

## **SUBJECT AND FOCUS – A CASE STUDY FROM BULGARIAN**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper deals with the pragmatic role of focus, focus types and the realization of focus on the grammatical subject of the Bulgarian sentence. We discuss mainly identification focus, but some remarks will also be made in regard to other focus types. The main research question is whether there exist any properties, formal or structural, on the base of which the two focus types, i.e. identification focus and information focus, can be distinguished in the simple declarative sentence of the written Bulgarian language. Word order and the grammatical category of determinedness/definiteness will be viewed as crucial factors for the distinction. This study is mainly descriptive and will just suggest one possible explanation concerning the problem.

### **Keywords:**

subject, focus, identification focus, information focus, syntactic realization, determinedness

## 1. The problem

The problem of the information structure of the Bulgarian sentence has been a subject of disputes for a long time and many works deal with this problem (Ivanchev 1957,1968; Rudin 1986; Nitsolova 2001; Krapova 2002, 2004; Tisheva&Dzhonova 2002, 2006; Tisheva 2007, 2009, 2013). Most of the previous studies, however, focus mainly on the grammatical object of the sentence, discussing problems such as topicalization, dislocation, and doubling of the grammatical object. Except for some studies (Ivanchev 1957,1968), the problem of the realization of the grammatical subject in the information structure of the Bulgarian sentence has been poorly discussed, and many questions still stay open. One such question concerns the problem of how the pragmatic roles of topic and focus are mapped on the subject. Another problem, insufficiently examined, is the distinction of the focus types (information focus and identification/contrastive focus) in the grammatical structure of the sentence.

This paper will focus on the written Bulgarian language and discuss the following questions in regard to the simple declarative sentence:

- 1) Is there a canonical position (initial/preverbal or final/postverbal) in the sentence for the focal subject?
- 2) Are there any formal or syntactic means on the base of which the focus types (identification focus, information focus, or others) mapped on the subject can be distinguished?

The reasons to deal with the written language are as follows. First, the written language has been chosen because, in comparison to the spoken language, it has been less discussed and described. Second, since the prosodic elements and the logical stress – crucial factors for the formation of the information structure of the sentence – are invalid in the written language, it would be of interest to examine whether there exist any other means on the base of which the pragmatic roles of topic and focus in the sentence can be distinguished. Third, it would be of interest to analyze how the pragmatic roles are mapped on the subject in the written language, a problem insufficiently treated in the previous studies.

Simple declarative sentences are chosen for simplicity reasons in regard to the structure and the realization of the components.

Word order will be viewed as one of the principle mechanisms for pragmatic manipulation. We will also pay attention to the grammatical

category of determinedness/definiteness whose role for the structural realization of the constituents of the sentence in Bulgarian has been poorly disputed in the previous studies and needs further examination.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we define the key terms used in our analysis. Section 3 makes a brief outline of the disputes concerning the information structure of the Bulgarian sentence, its word order, and the pragmatic realization of the subject. Section 4 discusses focus and focus types, and the specific features of each focus type. Section 5 presents the analysis of this study. Section 6 provides a summary.

## **2. Terminology**

In relation to the information structure of the sentence, different notions have been proposed for the pragmatic roles, e.g. ‘topic’ and ‘focus’, ‘theme’ and ‘focus’, ‘theme’ and ‘rheme’. In our analysis, we will prefer the terms ‘topic’ and ‘focus’, but when discussing some other studies, we will use the original terms used in those studies.

For focus types, also, different notions (‘information focus’, ‘regular focus’, ‘contrastive focus’, ‘identification(al) focus’, ‘closed focus’, ‘open focus’, ‘emphatic focus’, ‘exhaustive focus’, ‘broad focus’, ‘narrow focus’, etc.) have been proposed, sometimes even one and the same term used to describe different phenomena, or *vice versa*, different terms have been used to refer to one and the same phenomenon. We will mainly use the terms ‘information focus’ and ‘identification focus’. The connotations for our terms will be given in Section 4.

## **3. Information structure, word order, and subject in Bulgarian**

The constituents of a sentence may be ordered according to their syntactic or pragmatic roles.

Languages possess forms and structures whose realization depends on information structural factors (Breul&Göbbel&Thiel 2010:1), and, as languages differ in the linearization of the sentence constituents, they differ also in their options for marking discourse functions (topic, focus) structurally.

Traditionally, the ordering of the constituents in the Bulgarian sentence was considered to be determined by the syntax. However, recently, it has been argued (Krapova 2004, Tisheva 2007) that it is rather pragmatic factors which trigger the constituent ordering, and Bulgarian belongs to the so-called discourse-configurational languages

which have developed a subset of syntactic means to encode discourse functions such as topic and focus. Different types of information are made by different syntactic constructions (Tisheva 2013:18), and the sentence structure is a reflection of the human thought processes. Tisheva (2013:13) claims that two main factors are responsible for the realization of the pragmatic roles, i.e. contextual boundedness and communicative dynamism.

