

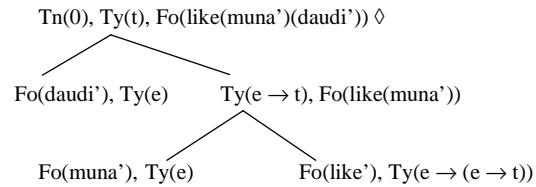
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Focus positions in Bantu
Lutz Marten, SOAS, lm5@soas.ac.uk

Aim: provide a structured analysis of (syntactically marked) (topic and) focus and to ascertain in how far this correlates with different focus types in the literature.

1. Theoretical background: Dynamic Syntax

LF: predicate-argument structure as the only level of (syntactic and semantic) representation (cf. Categorical Grammar, e.g. Steedman 2000)

(1) *Daudi likes Muna*

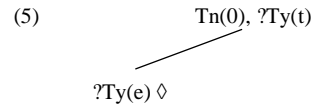


Dynamics: mapping from linearly-ordered words to structured semantic representations; parsing on a left-to-right basis (assume Bantu is SVO):

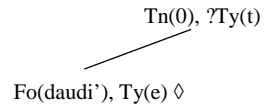
(2) *njũchi zi-ná-lúm-a a-lenje* [Chichewa]
 10.bees SM10-PAST-bite-FV 2-hunters
 'The bees bit the hunters'

(3) *Daudi likes Muna*

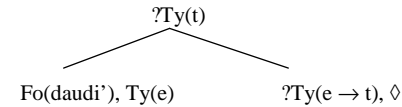
(4) Tn(0), ?Ty(t) ◊



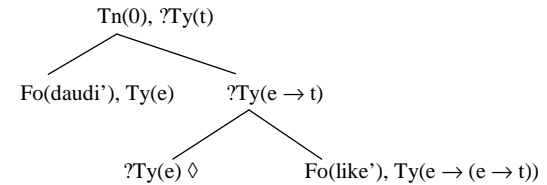
(6) *Daudi ...*



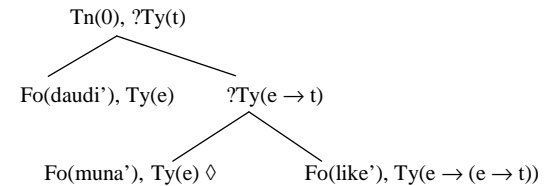
(7) *Daudi*



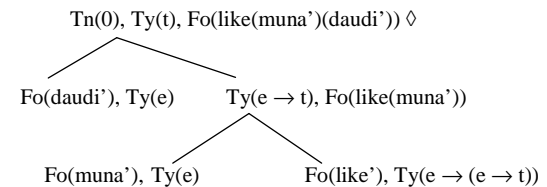
(8) *Daudi likes*



(9) *Daudi likes Muna*



(10) *Daudi likes Muna*



Grammaticality is determined by the set of transitions, not by the final tree alone.

2. Left and right peripheries (or, information early vs. information late)

Word order freedom in Bantu (Bresnan and Mchombo 1987): SM sometimes and OM always associated with Topic:

(11a) SVO: *Njũchi* *zi-ná-wá-lum-a* *a-lenje* [Chichewa]
 10.bees SM10-PAST-OM2-bite-FV 2-hunters
 ‘The bees bit them, the hunters’

- (11b) VOS *Zináwáluma alenje njũchi*
- (11c) OVS *Alenje zináwáluma njũchi*
- (11d) VSO *Zináwáluma njũchi alenje*
- (11e) SOV *Njũchi alenje zináwáluma*
- (11f) OSV *Alenje njũchi zináwáluma*

NB, without OM, according to Bresnan and Mchombo, only SVO and VOS (i.e. subject inversion) are possible:

(12a) SVO *Njũchi* *zi-ná-lúm-a* *a-lenje*
 10.bees SM10-PAST-bite-FV NP2-hunters
 ‘The bees bit the hunters’

