

On non-prosodic predicate-centered focus strategies

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- diversity of focus expression
- more or less marked focus encoding
- interaction with several grammatical categories (tense-aspect, polarity, ...), what about lexical properties?
- present different language-specific approaches to predicate-centered focus

1. Baatonum

- Gur language of the Bariba people (more than half a million), spoken in Benin and Nigeria
- basic SOV order, complex tone system (not yet analyzed)
- data mainly elicited with QUIS tasks, in cooperation with Sayane Gouroubera
- constituent-final particle, target and position according to information-structural configurations

Context-less elicited translation: no PTL

- (1) Woru d̩a d̩ɔ̩ g̩o̩.
W. wood fire kill
'Woru burnt (the) wood.'

Subject focus: subject-PTL

- (2) Woru-wá d̩a d̩ɔ̩ g̩o̩.
W.-PTL wood fire kill
'WORU burnt the wood.' < Who burnt the wood?

The absolute pronouns probably contain the particle *-wa* (allomorph *-a*)

- (3) n̩é-a ná yì d̩ūa.
1s-PTL 1s Cs(O) buy
'I bought it.' < Who bought the rice?

- (4) wí-a (ú) yì d̩ūa.
Cs-PTL (Cs) Cs(O) buy
'HE bought it.' < Who bought the rice?

- > Speech act participants and non speech act participants are treated differently when in focus and expressed by an absolute pronoun: in addition to the absolute pronoun the common subject pronoun is required for 1st and 2nd person, while optional with a 3rd person pronoun

Object focus > fronted object-PTL, PTL not required in elliptic replies

- (5) Swî-yá ú dī.
beans-PTL Cs eat
'She ate (the) BEANS.' < What did she eat?

- (6) Swî(*-yá).
beans
'(The) BEANS.' < What did she eat?

Verb focus and VP focus > verb-PTL, except negation

- (7) U daa dɔɔ gō-wà.
Cs wood fire kill-PTL
'He BURNT (THE) WOOD.' < What did he do?

- (8) Oo, u daa dɔɔ gō-(wà).
yes Cs wood fire kill-PTL
'Yes, he BURNT (the) wood.' < Did Woru burn (the) wood?

- (9) Aawo, u ñ daa dɔɔ gòò.
no Cs NEG wood fire kill
'No, he DIDN'T burn (the) wood.' < Did Woru burn (the) wood?

Narrow verb focus > verb-PTL

- (10) Aáwó ná ñ yè sɔ́r-ê, ná yè gō-wà.
no 1s NEG Cs(O) put.on-NEG 1s Cs(O) put.off-PTL
'No, I didn't switch it on, I switched it OFF.' < Have you switched on the computer?

- (11) Aáwó, ú ñ nùń só-ò, ú nùń bōria-wà tònā.
no Cs NEG Cs(O) hit-NEG Cs Cs(O) push-PTL only
'No, she didn't hit him, she only PUSHED him.' < The woman hit Woru.

- (12) Aáwó, (...) ú nùń sóká-wà.
no Cs Cs(O) call-PTL
'No, (...) she CALLED him.' < The woman hit Woru.

- (13) Yá wūnan-ε-wà mí.
Cs be.different-DUR-PTL PTL
'It IS DIFFERENT.' < (recognizing that a picture differs from another)

Focus on adverbials > verb-PTL, in addition adverbial-PTL, but only when in sentence-initial position

(14) U d̩a d̩ɔ̩ gō-wà gia.
Cs wood fire kill-PTL yesterday
'He burnt (the) wood YESTERDAY.'

(15) Gia-wa u d̩a d̩ɔ̩ gō-wà.
yesterday-PTL Cs wood fire kill-PTL
'He burnt (the) wood YESTERDAY.'

Presentation > presented constituent-PTL, in combination with clause-final PTL's, but other constructions without these PTL's also available

(16) Bèśé-n wúù-n yàbúr-â mí.
1p-POSS village-POSS market-PTL PTL
'(This is) the market of our village.'