The information structure of a sentence is the formal expression of the pragmatic structuring of a proposition in a discourse (Lambrecht 1994:5).

Slavic languages are notoriously rich in linguistic means that express or are sensitive to categories of information structure (Janinskaja 2016:707), and the information packaging is subject to interface between grammar, semantics, and pragmatics. Pragmatic roles are encoded prosodically (stress), morphologically (grammatical morphemes), syntactically (word order), or lexically (focalizers).

Bulgarian also possesses a rich system of means for encoding the pragmatic roles in the sentence. After the declension loss, word order has become the basic means for marking the elements with different pragmatic function in Bulgarian. The problem is, however, that the word order in Bulgarian is free and all theoretically possible word orders can be actually observed<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, the constituents of the sentence can be placed in different positions. Due to the lack of case marking, at first glance, it seems surprising how the syntactic roles can be defined in sentences with free word order. As Rudin (1986:14), however, has pointed out, although the word order in Bulgarian is quite free, it is not completely so.

Bulgarian has a canonical ‘neutral’ word order SVO where the initial subject is most easily interpreted as a topic. Ivanchev (1957) calls this word order ‘objective word order’ and says that the objective word order is much more prevalently found in the written language than the spoken language, since in the written language there can be no recourse to logical stress or intonation for the signaling of ‘rheme’. In the normal situation, the linearization of the elements goes from ‘old’ (known information/topic) to ‘new’ (unknown information/focus), as in (1).

- (1) [Detzata]T [igrajat v dvora]F.  
 “The children are playing in the yard.”

<sup>1</sup> 49 possible structures have been listed for the simple Bulgarian sentence (for the list cf. Dyer 1992:56).

Krapova (2004:1) states that word order, at least in the preverbal field (left periphery of the sentence) is to a large extent shaped by information structure requirements. Tisheva (2009:245) and Gebert (2009:315) assert the idea that in simple declarative sentences the word order achieves discourse prominence. This is the default realization of the information packaging of the Bulgarian sentence and the preferred interpretation in case of syntactic ambiguity, as in the example below.

- (2) [Lăvitzata]<sub>s</sub> napadna [tigritzata]<sub>o</sub>.<sup>2</sup>  
“The female lion attacked the female tiger.”

Deviations from this configuration should be structurally marked. Thus, if the initial NP (*lăvitzata*) in (2) is not the subject but the object, for the sentence to be grammatical, Bulgarian requires an obligatory clitic doubling (enclitic accusative of the personal noun co-referring with the noun) for the object, as in (3).

- (3) [Lăvitzata]<sub>o</sub> [ja]<sub>o</sub> napadna [tigritzata]<sub>s</sub>.  
“The female tiger attacked the female lion./ (lit.) The female lion was attacked by the female tiger.”

Georgieva (1974:66-67) argues that communicative intent, functional perspective and logical stress are the factors which might influence the linearization of the constituents in the Bulgarian sentence. However, Georgieva does not mention about the differences in the sentential word order in the spoken and the written language.

Consequently, since the written language lacks the prosodic properties of the spoken language, it would be of interest to examine what are the means in the written language which can take on the role of the logical stress used in the spoken language for the distinction of the pragmatic roles.

In Bulgarian, topic and focus can be found both at sentence-initial and sentence-final positions (Tisheva 2007:389). As it was pointed out, the order of the constituents depends not on their syntactic role but on their discourse/pragmatic function (topic, focus). Thus, initial subjects need not to be topic. Again, subjects need not occupy initial position.

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<sup>2</sup> The syntactic ambiguity is due to the fact, that, theoretically both *lăvitzata* and *tigritzata* can function as subjects or objects, since in feminine the syntactic roles cannot be distinguished on the base of the grammatical feature of definiteness (the noun phrases for both syntactic roles have one and the same form). Thus, the distinction can be made to a certain extent by the sentential position.

This fact was first discussed by Ivanchev (1957,1968) who made an attempt to describe the structure of the Bulgarian sentence in regard to the theory of the Functional Sentence Perspective (FSP). Unfortunately, his ideas stayed undeveloped further and no other study made an attempt to continue to investigate the problem treated in the Ivanchev's works.

Non-canonical word orders are derived from the basic one by means of movement operations triggered by information-structural features. The movement of the elements whose typical position is before the verb to a post-verbal position is generally viewed as focalization, while the opposite movement, i.e. the movement of the elements whose typical position is post-verbal to a pre-verbal position is regarded as topicalization (Tisheva 2013:19). Since the canonical position of the subject is pre-verbal, focalizing subjects is usually related to the movement of the subject to a post-verbal position (Tisheva&Dzhonova 2006). Krapova (2004), however, argues that the post-verbal position is the canonical position for focal subjects, and it is the verb (predicate) which undergoes movement ahead.