(12b) VOS: *Zinálúma alenje njũchi*

And in Xhosa (du Plessis and Visser 1992: 13): ‘This is a type of movement of noun phrases but this movement does not take place within the syntax. It is regarded as **stylistic** movement and is usually dealt with in the phonological component (Chomsky, 1981)’

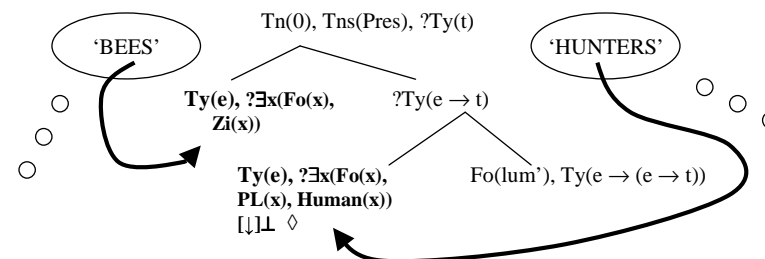
(13a) *úSándilè wáwùménà úmdùdò* [Xhosa]
 ‘Sandile called it a dance’

- (13b) VSO *Wáwùménà úSándilè úmdùdò*
- (13c) SOV *úSándilè úmdùdò wáwùménà*
- (13d) OVS *úmdùdò wáwùménà úSándilè*
- (13e) VOS *Wáwùménà úmdùdò úSándilè*
- (13f) OSV *úmdùdò úSándilè wáwùménà*

‘These different sentences, [are] all with the same meaning but dependent on previous discourse and/or emphasis ...’

Bantu clause structure: SM (sometimes?) and OM (always?) as clitics, building subject and object nodes, which are (syntactically) type-complete, and can be interpreted from context.

(14) *zi-ná-wá-lum-a*
 ‘they bit them’



Hence, most overt NPs are at the (left and right) periphery (except for possibly the immediately pre-verbal subject, and objects without OMs).

Two ways of introducing information early (at the left periphery) or late (at the right periphery) – LINK and unfixed nodes: association with topic (anaphoric) and focus (variable instantiation).

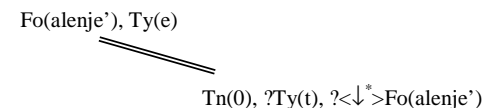
(15) OSV [Alenje]_{TOP} [njũchi]_{FOC} zináwáluma

(15') OSV [Alenje]_{TOP} njũchi zináwáluma

(16) OVS [Alenje]_{TOP} zináwáluma [njũchi]_{FOC}

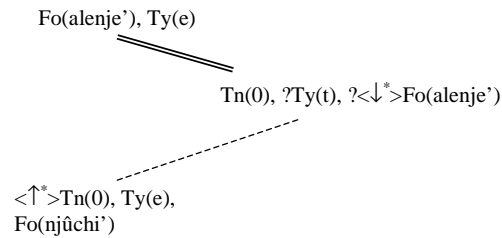
LINK structure – requires copy of formula value in the resulting tree, like in relative clauses, which can often be provided through resumptive anaphoric expression:

(17) [Alenje]_{TOP}...

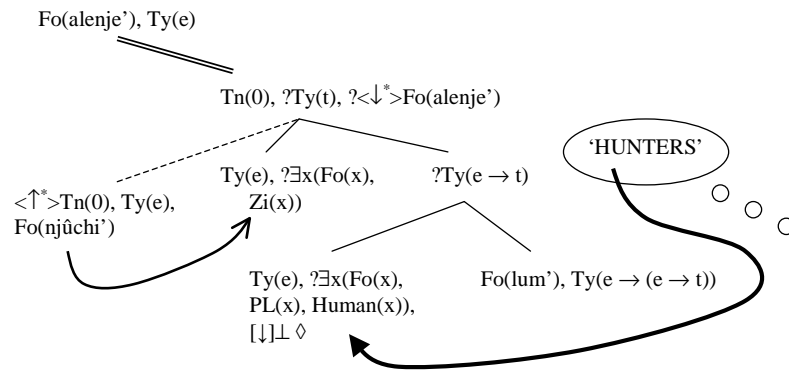


Unfixed node, at the outset of the parse (i.e. at Tn(0) without any nodes below it), licensed by *Adjunction. An unfixed node is part of the tree without – as yet – a fixed position:

