Nominal and Verbal Focus in the Chadic Languages[*]

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0. Introduction

This paper investigates the focus systems of some Chadic languages, in particular Tangale, a Western Chadic language spoken in Gombe State, in the North of Nigeria. We show that standard focus theories, which are based on accent languages, cannot account for the rich variety of focus related phenomena found in the Chadic tone languages. The standard theories generally assume that focus is obligatorily marked on the focused constituent by only one factor, namely accent. A brief survey of nominal focus in the Chadic languages shows, however, that these choose from a variety of focus marking devices (movement, morphological marking, prosodic phrasing). Looking at predicate focus, it further shows that the formal means of focus marking sometimes depends on the category of the focused element. Focus on an argument, for instance, can be marked differently from focus on a predicate. This category sensitivity of focus marking can even result in a systematic underspecification of focus. We show that at least in Tangale, focus is not consistently marked on all constituents. The data discussed suggest that universal theories of focus have to be either more complex than so far assumed. Or, they could still be simple, but would have to allow for a certain degree of underspecification in focus marking. The second alternative would shift much of the interpretive burden to the pragmatic component.

The paper is structured as follows. In section 1, we introduce the basic assumptions of the standard focus theory. Section 2 presents a comparative study of DP- and predicate focus in a number of Chadic languages. Section 3 investigates the complicated focus system of Tangale. Section 4 concludes.

1. Standard Focus Theories

In a nutshell, standard focus theories make the following three assumptions: First, focus must be marked on the focus constituent. Second, there is only one strategy to mark a focus, which is stress. And third, any syntactic category can be focused. The standard focus theories make correct predictions for accent languages, for which they have been developed.

For an illustration, we shortly discuss two influential focus theories that we take to represent the standard view. Selkirk (1984, 1995) establishes a relation between the place of an accent and the size of a focus. Accented constituents

receive a focus (F-) feature (the *Basic Focus Rule*, Selkirk 1995:555). This F-feature can project. If the accented constituent is a complement, it projects to the selecting head. If it is a head, it projects to the head's maximal projection (*Focus Projection*, Selkirk 1995:555). Constituents which are focus-marked (and are not the sentence focus) are interpreted as new in the discourse (Selkirk 1995:556). The following examples illustrate the basic assumption of Selkirk's focus theory.

(1)   a. What did Carolin bring to the party?
            She brought [$_{NP}$ SALAD]$_F$.
        b. What did Carolin do?
            She [$_{VP}$ brought$_F$ [SALAD]$_F$]$_F$.

In (1a), the accented object (typographically represented by capital letters) is F-marked. It is the focus of the sentence since it corresponds to the *wh*-word of the question. In (1b) the *wh*-question requires a predicate focus. Again, the accented object receives an F-feature, which projects across V to VP, the sentence focus.
　　　　Schwarzschild (1999) modifies Selkirk's focus interpretation rule. He assumes that constituents which are *not* F-marked are given (old) information. This deviation from Selkirk's theory is based on the following observation. In (2), from Schwarzschild (1999:145), the object pronoun is accented, hence F-marked, and should be interpreted as new. However, the pronoun is present in the preceding *wh*-question and is therefore not new.

(2)   (Who did *his* mother praise?) She praised [HIM]$_F$.

Given Schwarzschild's interpretation rule, the subject pronoun s*he* and the verb *praised* must be given because they are not F-marked. Since both form part of the question, this assumption is borne out. The fact that *HIM* is given is irrelevant for Schwarzschild, since the object pronoun is F- marked.[1]
　　　　To summarise, both theories assume that focus on any constituent is marked by one and the same strategy. The only factor to be considered is (the presence or absence of) accent. Additional means of highlighting a focus constituent (i.e. clefting or movement) are possible in accent languages, but they are always accompanied by accent on the clefted/moved constituent.

(3)   a. A BOOK, Peter bought (not a record).
        b. It is a BOOK that Peter bought (not a record).

