Preface

In Sara-Bagirmi languages, verbal doubling
- is the main means for expressing predicate-centered focus
- shows differences concerning the encoding of predicate-centered focus

The examples from MBAY, KENGA and BAGIRMI
- involve verbal doubling, but there are differences
- with respect to structural position of the different verb parts and
- regards the functional value of these constructions

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1  The field of research

1.1  The group of Sara-Bagirmi languages

1.1.1 Genetic affiliation

Nilo-Saharan > Central Sudanic > West > Bongo-Bagirmi > Sara-Bagirmi:

Figure 1: Languages of Sara-Bagirmi (Lewis et al. 2013, Boyeldieu 2006)

1.1.2 Language area

Figure 2: Area of BAGIRM, KENGA and MBAY (areal information Lewis et al. 2013)
1.1.3 Socio-linguistic and grammatical remarks

- SVO languages, predominantly agglutinative with synthetic features
- tone languages with three level tones (high: á, middle: a, low: à)

MBAY: 88,300 speakers in Chad, Markounda and Batangafo subprefectures, and CAR
BAGIRMI: 44,800 speakers in Chad, Chari-Bagirmi region in Massénlya and Bousso
KENGÁ: 40,000 speakers in Chad, Guéra region in Bitkine (Lewis et al. 2013)

1.2 Basic notions of information structure

Information structure reflects the formal means exploited to organize utterances, sentences and texts according to the common ground of the interlocutors (Chafe 1976, Krifka 2007). The most important categories are topic and focus.

- Focus is the most salient part of the utterance (Dik 1997: 326), which is also associated with the newly added, or asserted information as opposed to the presupposed information (“focus relation” Lambrecht 1994: 209ff.).

Different scopal types of focus are distinguished in the literature. Depending on the syntactic category of the element which is in focus there are (beyond other types) term focus and “predicate-centered focus” (Güldemann 2009).

- Term focus applies on the information-structural marking of nominal elements.
- Predicate-centered focus (PCF) refers to non-nominal elements.
  It subsumes focus on the lexical meaning of the verb (“SoA focus”) and focus on sentence operators. Operator focus can be split into focus on the tense, aspect or mood operators and focus on the truth value of the utterance (figure 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicate-centered focus</th>
<th>Operator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State of affairs (SoA)</td>
<td>Truth value (= polarity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>{What did the princess do with the frog?}</td>
<td>{I cannot imagine that the princess kissed the slippery frog.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She KISSED him.</td>
<td>Yes, she DID kiss him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3: Basic subclassification of predicate-centered focus types (Güldemann 2009)

1 In the literature for MBAY and KENGÁ all three tones are marked (á, ə and à). For consistency reasons (with the data from BAGIRMI), I will abstain to the explicit marking of middle tones.
1.3 Verbal doubling

1.3.1 The formal properties of verbal doubling

Cross-linguistically, verbal doubling is characterized by the co-occurrence of two (lexical or “dummy”, but not auxiliary) verb forms in one sentence.

The example from EWE (Kwa, Niger-Congo) illustrates the verbal doubling as understood here:

(1) ƙo-ƙo-έ²  wɔ-fo  ɖɛvɪ-á
DUPL-hit-T.FOC  3S-hit  child-DEF
original  doublet
BEATING he beat the child, i.e. He gave the child a THOROUGH BEATING.
(Ameka 2010: 159)

In (1),
- the first verb form can be analyzed as “original”, the second one as its “doublet”
- the original is usually nominalized, while the doublet is finite
- in EWE, the original occurs sentence-initially and is marked by ɛ for focus
- the doublet remains in-situ inside the background part of the sentence

Verbal doubling can be embedded in different constructions
- e.g. in split structures, as seen in (1), or in in-situ doubling structures
- Sara-Bagirmi languages show both split structures an in-situ structures as well

1.3.2 The function of verbal doubling

Bond & Anderson (n.d.: 32) argue that verbal doubling is employed for at least four focus related goals in African languages:

(i) verb/predicate focus
(ii) polarity focus
(iii) ‘obligatory adjunct’ constructions involving a modified cognate nominal, and
(iv) exclusive focus

The Sara-Bagirmi languages under study use verbal doubling at least for
- expressing verb focus (SoA focus) as well as polarity focus

The verb ƙo is reduplicated. This correlates in EWE (as in many other languages as well) with nominalization, which is necessary for extraposing the verb for focus marking.

