Focus in the Kenyang Language

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Abstract

Focus abbreviated "FOC" refers to that part of the clause that provides the most salient information in a given discourse situation.. It is also a grammatical category that determines which part of the sentence contributes new, non derivable or contrastive information. Focus is related to information structure. This article looks at focus from several theoretical and methodological perspectives, ranging from a detail generative analysis to careful typological generalization. Their common aim is to deepen our understanding of whether and how the information –structured category of focus is represented and marked in the Kenyang language. Focus marking refers to the overt realization of focus by special grammatical means which is subject to cross linguistic variation. Topics investigated in this article are among others the focus particles ,the structure of focus ,and their graphical representations, question formation, the information structure on word order, situ versus in-situ strategies of focus marking, , and related constructions.

Keywords: Focus, focus particles, focus structure, marked focus forms

1.0 Introduction

Generally speaking, focus refers to the potion of utterance which is especially informative or important with the context and which is marked as such via some linguistics means. It can be difficult to provide a single precise definition as the term is used somewhat differently to different languages and in different research traditions. Most often it refers to linguistic markings of contrast, question-answering status or discourse un-expectability. Focus can be signed prosodically example, in the form of a strong pitch accent ,syntactically foe example by moving focus phrases to a special position in the sentential or morphologically for example by appending a special affix to focus elements with different cross linguistic focus marking strategies often carrying slightly different restrictions on their use. Focus is regularly treated as a cross linguistically stable category that is merely manifested by different structural means in different languages such that a common focus feature may be realized through or example. a morpheme in one language and syntactic movement in another. *Focus is variously reflected in prosodic phrasing…..Constituent ordering via special focus morphemes and perhaps in some cases not at all … Languages just choose some aspects of their grammatical structures ,prosodic, syntactic or morphological, to realized focus* .(Büring 2010:177) *The heterogeneity of (non-neutral) focus marking mechanisms attested in natural languages –positional-prosodic and morphological ,only differ in terms of superficial realizations of an identical feature (*Kidwai 1999:224)

While some analyses apparently treat the universality of focus as established empirical facts, others overtly prejudge the issue by raising this assumption to the status of morphological principles. Thus Erteschik-shir (2007:40) states that*" any definition of focus must measure up to the requirement that it be universal"* .Similarly, Valduvi & Engdahl (1996:459)say that " *a set of information-packing primitives that are cross-linguistically sufficient and methodologically useful needs to be identified "* It is clear that Valluduvi & Engdahl mean that the set of information –packing primitives should be both minimal and directly involve in determining the status of the worlds languages: They proceed simply to claim that a variety of structural effects in a range languages are a manifestation of these simple primitives

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Focus is also define as that increment of information in a sentence which the speaker signals either structurally or contextually to be the most important. The "increment of information" may be anything from a specific lexical item to the entire sentence, and to the sentential operators. The speaker indicates which increment is important either by using a marked syntactic, morphological or phonological form which unambiguously identifies the increment, or by using an unmarked form in a specific context, in which case the increment is identifiable only in relation to the context in which the sentence is uttered. The importance of this increment is relative to the speakers understanding of the addressee's pragmatic knowledge of the word. The speaker believes that the addressee needs this information in order to correct, reaffirm, and add to his present knowledge. It is in this line of thinking that we will divide the paper into five sections, starting with the focus particles in Kenyang, linking them with examples from the language under study. Furthermore we will also discuss the structure of focus in Kenyang, showing how they are represented graphically. Next we will present question formation here we discussed the various types. Finally the last section is the conclusion.

1.1 Focus particles in Kenyang

In Kenyang, two ways are used to mark focus in clauses or in sentences. Phonologically, we used Intonation to mark contrastive focus, while morphologically; we used the morpheme /ká/ which allows the focus particles to be displaced. Below are the different clauses where the focus particles can be found. Examples of structures using intonation

