

# Kanuri (Western Saharan, Nigeria)

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## 1. Basic information on the language

### 1.1 General

- + Nilo-Saharan, Saharan, Western, Kanuri
- + Kanuri = macro-language, consisting of three main dialects: Central, Manga, Tumari (= Kanembu, Niger) (Lewis 2009), in total spoken by about 4 million people around the Lake Chad
- + Kanuri central: 3,000,000 in Nigeria (1985), total all countries: 3,240,500
- + spoken mainly in Nigeria, also in Niger, Chad, Cameroon, (Sudan, Eritrea)
- + main dialect: Yerwa, spoken in Maiduguri – also the basis for the grammatical descriptions of Kanuri by Cyffer (1974) and Hutchison (1981)

### 1.2 Basic typological information

- + noun phrase:
  - no grammatical gender, plural number marking with high-toned -wá and changing of all preceding tones to low
- (1) f̂r horse  
f̂rwá horses
- head-modifier order (N - ADJ – NUM – DEM)
- (2) f̂r kúrà índí ányì these two big horses
  
- noun can be further marked by (optional) functional morphemes which are used when the semantic role of the noun phrase is not identifiable from its position in the sentence – only obligatory in case of pronominal objects
  - yè agent ('subject', Cyffer 1974)
  - (g)à patiens/associative ('direct object'), topic
- further functional morphemes (oblique postpositional marking, Hutchison 1981: 239)
  - rò dative/allative ('indirect object')
  - bè genitive
  - làn locative/instrumental

+ rigid SOV word order, with the verb always occupying sentence-final position (Hutchison 1981: 15)

- (3) Áli nyí-à sú-rú-nà.  
PN 2S-GA 3S.SBJ-see-PERF<sup>1</sup>  
Ali saw you.

- when other elements occur in the sentence, the dominant word order is subject, adverbial adjunct, indirect object, direct object, verb (cf. Cyffer 1991: 280)

- (4) kû Bíntu-ro wotíya ruwo-n-g-ín  
SBJ ADV IO OBJ V  
∅ today PN-ALL letter write-n-1S.SBJ-IPFV  
Today I am writing Bintu a letter.

+ only permissible variant other than SOV: OSV (Hutchison 1981: 15)

- (5) wú-à kèná-yè cí-tà.  
1S-GA hunger-AG PST-3S.seize.PST  
I was stricken by hunger. (lit. me hunger it seized.)

+ verb system: two verb classes

- class I is a closed class consisting of more basic verbs (appr. 150 verb roots)
  - class II is an open class consisting of verbs build by a non-verbal meaning element + the finite form of the class I verb *n* 'to say'<sup>2</sup>
  - finite verb form is synthetic or agglutinative (Hutchison 1981: 17)
- (6) nzâ-kkè-làd-k-ín-bâ  
2S.OBJ-APPL-sell-1S.SBJ-IPFV-NEG  
I will not sell (it) to you. (Hutchison 1981: 17)
- each verb phrase must consist of: verb root, subject morpheme, tense/aspect morpheme (Cyffer 1974: 58)
  - optional elements: object morpheme, derivational morphemes (applicative, intransitive (passive-reflexive), causative, intensive (reduplicated))

<sup>1</sup> The examples are given as in the original. Sometimes, tonal marking was added when known. The glossing for nearly all of the examples is my own. The following abbreviations are used: ADJ – Adjective, ADV – Adverb, AG – Agentive, ALL – Allative, APPL – Applicative, DEM – Demonstrative, DER – Derivative, DET – Determiner, FN – Footnote, FUT – Future, GEN – Genitive, GF – Generic focus, IO – Indirect Object, IPFV – Imperfective, LOC – Locative, MB – Meaning bearer, N – Noun, NEC – Noun emphasis completive, NEG – Negative, NUM – Numeral, OBJ – (Direct) object, OPT – Optative, PQ – Polar question, P – Plural, PERF – Perfect, PF – Predication focus, PFV – Perfective, PN – Proper name, POSS – Possessive, PRED – Predicating particle, PST – Past, RED – Reduplication, S – Singular, SBJ – Subject, TA – Tense/aspect, TF – Term focus, V – Verb, VEC – Verb emphasis completive.

<sup>2</sup> This verb is part of verb class I, but shows there only a defective paradigm.

