

# Contrast marking in Romance and Germanic languages

Crosslinguistic and  
intralinguistic comparison  
through task-elicited speech

Cecilia Andorno, Università di Torino

# Starting points

- Investigating sentence information structure in crosslinguistic and acquisitional perspective



- need for functional categories, allowing crosslinguistic and cross-variety comparability

# A working definition of «contrast»

Functional notion, in terms of:

- maintenance/change of information units along the discourse information flow
- ...when a closed set of alternatives (explicit/salient/inferable) is available in the CG
- “the relationship between an information unit of a given utterance with respect to the same information unit in a previous utterance” (Dimroth 2002)
- [contrastive focus]: that subtype of focus in which “the alternatives are given” (Fery & Krifka 2008);
- “the Common Ground content contains a proposition with which the current utterance can be constructed, or [...] accommodated” (Krifka 2007)

# A working definition of «contrast»

- A- John drinks coffee  
B- Yeah, *but* he does **not** drink **tea**
- A- John drinks coffee  
*but* he does **not** drink **tea**

**RETAINED**

**CONTRAST is  
not only REJECTION**

**REJECTED / CONFIRMED**

- A- John drinks coffee, does he?  
B- No, he does **not** drink coffee
- A- John drinks coffee, does he?  
B- Yes, he **does** drink coffee

# A working definition of «contrast»

- A- John drinks coffee  
B- Yeah, *but* he does **not** drink **tea**

- A- John drinks coffee,  
but **Mary** drinks **tea**

## ENTITIES

CONTRAST can involve  
different information units

## POLARITY

- A- John drinks coffee, does he?  
B- No, he does **not** drink coffee

- A- John drinks coffee, does he?  
B- No, he **did** drink coffee

## TIME SPANS

# A working definition of «contrast»

- Independent from topic/focus component of the sentence
- Possibly, not necessarily marked
  - (marked/unmarked contrast)
- An independent variable against which speech is analyzed
  - «when/how/where contrast is marked»

(CG: Mary drinks coffee)  
**John** does **not** drink coffee

marked:

*John however does not*  
*John par contre ne bois pas de café*  
*Invece John non ne beve*

unmarked:

John does not drink coffee

# The Finite Story



CG: Mister Green  
does not jump out  
of the window...

...Mister Blue  
jumps



# «Contrast» in the Finite Story: parameters

	info units involved
<i>Finite Story</i>	entity / time + pol

entity + pol

CG: Mister Green  
does not jump out  
of the window...

**Mr. Blue jumps** out of  
the window

time + pol

CG: At time1  
Mr. Green is asleep

**At time2** Mr. Green  
**is not** asleep



# «Contrast» in the Finite Story: results

CG: Mister Green does not  
jump out of the window...

