

(Preposed) verb doubling and predicate-centered focus

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1 Preliminaries

1.1 Different predicate-centered focus types

+ predicate is the host of two major functions relating to focus:

- (a) instantiates an illocutionary act which relates to different operators
- (b) identifies/selects a state of affairs

> multiple import for information structure - precise terminology must distinguish:

- (a) verb/predicate **operator focus** - includes most importantly “verum”~**truth value focus**
- (b) **state-of-affairs (SoA) focus** - often but not necessarily verb (lexeme)

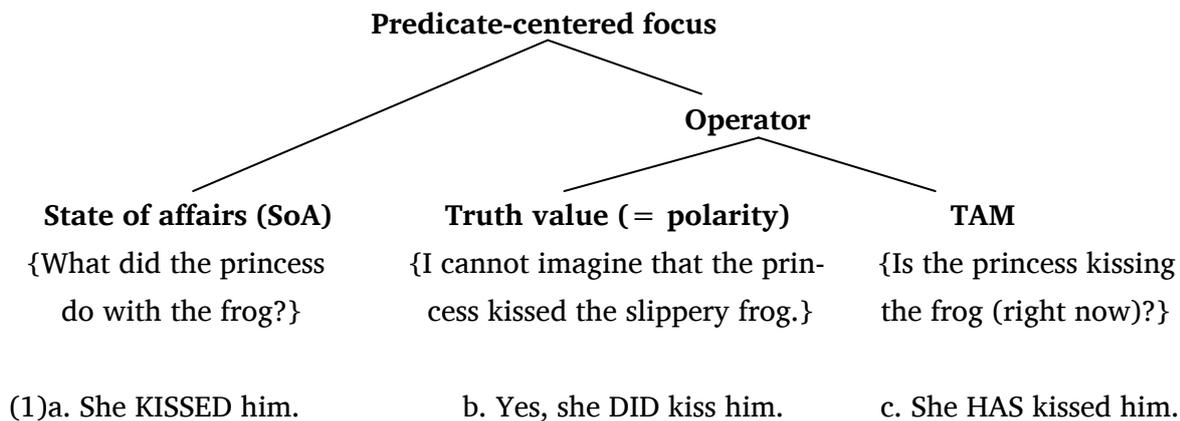


Figure 1: Basic subclassification of predicate-centered focus

1.2 Variable formal encoding with special reference to verb doubling

- (5) Morphological reduplication for SoA focus in Mombo (Dogon)

ǎy, émé s̀-ń-swê:

no milk REDUPL-1S-buy.PFV

{Did you take (the) milk ...?} No, I BOUGHT (the) milk! (Prokhorov 2010b)

- (6) Bound verb gram for predicate-centered focus in Bemba (Bantu M42, Niger-Congo)

bá-mó bá-la-lya ínsoka

3P-some 3P-PF-eat:PRS snake

Some people actually EAT [possibly also: DO eat] snakes. (Sharman 1956: 50)

- (10) Dummy verb construction for truth value focus in English

He **DID** repair the bicycle.

- (11) Final verb doublet + focus marker for SoA focus in Mad'i (Moru-Madi, Central Sudanic)

ópí ēsú gálámù dī ēsú `

PN find pen this find PF

Opi FOUND this pen. (i.e. he didn't BUY it) (Blackings and Fabb 2003: 596)

- (12) Cleft-like structure for SoA focus (as in a., cf. object focus in b.) in Ama (Nyimang)¹

a. **ládā** **bá** **nē** *inḍù* *ká* *ládī*
walk.INF EMPH GF 3S.DET ? walk.IPFV
She is WALKING.

b. **àlfúl** **bá** **nē** *ín* *tâl*
bean EMPH GF 3S eat.PFV
It was THE BEANS that she ate. (Fiedler 2010b)

> following discussion primarily concerned with bisected structures involving preposed (“fronted”) verb doubling as in (12)a.: verb is used in-situ in an inflectionally canonical form but is simultaneously exposed in a clause-initial position in a less finite doublet
Does verb doubling with preposing on the surface represent a unitary type?