In the following sections, we investigate whether the standard theories extend directly to the tonal languages from the Chadic family, or whether they have to be

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[1]Selkirk solves this problem by stipulating that the focus interpretation rule is restricted to embedded foci.

modified. As will be shown, at least for some Chadic languages a modification seems inevitable.

2. Focus in Chadic Languages

2.1 DP-Focus in Chadic

Focusing of DP-arguments is well-documented for Hausa (see Newman 2000, Jaggar 2001) and for a range of other Chadic languages (see Tuller 1987, 1992, Frajzyngier 1989, 1993, 2001, 2002, Schuh 1998).

2.1.1 Focus Movement

A common strategy of focusing a DP-constituent in Chadic is to move it to a designated position. Often, the resulting structure has a cleft-like nature and features a focus marker (in many cases formally identical to the copula or the relative marker). Movement may also be accompanied by high tone raising of the fronted constituent (Hausa, see Leben et al. 1989), or by a change in verbal aspect (Hdi, Frajzyngier 2002). Focus movement can be to several positions, namely to sentence-initial position, to a postverbal position, or to sentence-final position. We will consider each kind in turn.

In Hausa, an SVO language, focused DPs are fronted to the sentence-initial position (cf. Newman 2000). After the fronted constituent, a focus marker (FOC) is optionally inserted. (4a) is an example with neutral (i.e. all new) focus. In (4b), the object is focused and appears sentence-initially.

(4)   a. Bintà   zaa tà   biyaa teelà   *(neutral)*
          Binta   FUT 3sg.f pay   tailor
          'Binta will pay the tailor.'
        b. teelà$_1$ *(nee)* Bintà zaa   tà   biyaa t$_1$ *(OBJ-focus)*
          tailor   FOC Binta FUT   3sg.f pay
          'Binta will pay the TAILOR.'

Focus fronting also occurs in Hdi, a VSO language documented in Frajzyngier (2002). (5a) is a neutral example again. In (5b), the focused object is fronted. In addition to fronting, a change in verbal aspect occurs (see Frajzyngier 2002:408; SO = point of view of reference, REF = referential).

(5)   a. kà ks-ú-tá   ùvá   tá   vàzák   *(neutral)*
          SEQ touch-SO-REF cat   OBJ   rooster
          'And Cat devoured Rooster.'
        b. [ghùz-á   xìyá]$_1$ yà   tà   sə   mbítsá t$_1$
          beer-GEN guinea corn DEM IMPF drink Mbitsa
          'It is the corn beer that Mbitsa drinks.'   *(OBJ-focus)*

Focused consituents are also fronted to the sentence-initial position in Kanakuru (Tuller 1992) and Pero (Frajzyngier 1989).

The second strategy of focus movement observed in the Chadic languages is movement to a postverbal position. For an illustration of this strategy, consider the following Tangale data (from Kidda 1993:30f).

(6)   a. lak   padu-g   landá   *(neutral)*
            Laku buy-PERF   dress
            'Laku bought a dress.'
    b. padu-g   landá nóŋ   tom   tĩjo?   *(SUBJ-focus)*
        buy-PERF   dress who   from   Tijo
        'Who bought a dress from Tijo?'

Tangale is an SVO language; (6a) represents the neutral word order. If a subject is focused as in (6b) (a *wh*-focus), it is obligatorily displaced from its initial base position to the postverbal position. The Tangale focus system will be discussed in detail in section 3. Focus movement to the postverbal position also takes place in Bade, Podoko, Kanakuru, and Ngizim (cf. Tuller 1992).

Focus constituents can also appear in sentence-final position, as evidenced by the following example from Ngizim (SVO, Tuller 1992). In (7), the subject is focused, it consequently appears in sentence-final position. This strategy is also testified in Tangale (Tuller 1992), and Pero (Frajzyngier 1989).

(7)   bdə   karee aa aasək   nən   Audu   *(SUBJ-focus)*
        sold   goods in market   FOC   Audu
        'AUDU sold the goods in the market.'

2.1.2 In Situ Focus

In some languages, focused DPs remain in situ. In this case, prominence is achieved by morphological, aspectual, or prosodic marking. Consider the Mupun examples in (8) (from Frajzyngier 1993). The focused object DP is not displaced from its base-generated position (Mupun is an SVO language). Focus is only indicated by the presence of the focus marker *a*.

