FOCUS IN OROMO*

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This paper attempts to describe focused structures in
Oromo in light of the generative framework of Chomsky
[1976, 1981, 1986] and Williams [1977]. The framework
recognizes two levels of grammar: sentence and dis-
course. Focus is believed to be part of the latter.
Three types of focus have been identified in relation
to the four major syntactic categories of the language.
In NP's the feature is realized as /-tu/ , in V(P)'s
as /hin-/ , and in PP's as /-ḍa/ . These elements
are not part of the inflectional or derivational mor-
phology of the language. Adjectives use prosodic or
structural devices when focused. The structural de-
vice is clefting, which the other categories also em-
ploy in addition to the elements mentioned above.

0. Introduction

In this paper, I shall attempt to give a formal account of focused
structures in Oromo, a Cushitic language spoken in Ethiopia and Kenya, in
the generative framework of Chomsky [1976, 1981, 1986] and Williams [1977].
The framework recognizes grammar as a composite of two subparts. These are
sentence and discourse grammar. Each is believed to have its own rules and
levels of application.

The rules of sentence grammar are factored out of an idealized body of
data and make no reference to contexts, spatial, temporal, or cultural.
Such rules define the form and meaning of sentences structurally. On the

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other hand, the rules of discourse grammar do refer to such contexts, as
their relevant terms may not be contained within a single utterance. Such
rules may take a set of utterances as their domain of application. They al-
so operate at the level of LF (logical form), where pronominal and anaphor-
ic references and the scopes of quantified NP's are determined in configura-
tional terms. This is in contrast to the rules of sentence grammar, which
are believed to operate at the syntactic levels of deep and surface struc-
tures (s-structures).

The two rules are sequential in nature. The rules of discourse grammar
take as an input structures derived from the application of sentence gram-
mar rules. Williams [1977:106] has assigned this sequential nature the
status of a principle which he calls the "strict utterance principle".
This principle states that all rules of discourse grammar apply after all
rules of sentence grammar.

Focus, like other pragmatic functions such as topic or comment, is a
property of discourse grammar in contrast to such grammatical functions as
agent, patient, goal, etc., which fall within the domain of sentence gram-
mar. The rules which assign the feature "focus" are therefore part of the
rules of discourse grammar and hence operate at the level of LF in accord-
ance with the principle stated above.

In what follows, I shall attempt to show how such rules operate in Oro-
mo and also how the feature is realized in surface structures. The discus-
sion will be as follows: in section 1, I shall discuss types of focus; in
section 2, I shall consider the categories which can be assigned the fea-
ture; in section 3, I shall deal with the realizations of the feature; and
finally, in section 4, I shall examine the assignment of the feature it-
self.

1. Types of Focus

Before dwelling on types, it is necessary to give a working definition
for the term focus, as much of the discussion that follows depends on what
is meant by this term. Functional grammarians like Dik [1978:149] define
it as "the pragmatic function which represents the relatively most impor-

tant or salient information with respect to the pragmatic information of
the speaker and the addressee." Among generative grammarians, it is used
in relation to the semantic (structural) representation of a sentence. Such
a representation is divided into focus and presupposition. The focus is the
part which carries the information which the speaker believes to be new to
his addressee. The presupposition constitutes the part which he assumes to
be shared both by him and the addressee, and on which they agree as to its
truth or falsity (cf. Jackendoff [1972]). What is common to both defini-
tions is the fact that the term is used in relation to information which a
speaker believes to be important, and what is important from this point of
view of information structure is that which is new. Focus is, thus, a prag-
matic/semantic realization of constituents carrying such new information.

    With this brief definition, we may now move on to the classification.
According to Rochemont [1980] and Culicover and Rochemont [1983], there are
at least three types of focus in any natural language. These are the fol-
lowing:

1.1. <u>Presentational focus</u>. This type of focus is associated with individ-
uals[1] which are introduced into discourse and of which are made predica-
tions of their attributes or properties. This is demonstrated by struc-
tures like (1) below where the NP /aannan/ 'milk' is introduced as new in-
formation, and a predication is made of its attribute designated by the ad-
jective /adii/ 'white' and the copula /ḍa/ 'be'.