- > Baatonum employs parallel forms of encoding of both term and predicate-centered foci
- > the position of suffix *-wa* (allomorphs *-a*, *-ya*) interacts with the focus structure of the sentence, but the suffix itself cannot be regarded as a focus marker, as it often, but not always attaches to the constituent in focus (see 6, 14). We probably face a phrasing device which helps to prosodically distinguish the focal constituent from its non-focal environment, mostly, but not always, by marking its right edge. In such analysis, suffix would mark phonological boundaries in accordance with the focus structure of the utterance. Interestingly, focal objects have to be fronted (see 5), and seem not to allow *in-situ* phonological separation from the verbal head.
- > In addition to the phonological configuration apparently reflecting the focus-background structure of the utterance, there are several further particles (*mi*, *re*, and others) which can or should be added in specific pragmatic contexts.
- > Predicate-centered focus is marked for lexical or SoA focus, but not *per se* for polarity (see 8). This could mean that non-lexical focus-targets are less visible to phonological phrasing than lexical ones! Operator focus remains either unmarked or is expressed by additional particles which need more investigation.

2. Efutu

- an endangered Guang language spoken at the coast of Ghana. It belongs to the Awutu-Efutu dialect cluster with around 180.000 speakers according to the recent ethnologue
- data from short field work, recently a small grammar sketch (Obeng 2008) was published (which I couldn't consult for this paper)
- basic SVO order and tones with heavy grammatical function
- in comparison to Baatonum very rare overt focus expression by dedicated focus marking

- morphosyntax rather seems to reflect some categorical vs.thetic distinction, interaction with tense/aspect marking
- in the presence of a nominal subject, this is optionally cross-referenced at the verb (1), but cross-reference is completely blocked in one of the tense-aspects that resembles a perfect (2). The subject cross-reference reappears as a mandatory element, however, in syntactically marked constructions with a fronted subject for focalization.

(1) àtòbí-ṅ (mú-)dì èdùbá.
 child-DEF (3s-)eat bean
 The child ate beans.

→ optional subject cross-reference only in categorical utterances?

(2) òsì kú ń-!dééwì.
 person certain N-leave

Somebody has left. < What happened? (sound wakes me up in a waiting room, I then ask my neighbour)

(3) òsì kù ná mù-dééwì.
 person certain CNJ 3s-leave

Somebody has left. (not as reply to What happened?, but in other context, such as focalization of the subject)

- It seems possible that the seemingly “optional” cross-reference structures are restricted to categorical statements and *cannot* occur inthetic statements, though this is a working hypothesis that needs further evaluation. This would probably also entail that the two subject expressions in (4) and (5) have a different syntactic status?

(4) ámó-bà.
 3p-come
 ‘They have come.’

< discussion whether they came or didn't come, speaker is advocating that they HAVE COME (categorical)

(5) àmó mbà.
 3p N-come
 ‘They have come.’

< somebody whom we were expecting since long has finally come (thetic)

Regarding focus expressions, focus remains often unmarked (6). In addition, syntactically marked focus constructions are available, both for term focus (7) and for predicate-centered focus types (8-9).

- (6) àmò-wîr àpíákò.
3p-steal money
'They stole MONEY.'
- (7) àpíákò ná àmò-wîr.
money CNJ 3p-steal
'They stole MONEY.'
- (8) èwîr ná àmò-wîr.
?:steal CNJ 3p-steal
'They STOLE.' (It is stealing (money) that they stole.)
- (9) àpíákò wîr ná àmò-wîr.
money steal CNJ 3p-steal
'They STOLE money.' > means something like: Their duty is to steal money.
- > predicate-centered focus follows the same syntactic strategy as term focus
 - > focus marking in general is pragmatically restricted and often not necessary
 - > rare focus marking implementation because focalization task is to a large extent being effectively carried out by canonical word order, tense-aspect categories etc.?