(18) $[Alenje]_{TOP} [njũchi]_{FOC} \dots$



(19) $[Alenje]_{TOP} [njũchi]_{FOC} zi-ná-wá-luma$



FOCUS: The interpretation of the subject is through MERGE with an unfixed node. Note the structural analogy of providing a value for a variable. As many people working on focus have observed, focus gives rise to 'alternative' propositions (e.g. Lambrecht 1994, Rooth 1996, Bearth 1999 etc.). In this analysis, there is transparently a stage in the derivation at which

(20) $\lambda x[lum'(x, hunters')]$

and indeed

(21) $\lambda x[lum'(x, hunters')](njũchi')$

hold!

TOPIC: In contrast, the interpretation of the object node is achieved through contextual enrichment. The interpretation of *wá* as hunters is formally identical to the interpretation of *wá* without topic (= LINK structure), where 'hunters' are part of the context. In a sense, LINK structures set up the context against which the proposition has to be (pragmatically) evaluated – as topics should!

SEMANTICS AND INFORMATION STRUCTURE: The final tree for $[Alenje]_{TOP} [njũchi]_{FOC} zi-ná-wá-luma$ is identical to all trees involving *zi-ná-wá-luma* (in the relevant interpretation) The discourse-pragmatic functions of clause structure are reflected in the relevant transitions. The truth-conditional semantics remain the same (pace *only*).

Along those lines, a typology of possible interpretations (as opposed to word-orders) of the Bresnan and Mchombo data could be developed, with slightly different results

More sentence-initial focus (note the absence of OM in Tumbuku – indicative of an unfixed node):

(22a) Ngô:ma ti-zamu-limilira namch!ê:ro [Tumbuka]

'Maize we will weed tomorrow'
[maize is being contrasted with some other possible crop]

(22b) ma-bû:ku wa-ka-p!ása !wâ:na

books they gave children
'They gave the children books'
[Answer to: What did they give to the children?]
(Downing 2004: 6)

(23) Q: [ba-ntfwana] [ba-ba-nike-ni?] [SiSwati]

NP2-children SM2-OM2-give-what
'What did they give to the children'
(Presupposes that something was given)

A: tin-cwadzi, ba-ti-nike ba-ntfwana
NP10-books SM2-OM10-give NP2-children

3. Focus

So, focus interpretations arise (minimally) by merging an unfixed node into a tree position with a variable. This takes care of term focus (i.e. focus on an argument/adjunct of the verb) at the left periphery. What about other types of focus (Dik, Bearth, Morimoto etc.):

Focus positions	clause-initial clause-final clefts post-verbal
Focus types	contrastive focus new information focus presentational focus emphasis predicate focus thetic constructions

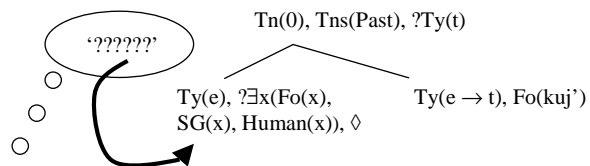
3.1. Presentational focus, clause-final (contrastive) focus (?) and clefts: Late*Adjunction

► Presentational focus

(24) a-li-kuj-a Haroub [Swahili]
 SCd1-PAST-come-FV Haroub
 'There came Haroub'

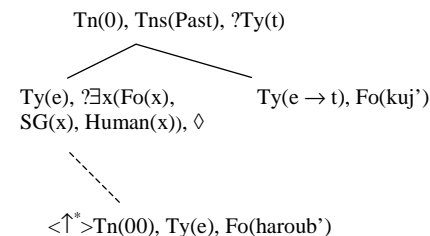
(25) ... watu wakapanda fiwi. Kaja Talafa ... Akatokea Mzee Mgomba akasema ...
 '... the people were planting beans ... There came Talafa ... Then arrived Mzee
 Mgomba and said ...'
 (Bearth 1995: 198)