(1) aannán-i adii -ḍa   'milk is white'
     milk-nom white be

    Here, the presupposition that "something is white" must be taken for
granted by both parties of the discourse, as part of their shared knowledge
(cf. Epstein [1977]). In other words, this type of focus is not context
construable in the sense of Culicover and Rochement [1983], since it as-
sumes that both parties know the issue involved in the discourse. In view

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[1]By "individuals" is meant terms (constituents) that are introduced in-
to discourse as carrying new information.

of this, in the structure above, the subject /aannan/ 'milk' is intro-
duced into discourse as new information and as such is assigned presenta-
tional focus, indicated phonologically by the placement of the stress. Such
constituents appear in surface structures with phonetic content. In cases
where they are not focused, they may be missing from the structures given
that they can be recovered from the shared context, grammatical or pragmat-
ic. Hence (2), with a phonologically empty subject:

(2) e hóolaa bit-an-i   'they bought a sheep'
     e sheep buy-3pl-pf

   In (1), it is only the subject NP which is focused. In (3), we have
both the subject and the predicate focused.

(3) Túlluu-n hin-ḍuf-a   'Tulluu will come'
     T-nom   foc-come-3ms[2]-impf

Such structures, where both categories are associated with the feature,
constitute what Rochemont and Culicover [1983:154] call dual presentational
focus. In such structures, the subject is shown as focused by the stress
and the V(P) by the element /hin-/ , which is attached to the verb. This
element is a V(P) focus marker and is distributionally restricted to main
declarative clauses only. Hence, interrogative, imperative, and all types
of complement clauses would be unacceptable if they contained it. Observe
the following:

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   [2]3ms is the unmarked form. Note also the following abbreviations:

nom.	nominative
cs.	causative
pf.	perfective
impf.	imperfective
imp.	imperative
rfl.	reflexive
comp.	complementizer
neg.	negative
foc.	focus
TNS.	tense
AGR.	agreement
f.	feminine
sgl.	singulative

(4) a. i.   eeňňu ḍuf-e   'who came?'
            who   come-3ms-pf

    ii. *eeňňu hin-ḍuf-e   'who came?'
            who   foc-come-3ms-pf

  b. i.   ňaad-u   'eat!'
          eat-imp

    ii. *hin-ňaad-u   'eat!'
          foc-eat-imp

  c. i.   Tulluu-n[ₛakka Čaaltuu-n hoolaa bit-t-e] hin-beek-a
          T-nom   that Č-nom   sheep buy-f-pf foc-know-3ms-impf

          'Tulluu knows that Čaaltuu bought a sheep'

    ii. *Tulluu-n[ₛakka Čaaltuu-n hoolaa hin-bit-t-e] hin-beek-a
          T-nom   that Č-nom   sheep foc-buy-f-pf foc-know-3ms-impf

          'Tulluu knows that Čaaltuu bought a sheep'

In negatives, there is a homophonous element /hin-/ which forms a discontinuous[3] morpheme with the suffix /-n/ . This /hin-/ is different from the focus marking /hin-/ phonologically, morphologically, and syntactically. Phonologically, the focus marking /hin-/ is characterized by a relatively high pitch, whereas the negative marking /hin-/ is not (cf. Owens [1985]; Gragg [1976]). In the case of the latter, it is the initial syllable of the verb stem to which it is prefixed that gets high pitch [Andrzejewski 1970], as in the examples below:

(5) a. hín-bit-e   'bought'
    b. hin-bín-n-e   'did not buy'

Morphologically, the negative marking /hin-/ is part of the word formation processes of the language, whereas the focus marking /hin-/ is not, since focus is a discourse, as opposed to a grammatical category. In other words, the focus marking /hin-/ is not part of the derivational

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[3]This is in perfect negatives only. In imperfect negatives, the form of the verb is /hin-stem-u/ as in:

Tulluu-n hin-ḍuf-u   'Tulluu will not come'
T-nom   neg-come-impf

morphology of the language. It is not part of the inflectional morphology
either, since it is not a realization of such grammatical features as per-
son, number, gender, case, tense/aspect, mood, etc., for which verbs are in-
flected. The fact that it belongs to neither of the morphological processes
of the language supports the argument that it is a discourse rather than a
grammatical formative.