According to the Ivanchev's model (1957) for the pragmatic structuring of the sentence, topical and focal subjects can be placed both initially or finally (examples (4)-(7)<sup>3</sup>).

- (4) Vojnitzite **dojdoxa**.
- (5) **Vojnitzi(te)** dojdoxa.
- (6) Dojdoxa **vojnitzite**.
- (7) **Dojdoxa** vojnitzite.  
"The soldiers came."

The work of Ivanchev made a great contribution to the investigations of the information structure of the Bulgarian sentence. However, some problems related to his analysis still stay open and need further investigation. First, Ivanchev did not give an explanation what is the difference of initial and final focal subjects (examples (5), (6)). Second, according to the Ivanchev's claim, initial focal subjects can be either definite or indefinite (example (5)), while final focal subjects should always be definite (example (6)), but the grounds for such claim have not been shown. Those two problems will be further discussed in our study in Section 5. Finally, it is not clear what contextual situations are relevant for the realization of final topical subjects (example (7))

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<sup>3</sup> Focus is given in **bold**.

and whether it is possible anyhow to distinguish in the written language the pragmatic meanings of (6) and (7), more strictly said, are there any factors on the base of which the information structures of (6) and (7) can be distinguished? In our opinion, it is hardly difficult to talk about final topical subjects in declarative sentences in the written language which lacks the prosodic factors valid in the spoken language for the distinction of the pragmatic roles, except for some cases where final topics are a result of the structural properties of the sentence (Yovkova-Shii 2022:184). Such cases are found in question sentences, as (8) below, where the subject (*italic*) can be viewed as a topic.<sup>4</sup>

- (8) **Šte si otide** li njakoga *novijat korona virus*? (Darik News, digital version 12.03.2020)  
 “Will ever the new corona virus go away?”

In the following part of this paper we will discuss about the focal subjects in Bulgarian and try to find the answers of the questions listed in Chapter 1.

## 4. Focus

### 4.1. Defining focus

Not all sentences have topic but all sentences have a focal element and focusless sentences do not exist since all sentences have some update potential (Vallduví&Engdahl 1996:469).

Different definitions have been proposed for focus. Lambrecht (1994:213) defines focus as ‘the semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition’. Krifka (2008:247), on the base of the theory of ‘alternative semantics’ (Rooth 1985, 1992), says that ‘focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions’ and ‘any kind of focus, contrastive or not, is assumed to evoke a set of alternatives against which the focus constituent is evaluated.’ Following Dik&Hengeveld (1997), Erteschik-Shir (2007:38) says that the focal information is that information which is most important and salient in the given communication setting, often being new, but if not new, re-emphasizing already available information.

For the purpose of our analysis, we would prefer a mixed version

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<sup>4</sup> Rudin et al (1999:546) claim that the question particle *li* is the element by which the focal element in the sentence can be checked. Consequently, the verb in this sentence (the constituent with the particle *li*) is the focus, and the rest part of the sentence (=the subject) should be viewed as the topic.

of the above mentioned definitions and say that **focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions, and expresses the most important and salient information in the proposition which is usually new or, if not new, re-emphasizes already available information.**

#### 4.2. Focus types

Different studies categorize different types of focus and, as already mentioned, different terms ('information focus', 'regular focus', 'contrastive focus', 'identification(al) focus', 'closed focus', 'open focus', 'emphatic focus', 'exhaustive focus', 'broad focus', 'narrow focus', etc.) have been proposed sometimes even for one and the same phenomenon, and *vice versa*, one and the same term has been used to describe different focus phenomena. In our analysis, we will distinguish and compare mainly two types of focus, i.e. identification focus and information focus<sup>5</sup>. Kiss (1998) argues that the distinction of these two types is of great importance since they differ syntactically as well as semantically.

There is a general tendency to distinguish between the information focus and contrastive (identification) focus. Information focus is commonly thought of as that part of the utterance that introduces new (non-presupposed) information into the discourse, e. g. by providing an answer to a *wh*-question. A single constituent of the sentence or the whole sentence can function as information focus.

(9) **Who** came?  
**A girl** came.

(10) **What happened?**  
**A girl** came.

Contrastive (identification) focus, on the other hand, is necessarily associated with a contextually determined set of alternatives for which the predicate holds potentially (Zubizarreta 1998:6). It is identified as the exhaustive subset of this set for which the predicate phrase actually holds (Kiss 1998:245). Contrastive focus is said to be a new information

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<sup>5</sup> For Bulgarian, we claim that 'identification focus' and 'contrastive focus' exist separately and should be distinguished. The ground for such claim is based on the observations of Green-Jaggar (2003) who argue that not all contrastive foci give rise to implicatures of exhaustiveness. Also, our analysis will show that in Bulgarian identification focus is always contrastive but contrastive focus need not be identificational.

focus that receives contrastive interpretation (Neeleman&Vermeulen 2012:5).

Different studies treat these two focus types in a different way. The differences in the points of view are due to differences in the languages discussed.

