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Focus and Word Order Variations in Polish

SUMMARY
An empirical study aimed at investigating whether different focus types favour a preverbal or postverbal position has been conducted among native speakers of Polish. Two factors were taken into consideration: a syntactic category of a given focused phrase and its syntactic environment. The results of an acceptability-judgement test show that Polish speakers do not readily accept focus fronting but express preferences towards realization of different focus types in their canonical positions.

KEYWORDS
focus; word order, acceptability-judgement test

1. Introduction[1]

Polish, like Italian or Spanish, is a canonical SVO word order language (Wiland, 2009, 2016; Witkoś, 2008; Witkoś & Dziemianko, 2006). It has also been reported to allow word order variations strictly connected with different discourse-related interpretations such as topics or foci. Their derivations have been accounted for within the framework of the cartographic approach of generative grammar (e.g., Mokrosz, 2022; Tajsner, 2008 but cf. Tajsner, 2015, 2017)[2]. Topic and focus interpretations are carried not only by expressions overtly moved in the syntactic component as a result of discourse related movements. Given the right context elements in their canonical positions may also receive a topic-like or focus-like interpretation. Behind every movement stands a question of motivation. Cruschina (2021) argues that contrast is not directly responsible for focus fronting (FF). By dissecting the idea of contrast Cruschina successfully accounts for cross-linguistic differences observed with focus fronting (section 2).

[1] I would like to express my gratitude to two anonymous reviewers for their constructive comments. All errors remain mine.

[2] The most thorough analysis of focus in Polish has been provided by Tajsner (2008, 2012, 2015, 2018).

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The current paper narrows down its investigation to foci in Polish and examines whether each type of focus requires fronting to a preverbal position as a necessary condition for its target interpretation. The results will reveal to what extent different types of foci are dependent on focus fronting.[3] Specifically, section 2 looks at a general classification of foci and its presence in Polish while section 3 provides a quantitative study conducted among native speakers of Polish showing pre- and postverbal preferences towards different positions of foci.

The discussion operates with the terms preverbal and postverbal. Most importantly, the notion preverbal cannot be equated with a focus movement in every investigated case. It is valid for object foci. The preverbal position of focused objects in $O_{XF}SV$ or $O_{XF}VS$ clauses is a target position of focus fronting while the postverbal position of focused objects in $SVO_{\mathbf{XF}}$ clauses is their canonical position. A nominal with a function of a subject focus may be found preverbally in $S_{\mathbf{XF}}VO$ clauses or postverbally, for example, in $OVS_{\mathbf{XF}}$ clauses. In both the $S_{\mathbf{XF}}VO$ and $OVS_{\mathbf{XF}}$ clauses in Polish subject moves to the Spec,TP. It does not undergo any overt discourse related movement here (Witkoś, 2008, and Citko et al. (2018, p. 6) (cf. Wiland, 2016). According to Witkoś (2008), both OSV and OVS share a derivation up to a point. The OVS word order results from a Polish Generalized Inversion (GI), i.e., a movement of an object to the topmost Spec,AgrP and a movement of a subject to the Spec,TP (Witkoś, 2008, p. 305). Citko et al. (2018, p. 6) with a battery of subjecthood diagnostics argue that a nominative subject in OVS word orders is moved to the Spec,TP. Since subjects in both SVO and OVS word orders end up in the Spec,TP in what follows preverbal and postverbal, not ex situ or in situ, contexts will be differentiated.

2. Types of focus

Focus generates a set of alternatives (Rooth's, 1992 Alternative Semantics) and is associated with a background (Krifka's, 2001 Structured Meaning Approach). The most recent classification of focus types is presented by Cruschina (2021). Cruschina (2021) openly rejects a binary distinction into contrastive and non-contrastive focus. Different types of focus result from different ways of exploitation of the set of alternatives a focus generates. The updated classification of foci includes an information focus (IF), exhaustive focus (ExhF), corrective focus (CorF), and mirative focus (MF). Each type is illustrated below with Polish examples.

Information focus introducing a new piece of information is related to a contextually open set (Zubizarreta, 1998). It is common to evoke the question-answer test to generate IF.[4] IF is a part of an answer non-presupposed by the

[3] Due to word limits, I leave any formal analysis as an area for future research.

[4] Question-answer pairs have been argued not to be a reliable test for IF (Cruschina, 2021, p. 15). A mirative focus can also be used in the answer to a *wh*-question (pp. 55–56).

question; it completes a given question providing the value of a variable from a question (for IF in Spanish, see Jiménez-Fernández, 2020, p. 91).

(1) A: Co dźwig uszkodził?
what crane-NOM damaged
'What did crane damage?'
Tajsner (2008, p. 239)[5]

B: Dźwig uszkodził *spychacz* *IF*
crane-NOM damaged bulldozer-ACC
'The crane damaged the bulldozer.'
Tajsner (2008, p. 325)

Exhaustive focus, usually associated with clefts, is a subtype of IF, see (2) (*É. Kiss, 1998*). The alternative set in the case of both IF and exhaustive focus is not explicitly given. Exhaustive focus involves exclusion by identification, which means that there is only one relevant alternative for which the proposition holds.