Syntactically, the focus marking /hin-/ is restricted to main declara-
tive clauses, whereas the negative marking /hin-/ is not. Consider the
following examples:

(6) a. hin-ňaad-u   'don't eat!'
        neg-eat-imp

    b. Tulluu-n [akka Čaaltuu-n hoolaa hin-bin-n-e]   hin-beek-a
                 s̲

        T-nom   that Č-nom   sheep neg-buy-neg-pf foc-know-impf

        'Tulluu knows that Čalltuu did not buy a sheep'

    c. eeňňu hin-ḍuf-n-e   'who did not come?'
        who   neg-come-neg-pf

These are structures from which the focus marking /hin-/ is excluded as
shown in (4) above. Such distributional differences suggest that the two
elements belong to different levels of the grammar.

1.2. Informative focus. This type of focus is associated with bare
wh-NP's and their responses. The following is an example of the former.

(7) éeňňu ḍuf-e   'who came?'
    who   come-3ms-pf

Here, the wh-NP /eeňňu/ 'who' is focused by virtue of its being a
question constituent, asking for new information in the discourse in which
it forms a part. This is indicated by the stress placed on it. The pre-
supposition on which the question is based is that "someone came". The re-
sponse to such questions is also characterized by the same feature. Hence,
a natural response to (7) above would be (8):

(8) Túlluu (ḍuf-e)   '*Tulluu* came'
    Tulluu come-3ms-pf

In both (7) and (8), the focused constituents do not have the nominative marker /-n/ . The structures would be unacceptable if the constituents showed up this element. The reason for this seems to be connected with the fact that the constituents are associated with the pragmatic feature of focus. Such constituents do not seem to be able to show the grammatical feature of case at the same time.

In structures like (7) and (8), the V(P) cannot be focused since structures like (9) are unacceptable:

(9) *eeññu hin-ḍuf-e   'who came?'
     who   foc-come-3ms-pf

This situation is different from the one observed in connection with presentational focus, where both subject and predicate constituents were associated with the feature without this leading to any problem. The situation here might suggest the intrinsic difference that exists between the two types of focus.

1.3. <u>Contrastive focus</u>. Unlike presentational focus, contrastive focus is context construable. The context may be one of disputation where, for example, a participant in a discourse believes that the information contained in a constituent uttered by his interlocutor is not true, but that something else is. Negative structures and non-bare wh-constituents[4] and their responses contain examples of this type. Consider the following structures:

(10) a.   Túlluu-n hin-ḍuf-n-e   'Tulluu did not come'
         T-nom   neg-come-neg-pf

     b. i.   eeññu-tu ḍuf-e   'who is it that came?'
             who-foc   come-pf

        ii.   Fayyisaa-tu ḍuf-e   'it is Fayyisaa who came'
             F-foc   come-pf

In (10a), the focused constituent is the subject, Tulluu, as shown by the placement of the stress. The presupposition which constitutes the context to which the focused constituent is related, is the assertion,

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[4]These are wh-NP's with the particle /-tu/ .

/Tulluu ḍuf-e/ 'Tulluu came', and it is this assertion of *Tulluu's* coming
which is negated and, hence, focused (cf. Givón [1979]).

Example (10bi) is a wh-question put forward in response to (10a). The
wh-NP has the suffix /-tu/ .[5] This suffix is a contrastive focus marker.
The question is based on the wide scope interpretation of (10a) where the
negated, and hence focused, constituent is 'Tulluu', rather than the V(P).
Based on this interpretation, (10bi) asks the question, 'who is it then that
came if it is not Tulluu?.' The response constituent like the questioned

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[5]Eshetu [1989] has assumed that /-tu/ is one of the variants of the
copula /ḍa/ 'be'. I believe that it is not; it is a focus marker associ-
ated with (wh-)NP's which are assigned contrastive focus. The copula can
occur as a predicate in both neutral and cleft constructions but /-tu/
cannot. Hence the following:

(i) a. Tulluu-n deeraa -ḍa   'Tulluu is tall'
         T-nom   tall   be

     b. *Tulluu-n ḍeeraa -tu
         T-nom   tall   ?

