State-of-affairs focus in complex predicates

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0 The project goals

Topic 1: Encoding of predicate-centered focus in affirmative main clauses - investigation of:

- the functions of predicate-centered focus types in discourse;
- the organization of tense/aspect (TA) systems in individual languages with respect to predicate-centered focus;
- complex predicates;
- syntactic properties of focus structures.

Topic 2: Predicate-centered focus in clause types other than affirmative main clauses, such as (i) negative main clauses, (ii) selected subordinate clauses, and (iii) yes-no interrogatives and alternative questions.

Topic 3: Synchronic variation and diachronic development of predicate-centered focus

- (i) possible influence of language contact (among languages of eastern Mali), and
- (ii) its stability and variation within a genealogical language group (Bantu languages)
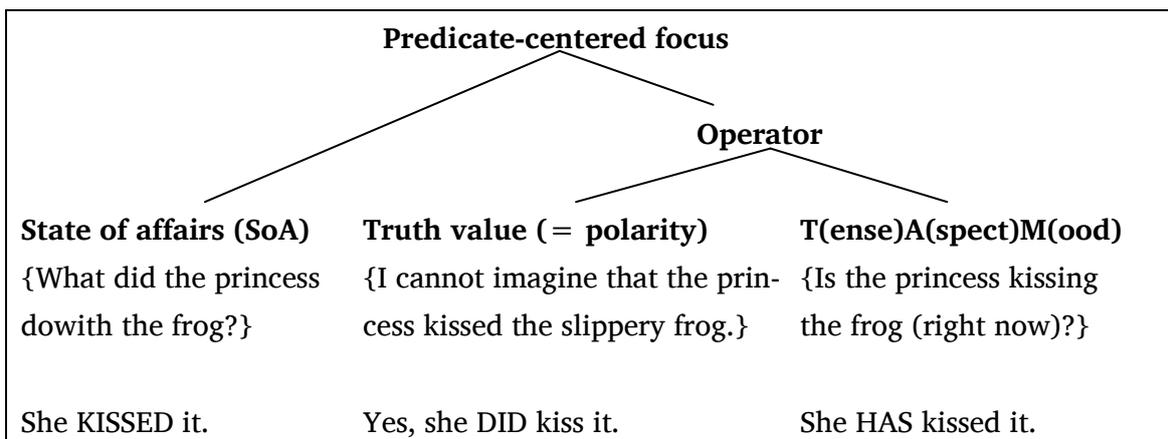
+ reminder: the notion of PCF focus

Figure 1: Basic subclassification of predicate-centered focus types (Güldemann 2009)

→ the following presentation belongs to Topic 1, particularly to SoA focus in complex predicates

1 Introduction

+ complex predicates as understood here are instantiations of predicates consisting of two or more elements that act as a single predicate semantically and syntactically in a monoclausal structure

- each element in a complex predicate contributes to the meaning of the predicate
- how far this meaning is predictable from the meaning of the single elements is language and construction specific

+ three types of complex predicates are investigated more closely:

- coverb construction in Ama
- inherent complement verbs (incl. cognate object construction) in Gbe
- cognate object construction in Mombo

+ these three constructions differ in the means used for focusing on the State of Affairs (SoA)

- these differences are due to structural and semantic properties of the elements of the respective construction, we will concentrate here on the semantic aspect

2 SoA focus in complex predicates

2.1 The Ama coverb construction

+ Nilo-Saharan, Eastern Sudanic, Nyimang, spoken in the Mandal hills west of Dilling in the Kordofan province of Sudan

+ typological characteristics:

- tone language with 3 level tones
- verb-final word order combined with head-modifier order
- dependent marking
- agglutinative morphology
- number marking on the verb, rather than on the noun
- case marking by means of suffixes
- makes use of different sentence particles that contribute to the information-structural interpretation of a sentence

+ coverb construction in Ama: finite verb (here: *ɲɔ́n* 'take') plus a preceding non-finite element with nominal characteristics (here: *bɔ̄rgə̀l-ɛ̀ì* 'as a thief')

(1) ŋá   nɛ̄   wɔ́ŋ   sá   **bɔ̄rgə̀l-ɛ̀ì**   **ɲɔ́n**   á?
      who   GF   1S.POSS   watch   thief-CASE   take.PFV   Q
      Who has stolen my watch? (lit.: Who has taken my watch as a thief?) (Fiedler, to appear)