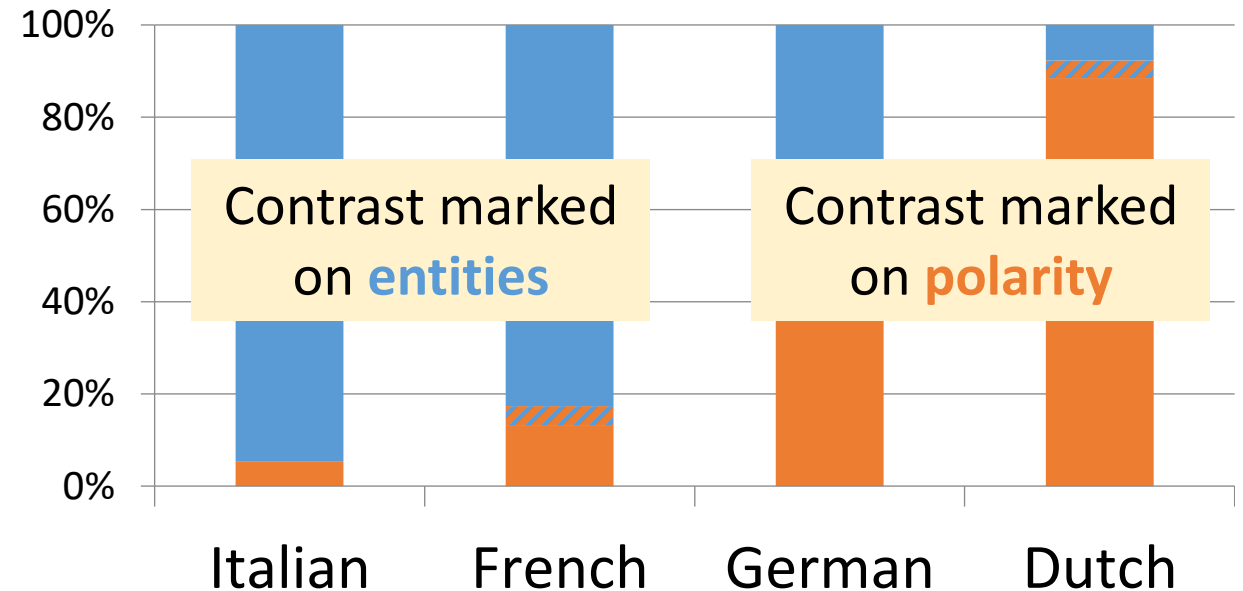
...Mister Blue jumps

GE: *H.Blau **IST** wohl gesprungen*

DU: *Meneer Blauw springt **WÉL***

IT: *Il Sig.Blu è **l'unico** a buttarsi*

FR: *M.Bleu **LUI** il saute*



- entity contrast
- polarity contrast
- both

(Dimroth, Andorno, Benazzo & Schimke, 2010;  
Benazzo, Andorno, Patin & Interlandi 2012)

...what if only polarity is involved?

	info units involved
<i>Finite Story</i>	entity / time + pol
<i>Pol-switch</i>	pol

# *POL-switch dialogues*

CG: In my picture,  
the girl is not tearing  
the banknote



BASELINE PICTURE

In my picture, the  
girl **is** tearing the  
banknote



# «Contrast» in the POL-switch dialogues: parameters

	info units involved	speaker
<i>Finite Story</i>	entity / time + pol	same
<i>Pol-switch</i>	pol	different

In my picture,  
the girl is not tearing  
the banknote

In my picture, the  
girl **is** tearing the  
banknote

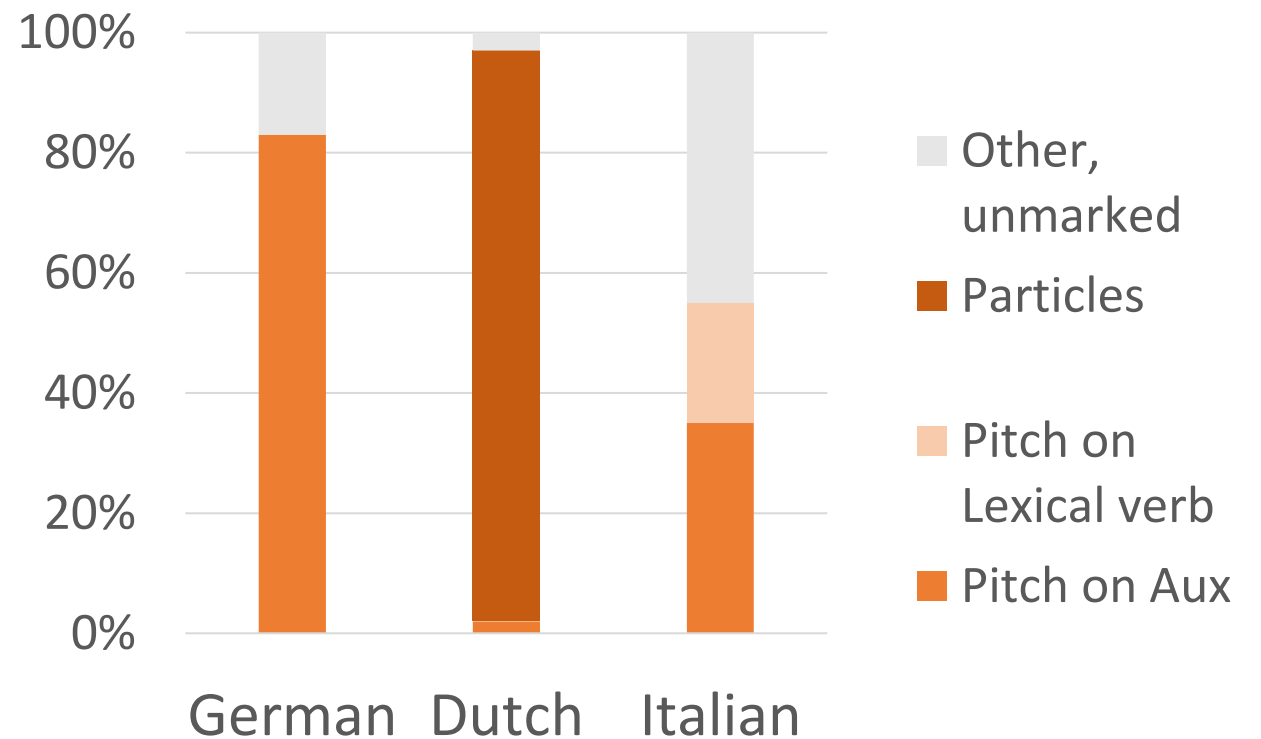
# «Contrast» in the POL-switch dialogues: results