- subject morphemes: 1/2 person singular and plural are suffixed to the verb root, 3<sup>rd</sup> persons are prefixed, they all get their tone according to the tense/aspect tonal pattern  
 - order of elements in the verb phrase:

cl. I: TA (ka-, ci-) DER OBJ SBJ (3S/P) Vroot DER SBJ (1/2 S/P) TA  
 cl. II: DER (caus.) MB TA (ka-, ci-) OBJ SBJ (3S/P) Vroot DER SBJ (1/2 S/P) TA  
 class I verb *lād* 'to sell'<sup>3</sup> in the imperfective (Cyffer 1974: 63)

		SBJ	Vroot	TBU	SBJ	TA	Form	translation
1S			lād	ə	sk	ìn	lādəskìn	I sell, I am selling
2S			lād	ə	m	ìn	lādəmìn	you sell, you are selling
3S		sə	lād	ə		ìn	səlādín	he sells, he is selling
1P			lād	ə	ye	ìn	lādíyèn	we sell, we are selling
2P			lād	ə	w	ìn	lādówì(n)	you sell, you are selling
3P		sa	lād	ə		ìn	səlādín	they sell, they are selling

class II verb *lè + n* 'to go' in the imperfective (Cyffer 1974: 64)

	Meaning bearer <sup>4</sup>	SBJ	Vroot 'to say'	TBU	SBJ	TA	Form	translation
1S	lè		n	á	sk	ìn	lējín	I go, I am going
2S	lè		n	á	m	ìn	lènómìn	you go, you are going
3S	lè	sə	n > Ø	á		ìn	lējín	he goes, he is going
1P	lè		n	á	ye	ìn	lènyèn	we go, we are going
2P	lè		n	á	w	ìn	lènówì(n)	you go, you are going
3P	lè	sa	n > Ø	á		ìn	lèzài(n)	they go, they are going

- object morphemes<sup>5</sup> are also affixed to the verb root: prefixed to class 1 verbs, infixes to class 2 verbs – occur often together with derivational verb forms (all examples: Hutchison 1981: 135)

(7) rú-k-in                                      nzú-rú-k-in                                      nzo-rú-k-in  
 see-1S.SBJ-IPFV                                      2S.OBJ-see-1S.SBJ-IPFV                                      2P.OBJ-see-1S.SBJ-IPFV  
 I see (him/her/it).                                      I see you (singular).                                      I see you (plural).

<sup>3</sup> Kanuri verb stems are high or low-toned. Here, the pattern is demonstrated only with a low-toned verb.

<sup>4</sup> The "meaning bearer" is of different origin. It can be a borrowed verb form, or of non-verbal Kanuri origin (adverbs, nouns).

<sup>5</sup> As in all examples (except (7) and (8)), only the subject morpheme in the verb is given, there is no marking of the personal morpheme as subject.

(8) lèfà-n-g-ín                                      lèfà-nzà-k-ìn                                      lèfà-nzá-k-ìn  
 greet-n-1S.SBJ-IPFV                                      greet-2S.OBJ-1S.SBJ-IPFV                                      greet-2P.OBJ-1S.SBJ-IPFV  
 I greet (him/her/them).                                      I greet you (singular).                                      I greet you (plural).

+ tense/aspect systeme (see table)

- basic aspectual differentiation: perfective vs. imperfective

- each aspectual category includes non-dependent, dependent and negative forms  
 - the aspectual attribution of some of the forms differs between Cyffer 1974 and Hutchison 1981 at one side and Wolff & Löhr 2006 on the other side (marked by dotted line)

- there is a disbalance between perfective and imperfective – in IPFV, only imperfect (+ NEG, + DEP?) is attested, whereas the PFV has four different affirmative forms used in main clauses whose use is related to the information structure of the clause  
 - following Wolff & Löhr 2006, all forms with suffix -ə (shaded cells) express predication focus, i.e. focus on sentential operators, not on the verb meaning – as they analyze these forms as perfective, the dichotomy between [+ focus] and [-focus] TAM forms is restricted to the perfective aspect

- two apparent contradictory labels for one and the same morphological form that call for explanation (see section 2.3):

/verb emphasis completive vs. counter-presuppositionalthetic perfect

/noun emphasis completive vs. in-focus perfect

- in the following, the denotations of Hutchison (1981) are used for the different verb categories

+ identificational, existential and locative clauses – expressed by simple juxtaposition, no copula in Kanuri (Hutchison 1981: 11)

(x) Áli bàrémá.                                      Ali is farmer.  
 (x) Áli kàsúwù-làn.                                      Ali is in the market.  
 (x) Áli kúrà.                                      Ali is big.

