On the syntactic focus and wh-phrases in Russian

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This paper offers a uniform treatment of focused phrases and wh-phrases in Russian. I show that there are two syntactic possibilities for focalization in Russian from a neutral declarative sentence: one in the left periphery and another in the IP domain. This conclusion contradicts claims that there is only one position associated with contrastive focus (IP) or that there is no specific position in the sentence structure that can be associated with contrastive focus. These two positions can host contrastive phrases, but only Focº in the left periphery can attract exhaustive phrases.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I study the notion of syntactic focus in Russian and examine the parallel between focused phrases and wh-phrases that allows me to propose a uniform treatment of these two types of phrases. Contrary to previous analyses (King 1995; Junghanns and Zybatov 1995; Zybatow and Mehlhorn 1999), I argue that there are two syntactic possibilities for focalization from a neutral declarative sentence in Russian: one in the left periphery and another in the IP domain, between TP and vP. I show that these two positions are specifier positions of a functional projection FocP. I show that two tests of exhaustivity of Szabolcsi (1981) and Farkas, presented in Kiss (1998), distinguish these two positions. Both positions can host contrastive phrases, but only the [Spec, FocP] position of the left periphery can host exhaustive phrases. Since Horvath (1986), it has been a standard practice in generative grammar to consider wh-phrases as carriers of the feature [focus], which lets them target the same position as the focused elements. I argue that this is the case in Russian.

2. Focused XPs' positions in Russian

In Russian, there are two syntactic possibilities when focusing a phrase from a neutral declarative sentence like the one seen in (1a). The first possibility is to move the phrase to the sentence initial position as in (1b); the second possibility is to move the phrase into the preverbal position as in (1c). In both cases we have a contrastive reading of the focused element:

(1) a. Deti čitajut knigi.
   children-NOM read.PRES.3PL books-ACC
   ‘Children are reading books.’

   b. Knigi deti čitajut.
      books-ACC-FOC children-NOM read.PRES.3PL
      ‘It’s books that children are reading.’ (i.e. not something else)

   c. Deti knigi čitajut.
      children-NOM books-ACC-FOC read.PRES.3PL
      ‘It’s books that children are reading.’ (i.e. not something else)
The third position is associated with the sentence final position (*in situ*), to which the focused element belongs:

(2) Deti čitajut **knigi**, a ne žurnaly.
children-NOM read.PRES.3PL books-ACC-FOC and not magazines-ACC

‘It’s books that children are reading and not magazines.’

The construction in (2) has a different interpretation from (1b) and (1c) and is more appropriate when it contrasts with another element (*a ne žurnaly*) and its intonational contour is less strong (see also the discussion in Section 3). If the element which the focused phrase is contrasted with is absent in (2), this is a case of the focus that only expresses identification without any contrast (Kiss 1998). An example of this identification without contrast is a situation in which the speaker expresses his or her joy about the fact that the children finally started reading books, which was not the case before.

King (1993, 1995), Junghanns and Zybatow (1995) and Zybatow and Mehlhorn (1999) consider the notion of contrastive focus in Russian and explain the data in (1) and (2) from two different angles that I present in the next section.

2.1 Previous analyses

King (1993, 1995) argues that there is one position related to contrastive focus that corresponds to the canonical linear position of focus in emotionally connotative sentences. According to King, in emotionally connotative sentences the focused phrases are in preverbal [Spec, IP] position. Her analysis says that the sentence in (3) will have the derivation in (4). The person saying this sentence is a little irritated because someone thought that he was reading something else instead.

(3) Ja **knigu** čitaju.
I-NOM book-ACC-FOC read.PRES.1SG

‘It’s a book that I am reading.’ (i.e. not something else)

(4) IP
   /undi
   \a
   NPj
   \a
   knigu
   /\i\k
   V + I
   čitaju
   /t
   \i
   tk
   tj
   VP
   V’
   ti
   V
   ti
   V

King argues that Russian is a VSO language, with obligatory verb movement in *I*. The author claims that if the subject precedes the verb, it is topicalized and is adjoined to IP. Bailyn (1995) clearly shows that Russian is a SVO language, and thus the fact that the subject precedes the verb is not solely due to the topicalization. Moreover, even if King’s analysis explains preverbal focus, it does not explain why focused DPs appear in the sentence initial position as in (5):
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(5) **Knigu** ja čitaju.
    book-ACC-FOC I-NOM read.PRES.1SG
    ‘It’s a book that I am reading.’ (i.e. not something else)

Here, if the focused DP is in [Spec, IP], then the DP subject, being lower than the focused element, cannot be adjoined to IP, and thus the analysis that suggests a unique position for focused DPs is not desirable.