(8)   war   cet   a   lua   ba   a   pupwap   kas.
        3f   cook FOC   meat NEG   FOC   fish   NEG
        'She cooked MEAT, not FISH.'   *(OBJ-focus)*

In Miya (Schuh 1998), the verbal aspect changes in order to indicate focus. In (9b), the object is focused. The aspectual change is manifested in the absence of the the totality marker (TOT) *suw…ay*, which is present in the neutral example (9a).

(9)   a. à   már   suw   zhàak-áy   *(neutral)*
          he   got   TOT   donkey- TOT
          'He got a donkey.'
      b. à   már   zhàakə   *(OBJ-focus)*
          he   got   donkey
          'He got a DONKEY.'

In situ focus is also possible in Lele, where it is indicated by a focus marker (see Frajzyngier 2001). In Pero, in situ focus is marked by an intonational break before the focused element (cf. Frajzyngier 1989). Focus constituents can also remain in situ in Ga'anda (cf. Ma Newman 1971) and in Hausa, where it is not evident if and how in situ foci are marked (cf. Jaggar 2001 and Green and Jaggar 2002).

To sum up, the Chadic languages express focus on DP-arguments by using different markers of prominence. DP-focus is indicated by movement (Hausa, Hdi, Tangale, Kanakuru, Ngizim, Bade, Pero), by morphological marking (Mupun, Lele), by changes in the verbal aspect (Miya), or by different prosodic phrasing (Pero). Languages that mark focus by movement sometimes use morphological marking or a change of verbal aspect in addition. Their grammatical systems appear to be somewhat uneconomical with respect to focus marking.

      With the exception of Pero (focus fronting and prosodic phrasing) and Hausa (focus fronting and in situ focus), the Chadic languages discussed here employ a single strategy to mark DP-focus. This suggests the following preliminary hypothesis:

(10)   *Preliminary Hypothesis (to be refuted):*
       In general, Chadic languages employ only a single focus strategy.

We will see below that this hypothesis cannot be maintained.

2.2   V(P)-Focus: The Picture Changes

Concerning the realisation of predicate focus, the Chadic languages differ as to whether or not they employ a unified strategy for coding focus. Some languages use a unified, category-neutral strategy (cf. examples (11) and (12)). Others have category-dependent focus-strategies (cf. example (13)).

      Hausa and Hdi are representatives of the first type. These languages have a unified strategy based on the movement strategy for nominal focus (see (4) and (5) above). V- and VP-focus are marked by assimilation to the nominal strategy. In Hausa, focused verbs have to be nominalized before being fronted (Newman 2000). (11a) is a neutral sentence. In (11b), the VP is nominalized (indicated by lengthening of the final vowel) and moved to the sentence initial position (DEP = dependent).

(11) a. su-n   bàzamà   *(neutral)*
          3pl-PERF   bolt.away
          'They bolted away.'
      b. *bàzamàa*   su-kà   yi   *(VP-focus)*
          bolting.away   3pl-PERF.DEP do
          'They BOLTED AWAY.' (lit. 'Bolting away, they did.')

Hdi inserts a cognate object that is fronted when the verb is in focus (Frajzyngier 2002), cf. (12b) (D:SO = distal extension, point of view of source).

(12) a. mbàzá-ùgh-mbàzá Pghinta   tá   mbàzá   *(neutral)*
          wash-D:SO-wash   Phinta   OBJ   wash
          'Phinta washed.'
      b. mbàzá   mbàzá-ùgh-mbàzá   Pghinta   *(V(P)-focus)*
          wash   wash-D:SO-wash   Phinta
          'Phinta WASHED.' (lit. 'Wash, Phinta washed.')