(26) a-li-kuj-a ('s/he came')



The interpretation of the subject position cannot be resolved from context. As all nodes are type-complete, but the formula value of the subject node is still required, a step of Late*Adjunction (the counterpart of *Adjunction at the 'right periphery') is licensed, introducing an unfixed node for the 'late' subject:

(27) a-li-kuj-a Haroub ('s/he came Haroub' (= 'Haroub came', or 'It came Haroub'))



PRESENTATIONAL FOCUS results, similar to the Chichewa cases above, the focus effect on Haroub results from the introduction of Fo(haroub') through an unfixed node. The structural difference is that in presentational focus, contextual interpretation of the pronominal fails, while in (pre-verbal) contrastive focus, the unfixed node is present before the question of pronominal interpretation arises. However, it is not clear if this structural difference really correlates to focus types (see post-verbal contrastive focus, below).

BACKGROUND TOPICS are cases where the pronominal expression IS identified from context, and the post-posed NP is LINKed to the main proposition, requiring a copy of its formula value to be part of the tree, which is trivially fulfilled by the previously contextually identified pronoun.

Note the combination of *Adjunction (initial unfixed node) with Late*Adjunction (final unfixed node) for multiple focus in Tumbuka:

(28) pa-mu-pâ:nda zi-ka-d!úka mb!ú:zi [Tumbuka]
 Over the wall jumped goats
 'The goats jumper over he wall'
 [And something else jumped over something else]
 (Downing 2004: 7)

Languages which do not allow this kind of subject inversion easily, and/or use a (grammaticalized) locative SM can be analysed as lexically encoding cataphoric-presentational pronominal reference:

(29) kú-yá-lil-w-á ngà-bántwánà [Xhosa]
 SM-ya-cry-PASS-FV by-children
 'There are being cried by the children'
 (du Plessis and Visser 1992: 82)

(30) pa-ka-tol-ew-a hotuba mbali mbali [Swahili]
 SM16-CONSC-take_out-PASS-FIN speeches different
 'and there were held different speeches'
 (Kibao 1975: 50)
 (cf. *hotuba mbali mbali zikatolewa*)

(31a) ábá-ntwánà bá-yà-dlálà [Xhosa]
 NP2-children SM2-ya-play
 'The children are playing'

(31b) kù- dlálà ábá-ntwánà
 SM15-play NP2-children
 'There are playing children'
 (du Plessis and Visser 1992: 133)

(32) kudlalé: abantwana [Zulu]
 'There played children'

(33) kudlalile abantwana
 'It was children who played'

'When the impersonal class 10 concord ku- is used initially, the short tense is employed, the long tense signifying emphasis' (Doke 1992: 338)

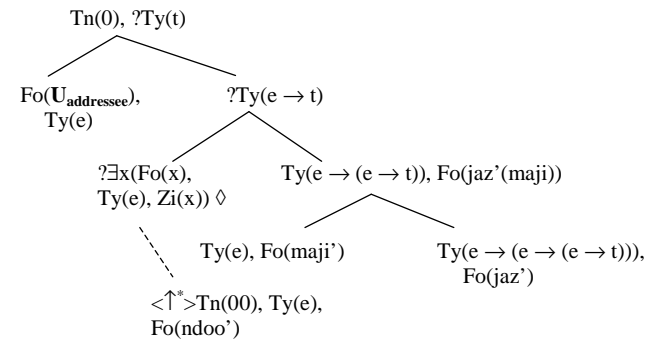
► Clause-final contrastive focus (?) (note OM – contrastive topic?) (Ashton 1942)

(34a) zi-jaz-e ma-ji [ndoo] FOC [Swahili]
 OM10-fill-SUBJ NP6-water 10.bucket
 'fill the buckets (not tin cans) with water'

(34b) zi-jaz-e ndoo [ma-ji] FOC
 OM10-fill-SUBJ 10.bucket NP6-water
 'fill the buckets with water (not milk)'