Junghanns and Zybatow (1995) and Zybatow and Mehlhorn (1999) argue that there is no specific position in the sentence structure that can be associated with contrastive focus. According to the authors, contrastive focus can be assigned to any constituent *in situ* or after movement. Thus, they say, the contrastive focus can be realized in the left or right periphery, or *in situ* as in (1) and (2). Even if at first glance this analysis explains the data in (1) and (2), it does not explain the contrast between (6a–b) (the focused phrase cannot be *in situ*):

(6) a. Deti *skazki* čitajut v mašine.
    children-NOM tales-ACC-FOC read.PRES.3PL in car-PREP
    ‘It’s tales that the children are reading in the car.’
    Context: A man sees children in the car and he thinks that children are reading comics, but his friend explains that they read tales.

b. * Deti čitajut *skazki* v mašine.
    children-NOM read.PRES.3PL tales-ACC-FOC in car-PREP

Another argument against the analysis that claims that there is no position in the sentence structure associated with contrastive focus is the distribution of focused elements in the left periphery, where they must follow the conjunction čto (7) and the topics (9):

(7) a. Ja dumaju, čto *etu knigu* ty skoro pročitaš.
    I-NOM think PRES.1SG that this book-ACC-FOC you-NOM soon read.FUT-2SG
    ‘I think that it’s this book that you will read.’ (i.e. not another one)

    I-NOM think PRES.1SG this book-ACC-FOC that you-NOM soon read.FUT-2SG

(8) * Etomu *fil’mu*, nagradu, oni ejo dadut.
    this movie-DAT-FOC award-ACC-TOP they-NOM it-ACC give.FUT-3PL
    ‘The award, it’s to this movie that they will give it.’ (i.e. not to another one)

(9) Nagradu, *etomu* *fil’mu* oni ejo dadut.
    award-ACC-TOP this movie-DAT-FOC they-NOM it-ACC give.FUT-3PL
    ‘The award, it’s to this movie that they will give it.’ (i.e. not to another one)

Thus, the two analyses of focused phrases in Russian do not explain the ability of these phrases to appear in two peripheries. In what follows, I show that there are two distinct positions in Russian as they behave differently with respect to their semantic interpretation.
2.2 What are these focus positions?

Here, I argue in favor of two positions for focused phrases in Russian: one higher than TP and another one between TP and vP. According to Jackendoff (1972), some adverbs, like *wisely*, are ambiguous between sentence and manner reading and thus should be in different structural positions. Let us consider the Russian sentences in (10), (11) and (12) where I use the Russian adverb *blagorazumno*, equivalent to *wisely*:

(10) My *blagorazumno* Alekseju dajom sovety.
    we-NOM wisely Alex-DAT-FOC give.PRES-1PL advices-ACC
    'We advise Alex in a wise manner.' (manner reading)
    'It’s wise of us to advise Alex.' (sentence reading)

(11) My Alekseju *blagorazumno* dajom sovety.
    we-NOM Alex-DAT-FOC wisely give.PRES-1PL advices-ACC
    '# 'It’s wise of us to advise Alex.' (sentence reading)

(12) Alekseju my *blagorazumno* dajom sovety.
    Alex-DAT-FOC we-NOM wisely give.PRES-1PL advices-ACC
    'We advise Alex in a wise manner.' (manner reading)
    'It’s wise of us to advise Alex.' (sentence reading)

In (10), where the adverb precedes the focused element, we have both readings. In (11), where the focused element precedes the adverb, the only possible reading is the manner reading. In (12), where the focused element is in the sentence initial position, we can have both readings as in (10).

To interpret this contrast, I adopt the arguments of Watanabe (1993) and Bošković (1997), who argue that the sentence adverbs are adjoined to TP, while manner adverbs are adjoined to VP. The contrast in interpretation of the adverb in these sentences suggests a focus position under TP. In the cases with the sentence reading of the adverb in (10) and (12), the adverb can be adjoined to TP; when this reading is not possible (as in (11)), the adverb must be adjoined lower in the structure. Given that in (11) we cannot have the sentence reading, the focused phrase must be located between TP and vP. If the adverb precedes the focused phrase as in (10), we can have both readings. This means that the adverb can be adjoined either to VP or TP, which means that the focused phrase is situated higher than the adjoined position of VP. The sentence in (12) shows that when the focused phrase is in the sentence initial position, we can have both readings, and thus, the focused phrase can be higher than TP.

