Predicate-centered focus types in Khoekhoegowab:

A morphosyntactic analysis

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1. Introduction

Khoekhoegowab (ISO 639-3 NAQ)

Other names: Nama, Namaqua, Bergdama, Ber指导ama; Hottentot (*pejorative*)

(Ethnologue 2014)

a) Classification ("Khoisan")

1. Non-Khoe (Ju, ḫHôa, Tuu)
2. Khoe-Kwadi ("Central Khoisan")
   2.1. Khoekhoe
      2.1.1. North: Nama/Damara, Hai'||om, ḫAakhoe (DC) (= KHOEKHOEGOWAB)
      2.1.2. South: !Ora; Cape Khoekhoe varieties (DC)

2.2. Kalahari Khoe

3. Sandawe (not illustrated on the map)
4. Hadza (not illustrated on the map)

(Figure 1: Güldemann & Vossen 2000: 102)
b) Speakers
- **Total: 251 100** throughout southern Africa - i.e. in Namibia, South Africa and Botswana.
  - 200 000 of them live in Namibia. (Ethnologue 2014)
  - In Namibia Khoekhoegowab serves as the second most widely used language per household. (Namibia statistics agency 2011)

c) Grammatical and phonological information
- Canonical sentence structure: SOV
- Isolating/agglutinating language
- Phonological inventory:
  - 20 click consonants (combination of 4 influxes and 5 effluxes - accompaniment)
  - 12 non-click consonants; 5 oral and 3 nasal vowels
- 6 lexical tones in citation form (i.e. SL; L; SL-L (low-rising); H; SH; H-SH (high-rising)) and 4 lexical tones in sandhi form. (cf. Haacke 1999c: 721 and Brugman 2009: 120)
- Nouns and nominal phrases take person, gender and number suffixes.

2. Theoretical framework and methodology

a) Focus

*Focus* is understood as "that information which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by S [Speaker] to be most essential for A [Addressee] to integrate into his pragmatic information. (Dik, 1997:326).

The main parameters of focus are:

1. Communicative point:
   - a. information gap > assertive focus
   - b. contrastive information > contrastive focus

2. Scope:
   - a. term > term focus
   - b. verb lexeme and predicate operators > predication focus

(Figure 1: Güldemann 2003: 332)

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1 According to Haacke (1999c), Khoekhoegowab tones result from a combination of four surface *tonal features* of which each is assigned a syllable –i.e. double low, low, high and double high. Therefore in all bisyllabic roots they constitute "tonal melodies".
b) **Predicate-centered focus (PCF)**

Focus on the verb lexeme and on the sentential operators is analysed in the sense of Güldemann (2009):

![Diagram of Predicate-centered focus](image)

**State of affairs (SoA)**

{What did the princess do with the frog?}

She KISSED him.

**Operator**

Truth-value (= polarity)

{I cannot imagine the princess kissed the slippery frog.}

Yes, she DID kiss him.

T(ense)A(aspect)M(ood) "Intensification"

{Is the princess kissing the frog (right now)?}

{Is the frog small, green and ugly?}

She HAS kissed him.

He is SO ugly.

(figure 2: Basic subclassification of PCF - from Jacob 2014 citing Güldemann 2009)

c) **Objectives:**

This analysis is based on the following questions:

i. How are predicate-centered focus types primarily realized in Khoekhoegowab?

ii. Is there a difference at all between the expression(s) of predicate-centered focus types and term focus in Khoekhoegowab?

iii. What is the formal relation (if any) among the predicate-centered focus types?

d) **Methodology (and data)**

A questionnaire on Focus translation (Fiedler & Schwarz 2006) has been translated from English to Khoekhoegowab by Sylvanus Job in February 2014 at the Center of general linguistics (ZAS) in Berlin. The translated text was analysed for structures related to the predicate-centered focus types for the purpose of this presentation.

e) **Orthographical conventions:**

- "Long vowels" are written with a macron over a single vowel in official Khoekhoegowab orthography (in Namibia), but here double vowels would be used, eg. ā > aa)
- Tone is marked only later in the presentation where prosodic prominence seems to influence the placement of focus.
3. Previous Studies

Studies on information structure in Khoekhoegowab has mainly been concerned with term focus. Currently, no study has yet been devoted for an elaborative analysis of the implications of predicate focus in Khoekhoegowab. Contributions were made i.a. by

1. Dempwolff (1927, 1934)
2. Hagman (1977)
3. Haacke (2006) and

a) Focus assignment in Khoekhoegowab

In a non-canonical sentence, the sentence initial position is the focus position. This has also been alluded to by Dempwolf (1927):

"What is placed into the sentence initial position is translated as stress."

