PRAGMATIC ROLES IN CENTRAL SOMALI NARRATIVE DISCOURSE[1]

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This paper compares the marking of pragmatic roles in Central
Somali oral narrative discourse and elicited question-answer
pairs to illustrate the claim that information structure must
be studied within the context of particular discourse genres.
The study of pragmatic roles in Central Somali is especially
interesting because clause-level focus is explicitly marked
through the particle yaa . The functions of this particle
in elicitation question-answer pairs and narrative discourse
are compared, and it is shown that elicitation data exhibit
only a few of the possible functions of yaa , viz. as a
marker of assertive and contrastive focus. In contrast, nar-
rative discourse provides examples of yaa as a marker of
both event-clause focus and discourse topic. This result is
discussed within the context of discourse coherence and is
shown to be not as surprising as it first appears. In addi-
tion, narrative focus constructions (defined as the most sa-
lient section of new information in a narrative text) are
shown to be formally well-defined and functionally important
in giving coherence to a narrative, although no counterpart
has been found in elicitation data. In conclusion, it is
noted that pragmatic roles should be studied in a broad range
of discourse genres in addition to elicited question-answer
data, since each genre may illustrate different functions of
the same constructions.

1. Introduction

By definition, pragmatic roles, e.g. focus and topic, must be studied with-
in a discourse context, since they mark the status of information with respect
to the preceding or following text. This necessity is acknowledged in descrip-
tive linguistics through the use of elicited question-answer pairs in which
the new information or the choice of topic in the answer is forced by the word-

ing of the question [Comrie 1981:57]. Even within generative grammar, with
its traditional emphasis on the sentence as the maximum syntactic unit of in-
terest, the marking of focus has been discussed in terms of question-answer
pairs, e.g. Jackendoff [1972:229ff]. Data of this type, however, exhibit only
a small range of the possible functions of pragmatic roles in a given language,
since many of these functions occur only within naturally occurring texts.

Some researchers, though, have discussed pragmatic roles within a larger
context. For example, Grimes [1975:112-113] distinguishes among three differ-
ent sets of information in discourse: "content" (the meaning structure—simi-
lar to the notion of coherence in other researchers' work), "cohesion" (which
includes the marking of old and new information), and "staging" (which ex-
presses the speaker's perspective). Grabe [1983] describes one of the major
functions of pragmatic roles as organizing the assertions within a coherent
discourse.[2] In this case, the information structure will directly relate to
the discourse topic (or theme). The following discussion shows this particu-
lar relation to be made explicit in Central Somali narrative, in which dis-
course topic is marked by the same particle as new information at the clause
level.

To this point, I have been using the terms "focus" and "topic" as if they
were well defined. This is, in fact, not the case. In general, focus refers
to the salience or prominence of information, while topic refers to the gener-
al framework of aboutness (see Grabe [1983] for an overview of the range of
terminology used with respect to pragmatic roles in discourse). Comrie [1981:
56-59] defines focus as the essential piece of new information in a clause
and topic as what the clause is about. He further distinguishes contrast
from these two notions, noting that both focus and topic can serve contrast-
ive functions.[3] For example, in the following pairs of sentences, *Bill* func-
tions as the focus of sentence (1b), but as the contrastive topic in sentence

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[2]It is also possible for a discourse to be noncoherent, in the sense that
it has no single discourse topic, and yet still have a well-defined informa-
tion structure.

[3]Chafe [1976] also distinguishes contrastiveness from new/old information
and from topic.

(2b).

(1) a. Did John go to the store?

    b. No, *Bill* went to the store.

(2) a. John went to the store.

    b. As for Bill, he went to the movie.

In this paper, I will maintain the three-way distinction of Comrie but will also distinguish between clause-level and discourse-level pragmatic roles as follows:

1. Aboutness:

    a) topic - what the clause is about;

    b) contrastive topic - what the clause is about, in explicit contrast to the topic of an earlier clause;

    c) discourse topic (or theme) - the framework of aboutness of the discourse as a whole or of an episode within a discourse.

2. Prominence:

    a) focus (assertion) - the essential new information in the clause;

    b) contrastive focus (counter-assertion) - information which the speaker substitutes for previously asserted information;

    c) discourse focus - the most salient section of new information in a discourse.