2.3 FocP in the left periphery

In his study of left periphery (CP layer), Rizzi (1997, 2001) argues that a unique C head cannot deal with the distributional constraints of different kinds of operators hosted by the C-system. Following Rizzi’s study, I adopt his analysis and propose that the C° head in Russian should be split into at least four functional projections: ForceP (complementizers, relative pronouns), TopP (topics), FocP (focused constituents and question operators), and FinP (complementizers). In (7) and (9) I showed that the focused phrase must follow complementizers in ForceP (7) and topics in TopP (9). At the same time, it precedes the complementizer *čtoby* in FinP:
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(13) On prišjo, etu knigu čtoby počitat’.

He-NOM came.PAST-3SG this book-NOM-FOC to read.INF

‘It’s this book that he came to read.’

The distribution of elements in the left periphery lets us argue for the following configuration: ForceP > TopP > FocP > FinP > IP.

In what follows, I show that Focº of the left periphery is specified for the strong [focus] feature. I start with constructions containing the že clitic, which, according to our analysis, is the head of FocP projection.

First of all, I argue that the element that precedes the že clitic is always focused. As argued by Kiss (1998), Kenesei (1986), Rudin, King and Izvorski (1996) and Szabolcsi (1994) among others, existential quantifiers like someone or something cannot appear in a focused position. The ungrammaticality of sentences (14b) and (15b) shows that existential quantifiers in Russian cannot precede že, and thus, this position is reserved for focused phrases:

(14) a. Knigu že Ivan pročital.
    book-ACC-FOC že Ivan-NOM read.PAST-3SG
    ‘(But) Ivan read the book (že).’

b. * Čto-nibud’ že Ivan pročital.
    something-ACC-FOC že Ivan-NOM read.PAST-3SG

(15) a. Ivan že protčital knigu.
    Ivan-NOM že read.PAST-3SG book-ACC-FOC
    ‘(But) Ivan (že) read the book.’

b. * Kto-nibud’ že protčital knigu.
    Someone-NOM-FOC že read.PAST-3SG book-ACC-FOC

Following the test of distribution of existential quantifiers, I conclude that the position of the specifier of functional projection FocP of the left periphery is the eventual landing site of focused phrases in Russian.

I argue that the sentence in (1b) repeated in (16) will have the derivation in (17):

(16) Knigi deti čitajut.
    books-ACC-FOC children-NOM read.PRES.3PL
    ‘It’s books that children are reading.’ (i.e. not something else)

1 According to McCoy (2001), particle že marks a set of propositions which differ from each other in the value of (at least) one term. The contrast set for že contains members which are mutually exclusive: if one proposition is true, the other one(s) is/are false. Rendering the meaning of utterances containing že into English usually involves the use of either some contrastive lexeme, such as but, or some prosodic means.

2 These sentences cannot be grammatical in a declarative reading.
In the derivation in (17), the sentence has the functional head Foc with a strong formal feature \([\text{focus}]\) that requires checking in the specifier-head configuration. The only possible candidate for this checking is the lexical item with formal feature \([\text{focus}]\) – the direct object \textit{knigi}. As for the subject, \textit{deti}, it moves to \([\text{Spec, TP}]\) to check the strong OCC feature of T.

2.4 FocP in IP domain

I argue that the second focus position in Russian is that of the specifier of functional projection FocP located between TP and vP. In the derivation (19) of the sentence (1c) that I repeat in (18), the FocP is the only logical and available site, because the [Spec, TP] position is occupied by the DP subject that checks the strong OCC feature of T. As a possible solution, we could suppose that the DP object also rises to [Spec, TP]. In this case, we have to prove that T in Russian has the \([\text{focus}]\) feature which could attract the DP object in [Spec, TP], and then we must prove that focused DP cannot occupy the same position even in multiple specifiers' configuration with the subject, because, as we see in (20), both phrases can be separated by a syntactic element and thus must occupy different positions.