The second group of languages uses category-dependent focus strategies. In Mupun and Tangale, for instance, focus on nominal expressions is expressed differently from focus on verbs and VPs. In Mupun, focused nominals carry a focus marker 'a' (see (8)), whereas focused verbs reduplicate in addition (Frajzyngier 1993):

(13) mo   cet   a   cet   lua   ne   ba   mo sur(a)sur kas
      3pl   boil   FOC   boil   meat   the   NEG   3PLfry FOC fryNEG
      'They BOILED the meat, they didn't FRY it.'   *(V(P)-focus)*

As we will show in section 3, in Tangale, at least some focused nominals move to a postverbal focus position (see (6b) above), whereas focused verbs (and VPs) show no sign of movement.

The data discussed in this section lead us to conclude that some Chadic languages have different strategies for focusing different syntactic categories. This forces us to refute the Preliminary Hypothesis assumed in (10). Some Chadic languages differ from accent languages in that more than one factor has to be considered in focus marking. In the next section we analyse the Tangale focus system in detail. The discussion will provide more evidence for the claim that the standard focus theories do not extend directly to all Chadic languages.

3.   Predicate Focus in Tangale

In this section, we take a closer look at predicate focus, i.e. V- or VP-focus in Tangale, a Western Chadic language from the Bole-Tangale subbranch. We

present the main empirical generalisations in 3.2 and discuss our findings in 3.3. For a better understanding of the following discussion, however, it is necessary to take another look at (argument) DP-focus in Tangale first.

3.1 Existing Accounts of Focus in Tangale

The – to the best of our knowledge – two existing accounts of focus in Tangale (Kenstowicz 1985, Tuller 1992) assume focus to be realised syntactically: The focused DP is moved (sometimes vacuously) to a postverbal position. The two accounts differ only as to the direction of movement.

In Kenstowicz (1985:86), focused (DP-) constituents move to the right and adjoin to S (or S'). In the neutral, all new sentence (14a), the subject is in its unmarked sentence-initial position and precedes the verb. When focused, however, the subject moves to a postverbal position (14b).[2]

(14) a. [$_S$ Malay [$_{VP}$ múdúd-gó]]   *(neutral)*
          M.   die-PERF
          'Malay died.'
      b. [$_S$ t$_1$ múdúd-gó] nóŋ$_1$ *(SUBJ-focus)*
             die-PERF   who
          'Who died?'

In parallel fashion, direct objects are assumed to move vacuously for reasons that have to do with the different phonological realisation of the perfective aspect marker as *-ug* or *-go* in (15ab):

(15) a. [$_S$ Kay [$_{VP}$ dob-*ug* Málay]]   *(neutral)*
          K.   call-PERF M.
          'Kay called Malay.'
      b. [$_S$ Kay [$_{VP}$ dob-*gó* t$_1$] nóŋ$_1$]   *(OBJ-focus)*
          K.   call-PERF
          'Who did Kay call?'

While focused (DP-) constituents also move in Tuller's (1992) analysis, the direction of movement is to the left and the focused material left-adjoins to the VP-projection. Since the perfective verb has to move to the inflectional head I^0 for independent reasons, focused constituents nevertheless surface in a postverbal position, as shown for a focused object in (16) (cf. Kenstowicz's 15b).[3]

(16)   [$_S$ [$_{IP}$ Kay dob-gó [$_{VP}$ nóŋ$_1$ [$_{VP}$ t$_v$ t$_1$]]]]   *(OBJ-focus)*
             K.   call-PERF   who

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[2] We abstract away from the open/closed distinction in vowel quality.
[3] Tuller does not discuss the precise structure of clauses with focused subjects.

As indicated above, there is only indirect, namely phonological evidence for the assumption of vacuous movement in the case of focused objects (be it to the left or to the right). When the object is focused, the perfective marker is realised as –*go*. This indicates the presence of a prosodic boundary between V and OBJ as witnessed by the blocking of a phonological process of *vowel elision* (henceforth: VE). Had VE applied, the perfective marker would have been realised as -*ug*.[4] Kenstowicz (1985:80) defines VE as follows (where ']' marks the end of the stem or word):

(17)   *Vowel Elision (VE)* deletes the final vowel of a stem or a word when in close syntactic connection with some following phonological material denoted by the X: V $\rightarrow \varnothing$ / _] X