1. Ayuk a den Agbor eyu
ayuk sm beat abgor   yesterday
"Ayuk beat Agbor yesterday"
From the sentence above, we can highlight or mark as focus different elements of the sentence examples as follows
a) Ayuk a den AGBOR   eyu´
b) A yuk a den Agbor   EYU
c) AYUK a den Agbor   eyu´
In sentence (a) the focus is on the object "Agbor". In (b) on the locative adverb "áyu" and (c) on the subject" Ayuk".
    Intonation can also be found on yes/no questions. For example
a. Ayuk a   róñ ?
Ayuk sm went
"Did Ayuk go" ?
b. Besong a nye nya ?
Beson sm eat meat
"Did Besong eat meat" ?
c. Mbi a kóñ Arah ?
Mbi sm love Arah
"Does Mbi loves Arah"
Intonation on constituent questions
Examples
a. yï´ áwaj   mán
what kill   goat
"What killed the goat?"
aè⊗a´ a´ ku´ ákatï´
who sm buy book
"who bought a book"
 yïò   wóò   nye?
What sm eat
 "What are you eating"?

Structurally in Kenyang we use the focus morpheme /ká/. Constructions with /ká/ can also be subjected to some sorts of movements. For example
a. Achuo káÌ a´ wa´ j má´n

Achuo   foc kill goat
Achuo killed the goat.

On the sentence above, focus is on the subject. If we lay focus on the object of the verb then we will have (b) bellow

b. Men ke Achuo a´ wa´j

c. Goat foc Achuo sm kill

We notice that in this construction, when we compare   (a) and (b), we notice intonation difference on the subject marker and the fronting of dp constituents of the verb. When we look at the simple sentence   Achou a waj men But when we use focus, the intonation changes so the focus marker conditions or modifies the intonation of the subject marker and movements. Let us look at

 MáÌn káÌ Achuo a´ wa´j we notice that there is a change in intonation because of the focus which has shifted from Achuo to   Men.

2.0 The structure of focus sentences in Kenyang

(a) Agbor a ku´ eket nta ngore wï´ eyu´
    Agbor sm buy   house for   wife his yesterday
     " Agbor bought a house for his wife yesterday"
(b) Chï´ AGBOR ke a´   ku´ eket nta ngore wï´ eyu´
It is Agbor who sm buy   house for wife his yesterday
"It is a Agbor who bought a house for his wife yesterday"
(c) Chï´ eket   ke Agbor a´ ku´ nta ngore wï´ eyu´
It is house that   Agbor sm buy for wife his yesterday
" It is a house that Agbor bought for his wife yesterday"
(d) Chï´ nta ngore wï´ ke Agbor a ku´ eket eyu´
    It is for wife his that Agbor sm buy house yesterday
  " It is for his wife that Agbor bought a house yesterday"

(e) Chï´ eyu´   ke Agbor a´ ku´ ngore wi eket
    It is yesterday that Agbor sm buy wife his house
    " It is yesterday that Agbor bought his wife a house"

From the above examples it can be seen that every time a constituent is focused, it comes after /chï´/ and the focus constituent is followed by /ke / Let us look at the (f) below

(f) BaÌßa´ka´nem   ba´   kóñ   bóh   ßa
   Men   sm love   children   their
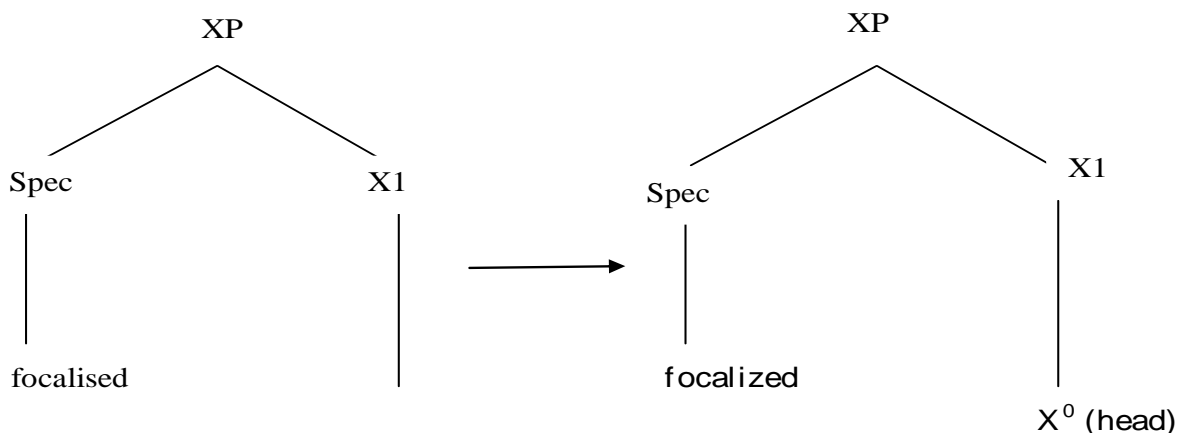"Men love their children"
Chï´ baÌßa´ka´nem ká ba´ kóñ   bóh   ßa
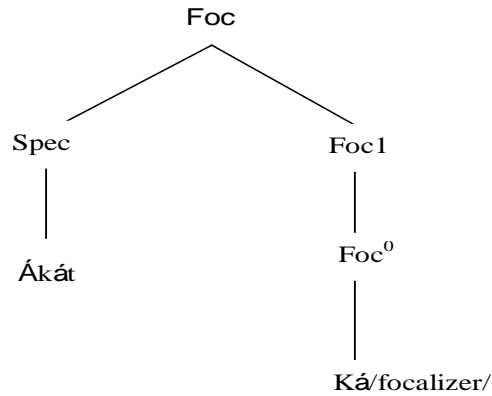It is Men   sm   love   children   their
"It is men that love their children"
The number of the focus constituent does not matter; /Chï´/ is always invariant.

