus. The analysis of to Be occurrences confirms the possibility of the verb full grade, both as existential and as locative. Moreover comparing the information structure of copular sentences (1) with the one of existential sentences (3), the verb shows a medium grade, semantically faded but not as empty as in copulas, in the specific occurrences of copular clauses with a sentence-f structure (2), in which the new element introduction in the speech is strictly related to its entrance in the speech situation. These sentences identify this new entity just shown and its contextualization gives the copula a slight spatial semantic feature. This also suggests in Italian a postverbal subject can be a formal mean to correctly read a sentence asthetic.