(18)  \text{Deti} \quad \text{knigi} \quad \text{čitajut.}
\text{children-NOM} \quad \text{books-ACC-FOC} \quad \text{read.PRES.3PL.}

‘It’s books that children are reading.’ (i.e. not something else)
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(19)

TP
Deti T' T FocP knigi Foc' Foc vP t Subj v VP t Obj čtajut

(20) Deti, po-mojemu, knigi čitajut.
children-NOM in my opinion books-ACC-FOC read.PRES.3PL
‘In my opinion, it’s books that children are reading.’

Interestingly, the same contrastive focus marker že can appear in the IP domain to mark a focused phrase:

(21) Deti knigi že čitajut.
children-NOM books-ACC-FOC že read.PRES.3PL
‘(But) children are reading books (že).’

Consequently, the test of the distribution of existential quantifiers applies to this position. The ungrammaticality of (22) confirms our hypothesis:

(22) * Deti čto-nibud’ že čitajut.
children-NOM something-ACC-FOC že read.PRES.3PL
‘(But) children are reading something (že).’

If there are two positions for focused phrases in Russian, what distinguishes them? In what follows, I show that these two positions differ in exhaustivity. These two positions can host contrastive phrases, but only the [Spec, FocP] position in the left periphery can host exhaustive phrases.

3. The contrastivity and exhaustivity of focus

In this section, I show that there are two positions for focused phrases in Russian in the CP and IP domains, differing with regard to exhaustivity of the focused phrase.
3.1 The contrastivity of focus

As I mentioned, the two specifier positions of functional projection FocP of the left periphery and IP domain can host contrastive phrases where the focus negates the assigned value of the variable in the context’s specification, and at the same time, it introduces an alternative value for this variable. The sentences (23b) and (23c) are possible replies to the affirmation in (23a):

(23) a. Ivan pokupajet kvartiru.
    Ivan-NOM buy.PRES.3SG apartment-ACC
    ‘Ivan buys an apartment.’

   b. Dom Ivan pokupajet.
      house-ACC-FOC Ivan-NOM buy.PRES.3SG
      ‘It’s a house that Ivan buys.’ (i.e. not an apartment)

   c. Ivan dom pokupajet.
      Ivan-NOM house-ACC-FOC buy.PRES.3SG
      ‘It’s a house that Ivan buys.’ (i.e. not an apartment)

In (23b) and (23c), the focus negates the assigned value of the variable (apartment), and, at the same time, it introduces an alternative value for this variable (house), and thus, both positions are compatible with contrastive focus.

3.2 Exhaustivity of focus of the left periphery

In what follows, I show that if these two positions can host contrastive phrases, then these two positions have different exhaustive interpretations. There are two tests of exhaustivity: the test of Szabolcsi (1981) and the test of Farkas, presented in Kiss (1998).

3.2.1 Szabolcsi’s test (1981)

Szabolcsi’s test involves a pair of sentences in which the first sentence contains a focus phrase consisting of two coordinate DPs and the second sentence differs from the first one only in that one of the coordinate DPs has been dropped. If the second sentence is not among the logical consequences of the first one, then the focus expresses exhaustive identification. Kiss (1998: 250) illustrates this test with the Hungarian examples that I reproduce in (24) and (25). The sentence in (24a) has a contrastive focus, while the sentence in (25a) has an identificational focus:

     Marie a hat-FOC and a coat-FOC picked out herself.to
     ‘It was a hat and the coat that Mary picked for herself.’

   b. Mari egy kalapot nézett ki magának.
      Mary a hat-FOC picked out herself.to
      ‘It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.’
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Mary out picked herself to a hat and a coat

‘Mary picked a hat and the coat for herself.’

b. Mari kí nézett magának egy kalapot.

Mary out picked herself to a hat

‘Mary picked a hat for herself.’

Kiss argues that the Hungarian sentence and its English translation in (24b) are not logical consequences of (24a); on the contrary, they contradict (24a). The Hungarian example and its English equivalent in (25b), on the other hand, are logical consequences of (25a). That is, the Hungarian preverbal contrastive focus and the English cleft constituent in (24) pass this test of exhaustivity, but the post-verbal information focus in (25) does not pass.

Let us apply this test to Russian with the context in (26). In this context the sentence (27) is not a logical consequence of (26): if it were true that the boy wanted to buy only tomatoes and lettuce (= truth condition for (26)), then it would not be true that he wanted to buy only tomatoes (= truth condition for (27)). Thus, the examples in (26) pass the test of exhaustivity, and the focus of the focused phrase in the left periphery is exhaustive.