(2) *Hungarian*
A: Hol sjártál a nyáron?
where went-2SG the summer.in
'Where did you go in the summer?'
B: *Olaszországban* jártam. *ExhF*
Italy.to went-1SG
'It was Italy where I went.'
É. Kiss (1998, pp. 249–250)

Answers to *wh*-questions in Polish do not include a direct exclusion of alternatives. It is possible that the crane in (1A) damaged other things that the interlocutor is not aware of. A cleft like construction marked by the sentence initial particle *to* in Polish seems to always involve explicit alternatives resembling more a corrective focus rather than an exhaustive one in this particular classification. The cleft construction in (5) is an unacceptable answer to (3) but a felicitous reaction to (4). Due to its vague status, I decide not to discuss ExhF here.

(3) Co Jan zgubił na wycieczce?
what John-NOM lost on trip
'What did John lose on the trip?'

(4) Jan na wycieczce zgubił paszport.
John-NOM on trip lost passport-ACC
'John lost his passport on the trip.'

[5] In Tajsner (2008) IF is referred as identificational, non-polarity focus/narrow focus while CorF is the same as exhaustive, polarity focus.

(5) To *telefon* Jan zgubił.
TO phone-ACC John-NOM lost
'It was his phone that John lost.'

Corrective focus generates a set of alternative propositions with the background being a repetition of the corrected assertion (for CorF in Spanish, see Jiménez-Fernández, 2020, p. 91). In the example provided by Tajsner (2008) the background is not spelled out due to its redundancy.

(6) A: Ania spotkała Marka przed kinem.
Ann-NOM met Mark-ACC in-front-of cinema
'It was Mark that Ann met in front of the cinema.'

B: Nie, nie Marka! *Tomka*! *CorF*
no no Mark-ACC Tom-ACC
'No, it wasn't Mark! It was Tom!

Tajsner (2008, p. 364)

Cruschina (2021) questions the existence of a plain contrastive focus. Yet, there are linguists who still make a distinction between a corrective and contrastive focus (CF), the distinction I decide to follow as the two may behave differently when it comes to focus fronting. The difference between a corrective focus and contrastive focus is associated with pragmatics. Corrective focus is in a proposition that corrects a previous assertion. As shown in (7), contrastive focus stands in opposition to an element introduced in the same utterance (see Bianchi et al., 2015). Defined in this way, a contrastive focus can be found in Polish as well (see (8)).

(7) *Italian*
A: Io vi saluto, devo rientrare a casa.
I you greet must-1SG go back-INF to home
'I'm off, I have to go back home.'
B: Ti conviene prendere *il taxi*, non la metro... *CF*
to-you be-better.3SG take the taxi not the underground
'You'd better take the taxi, not the underground...'

Bianchi et al. (2015, p. 6)

(8) Piotrek mógłby pojechać *taksówką*, a nie autobusem. *CF*
Peter-NOM could drive taxi but not bus
'Peter could take a taxi and not a bus.'

None of the works cited above on Polish focus, to the best of my knowledge, mentions a mirative focus, which has been classified as a discourse function quite recently. Mirative focus carries new and unexpected information (French: Authier & Haegeman, 2019; Italian: Bianchi et al., 2015, 2016 and Cruschina, 2012; Sardinian and Sicilian: Cruschina, 2009; German, Hausa Italian, Portuguese,

Romanian, Spanish: Cruschina, 2019 (cf. Frey, 2010); Spanish: Jiménez-Fernández, 2020, p. 113). Below I present examples of MF in Polish and examine its features.

The mirative import, associated with MF, refers to the fact that at least one member of the alternative set is more likely than the asserted proposition (Bianchi et al., 2015, 2016). According to Bianchi et al. (2015, 2016) and Cruschina (2019, p. 138), the mirative import should be considered a conventional implicature. Conventional implicature cannot be cancelled by the speaker (non-deniability), see (9c). A proposition with a MF consists of a pair of an at-issue proposition and a non at-issue (CI) proposition, (9d).

(9)

a. Context: John has been quarrelling with his wife for weeks now. He lost his job a month ago. At the supper …

b.	A:	Nie	uwierzysz!	*Pierścionek*	*z*	*diamentem*	jej	dał!	*MF*
		not	believe	ring-ACC	with	diamond	her	gave	
		‘You won’t believe it! He gave her a diamond ring!							
c.	A:	#Ale	wcale	mnie	to	nie	dziwi. (non-deniability)		
		but	not-in-the-least	me	this	not	surprise-3SG		
		‘It does not surprise me.’							
d.	B:	Nieprawda.	Nie	dał. (rejection of the truth-conditional content)					
		not true	not	gave-3SG					
		‘That’s not true. He did not give it to her.’							

MF is often compared to CorF as they both produce a conventional implicature (Bianchi et al., 2015). They are kept separate in Italian, though, on the basis of their prosodic and syntactic behaviour (see Bianchi et al., 2015, 2016 and Cruschina, 2019).