(ii) a. Tulluu -ḍa hoolaa kan bit-e   'it is Tulluu who bought a sheep'
                 be sheep comp buy-3ms-pf

     b. *Tulluu -tu hoolaa kan bit-e
                 ? sheep comp buy-3ms-pf

(iii) a. Tulluu-tu hoolaa bit-e   'it is Tulluu who bought a sheep'
          T-foc   sheep buy-pf

      b. *Tulluu -ḍa hoolaa bit-e
                  be sheep buy-3ms-pf

Furthermore, whereas there is agreement neutralization in clauses where
the subject NP has the element /-tu/ , as shown in the text, there is no
such neutralization in structures where /ḍa/ is used. Observe the follow-
ing:

(iv) a. Čaaltuu -ḍa hoolaa kan bit-t-e   'it is Čaaltuu who bought a
                 be sheep comp buy-f-pf   sheep'

     b. *Čaaltuu -ḍa hoolaa kan bit-∅ -e
                  be sheep comp buy-∅-pf

Such distributional restrictions suggest that /-tu/ and /-ḍa/ are dif-
ferent elements.

constituent itself, also has the same element /tu-/ as shown in (10bii),
which has the interpretation, 'it is *Fayyisaa* (not Tulluu or anyone else
for that matter) who came.'

The distribution of /-ţu/ as a focus marker is restricted to contrast-
ively focused subject (wh-)NP's. This restriction is contrary to Gragg's
[1976] claim that it occurs virtually with any constituent. The fact that
structures like the following are unacceptable puts his claim into question.

(11) a. *Tulluu-n eeňňu-tu arg-e   (wh-NP,VP)
        T-nom   who-foc see-3ms-pf

        'who is it that Tulluu saw?'

     b. *Tulluu-n adii-ţu   barbaad-a   (AP))   (AP)
        T-nom   white-foc want-3ms-impf

        'it is white that Tulluu wants'

     c. *Tulluu-n eeboo-n-tu   leenča aɟɟee-s-e   (PP)
        T-nom   spear-with-foc lion . kill-cs-3ms-pf

        'it is with a spear that Tulluu killed a lion'

     d. *Tulluu-n hoolaa bit-e-tu   (V)   (V)
        T-nom   sheep buy-3ms-pf-foc

Excepting (11d) which employs /hin-/ when the V(P) is focused, all
the other constituents with /-ţu/ do undergo the process of clefting when
focused. For example, corresponding to (11a) above, we have (12) below
with the wh-NP clefted.

(12) eeňňu -ḍa[_Tulluu-n kan arg-e]
     who   be ˢT-nom   comp see-3ms-pf

     'who is it that Tulluu saw?'

Unlike /hin-/ which, as we have seen, is restricted to main declara-
tive clauses, /-ţu/ can occur with subject (wh-)NP's of complement clauses
of all types and also with negative structures as shown in (13) and (14)
respectively.

(13) a. Tulluu-n [_akka[eeňňu-tu hoolaa bit-e]](hin-)beek-a
                 s̄   s
        T-nom   that who-foc sheep buy-pf foc-know-3ms-impf

        ? 'who is it (that) Tulluu knows bought a sheep?'

b. Tulluu-n [_akka[Fayyisaa-tu hoolaa bit-e]](hin-)beek-a
         s   s
   T-nom   that F-nom   sheep· buy-pf   foc-know-3ms-impf

  ? 'it is Fayyisa that Tulluu knows bought a sheep'

(14) a. maal-tu hin-ḍuf-n-e
        what-foc neg-come-neg-pf

        'who is it that did not come?'

   b. fard-ičč̆a-tu hin-ḍuf-n-e
       horse-sgl-foc neg-come-neg-pf

       'it is the horse which did not come'

From the foregoing discussion, it seems that contrastive focus is shown
by the element /-tu/ with subject (wh-)NP's, and by the process of cleft-
ing with non-subject constituents.

1.2. <u>Categories</u>. In the description of the types of focus, it has been
shown that NP's and V(P)'s are indicated as focused by the elements /-tu/
and /hin-/ respectively and also by phonological means. A question that
may arise from this is whether or not other syntactic categories such as
AP's (adjectival phrases), PP's, and S's can also be focused and if so,
whether or not they employ the above same device to show the feature.

   According to Nomi Erteschik-Shir [1986], any category can be focused if
(i)   the information contained in it can be denied,
(ii) it can be extracted (dislocated) as in topicalization,
(iii) it can be used to answer a wh-question.