1.3 Preposing as a syntactic encoding device of information structure

+ morphosyntactic default: categorical statement (in the sense of Sasse 1987) with a topical subject and assertive focus on the predicate (and possible non-subject participants)

> encoding of marked information structure by syntactic manipulation of default regarding:

(a) word order = linear syntax: preposing or postposing from a default position

(b) constituent complexity = hierarchical syntax: adding syntactic layer to default

> syntactic differences need not imply any derivation from a deep to a surface structure (“movement” etc.), rather comparison of a marked and an unmarked surface structure

+ at least three different types of syntactic preposing

- extraclausal preposing ~ “left dislocation”/“topicalization” in English

- (13) **The dog**, he *BOUGHT* (it).

- extraclausal preposing ~ “clefting” in English

- (14) **It's the DOG** he *bought*.

- intraclausal preposing in German

- (15) **Den Hund** *hat* er *gekauft*
the:ACC dog:ACC has he bought

(two distinct intonations:) He bought the DOG./He BOUGHT the dog. (cf. §2.3 below)

¹ The general focus marker *nē* is derived from an identificational/copulative predicator but no longer employs original aspect and number distinctions.

2 Clause bisection + verb preposing and predicate-centered focus

2.1 Verb focus preposing (= verb doublet as focus)

+ “predicate cleft” used without commitment to the cross-linguistically unrealistic narrow definitional requirements of the biclausal English cleft type (pace, e.g., Aboh 2006: 28)

> “cleft” used instead in the literal (?original) sense: sentence with a syntactic “cleavage/split” between (a) an exposed (normally focused) noun-like term constituent (without a necessary argument relation to the finite clause predicate) and (b) another clause-like (but possibly assertively reduced) constituent which includes the finite predicate

+ slightly different types of predicate clefts can be used in all major predicate-centered focus types

(16) Cleft for SoA focus (as in a.), truth value focus (as in b.), and TAM focus (as in c.) (cf. object focus in d.) in Aja (Kwa, Niger-Congo)

- a. óò, **ɖà** (yí) é ɖà
no cook GF 3S cook
{The woman ate the beans.} No, she COOKED them.
- b. óò, **nyɔ́** (yí) é nyɔ́vì
no, be.beautiful GF 3S be.beautiful
{She is not beautiful.} No, she IS beautiful.
- c. TA operator focus
óò, **xó-ì** á xó-ì
no, hit-3S.OBJ 3S.FUT hit-3S.OBJ
{The woman has hit Peter.} No, she WILL hit him.
- d. **āyú** (yí) é ɖù
bean GF 3S eat
She ate BEANS. (Fiedler 2010a)

+ predicate cleft used exclusively for SoA focus

(17) Cleft for SoA focus (as in a., cf. object focus in b.) in Emai (Edoid, Niger-Congo)

- a. **úkhùmí** (lí) òhí *khú'* ólí éwè
chase:VN GF PN chase the goat
[lit.:] It was chasing that Ohi did to the goat. [Ohi CHASED the goat]
- b. **òpià** lí ó ré' híán òì
cutlass GF he use cut it
It is a CUTLASS he used to cut it. (Morimoto 2010a < Schaefer and E. 2009: 356, 385)

+ non-cleft preposed doublet: [Infinitive Finite.form] in Western Bantu (zones B + H)

(18) Intraclausal preposed verb doublet for SoA focus (as in a./b., cf. c. for object focus) in Suundi (Bantu H13b, Niger-Congo)