3. Buli

- a Gur language spoken in Northern Ghana (around 150.000 speakers)
- basic SVO order, 3-tone-system with heavy grammatical functional load

3.1 Object (and any postverbal complement) focus:

- (1) Did you sweep (in) the room?
B: àāyà, mí váá **ká** dàbìàkà pō.
no 1s sweep PTL yard:DEF in
No, I swept (IN) THE YARD.

3.2 VP focus:

- (2) A: What did you do?
B: mí sùgúrí **ká** gàttā.
1s wash PTL clothes
I WASHED CLOTHES.
- > object focus or VP-focus within T-C structure, **ká** ("pseudo focus marker"), correlates with topical subject (rare exceptions)

3.3 Subject focus <thetic statement:

- (3) A: Did you sweep the room?
 B: ààyí, Apofiik lē vāàī.
 no Apofiik CON sweep(PTL)
 No, APOFIIK did.

Thetic statement formed with connective particle *lē* and a specific verb form:

- (4) a. Speaker expresses surprise about who washed the clothes > subject focus
 ká fí lē sùgùrì kwàlìmàṅāà.
 PTL 2S CON wash things:DEF:Q
 ‘Did YOU wash the clothes?’
- b. ‘What happened?’ > “sentence” focus
 gàlásì àlē lò tēṅ.
 glass &:CON fall ground
 ‘A glass has fallen down.’

> subject focus necessarily syntactically marked, in contrast to focus on postverbal constituents

3.4 Non-subject term focus < marked categorical statement with clausal comment:

- (5) wà=gàrùkū tē mà-á yāāli.
 Cs=shirt:DEF CNJ 1s-IPF like
 It is his SHIRT that I like. (not his TROUSERS as you expect)

- > disjoints two semantically closely related constituents of the sentence to allow multiple / discontinuous multiple foci
- > construction is compatible with a focus-background and with a topic-comment configuration of the sentence
- > T-C, categorical statement involving clause boundary
- > also applicable for predicate-centered focus:

- (6) ‘They are not climbing the tree,

- a. ká chēkā tē bà=à chē.
 PTL cut:ACT CNJ 3p= IPF cut
 they are CUTTING it.’

b. *ká chēkā tè bà=pà liàká, á chē (tìimū).*
 PTL cut:ACT CNJ 3p=take axe:DEF, IPF cut
 they are CUTTING (the tree) with the axe.'

(7) 'Did the policeman catch the thief?'

gbáŋ ŋmārisikā jīiní tè wà=ɲè.
 letter write:ACT only CNJ 3s=do
 'Only WRITING A REPORT he did.' ~ 'He only WROTE A REPORT.'

- > highly marked constructions, comparatively rare
- > predicate-centered focus occurrences rather correlate with certain particles, first of all with the particle *kāmā*

3.5 Morphologically marked predicate-centered focus:

- intransitive environments:

(8) A: What did you do?

B: *mí sūgūrī(-yà).* or *mí sūgūrí kāmā.*
 1s wash-PTL 1s wash PTL
 I WASHed.

(9) A: What are you doing?

B: *má-à sūgūrī kāmā.*
 1s-IPF wash PTL
 I am WASHing.

- > aspectual difference: more emphatic alternative compared to suffix *-ya* in the perfective, only choice in the imperfective
- > particle *kāmā* bimorphemic, containing the morpheme *ká* (the „pseudo“ focus marker mainly associated with topical subjects) and a second morpheme *mā*
- > particle *kāmā* indicates predicate-centered focus, parallel to other ME-particles, often called „affirmative“ or „emphatic“ particles in closely related Gur languages (Schwarz 2010)

Distributive hints for this function (in Buli and related languages)

The particle:

1. is placed clause-finally and occurs most frequently in the direct postverbal position whereby enclitic pronominal objects may intervene. Lexical complements separating verb and clause-final particle are less common, but possible;
2. is almost completely excluded from negative sentences;