   According to these criteria, AP's, PP's, and infinitival clauses can
qualify for focus assignment in this language since they can be denied, ex-
tracted, and used in response to wh-quesitons. Observe the following in
connection with the PP /eeboo-n/ 'with a spear' in (15) and the AP
/baɁe guddaa/ 'very big' in (16).

(15) Tulluu-n [eeboo-n]   leenč̆a aɉɉee-s-e
      T-nom   spear-with lion   kill-cs-3ms-pf

      'Tulluu killed a lion with a spear'

a. [eeboo-n   miti] Tulluu-n leenča aǰǰee-s-e
   spear-with not-be T-nom   lion   kill-cs-3ms-pf

   'it is not with a spear that Tulluu killed a lion'

b. eeboo-n$_i$ [$_{\bar{s}}$ [$_s$Tulluu t$_i$ leenča aǰǰee-s-e]]
   spear-with   T-nom   lion   kill-cs-3ms-pf

   'with a spear, Tulluu killed a lion'

c. Tulluu-n [maal-in] leenča aǰǰee-s-e
   T-nom   what-with lion kill-cs-3ms-pf

   'with what did Tulluu kill a lion?'

d. eebb-n   'with a spear'
   spear-with

(16) man-ni   kun-(i) [bay?e guddaa] -da
      house-nom this-nom very big   be

   'this house is very big'

a. bay?e guddaa miti ...   šaggaa -da malee
   very big   not -be ... nice   be but

   'it is not very big ... but (it is) nice'

b. [$_s$man-ni   kun(-ni) t$_i$ -da → Ø] bay?e guddaa$_i$
      house-nom this-nom   be   very big

   lit. 'very big, this house (is)'

c. i. man-ni   kun(-ni) [maal] fakkaat-a
       house-nom this-nom what looks-3ms-impf

       'what does this house look like?'

   ii. bay?e guddaa
       very big

If it is the case that PP's and AP's are subject to focus assignment, then the next question to ask is how they show the feature. In contrastive focus, PP's employ the element /da/ . This is demonstrated by the examples in (17).

(17) a. Tulluu-n ulee-ḍa[6]-n   nama rukkuṭ-e
        T-nom   stick-foc-with man hit-3ms-pf

        'it is with a stick that Tulluu hit a man'

    b. Tulluu-n ḳawwee-ḍa-n leenča aǰǰee-s-e
        T-nom   gun-foc-with lion   kill-cs-3ms-pf

        'it is with a gun that Tulluu killed a lion'

In these structures, the element /ḍa/ is incorporated into the PP's
/ulee-n/ 'with a stick' and /ḳawwee-n/ 'with a gun' to show that these
categories are focused. When they are not focused, such categories can ap-
pear without /ḍa/ as in the corresponding (18).

(18) a. Tulluu-n ulee-n   nama rukkuṭ-e
        T-nom   stick-with man hit-3ms-pf

        'Tulluu hit a man with a stick'

    b. Tulluu-n ḳawwee-n leenča aǰǰee-s-e
        T-nom   gun-with lion   kill-cs-3ms-pf

        'Tulluu killed a lion with a gun'

Focused PP's like /ulee-ḍa-n/ 'it is with a stick' in (17a) can also
undergo the process of clefting when they are emphatically focused. This
happens in contexts where the information contained in a focused category
such as /ulee-ḍa-n/ is denied. In such cases, (17a) would appear as in
(19).

(19) ulee-ḍa-n-i[7]   [_Tulluu-n nama kan rukkuṭ-e]
      stick-foc-with-be ^{S}T-nom   man comp hit-3ms-pf

    'it is certainly with a stick that Tulluu hit a man'
    lit. 'it is, it is with a stick that Tulluu hit a man'

As stated above and also in footnote 5, the element /ḍa/ 'be' is a

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[6]In an earlier version, I argued that /-ḍa/ was a part of the post-
positional element /-an/ . A closer examination of more data has now re-
vealed that it is a copula incorporated into PP's to show that they are fo-
cused (see also Temesgen [1988]).

[7]/-i/ is a variant of /-ḍa/ and occurs following stems ending in
consonants.

copula in the syntax, because it can occur heading a predicate structure of
the type in (20).