The two types have different intonational properties. MF has %H H+L* L- or %H H* L- intonational pattern while CorF has L+H* L- (a raising contour). Based on my native-speaker intuition, I will argue that MF and CorF in Polish also have different intonational contours.

As for syntactic behaviour, Cruschina (2012, pp. 120–122) observes that in Sicilian and standard Italian nothing can intervene between a constituent interpreted as a MF and a finite verb. No adjacency restrictions apply to CorF. In Polish, it is not the closeness to the verb that differentiates between both types of focus. It appears that only CorF but not MF is felicitous in a position immediately following the particle *to*. The particle *to* is known to immediately precede a contrastive/exhaustive type of focus in Polish (Tajsner, 2008).

(10) To *Janowi* Maria kupiła prezent, nie Piotrowi. *CorF*
TO John-DAT Mary-NOM bought gift not Peter
'Mary bought John a gift, not Peter.'

(11) Nie uwierzysz! *To *Janowi* Maria kupiła prezent. *MF*
'You won't believe it'. TO John-DAT Mary bought gift

The sentence in (10) is not acceptable with a mirative focus reading. A contrast is implied with regard to a relevant alternative already present in the discourse.

Last but not least, the two types of focus, namely MF and CorF, are used in two different contexts. CorF emerges in a response to an assertion, see (6), while MF can be used in out-of-the-blue sentences, (12a), answers to *wh*-questions, (12b), and polar questions themselves, (12c) (Bianchi et al., 2016, in Italian).

(12)

a. A: Wiesz co się stało?
'Do you know what happened?'
B: Szef zabrał *Janowi* podwyżkę! *MF*
boss took John payrise
'The boss took away John his pay rise!'

b. A: Wiesz kogo Jan zaprosił na studniówkę?
'Do you know whom John invited to the prom?'
B: *Ewę* zaprosił! *MF*
Eve- ACC invited
'He invited Eve!'

c. *Nad morze* jutro się wybieracie?! *MF*
over sea tomorrow RELF going
'Are you going to the sea tomorrow?!'

On the basis of the facts presented above, MF should be recognized in Polish as a separate discourse category.

Cruschina (2021) places the focus types described above on a scale arguing that they represent different degrees of contrast. The highest degree of contrast is associated with a corrective focus.

(13) information focus > exhaustive focus > mirative focus > corrective focus
Cruschina (2021, p. 2)

The higher the degree of contrast, the more readily fronting is accepted cross-linguistically, which is supported with the data in Table 1. The table shows interdependency between contrast and focus fronting in the investigated languages. The blank cells indicate unavailability of focus fronting with a given focus type.

Table 1. Focus fronting with different focus types (Cruschina, 2021, p. 7)

	information focus	*exhaustive focus*	*mirative focus*	*corrective focus*
Italian/Spanish			∨	∨
Hungarian		∨	∨	∨
Sicilian/Sardinian	∨		∨	∨

3. Acceptability-judgement experiment

In section 3 I present results of an acceptability-judgement experiment, the aim of which was to check which types of focus favour a preverbal position (focus fronting) and which a postverbal position. Before the description proper, I summarize the available results of similar acceptability-judgement tests from Romance languages to see how a representative of a Slavic language compares to some Romance languages examined in the same respect.

3.1 Pre- and postverbal foci in Romance languages

The studies on the acceptability of different focus types in different sentential positions, has been narrowed down to two contexts, i.e., preverbal and postverbal (Cruschina, 2009, 2019; Jiménez-Fernández, 2025). In the literature on Romance languages, the preverbal and postverbal contexts are often referred to as ex situ and in situ (see 24, 25).

IF is reported to be pragmatically felicitous postverbally in Standard Spanish, see (14) (Zubizarreta, 1998). Speakers of some Spanish dialects such as Southern Peninsular Spanish accept also its preverbal position (Jiménez-Fernández, 2015b, p. 128, 2020). In Italian it occupies a postverbal position, (15) (Belletti, 2004).

(14) *Standard Spanish*

a. ¿Quién compró los discos?
who buy-PST-3SG the records
'Who bought the records?'

b. Los discos los compró *una muchacha*. *IF*
the records them-CL buy-PST-3SG a girl
'A girl bought them/the records.'

b. **Una muchacha* compró los discos.
a girl buy-PST-3SG the records

Cruschina (2019, p. 122)

(15) *Italian*

a. Chi è partito / ha parlato?
who is left has spoken
'Who left / spoke?'

b. (**Gianni*) È partito / ha parlato *Gianni*. *IF*
John is left has spoken John
'John left / spoke.'

Belletti (2004, p. 21)

CorF can be both postverbal and preverbal (Spanish: Jiménez-Fernández, 2020; Italian: Bianchi et al., 2015).