(26) Pomidory i salat on kupit.
tomatoes-ACC-FOC and lettuce-ACC-FOC he-NOM buy.FUT.3SG

‘It’s tomatoes and lettuce that he will buy.’

Context: A boy is going to the grocery shop and will buy tomatoes and lettuce.

(27) Pomidory on kupit.
tomatoes-ACC-FOC he-NOM buy.FUT.3SG

‘It’s tomatoes that he will buy.’ (exclusively)

At the same time, in the examples in (28), the truth condition for (28a) supposes those for (28b) and (28c): if it were true that the boy will buy only tomatoes and lettuce, then it would be true that he will buy tomatoes (28b) and lettuce (28c). There is no evidence in (28b) and (28c) that indicates that the boy will buy only tomatoes or lettuce and nothing else.

It means that the DPs tomatoes and lettuce in (28a) have a different reading that those in (28b) and (28c).

(28) a. On kupit pomidory i salat.

he-NOM buy.FUT.3SG tomatoes-ACC and lettuce-ACC

‘He will buy tomatoes and lettuce.’

b. On kupit pomidory.

he-NOM buy.FUT.3SG tomatoes-ACC

‘He will buy tomatoes.’

c. On kupit salat.

he-NOM buy.FUT.3SG lettuce-ACC

‘He will buy lettuce.’

The sentences in (29) behave exactly as those in (28). The sentence in (29b) does not mean that the boy will buy only tomatoes and nothing else:
To summarize, only the focused phrase in the sentence initial position as in (26) (FocP of the left periphery) passes the test of exhaustivity of Szabolcsi (1981).

3.2.2 Farkas's test

Farkas suggests an exhaustive identification test involving a dialog about a situation in which Mary picked a hat for herself (Kiss 1998):

(30) a. A: Mari egy kalapot nézett ki magának Marie a hat-FOC picked out herself
   ‘It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.’
   B: Nem, egy kabátot is ki nézett  no a coat-FOC too out picked
   ‘No, she picked a coat, too’

b. A: Mari ki nézett magának egy kalapot. Mary out picked herself a hat
   ‘Mary picked herself a hat.’
   B: # Nem, egy kabátot is ki nézett  # ‘No, she picked a coat, too.’

Kiss explains that since the dialog in (30) describes a situation in which Mary did pick a hat for herself, the negation of Mary’s picking a hat for herself can only be interpreted as the negation of exhaustivity. This interpretation is available only in the case of the Hungarian and English sentences in (30a), containing contrastive focus in Hungarian and a cleft constituent in English, and this interpretation is absent in (30b).

Let us now apply the same test to Russian, taking the same context as in (26). In (32a), the negation serves to negate the sentence (31) by replacing it by the sentence salat on kupit in (32a). In (32b), although, the presence of tože “too” indicates that the negation does not negate the sentence (31) but rather serves to negate the fact that the boy will buy only tomatoes and nothing else (negation of exhaustivity). The acceptability of the answer (32b) indicates that this example exhibits exhaustive focus:

(31) Pomidory on kupit.
    tomatoes-ACC-FOC he-NOM buy.FUT.3SG
    ‘It’s tomatoes that he will buy.’
    Context: A boy is going to the grocery shop and will buy tomatoes and lettuce.
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no  lettuce -ACC-FOC  he-NOM  buy.FUT.3SG
‘No, it’s lettuce that he will buy.’

b.  Net,  salat  on  kupit  tože.
no  lettuce -ACC-FOC  he-NOM  buy.FUT.3SG  too
‘No, it’s lettuce that he will buy, too.’

Note that the presence of tože in (33c) and (34c) is not pragmatic: in (33), the object remains in situ, and in (34), it is moved in preverbal position. It follows from that fact that the only interpretation of negation in (33b), (33c), (34b) and (34c) is the one that negates the entirety of sentences (33a) and (34a), respectively. The negation of exhaustivity is not available in these two cases.

(33)  a.  On  kupit  pomidory.
he-NOM  buy.FUT.3SG  tomatoes-ACC
‘He will buy tomatoes.’

b.  Net,  on  kupit  salat
no  he-NOM  buy.FUT.3SG  lettuce -ACC
‘No, he will buy lettuce.’

c.  # Net,  on  kupit  salat  tože.
no  he-NOM  buy.FUT.3SG  lettuce -ACC  too
‘No, he will buy lettuce, too.’