The relevant restriction here is that VE between two elements is possible only when the two elements stand in a close syntactic, e.g. head-complement relation. Application of VE to perfective verbs elides the final vowel of the perfective marker –*go*. Since the result of elision does not comply with Tangale syllable structure, an epenthetic vowel –*u*- is inserted in a last step:

(18)   mad-*gó* 'read-perf' >> mad-*g* (after VE) >> mad-*ug*

The (non-) application of VE is in so far interesting for the present discussion as it gives us a reliable diagnostic for OBJ-focus. The empirical generalisation is that whenever the object is focused, VE is blocked: OBJ$_{FOC}$ $\Leftrightarrow$ *VE. For illustration, VE can apply in the neutral sentence (19a), deleting the final –*o* of the perfective marker. In contrast, VE is blocked with the focused (wh-) objects in (19b) such that the perfective marker surfaces as –*go*:

(19)   a. Áudu mad-*ug*   littáfi.
          A.   read-PERF   book
          'Audu read a book.'
       b. Q: Áudu   mad-*go*/ *mad-*ug* náŋ?   A: Áudu   mad*go*/ *mad*ug* littáfi.
          A.   read-PERF   what   A.   read-PERF   book
          'What did Audu read?'   'Audu read A BOOK.'

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[4] In addition to VE, the existence of a prosodic phrase-boundary between V and OBJ is indicated by the non-application of a second phonological process, *left tone delinking* (LTD), which separates rightwards spreading tones from the original tone-bearing unit (Kenstowicz 1985, Kidda 1993). Since the domains of application of LTD and VE are generally taken to be co-extensive (at least in the postverbal domain, cf. Kenstowicz 1985:82), we will focus only on the (non-) application of VE. See the references cited for further details.

Given the definition of VE in (17), the non-application of VE in (19b) implies that verb and object do not stand in a close syntactic relation when the object is focused. From this Kenstowicz and Tuller conclude that the object must have moved (vacuously) away from the verb.

Neither Kenstowicz nor Tuller discusses instances of V- or VP-focus, to which we turn in the next section. There, it will emerge that the insertion of a prosodic boundary that blocks VE plays a more general role in Tangale focus marking.

3.2 Verb(Phrase)-Focus in Tangale

In this section, we show that predicate focus on the verb or on the entire VP in Tangale is in some cases marked differently from argument DP-focus. Unlike SUBJ-focus, predicate focus in Tangale does not involve movement to a postverbal position. Instead, it is sometimes indicated morphologically by means of a verbal suffix (3.2.1), or prosodically by the insertion of a prosodic boundary (3.2.2). Thus, there seem to be at least three strategies of focus marking in Tangale: syntactic movement, suffixation, and prosodic phrasing. In addition, we show that V-, VP- and OBJ-focus are often realised identically to the exclusion of SUBJ-focus, arguing against Kenstowicz's (1985) and Tuller's (1992) analyses of OBJ-focus as involving vacuous movement.

3.2.1 Morphological Focus Marking

With some intransitive verbs, V(P)-focus is marked morphologically by means of a verbal suffix –i.[5] This is shown in (20b), where the verb (or the entire VP) is in focus and the suffix is added after the perfective suffix –go. In contrast, no special focus-suffix is added in neutral, all new contexts (20a):

(20) a. Fátíma   wur-go.   *(neutral)*
         F.   laugh-PERF
        'Fatima laughed.'
      b. Q: Mairo yaa-gó náŋ?   A: Mbáastám wur-gó-*i*.   *(V(P)-focus)*
            Mairo do-PERF what   she   laugh-PERF-FOC
            'What did Mairo do?'   'She LAUGHED.'

This is a different focus strategy from the one observed for focused subjects, which involved movement to a postverbal position, as shown in (14b). Unlike in accent languages, there are thus at least two focus strategies in Tangale, one of them (suffixation) seemingly reserved for intransitive verbal predicates.

3.2.2 Prosodic Focus Marking

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[5] For reasons unclear to us, this focus marking device does not seem to occur with all intransitive verbs. Also, *i*-suffixation exhibits a certain degree of optionality even with those verbs on which it can occur in principle.