These six pragmatic roles are formally well-defined within, and important in giving coherence to, narrative discourse in Central Somali. Many of them can also be illustrated from elicited question-answer pairs, but it is not possible to elicit examples of either discourse topic or discourse focus. Rather, these constructions crucially depend on the larger framework of naturally occurring discourse. The following discussion will illustrate this point through a detailed analysis of the information structure of the oral narrative text "The woman and the thieves," although supplementary examples from other oral narratives are presented as well. All of the texts used in this paper[4]

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[4]I am using the term "narrative discourse" in this paper to refer only to uninterrupted monologue which depicts a chronological series of events, i.e. "stories" as opposed to dialogue narrative or personal narrative. The texts

were narrated by Madowbi Maalim, from Mandera, Kenya.[5]

2. Pragmatic Roles in Elicited Question/Answer Pairs

Saeed [1981] has recently described the overall grammatical system of Central Somali. I will provide details of the information system here, but otherwise the reader is referred to Saeed's paper. Throughout the following discussion, all phonetic symbols have their usual value, except for j , which represents the affricate [dž] ; D , J , and G , which are voiced implosive consonants; and the digraph sh , which is used for [š] (in conformity with the standard Somali orthography).

Standard informant elicitation sessions are crucial for the initial linguistic description of an unknown language. The use of question-answer pairs in such sessions provides considerable insight into the marking of pragmatic roles. One of the more noteworthy features of Central Somali grammar resulting from this type of analysis is the fact that every independent clause contains a focus marker, yaa . This particle functions to mark the most salient noun phrase in the clause, i.e. normally the constituent which is either asserted as new information or counter-asserted in order to contradict a preceding statement.[6]

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were narrated to Somalis present at the recording session (who were free to respond to the story telling), rather than to myself or to the tape recorder. The purpose of this methodology was to transfer the focus of the situation from the "collection" itself to the actual story-telling. The narratives recorded were all folk-tales well-known to the story-teller and were told smoothly without major hesitations or false starts. Texts of this type were chosen for analysis because they are known to have very clear structural characteristics. These characteristics evolve through repeated retellings, since oral folktales must respect memory limitations by conforming to an ideal "schema" (see Mandler and Johnson [1977], Grimes [1975:33-34], and de Beaugrande [1980:259]).

[5]Central Somali (also known as Rahaween) is closely related to Standard Somali, although the two are not mutually intelligible. It is spoken by approximately 12,000 people living in the northeast corner of Kenya, as well as by a larger population residing within Somalia. The two language assistants for this paper, Hasan Abdirahman and Mohamed Adan, were both from Mandera, Kenya.

[6]The following references contain descriptions of focus/topic in Standard Somali: Andrzejewski [1975], Gebert [1980], and Hetzron [1965].

(3) a. aay dilee gool   'who killed a she-lion?'
        who killed f.-lion

    b. lanke   yaa gool   dilee   'the man(!) killed a she-lion'
        man-the FOC f.-lion killed

(4) a. lanke   yaa gool   dilee   'the man(!) killed a she-lion'
        man-the FOC f.-lion killed

    b. may lanke   mas   aa dilee   'no, the man killed a snake(!)'
        no man-the snake FOC killed

As can be seen, yaa marks the immediately preceding constituent as the
item in focus, e.g. lanke in (3b) and mas in (4b). Example (4b) also il-
lustrates one of three possible contractions of an NP + yaa sequence, i.e.

(5) ...C   + yaa → ...Caa

(6) ...CV   + yaa → ...Cii

(7) ...CVV⎫ + yaa → ...CVV⎫ + waa
     #CV ⎭   #CV ⎭

    Another important marker of pragmatic role is word order permutations.
The unmarked word order in Central Somali is S̲OV, where S is the constituent
in focus. When the object is in focus, the expected word order is O̲VS. Thus,
in general the focused constituent is sentence-initial. Exceptions to this
generalization serve to mark the topic. That is, a topicalized constituent is
in sentence-initial position, preceding the focused constituent, and functions
to establish a framework of "aboutness" for the following predication.[7] For
example, in the story "The fox, the ticks and the elephant," the ticks slowly
suck the fox's blood until she dies (the fox formerly being the owner of the
goats), and then we are told that:

(8) erinkii   shillinaa Dahalli   'the goats, the ticks inherited'
     goats-the ticks-FOC inherited

Due to the O̲S̲V word order (object in sentence-initial position, preceding the
focused subject), this sentence has the force 'As for the goats, the *ticks* in-
herited them.' Thus, this construction marks a return to the goats as the top-

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   [7]See Ochs and Duranti [1979] for a discussion of similar constructions in
Italian.

ic, with the following comment describing what happened to them.