(cited by Witzlack-Makarevich 2006: 49)

In his Ph.D thesis Hagman (1977:108) expands on Dempwolf, but with a change in name, i.e.:

"initialization is the bringing of the element to the beginning of the sentence. In the normal sentence order, the subject is in the initial position – the position of highest emphasis; in a declarative sentence, it is followed by the declarative particle (indicative) ge.

When another sentence element is brought into the initial position, it must be placed in the position of the noun phrase stem (NPS) [the subject][...] and the subject is deleted or is alternatively reintroduced (in an oblique form, as NP-a) after ge.

The deposed subject (NP-a) is optional, and therefore may be deleted." (1977:108)

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2 The works mentioned here are not meant to be exhaustive at the moment.

3 It is not clear from this example what Hagman means with emphasis, i.e. whether he refers to accent placement or to focus, but what is of importance for us here is his special reference to the syntactic position.

4 This type of phenomena is also echoed by Lambrecht (1994:223): "concerning the predicate-focus […], it is clear that in the minimal context […] the sentences would be most natural with pronominal or null subjects."
Hagman’s description is illustrated below.

Note that in a canonical indicative sentence the postpositional phrases, as well as all other non-subjects (i.e. objects, adverbs, etc.) are found between the indicative ge and the verb.

**Canonical (SOV) sentence structure**

(1) a. [Nee ao-b] ge [l[taa-s !oa] [ra !gû.]]
   
   this/now man-3M.S IND town-2:3F.S toward PST.PROG go
   
   This man is going to the town. (Hagman 1977: 109)

**Focus on postpositional adverbial phrase**

- the (nominal) subject deposed. The subject pronoun attached to the focused postpositional phrase retains the canonical subject position.

b. [lAa-s !oa]-b ge [nee ao-b-a] [ra !gû.]
   
   town-2:3F.S toward-3M.S IND this/now man-3M.S-OBL PRS.PROG go
   
   This man is going TO THE TOWN. (Hagman 1977: 109)

In c. (below) focus is on the postpositional adverbial phrase

- the (nominal) subject is deleted, but the subject pronoun (-b) attached to the focused postpositional phrase retains the canonical subject position followed by the indicative ge.

c. [lAa-s !oa]-b ge [ra !gû.]
   
   town-2:3F.S toward-3M.S IND PRS.PROG go
   
   He is going TO THE TOWN. (Hagman 1977: 109)

The pronoun actually represents the subject of the sentence and takes any lexical stock attached to it. Below is another example, but this time with term focus in b., and the predicate focus in c.

**Canonical SOV sentence**

(2) a. [Ao-b] ge [tara-s-a] [ra mû.]
   
   Man-3M.S ND woman-2:3F.S-OBL PRS.PROG see
   
   The man is seeing the woman.

**Term focus**

b. [Tara-s-a]-b ge [ao-b-a] [ra mû]
   
   woman-2:3FS-OBL-3M.S IND man-3M.S-OBL PRS.PROG see
   
   (He,) The man is seeing THE WOMAN.

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5 The postpositional noun phrase is moved into the initial position. This type of sentence permutation is also referred to as *fronting*. "With *fronting* I refer to the preposing of a constituent other than the LS [lexical specification] of the subject into the (underlying) initial slot" (Haacke 2006: 117).