- a. mwà:nà bùkú **kù-tá:ngà** kèká-tá:ngà dyò (also: bùkú mwà:nà kùtá:ngà ...)
 child_x book_y INF-read 3S_x:FUT-read 3S_y
 l'enfant va LIRE le livre (Hadermann 1996: 162)
- b. **kù-tá:ngà** ndyèká-tá:ngà (ndyèkátá:ngà = je vais lire)
 INF-read 1S:FUT-read
 je vais LIRE (Hadermann 1996: 161)
- c. **ngó** kà-hó:nd-ídi
 leopard 3S-kill-PST
 il a tué le LÉOPARD (Hadermann 1996: 159)

+ structural parallel of preposed term constituent and preposed verb doublet mirrors pragmatic parallel: both are exposed foci against the following extrafocal predicates

> long tradition of research mainly on African and Caribbean languages (Manfredi 1993)

2.2 Verb topic preposing (= verb doublet as topic)

+ some languages with two superficially similar cleft-like constructions

(19) Cleft-like preposing for focus in Akan (Kwa, Niger-Congo)

- a. **me na** me *ba-a* ha nera
 1S TF 1S come-PST here yesterday
 I it was [sic] who came here yesterday; I [TF] came here yesterday (Boadi 1974: 5-6)
- b. **me deɛ** me *ba-a* ha nera [with rising intonation]
 1S ? 1S come-PST here yesterday
 I (?) came here yesterday (Boadi 1974: 6)
- c. **ba deɛ** me *ba-a* ha nera [with rising intonation]
 come ? 1S come-PST here yesterday
 I CAME here yesterday (Boadi 1974: 6)

!!! *deɛ* is actually a **TOPIC** marker (cf. Marfo and Bodomo 2005, Ameka 2010)

+ other verb-doubling cases where preposed doublet is clearly a topic (cf. also Aboh 2006)

(20) Preposed verb doublet for truth value focus in Amharic (Semitic, Afroasiatic)

- əšši **lä-madammät'-u** ənkw l-adamt'-əh
 alright for-listen:VN-DEF ? PROX-1S:listen:IPFV-2M.S.OBJ
 {But listen to me Tiruneh.} [lit.:] All right, as for listening, I am listening. [Alright, I DO listen to you] (Wetter 2010 < Kapeliuk 1988: 68)

(21) Preposed verb doublet for truth value focus in Hausa

gyaaraa, wàllaahì yaa gyaarà mootà-r
 fix:VN “By God!” 3M.S.PFV fix car-DEF.F

[lit.:] fixing, well he’s fixed the car. [he really DID fix the car] (Jaggar 2001: 542)

+ complex underlying structure: SoA expression is topicalized while assertion of operator is suspended to the following predicate - paraphrase: '**As for *verbing*, (I assert that) X *verb***'
 > conventionalized reanalysis as predicate-centered focus '**X DOES *verb***'

+ predicate-centered focus only as a specialized sub-reading of a wider topicalization construction: other information-structural interpretation of verb (phrase) preposing, as soon as post-topical material is more complex than the topic (see §2.4 below)

(22) Preposed verb phrase without predicate-centered focus in Hausa

a. **syaar dà mootocii dai**, munàa sayar dà mootocii irii-irii
 sell:VN with car.P TOP 1P.IPFV sell with car.P different

As for selling cars, we sell ALL KINDS of cars. (Jaggar 2001: 542)

b. **gyaaraa, sâ yi wà mootà-ĩ** gòobe
 fix:VN 3P.POT do IOBJ car-DEF.F tomorrow

fixing, they’ll probably do it to the car TOMORROW. (Jaggar 2001: 542)

2.3 “Dummy verb constructions” as non-doubling counterparts of preposing

+ dummy verb with verb (phrase) preposing parallel to preposed verb doubling

(23) Focus preposing for SoA focus (as in a., cf. object focus in b.) in Tamashek (Berber, Afroasiatic) - cf. §2.1

a. wæddéy əššəyəl à i-tájj, èdəs à i-tájj
 not work DEM 3M.S-do:IPFV1 sleep:VN DEM 3M.S-do:IPFV1
 [He doesn’t WORK, he SLEEPS.] (Prokhorov 2010c < Heath 2005: 643)

b. **nàkk** à i-wæt
 1S DEM 3M.S-hit:PFV
 It is ME he hit. (Prokhorov 2010c < Heath 2005: 646)