(34)  a.  On  pomidory  kupit.
he-NOM  tomatoes-ACC-FOC  buy.FUT.3SG
‘It’s tomatoes that he will buy.’

b.  Net,  on  salat  kupit
no  he-NOM  lettuce -ACC-FOC  buy.FUT.3SG
‘No, it’s lettuce that he will buy.’

c.  # Net,  on  salat  kupit  tože.
no  he-NOM  lettuce -ACC-FOC  buy.FUT.3SG  too
‘No, it’s lettuce that he will buy, too.’

Thus, we observe one more time that only a focused phrase in sentence initial position passes the test of exhaustivity.

Both tests of exhaustivity support our hypothesis that there are two focus positions in Russian. Although each position can serve as a landing site for focused phrases, only the Focº head of the left periphery can attract exhaustive focused phrases and distinguishes itself from Focº head situated in the IP domain.
3. VP-internal focus

I showed that there are two positions for focused phrases in Russian in the CP and IP domains, differing with regard to exhaustivity of the focused phrase. But what about the focused phrases in sentence final position?

As I mentioned before, Russian allows a focused phrase in the sentence final position, and these constructions are more appropriate when they are contrasted with a phrase, as in (2), repeated in (35). Also, their intonational contour is less strong than in other focused phrases.

(35)  
Deti čitajut knigi, a ne žurnaly.  
children-NOM read.PRES.3PL books-ACC-FOC and not magazines-ACC  
‘It’s books that children are reading and not magazines.’

If the element to which the focused phrase is contrasted is absent in (35), we have a focus that expresses the identification without expressing any contrast:

(36)  
Deti čitajut knigi.  
children-NOM read.PRES.3PL books-ACC  
‘Children are reading books.’

If this final position were the site for contrastive focused phrases, then the sentence in (37) would be acceptable given that the clitic že is a marker of contrast, as we can see in this article:

(37)  
* Deti čitajut knigi že.  
children-NOM read.PRES.3PL books-ACC-FOC že  
‘(But) children are reading books (že).’

The ungrammaticality of (37) shows that the focus in the sentence’s final position does not have the same status as the focus in the IP domain and in the CP layer. The sentences in (38) confirm that focus in any VP-internal position has the same behavior as in (37):

(38)  
a.  
* Deti čitajut knigi že v mašine.  
children-NOM read.PRES.3PL books-ACC-FOC že in car-PREP  
‘(But) children are reading books (že) in the car.’

b.  
* Deti čitajut knigi v mašine že.  
children-NOM read.PRES.3PL books-ACC in car-PREP-FOC že  
‘(But) children are reading books in the car (že).’

The ungrammaticality of (38a) and (38b) suggests that VP-internal focus is not related to contrast. This is an additional argument against the proposition of Junghanns and Zybatow (1995) and Zybatow and Mehlhorn (1999), who argue that there is no specific position in the sentence structure that could be related to the contrastive focus. I propose that contrastive focus is related to two positions in the sentence: FocP in the left periphery and in IP domain, and that the focus in the VP domain is identification without contrast.
4. The relation between focus and wh-phrases

Let us examine the parallel between focused phrases and wh-phrases that will lead us to the uniform treatment of these two types of phrases.

A relevant discussion in the field of sentential information structure turns on the supposed relation between focus and the question. The first fact that enables us to speak about this is that a wh-question always requests a focused answer. The constituent corresponding to the wh-phrase of an interrogative sentence is necessarily focused. The answer to the question may be either focus (39b) (in this case it may just fill in a blank), or a constituent containing focus (40b), where it presupposes a more highly structured multiple choice context and excludes the alternatives (Kuno 1982):

(39)  a. Who will come?
     b. John (will come)

(40)  a. Who will come?
     b. Russian writer (will come)

The answer to the question can also be a sentence that contains a focused element and is a near echo of the question. In this case, the whole sentence-answer must be focused (41b):

(41)  a. What will happen?
     b. John will come.

Interestingly, we can also have the structure with multiple choices (42b):

(42)  a. Why are you surprised?
     b. Because the Russian writer will come (and not Canadian one).