In my picture, the  
girl **is** tearing the  
banknote

Nella **MIA** immagine...

la ragazza **HA strappato** la banconota

la ragazza **ha strapPAto** la banconota



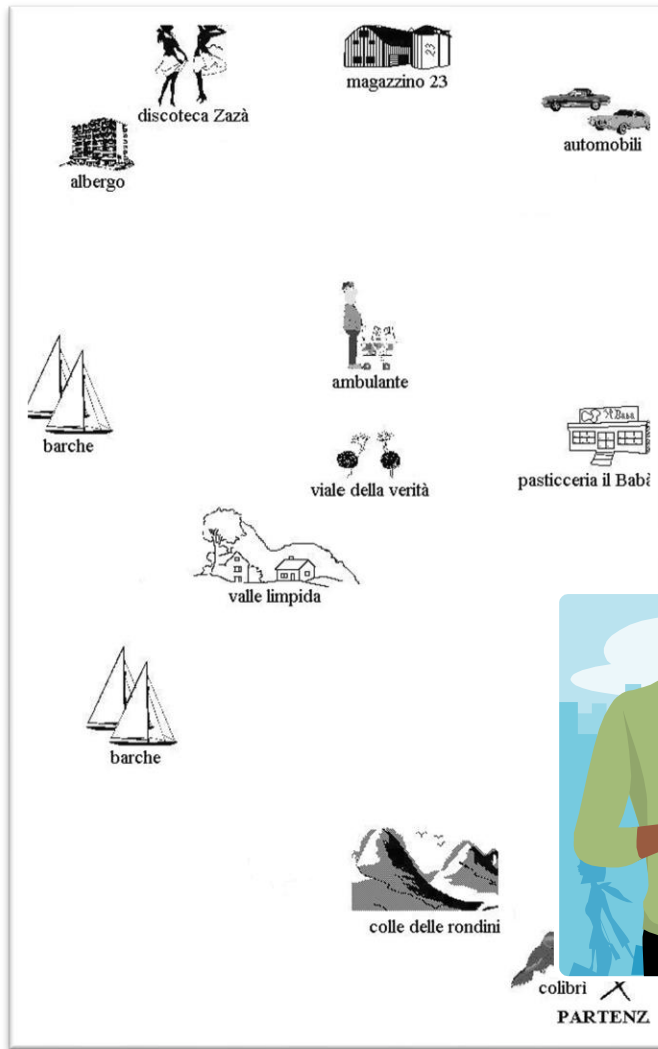
# «Contrast» in the POL-switch dialogues: parameters

	info units involved	speaker	frame of reference
<i>Finite Story</i>	entity / time + pol	same	same
<i>Pol-switch</i>	pol	different	different