(24) Topic preposing for truth value focus in English - cf. §2.2

I told John to wash the car and **wash the car** he *did*. (Aboh 2006: 46)

+ language-internal variation of preposing + dummy verb and its pragmatics is entirely parallel to the two different doubling patterns in §2.1 vs. §2.2

> prosody in German disambiguates two predicate-centered focus types in segmentally identical form with intraclausal preposing (cf. (15) above)

(25) Focus preposing for SoA focus (as in a.) vs. topic preposing for truth value focus (as in b.) in German

- a. [I**Es-En**]^{FOCUS} [tut er]^{TOPIC}
 read-INF does he
 he READS (“READING he does”) cf. §2.1
- b. [I**Es-en**]^{TOPIC} [tUt er]^{FOCUS}
 read-INF does he
 he DOES read (“as for reading, he DOES (it)”)² cf. §2.2

+ same pragmatic reading irrespective of doubling vs. dummy verb (cf. (26)a. vs. b.) -
 different pragmatic reading with similar dummy verb structure (cf. (26)b. vs. (26)c.)

(26) Preposed topic doubling for operator focus (as in a.), preposed topic with dummy verb (as in b.) for operator focus, and preposed focus with dummy verb for wide VP focus (as in c., cf. dependent verb form!!!) in Hausa³

- a. **sàyé-n** **àbinci kòò,** *zá sù* *sàyaa*
 buy:VN-GEN food moreover FUT 3P buy
- b. **sàyé-n** **àbinci kòò,** *zá sù* *yì*
 buy:VN-GEN food moreover FUT 3P do
 [lit.:] Buying food moreover, they will buy/do. [they WILL buy ...] (Jaggar 2001: 542)
- c. **sàyé-n** **àbinci nèe,** *sukà* *yì*
 buy:VN-GEN food GF 3P.IPFV.DEP do
 They BOUGHT FOOD. (Green 2007: 60)

2.4 Parallel functions, similar surfaces but different strategies

2.4.1 Traditional approach to predicate-centered focus by means of verb preposing

+ recurrently with little differentiation between above “focusing” and “topicalization” types
 (a) Boadi (1974): preposed verb is basically focus - differences through special focus marker
 (b) APiCS (as currently representative survey): no crucial distinction - “verb doubling and focus” (feature 105) subsumes focus preposing as in (27), topic preposing as in (28), and yet other verb doubling strategies under the feature value “**predicate cleft construction**, where the verb is **moved outside** the matrix clause, leaving a copy within the matrix clause”

(27) Focus preposing for truth value focus in Jamaican (English-based Creole)

- a **swel** *it swel*, luk da
 TF swell 3S swell look there
 It really swelled up, look there. (Joseph Farquharson in APiCS)

² This construction is typically, but must not be, used in complex adversative constructions of the type [as for *verbing* X DOES *verb*, but ...].

³ Cf. Hadermann (1996) and Güldemann (2003) for a parallel situation with the “fronted-infinitive” structure in Bantu involving both preposed focus doubling and preposing + dummy verb.