Aspect	Form (without respective tone pattern)	Cyffer 1974	Hutchison 1981	Function (Cyffer 1974, Hutchison 1981)	Sentence type	Wolff & Lohr 2006
Perfective	-nà	Perfect	Perfect	highlighting of completeness of event ('TA-focus?') in main clauses, in dep. clauses only PFV form allowed; Hutchison 1981: neutral, no emphasis, with verbs of cognition and sensation	main, relative and embedded clauses	Out-of-focus Perfect
	-í	Emphaticus	Verb Emphasis Completive	highlights the verbal action (SoA?), narrative, expresses sudden (completion of) or unexpected event, emphasis on achievement of the action of the verb, verb has semantic prominence (Hutch. 1981)	main clause, not with np-na, mostly without overt np	Counter-presuppositional Thetic Perfect
Imperfective	-ò	Relative Historicus	Noun Emphasis Completive	fixation of event to a certain time point, weakened verbal action and emphasized np, semantic prominence of major constituent np	main clause, np must be overtly expressed (questioned, focused, negated)	In-focus Perfect
	-ò + -nyí	Negativus	Negative Completive	negation of perfective, of condition or order		Negative in-focus Perfect
	ka/ki...-ò	Historicus	Past	fixation of event to a certain time	main clause, past	Preterite in-

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Imperfective	ka/ki...-ò + nyá	Dependent Historicus	--	point, historical events, entails being there some other const. having prominence over the action of the verb	narrative, certain conditionals	focus Perfect
	ca/ci...-ò	Eventualis	Future	expression of anteriority of an event	dep. temp. clauses	Dependent Preterite in-focus Perfect
No aspect	ca/ci...-ò + nyí	Negative Eventualis	Negative Future	event in future, event uncertain or dependent of some condition	main clause (rarely)	Future in-focus Perfect
	-iyà	Dependent Imperfect	--	negation of above	(rarely used)	Negative Future
	-in	Imperfect	Imperfect	anteriority of future events, habitualis in past, real conditions	dep. temp. clauses, conditional	Dependent Thetic Perfect
	-in bá	--	Negative Imperfect	incomplete actions in the past, present or future, habitualis, continuous, simultaneity of two events	main clause, relative clause	Imperfect
No aspect	Sing: -é Plural: -ógó	Imperative	Imperative	imperative		Negative Imperfect
	-nyí	--	Negative Imperative	neg. imperative		--
	-é	Optative	Optative	optative		--
	-è	Consecutive	--	succession of events	dep. clause	Sequential

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## 2. Basic information structure profile

### 2.1 Topic

#### 2.1.1 Aboutness topics –

- + unmarked subject is in general the topic of the sentence
- + activated topic: marked by determiner (or demonstratives) + optional pause: “Those that function anaphorically may indicate a resumptive topic NP, recalled from an earlier point in the discourse or conversational context.” (Hutchison 1981: 239f.)

(9) Áli-dó (,) kâm ngólà-má gènyí.  
PN-DET (,) person good-GF it.is.not  
That Ali is not a good person.

(10) kû-dó cidà-n-g-în-bâ.  
today-DET work-n-1S-IPFV-NEG  
As for today, I won't work.

- left-dislocated element marked by determiner may also be represented by a full (nominalized) clause setting the scene for the following discourse (Hutchison 1981: 242)

(11) ábà-nóm bá-làn bâ-dó, sàm-bí ká-dì-ò?  
father-2S town-LOC be.LOC.NEG-DET, ?time-which AUX-come.3S-PST  
(You say) that your father is not in town, (well) when did he come back?

#### 2.1.2 Contrastive topics

- + patients/associative marker -ga is used to mark left-dislocated contrastive topics of various kinds (cf. Hutchison 1981: 247), might be set up by a pause

(12) Áli-à lè-j-în-bâ.  
PN-GA go-3S-IPFV-NEG  
As for Ali, he won't go.

(13) kû-à lè-n-g-în-bâ  
today-GA go-n-1S -IPFV-NEG  
As for today, I am not going.

- there is a relation between -ga as topic marker and as marker of conditionals

(14) gèlé, nyí-à, àbí dí-m-în?  
well, 2S-GA, what do-2S-IPFV  
Well, as for you, what will you do? ~ Well, if it were you, what would you do?  
(Hutchison 1981: 248)

- furthermore, -ga is used as subordinator – together with the verb emphasis form, it expresses the achievement of the action expressed by the verb prior to the main event

(15) Mákkà-rò lè-nó-m-í-à wú-rò rádìò kúd-é.  
PN-ALL go-n-2S-VEC-GA 1S-ALL radio bring-OPT  
When you go to Mekka, bring me a radio. (Hutchison 1981: 294f.)

- -ga in coordinative constructions

(16) Áli-à Músà-à lè-zá-nà.  
PN-GA PN-GA go-3P-PERF  
Ali and Musa have gone. (Hutchison 1981: 239)

- -ga in tail-head constructions (Hutchison 1981: 294f., 301)

(17) jí-wú-k-è-nyâ, lè-wó-k-ò.  
?AUX-eat-1S-PST-NEG.GA<sup>6</sup> go-AUX<sup>7</sup>-1S-PST  
When I had eaten, I went.