Finally, the conjunction +na must be discussed before moving on to the narrative discourse structures. There are three separate conjunctions in Central Somali: iiye which joins two noun phrases together, oo which joins two clauses together, and +na . This last conjunction also joins two clauses together, but it additionally functions to single out the constituent that it is attached to as a contrastive topic. For example, a section in the story "The man and the snake" discusses the probable intentions of the man and then switches to the snake with sentence (9):

(9) maskiina   sir   aa ngali   'and as for the snake, he de-
     snake-the-and cheating FOC entered into cided to cheat'

In this sentence, maskii 'the snake' is not old or presupposed information, although it is the topic (marked as such by its sentential position and the particle +na). That is, maskii establishes the framework of aboutness for this sentence, and in addition it contrasts with the topic of the immediately preceding sentence (the man). This latter fact is signalled by the suffix +na .

Given this background, we can proceed to the analysis of pragmatic roles in narrative discourse. However, I will return to the discussion of pragmatic roles in elicited data later in the paper.

3. The Functions of yaa in Narrative Discourse

The following sections will give a detailed analysis of the overall episodic structure of, and prominence within, the narrative text "The woman and the thieves." The full text of this story can be found in Appendix I, and all line references will be to this appendix.

Throughout a narrative discourse, clauses can be divided into the two categories "events"[8] and "nonevents" [Grimes 1975:35ff]. Events carry the story line of a narrative, while nonevents provide background or collateral information. In Central Somali, event and nonevent clauses are distinguished in two ways: (1) the verb is always in the past tense in event clauses, while non-

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[8]My use of "event-clause" here seems quite similar to Labov's [1972] use of the term "narrative-clause".

event clauses, e.g. lines 12 and 25, utilize either past or present tenses, and (2) the particle yaa never occurs in nonevent clauses but must occur in each event clause containing a noun phrase. Thus, a minimal event clause will consist of either a verb with no nominal constituent and therefore no focus marker, e.g. line 16, or a verb together with one or more noun phrases, one of which must be in focus (marked by yaa), e.g. lines 13, 14, 22, 23, etc. Already the function of yaa is seen to be more complex than suggested by the elicitation data, since it crucially distinguishes between event and nonevent clauses as well as marking focus within a clause.

In addition, yaa functions to mark episode boundaries within a narrative. For example, "The woman and the thieves" is divided into two major episodes, both delimited by the construction maddaas aa 'then yaa ' (lines 6 and 21, see Table 1). The first episode, starting in line 6, begins with the woman going back to her own village, then moves on to her meeting the thieves and the thieves' subsequent planning. Then in line 21, the second episode is begun when the thieves actually start to implement their plan, and this entire episode describes only the way in which they carry out the plan. The construction maddaas aa marks the beginning points of both episodes.

The initial boundaries of embedded episode units are marked by subordinate clause + yaa + event clause constructions. In "The woman and the thieves" (see Table 1 and the Appendix), the first example of this type is found in line 12, which begins the description of the woman's first meeting with the thieves (lines 12-16). The second example, in line 17, begins the description of the thieves' plotting and initial preparation (lines 17-20). The construction maddaas aa in line 21 initiates an embedded episode (lines 21-23) as well as the second major episode. This minor episode describes the first step in the execution of the thieves' plot. Finally, the subordinate clause-yaa construction in line 24 begins the last minor episode before the discourse focus, in which the thieves take the second step in executing their plan.

In these constructions there is no single nominal constituent given prominence by the yaa . Rather, the entire subordinate clause preceding the yaa is highlighted, and the construction as a whole functions to establish a new setting for the following episode. For example, the setting of episode 12-16

is the woman coming to the place where two thieves are sitting (line 12),
while the setting for episode 17-20 is the two thieves together and the woman
nearly out of sight (line 17). Thus, in this type of construction yaa func-
tions to mark a new discourse topic (or setting).