(16) *Spanish*
A: Juan se ha comprador un nuevo coche.
Juan SE have-PRS-3SG bought a new car
'Juan has bought a new car.'
B: No, no. Se ha comprado *una bici*, no un coche. *CorF*
no no SE have-PRS.3SG bought a bike not a car
'No, no. He has bought A BIKE, not a car.'
Jiménez-Fernández (2025, p. 577)

(17) *Spanish*
No, no. *A Pepale* han dado el premio (no a Maria). *CorF*
No no to Pepa CL.DAT.3SG have-PRES.3PL given the prize not to Maria
'No way. Pepa has been awarded the prize (not Maria).'
Jiménez-Fernández (2020, p. 92)

(18) *Italian*
A: Hannno invitato Marina.
have-3PL invited Marina
'They invited Marina.'
B: *Giulia* hanno invitato (, non Marina) *CorF*
Julie have-3PL invited not Marina
B': Hanno invitato *Giulia* (, non Marina) *CorF*
have-3PL invited Julie (, non Marina)
'They invited Julie (, not Marina).'
Bianchi et al. (2015, p. 5)

MF is also felicitous both postverbally and preverbally in Spanish and Italian (Spanish: Jiménez-Fernández, 2015a, 2025; Italian: Bianchi et al., 2015).

(19) *Spanish*
¡Madre mía! Juan se ha comprador *un maserati*. *MF*
mother mine Juan SE have-PRS-3SG bought a Maserati
'My goodness! Juan has bought A MASERATI.'
Jiménez-Fernández (2025, p. 577)

(20) *Spanish*
¡No me lo puedo creer! ¡*Tres trozos de tarta* *MF*
not me it can-PRS.1SG believe three pieces of cake
se ha comido Ángela!
CL have-PRS.3SG eaten Angela
'I can't believe it! Angela ate THREE PIECES OF CAKE!
Jiménez-Fernández (2015a, p. 52)

(21) *Italian*
a. Pensa te! Voleva parlare *col direttore*! *MF*
think you wanted speak-INF with the manager
'Guess what! He wanted to speak with the manager!'
b. Pensa te! *Col direttore* voleva parlare! *MF*

think you with the manager wanted speak-INF
'Guess what! He wanted to speak with the manager!'

Bianchi et al. (2015, p. 3)

Interestingly, CF has been noted to be pragmatically acceptable only in a postverbal position in both Spanish (Cruschina, 2019) and Italian (Bianchi et al., 2015).

(22) *Spanish*

B: Sí, fueron *al mar*, no a la montaña. *CF*
yes go.PST.3PL to-the sea not to the mountain
'Yes, to the seaside they went, not to the mountains.'

B: ??Sí, *al mar* fueron, no a la montaña. *CF*
yes to-the sea go-PST-3PL not to the mountain
?? 'Yes, to the seaside they went, not to the mountains.'

Cruschina (2019, p. 132)

(23) *Italian*

A: Io vi saluto, devo rientrare a casa.
I you greet must.1SG go-back.INF to home
'I'm off, I have to go back home.'

B: Ti conviene prendere *il taxi*, non la metro... *CF*
to-you be-better.3SG take the taxi not the underground

B': **Il taxi* ti conviene prendere, non la metro... *CF*
the taxi to-you be-better.3SG take not the underground
'You'd better take the taxi, not the underground...'

Bianchi et al. (2015, p. 4)

The paragraphs below summarize quantitative studies on focus fronting in Romance languages.

(24) Bianchi et al. (2015, p. 8) in Italian (CF, CorF, MF)

a. Focus in situ is always preferred over focus ex situ. The contrast between corrective and mirative focus in situ, on the one hand, and corrective and mirative focus ex situ, on the other, is strongly significant;
b. FF in mirative and in corrective contexts is accepted as equally good; there is no statistically significant difference of acceptance rate between these two conditions;
c. FF is not accepted in merely contrastive contexts.

(25) Cruschina (2019) in Spanish (CF, CorF, MF)

a. The sentences with focus in situ (unmarked word order) scored significantly higher than those with focus ex situ in all three contexts (CF, CorF, MF);
b. ex-situ mirative focus scored higher than ex-situ corrective focus;
c. focus ex-situ in the corrective and the mirative contexts obtained much higher scores than focus ex-situ in the contrastive context; merely contrastive focus does not license FF.

(26) Jiménez-Fernández (2025), English vs Spanish (IF, CorF, MF)[6]

Information Focus

a. Preverbal focused *subjects* (IF) are fully available and acceptable in English and Spanish. In Spanish preverbal focused *subjects* are slightly preferred (preverbal IF subjects: 93.5% vs postverbal IF subjects: 91.6%)[7];

b. In English and Spanish there is a clear preference towards postverbal IF objects;

Corrective Focus

b. Both English and Spanish accept preverbal focused *subjects*. A postverbal focus subject is accepted in Spanish while ungrammatical in English. As for focused *objects*, there is a preference towards postverbal CorF objects in both English and Spanish;

Mirative Focus[8]

c. Full acceptability of MF subjects in situ. However, postverbal MF subjects 'are not an option in Spanish' (11.25%) (Jiménez-Fernández (2025, p. 588). Object MFs, both in English and Spanish, are fully acceptable. English shows very low acceptability of preverbal object MFs (22.5%), which makes it unacceptable there, while a high acceptability of preverbal object MFs is noted in Spanish (96.15%).