(18) lè-gá-dàn-nyâ âm àjáp-sá-nà  
go-AUX-3P.PST-DEP.PST people wonder-3P.n-PERF  
[Then the boys returned and went back to the house of the farmer's son.]  
When they had returned, people wondered ... (Cyffer 1974: 96)

- + additive particle yé to express contrastive topics

(19) dágəl fār-j-în, zàzòrmà yé fār-j-în.  
monkey jump-3S-IPFV leopard also jump-3S-IPFV  
[like this, the leopard has annoyed the monkey.]  
the monkey jumps, and the leopard also jumps. (Cyffer 1974: 89)

- + (pseudo-)cleft to indicate topic (?) (Hutchison 1981: 225)

(20) àwó ábà-nóm-yè nyí-rò sè-dó-nà-dá zàurò ngólà.  
thing father-2S-AG 2S-ALL 3S-do-PERF-DET very good  
The thing that your father did to you is very good.

- + right dislocation (after-thought)

(21) Kùrà, bólànzá. It is big, their town.  
big town.3P (Hutchison 1981: 174)

<sup>6</sup> Hutchison does not establish a category 'dependent past' (as Cyffer 1974). He analyzes suffix -nyâ as consisting of two morphemes, nyí and a > -ga. nyí in the verbal system expresses negation, but when it follows a nominal, it takes over the function of insisting and emphasising (Hutchison 1981: 245).

<sup>7</sup> wo = ka 'auxiliary for past (historicus)'

## 2.2 Term focus

+ Ziegelmeyer (2009, Ms.) mentions four different strategies for focusing on terms – most if them are used conjointly

- use of certain verb forms
- cleft constructions
- leftward movement
- focus marker

+ strategies used depend on:

- status of the focused constituent: major vs. oblique arguments
- aspectual category used in the clause: perfective vs. imperfective

### 2.2.1 Major arguments in perfective aspect

+ **sentence-initial position** + **out-of-focus verb form** (only for direct objects, following Ziegelmeyer 2009, Ms., but see examples (24, 50-55) from Hutchison (1976: 241, in Wolff & Löhr 2006: 197) which nevertheless have a slightly different interpretation (in the translation, a scalar focus-sensitive particle is used)

- normal position for object would be directly before the verb

(22) ndú rú-m? question

Q see-2S.NEC

WHO did you see?

(23) táda-nám kasúwu-lan rú-kó-na. sentence-initial,  
son-POSS2S market-LOC see-1S-PERF perfect (out-of-focus)

I have seen YOUR SON at the market.

instead of expected:

(24) táda-nám kasúwu-lan rú-k-ò. sentence-initial,  
son-POSS2S market-LOC see-1S-NEC noun emphasis completive

I have seen YOUR SON at the market.

(25) bólà ádà-mâ-n shí-gà rú-kó-nà.  
town this-GF-LOC 3S-GA see-1S-PERF

I have seen him even/right IN THIS TOWN. (Hutchison 1976: 241)

- the noun emphasis completive “[...] entails the implication of semantic prominence for one of the major constituent noun phrases, i.e. either the subject or the object noun phrase. Thus one of the major nominal constituents is always manifested independently in the sentence, and the finite noun emphasis completive verb form can never occur alone sententially. [...] Its use requires the questioning or focus of a nominal subject or object”. (Hutchison (1981: 126-27)

- also used for sentence focus (which is also possible with perfect or past)

> synchronically, the noun emphasis completive has to be regarded as verb category for the expression of term focus on major constituents and for sentence focus

+ **preverbal focus position** + **past (and other verb forms?)**

- “SOV represents the most natural and commonly occurring order of the declarative sentence.” (Hutchison 1981: 89) – parallel to the assumption that in SVO languages the postverbal object is part of the comment and can therefore be considered as focal, in SOV languages the focal position is the preverbal position, evidenced by the translation of the second example

(26) Áli Músà-à lèfà-wó-n-ò. SOV, past  
PN PN-GA greet-AUX-n-PST object focus  
Ali greeted MUSA.

(27) Músà-à Áli-yè lèfà-wó-n-ò. OSV, past  
PN-GA PN-AG greet-AUX-n-PST subject focus  
ALI greeted Musa. (Hutchison 1981: 89)

+ **cleft-like constructions**

- instead of focussing a major constituent by means of the noun emphasis completive, it can be given even more emphasis in a cleft NP construction (Ziegelmeyer 2009, Ms.)

+ properties of cleft constructions in Kanuri

- consist of two autonomous, equational NP positions: NP<sub>1</sub> NP<sub>2</sub> wò

- NP<sub>1</sub>: focused by means of focus marker, yes-no question marker or through negation

- NP<sub>2</sub>: “with the latter or predicate NP position always filled by a complex NP or relative clause construction” (Hutchison 1981: 249) (i.e. (headless) relative clause)

- only possible with verb forms also used in relative clauses (imperfect, negative-imperfect, perfect and negative-perfect; these are independent verb forms!)

- structurally identical to the non-verbal predicate of comparison (28), the cleft construction with focused subject followed by *-ma* can get superlative interpretation (30)

(28) Áli kùrà wò. comparative  
PN big PRED  
Ali is bigger/biggest.