(2) cf. categorical sentence with *ɲɔ́n* 'take' as simplex predicate
      á-ḍʊ̀   midr-ɔ   **ɲɔ̂n** ...
      1S-?DS   stone-ACC   take.PFV
      I took a stone (and …). (Fiedler, to appear)

+ non-subject focus with simplex predicate

(3a) cleft-like construction (= preferred)
      àlfúl   **(bá)**   **nɛ̂**   ín   ṭâl.
      beans   PRT   GF   3S   eat.PFV
      {What did the woman eat?} She ate BEANS. (Fiedler, field notes)

(3b) elliptical construction (less typical):
      àlfúlo   **bá**   ṭâl.
      beans   PRT   eat.PFV
      {What did the woman eat?} She ate BEANS. (Fiedler, field notes)

(3c) cf. the categorical sentence
      kɛ́r   **bá**   fúl-ō   **ṭâl**.
      woman   PRT   bean-ACC   eat.PFV
      A/The woman ATE (THE) BEANS. (Fiedler, field notes)

- note that the pronoun for 3rd person singular is often not overtly expressed when known from the context, thus making the elliptical construction possible (i.e., no data with overt subject for this construction)

+ SoA focus with simplex predicate: particle *kāà* in slot directly before the verb, all unnecessary information is dropped

(4) bwɛ̂r,   **kāà**   tír̄ē.   *bwɛ̂r, kɛ́r kàmál-úŋ **kāà** tír̄ē.
      no   PF   call.PFV
      {The woman hit Kamal.} No, (she) CALLED (him). (Fiedler, field notes)

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+ SoA focus in complex predicates: particle *kāà* not allowed, but the less typical term focus construction, i.e. the fronted element followed by the particle *bá* (cf. 3b)

(5) A: What is the girl doing?

   B: Oh, the girl is jumping, she is JUMPING!

   C: <u>**sùléì**</u> **bá** **mùʃèg**, fífìr há múì.
      running PRT move.IPFV jumping NEG rise.IPFV
      She is RUNNING, not JUMPING. (Fiedler, to appear)

(6) cf. also the quasi minimal pair showing clearly the contrast between the coverbs used

   {A: What is the girl doing here?}

   B: έ wìdéŋ á tὲtéŋ múì. **fífìr** **bá** **múì**.
      CNJ child PRT up move.IPFV jumping PRT move.IPFV
      Oh, the child is getting up, JUMPING up!

   {long discussion whether the child is running or jumping (cf. (5). A: Is he jumping or skipping?}

   C: … **dídídì** **bá** **múì**.
         skipping PRT move.IPFV
      He is SKIPPING. (i.e. he is jumping, but in a slightly other way) (Fiedler, field notes)

+ to sum up:

- the dedicated and expected predicate-centered focus marking particle *kaà* is not allowed in these contexts

- SoA focus in the Ama coverb construction is encoded by formal means which are also used to focus on terms, i.e. by placing the emphatic particle *bá* after the coverb

- the cleft-like term focus construction is also not available to focus a coverb construction by marking of its non-finite part

2.2 Inherent complement verbs in Gbe

+ Gbe (New Kwa, Volta Congo, Niger-Congo) is a dialect cluster spoken along the coastline of Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria

- five dialect groups established by Capo (1991):

   Ewe (Vhe) (Western), Gɛn (Gen) (Western), **Aja** (Central), **Fɔn** (Fon) (Eastern), Phla-Phera (Eastern)

+ basic typological features

- isolating language with agglutinative features

- tonal with two tonemes

- head – modifier order

- basic SVO word order, in the progressive SOV (with tendency of reanalyzing to SVO)

- word order is rigid, insofar as the subject always has to precede the verb

- no case, no agreement

+ Gbe languages are said to be hypertransitive, since the majority of verbs take obligatory complements (Ameka 2002) (called inherent complements by Essegbey 1999, term which is used here)

- these complements can have different semantics:

> "There is a balance between the semantic specificity of the verb vis-à-vis that of the complement (Essegbey 1999). Some verbs with general semantics (e.g. ɸú 'move.limbs') require complements with specific semantics (e.g. tsi 'water'). Few verbs (e.g. fi 'steal') require a cognate object to reiterate their semantics without which they cannot form a grammatical expression. Other verbs require a complement that is a basic level term (e.g. ɖu nú 'eat thing')." (Ameka 2007: 126)