2.1 Graphical representation of focus structure in Kenyang

```
                          Foc
                        /     \
                     Spec      Foc1
                      |          |
                     Ákát      Foc⁰
                                 |
                            Ká/focalizer/
```
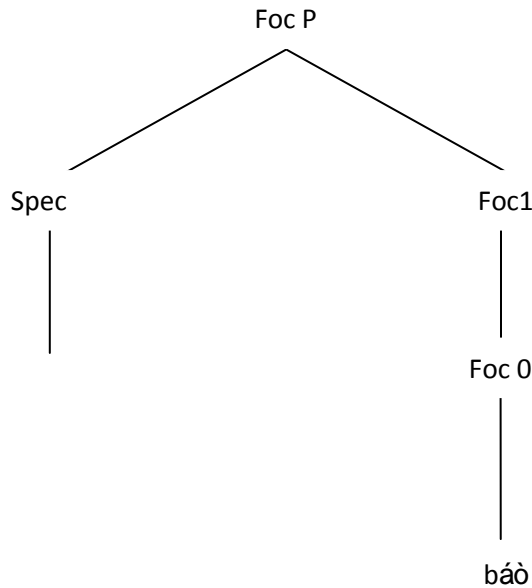
It is what indicates that a

2.2 FALSE PHRASE

*Agbor a rinñ ße   Tabe
Agbor sm know that Tal
" Agbor knows that Tab

"bá" is the lexical complementiser. Note should be taken that the lexical complementiser /bá/ is different from the focus marker/ ká /

```
                    Foc P
                   /      \
               Spec        Foc1
                |            |
                |          Foc 0
                             |
                           báò
```

The lexical complementiser is a subordinator which is different from the focus marker. Xp stands for focus elements whereas the focus word is **ká** in the above examples. In the next section, it is shown that the structure of matrix wh –questions is very similar to the structure of focus sentences in Kenyang.

3.0 Question Formation

In relevant literature, every clause must be typed, that is, identified as declarative, interrogative   or cxclamative in the sentence syntax.   (Cheng 1997) A clause is typed interrogative, if it contains an interrogative head, or specifier . Main-clause, Wh-questions are Cps headed by a movement in terms of "the fine structure of the periphery" proposed by Rizzi (1997, 2001b, 2004). It is advocated in Kenyang through the focus element subsequently followed by pied-piping of the left clause [IP], to spec [x] foc p1

3.1 Matrix Wh questions

Kenyang Wh-iterm   are classified below into arguments, referential and non referential adjuncts.
3.1.1 Arguments
     a-⊗a   =who
   yïò= what
3.1.2 Referential Adjuncts
fa´= where
ntÏò´kpok=when
3.1.3 non –Referential Adjuncts
na´=how
yï´rá/ átï´yï´=why

        The following constructions serves to illustrate their use in the language under study. It should be observed that Wh expressions appear in-situ in clause –final or clause medial position.