Some other examples of this type of construction follow. In "The fox, the
ticks and the elephant," the setting for the major story line is presented as:

(10)   shilin oo   meel Daraaran   yaa too ku roogsidoi
       ticks which place are together FOC one on let-him-stand

       '(when) the ticks are at a place where they are all together, yaa ,
       he (the elephant) stood on one of them'

This incident initiates all of the following action in the narrative. In "The
man who kept his promise," after a long introduction the main story line be-
gins:

(11)   ...iddile   hanka hoyidayan   yaa lamankii lan ku mid eh   yaa
       village-the to   they-come-home FOC men-the   man of one being FOC

       balaankii   ku   baihi
       promise-the from went-out

       '...as they are (every night) coming to sleep only at the village,
       yaa , one of the two men yaa broke his promise'

The following plot centers around the consequences which result from this bro-
ken promise. Finally, in "The boy who did not cheat," we are told that the
boy was sent to school, where he was learning various things, and then:

(12)   ...farte   Gorooshe baradi   yaa aawkii   Dimidi
       symbols-the writing he-learned FOC father-the died

       '...(when) he learned the symbols of writing, yaa , the father died'

This is the setting from which the boy sets out upon his subsequent adventures.
In all of these examples, the event described provides the setting for one of
the major episodes within the narrative.

Thus, the functions of the particle yaa in narrative discourse range
from marking assertive focus within clauses to marking discourse topic. In an
elicitation framework, this result would be unacceptable since focus and topic
are normally considered separate notions. But within the framework of dis-
course coherence, this result is perhaps not as surprising, for yaa can be

considered as consistently marking salient information in the discourse. On
the clause level, this consists of nominal constituents which provide new in-
formation in event clauses (since nonevent clauses provide background informa-
tion and therefore are not salient with respect to the overall discourse struc-
ture). On a higher discourse level, this consists of episode settings, which
provide salient information through establishing a *new* framework of aboutness
for the following discourse.

4. Narrative Discourse Prominence

This section will discuss several methods of marking prominence within a
narrative. Just as yaa functions to mark the most salient new information
in event clauses, there are grammatical devices which mark parts of a narra-
tive as more salient new information than other parts. These devices include
event chains, repetition, and collateral statements. Finally, it will be
shown that these devices often combine to mark the narrative focus, or most
prominent section,[9] of a narrative.

4.1. Event chains. I have described the form of event clauses above. Normal-
ly these clauses occur in a text mixed together with nonevent information (set-
ting, background, etc.). At certain points, however, the event line of a nar-
rative can be brought into prominence through an event chain, i.e. a chain of
event clauses (without intervening nonevent clauses), each of which contains a
minimum number of nominal constituents (as in lines 18-20). Longer chains are
more marked structures and therefore result in greater prominence. For exam-
ple, in "The fox, the ticks and the elephant," the ticks attacked the elephant
while he was sleeping, and then:

(18) kaheey,   ka taanDowidi lugaagii yaa Dulke   ka Dowi,
      he-woke-up, he-shook-self, legs-the FOC ground-the on he-beat,

      Degaagii yaa "geb geb geb" ku siiyi, "uuuuuu..." yaa erri,
      ears-the FOC   out gave,   FOC he said,

      (koraa fiiriyee   ogtaa)
       up FOC he-was-looking know it

      'He (the elephant) woke up, he shook himself, he beat his legs on the

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[9]This is perhaps similar to the climax in literary terms.

ground, he made his ears go "geb geb geb," he said "uuuu...," (he was
looking up, do you know it?).'

This sequence is the focus of the entire narrative, and it is marked as such
by length of the event chain.

   At other times, there may be little explicit marking of the participants
in an event chain. An example of this is in lines 36-44 of "The woman and the
thieves." Here, the agent switches from the man (36) to the woman (37), back
to the man (40), and back to the woman again (41), with no explicit marking of
any of the switches. It is possible to understand the participant orientation
through the verb morphology, but this is a marked construction in which all at-
tention is focused on the event line.