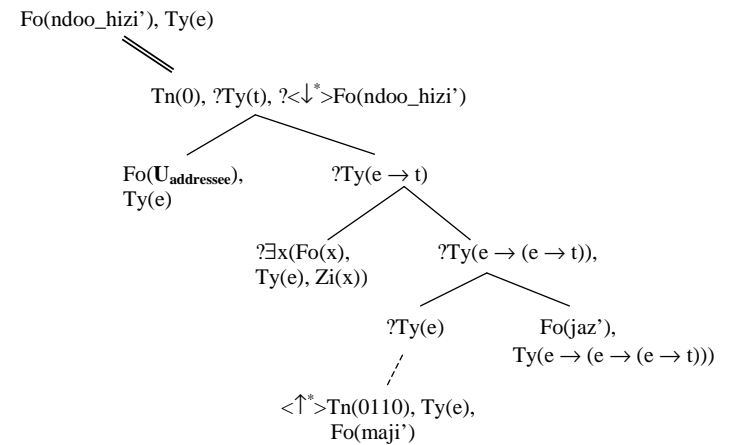
(34c) [ndoo hizi] TOP zi-jaz-e [ma-ji] FOC
 10.bucket these OM10-fill-SUBJ NP6-water
 'fill these buckets with water' (or maybe, 'these buckets, fill them with water')

(35) *zijaze maji* [ndoo] FOC



This may work for (34a) – even though with some trivial modifications to Late*Adjunction – but it is not clear how Late*Adjunction works for (34b) and (34c) PLUS it is far from clear whether OM in Swahili allow this kind of updating (i.e. whether they have lost the bottom restriction). Finally, this of course presupposes some idea about the structure of double objects in Swahili.

(36) [ndoo hizi] TOP zi-jaz-e [ma-ji] FOC



In order to get, this Late*Star Adjunction has to be modified non-trivially to be launched from non-type complete nodes? Again, the structure of the causative may play some role here.

However, clause-final focus (as opposed to post-verbal focus) seems to be recurrent:

- (37a) Yohani a-á-oógeje néézá [imiduga]_{FOC} [Kirundi]
 John SM1-PAST-wash.PERF well cars
 'John washed cars well (not trucks)
- (37b) Yohani a-á-oógeje imiduga [néézá]_{FOC}
 John SM1-PAST-wash.PERF cars well
 'John washed cars well (not badly)
 (Ndayiragije 1999: 411)

3.2. Post-verbal (new information) focus

Tumbuka (Downing 2004: 7), cf. also Tumbuka examples above. Also note the absence/presence of the OM in the second group of examples:

- (38) ti-zamu-limilira ngô:ma namch!ê:ro [Tumbuka]
 'we will weed maize tomorrow'
 [Answer to: What are you weeding tomorrow]
- (39a) wâ:na wa-ka-wa-p!ása ma-b!û:ku
 children they gave them books
 [Answer to: What did they give to the children?]
- (39b) wa-ka-wa-p!ása ma-b!û:ku !wâ:na
 they gave them books children
 [many presents ditributed, but only books given to the children]
- (39c) wa-ka-p!ása wâ:na ma-b!û:ku
 they gave children books
 [that is, children, not elders, got books]

Xhosa *wh* (du Plessis and Visser 1992), 'When interrogative words are used together with objects in Xhosa, the interrogative word has to appear immediately adjacent to the verb. In such cases the verb must always have objectival agreement through a clitic with the object because the object is never adjacent to verbs in questions' (du Plessis and Visser 1992: 18)

- (40) ú-yí-fùmèné phí úThémbà lé mótò?
 SM1-OM9-get where 1.Themba DEF 9.car
 'He got it where Themba this car?'

- (41) ú-ngà-zì-théngà ngàntóní ízi-tyó ézínjéngéziyá
 SM1-TAM-OM10-buy with.what NP10-clothes like this
 'With what can you buy dishes like this?'
- (42) ù-théthà úkú-m-khápà njàní ló m-fúndi
 SM2sg-mean INF-OM1-accompany how DEF NP1-student
 'How do you mean to accompany this student?'