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2 Verbal doubling in Sara-Bagirmi

2.1.1 Verbal doubling in MBAY

Split structure is combined with additional information-structural marking:

(2) A: Ka-gə lò-i màjài.
   tree-P POSS-2S be.good.NEG
   Your wood is bad.

B: Jágə, l ka-gə ká màjə kəri,
   no ID tree-P that be.good fine
   nà ndusə la ndusə yé.
   but INF.be.worm.eaten G.FOC be.worm.eaten BG
   original doublet
   No, the wood is fine; it’s just that it’s WORM-EATEN. (Keegan 1997: 148)

Structurally,
- the nominalized original is preposed and marked by the generic focus marker
- the finite doublet occupies the canonical sentence position and is marked by the background marker³

Functionally,
- the construction in (2) can be analyzed as typical instance of “focus preposing”:
- the preposed verb is explicitly marked as focus,
- the doublet is explicitly marked as background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Focus preposing” in MBAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Underlying structure:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information structure:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

³ This analysis contradicts the analysis in the literature. Keegan (1997: 147f.) describes the first element as finite and the second one as non-finite. Compared to the marking strategies for term focus in MBAY, it is more likely that verb focus follows the same structure. The glosses in (2) are mine.
2.2 Verbal doubling in KENGA

Split structure with additional information-structural marking:

(3) **K-ààña** kìc àành àành èyo, bàà mákálà mákálà⁴.

INF-courir aussi 3:pouvoir 3:courir NEG aller doucement doucement
original doublet

Il (= un serpent) ne pouvait pas courir (lit. courir, il ne pouvait pas courir),
il s’en est allé doucement. (Neukom 2010: 226)

It could NOT run (as for running, it could not run), it walked there very slowly.

Structurally,
- the **nominalized original** is **preposed** and followed by the particle kìc ‘also’
- the **finite doublet** occupies the **canonical sentence position** and is not marked
concerning information structure

Functionally,
- the construction in (3) can be analyzed as an instance of “**topic preposing**”:
- the preposed verb is followed by the particle kìc
- this particle functions as a **focus-sensitive particle for additive focus**
- cross-linguistically, such elements can mark preceding parts as **topic** (Fiedler 2009)
- if the preposed verb is the topic, the finite part of the predication must be in focus

“Topic preposing” in KENGA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Underlying structure:</th>
<th>[V\textsubscript{INF}] kìc\textsubscript{BG} – [… V\textsubscript{FIN} …]\textsubscript{FOC}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information structure:</td>
<td>Polarity focus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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⁴ The adverb mákálà shows – in contrast to the verbal doubling of the verb forms k-ààña/ààñ –
(contrastive) morphological reduplication for intensification.
2.3 Verbal doubling in BAGIRMi

In-situ doubling without additional morphological marking:

(4) Q: Boukar tā́ d jùm tě́ŋ làbà sà k-sàà wà?
P N PFV.do gruel millet or PFV.eat INF-eat Q
Did Boukar cook millet gruel or did he eat it?