(29) Áli-(má) wú-rò kùrà wò. comparative, cleft?<sup>8</sup>  
PN-(GF) 1S-ALL big PRED  
ALI is bigger than me. (lit. It is Ali who is bigger than me.)

<sup>8</sup> Hutchison (1981: 249) is not consistent in his description wrt. this example. He explains that the structure in (x) cannot be considered a cleft construction as in a real cleft the third NP denoting the measure of comparison (with *-ro*) is not expressed. Nevertheless, he translates this sentence as cleft.

(30) Fánnà-dó-má kúrà wò.  
 PN-DET-GF big PRED  
 It is Fanna who is big. ~ Fanna is the biggest. (Hutchison 1981: 182)

- preposed subject may not be marked as agentive, as in any verbal clause (31), due to equational structure of cleft, it is not the subject of the verbal predicate expressed in the relative clause (Hutchison 1981: 250)

(31) shí-má-yè sè-d-ò.  
 3S-GF-AG 3S-do-NEC  
 HE did it.

(32) shí-má sè-dó-nà wò \*shí-má-yè sè-dó-nà wò  
 3S-GF 3S-do-PERF PRED 3S-GF-AG 3S-do-PERF PRED  
 IT IS HE who did it.

- only non-oblique arguments (not marked by “case markers”) can take subject or predicate position in cleft constructions (Hutchison 1981: 250f.)

(33) láràwà-dó-má yím lè-zè-ná-dó wò. Adverb  
 wednesday-DET-GF day go-3S-PERF-DET PRED  
 It is Wednesday that is the day that she went.

(34) shí-má (kâm) rú-kó-nà wò. Direct object  
 3S-GF (person) see-1S-PERF PRED  
 It is HE whom I saw.

- the final determiner (which occurs in relative clauses (35) but becomes optional and may be dropped under certain conditions) is in most instances of focussing clefts not available but possible (see ex. (33) and (36))

(35) kâm rú-kó-nà-dá sáwà-nóm.  
 person see-1S-PERF-DET friend-2S  
 The person that I saw is your friend. (Hutchison 1981: 218)

- when the relative clause is headless, there is agreement between subject of the cleft and the verb (Hutchison 1981: 251)

(36) wú-má lè-n-gò-nà wò. but: wú-má kâm lè-zé-nà (dó) wò.  
 1S-GF go-n-1S-PERF PRED 1S-GF person go-3S-PERF DET PRED  
 It is I who went. It is I who is the person who went.

+ predicating particle wò:

- used to focus a preceding constituent in non-verbal sentences (insistence, due to repetition, emphasis, or contrast) (Hutchison 1981: 179)

- obligatorily used in clefts

- obligatorily used in comparative sentences “the predicate is singled out by the predicating particle either as that which is distinctive about the subject in the focus construction, or as the criterion upon which the comparison is being made in a comparative sentence.” (Hutchison 1981: 180)

- the subject NP of these constructions (as in clefts) can be marked either by the focus marker -má, the negating particle gènyí or the yes/no-question particle wá

(37) Ndú? Who?

(38) Ndú wò? WHO is it?

(39) kâm ádè gènyí; kâm túdù wò.  
 person DEM it.is.not person DEM PRED  
 It is not this person, it is THAT person.

(40) Shí wá kúrà wò.  
 3S PQ big PRED  
 It is S/HE who is big/important?

## 2.2.2 Oblique arguments in perfective aspect

+ either totally unmarked or by means of sentence-initial position and optional focus marker -ma (Ziegelmeyer 1009, Ms.)

(41) a) Músa ndára-ro le-wó-n-o? question, canonical  
 PN where-ALL go-AUX.3S-n-PST word order, S-ADV-V  
 WHERE did Musa go to?

b) kasúwu-ro Músa le-wó-n-o. answer, ADV-S-V  
 market-ALL PN go-AUX.3S-n-PST  
 Musa went TO THE MARKET.

or c) Músa kasúwu-ro le-wó-n-o. answer, canonical  
 PN market-ALL go-AUX.3S-n-PST word order, S-ADV-V  
 Musa went TO THE MARKET.

## 2.2.3 Terms in imperfective aspect

+ leftward movement for all terms, independent of their function, except the subject (all examples Cyffer 1991: 280) – then, focus marker -ma normally not occurs (Wolff & Löhr 2006: 197) - no special verb form available

(42) Áli Káno-ian Músa-ro kákkádè cín. “neutral”  
 PN PN-LOC PN-ALL book 3S.give<sup>9</sup>.IPFV  
 Ali will give Musa a book in Kano.

<sup>9</sup> The root of the verb ‘to give’ is yí.