3. seems to be very uncommon beyond the indicative mood;
 4. shows some affinity to the imperfective aspect as it is (almost) obligatory in imperfective intransitive sentences, although it is compatible with the perfective, as well;
 5. conveys some emphatic and “insisting” communicational value, at least in some of its occurrences.
- In the first grammatical sketch on the language, published by Melançon et al. (1974), particle *kámā* is described as having a value of insistence, a strong affirmation of the reality of the verbal process (« une valeur d’insistance, d’affirmation plus accusée de la réalité du processus verbal ») (1974 : 383).
 - In the Buli-English dictionary by Kröger (1992: 163), it is described as an “emphatic and affirmative particle” that is not used in negative sentences, but must be used if a negative sentence is contradicted. The author further explains that the particle can be approximated in English by “indeed, in fact, actually” etc. or that translation via an English do-construction might be adequate
 - In Schwarz (2007: 248), the particle is treated as an emphatic predication marker which is obligatory in indicative sentences in the absence of any complement and which attributes a stative reading to perfective predicates

(10) A: Did you wash the clothes?

B: àáyà, mí lán-ŋá **kámā**.
 no 1s patch-3p PTL
 No, I PATCHED them.

B: mí-ñ sùgùrí-yà ?.
 1s-NEG wash-PTL %
 ‘I did not wash them.’

(11) A: Did you wash the clothes?

B: ŋm̄m̄, ñ=sùgùrí **kámā**. or ñ=sùgùrí-(yà).
 yes 1s=wash PTL 1s=wash-PTL
 Yes, I WASHED (them).

(12) A: Do what your mother told you!

B: mí sùgùrí (gàttàŋà) **kámā**.
 1s wash (clothes:DEF) PTL
 I DID wash (the clothes)!

- (13) A: fī dān kàn nū mí tìimù kámā, ...
 2s if NEG drink 1s medicine:DEF PTL
 If you HADN'T taken my medicine, ... (Schwarz 2010)

Particle *kámā*

- > is complementary to suffix *-ya* which resembles a perfective verb suffix, but can be analyzed as assertive marker taking the occurrence of identical forms in other environments into account (in particular in negation: clause-final verb, clause-final indefinite noun) > suffix *-ya* correlates with „weak“, assertive focus, particle *kámā* with stronger types of foci, often involving an overt contrast to preceding propositions.
- > compare emphatic *do*-construction in English which “requires the presupposition that the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentence containing *do* was questioned in the immediately preceding discourse context” (Lambrecht 1994: 72)
- > has presuppositional structure, can force the creation of a new presuppositional situation in the discourse, serves to manipulate the common ground.
- > functions similar to a definite article which triggers an existential presupposition of the referent in the universe of discourse

Table 1. Basic pragmatic configuration

	verb-and-predication focus
assertive	- <i>YA</i> (perfective aspectual marker, negation marker)
presuppositional	<i>ME</i> (“aspectual” subtypes: present progressive, stative)

- > suffix *-YA* marks assertive focus while the *ME*-particle has presuppositional structure allowing (re)confirmation and can sometimes manipulate the common ground
- > in imperfective predicates only the presuppositional *ME*-particle prevails > aspectual interaction (see also Güldemann 2003)
- > verb close / clause-final particles correspond functionally to conjoint verb forms in Bantu, parallel devices also found in Kru (Marchese) and Burun (Andersen)

4. Predicate-centered focus expression in Buli discourse

Tomatos Fairy Tale

- (1) nípōk àlē tòm wà = bì-kpāgī
 woman &:CON send Cs=child-head
 ‘A woman sent her first-born’

àyēn wà = chēŋ yàbā gà dā tòmántòsūk
 &:that Cs=go market SS buy tomatoes
 ‘to go to the market to buy her tomatoes’

à tā jàm tè = wā, tè wà = dīg jèntà.
 & have come give=Cs CNJ Cs=cook soup
 ‘to be used in preparing soup.’