A1: Djùm tě́ŋ ná, Boukar tā́ d tā́dà. topicalized object
gruel millet BG PN PFV.do INF.do
doublet original

A2: Boukar tā́ d djùm tě́ŋ tā́dà. object insertion
gruel millet INF.do
PN PFV.do
doublet original

Boukar COOKED millet gruel. (Jacob 2010: 129)

The question for focus on the lexical semantic of the verb offers two possible answers:
- in (4-A1), the object is topicalized by extraposing
- in (4-A2), the object remains inside the proposition (between doublet and original)

In both cases, the nominalized original occurs in right-most position
- the finite doublet appears in its canonical position, i.e. it follows the subject\(^5\)
- neither the original nor the doublet show any morphological marking concerning information structure

Functionally,
- the construction in (4) is an example for “in-situ verbal doubling”:
- the doublet occurs in its canonical position, followed by the nominalized original

“In-situ doubling” in BAGIRMi

Underlying structure: [... \(V_{FIN}\) \(\ldots\)]BG [\(V_{INF}\)FOC]
Information structure: Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

\(^5\) This analysis is based on the structure in (4-Q) with the “marked” infinitive \(k\)-sàà. This prefix \(k\) occurs only with verbs of conjugation class I and II, cf. Stevenson (1969: 112).
3 Principles underlying the distribution of doubling

In Sara-Bagirmi, verbal doubling is used to express predicate-centered focus
- there are differences with respect to structural position of the different verb parts:

In MBAY, “focus preposing” is used to express SoA focus
- the original is preposed and marked as focus, the doublet provides the background

In KENGA, “topic preposing” is used to mark polarity focus
- the original is preposed and marked as topic, the doublet occurs inside the focal part

In BAGIRMI, “in-situ doubling” is used to express SoA focus
- the nominalized original is in focus, the doublet is embedded in the background part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SoA focus</th>
<th>Polarity focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Split structure</strong></td>
<td>MBAY</td>
<td>KENGA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-situ doubling</strong></td>
<td>BAGIRMI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1

Table (1) lists the mismatch between form and function:
- SoA focus can be expressed by split structure and in-situ doubling as well
- split structures are used for marking SoA focus and polarity focus as well

3.1 Structures expressing SoA focus

For realizing SoA focus,
- the focused original in MBAY is preposed
- in BAGIRMI, the nominalized original occurs in-situ
- in both cases, the doublet remains in its canonical position

In MBAY, term focus is realized by a **nominal cleft-like construction**:

(5a) Súu la ndà ngon-ît yé. subject focus
PN G.FOC hit child-POSS.3S.MSR BG
It was Suu who hit his child.

(5b) Ngon-á la Súu ndà-á yé. object focus
child-POSS.3S G.FOC PN hit-3S BG
It was his child that Suu hit. (Keegan 1997: 158)
SoA focus is realized in the same way as term focus
- the nominalized verb occurs in the same position as subject or object:

(6a) \([\text{NP}] \text{la}_{\text{FOC}} - [\ldots] \text{yé}_{\text{BG}}\) Nominal cleft-like construction

(6b) \([\text{V}_{\text{INF}}] \text{la}_{\text{FOC}} - [\ldots \text{V}_{\text{FIN}} \ldots] \text{yé}_{\text{BG}}\) Predicate cleft-like construction

(6) shows the similarities between nominal and predicate cleft-like constructions:
\(\Rightarrow\) the focused element is preposed and marked by \(\text{la}\), the background is marked by \(\text{yé}\)

For encoding term focus, BAGIRMI can use two different strategies:

(7a) \(\text{Kro} \text{keɗe} \text{dáŋ}, \text{Boukar ndugo tepre kasko.}\) donkey IDEFT.FOC PN PFV.buy yesterday market
Boukar bought A DONKEY at the market yesterday.

(7b) \(\text{Tepre} \text{kasko ná, Boukar ndugo ná, kro keɗe.}\) yesterday market BG PN PFV.buy BG donkey IDEF
Yesterday at the market, Boukar bought A DONKEY. (Jacob 2010: 125)

Both sentences express narrow focus on the object
(7a) shows “direct focus marking”:
- the focused element is preposed and marked by the focus marker \(\text{dáŋ}\)
- the rest of the sentence is not morphologically marked at all

(7b) illustrates “indirect focus marking”:
- all non-focused elements occur left-peripherally
  - they show an additional morphological marking by the particle \(\text{ná}\) as background
- the focused element is not focus-marked itself – it is the only unmarked element
  - it must be interpreted as focus, because it is excluded from the background domain
- the focused object remains sentence-finally