4.2. Repetition. It is also possible to bring one particular event in the
event line into prominence through repetition. For instance, in "The man who
kept his promise," the man hid inside a hyena hole, and then:

(14) lama waraabii   ha gelen. lamadii waraaba yaa ha gelen.
      two hyenas-FOC entered.   two-the hyenas FOC entered

      'Two hyenas entered. The two hyenas entered.'

In this case, the repeated clause is not even part of an event chain, but it
is marked through repetition as a prominent event in the narrative (the man
learned from the hyenas a secret which later helped him to become successful).
A second example, from "The man and the snake," comes after a long introduc-
tion describing the good relationship which a man and a snake had established:

(15) maskii   iiye ariirkii lankii Dali   iiye maskii   yaa isgifen.
      snake-the and boy-the man-the birthed and snake-the FOC fought.

      wal isgifen.
      they fought each other.

      'the snake and the boy who the man gave birth to, (and the snake),
      yaa , fought each other. They fought each other.'

Again, these clauses are not part of an event chain. Rather, in both of these
examples, the event is focused upon through repetition because it has a cru-
cial relation to later events in the narrative.

4.3. Collateral statements/rhetorical questions. Collateral statements also

function to focus on a particular event clause in the narrative. Grimes
[1975:64-70] classifies all instances of telling what did *not* happen as col-
lateral information. Collateral clauses are important in Central Somali nar-
rative in that they bring into prominence the immediately following clause,
which tells what *did* happen. For instance, line 19 notes that "they [the
thieves] did not follow," but rather they passed a different way. Thus, the
listener's attention is focused on the fact that the thieves circled around
the woman by the explicit collateral statement that they did not follow her.

   Rhetorical questions are a special case of collateral statements [Grimes
1975:68]. In Central Somali narrative, they often seem to bring a whole se-
quence of events into prominence, rather than one particular event clause.
For instance, in "The man who kept his promise," we are told that a second
man, who was dishonest, also went into the hyena hole, that he fought with the
hyenas in the hole, and then:

(16) lankow iiye lama waraaba God Datiis eh,   maay taawiiyaasa
      man-one and two hyenas hole inside being, what do-you-think

      'One man and two hyenas inside a hole, what do you think (will happen)?'

Then we are told that the man was mutilated by the hyenas. In this way, the
event describing the final outcome of this character is emphasized.

   There is a special type of rhetorical question used in Central Somali nar-
ratives, ogtaa 'do you know it?!', which has a separate function. It is
used mainly to raise background information, i.e. explanations or comments
about what has happened, to prominence. For instance, in line 25, when the
narrator wants to emphasize that the two thieves are the ones that were pre-
viously introduced and that they know each other, he uses ogtaa . In other
cases, this construction can mark background information which is a type of
foreshadowing, i.e. a reference to new information in an event clause before
it happens. For instance, in "The man and the snake," a boy was about to go
down into a well when the narrator tells us that:

(17) malaksheeyaa ha galee   ogtaa
      angel-his-FOC is-entering, know it

      'His angel of death is entering, do you know it?!'
      (i.e. the boy is about to die)

Then later, when the boy's father is trying to negotiate with the snake, we
are told that:

(18)   maskiina   siraa   ngali   ogtaa
       snake-the-and cheating-FOC entered, know it

       'and as for the snake, he decided to cheat; do you know it?!'

That is, we are to note beforehand that the snake did not intend to honor any
agreement.

4.4. Narrative focus constructions. In Central Somali narrative discourse,
the discourse focus (or climax) is marked as the section which combines the
greatest number of prominence constructions, and therefore it might be defined
as the point of greatest prominence (or focus) in the narrative. I will use
the term "narrative focus" to refer to the discourse focus of any episode, and
"climax" to refer to the most marked discourse focus in a narrative.

     It seems proper to speak of both well-defined climaxes and more loosely de-
fined climaxes. For instance, the event chain previously discussed in "The
fox, the ticks, and the elephant" (see section 4.1) is an example of a moder-
ately well-defined climax. It utilizes only the feature of longest event
chain. But since it is the most marked sequence in the discourse, it consti-
tutes the climax.