Tswana (Creissels 2004); in addition to data similar to Xhosa, in Tswana *wh*-words (in contrast to non-*wh*-adverbials) may precede the object even without OM:

- (43a) *Ke bonye monna yo maabane* [Tswana]
 SM1sg-see.PFT-FIN 1-man 1.DEM yesterday
 'I saw this man yesterday'
- (43b) **Ke bonye maabane monna yo*
- (43c) *Ke mmonyé maabane monna yo*
 S1S-O3:1-see.PFT-FIN yesterday 1-man 1.DEM
 'I saw him yesterday, this man that is'
- (43d) *O bonye leng monna yo?*
 S2S-see.PFT-FIN when? 1-man 1.DEM
 'When did you see this man?'

► Focus marking in Bantu: Applicatives

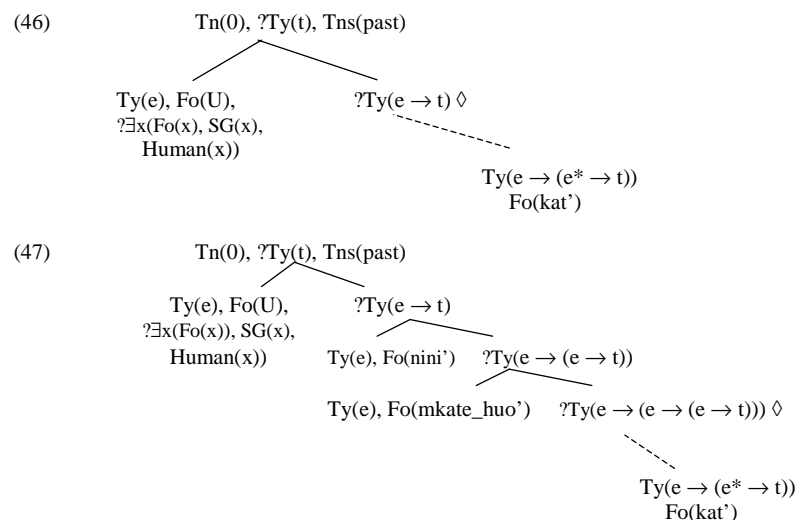
This leads Creissles to consider focus uses of applicatives, where the applicative focuses the (postverbal) locative complement:

- (44a) *Ke tlaa tabogela ko tseleng* [Tswana]
 S1S-FUT-run-APPL-FIN PREP 9.road-LOC
 'I will run to the road'
 OR, 'I will run on the road (and nowhere else)'
- (44b) *Lorato o apeela MO JARATENG*
 1.Lorato S3:1-cook-APPL-FIN PREP 9.yard-LOC
 'Lorato does the cooking IN THE YARD'
- (44c) *Monna wa me o swetse KO MORAFONG*
 1-man 1.GEN-PRO1S S3:1-die-APPL.PFT-FIN PREP 3-mine-LOC
 'My husband died IN THE MINE'

Similar examples in Swahili (and many other Bantu languages; Marten 2002, 2003b):

- (45a) *Bi Sauda a-li-kat-a mkate kwa kisu* [Swahili]
 Bi Sauda SCd1-PAST-cut-FV bread with knife
 'Bi Sauda cut bread with a knife'
- (45b) # *Bi Sauda a-li-kat-i-a mkate kisu*
 Bi Sauda SCd1-PAST-cut-APPL-FV bread knife
 'Bi Sauda cut bread with a knife'
- (45c) *Bi Sauda a-li-kat-i-a nini mkate huo?*
 Bi Sauda SCd1-PAST-cut-APPL-FV what bread this
 'How *did* Bi Sauda cut this bread? (lit: With what *did* Bi Sauda cut the bread?)'

Applicatives as inducing predicate focus: an e* analysis with unfixed verbs (Marten 2002)



Is the 'predicate focus' analysis right here? How are the arguncts in applicatives licensed?

4. (Object) Agreement and emphasis (focus?)