(28) Topic preposing for truth value focus in Afrikaans (Dutch-based Creoloid)

sUkkel sal hy sUkkel [bell-type intonation on first *sukkel*]

struggle shall he struggle

He will jolly well struggle! (Hans den Besten in APiCS)

(c) Aboh (2006): recognition of different types but down-playing their differences

... verb focusing in Kwa is comparable to VP-fronting under focus or topic in other languages; the only difference being that not all languages display a doublet of the fronted category inside the clause. (Aboh 2006: 27)

> indeed “comparable” - see §2.4.2

> explanation/motivation, however, inadequate in two important respects:

- verb doubling is a secondary, non-explanatory factor:

- language-internal distinction: cf. (26) in Hausa

- crosslinguistic parallels in spite of different structures: cf. (19) in Akan vs. (25) in German

- deep structural and functional distinction between verb focus preposing and verb topic preposing - see §2.4.3

2.4.2 Similarities of verb focus preposing (I) and verb topic preposing (II)

(a) (partial) structural bisection and dissociation of SoA host and OP(erator) host

- SoA expression preposed

- operator host left in-situ (can also express SoA in doubling variant)

(I) [Preposed predicate]^{SoA} (PIVOT) [Less asserted reduced predicate]^{OP+(SoA)}

(II) [Preposed predicate]^{SoA} (PIVOT) [Asserted main clause predicate]^{OP+(SoA)}

(b) preposed SoA expression treated morphosyntactically like a nominal (nominalized or at least non-finite status of preposed doublet recurrent)

> exploitation of constructions typical for nominal constituents - “grammatical analogy”

(!!!difference to term preposing: verb as SoA expression is resumed in-situ if no available operator host without SoA expression, aka a dummy verb)

(c) in spite of different mechanisms, function of entire construction is **broadly speaking** in the wider domain of predicate-centered focus

2.4.3 Differences of verb focus preposing (I) and verb topic preposing (II)

(a) **different topic-focus distribution > distinct pragmatic status of preposed predicate:**

(I) [Preposed predicate]^{FOCUS} (PIVOT) [Less asserted reduced predicate]^{TOPIC}

(II) [Preposed predicate]^{TOPIC} (PIVOT) [Asserted main clause predicate]^{FOCUS}

(b) inflectional variability/syntactic status of finite verb is:

- in (I) possibly reduced/deranked (cf. (26)c. in Hausa)
- in (II) not reduced/deranked

(c) information structure of entire construction depends crucially:

- in (I) on complexity of initial noun-like constituent: cf. (26)c. in Hausa
- in (II) on complexity of final clause-like constituent: cf. (22)a. in Hausa

(d) **different assertions determine different subtypes of predicate-centered focus:**

- in (I) asserted focus usually on the SoA
- in (II) asserted focus usually on the operator host property (mostly truth value)

> predict historically that each starts out in its respective sub-domain (SoA vs. operator) and may only later extend from original to other predicate-centered focus types (as in Aja)

> (I) not in operator focus only and (II) not in SoA focus only but the inverse yes - Table 1

Focus type	(I) Focus preposing	(II) Topic preposing
Operator focus only	???	Akan (19)c., Amharic (20), Hausa (21)/(26)a. + b., English (24), German (25)b., Afrikaans (28)
SoA focus only	Ama (12)a., Emai (17)a., Suundi (18)a. + b., Tamashek (23)a., German (25)a.	???
General	Aja (16), Jamaican (27)	?

Table 1: The two types of verb preposing across predicate-centered focus

2.5 A typology of verb preposing in predicate-centered focus

+ all logically possible structural-pragmatic patterns attested

Syntax	Preposing with verb doublet		Preposing with dummy verb	
	Focus	Topic	Focus	Topic
Extraclausal	Ama (12)a. etc.	Hausa (26)a. etc.	Tamashek (23)a.	Hausa (26)b.
Intraclausal	Suundi (18)a. + b.	Afrikaans (28)	German (25)a.	German (25)b.