- (43) Áli kákkádə Káno-lan Músa-ro cín. OBJ, 2<sup>nd</sup> position  
 PN book PN -LOC PN-ALL 3S.give. IPFV  
 Ali will give Musa A BOOK in Kano.
- (44) Áli Músa-ro Káno-lan kákkádə cín. IO, 2<sup>nd</sup> position  
 PN PN-ALL PN-LOC book 3S.give. IPFV  
 Ali will give MUSA a book in Kano.
- (45) Káno-lan Áli Músa-ro kákkádə cín. ADV, initial position  
 PN-LOC PN PN-ALL book 3S.give. IPFV  
 Ali will give Musa a book IN KANO.

+ these examples challenge the assumption of an immediately preverbal focus position in Kanuri – here, the focus position seems to be rather the second position in a sentence – the focus position is possibly dependent on aspect

+ subject focus – by means of focus marker *-ma*

- (46) Músa-má Káno-ro le-j-ín.  
 PN-GF PN-ALL go-3S.n-IPFV  
 MUSA will go to Kano. (Cyffer 1991: 75)

+ leftward movement is not always necessary – *in situ* marking with focus marker *-ma* seems to be sufficient

- (47) Bíntu kasúwu-də-má-lan góro sə-lad-ín.  
 PN market-DET-GF-LOC kola\_nuts 3S-sell-IPFV  
 Bintu will sell kola nuts IN THE MARKET. (Cyffer 1991: 75)

+ focus does not need to be marked at all in the imperfective, especially adverbs, but also subjects and direct objects (Ziegelmeyer 2009: 14f.)

## 2.2.4 Focus marker *-ma*

+ wide range of different uses

- used as identificational marker in elliptical answers (Hutchison 1981: 243)

- (48) shí wá lè-z-ó? - Àâ, shí-má.  
 3S PQ go-3S-PST - yes, 3S-GF  
 Was it he who went? - Yes, it was HE.

- used to focus on focused constituents in a clause, but seemingly rarely as sole means

- used to emphasize different kinds of adverbs ('just now', etc.)

- used to emphasize adverbial clauses (Hutchison 1981: 243f.)

- (49) cì-n-g-í-à-má lè-n-g-ín.  
 get\_up-n-1S-VEC-GA-GF go-n-1S-IPFV  
 As soon as /right when I get up, I will go.

+ has contrastive and exhaustive meaning (Hutchison 1981: 180, 245) when used in focus constructions

- in all other environments its common denominator is that it “emphasizes” the element marked by it, often be interpreted as ‘even’, interpretation related to verb form

- (50) shí-má lè-zə-nà. Even he went. PERF  
 (51) shí-má lè-zò. HE went. NEC  
 (52) shí-má lè-wón-ò. Even he went. / HE went. PST  
 (53) shí-má (kám) lè-zə-nà (dó) wò. It is HE who went. cleft, PERF

- in restrictive relative clauses in predeterminer position, it intensifies the restrictiveness of the clause (Hutchison 1981: 245)

- (54) kám lè-zə-nà-má-dó.  
 person go-3S-PERF-GF-DET  
 The very person that went.

## 2.2.5 Summary of term focus

		[-PF] + preverbal position (without <i>-ma</i> )	NEC + initial position with GF <i>-ma</i>	[-PF] + initial position	cleft (with <i>-ma</i> )	leftward movement (without <i>-ma</i> )	in situ marking with GF <i>-ma</i>	no marking
PFV	subject	+	+	-	+	-	-	(+)
	object	+	+	+	+	-	-	+
	oblique	-	-	+	-	-	-	+
IPFV	subject	-	-	-	-	-	+	(+)
	object	-	-	-	-	+	+	+
	oblique	-	-	-	-	+	+	+

### 2.3 Predicate-centered focus

+ three hypotheses can be developed concerning the expression of predicate-centered focus in Kanuri from earlier descriptions on the language (recall the table of verb forms in 1.2):

1. There is a dichotomy of [+ focus] and [-focus] verb forms in the Kanuri verb system which is restricted to the perfective.
- 2.a) The so-called verb emphasis completive is used to express focus on the verbal action, i.e. predicate-centered focus, probably state-of-affairs focus.
- 2.b) The perfect highlights the completedness of the action, i.e. operator focus.
- 2.c) The other perfective forms have rather to do with term focus, but not with predicate-centered focus.
3. Following Wolff & Löhr 2006, predication focus in Kanuri entails the use of a [+ focus] verb form characterized morphologically by suffix -ò; semantically, these forms denote focus on some verbal operator (truth value, tense/aspect), but not on the lexical meaning of the verb.