It has been said that identification focus is not uniform across languages. Again, it has been claimed (Kiss 1998:245-246) that information focus is present in every sentence but not every sentence contains identification focus. The question is, however, whether these two focus types are grammatically realized in different ways across languages and can be distinguished anyhow, namely, are there any reliable cues for the identification of information focus and identification focus?

For instance, it has been argued for a range of languages that contrastive foci must be marked in a special way by means of special prosodic, or syntactic, or morphological means, which set them formally apart from mere information foci (Vallduví&Vilkuna 1998). Prosodic evidence from intonation languages, however, suggests that contrastive focus is not fully independent of information focus, as contrastive focus differs only gradually in intonation from information focus (Hartmann 2008, and references therein). Similarly, Krifka (2008) argues that contrast is simply a pragmatic feature, and ‘regular focus’ (i.e. information focus) and contrastive focus are not distinguished. In contrast, evidence from languages such as Hungarian or Finnish, in which contrastive elements are realized in a particular syntactic position, suggests the opposite (Kiss 1998, Vallduví–Vilkuna 1998). Discussing the situation in Hungarian, Kiss (1998:247) claims that information focus and identification focus (in Kiss’s terminology) are associated with distinct structural positions.

Krifka (2008) argues that there is little reason – neither from a formal nor from a functional perspective – for distinguishing between contrastive focus and information focus with regard to the notion of contrast, and, says that the distinction between the two focus types should be rather captured in terms of the notions of ‘open focus’ (open set of alternatives: information focus) *vs.* ‘closed focus’ (restricted/closed set of alternatives: selective information focus<sup>6</sup>). Krifka states that the question ‘What do you want to drink, tea or coffee?’ doesn’t seem to be more contrastive than an answer to the non-restricted

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<sup>6</sup> The contrastive/identification focus.

question ‘What do you want to drink?’, referring to the first as closed focus and the latter as open focus. (ibid:258-259). Zimmermann (2008:351) argues something similar, saying that it is impossible to predict the presence or absence of a contrastive marking on a focus constituent just on the basis of its inherent properties, or its immediate discourse function as an answer, correction, etc. Rather, the presence or absence of a special grammatical marking depends on the specific discourse requirements at a specific point in the discourse. These are influenced by the intentions of the speaker and his/her assumptions about the knowledge state(s) of the hearer(s). Consequently, contrastive focus and information focus are not fundamentally different as far as the underlying semantics is concerned.

In our analysis on Bulgarian, we will discuss mainly the information and identification focus, the latter to be distinguished from contrastive focus, and claim, as stated in footnote 5, that the identification focus is contrastive and exhaustive in meaning (excluding some or all relevant alternative referents to the focused element (Skopetas&Fanselow 2010:170)), while information focus can be contrastive but not exhaustive due to its operation within an open set of alternatives.

The main problem we will discuss is whether information focus and identification focus are realized grammatically or syntactically in a different way in the structure of the Bulgarian sentence in relation to the subject, and, if it is possible in any way to distinguish these two types of focus in the written language.

## **5. Subject and focus in Bulgarian**

As already mentioned, Bulgarian has a free word order with a canonical linearization of SVO for the elements in the simple declarative sentence which has been preferred in case of ambiguity. All the constituents in this structure, however, can move and every constituent can become a topic or a focus. As Tisheva (2013:9) has pointed out, the movement of the elements whose typical position is before the verb to a post-verbal position marks the new information, i.e. the focus in the sentence. *Vice versa*, the movement of the elements whose typical position is after the verb to a pre-verbal position marks the old information, i.e. the topic in the sentence. Again, the movement of the elements whose typical position is after the verb to a pre-verbal position has different discourse functions for expressing different kind of information.

Different semantic and pragmatic nuances are expressed through sentential element rearrangements. The most natural pragmatic structure is the structure where the initial subject is the topic at the same time. It has been said (Ivanchev 1957) that the basic requirements for a subject to be a topic are initial position and determinedness, as in example (1).

Subjects, however, can be both definite and indefinite. Definite subjects are marked by inflecting the morpheme of the definite article and post-fixing it to the stem of the noun, as in *grad-ăt* ‘the city’. The definite article possesses long and short forms by which the syntactic roles (subject/object) are distinguished but this formal distinction exists only in the singular masculine (*grad-ăt/ grad-ă*). For feminine, neuter, and plural, one and the same form is used for both syntactic roles<sup>7</sup> (*žena-ta/ žena-ta* (fem. sg.) ‘woman’, *dete-to/dete-to* (neut. sg.) ‘child’, *ženi-te/ ženi-te* (pl.) ‘women’).

Indefiniteness is expressed by the bare (non-ricled) form of the noun (*grad*), or by adding the numeral *edin* ‘one’<sup>8</sup> to the noun.