To sum up, focus fronting in Romance languages is an option, not an obligation. Spanish and Italian despite a flexibility in word order show a preference towards postverbal (in situ) foci. In general, focus fronting is the less preferred option. Yet, the study summarized in (26) shows that Spanish disprefers postverbal MF subjects in contrast to MF objects. In a preverbal position, a MF object is more felicitous than CorF in Spanish whereas in Italian they are equally good preverbally. Finally, contrast is not a sufficient condition on FF in both Spanish and Italian.

3.2 Methodology

I decided to carry out an acceptability-judgement experiment similar to the one conducted by Jiménez-Fernández (2025) using a new type of elicitation called Questions with a Delayed Answer (QDA) proposed by Cruschina and Mayol (2025). The experiment was to show to what extent each type of focus is accepted in preverbal and postverbal positions.

As in the acceptability-judgement experiment carried out by Jiménez-Fernández (2025), either a subject or an object carried a given type of a focus. Each category with a specific focus type was evaluated both preverbally (27b,c; 28a) and postverbally (27a; 28b). In (27a) and (28a) focused categories are in their canonical positions. With (27b) and (27c) I also checked preferences towards OSV and OVS configurations.

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[6] Jiménez-Fernández (2025, p. 575, ft.7) uses the term Contrastive Focus (CF) which, in his article, covers the meaning of a Corrective Focus. I decided to stick to the term Corrective Focus, not to confuse a reader.

[7] According to Jiménez-Fernández (2015a, p. 579), 'percentages resulted from the combination of one + two for unacceptability and three + four for acceptability'.

[8] Jiménez-Fernández (2025) concludes that Spanish always allows fronting. English disprefers it.

(27) *Focused objects*
  a. SV**O**$_{\mathbf{XF}}$
  b. **O**$_{\mathbf{XF}}$SV
  c. **O**$_{\mathbf{XF}}$VS
(28) *Focused subjects*
  a. **S**$_{\mathbf{XF}}$VO
  b. OV**S**$_{\mathbf{XF}}$

All relevant clauses in the questionnaire contained transitive verbs. Every clause with a given focus was put in a context. Questions with a Delayed Answer (QDA) elicited IFs. A question that usually produces IF was followed by context-related pieces of information, which delayed an answer provided by the listener. The new technique is an aid in eliciting full sentences as responses in the most natural way possible. Cruschina and Mayol (2025) report that in production experiments lacking QDA participants tend to use fragment answers that are not a reliable piece of evidence in favour for FF. As for CF and CorF, a clause containing the relevant type was part of a dialogue. MFs, on the other hand, were preceded by sentences creating a background context.

The acceptability-judgement test was distributed to 35 year 1, English Studies students, all native speakers of Polish. Their task was to rate the degree of acceptability of bolded clauses on the four-point Likert scale where 1 was totally unacceptable and 4 was fully acceptable. The test consisted of 30 sentences including 9 distraction sentences. The target sentences were bolded. Focused phrases were not marked in any way. All evaluated sentences without distraction sentences can be found in the appendix.

3.3 Results and discussion

The results of the acceptability-judgement test were collected and put in the tables for each type of an investigated focus. In each table one can find a mean score as well as a sum of all scores expressed in percentages.

Let us start with IF. The highest scores were given to an IF subject and object in their canonical positions (a, d in Table 2). Interestingly, a postverbal IF subject (e in Table 2) was rated higher than a preverbal IF object.

In the t-test, the difference between O$_{\text{IF}}$SV and OVS$_{\text{IF}}$ turned out statistically significant (p-value = 0.0016). Apart from focus fronting possibilities, with sentence (f), in Table 2, I wanted to check whether background (known information) split with a new piece of information is acceptable in Polish. According to the scores (f, Table 2), many native speakers found such an order felicitous. Sentence (29) below represents the O**S**$_{\mathbf{IF}}$V word order.

Table 2. Information focus subjects and objects

Information focus		
	Mean score	Total
a. SV**O**$_{IF}$	3,68	92%
b. **O**$_{IF}$SV	2,11	52,8%
c. **O**$_{IF}$VS[9]	2,54	63%
d. **S**$_{IF}$VO	3,68	92,14%
e. OV**S**$_{IF}$	2,88	72,14%
f. O**S**$_{IF}$V	2,54	63,57%

(29) A: It was a beautiful, golden autumn. You went mushroom picking with friends to the nearest forest. In the evening, at home you were having a rest eating delicious mushroom when your friend called you and asked you: Who gathered the most mushrooms? When your dog heard your friend's voice, he knocked your mobile out of your hand. You picked it up and answered the question.

B: Najwięcej grzybów *Ania* zebrała. *IF*
most mushroom-ACC Ann-NOM gathered
'Ann gathered the most mushrooms'.