- (48a) *ámá-dòdá á-xhé1-à í-gùshà* [Xhosa]
 NP6-men SM6-slaughter-FV NP9-sheep
 'The men are slaughtering a sheep'
- (48b) *ámá-dòdá á-yá-yì-xhé1-à í-gùshà*
 NP6-men SM6-ya-OM9-slaughter-FV NP9-sheep
 'The men do occasionally slaughter a sheep'

'In (a) without the clitic *yi* these two semantic features [i.e. [emphasis] and [-frequent] or [-regular]] are not present. It seems then as if structures like (b) with the clitic used together with a **lexical** object have to be dealt with within the broader framework of a theory of **focus** where **ígùshà** in (b) is thus in a focus position' (du Plessis and Visser 1992: 12) – but there seems to be more to it, cf. the Xhosa examples above.

► Ha, Kinyarwanda, Rundi

► Conjunct agreement: Luguru, Xhosa

Luguru: Pragmatic agreement with pre-verbal conjoined NPs (both subjects and objects) only (Marten 2003a):

- (49a) *chi-ti na ghumu-biki pfi-ghul-iw-a*
 7-chair and 3-tree SCd8-buy-pass-fv
 'The chair and the tree were bought' [CI 7 + CI 3 = CI 8]
- (49b) *ghumu-biki ne-chi-kapu pfi-ghul-iw-a*
 3-tree and-7-basket SCd8-buy-pass-fv
 'The tree and the basket were bought' [CI 3 + CI 7 = CI 8]
- (49c) [*chi-ti*]_{EMPH} *na ghumu-biki chi-ghul-iw-a*
 7-chair and 3-tree SCd7-buy-pass-fv
 'The chair and the tree were bought' [CI 7 + CI 3 = CI 7]
- (49d) *chi-ti na [ghumu-biki]_{EMPH} u-ghul-iw-a*
 7-chair and 3-tree SCd3-buy-pass-fv
 'The chair and the tree were bought' [CI 7 + CI 3 = CI 3]
- (50a) [*ichi-ti*]_{EMPH} *na ghumu-biki wanzehe wa-chi-ghul-a*
 NP7-chair and NP3-tree elders SCd2-Ocd7-buy-fv
 'A chair and a tree the elders bought' [CI 7 + CI 3 = CI 7]

- (50b) *ichi-ti na [ghumu-biki]_{EMPH} wanzehe wa-u-ghul-a*
 NP7-chair and NP3-tree elders SCd2-Ocd3-buy-fv
 ‘A chair and a tree the elders bought’ [CI 7 + CI 3 = CI 3]
- (50c) *ichi-ti na ghumu-biki wanzehe wa-pfi-ghul-a*
 NP7-chair and NP3-tree elders SCd2-Ocd8-buy-fv
 ‘A chair and a tree the elders bought’ [CI 7 + CI 3 = CI 8]

Xhosa: ‘The clitic will have the agreement of the emphasized NP, whichever it is’ (du Plessis and Visser 1992: 16)

- (51a) *à-ndí-sì-bón-ì [ísí-lò]_{EMPH} n-óm-thi*
 NEG-SM1sg-OM7-see-NEG NP7-animal CONJ-NP3-tree
 ‘I don’t see it the wild animal and the tree’
- (51b) *à-ndí-wú-bón-ì ísí-lò [n-óm-thì]_{EMPH}*
 NEG-SM1sg-OM3-see-NEG NP7-animal CONJ-NP3-tree
 ‘I don’t see it the wild animal and the tree’

5. (Tentative) Conclusions

► Some focus interpretations in Bantu seem to correlate with an analysis employing unfixed nodes (sentence-initial, some sentence-final). It is probably a bit naive to assume that all focus interpretations result from one structural analysis. On the other hand, a structural explanation of some focus phenomena probably helps to better understand focus in general.

► Leaving analyses to one side, what is the typological space of focus in Bantu. The somewhat random examples here seem to indicate different positions being employed by different languages (or, in different contexts?). What is the nature of this variation?

► At least for some focus interpretations, it might be desirable to have a better understanding of other aspects of Bantu clause structure, for example, the nature of (object) agreement, and of applicatives.

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