Ivanchev (1957:504), Stankov&Ivanova (1989:20) claim that indefinite subjects can become topics also<sup>9</sup>, but only when they occupy initial position and are accompanied by *edin*, as below.

- (11) [Edna krasiva žena]<sub>T</sub> pee. / \*Pee [edna krasiva žena]<sub>T</sub>. (example from Ivanchev 1957)

“A beautiful woman is singing.”

- (12) [Edno dete]<sub>T</sub> vleze i sedna./\* [Dete]<sub>T</sub> vleze i sedna. (example from Stankov&Ivanova 1989)

“A child came in and set.”

In our opinion, as we suggest later, *edin* functions in the above examples as a ‘representative marker’, introducing a new referent into the discourse, and the phrases with *edin* are better to be viewed as the focal elements in the sentences rather than topics.

<sup>7</sup> See also footnote 2.

<sup>8</sup> The status of *edin* as an indefinite article has been greatly disputed, and we will avoid mentioning to *edin* as an indefinite article.

<sup>9</sup> The question whether the forms with *edin* are topic or not is tightly connected to the definition of topic and to the problem to whom the information is ‘given’. If topic is defined as it has been proposed by Hockett (1958), or Reinhart (1981) as ‘aboutness’ or ‘topic-to-be’, then it is possible to state that the forms with *edin* are topics. In relation to ‘familiarity’ (considered to be one of the properties of ‘definiteness’), which has been given as one of the criteria in the distinction of definite and indefinite forms, Nicolova (2008) argues that the forms with *edin* in Bulgarian are used when the referent is familiar to the speaker, but unfamiliar to the hearer.

Thus, topical subjects are necessarily definite. Again, the normal syntactic position for topical subjects is initial (i.e. preverbal), however, as displayed in example (8), syntactic structures with final topical subjects either exist.

Focal subjects can be non-articled (indefinite) and articulated (definite). Again, they can be placed either initially or finally. Consequently, here arise the following two questions: 1) how is it possible to distinguish topical and focal subjects, and 2) how is it possible to distinguish the different foci types in the written Bulgarian language? The first question has already been treated in a previous study (Yovkova-Shii 2022), and here we will focus only on the second question.

As already mentioned, Krapova (2004) claims that the normal focus position is after the verb, and initial focal subjects are a result of movement of the final subject to preverbal (initial) position.

Tisheva&Dzhonova (2006), Tisheva (2007, 2009) take a rather different position, talking only of subject right dislocation in case of focalization. According to Tisheva&Dzhonova (2006), the subject right dislocation is the case of ‘real’ movement. To support their idea, they give the following examples with pronominal antecedents (underlined parts) of the focalized subjects.

(13) E, tāj sa te, **momčētata**.

“So, it is they, the boys.”

(14) Toj šte dojde **bašta ji**.

“He, her father will come.”

In this study we will not discuss the process of movement/dislocation of the subject, but just analyze the pragmatic functions of the initial and final subjects.

We will start the discussion with some remarks on contrastive focus. Although this type of focus is not the main concern of our analysis, it would be necessary to make some brief remarks about this focus type.

As already mentioned, we distinguish contrastive focus and identification focus in Bulgarian. The main reason for the distinction is that, first, contrastive focus nouns can be both indefinite and definite (examples (15), (16), (17)), while identification focus nouns, as discussed later, are necessarily definite, and second, identification focus

is exhaustive in meaning (excluding all relevant alternatives), while contrastive focus (in our interpretation) need not be exhaustive.

(15) **Máž (a ne žena)** kara kolata.

“A man (not a woman) is driving the car.”

(16) **Mážăt (a ne ženata)** kara kolata.

“The man (not the woman) is driving the car.”

(17) **Snjag** vali, **a ne dăžd**.<sup>10</sup> (example from Dyer 1992:45)

“It is snowing, not raining.”

As can be seen from example (17), and footnote 10, when the contrastive meaning is made explicit by all the contrasted constituents, the contrasted elements can occupy different positions (initial, final), since the meaning of contrast is made explicit by mentioning all the members of the contrast, and thus it is not a problem to recognize the meaning of contrast wherever the contrastive focus subjects are placed. However, when the contrast is implied by a single member, as in (15), (16), the contrastive focal subject is better to occupy initial position. As it will be mentioned later, identification focus is also usually realized sentence initially. Probably this syntactic property (initial position) is one of the features which relates the contrastive and identification focus. To support our idea, let us refer to the next examples (18, 19). Both of them mean “A war started”. Again, in both sentences, the subjects are more naturally interpreted as the focal parts. Are, however, these two sentences different pragmatically? One possible interpretation is, (18) to be viewed as either information focus (WHA), answering a *wh*- question *Kakvo započna?* “What started?”, or as all-new focus, answering the question *Kakvo stana?* “What happened?” (*Započna vojna*. “A war started.”), while for (19), when interpreted irrespectively of a *wh*- question,<sup>11</sup> a contrastive focus interpretation (*Vojna, (a ne...) započna*. “A war, not a...started.”) should be more natural.