Now let us move on to MF, which introduces unexpected new information. Again, the highest scores are next to a MF subject and object in the unmarked word orders (a, d in Table 3). A postverbal MF object was rated higher than a preverbal one.

Table 3. Mirative focus subjects and objects

Mirative Focus		
	Mean score	Total
a. SV**O**$_{MF}$	3,8	95%
b. **O**$_{MF}$SV	2,17	54%
c. **O**$_{MF}$VS	2,74	68,57%
d. **S**$_{MF}$VO	3,62	90,71%
e. OV**S**$_{MF}$	2,85	71,4%

The difference between O_{MF}SV and O_{MF}VS is again statistically significant (p-value = 0.0187). As mentioned earlier (see 26c), Spanish does not accept postverbal MF subjects (cf. (30)) while English disallows preverbal object MFs (cf. (31)). Both cases are acceptable in Polish.[10]

[9] Unfortunately, two participants did not rate the sentence with an O_{IF}VS word order.

[10] One of the reviewers rightly points out that sentence (30B) was judged as acceptable because it is *cały tort czekoladowy*, 'the entire chocolate cake', that receives a MF interpretation and not *mój*

(30) A: Yesterday I came back from a training camp. Everyday all of us had to eat something healthy, some low-calorie meals. On the last day, a party was organized to celebrate the end of the camp.

B: Nie uwierzysz! Cały tort czekoladowy zjadł *mój trener personalny*! *MF*
not believe whole cake chocolate ate-3SG my trainer personal
'You won't believe it! My personal trainer ate the entire chocolate cake!'

(31) A: Ann is just 3 years old. She has been attending singing lessons for just over a month. Despite having little experience, she entered a singing competition for pre-schoolers.

B: I nie uwierzysz! *Trzy nagrody* zdobyła Ania! *MF*
and not believe three prizes-ACC won Ann-NOM
'And you won't believe it! She won three prizes!

As for contrastive focus, we can see a clear preference towards a postverbal position. The difference between (a in Table 4) and (b in Table 4) is statistically significant (p-value= < 0.0001).

Table 4. Contrastive Focus

Contrastive Focus		
	Mean score	Total
a. SV**O**$_{CF}$	3,48	87%
b. **O**$_{CF}$SV	2,51	63%
c. **O**$_{CF}$VS	1,97	49%
d. **S**$_{CF}$VO	2,57	64%
e. OV**S**$_{CF}$	2,82	71%

trener personalny, 'my personal trainer'. I do think, however, that the other reading, with a MF on *mój trener personalny,* is still legitimate. What I do not know, is with which reading respondents evaluated the sentence as acceptable. I asked a different group of 10 native speakers of Polish to evaluate another OVS$_{MF}$ sentence without an interpretational ambiguity.

(i) A: Wczoraj odbył się bieg charytatywny na 5 kilometrów. Brał w nim udział Jan, który biega od 10 lat. Ale nie uwierzysz!
'A five kilometer charity run took place yesterday. John, who has been running for 10 years, took part in it. But you won't believe it!

(ii) Pierwsze miejsce zajął Piotr. To był jego pierwszy bieg po medal.
first place took Peter it was his first run after medal
'Peter took first place. It was his first race for a medal.'

Six respondents rated it as fully acceptable. Three respondents marked it as probably acceptable and one of them as rather unacceptable, which, in general, indicates acceptability of OVS$_{MF}$ word orders in Polish.

The two highest scores belong to a postverbal CF object and a postverbal CF subject (a and e in Table 4). Preverbal CF objects (b (32), c (33) in Table 4) and a preverbal CF subject (d in Table 4) were a less preferred option, and yet it cannot be argued that contrast is infelicitous in a preverbal position, as it was observed in Italian (Bianchi et al. 2015). Reaching such a conclusion was possible only by adopting the contrastive-corrective division of foci.

(32) $\mathbf{O}_{\mathbf{CF}}$SV
A: Ewa has just come back from work and she has a terrible headache. She must take some painkillers.
B: *Paracetamol* Ewa mogłaby wziąć, a nie ibuprofen. *CF*
paracetamol-ACC Eve-NOM should take but not ibuprofen-ACC
'Eve could take paracetamol and not ibuprofen.'

(33) $\mathbf{O}_{\mathbf{CF}}$VS
A: Józek is baking an apple pie for himself even though he is not allowed to eat sweets.
B: *S*łodzik mógłby dodać Józek, a nie biały cukier. *CF*
sweetener-ACC should add Józek-NOM but not white sugar-ACC
'Józek could add sweetener instead of white sugar.'

Acceptability judgements concerning CorF are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Corrective Focus

Corrective Focus		
	Mean score	Total
a. SV$\mathbf{O}_{\mathbf{CorF}}$	3,31	83%
b. $\mathbf{O}_{\mathbf{CorF}}$VS	2	50%
c. $\mathbf{S}_{\mathbf{CorF}}$VO	3,65	91%
d. OV$\mathbf{S}_{\mathbf{CorF}}$	3,6	90%

A CorF subject and object in their canonical, unmarked positions (a, c in Table 5) collected the highest number of scores, which was expected considering results in the previous tables. Surprisingly, a postverbal CorF subject was judged almost as good as a CorF subject in its unmarked position (compare c with d in Table 5).