The in-situ doubling is similar to the latter strategy
- I consider the sentence-final position as most important for the focus reading
\(\Rightarrow\) the term and the verbal original occupy the rightmost position when in focus:

(8a) \([\ldots] \text{ná}_{\text{BG}} - ([\ldots] \text{ná}_{\text{BG}}) - [\text{NP}]_{\text{FOC}}\) Indirect term focus structure

(8b) \([\ldots \text{V}_{\text{FIN}} \ldots]_{\text{BG}} - [\text{V}_{\text{INF}}]_{\text{FOC}}\) In-situ verbal doubling

The structures used for marking SoA focus in MBAY and BAGIRMI are very similar:
- they are always oriented on the encoding means for term focus
\(\Rightarrow\) SoA focus and term focus refers to a lexical element
It is worth noting, that the focused element is not morphological marked at all - cross-linguistically, in-situ strategies are used exclusively for emphasizing (focus)

3.2 Structures expressing polarity focus

The split structures involving preposing need additional morphological material - because the sentence-initial position is used for both focal and topical information → the particular reading must be identified by the use of special particles

Preposed verbal doubling can be applied for expressing SoA focus and operator focus - structural differences allow disambiguation (Güldemann 2010) - e.g. by morphology in HAUSA (Chadic, Afro-Asiatic)

(9a) gyaaraa (nèe) ya yi „focus preposing“
    repair:VN G.FOC 3M.S.PFV.DEP do
    he REPAIRED it (lit.: it was REPAIRING, he did)

(9b) gyaaraa, yaa yi „topic preposing“
    repair:VN 3M.S.PFV do
    he DID repair it (lit.: as for repairing, he DID (it)) (Fiedler, p.c.)

In both cases in (9), the nominalized verb is preposed and the dummy remains in-situ
In (9a), the original is focal (marked by the focus marker and the dependent form ya)
- the whole construction can be analyzed as “focus preposing” (“VERBing X verb”)
→ the structure indicates SoA focus

In (9b), the original is topical (marked by the independent form yaa)
- the whole construction can be analyzed as an instance of “topic preposing”
- the original (and its lexical meaning) is not longer in focus, but only the illocution
- this could be described as “As for verb, (I assert that) he verb”/“X DOES verb”
→ the structure indicates polarity focus

In Sara-Bagirmi,
- the preposed verb in MBAY is followed by the focus marker la (10a)
- the preposed verb in KENGA is followed by the additive focus marker kìc which usually indicates preceding elements as topic (10b)

(10a) \[ [V_{INF}] \text{la}_{FOC} - [V_{FIN} \ldots] \text{yé}_{BG} \] “focus preposing” in MBAY

(10b) \[ [V_{INF}] \text{kìc}_{BG} - [V_{FIN} \ldots]_{FOC} \text{FOC} \] “topic preposing” in KENGA

→ split structures must be explicitly marked concerning information structure
3.3 Summary

In Sara-Bagirmi languages, verbal doubling is the main means for expressing predicate-centered focus.

First, it can be stated here, that the constructions under study are used to disambiguate the different types of predicate-centered focus.

Second, the realizing of SoA focus is strongly oriented on the (language-specific) strategies for marking term focus. Conversely, polarity focus often asks for a special encoding.

Third, split structures require an explicitly marking of the preposed elements concerning their information-structural value. In contrast to this, in-situ doubling needs no additional morphological marking.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>MSR</td>
<td>Mandatory subject reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEF</td>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEP</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Determiner</td>
<td>PFV</td>
<td>Perfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUPL</td>
<td>Reduplication</td>
<td>PN</td>
<td>Proper name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOC</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>POSS</td>
<td>Possessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Generic</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Question marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Singular</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDEF</td>
<td>Indefinite</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Term</td>
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<tr>
<td>INF</td>
<td>Infinitive</td>
<td>VN</td>
<td>Verbal noun</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
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### References