6 Canonical SOV sentence
Predicate focus

c. [Mû ra tara-s-a] [ao-b] ge.
    see     PRS.PROG  woman-2:3FS-OBL  man-3M.S  IND

The man DOES SEE THE WOMAN (can also be: He is the MAN WHO DOES SEE THE WOMAN)\(^7\) (Haacke, 2006:116)

Note in c. not only the preposing of the predicate but also the inversion (Haacke 2006) of TAM and the lexical verb. The inversion of TAM and the verb is governed by a grammatical rule that non-lexical particles may not occupy a sentence initial position.

It is argued herein that constructions like (1)c. in which the entire predicate is moved into the sentence initial position amount to truth value focus.

Finally, there are some views on the latest research in information structure in Khoekhoegowab which seem to complement each other but with subtle differences, particularly with regard to the focus position.

"The primary focus position normally – but not always – is in the initial slot, immediately in front of the subject-PGN" (Haacke 2006: 114)

"The two possible linear positions for narrow focus are the prefieid [immediately infront of the subject PGN] and a preverbal position in the middlefield after the [deposed] subject. Though being a possible focus position, the prefieid is not the primary focus position." (Witzlack-Makarevich 2006: 91&87)

Note that Witzlack-Makarevich's prefieid is Haacke's initial slot.

The latter term will be used in the succeeding analysis of predicate-centered focus in Khoekhoegowab to refer to the particular sentence initial position, i.e. immediately before the subject pronoun.

\(^7\) Copulative vs. predicative reading, cf. Haacke, 2006
\(^8\) The use of the tense marker more than once in a sentence has been attested only for few dialects of Khoekhoegowab and is therefore not (yet) representative of the whole language. Therefore, the double marking of tense (in this example) must be seen a feature of the Richtersveld Nama dialect that Witzlack-Makarevich has worked on. Generally the tense apprears IAV in a canonical sentence.
Non-subject elements which precede the initial slot without the (nominal) subject being deposed will be referred to as *preposed*.

4. *Predicate-centered focus types (PFC) in Khoekhoegowab*

a) **State of affairs (SoA) focus**

*Contrastive focus*

Whereas (3)a. shows the full response to the question, but with only the lexical verb in the focus position followed by TAM, example (3)b. indicates a minimal answer (a response which has only the focal elements). When the verb is preposed there’s an inversion of TAM to the position after the verb, because non-lexical elements may not occupy a sentence initial position.

(3)  
3a. **Ama ra axa-gu ge banana-ga.**
   
   buy PRS.PROG boy-3M.P IND banana-3M.P:OBL
   
   {Are the boys buying or selling bananas?} The boys are BUYING the bananas.
   
   (Ques.FT 111)

3b. **Ama ra.**
   
   buy PRS.PROG
   
   {Are the boys buying or selling bananas?} (They are) BUYING (them)

Note also that in example (3)a. above, the object *banana-ga (the bananas)* which forms part of the presupposed information is in its canonical position, after the indicative sentence marker *ge*. The subject (which also forms part of the presupposed information) remains in its canonical position as well.

*Assertive focus*

(4)  
4a. **Kuru-khâi go audo-s-a**
   
   assemble/create-up REC.PST car-3F.S-OBL
   
   {What exactly did he do with the car?} (He) FIXED the car.          (QUES.FT 197)

4b. **Kuru-khâi go**
   
   assemble/create-up REC.PST
   
   {What exactly did he do with the car?} (He) FIXED it.               (QUES.FT 197)

(4)a. again indicates a minimal answer and (4)b. a longer answer of the same response. (4) also illustrates that the verb is preposed for SoA focus and is followed by TAM.

From the examples above both assertive focus and information focus are realised identically.

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9 A canonical sentence in this case would be: **Axa-gu ge banana-ga ra Ifama.**
b) TAM focus

TAM-focus is expressed by means of adverbs in example (below).

(5) a. Ƞabileceği  koo hā.
 already  look PFV
{at a vetenary) Have they already looked at the dog or are they still looking at it?} (They) HAVE ALREADY looked (at it) (Ques.FT 190)

b) Truth-value (polarity) focus

In examples (7) and (8) truth-value is expressed by preposing the entire predicate, with the subject remaining in its canonical position (-not deposed). The indicative ge that would normally follow after the subject is deleted.