C) Besong a´ ku´ yï´
Besong sm buy what
What has Besong bought?
(d) Bate a´ róòñ fa´
Bate sm go where
Where has Bate gone to?
e) Bate a´den moh átï´yï´
   Bate sm beat child why
    "Why has Bate beaten the child?
f) Besong a´ sÏñ ná móh na´
Besong sm write exam how
How did Besong write the exams?

        We can note from the proceeding examples that the Wh-expressions identified above, are interrogative pronouns or adverbs and are used to form interrogative constructions in the Kenyang Language. Kenyang marks reference and definiteness, distinctions in interrogative clauses in every systematic way with the generic interrogative expressions [ntÏòkpok] "which". It must co-occur with some nominal /adverbial elements to be qualified as an interrogative phrase.

        Let us consider the following sentences illustrating the interrogative pronoun /adverb in (a) and their corresponding generic interrogative phrase in (b) .

1a)   a⊗a   "who"
1b)   ntÏòke   mmu´
  which person
  "who"
2a)   yï´   what
2b) ntÏke -ányïñ
  which thing
   "What"
3a) fa´   "where"
  3b)   ntike -epo´k
   "where"
4a) na´   "how"
4b) ntÏk e ewaj
Which way
5) "How"
eï´yï´ " why"
  none

6a) ntipòk   "when"
     which time
      "when"

We note from (5) above that [átï´yï´]" why" lacks a generic interrogative equivalent. While in (6a) the generic phrase /ntÏkpok/ "when" lacks a corresponding wh-pronoun.

In Co wh –questions, Co carries, tense, (Tns), wh-and Tpp features that triggers the movement of the wh-expressions to the specifier position of Cp well as 1o, to Co movement. The unmarked syntactic position of wh-elements is In-situ sentences, Madrid of final position. The wh-element base-generated in these positions can be raised into a high position in the matrix clause.

3.2 WH- Phrases In situ

(a)   Agbor a kong   a⊗a
         Agbor sm love who
          "Agbor loves who"

(b)   Agbor a róñ Kenyang ntÏ´kpok
         Agbor   sm go   village when
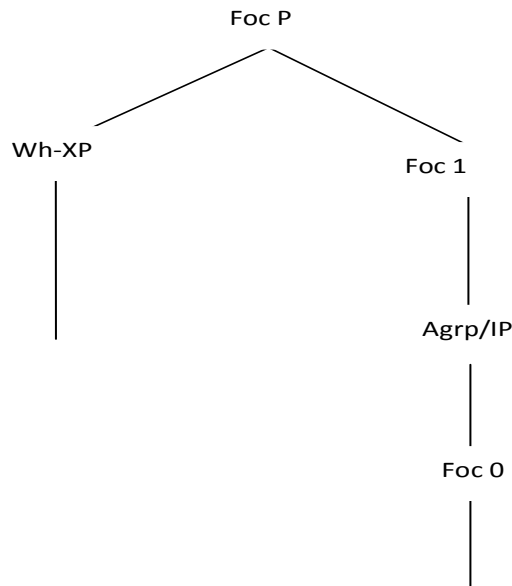   "Agbor goes to the village when"

3.2.1 Fronted wh-phrases

(a) Chï´ a⊗a   Agbor a kóñ
It is   who   Agbor sm love
        "who   does Agbor love"

(b) a-⊗a   Agbor   a kóñ
 who Agbor   sm love
"Who does Agbor loves"

 c)   a-⊗a rá   ná Bate a´ purï´
     Who scp rel Bate sm push
 "Who did Bate Push?"

Examples with nti´kpok

a)   Chï´ ntÏkpok Agbor a´ róñ-ó Kenyang
It is when   Agbor sm go   village
"when did Agbor go to the village"

b)   ntÏ´kpok Abgor a   róñ kenyang
when   Agbor sm go village
"When does Agbor go to the village?"

