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 ɗà dɔɔ̃ gō.
W. wood fire kill
‘Woru burnt (the) wood.’

Subject focus: subject-PTL

(2) Woru-ɗà wà ɗà dɔɔ̃ gō.
W.-PTL wood fire kill
‘WORU burnt the wood.’ < Who burnt the wood?

The absolute pronouns probably contain the particle -wà (allomorph –a)

(3) nɛ̀-á ná yì dūa.
1s-PTL 1s Cs(O) buy
‘I bought it.’ < Who bought the rice?

(4) wì-á (ú) yì dūa.
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-ya ú dì.
beans-PTL Cs eat
‘She ate (the) BEANS.’ < What did she eat?

(6) Swî(*-ya).
beans
‘(The) BEANS.’ < What did she eat?

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

(7) U da dọ gō-wà.
Cs wood fire kill-PTL
‘He BURNT (THE) WOOD.’ < What did he do?

(8) Oo, u da dọ gō-(wà).
yes Cs wood fire kill-PTL
‘Yes, he BURNT (the) wood.’ < Did Woru burn (the) wood?

(9) Aawo, u bụ da dọ góò.
no Cs NEG wood fire kill
‘No, he DIDN’T burn (the) wood.’ < Did Woru burn (the) wood?

Narrow verb focus > verb-PTL

(10) Aâwó nǎ ñ yè sâr-è, 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) Aâwó, ñ ñ nùn só-ô, ñ nùn bôria-wà tônà.
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) Aâwó, (...) ñ nùn sókâ-wà.
no Cs Cs(O) call-PTL
‘No, (...) she CALLED him.’ < The woman hit Woru.

(13) Yà wūnan-e-wà mì.
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 dāa dɔ olocation-gō-wà gía.
Cs wood fire kill-PTL yesterday
‘He burnt (the) wood YESTERDAY.’

(15) Gía-wa u dāa dɔ olocation-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) Bɛ̀sɛ̀-n wū̀-n yàbùr-à mì.
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) àtóbí-ń (mú-)dì èdùbá.
child-DEF (3s-)eat bean
The child ate beans.
→ optional subject cross-reference only in categorical utterances?

(2) ṣì 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) ṣì kú ná mú-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 in thetic 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) ámó mú-bà.
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).
àmò-wîr àpíákò.
3p-steal money
‘They stole MONEY.’

àpíákò ná àmò-wîr.
money CNJ 3p-steal
‘They stole MONEY.’

èwîr ná àmò-wîr.
?:steal CNJ 3p-steal
‘They STOLE.’ (It is stealing (money) that they stole.)

àpíák 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: àāyā, mí váá ká dàbiáká 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 súgúrí 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: ̀àýí́, Apofiik le waíí.
    no Apofiik CON sweep(PTL)
No, APOFIIK did.

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

(4) a. Speaker expresses surprise about who washed the clothes > subject focus
    ká fi lé sugúrí kwàlimàŋáá.
    PTL 2s CON wash things:DEF:Q
    ‘Did YOU wash the clothes?’

b. ‘What happened?’ > “sentence” focus
    gàláší àlé lò tèŋ.
    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=gàrùkù té mà-á yàáli.
    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 chëká té bà=à chë.
    PTL cut:ACT CNJ 3p=IPF cut
    they are CUTTING it.’
(7) ‘Did the policeman catch the thief?’

They are cutting (the tree) with the axe.

‘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 kámá

3.5 Morphologically marked predicate-centered focus:

- intransitive environments:

(8) A: What did you do?

B: mí súgúrí(-yà), or mí súgúrí kámá.

I washed.

(9) A: What are you doing?

B: má-à súgúrí kámá.

I am washing.

> aspectual difference: more emphatic alternative compared to suffix –yà in the perfective, only choice in the imperfective
> particle kámá bimorphemic, containing the morpheme ká (the „pseudo“ focus marker mainly associated with topical subjects) and a second morpheme mā
> particle kámá 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 kāmā 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 láŋ-ŋá kāmā.
no 1s patch-3p PTL

No, I PATCHed them.

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

(11) A: Did you wash the clothes?

B: ŋūmā, ǹ=sùgùrí kāmā. or ǹ=sùgùrí-(yà).
yes 1s=wash PTL 1s=wash-PTL

Yes, I WASHED (them).

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

B: mí sùgùrí (gàttànà) kāmā.
1s wash (clothes:DEF) PTL

I DID wash (the clothes)!
(13) A: fì dàn kàn Ṽu mì tì mù kámá, ...
2s if NEG drink 1s medicine:DEF PTL
If you HADN’T taken my medicine, ... (Schwarz 2010)

Particle kámá
> 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 kámá 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>verb-and-predication focus</td>
<td>assertive: -YA (perfective aspectual marker, negation marker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>presuppositional: ME (“aspectual” subtypes: present progressive, stative)</td>
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</tbody>
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> 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 ̀lë tóm wà=bi-kpāgi
woman &:CON send Cs=child-head
‘A woman sent her first-born’

àyèn wà=chēn yàbā gà dà tómántősük
 &:that Cs=go market SS buy tomatoes
‘to go to the market to buy her tomatoes’
à tä jäm tə = wä, tə wä = dig jëntà.
& have come give=Cs CNJ Cs=cook soup
‘to be used in preparing soup.’

(2) àtè biiká yāä chëñ yàbänà = lā,
&:CNJ child:DEF then go market:DEF=DET
‘And when the boy went to the market,’
yāä chëñ siûkú bè.
then go road:DEF lose
‘he lost the way.’

(3) à chëñ siûkú bè = lā,
& go road:DEF lose=DET
‘When he lost the way,’
wà-m bāg dā tômântôsûkū à yāä pilim jäm yèrī.
Cs-NEG can buy tomatoes:DEF & then return come house
‘he couldn't buy the tomatoes and returned home.’

(4) àtè nîpoowä pilim tôm wà = bî-kääi nè pâà sän = lā,
&:CNJ woman:DEF return send Cs=child-IND CON reach follow=DET
‘and the woman sent her second born,’
àtè wà = chëñ yàbänà, wà më chëñ siûkú bè à jäm
&:CNJ Cs=go market:DEF Cs also go road:DEF lose & come
‘and he also went and lost the way and came back,’
àn dā tômântôsûkū tā jäm
&:NEG buy tomatoes:DEF have come
‘he didn't buy and bring the tomatoes’

(5) nîpoowä yāä tôm wà = bî-bâàŋkä tè wà chëñ yàbänà = lā,
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 bâğı mîn siûk,
& can know road
‘he found his way’
à chëñ gâ dâ tômântôsûwâ à tā jäm yèrî,
& go SS buy tomato:DEF & have come house
‘and went and bought the tomatos and brought them home,’
Questions and Answers concerning Tomatos Fairy Tale

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

A1: wà = lìm đê nịn tóm kà wà = bi-kpāngnì
  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 = bi-kpāngnì nê chèn = là, wà = gà chèn sìkówù bē = kànà.
  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-ndo ta jāa-jāa jàm-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 bi-bàńjà.
  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 = pó pięntì kànà.
  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  
NEG  negation  

**References**