(7)   Ewe: cognate object construction
        Kofi   fi   *(fi).
        PN   steal   theft
        Kofi stole. (Essegbey 1999: 11)[1]

+ in simplex verb constructions, SoA focus is mostly not marked at all, but can be marked by focus fronting the bare verb

(8)   Fɔn
        ...,   ylɔ́   wɛ̀   é   ylɔ́-ɛ̀.
                call   GF   3S   call-3S
        {The woman hit Peter.} (She did not hit him,) she CALLED him. (Fiedler, in press)

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[1] The complement can be exchanged with a semantically appropriate complement – then, we won't speak anymore of an inherent complement construction.

(7')   Ewe
            Kofi   fi   agbalẽ.
            PN   steal   book
            Kofi stole a book. (Essegbey 1999: 11)

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+ SoA focus by complement focus fronting

- is the preferred option for an idiom (=special kind of the inherent complement construction; fixed collocation of generic verb + specific complement) (b) besides the default sentence structure (a)

(9)   Aja

{Did he win or lose the game?} (FT, data-nr: 82-113)

a.   é   ɖù   jí

3S   eat   top

b.   èjí   yí   é   ɖù.

top   GF   3S   eat

He WON. (Fiedler, in press)

- in some examples with a more generic verb, focus fronting of the inherent complement seems to be the only way to encode SoA focus

(10)   Aja: {Did you go swimming and did you eat a banana?} (SLP, data-nr: 81-24)

óò,   ētɔ̄   ɖēkɛ́   ń   yì   lìn.

no,   body_of_water   only   1S   go   move

No, I only went SWIMMING. (Fiedler, field notes)

(11)   Aja: {They ate the beans.} (FT, data-nr: 82-118a)

èshí   yí   wó   nù.

water   GF   3P   consume_non-solids

(They did not eat the beans, but) they DRANK. (Fiedler, in press)

+ when both the verb and the complement are equally specific/generic, SoA focus is encoded by complement focus fronting (b) or by verb focus fronting (c)

- inherent complement

(12)   Aja

a.   é   kù   èhùn.

3S   pilot.vehicle   vehicle

He drove (a car).

b.   óò,   èhùn   (yí)   é   kù ²   =

no   vehicle (GF)   3S   pilot.vehicle

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² - This example can get an interpretation as focusing the complement: {He was riding a motorbike.} No, he drove a CAR.

    c.   óò,   kù   (yí) é   kù   hùn

        no   pilot.vehicle (GF) 3S   pilot.vehicle   vehicle

        {He was marching.} No, he DROVE (a car). (Fiedler, field notes)

- cognate object construction

(13)   Aja

    a.   é   ɖɔ́   ɖyìɖɔ́

        3S   urinate urine

        He urinated.

    b.   óò,   ɖyìɖɔ́ (yí)   é   ɖɔ̄   =

        no   urine   (GF)   3S   urinate

    c.   óò,   ɖɔ́   (yí)   é   ɖɔ́   ɖyìɖɔ́

        no   urinate (GF)   3S   urinate   urine

        {He dumped the waste.} No, he URINATED. (Fiedler, field notes)

→ preferred option for focusing an inherent complement verb in Gbe is to front the inherent complement, parallel to focus fronting of the coverb in Ama
- this strategy is identical to a normal term focus construction
- the other possibility goes back to SoA focus proper, i.e. the bare verb can be focus-fronted

2.3 The cognate object construction in Mombo

+ Mombo is a Dogon language spoken in Mali

+ basic typological features are:

- grammatical and lexical tone

- basic SOV word order, verb-final

- clause-chaining instead of verb chaining

- subject pro-drop

- pronominal subject marking in verbs

- case markers attach to NP's rather than single noun and adjective

> **Three types of cognate object constructions in Mombo can be identified**

+ **Type 1**: $CO_U V$

- many verbs have a cognate, derived object

- frequently this is a quasi-lexem not found elsewhere in the lexicon besides this fixed unique verb-object combination