As Drubig (2000) notices, there are many languages with structures of morpho-syntactic focus: for example, Akan, a Kwa language spoken in Ghana, has a focus construction in which the focused component appears obligatorily in the left periphery and is followed by focus-particle na. A wh-question built by such a sentence has the same structure: the wh-phrase appears in the sentence’s initial position and is accompanied by the marker of focus. In the answers, two types of particle can appear: the marker of focus na appears in the phrastic answer (43A1), while the marker of focus a appears in the answer to a term:

(43)  Q: Hena na Ama rehwehe?
     qui FOC Ama is-looking-for
     ‘Who is it that Am is looking for?’

     A1: KOFI na *(Ama rehwehe)
        Kofi FOC Ama is-looking-for

     A2: Kofi a *(Ama rehwehe)
        Kofi FOC
        ‘(It is) KOFI (that Ama is looking for)’  ( = (3) de Drubig 2000: 5)

Another fact that lets us discuss the supposed relation between focus and questions is that in the languages with a pied-piping of wh-phrases, wh-phrases appear in the focus position. Thanks to
typological work (Croft 1990; Givón 1990), this generalization is recognized as a near-universal feature of natural languages. We have the best proof in languages where the focused phrase moves to a specific syntactic position: Hungarian and Basque are the most quoted representatives of this type of language, where the focused phrases and the wh-phrases are found in the preverbal position.

This position is the most widely used and can be observed in many languages (Kiss 1995, 1998). Also frequent are the languages with focus in the sentence initial position, like Russian or Akan, as in the example in (43). As Watters (1979) and Tuller (1992) notice, a small number of Bantu and Chadic languages have focus in the post-verbal position, but the authors suppose that focus constructions in these languages are connected to the preverbal focus in a derivational way. Rare are the languages - Tangale, Ngizim (Tuller 1992) or Kirundi (Ndayiragije 1999), for example where the focus inevitably occupies the final position of the sentence. But, as Mallinson and Blake (1981: 152) mention, the obligatory or optional displacement of the focused phrases is a very frequent phenomenon in the languages of the world, so perhaps we may speak about a universal phenomenon.

Since Horvath (1986), it has become a standard practice in generative grammar to consider wh-phrases as carriers of the feature [focus], which lets them target the same position as the focused elements. Rochemont (1978) and Culicover and Rochemont (1983) had also previously proposed analyses in this direction. More precisely, Rochemont (1986: 19) notices that the wh-phrase can be considered to be an operator that, in the sentence, binds an opened position to which the speaker allots an appropriate value: the focus or new information.

The same type of debate emerges in semantics. Hamblin (1973) proposes a semantic approach in the form of a unified analysis of declarative and interrogative sentences. His approach is centered on the notion of denotation, which is very similar to Rooth’s semantics for focus (1985). Hong (1995) goes further and develops compositional semantics for wh-questions where the wh-phrase is interpreted like semantic focus, and the morpheme-Q is defined as an operator sensitive to focus. This is similar to focus particles like only and even with which the wh-phrases are associated.

How can we apply our findings about focus to wh-movement in Russian? As in the case of focus, wh-phrases can appear in sentence’s initial position (44a), in a preverbal position (44b) and in situ (44c):

(44) a. Čto deti čitaiut?
  what children-NOM read.PRES.3PL
  ‘What do children read?’

b. Deti čto čitaiut?
  children-NOM what read.PRES.3PL
  ‘What do children read?’

c. Deti čitaiut čto?
  children-NOM read.PRES.3PL what
  ‘Children read what?’
  # ‘What do children read?’

First of all, I should mention that the question in (44c) is not a regular question, but an echo-question, as shown by its English translation. And, as in the case of contrastive focus which cannot appear in situ, a wh-phrase in a regular question cannot appear in this position either.

As for (44a) with the focused phrase in sentence initial position, it will have the derivation in (45), while (44b) with preverbal focus will have the derivation in (46):
5. Conclusion

This paper has proposed a uniform treatment of focused phrases and wh-phrases. I have shown that there are two syntactic possibilities for focalization from a neutral declarative sentence in Russian: one in the left periphery and another in the IP domain. This conclusion contradicts King's (1995) claim that there is only one position associated with contrastive focus (IP), and Junghanns and Zybatow's (1995) and Zybatow and Mehlhorn's (1999) claim that there is no specific position in the sentence structure that can be associated with contrastive focus. These two positions can host contrastive phrases, but only Focº in the left periphery can attract exhaustive phrases, according to
two exhaustivity tests. In conclusion, I have shown that wh-phrases in Russian target the same positions as the focused elements.

References