(20) Tulluu-n ḍeeraa -ḍa   'Tulluu is tall'
      T-nom   tall   be

Its incorporation into focused PP's seems to suggest that it has both syn-
tactic and pragmatic functions. In other words, it is an element which be-
longs to both levels of the grammar.

    AP's differ from all categories with respect to the manner in which
they show focus. Unlike all the rest, which, as we have observed, employ
certain elements to show the feature, they use either the phonological de-
vice of stress as in (21a) or undergo the process of clefting as in (21b).

(21) a. Tulluu-n adíi barbaad-a
         T-nom   white want-3ms-impf

         'Tulluu wants white'

     b. adíi -ḍa [_Tulluu-n kan barbaad-u]
         white be ˢT-nom   comp want-3ms-impf

         'it is white which Tulluu wants'

    Regarding clauses, it seems that only infinitivals can be focused by un-
dergoing the process of clefting. Hence (22a) but not (22b) is acceptable.

(22) a. buddeena ňaa-čč-uu   -ḍa [_Tulluu-n kan barbaad-u]
         bread   eat-rfl-ing be ˢT-nom   comp want-3ms-impf

         'it is eating bread that Tulluu wants'

     b. ? akka Čaaltuu-n buddeena ňaat-t-e -ḍa [_Tulluu-n kan barbaad-u]
           that Č-nom   bread   eat-f-pf be ˢT-nom   comp want-3ms-impf

         lit. 'that Čaaltuu ate bread is (the thing) Tulluu wants'

The questionableness of (22b) suggests that finite clauses cannot be cleft-
ed. The asymmetry between such clauses and infinitivals seems to be con-
nected with the nature of infinitivals in Oromo. Such clauses are nominal,
i.e. they are NP's categorially though they are sentential structurally.
For example, in /buddeena ňaa-čč-uu/ 'eating bread' in (22a) /ňaa-čč-uu/
'eating', which is the head of the clause, is a nominal, lexically derived

from the corresponding verbal /ňaa-t-/ 'eat'. As a nominal, it can occur
in syntactic positions associated with bare NP's and, like other such NP's,
it displays the appropriate case affix, as in the examples below.

(23) a.   [buddeena ňaa-čč-uu-n]   gaarii -ḓa
            bread   eat-rfl-ing-nom good   be

           'eating bread is good'

     b.   Tulluu-n [buddeena ňaa-čč-uu] barbaad-a
            T-nom   bread   eat-rfl-ing want-3ms-impf

           'Tulluu wants eating bread'

   The infinitival clause is in subject position, nominatively marked, in
(23a), and in object position in (23b).

   On the other hand, finite clauses are headed by (INFL)ection, a non-lex-
ical category, according to Chomsky [1981]. Hence, only infinitivals allow
clefting because they are headed by nominals, which are lexical categories.

   From what has been observed in this section, it appears that the phra-
sal categories of the four major lexical categories, namely, nominals, ver-
bals, adjectivals, and pre-/post-positionals are subject to focus assign-
ment. In what follows, we shall consider the realizations of the feature
in surface structures.

3. Realizations

   As Dik [1978:19] has pointed out, languages may vary in the ways in
which they show focus. Some have special markers, others use special order-
ings, and probably all use phonological means for marking the feature. It
seems that Oromo uses all of these devices.

3.1. Particles. It has been observed in the preceding section that the
distribution of affixal particles such as /-tu/ , /hin-/ , and /-ḓa/ is
restricted to focused NP's, V(P)'s, and PP's respectively. For purposes of
illustration, let us compare the following pairs of structures again.

(24) a. i.   Tulluu-n hoolaa bit-e   'Tulluu bought a sheep'
               T-nom   sheep buy-3ms-pf

      ii.   Tulluu-tu hoolaa bit-e   'it is Tulluu who bought a sheep'
               T-foc   sheep buy-pf

b. i.   Tullúu-n nama rukkut-a   'Tulluu hits a man'
         T-nom   man hit-3ms-impf

    ii. (Tullun-n) nama hin-rukkut-a   'Tulluu hits a man'
         T-nom   man foc-hit-3ms-impf

c. i.   (Tulluu-n) eeboo-n   leenča ajjee-s-e
         T-nom   spear-with lion   kill-cs-3ms-pf

         'Tulluu killed a lion with a spear'

    ii. (Tulluu-n) eeboo-ḍa-n   leenča ajjee-s-e
         T-nom   spear-foc-with lion   kill-cs-3ms-pf

         'it is with a spear that Tulluu killed a lion'

As stated earlier on in connection with /hin-/ , such elements are not
a part of the nominal or verbal morphology of the language, in the sense
that they are not realizations of such grammatical features as person, num-
ber, gender, tense/aspect/mood, etc.   They have, therefore, been recog-
nized as discourse elements (as opposed to grammatical elements) designating
the pragmatic feature of focus.