Interestingly, a sentence with a preverbal CorF object (b in Table 5) was judged very poorly by the participants[11].

[11] Unfortunately, due to a spelling a mistake in an O_{CorF}SV clause (sentence 13 in the appendix) I decided to remove it from the discussion. The mean score for the clause was 2,17 while the sum of all scores expressed in the percentages was 54%.

(34) **O_{CorF}VS**

A: Wojtek was picking mushrooms all day. He went to the forest at 7 a.m. and came back at 6 p.m.

B:	Nieprawda!	*Jagody*	zbierał	Wojtek,	a	nie	grzyby.	*CorF*
	not true	bluberries-ACC	picking	Wojtek-NOM	but	not	mushrooms-ACC	
	miał	fioletowe	ręce.					
	had-3SG	purple	hands-ACC					

'That's not true. Wojtek was picking blueberries and not mushrooms. His hands were purple.'

The dispreference towards a sentence initial position of a corrective focus in this particular example may follow from the written rather than spoken nature of the test. Intonational cues would probably render the interpretation of the preverbal object as CorF more likely.

4. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to check whether in Polish foci show preferences towards preverbal or postverbal positions in a sentence. It turns out that the inclination towards a canonical word order is stronger than the need to mark focus via movement. Subjects and objects, regardless their discourse function, be it IF, MF and CorF, received the highest acceptability rates in clauses without overt discourse related movements. A specific focus type in Polish cannot be identified by a syntactic position as if pragmatic interpretation were only loosely related to a syntactic distribution.

Table 6 is a version of Table 1 (section 2) with information on Polish. The data obtained in this study seem to undermine the claim that fronting is more readily accepted with foci of a higher degree of contrast.

Table 6. Focus fronting with different focus types

	information focus	*exhaustive focus*	*mirative focus*	*corrective focus*
Italian/Spanish			√	√
Hungarian		√	√	√
Sicilian/Sardinian	√		√	√
Polish	√ (O_{IF}VS 63%)	n/a	√ O_{MF}VS (68,57%)	√ (O_{CorF}VS 50%)

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Appendix

INFORMATION FOCUS

1. **SVO_{IF}**
   Context: You're watching a movie together. Your roommate fell asleep at the very beginning. At some point, she wakes up and asks you a question, 'Who did Ann, the main character, marry?' You try to recall all the characters and after a while, you answer her:

Answer: Ania poślubiła Jana.
'Ann married John.'

2. **$O_{IF}SV$**
   Context: You have a group of friends who sell various items at a flea market. Your mom curiously asks you, 'What did Bartek sell?' Actually, you've not been talking to Bartek for a while. Finally, you read his latest message and reply:

Answer: Stary rower Bartek sprzedał.
'Bartek sold an old bike.'

3. **$O_{IF}VS$**
   Context: It's the summer exam session. Your friend asks you about your friend Basia's grade: 'What did Basia get in philosophy?' You're having trouble recalling any grades because the exam was really tough. After a while you reply to your friend:

Answer: Piątkę dostała Baśka.
'Baśka got a 5.'

4. **$S_{IF}VO$**
   Context: You are organizing a church bake sale in your neighborhood. All the cakes were delicious. A parishioner asks you: 'Who baked the apple cake?' You try to recall the details, knowing there were 12 cakes in total and that everyone had brought one. Finally, you reply:

Answer: Emilia upiekła szarlotkę.
'Emilia baked an apple pie.'

5. **OVS_{IF}**
   Context: You went out for karaoke with friends yesterday. The next day, you are talking to your mom, and she asks you: 'Who sang *Mamma Mia*?' Suddenly, you hear a knock at the door. A courier has brought three packages for your mom. You return to your mom's question and answer her:

Answer: Mamma mia zaśpiewała Kaśka.
'Kaśka sang *Mamma mia*.'

6. **$OS_{IF}V$**
Context: It was a beautiful, golden autumn. You went mushroom picking with friends to the nearest forest. In the evening, at home you were having a rest eating delicious mushroom when your friend called you and asked you: Who gathered the most mushrooms? When your dog heard your friend's voice, he knocked your mobile out of your hand. You picked it up and answered the question.

Answer: Najwięcej grzybów Ania zebrała.
'Ann gathered the most mushrooms.'

CONTRASTIVE FOCUS

7. **SVO_{CF}**
A: Peter is just coming back from a party. He needs to get home as soon as possible. His mom started feeling unwell, and he has to take her to the hospital.
B: Piotrek mógłby pojechać taksówką, a nie autobusem.
'Peter could take a taxi instead of the bus.'

8. **$O_{CF}SV$**
A: Ewa has just returned from work and has a bad headache. She needs to take some painkillers.
B: Paracetamol Ewa mogłaby wziąć, a nie ibuprofen.
'Ewa could take paracetamol, not ibuprofen.'