Table 2: Different syntactic-pragmatic types of verb preposing in predicate-centered focus

3 A wider typology of dissociating SoA and operator expression

+ SoA-operator dissociation also attested in non-preposing constructions:

(a) default syntax with in-situ doubling: finite verb form in construction with non-finite doublet (cf. also (11) for Mad'i verb doubling)

(29) In-situ verb doublet for SoA focus in Kabiye (Gur, Niger-Congo)

ma-ní-u *kabiye kí ní-u* *ma-a yɔɔd-u kú*
 1S-understand-IPFV Kabiye ADJZ understand-H.S⁴ 1S-NEG speak-IPFV it
 I only UNDERSTAND Kabiye. I don't speak it. (Collins and Essizewa 2007: 192)

(b) default syntax with in-situ dummy verb: generic verb as host of predicate inflection in construction with content verb as non-finite or less finite dependent form (cf. also (10) for English *do*-support as non-preposing counterpart of (25) in German)⁵

(30) Periphrastic present with 'do' for truth-value focus (as in a., cf. object focus in b.) in Ndendeule (Bantu N12, Niger-Congo)⁶

a. *mwe n'-tenda ku-pêta*

you:P 2P-do INF-pass

You STILL/DO go through. [although you are not expected to]

b. *ti-lëma malombi*

1P:PRS-cultivate maize.

We cultivate MAIZE.

(Güldemann field notes)

(c) default syntax with doubling morphology = verb reduplication: cf. (5) in Mombo

(d) default syntax with non-doubling morphology = focus verb gram: cf. (6) in Bemba

Syntax	Doubling		Dummy verb	
	Focus	Topic	Focus	Topic
Extraccl. prep.	Ama (12)a. etc.	Hausa (26)a. etc.	Tamashek (23)a.	Hausa (26)b.
Intraccl. prep.	Suundi (18)a. + b.	Afrikaans (28)	German (25)a.	German (25)b.
In-situ	Kabiye (29) etc.		Ndendeule (30) etc.	
Morphology	Mombo (5)		Bemba (6)	

Note:

SoA focus bias	Operator focus bias	?No bias
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Table 3: A wider typology of SoA-operator dissociation in predicate-centered focus

⁴ I follow Lébikaza (1999: 399, 445) in analysing the suffix -U as the class-1 concord for human singular nouns, as opposed to Collins and Essizewa (2007) who gloss it as INFinitive. This analysis and other facts would suggest that the entire structure *kí-VERB.STEM-U* could have grammaticalized from a subject-oriented secondary predicate.

⁵ Cf. Güldemann (2003) for proposing that auxiliary periphrases inherently focus on operators rather than participants (aka terms).

⁶ Cf. Güldemann (2003) for more examples in central-eastern Bantu and elsewhere.

+ some questions to pursue in the future:

(a) more empirical data on assumed focus biases, especially for morphological strategies

> clause-internal strategies without distinction with respect to focus-topic status of verb

(b) role of TAM focus (cf. Figure 1) in the overall picture - hardly figures in currently available data

(c) historical drift from complex sentence syntax over simple sentence syntax to morphology:

- from extraclausal to intraclausal preposing under loss of syntactic bisection

- from default syntax to morphology:

- Mombo in (5): synchronically a morphological process but possibly derived from a construction where reduplicant is the former focus constituent in the immediately preverbal position (Prokhorov 2010b)

- Bemba in (6): morphemes in this particular slot by and large derived from earlier semantically more generic auxiliary verbs

Abbreviations and symbols

ACC accusative, ADJZ adjektivizer, DECL declarative, DEF definite, DEP dependent, EMPH emphasis, F feminine, FUT future, GEN genitive, GF general focus, H human, INF infinitive, INSTR instrumental, IOBJ indirect object, IPFV imperfective, M masculine, NEG negative, NOM nominative, NOMZ nominalizer, OBJ object, OP operator, P plural, PF predicate-centered focus, PFV perfective, PN personal name, POT potential, PROX proximative, PRS present, PST past, Q question, REDUPL reduplication, S singular, SoA state of affairs, TF term focus, TOP topic, VN verbal noun

FOCUSED CONSTITUENT, [prosodic phrase and/or syntactic constituent], {pragmatic context}, in relevant examples: **primary SoA expression** vs. *operator expression*

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