(14a) *swɛ́:* 'buy' with an ordinary object

      mótô:ⁿ   swɛ́:

      motorcycle   [1]buy.PFV.3S

      She/he bought a motorcycle. (Prokhorov, field notes)

(14b) *swɛ́:* 'buy' with unique cognate object

      só: swɛ́:

      buy.CO   [1]buy.PFV.3S

      She/he did shopping. (Prokhorov, field notes)

+ **Type 2**: CO V_U

- a full-fledged nominal and a derived verb with a distribution limited to this combination

(15a) *jáwⁿá* 'shed' as a free noun

      jáwⁿá   m̀-màlyě:

      shed   [1]1S-see.PFV

      I saw a shed. (Prokhorov, field notes)

(15b) *jáwⁿá* as cognate object

      jáwⁿá   jáwí

      shed   [1]build.shed.PFV.3S

      She/he built a shed. (Prokhorov, field notes)

+ **Type 3**: $CO_U V_U$

Finally, both the verb and the object can be unique and not found elsewhere in the lexicon outside a given verb-object pair. Cf. *yɔ̀lì yɔ́lɛ́* 'do a research' and *yɔ́lù* 'research' This type is the least common case. The data on this type are not sufficient and hence in what follows only type 1 and 2 are considered.

> **Marked focus constructions in simplex-predicate clauses**

+ each TAM category comes in four possible forms or "series" - these are used to distinguish between declarative categorical statement structure (series 1), subject-focus (series 2), non-subject focus (series 3) and state-of-affaires focus (series 4) (in the glosses, the series is marked by a superscript before of the verb)

	Form	Gloss	IS configuration of the clause
Perfective, series 1	mí:ndɛ̀	[1]swallow.PFV.3S	default categorical statement / truth value focus / adverbial focus
Perfective, series 2	mí:ndɛ́	[2]swallow.H[3]	subject focus
Perfective, series 3	mí:ndɛ́-nɛ́	[3]swallow-3S	non-subject focus
Perfective, series 4	mì-mí:ndɛ̀	[4]RED- swallow	SoA focus

Table 1: Mombo inflectional series (perfective 3S of *mí:ndɛ̀* 'swallow')

+ non-subject focus with simplex predicate – series 3, preverbal focus position

(16) Sá:rù mótô:ⁿ   swɛ́:-nɛ́

      PN   motorcycle   [3]buy.PFV-3S

      Sarou bought (a) MOTORCYCLE. (Prokhorov, field notes)

+ SoA focus with simplex predicate (with object) - reduplicated form of series 4

(17) ɛ́mɛ́   sɔ̀:-ń-swê:

      milk   [4]RED-1S-buy.PFV

      I BOUGHT the milk (and not stole it).

> **SoA focus in cognate-object constructions**
+ **Type 1** ($O_U V$)
- closer to ordinary transitive clauses – dedicated SoA focus strategy used
- reduplicated form of series 4, cognate object cannot co-occur with this form (note that in SoA focus constructions ordinary objects are frequently omitted but can be used in principle):

(18a) sɔ̀-swɛ́:.

      [4]RED-buy.PFV.3S

      He did SHOPPING (Prokhorov, field notes)

(18b) *só: sɔ̀-swɛ́:.

      buy.CO   [4]RED-buy.PFV.3S

      He did SHOPPING. (Prokhorov, field notes)

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[3] 'H' stands for high-tone melody of the stem.

+ **Type 2** (OV_U)
- SoA focus is expressed by a non-subject focus construction, i.e. focus is marked on
the cognate object in preverbal position and on the verb using series 3

(19)   dóŋgú-nà   έlályέ-nέ,   mándú   mándá:
       heart-POSS.3S   ³become.sweet.PFV-3S   laugh.CO   laugh.CV.IPFV

       sí-yá-nà.
       ³have.STAT-NSF-3S
       {What is he saying?}(He is not speaking,) he is HAPPY and he is LAUGHING.
       (Prokhorov, field notes)

→ when the verb is the main carrier of the semantic information of the whole
predicate (type 1), focus marking follows in general the pattern used in simplex
predicates, i.e. the genuine SoA focus construction
→ when the cognate object is the main carrier of the semantic information (type 2),
non-subject focus construction is used to express the SoA focus (parallel to Ama coverb
fronting and Gbe complement fronting)