(18) Započna **vojna**.

(19) **Vojna** započna.

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<sup>10</sup> The same contrastive meaning can be expressed by ‘Vali **snjag, a ne dăžd**.’

<sup>11</sup> Compare with example (20) where the statement is preceded by a *wh*- question.

Information focus usually presupposes a *wh*- question. The opposite, i.e. the answer to a *wh*- question is necessarily an information focus, however, is not true, because, as Shimoji (2018:90) has argued, WHQ evokes a set of alternatives but it cannot entail the exclusion of any subset of alternatives since the alternative is not yet specified by definition. Also, as it has already been mentioned, there is little reason – neither from a formal nor from a functional perspective – for distinguishing between contrastive focus and information focus with regard to the notion of contrast, and, thus, the possibility to interpret the subject in (20, B) as a contrastive focus (*Dete, a ne vāzrasten se davi* “A child, not an adult, is drowning.”) cannot be denied.

Information focus, thus, can be defined as the domain of new (non-presupposed) information, i.e. the new part in the sentence describing what has been said about the topic, or as the information of the sentence that makes contribution to the hearer’s knowledge store (Vallduví 1992). Information focus nouns in Bulgarian can be non-definite (examples (18), (20)) as well as definite. Bare subject nouns, however, are most easily interpreted as the constituent expressing information focus. Again, as shown, bare subject nouns can occupy initial or final position. Bare noun subjects can express contrastive or information focus, but as it has already been mentioned, when the sentence occurs without any previous context, information focal subjects occupy more often final position in the sentence (example (18), (21)), while initial focal subjects indicated by bare nouns are more easily interpreted as contrastive focus (examples (19), (20)).

- (20) A: **Koj** se davi?  
 “Who is drowning?”  
 B: **Dete** se davi.<sup>12</sup>  
 “A child is drowning.”

- (21) Čakaše ni **dālāg pāt**.  
 “A long journey was waiting for us.”

Janinskaja (2016) claims that the VS(O) structure in Bulgarian is used to express ‘broad focus’ (=information focus). The observation of Janinskaja is not wrong, but, as shown, SV(O) structures, also, can express information focus, and, thus, information focus subjects need

<sup>12</sup> Without the *wh*- question, this sentence, can function also as all-new information (*Dete se davi*).

not come finally (or, post-verbally).

Subject nouns with *edin* can also function as information focus due to the function of *edin* as a ‘presentative marker’.

(22) Imalo edno vreme **edin kral**. Kraljat[T] imal dvama sina.<sup>13</sup>  
“Once upon a time there lived a king. The king had two sons.”

(23) **Edna žena** se odдели ot grupata.  
“A woman left the group.”

Information focus subjects can also be definite. As Dyer (1992:121) points out, though it has been claimed that definite forms mark usually the ‘theme’, definite forms may in fact be ‘rhematic’, either. Dyer, however, points out only expressions of uniqueness (generic nouns) with the article<sup>14</sup>, but as example (24) shows, non-generic definite subjects can also function as information focus.

(24) A: **Koj** plašta za ekskurzijata?  
“Who pays for the excursion?”  
B: **Firmata** plašta.  
“The company pays.”

In relation to the fact that definite forms naturally qualify the old (known) information<sup>15</sup>, it could be claimed that contrastive and information focal subjects, besides their function to express non-presupposed (new for the hearer) information, when definite, can express also already available information which is new only at the moment of the speech.

Finally, let us discuss the identification focus and its realization in the sentence. The problem of identification focus is poorly discussed in the previous studies, and just few works (Krapova 2002, 2004; Tisheva&Dzhonova 2002) mention about this type of focus in

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<sup>13</sup> The function of ‘presentative marker’, i.e. introducing a new referent into the discourse, becomes explicit by the second sentence where *kraljat* becomes the old/known information and turns into a topic.

<sup>14</sup> Dyer treats generic subjects as ‘rheme’, giving the following example from Stojanov (1980:37) with a definite subject.

Ex.) **Fizikata** e edna ot nai-starite nauki za prirodata.  
“Physics is one of the oldest sciences about nature.”

<sup>15</sup> There exists a general correspondance between old information and definiteness. This tendency is related to the fact that the old information is the information which can be identified, and since, as it has been pointed out (Lyons 1999), identification is one of the features of determinedness, these parts of the sentence which are old or known will exhibit greater degree of semantic, and formal determinedness than those which are new.

Bulgarian. Quoting Zubizarreta (1998:6), Krapova (2004:3) states about contrastive focus<sup>16</sup> that it is necessarily associated with some contextually determined set of alternatives for which the predicate holds potentially, by pointing out the unique member (or subset) of that set for which the predicate actually holds. Again, Krapova (op. cit.) states that this type of focus conveys new information only indirectly: by emphasizing the information the speaker typically brings forward a (potentially) novel quality or property of what is being talked about.