3.2. <u>Special ordering</u>. By this is meant changing the syntactically derived
patterns of sentences for various communicative effects. The rules which
change such basic patterns are different from those rules which convert D-
structure into S-structure because the latter are syntactic, motivated by
independent principles of UG (universal grammar) [Chomsky 1981]. In fact,
it is on such syntactically derived structures that the former type of rules
operate for the reasons mentioned. Among such rules are dislocation and
clefting. The former is associated with topicalization, whereas the latter
is related to focus.

As shown in the preceding section, all the major categories, with the
exception of verbals, undergo the process of clefting when focused, as il-
lustrated in (25).

(25) a. Tulluu -ḍa [_ hoolaa kan bit-e]   (NP,s)
         Tulluu-be   S sheep comp buy-3ms-pf

         'it is Tulluu who bought a sheep'

b. hoolaa -ḍa[Tulluu-n kan bit-e]   (NP,VP)
    sheep-be ˢT-nom   comp buy-3ms-pf

    'it is Tulluu who bought a sheep'

c. adii -ḍa[Tulluu-n kan   barbaad-u]   (AP)
    white-be ˢT-nom   comp want-3ms-impf

    'it is white which Tulluu wants'

d. ulee-n -i   [Tulluu-n kan   nama rukkut-e]   (PP)
    stick-with-be ˢT-nom   comp man hit-3ms-pf

    'it is with a stick that Tulluu hit a man'

e. *buddeena n̆aat-e   -ḍa[Tulluu-n kan goḍ-e]   (VP)
    bread   eat-3ms-pf be ˢT-nom   comp do-3ms-pf

    ? 'it is *ate bread* that Tulluu did'

The ill-formedness of (25e) might appear to be related to the fact that
verbals show the feature *in situ* by employing the element /hin-/ . But
this observation is not strong, particularly when considered with the fact
that other categories, which also show the feature *in situ*, do undergo the
process of clefting without this causing any problem. It seems that the
reason for the ungrammaticality of structures like (25e) has to do with the
feature [+TENSE], which only verbals are characterized by. The other cate-
gories are [-TENSE], and it seems that only they are subject to the process
of clefting.

3.3. <u>Prosodic features</u>. Other than the two devices already considered,
prosodic features like stress are used to show focus. This is the situa-
tion, for example, in presentational focus where the subject of a clause is
associated with the feature. In such cases, the VP is assigned a low level
stress,[8] as in the following:

(26) nam-óon-ni hoolaa bit-an-i   'the man bought a sheep'
      man-pl-nom sheep buy-3pl-pf

As stated earlier on, such focused NP's appear in surface structures
with phonetic content only when focused. If the focused constituent is a

----

[8]This is the unmarked one in this study.

complement as in (27) below, the subject may either be missing or associat-
ed with a low level stress.

(27) (nam-onn-ni) hóolaa bit-an-ni   'the men bought a sheep'
      man-pl-nom   sheep buy-3pl-pf

In such structures, the verb also occurs either without /hin-/ or with its
reduced form /-n/ , which gets encliticized onto a preceding constituent.
Hence, (27) above may have the alternative realization shown in (28) below.

(28) (nam-onn-ni) hóolaa-n / ←hin-/ bit-an-i
      man-pl-nom   sheep-foc   buy-3pl-pf

      'the men bought a sheep'

4. Assignment

    In the preceding section, we have observed the various realizations of
focus. In this section, we shall consider the assignment of the feature it-
self.

    Structures with the focus particles /-tu/ , /hin-/ , or /-ḍa/ can be
treated as having the following S-structure representation.