#### Hypothesis 1

+ no doubt of its truthfulness

#### Hypothesis 2:

- a) The so-called verb emphasis completive is used to express focus on the verbal action, i.e. predicate-centered focus, probably state-of-affairs focus.
  - + supported by the descriptions of Hutchison (1981) and Cyffer (1974) and others
  - Cyffer (1974: 93f.): “Der **Emphaticus** ist ein Modus der Vollendung mit Hervorhebung der verbalen Handlung.”
  - Hutchison (1981: 125): “...the use of the **verb emphasis completive** entails emphasis of some kind upon the achievement of the action of the verb. In its use, the verb has semantic prominence and thus a finite verb form in this aspect often stands alone sententially.”
  - + challenged by
  - Wolff & Löhr (2006): *verb emphasis completive* has to be regarded “as opposed to *noun emphasis past*; i.e. it only tells us that it is not a noun or noun phrase that is highlighted in the clause. The label *predicative* for the same TAM category – rightly – indicates that it is not the verb meaning as such that is under ‘emphasis’.” (2006: 189, FN 6)
  - Hutchison (2000: 583) states the absence of focus with this category: “Interestingly, the Kanuri verb emphasis completive is used principally as athetic utterance, meaning that it may be used to make statements which are completely out of the blue. Assertive and contrastive emphasis are handled by other verbal aspects.”

- (55) Háwàr mâi-bè fàn-g-í.  
 news king-GEN hear-1S-VEC  
 I JUST HEARD the news of the king.
- (56) Háwàr mâi-bè fàn-g-ò.  
 news king-GEN hear-1S-NEC  
 I heard THE NEWS OF THE KING.

+ thetic utterances?

- (57) ndâ Músà? - bâ, lè-j-í  
 where PN - be.LOC.NEG go-3S-VEC  
 Where is Musa? - (he is not here), he just left. (Löhr 2006, ms.)
- (58) hángàl fèrò-bè-gà sú-móg-í.  
 ?sympathy girl-GEN-GA 3S-get-VEC  
 [The foreigner discusses with the girl the richness of his country.]  
 He found the sympathy of the girl. (Cyffer 1974: 206, story, sentence nr. 112)

> description as being used when an action was performed “suddenly, surprisingly, after some difficulty or after a previous failure” let Wolff & Löhr to assume counter-presuppositionality, “absence of focus” to categorize it as thetic (2006: 188, FN 4)

> following Wolff & Löhr 2006, *verb emphasis completive* should not belong to the domain of predicate-centered focus

– but are (55) and (56) really thetic? –clear examples needed

#### Hypotheses 2b and 2c

+ have to be dealt with when clear examples are available

#### Hypothesis 3:

The following affirmative [+ focus] TA categories express predication focus in the analysis of Wolff & Löhr (2006):

Wolff & Löhr 2006	Cyffer 1974	Hutchison 1981	focus structure (Wolff & Löhr 2006):
In-focus Perfect	Relative Historicus	Noun Emphasis Completive	only term focus (irresp. of presence of <i>-ma</i> ), no PF
Preterite in-focus Perfect	Historicus	Past	term focus when <i>-ma</i> : TF and PF
Future in-focus Perfect	Eventualis	Future	term focus when <i>-ma</i> : TF and PF

- but all three can be used to express term focus, alone or jointly with predication focus  
 > predication focus and term focus are allowed to occur together (i.e. multiple foci) in Kanuri “with each marker operating in its proper scope: {má} for [+TF] and {-ò} for [+PF]” (Wolff & Löhr 2006: 198)

> synchronically, the in-focus perfect does not denote predication focus, but only term focus (cf. 2.2.1) > “focus anomaly” in the Yerwa dialect (Wolff & Löhr 2006)

+ in other dialects (Manga), the situation is different

“In Manga, all *in-focus perfect* forms, whether marked for tense or not, clearly signal predication focus, and only that, i.e. Manga shows not sign of an anomaly here.” (Wolff & Löhr 2006: 199, see following examples)

	<b>in-focus perfect</b>		<b>preterite/future in-focus perfect</b>	
(59) (a)	wú	rú-k-ò.	wú	kí-rú-k-ò.
	1S	see-1S-NEC	1S	AUX-see-1S-PST
	I SAW.		I SAW/WILL SEE.	
(b)	wú	rú-k-ò.	wú	kí-rú-k-ò.
	[What happened?]		[What happened?]	
(c)	wú-má	rú-k-ò.	wú-má	kí-rú-k-ò.
	[Who has seen?]		[Who has seen?]	
(d)	Áli-má	gà rúkò	Áli-má	gà kírúkò
	I saw ALL.		I <u>saw/will see</u> ALL.	

- in the Yerwa dialect, the interpretations of (a) and (b) are not / no more available for the tenseless in-focus perfect, this verb category is exclusively used for term focus

+ Wolff & Löhr 2006 assume therefore a historical development in the Yerwa dialect, the so-called “focus shift”, whereby the scope of focus moves leftwards (from the aspect, to tense and further to an argument of the verb), even though it is (still) marked in the right periphery (on suffix -ò)

> in Yerwa, the so-called in-focus perfect does not express predicate-centered focus!