# What if you REALLY do not have alternatives?

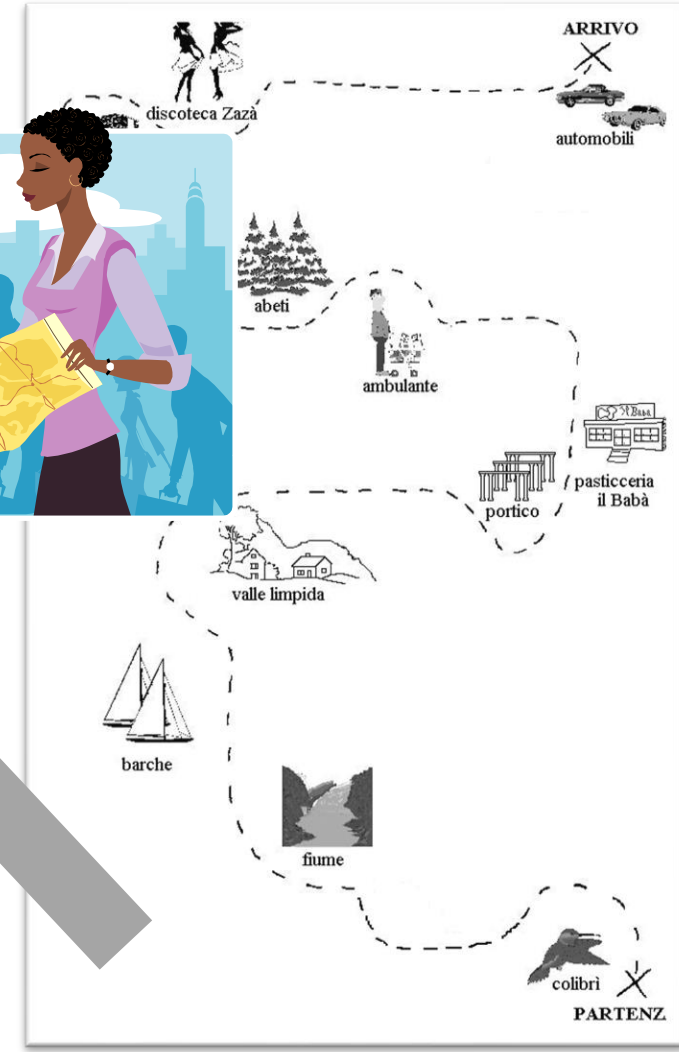
	info units involved	speaker	frame of reference
<i>Finite Story</i>	entity / time + pol	same	same
<i>Pol-switch</i>	pol	different	different
<i>Map Task</i>	pol	different	same

# Map Task



Oh no, you **have** to go past the boats

CG: So I do not have to go past the boats





# «Contrast» in the Map Task: parameters

	info units involved	speaker	frame of reference	effect on alternatives
<i>Finite Story</i>	entity / time + pol	same	same	retained
<i>Pol-switch</i>	pol	different	different	retained
<i>Map Task</i>	pol	different	same	confirmed/ rejected

CG: So I do not have to go past the boats

Oh no, you **have** to go past the boats

# «Contrast» in the Map-task: results

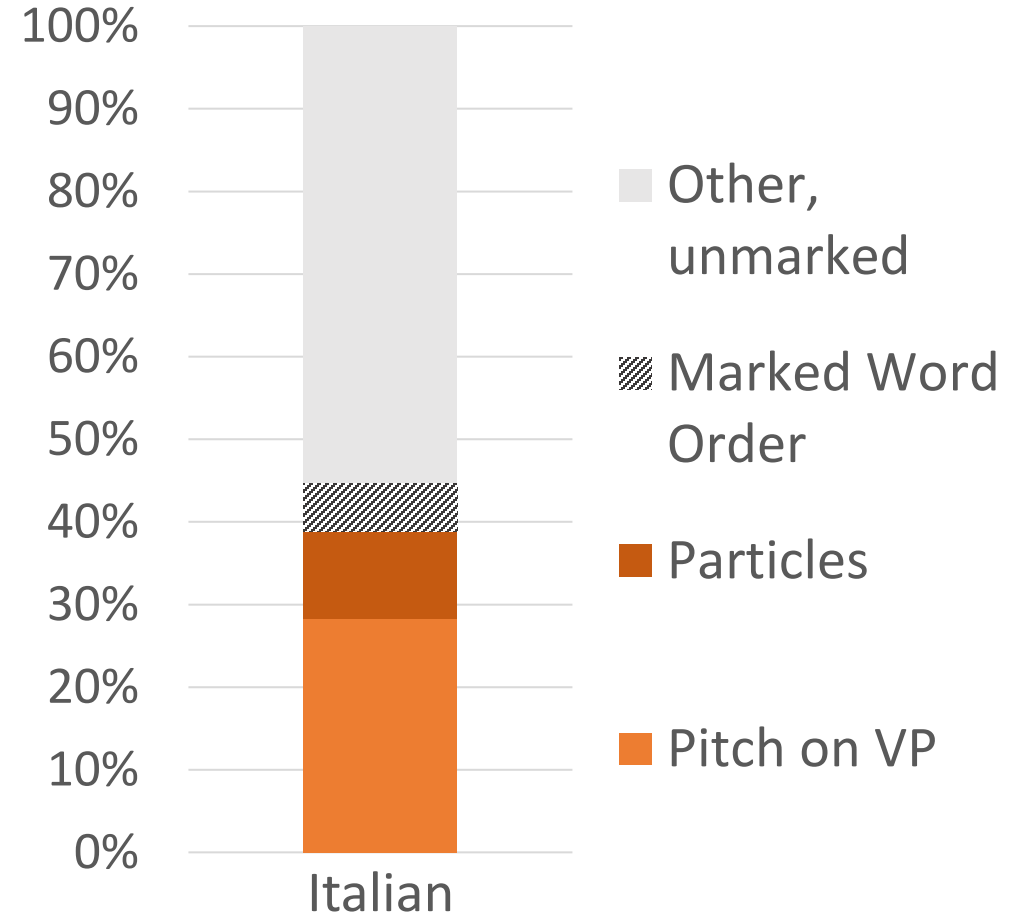
Oh no, you **have**  
to go past the boats