On the basis of Krapova's claim, we would like to suggest that one of the invariant properties of the identification focus in Bulgarian is determinedness/definiteness. Indefinite forms cannot express identification focus. Thus, the subject in (25) can function as identification focus, while the subjects in (26) and (27) cannot.

(25) **Deteto na Marija** sčupi vazata.

“Marija's child broke the vase. / It was Marija's child who broke the vase.”

(26) **Dete**<sup>17</sup> sčupi vazata.

“A child broke the vase.”

(27) **Palavo dete** sčupi vazata.

“A naughty child broke the vase.”

Our claim is supported by the claim of Skopeteas&Fansalow (2010) who say that ‘identificational focus’ is more likely to induce focus marking than ‘non-identificational focus’ (=information focus)<sup>18</sup>.

Tisheva (2013:24) argues that, besides ‘old’ information (or, the topic), the definite article can be used to mark ‘new’ information, which, however, is already available to the hearer and the hearer thus just re-emphasizes (updates) at the moment of the utterance the information which he/she already possesses.

As we displayed about contrastive and information focus, the contrastive focus is more naturally related to the left periphery of the

<sup>16</sup> In the previous studies about focus in Bulgarian, the term ‘contrastive focus’ is usually used for what we call identification focus.

<sup>17</sup> *Dete* in this sentence can express contrast, and this subject can also be interpreted as contrastive focus (*dete, a ne vāzrasten* ‘a child not an adult’), however, it cannot function as an identification focus since the indefinite form cannot express exhaustiveness.

<sup>18</sup> As we displayed already about the information focus in Bulgarian, there exist cases where the noun phrase expressing information focus is definite, but this is not the default situation in the case of the information focus.

sentence while information focus occupies easily the right periphery of the sentence. We will show that identification focus, like contrastive focus, is most naturally related to the left periphery of the sentence. Similarly, Krapova (2004) argues that ‘contrastive’ (=identification) focus is related with the left periphery of the Bulgarian sentence. Janinskaja (2016:707), also, says that non-final foci are narrow and/or contrastive. Identification focus is, in fact, usually realized in the sentence-initial position, however, this position should not be considered absolute. The structural property, i.e. sentence-initial position of identification focal subjects, however, can be viewed as an evidence for their semantic/pragmatic similarity (i.e. availability of the information) with the topic. This semantic/pragmatic similarity is also reflected in formal similarities (determinedness/definiteness). Although determinedness is not a decisive factor in the information structuring of the sentence (Fesenmeier 2009:233), as Vaseva-Kadankova (1980:119-120) has pointed out, the actual division of the sentence, namely, the functional sentence perspective, can be realized also by the article. Ivanchev (1957)’s study, also displays that there is a relationship between sentential word order and determinedness/definiteness. Namely, sentence proceeds from the information which already has been designated to the information which has been specified to a lesser degree.

Dyer (1992:57) claims that determinedness is an important factor in the construction of SVO structures in Bulgarian. Based on his claim, it could be said that identification focal subjects which are definite most naturally occupy initial position in the sentence.

While contrastive and information focal subjects can express not only non-presupposed, but also already available information, identification focus (in our interpretation) can express only already available (from the context, discourse, situation) information about the unique member of that set. The definite property of the information focus is due to the fact that this type of focus does not indicate ‘brand new’ information but rather updates already available information, a semantic property which it shares with the topic. Identification focus points to the unique member of a closed set of alternatives already available (known) to the hearer eliminating the rest of the alternatives. The necessity for updating can be explained by the following claim of Zimmermann&Onéa (2011:1665):

‘[T]he notion of contrast<sup>19</sup> refers to the fact that a particular focus content, or a particular speech act containing a focus, or a particular focus-background partition, is unexpected for the hearer from the speaker’s perspective, and may thus create problems for the successful update of the common ground: since unexpected facts, or discourse moves, are more difficult to accept or accommodate, the speaker will often try to facilitate the hearer’s plight of adjusting her background assumptions accordingly, which is a precondition for successful update. One possibility for the speaker to direct the hearer’s attention, and to facilitate the task of shifting the background assumptions, is to use a non-canonical, i.e., a structurally more complex sentence that comes with additional grammatical marking in form of, for instance, a particular intonation contour, syntactic movement, a cleft structure, or the insertion of morphological markers.’

The following remark of Zimmermann (2008:348) can be added to the above mentioned remarks of Zimmermann&Onéa.

‘[C]ontrastivity should be best viewed as a discourse-semantic phenomenon with grammatical reflexes, perhaps exempting Hungarian: contrastivity in this sense means that a particular focus content or a particular speech act containing a focus is unexpected for the hearer from the speaker’s perspective.’

As it was argued, in the spoken language, prosodic factors, i.e. logical stress, are of great importance for the distinction of the pragmatic roles in the sentence. In the written language, however, prosodic factors are invalid. Instead, other means have been used to distinguish the pragmatic roles.