Prosodic focus marking is used with transitive verbs or VPs. It turns out that the phonological process of vowel elision (VE) on perfective verbs is blocked not only with focused objects (see section 3.1), but also with focused verbs or VPs. (21a) is an already familiar example with OBJ-focus. The crucial cases are (21b), with VP-focus, and (21c), with V-focus. In all three cases, the perfective verb appears in its non-elided form *waigó*, indicating the presence of a prosodic phrase boundary after the verb. Notice that the three foci in (21a-c) do not seem to be distinguished by other prosodic means (prosodic breaks, tone raising, etc.) either.[6]

(21)   a. Q: What did Laku sell?   *(OBJ-focus)*
          A: Lak wai-gó   landa
             Laku sell-PERF dress
             'Laku sold [A DRESS]FOC.'

       b. Q: What did Laku do?   *(VP-focus)*
          A: Lak waigó   landa
             Laku sell-PERF dress
             'Laku [sold A DRESS]FOC.'

       c. Q: What did Laku do at the market?   *(V-focus)*
             Did she buy a dress or did she sell a dress?
          A: Lak waigó   landa
             Laku sell-PERF dress
             'Laku [SOLD]FOC a dress.'

The prosodic phrase boundary after the verb in (21b) cannot be the direct result of moving the VP as a whole, since the boundary is inside the VP. Nor can the prosodic phrase boundary in (21c) be the result of verb movement for principled reasons. Obviously, the verb in (21c) has not moved to the right, adjoining to S (see Kenstowicz 1985). What about movement to the left, say to the head of a functional projection FocP? According to Tuller (1992), perfective verbs must, focused or not, move to the inflectional head I^0 in order to support the perfective suffix. Tuller (1992:317) further assumes that verb traces in Tangale are unable to assign case to their direct object. Therefore, whenever the verb moves, the object has to move along with it (presumably after incorporating into the verb) for reasons of case. Hence, if the verb moved to Foc^0 on its way to I^0 in (21c), the object would move along, preserving the close syntactic relation between the two elements (recall that VE only applies between locally related elements). As a result, VE should not be blocked in (21c).

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[6] So far, this judgment concerning the prosodic identity of (21a-c) is based solely on first auditory impressions as well as on a preliminary comparison of pitch contours. A more thorough systematic study of the prosodic properties of such sentences is in preparation.

The alternative assumption that the verb moves to I^0 on its own, leaving its object behind in its base position, makes wrong predictions as well. After V-(to-Foc-)to-I movement, verb and object would no longer stand in a close syntactic relation such that VE should be blocked. However, since movement to I^0 is assumed to take place whether or not the verb is in focus, we would expect VE to be blocked in all perfective sentences. This prediction is falsified by (22), from Kidda (1993:122), where VE applies in a neutral all new sentence:

(22)   Lak šwad-ùg yiláà

       L.   hit-PERF   Y.

       'Laku hit Yila.'

We conclude that the insertion of a prosodic phrase boundary is a focus marking device independent of movement. Focus on the VP in (21b) and on the verb in (21c) are marked by inserting a phrase boundary at PF. No previous syntactic movement is necessary. But given this, we no longer have to assume that the prosodic phrase boundary showing up with OBJ-focus in (21a) is the result of vacuous movement, as argued by Kenstowicz (1985) and Tuller (1992) (see section 3.1). Rather, V-focus, VP-focus and OBJ-focus seem to be marked by the same formal device, namely by inserting a prosodic phrase boundary to the right of the verb. This phrase boundary signals that some element of the VP, or the entire VP is in focus. Tangale thus differs from accent languages, in which narrow V-focus is marked differently from narrow OBJ-focus by accent placement on the verb or the object respectively.

      In contrast, SUBJ-focus with transitive verbs is again marked by syntactic movement. As in the intransitive sentence (14b), the focused subject in (23) has moved from its default preverbal position to a postverbal position.

(23) t_1 way-ug land-í   nóŋ$_1$?   *(SUBJ-focus)*

       sell-PERF dress-the who

       'Who sold the dress?'