*sì, **DEVI** superarle*  
yes you.must go-past-them

*sì, le barche **sì***  
yes, the boats yes

*tz, **le barche le superi!***  
no the boats them you-go-past

Word order:  
A Romance way  
to signal contrastive  
relations?



# Exploiting word order in Romance languages

**Contrast on entities+polarity**  
**(Finite Story)**

(CG: Mr. Red&Green did not jump  
out of the window)

PSEUDO-CLEFT:  
IT: *Il Sig.Blu è l'unico a buttarsi*

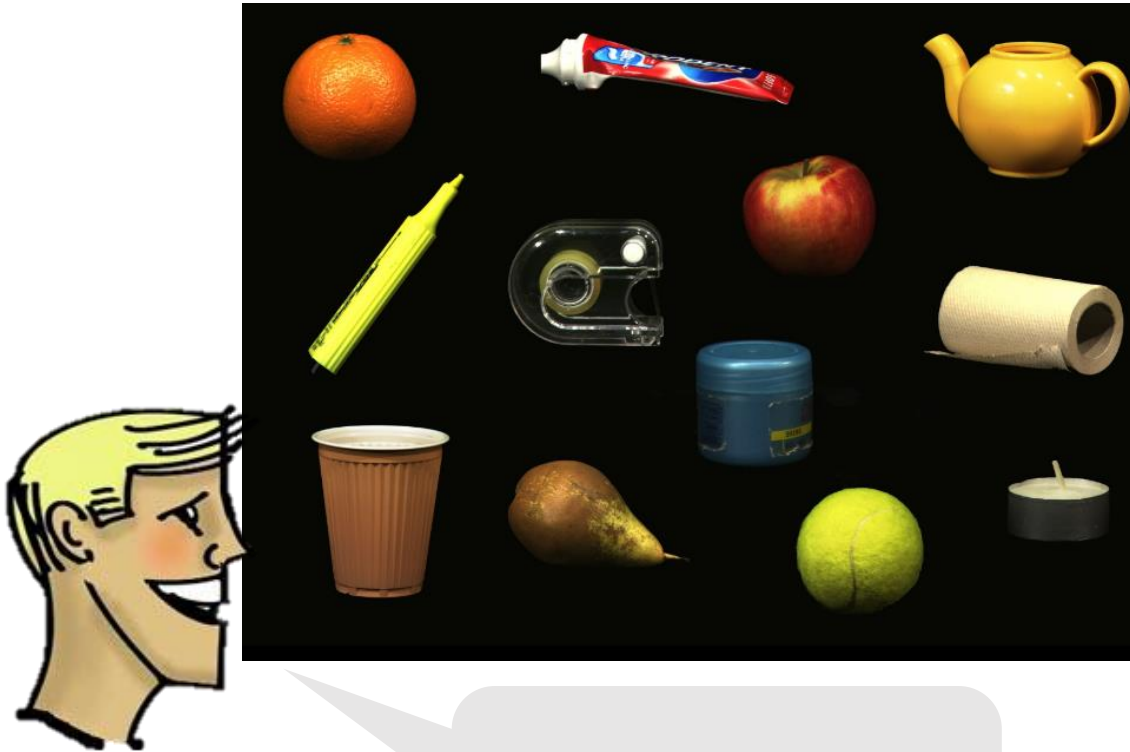
SUBJECT DISLOCATION:  
FR: *M.Bleu LUI il saute*