Besides the means we discussed above, some lexical means have been also pointed out as important factors in the distinction of the focus types. König (1991) and Dryer (1994) use similar frameworks for their investigations and say that focus particles (focalizers) like *only* and *even* are involved in the semantic interpretation of the narrow focus (in our terminology, the identification focus). For Bulgarian, Nicolova (2001) analyzes the adverb *samo* ‘only’ and claims that this lexeme may function as exclusive focus particle, overtly marking the focus element in the information structure of the sentence (i.e. the narrow focus).

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<sup>19</sup> Zimmermann&Onéa talk about ‘contrastive focus’.

Unfortunately, Nicolova's analysis does not focus on the subject and her observations concern other constituents of the sentence, mainly objects and predicates.

It has been said that cleft sentences are one of the mechanisms for marking focus. Cleft sentences signal the exhaustive interpretation of the contrastive/identification focus which in-situ focus lacks.

In relation to clefting, we will examine the Bulgarian focus particle *imenno* 'exactly' which has similar semantic functions with the cleft sentences, and test the difference between the information and identification focus using this particle. We will argue that information focus cannot occur with *imenno* (example (28)), while identification focus can occur with this focalizer (example (29)). The inconsistency (ungrammaticality) with *imenno* of (28), expressing information focus, is due to the fact that information focus works within an open set of alternatives for which the property of exhaustiveness expressed by *imenno* is inappropriate. However, without a *wh*-question, in situations where *firmata* can be interpreted as the exhaustive member of a closed set of alternatives (i.e. the process is exclusion of the non-correct referents by indicating the correct one), the co-occurrence is possible (example (29)).

- (28) A: **Koj** plašta za ekskurzijata?  
"Who pays for the excursion?"  
B: \*Imenno **firmata** plašta.  
"Exactly the company pays."

- (29) closed set {n1=firmata, n2=otdelăt, n3=učastnitzite}<sup>20</sup>  
B: Imenno n1=**firmata** plašta za ekskurzijata.  
"Exactly the company pays for the excursion."

It is difficult to talk about universal strategies for focus encoding. Again, even within a single language it is difficult to indicate a single strategy for marking focus. Bulgarian is not an exception.

In the spoken language, prominence is the main mechanism for distinguishing the pragmatic roles. In the written language, however, prominence is not valid. As our analysis displayed, word order and the grammatical category of determinedness/definiteness can be taken as reliable, but not absolute, strategies to differentiate the two focus types

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<sup>20</sup> This is one possible closed set with three members, namely, 'the company', 'the division', 'the participants'.

– information focus and identification focus.

## 6. Summary

In this paper we discussed the problem of the information structure of the Bulgarian simple declarative sentence in relation to the realization of the focus on the subject, accentuating on the distinction of information focus and identification focus. The analysis displayed that structural (sentential position) and grammatical (determinedness/definiteness) factors are involved in the distinction of these two types of focus but the distinction is rather pragmatic, realized in the context.

Thus, both information focus and identification focus can occupy either initial or final position in the sentence, however, identification focus is more naturally sentence-initial, while information focus is more naturally sentence-final.

Again, both the information and identification focus can express already available information. This information is already available, through the context or the situation, to the hearer and is just re-emphasized or updated at the moment of speech. In this aspect, they share similarities with the topic.

However, these two foci have also different semantic properties. One of the semantic differences between the information and identification focus is that, while the information focus can express non-presupposed information (and this is the main semantic-functional property of this type of focus), identification focus cannot.

Again, information focus and identification focus display formal differences in that the information focus nouns can be both definite and indefinite, while identification focus nouns are necessarily definite. The definiteness property and the semantics of ‘availability of information’ of the identification focus makes it closer to the topic than information focus. That similarity with topic is the factor for identification focus subjects to occupy usually sentence-initial position, a specific syntactic feature of the topic.

Finally, identification focus is contrastive and exhaustive, thus identifying the unique member of a closed set of alternatives. The property of exhaustiveness is what distinguishes this type of focus from contrastive focus, which we consider to be a separate focus type in Bulgarian. On the other hand, information focus can be contrastive, but never exhaustive, since it functions within an open set of alternatives.

The features of the information focus and identification focus in Bulgarian are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**

<b>focus type</b>	<b>type of information expressed</b>	<b>set of alternatives</b>	<b>sentential position</b>	<b>±article</b>
information	non-presupposed/ available	open set	final/initial	±article
		does not point out any unique member		
identification	available	closed set	initial/final	±article
		points out (identifies) the unique member		

The distinction of the pragmatic roles of the subject in the written Bulgarian language can be made to a certain extent on the base of syntactic and formal features but such factors are not absolute, and the distinction between topic and focus, on the one hand, and focus types, on the other hand, is principally pragmatic, realized mainly in the context and through the intuition of the native speakers. Thus, the distinction is more relative than absolute.

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