Summing up, there seem to be at least three focus strategies in Tangale, namely syntactic movement, *i*-suffixation, and prosodic phrasing. These strategies are in part dependent on the syntactic category or the grammatical function of the focused constituent. Syntactic movement seems to be reserved for focused subjects, while *i*-suffixation is reserved for (intransitive) verbal predicates. With transitive verbs, instances of V-, VP- and OBJ-focus are not formally distinguished, leading to focus ambiguity.

3.3   Discussion

In section 1, we have seen that focus in accent languages can be captured by a fairly simple model that considers only one factor, namely stress.

(24)   Focus model for accent languages (based on Selkirk 1995):
CONSTITUENT STRESSED → focus/new, otherwise old information

In sections 2.1 and 2.2, it was then shown that this mono-factorial model of the standard analysis can be extended to some Chadic languages, such as Hdi. In Hdi, focus marking of all categories is assimilated to the nominal strategy, such that only movement has to be considered:[7]

(25)   Focus model for Hdi:
CONSTITUENT MOVED → focus/new, otherwise old information

Due to the lack of information on predicate focus in most Chadic languages, it remains to be seen if a mono-factorial analysis can be extended to those languages that employ only one strategy for marking nominal focus (see section 2.1).

Given the discussion in 3.1 and 3.2, it is clear that focus marking in Tangale is more complicated, and cannot easily be captured by mono-factorial models like those sketched in (24) and (25). (The same may hold for Pero, which also makes use of more than one focus strategy, namely movement and prosodic phrasing, see section 2.1). Based on the data in 3.1 and 3.2, a model of focus marking in Tangale would have to consider at least three factors as shown in (26):

(26)   Focus model for Tangale:
if CONSTITUENT MOVED → SUBJ-focus, otherwise
        if i-SUFFIXATION → intransitive V(P)-focus, otherwise
                if PROSODIC BOUNDARY → V, VP-, OBJ-focus, otherwise
                                old information or neutral

It seems, then, that focus marking in Tangale is a complicated process that requires a more complicated theory of focus.

The picture of focus marking in Tangale becomes even more complicated when we look at other aspects but the perfective. In the progressive, there are no discernible differences at all between sentences with OBJ-focus (or V(P)-focus) on the one hand (27a), and neutral, i.e. all new sentences on the other (27b). In both cases, VE obligatorily deletes the final vowel on the verbal noun *balli > ball*.

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[7] In Hausa, another language that assimilates marking of predicate focus to the nominal strategy of focus movement, the situation is complicated by the fact that it also allows for in situ focus (see the remarks in section 2.1). If so, checking of whether or not a constituent has moved to initial position is insufficient for determining the precise information structural status of a constituent as being old information: An element could still be in focus (in situ) without having moved. Interestingly, in situ focus in Hausa displays a subject-object asymmetry similar to that observed for Tangale in the main text. Unlike objects, subjects cannot be focused in situ (see Green & Jaggar 2002).

(27)   a. Músá ǹ   ball   wasíka   *(neutral)*
                Musa PROG writing letter
                'Musa is writing a letter.'
       b. Q: Músá ǹ   ball   náŋ? A: Músá ǹ   ball   wasíka *(OBJ-focus)*
                Musa PROG writing what   Musa PROG writing letter
                'What is Musa writing?'   'Musa is writing A LETTER.'

The reason for this formal identity has to do with the fact that the focus marking device for OBJ-focus and V(P)-focus in Tangale, i.e. the insertion of a prosodic phrase boundary between verb and object (see 3.2), is bled by the syntactic structure of the progressive plus the general conditions on VE. As in Hausa, verbs are nominalised and form an N-N-complex with their direct object in the progressive aspect. Kenstowicz (1985) shows that VE obligatorily applies in such N-N-configurations, presumably because the two N-elements stand in a close syntactic relation. But if VE must apply obligatorily, it can no longer serve as a diagnostic for OBJ-focus and V(P)-focus in the progressive aspect. In other words, narrow focus on V(P) or object does not seem to be explicitly marked at all in the progressive, resulting in an underspecification of focus (the same holds for the future, or long progressive aspect). It seems, then, that focus marking in Tangale is not only a complicated process, but also an underspecifying process with systematic gaps.