- (2) àtè bìiká yāā chèn yàbàṅà = lá,
 &:CNJ child:DEF then go market:DEF=DET
 ‘And when the boy went to the market,’

yāā chèn sìùkú bè.
 then go road:DEF lose
 ‘he lost the way.’

- (3) à chèn sìùkú bè = lá,
 & go road:DEF lose=DET
 ‘When he lost the way,’

wà-m̄ bāg dà tòmántòsùkū à yāā pìlìm jàm yèrì.
 Cs-NEG can buy tomatoes:DEF & then return come house
 ‘he couldn’t buy the tomatoes and returned home.’

- (4) àtè nípōowá pìlìm tòm wà = bí-kāāi nē pàà sāṅ = lá,
 &:CNJ woman:DEF return send Cs=child-IND CON reach follow=DET
 ‘and the woman sent her second born,’

àtè wà = chèn yàbàṅà, wá mē chèn sìùkú bè à jàm
 &:CNJ Cs=go market:DEF Cs also go road:DEF lose & come
 ‘and he also went and lost the way and came back,’

àn dá tòmāntòsùkū tā jàm
 &:NEG buy tomatoes:DEF have come
 ‘he didn’t buy and bring the tomatoes’

- (5) nípōowá yāā tòm wà = bí-bààṅkā tè wá chèn yàbàṅà = lá,
 woman:DEF then send Cs= child-last:DEF CNJ Cs go market:DEF=DET
 ‘and the woman sent her second born, and when he went to the market’

à bāgī mìn sìùk,
 & can know road
 ‘he found his way’

à chèn gà dà tòmántòsùwā à tā jàm yèrì,
 & go SS buy tomato:DEF & have come house
 ‘and went and bought the tomatos and brought them home,’

tè nīpōōwá bāgā pà tòmantòsùwā òg jèntà.
 CNJ woman:DEF can:IPF? take tomato:DEF cook soup
 ‘and the woman was able to use the tomatoes and prepared soup.’

> no dedicated focus marking, neither verb nor argument or others

Questions and Answers concerning Tomatos Fairy Tale

Q1: ‘Who actually did the woman send first to go and buy the tomatoes?’

A1: wà = lim òè nìj tòm ká wà = bì-kpāgní
 Cs=first eat front send PTL Cs=child-old:DEF
 ‘She initially sent her first-born.’

Q2: ‘After that, why is it that the woman sent a different child?’

A2: wà = bì-kpāgní nē chèn = lā, wà = gā chèn siùkú bè = kāmā.
 Cs=child-old:DEF CON go=DET Cs=SS go road:DEF lose=PTL
 ‘When the first-born went, he went and lost the way.’

Q3: ‘When she sent the second child, what did he bring home?’

A3: wà-n ta jāā-jāāb jām-yà ?.
 Cs-NEG have thing-thing come-NEG ’%
 ‘He brought nothing.’

Q4: ‘Which child was able to buy the tomatoes and bring them home?’

A4: ká bí-bààṅkā.
 PTL child-last.born:DEF
 ‘It was the last-born.’

Q5: ‘So, after that, the last-born and the mother, were they happy or were they sad?’

A5: bà = pō pièntì kāmā.
 Cp=stomach bec.white PTL
 ‘They were happy.’

- > What role do predicate-centered focus types play in different discourse types and why?
- > To what degree can focus expression felicitously rely on grammatical categories, on multifunctional thetic encoding etc. and at which points dedicated focus marking comes into play?

Abbreviations

ASS	assertive	O	object
C	class	p	plural
CNJ	clausal conjunction	POSS	possessive
CON	connective particle	PTL	particle
DEF	definite	Q	question
DEM	demonstrative (identifier)	s	singular
DET	determiner	&	prosodic connective
IPF	imperfective	'%	intonational boundary marked by a glottal stop
NEG	negation		

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