9. **$O_{CF}VS$**
A: Józek is baking an apple pie for himself, even though he cannot to eat sweets.
B: Słodzik mógłby dodać Józek, a nie biały cukier.
'Józek could add sweetener instead of white sugar.'

10. **$S_{CF}VO$**
A: Ania keeps coughing and sneezing. She hasn't been to work for a week.
B: Alergolog mógłby pomóc Ani, a nie pulmonolog.
'An allergist could help Ania, not a pulmonologist.'

11. **OVS_{CF}**
A: I am looking for someone who could bake a birthday cake for my daughter.
B: Tort mógłby upiec Jan, a nie Piotr.
'Jan could bake the cake, not Piotr.'

CORRECTIVE FOCUS

12. **SVO_{CorF}**
A: Wojtek was hungry. He left the house and ate a hamburger. Afterwards, he said that the best beef hamburgers he had ever eaten were the ones sold in front of the dormitory.
B: Nie. No coś Ty! Byłam tam. Wojtek zjadł pizzę. On nie lubi wołowiny.
'No. Come on! I was there. Wojtek ate pizza. He doesn't like beef.

13. **$O_{CorF}SV$**
A: Piotrek gave Pola a good Italian wine for her birthday. Apparently, it's only available by order. It has the best online reviews.
B: Nie. Nieprawda! Bukiet kwiatów Piotrek dali Poli. Ona nie lubi wina.
'No. Not true! Piotrek gave Pola a bouquet of flowers. She doesn't like wine.'

14. **$O_{CorF}VS$**
   A: Wojtek spent the entire day picking mushrooms. He went out into the forest at 7 a.m. and didn't return until 6 p.m.
   B: Nieprawda! Jagody zbierał Wojtek, a nie grzyby. Miał fioletowe ręce.
   'Not true! Wojtek picked berries, not mushrooms. His hands were purple.'

15. **$S_{CorF}VO$**
   A: Kasia's car broke down. Adam helped her change the tire. It took about six hours.
   B: Nie. No coś Ty! Olek wymienił oponę. Adam był wtedy w pracy.
   'No. Oh, come on! Olek changed the tire. Adam was at work at the time.'

16. **OVS_{CorF}**
   A: I heard that your friend Eric won the lottery and bought a new apartment.
   B: Nie. Nieprawda! Nowe mieszkanie kupił Marek, a nie Eryk.
   'No. Not true! Marek bought the new apartment, not Eryk.'

MIRATIVE FOCUS

17. **SVO_{MF}**
   Alicja nigdy nie paliła papierosów. Dzisiaj miała bardzo stresujące dzień w pracy. Poszła na urodziny do kolegi. Świetnie się bawiła i nie uwierzysz! **Alicja wypaliła całą paczkę papierosów!**
   'Alicja has never smoked cigarettes. Today she had a very stressful day at work. She went to a friend's birthday party. She had a wonderful time, and you won't believe it! Alicja smoked an entire pack of cigarettes!'

18. **$O_{MF}SV$**
   W okolicy była seria włamań. Bardzo dużo cennych rzeczy zginęło na moim osiedlu. Ja też padłam/em ofiarą. No i nie uwierzysz! **Stary czajnik złodzieje mi ukradli!**
   'There's been a series of burglaries in the neighborhood. A lot of valuables have been stolen in my neighborhood. I was a victim too. And you won't believe it! Thieves stole my old kettle!'

19. **$O_{MF}VS$**
   Ania ma dopiero 3 lata i dopiero od miesiąca uczęszcza na lekcje śpiewu. Mimo wszystko spróbowała swoich sił na konkursie wokalnym zorganizowanym dla przedszkolaków. I nie uwierzysz! **Trzy nagrody zdobyła Ania!**
   'Ania is only three years old and has only been taking singing lessons for a month. Despite everything, she tried her hand at a singing competition organized for preschoolers. And you won't believe it! Ania won three awards! '

20. **$S_{MF}VO$**
   Codziennie z mojego garażu ginęły przedmioty. Myślałam, że to dzieci sąsiada robią mi psikusy. Obejrzałam nagrania z kamer. Byłam w szoku! **Kuna wynosiła moje narzędzia!**
   'Items were disappearing from my garage every day. I thought the neighbor's kids were playing pranks on me. I checked the camera footage. I was shocked! A marten was making off with my tools!

21. **OVS_{MF}**
   Słuchaj. Wczoraj wróciłam/em z obozu treningowego. Codziennie wszyscy mieli jeść zdrowe, niskokaloryczne posiłki. W ostatnim dniu było przyjęcia z okazji zakończenia wyjazdu. Nie uwierzysz! **Cały tort czekoladowy zjadł mój trener personalny!**
   'Listen. Yesterday I came back from a training camp. Every day, all of us had to eat something healthy, some low-calorie meals. On the last day, a party was organized to celebrate the end of the camp. You won't believe it! My personal trainer ate the entire chocolate cake!'