      Interestingly, the only constituent in Tangale that can unambiguously be marked for focus even in the progressive and future aspect is the subject. As in (14b) and (23) above, the subject occurs again in a postverbal position.[8]

(28)   Q: bal   wasíka-i   nóŋ?   A: (wasíka-i) ball-í   Músa
          writing letter-the who   letter-the writing-it Musa
          'Who is writing the letter?'   'MUSA is writing the letter.'

The data in (28) give rise to the following empirical generalisation:

(29)   In Tangale, focus marking is fully grammaticalised only on subjects. Focus on all other constituents is only sporadically marked and relies heavily on pragmatic resolution.

If correct, the generalisation in (29) would allow for a significant simplification in the focus marking system of Tangale, as sketched in (30).

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[8] When the subject is focused, the word order (nominalised) V >> OBJ >> SUBJ is often changed by making the object the (optional) sentence-initial topic of the utterance. In such a case, a pronominal suffix –*i* is added to the nominalised verb, as illustrated in the answer in (28). It remains to be seen if there exists more than an accidental homophonic relationship between the neutral pronominal suffix –*i* and the focus marker –*i* from section 3.2.1.

(30)   Alternative focus model for Tangale:
        CONSTITUENT MOVED → SUBJ-focus, otherwise the interpretation of
                    elements as focused or not is pragmatically resolved.

In the absence of further evidence, the underspecifying model in (30) seems to be all that can be said about Tangale focus marking in the progressive and future aspects, and perhaps in general.[9]

The model in (30) makes a sharp distinction between subjects and non-subjects. It singles out focused subjects as being in special need of explicit focus marking. Intuitively, the reason for this apparent subject bias in the Tangale focus system seems clear. The (default) preverbal subject position triggers a topic interpretation (see Givon 1976). Therefore, if a subject is to be interpreted as focus (and not as topic) something special has to be done: In the Tangale case, the subject has to be dislocated.

A comparable special status for focused (wh-) subjects has been observed for a number of languages both within and without the Chadic language family. For instance, in the Bantu languages Kinyarwanda, Dzamba, and Kitharaka, and also the Austronesian languages Malagasy, Tagalog, and Javanese wh-subjects have to move, whereas wh-objects can remain in situ (see Sabel & Zeller, to appear, and references therein). Looking again at the Chadic languages, it was mentioned in fn.6 that focused objects in Hausa can remain in situ whereas focused subjects have to move (Green & Jaggar 2002). In Miya, focused subjects require special TAM's (these-aspect-mood markers), whereas focused objects can only be identified indirectly by the absence of the totality marker (see (9) above and Schuh (1998) for more discussion).

Hopefully, future work will show more clearly if and to what extent the distinction between subjects and non-subjects plays a central role in the focus systems of the Chadic languages. In any event, it appears inevitable to us that more attention be paid to the realisation of focus on non-nominal categories.

4.   Conclusion

In this paper, we have investigated nominal and verbal focus marking in various Chadic languages, in particular in Tangale. While it seems possible to extend the standard mono-factorial analyses of accent languages to some of the Chadic languages (e.g. to Hdi), the focus systems of other Chadic languages seem to be more complex. Our investigation of the Tangale focus system has shown that three different factors play a role in the perfective aspect. At the same time, it was shown that special focus marking on V, VP, or OBJ appears to be absent

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[9] If (30) is an adequate model of focus marking in Tangale in general, the question arises why focus can or should ever be marked on constituents other than the subject, as was shown in sections 3.1 and 3.2. At the moment, we have no conclusive answer to this.

altogether in the progressive and future aspect, resulting in an underspecification of focus. Given this underspecification, an alternative solution would be to keep the focus system of Tangale simple (assuming only a single distinction between SUBJ- and non-SUBJ-focus) at the cost of shifting the major burden of focus resolution to the pragmatic system.

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