**Contrast on polarity**  
**(MapTask)**

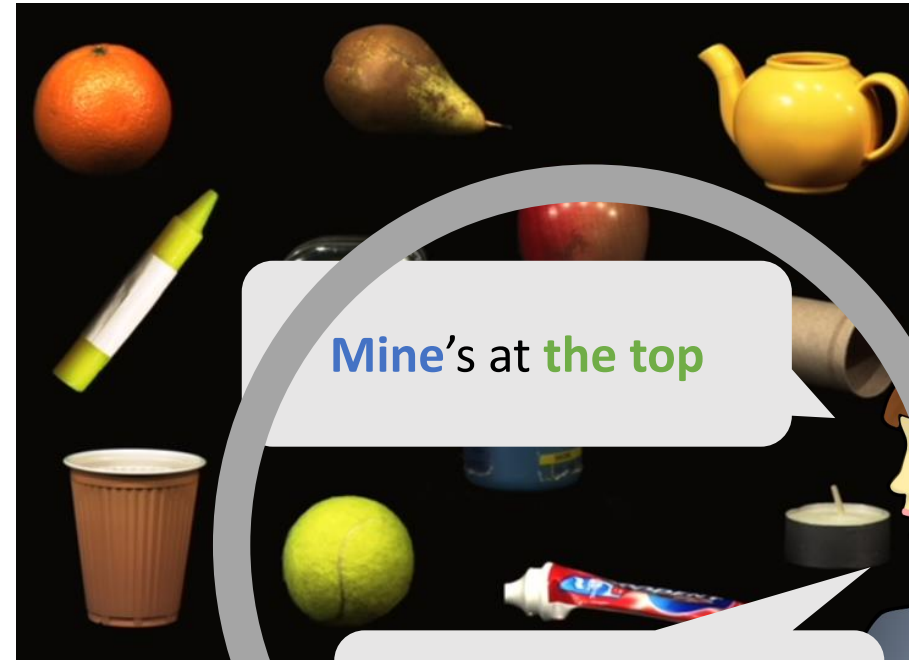
(CG: I do not have to go past the  
boats)

OBJECT DISLOCATION:  
IT: *Sì, le barche le superi*

# Spot the difference (work in progress)



CG: And then a pear,  
at the bottom



Mine's at the top

There I've got  
a tennis ball

# «Contrast» in *Spot the difference*: parameters

	info units involved	speaker	frame of reference	effect on alternatives
<i>Finite Story</i>	entity / time + pol	same	same	retained
<i>Pol-switch</i>	pol	different	different	retained
<i>Map Task</i>	pol	different	same	canceled
<i>Spot the difference</i>	entity + location	different	different	retained

CG: And then a pear,  
at the bottom

Mine's at **the top**

**There** I've got  
**a tennis ball**

# «Contrast» in *Spot the difference*: results

There I've got  
a tennis ball

Mine's at the top

## CONTRAST on ENTITY

## CONTRAST on LOCATION

	TOPIC	COMMENT	TOPIC	COMMENT
GE	<i>Da</i>	<i>ist bei mir ein Tennisball</i>	<i>Die</i>	<i>ist bei mir oben</i>
	<i>Unten</i>	<i>ist bei mir ein Tennisball</i>	<i>Die Birne</i>	<i>ist bei mir oben</i>

	TOPIC	COMMENT	TOPIC	COMMENT
FR	<i>Moi en bas</i>	<i>j'ai une balle de tennis</i>	<i>Moi (la poire)</i>	<i>elle est en haut</i>
			<i>Ma poire moi</i>	<i>elle est en haut</i>
			<i>Moi</i>	<i>j'ai ça en haut</i>
IT	<i>Io in basso</i>	<i>ho una pallina da tennis</i>	<i>Io (la pera)</i>	<i>ce l'ho in alto</i>
			<i>Da me / la mia</i>	<i>è in alto</i>

# In sum...

Context	Marking	
	Germanic languages	Romance languages
Contrast on Polarity	Pitch accent on Finite verb, Rich repertoire of particles ↓ Used to <b>contrast</b> alternatives	Pitch accent restrictions on function words Limited repertoire of particles ↓ Used to <b>reject</b> alternatives
Contrast on Entity, Location	V2 restrictions, 2series of pronouns only in 3rd Person ↓ Preverbal position for <b>given</b> info only	Marked word order, and/or Richer repertoire of pronouns ↓ Preverbal position (also) for <b>contrasted</b> info

Grazie dell'attenzione  
Merci pour votre attention  
Vielen Dank für Ihre Aufmerksamkeit