3 Conclusion

+ in all three languages, a term focus construction is used to express SoA focus
- besides this, a SoA focus strategy is used for semantic reasons
- the coverb construction in Ama makes use of the less typical term focus strategy
(coverb fronting), but cannot use the SoA focus or the cleft-like term focus strategies
- inherent (cognate) complement verbs in Gbe employ preferably the complement
fronting construction
- cognate object constructions in Mombo differ structurally as to which strategy can be
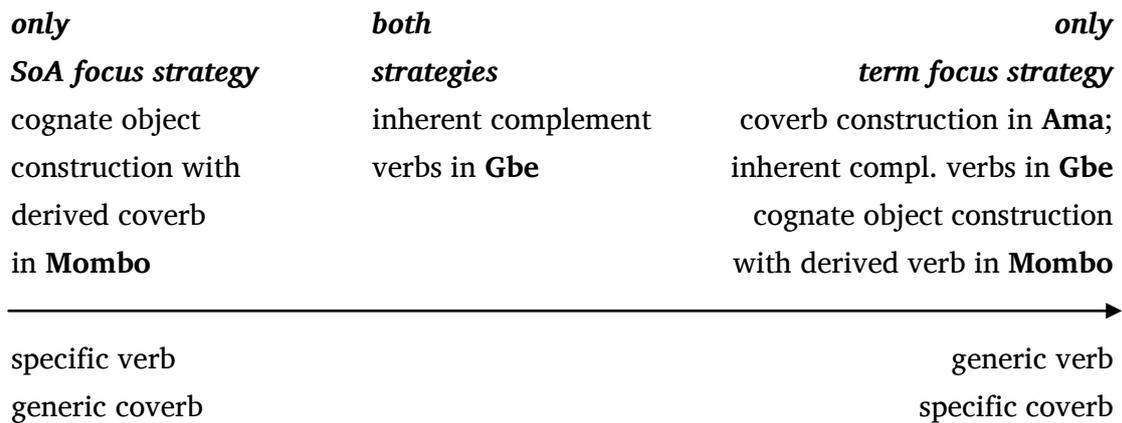used, depending partly on the status of verb and complement

only *SoA focus strategy*	*both* *strategies*	*only* *term focus strategy*
cognate object construction with derived coverb in **Mombo**	inherent complement verbs in **Gbe**	coverb construction in **Ama**; inherent compl. verbs in **Gbe** cognate object construction with derived verb in **Mombo**

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specific verb	generic verb
generic coverb	specific coverb

Figure 2: Specifictiy scale of coverb and verb

- the elements building together the coverb construction in Ama resp. coming together in the inherent complement verb construction in Gbe and Mombo contribute to a different degree to the overall semantics of the predicate
→ **specificity of coverb and verb influences choice of the strategy used to encode SoA focus**

+ the coverb construction: finite verb = light verb with generic meaning (different to Butt's 2003, 2010 conclusion for Urdu that the light verb contributes a full specific meaning), coverb = specific meaning → term focus strategy
+ inherent complement verbs (Gbe): both strategies are available, depending of the concrete semantic configuration
- in idiomatic expressions: coverb = most specific element → term focus strategy
- when verb = specific, coverb = generic (e.g. *ɖu nú* 'eat thing') → SoA focus strategy expected
- cognate object construction in Gbe: both elements are equally specific → both strategies exist side by side
+ cognate object construction in Mombo
- verb = specific, coverb = derived → SoA strategy
- coverb = specific, verb = derived → term focus strategy

to sum up:
The different behavior of complex predicates with respect to SoA focus encoding is to a great deal due to the different degree of specificity of coverb and verb. Other properties which have to be taken into account in the future are:

- non-referentiality of coverb / complement

- argumenthood of the coverb / complement

- constituency properties

- transitivity requirement

- information-structural requirement.

Abbreviations

ACC	Accusative	PFV	Perfective
CNJ	Conjunction	PN	Proper name
DEF	Definite	POSS	Possessive
DEM	Demonstrative	PRES	Present
DS	Different subject	PROG	Progressive
F	Feminine	PRT	Particle
GF	Generic focus	RED	Reduplication
IPFV	Imperfective	Q	Question
NEG	Negative	QUOT	Quotative
P	Plural	S	Singular
PF	Predicate-centered focus marker		

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