(7) Hǐ-ɬ, noxopa Petru-b-a  nī hao-u-se  ii kaikhoe-s¹⁰
 no, still Peter-3M.S-OBL FUT meet-with-ADV.S look/appear big-person-2:3F.S
{The woman met Peter} No, The woman IS STILL (GOING) TO MEET (WITH) PETER. (Lit. (the woman (~it)) seems that she would (still) meet Peter.) (Ques.FT 164)

(8) Hǐ-ɬ, tama buŋki-e Maria-s.
 no eat NEG beans-3NS-OBL PN-2:3FS
{Mary ate the beans} No, Mary DIDN'T EAT (any) beans. (Ques.FT 152)

Example (9)b. shows that to negate a proposition, the negation particle tama is placed immediately after the verb, replacing the TAM, except in sentences with the stative i. ¹¹

(9) a. ɬ, go.
 yes eat REC.PST
 {The woman ate the beans, didn't she?} Yes, (she) ATE (them).

b. Hǐ-ɬ, tama.
 no eat NEG
 {The woman ate the beans, didn't she?} No, (she) DIDN'T EAT (them). (Ques.FT 123)

¹⁰ The canonical SOV sentence would be: Kai-khoe-s ge noxopa Petru-b-a nī hao-u-se i.
¹¹ ꠝ-b  ge  ꠝgoe  tama  go  i
 DISC-3M.S  IND lie(down)  NEG  REC.PST  STAT
 He didn't lie (down). (Hagman 1977: 90)
Moreover, there are also similar constructions, but with an explicit marked truth-value.

In examples (10) and (11), an adjective *ama* (*true*) is frequently used in an adverbial function preceding the verb. With this it seems the speaker puts explicit emphasis on the truth-value of the proposition. The morpheme seems to confirm both positive and negative propositions respectively.

(10) \( {i, \ ama} \ ji \ go. \)
    yes true limp REC.PST
    \{He limped, didn’t he?\} Yes, (he) DID limp.  (Ques.FT. 119)

(11) \( {i, \ ama} \ t\m{n}t\m{a} \ ge \ h\m{a}. \)
    yes, true steal NEG-3C.P IND PFV
    \{They didn’t steal it.\} Yes, (they) DIDN’T STEAL (it).  (Ques.FT. 184)

5. Conclusion

- Current preliminary analysis reveals that syntactic focus strategies applicable for term focus is operational for the predicate-centered focus types as well. Exceptions are however noticed with regard to the position of the sentential operators (like TAM), which may not occupy the sentence initial position.
- Within the predicate-centered focus types
  - SoA focus is realised by placing the lexical verb in the initial slot – and leaving other arguments, eg. object and adverbials in their canonical sentence positions.
  - When the entire predicate is placed in the initial slot, focus is on truth-value and not on the lexical verb.
  - TAM focus and Truth-value focus are marked (the latter explicitly) by means of "adverbial" morphemes
  - Propositions are negated by means of a negation particle which is placed IAV.

6. Outlook

- Further analysis is needed to evaluate the data in literature with the current data
- The role of prosody also needs investigation
  - So far no evidence exists from the data that lexical tones influence focus placement.
  - However, grammatical tones/pitch, particularly the intonation in yes/no interrogatives seem to influence focus assignment (see the example below).

(12) a. \( {!Na} \m{ri-ao-b-\m{\ddot{a}}} \)
    steal-man-3M.S-OBL
    Petru-b-\m{\ddot{a}}?
    PN-3M.S-OBL
    Is the thief PETER?

b. \( {!Na} \m{ri-ao-b-\m{\ddot{a}}} \)
    steal-man-3M.S-OBL
    Petru-b-\m{\ddot{a}}?
    PN-3M.S-OBL
    Is THE THIEF Peter?  (Haacke 2006: 123)
7. References


Güldemann, Tom and Ines, Fiedler. 2013. Predicate-centered focus from a cross-linguistic perspective. Theme session at ALT 10, August 15–18, 2013.


### 8. Abbreviations

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<td>1</td>
<td>first person</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>interrogative</td>
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<td>second person</td>
<td>IAV</td>
<td>immediately after the verb</td>
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<td>(the one just being) discussed</td>
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