> Can we therefore maintain the assumption of suffix -ò as predication focus marker?

#### Problems with all these hypotheses:

+ all examples in the descriptions are given without context, thus not allowing for a final decision as to whether we are dealing with predicate-centered focus or not

+ only rarely, clear contexts and descriptions of the use of these forms are given

#### 2.3.1 SoA focus

+ Wolff & Löhr deny the existence of a category of verb focus in Kanuri

+ intensifying of verb meaning through reduplication

- “morphological reduplication to effect verb emphasis” – to express intensification and reiteraton, but not necessarily assertion or contrast (Hutchison 2000: 580, see also Hutchison 1981: 153)

(60) Zau-ma-ro shí-gà bàbák-kò-k-ò.  
 ?very-GF-ALL 3S-GA beat.RED-AUX-1S.PST  
 I really beat him/her.

#### 2.3.2 Operator focus

+ expressed by special verb forms (Cyffer 1991: 287, 288; in Wolff & Löhr 2006: 200)

- the prefixed (i.e. for tense marked) perfective forms are used to express focus on the tense/aspect operator (Wolff & Löhr 2006: 200f.)

(61) wú-mà	cú-rú-k-ò	Preterite in-focus perfect (= Past)
1S-GF	AUX-see-1S-PST	Term focus + PF
I saw (it).		
(62) wú	cú-rú-k-ò	Preterite in-focus perfect (= Past)
1S	AUX-see-1S-PST	Focus on TA
I SAW (it).		
(63) wú	cú-rú-k-ò	Future in-focus perfect (= future)
1S	AUX-see-1S-?	Focus on TA
I WILL SEE (it).		

- the ‘neutral’ perfect, followed by the predicating particle *wò* or *gulle* ‘it should be said’, is used for contrastive focus on the truth value (Hutchison 2000: 583)

(64) amma, lè-zə-nà wò.  
 but go-3S-PERF PRED  
 But s/he DID go!  
 (65) lè-zə-nà gulle ye!/be!  
 go-3S-PERF it.should.be.said  
 S/he DID TOO go.

- in the imperfective, there is no special conjugation for operator focus – one could expect that the imperfect form followed by one of the two particles would also be used for truth value, but that tense/aspect focus is not expressed

### 2.3.3 Constructional polysemy

	Term focus	SoA focus	Truth value	TAM focus
noun emphasis completive	+	-	-	-
[+ focus] perfective forms	-	-	-	+
special positions	+	-	-	-
cleft	+	-	-	-
predicating particle	+	-	+	-

#### + Summary

- the only strategy used in both term and predicate-centered focus is the predicating particle *wò*, even though in different syntactic environments
- the perfective verb forms show a complementary distribution between term focus and tense/aspect focus
- the as [-focus] described perfect form is the most general with the widest use, i.e. in 'neutral' contexts in main clauses, in clefts, relative clauses and when truth value shall be expressed
- + even though the verb system of Kanuri was discussed at length in former descriptions, only little is known about the expression of predicate-centered focus
- > the classification of the Kanuri verb forms needs substantial revision, based on texts
- + predicate-centered focus in general seems to be extremely rarely marked in Kanuri in contrast to term focus
- > is that an effect of language use or of descriptonal deficits?

### 2.3.4 Outlook

- + evaluation of the questionnaire on predicate-centered focus in Kanuri and analyzing of more texts, in order to answer the following questions:
  - Is SoA focus really never marked in Kanuri?
  - Can a verb be focused in its nominalized form?
  - What are the exact conditions for the use of the predicating particle?
- + What about subordinated when-clauses with verb emphasis completive?
  - compare the following examples with the tail-head constructions mentioned in 2.1.2 (examples (17) and (18), dependent past)
  - "Kanuri and Hausa, among others, show their assertive verb focus forms being used in a subordinate clause construction for when-clauses; here the verb is essentially focused since the when-clauses mark completion of the verbal event." (Hutchison 2000: 590)

(15) Mákkà-rò lè-nó-m-í-à wú-rò rádiò kúd-é.

PN-ALL go-n-2S-VEC-GA 1S-ALL radio bring-OPT

When you go to Mekka, bring me a radio. (Hutchison 1981: 294f.)

"Use of an associative subordinated VEC clause always entails the presupposition on the part of all parties to the utterance, that the action of the subordinated verb phrase will be realized, or is normally realized. Clauses of this type are very definite in the sense that the achievement of the action of the subordinate clause is essentially taken as a given."

(Hutchison 1981: 294)

> this explanation points to another interpretation of the VEC, which therefore needs still further investigation

(49) Cì-n-g-í-à-má lè-n-g-ín.

get\_up-n-1S-VEC-GA-GF go-n-1S-IPFV

As soon as I get up, I will go. (Hutchison 1981: 243)

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