There are three ways of fronting the wh-phrases. The first two ways consist in focusing them or focalizing them. When the wh-phrases is focused, it is proceeded by / Chi/ and optionally followed by /mbú´/ .The wh-phrase may also be fronted without being focused morph- syntactically. In that case, it is fronted and it is neither   preceded by Chï´ nor followed   by **mbú´** . When the wh-phrase is focused, Kenyang matrix wh-questions are structured this way.

```
                              Foc P
                             /     \
                            /       \
                       Wh-XP        Foc 1
                         |            |
                         |            |
                         |          Agrp/IP
                         |            |
                         |            |
                         |          Foc 0
                         |            |
                         |            |
                         |            |
```

(Focus Marker) here it is optional that is
why it is in brackets

We can also fine sentences with more than one wh-element in Kenyang. The morpheme "rá, which marks scope in Kenyang can immediately follow each of the wh-elements for the latter to become more emphatic over the other. The presence of the scope morpheme however is not obligatory in Kenyang. Let us look at some examples

a) chï´ Besong re ,ke a´ ku´ yï´,   nta´ a⊗a eyu´?
    it is   Besong   foc buy what for   who yesterday
    "it is Besong , who bought what , for who yesterday?"

b)   yï´ Besong aku´nta´´ a⊗a eyu´?
what Besong buy for who yesterday
"What did Besong buy for who yesterday?**"

From the examples above, wh-phrases appear in-situ in the majority clauses. The fronting of wh-phrases is optional.

3.3. Embedded Wh-question

In Kenyang , just as in English and French , embedded questions are introduced by [mbaka] "if" or "whether" preceded by a verb of knowledge such as "rám", /say/tell/ "ßáp", /ask/, "rÏ´ñáò" /know/, etc. These embedded questions this is what Barker (1970) calls the yes/no particles. Mba´ka´ "if or whether are called lexical complementiser because they introduced complement clauses or independent clause

    Agbor a ßï´kï´ ringe mba´⊗a´ ngore wï a´   twó tSóñ mbo´re
Agbor sm neg know   if/wether wife   his   sm come fut   tomorrow
    " Agbor doesn't know whether his wife will come tomorrow"

a) Agbor a´ ßáb moh wï´ ntÏ´kpo´k tSóñ wï´ a´ so ndená   wï´
Agbor sm ask child his when   fut his sm   wash dresses   his
"Agbor asked his child when he will wash his dresses"

3.4. Indirect questions

a. Agbor a ßáb a´⊗a´ Tabi a´   ⊗ó
   Agbor sm ask who   tabi   sm   see
   "Agbor asked who tabi saw"

b* Agbor a ßáb, chï´ a´⊗a´ mbú´ tabi a ´   ⊗ó
 Agbor sm ask it is who p2   tabi sm see
    "Agbor asked who Tabi saw"

C * Agbor a ßáb yi tabi a   ku?

      Agbor sm ask what tabi sm buy
    " Agbor asked what Tabi bought"
D Agbor a ßáb ntǏkpok tabi a na´ña´ bá te´j   eket wï´
  Agbor sm ask when tab ism finish that build house his
" Agbor asked when tabi finished building his house"
 E Agbor a   ßáb   áti´-yï´ tabi a den   moh   wï´
   Agbor sm asked why tabi sm beat child his
    "Agbor asked why tabi beat his child"

3.5. Yes/No Questions

      Yes/No questions are also called question tags. They are used mostly during discussions where by "A" would ask a question (direct question) and "B" would answer by yes or no. Kenyang has a zero declarative marker [Ø] and a question marker which appear at the end of the question. Let us consider the following examples:

Statement   **questions**
yï´ a´ róñ   yï´ a´ róñ ñ ká
 he   sm go   he sm go qm
  "he has gone"   "has he gone?"
a)   Agbor a ßóñ ñgo   Agbor a ßóñ ñó ká
b)   Agbor sm has gun   Agbor sm has gun qm
  "Agbor has a gun"   "Does Agbor has a gun?

So far, when [Ø] is substituted, by /ká/, the declarative clause automatically turns into a yes/no question

4. Conclusion

      In this paper, we set out to discuss focus in Kenyang and we came out with the conclusion that the Kenyang focus is phonologically marked through intonation and morphologically through the morpheme /ká/ and it is marked on the subject, subject pronominal and on the object. In addition the initial position in a pragmatically neutral clause is fronted. Concerning the function of the constituent focus categories, we realised that they were found mostly in relative clauses, Cleft sentences and the answer to interrogative questions. It is important to note that they are restricted to the perfective and the imperfective aspect within the overall TAM system.

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