(29)

```
                      S
          ┌───────────┴─────────────────────┐
         NP                                  VP
          │                     ┌────────────┴──────┐
          │                    PP                    V
          │             ┌───────┴───┐          ┌─────┴────┐
          N            NP           P          NP          V
          │             │           │          │          │
        Tulluu        eeboo        -n        leenča    ajjee-s-e
                      spear        with       lion    kill-cs-3ms-pf
```

      'Tulluu killed a lion with a spear'

    At the level of LF, where the assignment is believed to take place, (29)
would have the representation shown in (30) below, with the feature assigned
to the subject NP Tulluu, for example:

(30)   S
              ┌─────────┴─────────┐
             NP   VP
              | △
            [FOC]
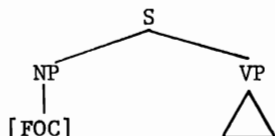
The feature [FOC] then manifests itself as /-tu/ in the case of contras-
tive focus, and as (′) in the case of presentational focus, the latter as-
signed at the level of PF (phonetic form). The resulting structures would
then look like those in (31).

(31) a. Tulluu-tu eeboo-n   leenča ajjee-s-e
         T-foc   spear-with lion   kill-cs-3f

         'it is Tulluu who killed a lion with a spear'

     b. Túllu-n eeboo-n   leenča ajjee-s-e
         T-nom   spear-with lion   kill-cs-3ms-pf

         'Tulluu killed a lion with a spear'

    As in bare-wh-questions and their responses (1.2), there is a process
of partial agreement and case neutralization taking place when the focus
marker /-tu/ is attached to Tulluu in (31a). This is further demonstrat-
ed by the following structures.

(32) a. i.   išée-n hoolaa bit-t-e   'she bought a sheep'
             she-nom sheep buy-f-pf

     ii.   išee-tu hoolaa bit-∅-e   'it is she who bought a sheep'
             she-foc sheep buy-∅-pf

     b. i.   isáan-i hoolaa bit-an-i   'they bought a sheep'
             they-nom sheep buy-3pl-pf

     ii.   issan-tu hoolaa bit-∅-e   'it is they who bought a sheep'
             they-foc sheep buy-∅-pf

    A question which is likely to arise here concerns the reasons why such
neutralizations take place. The question is crucial in the sense that the
phenomenon is not apparent in the derivation of structures at the syntactic
levels. The reason might be related to the level at which focused struc-
tures are derived. As stated earlier on, such structures are derived at a
post-syntactic level. At the syntactic levels of D- and S-structures, sub-

ject NP's have to be identified as such by the agreement relation holding
between them and verbs. It is this relation which, in fact, licenses them
to occur in their positions. At the post-syntactic level, where focus is
assigned, that is, after they have been identified in the syntax by agree-
ment elements, the agreement elements may cease to appear since, at this
level, the identification of the subject NP's is taken over by the pragmat-
ic feature of focus. In other words, grammatical features seem to get sup-
pressed at the level where pragmatic features prevail.

5. Conclusion

In summing up, we have followed Williams [1977] in treating focus as a
property of discourse grammar. We have identified three types of focus and
also established the categories to which the feature is assigned. These in-
clude projections of all major lexical categories. The realization of the
feature has also been described. In NP's, it manifests itself as /-tu/
and as (´) in presentational and contrastive focus. In V(P)'s, it is
shown by the prefix /hin-/ and in PP's by the element /ḍa/ .

Structurally, focus is expressed in the form of cleft constructions.
All but verbals undergo this process. The difference between, say, a fo-
cused NP with /-tu/ and a similar NP which undergoes the process of cleft-
ing is that the former is limited to subject (wh-)NP's whereas the latter
is not. In both, the type of focus is contrastive.

It has also been observed that in cleft structures and in others in
which the subject NP is contrastively focused, indicated by the element
/-tu/ , there is a process of case and agreement neutralization taking
place. Verbals lose all features of agreement just as in the same way nom-
inals lose their case endings. This we have tried to explain in terms of
the levels at which syntactic and pragmatic features operate. It has been
suggested that at the discourse level of grammar, syntactic features get
suppressed and pragmatic features take off. In other words, constituents
which have been identified by syntactic (grammatical) features at the level
of sentence grammar get identified by pragmatic features at the level of
discourse grammar. Such neutralizations of grammatical features may indi-

cate the level of grammar a particular structure is in.

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