     At other times a narrative will have a narrative focus for each episode in
the story, with no overall climax. As shown earlier, episodes are demarcated
through the use of either subordinate clause-yaa constructions, or maddaas
aa constructions. For instance, "The man who kept his promise" has two nar-
rative focuses, which correspond to the two episodes. The first episode be-
gins with the subordinate clause-yaa construction describing how one man broke
his promise (discussed in section 3). We are then told how (as a result of
this broken promise) the honest man ended up in a hyena hole, where he learned
from the hyenas how to cure a certain rich man who had been sick for many
years; and subsequently how he did in fact cure that rich man and win a great
reward. This episode ends with the following discourse focus construction:

(19)   shinniidii yaa la haa gooyi, Gurbigii   yaa la gowriyi,
       bees-the   FOC were cut,   m. camel-the FOC was slaughtered,

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Iankii  meelli    yaa Iiinke Daawi,     fiyawaadi.
man-the place-the FOC was prayed for at, he became well.
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> 'the bee hive was cut, the camel was slaughtered, the man was prayed
> for at that place, (and) he became well.'

This sequence is marked as a narrative focus construction through the feature
of longest event chain.

The second episode begins with the following subordinate clause-yaa con-
struction:

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(20)  hoobe ... gaalshee   hortiis ko odini,    gebertun mankii
      when       camels-his in front were fenced, girl-this house-the

      nki jerti,        walaagun baatirke eh,   yaa, kii kala koiyi.
      was there inside, this one beautiful being, FOC, the other came.
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> 'When (the honest man was given 100 camels), his camels were fenced in
> front of his house, this girl was in the house for him, (and she) was
> very beautiful, yaa , the other one (i.e. the dishonest man) came.'

In this episode, then, the dishonest man learns how the first man became suc-
cessful, and subsequently he also goes to the hyena hole in the hope of over-
hearing an equally valuable secret, whereupon he is killed by the hyenas.
This episode ends with the following focus construction:

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(21)  meellii    yaa liki harbiyi.    Iankow  iiye Iama waraaba God  Datiis
      place-the FOC was fought at.  man-one and  two  hyenas  hole inside

      eh,    maay taawiiyaasa?   Iankii  meellii   yaa liki JeJabsadi.
      being, what do you think? man-the place-the FOC was broken to pieces

      Iankii  meellii   yaa liki JeJabsadi.
      man-the place-the FOC was broken to pieces
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> 'The place was fought at by them. One man and two hyenas inside a hole,
> what do you think will happen? The man was mutilated at that place.
> The man was mutilated at that place!'

The features of an event chain, a rhetorical question, and repetition are com-
bined in this narrative focus.

It can be noted that the narrative focus constructions in both of these
episodes occur in episode-final position. In fact, these constructions gener-
ally occur in the final position of the discourse unit they are serving as fo-
cus for, i.e. either an episode or entire narrative.

Finally, unlike most Central Somali narratives, there is no overall climax or point of focus in "The man who kept his promise." Rather, each of the two episodes has a discourse focus. In narratives of this type, the episodes are simply concatenated, i.e. they are not part of a larger structure which has its own focus. Thus, after the second episode in this story we are merely given an explanation and a moral concerning what happened. There are no fur- ther events to serve as a focus for the entire narrative.

In contrast, "The woman and the thieves" consists of two episodes, each of which contains a narrative focus construction, plus a discourse-final climax, which serves as the focus for the entire narrative. The overall structure of this text is outlined in Table 1.

The narrative focus of the first episode occurs when the one thief actual- ly makes all of the necessary preparations for their plan (in lines 18-20). This focus is marked by an event chain and a collateral statement (line 19). The narrative focus of the second episode (lines 27-33) occurs when the second thief actually takes the sheep. It combines a collateral statement (line 27) and repetition (lines 28 and 29) with a well-developed event chain.

These narrative focus constructions occur episode-finally. The climax in lines 36-44 also occurs unit-finally, although the unit in this case is the en- tire narrative rather than an episode. This climax is the most marked focus construction in the entire discourse, describing the manner in which the first thief completes the execution of the plan. It combines the features of a long event chain, repetition (41-42, 43-44), and a rhetorical question (line 39).

There is one further focus marker in this construction: participant re- orientation. Grimes [1975:262-271] discusses the permutations which can occur between the different case roles assigned to the participants in a narrative. He ranks the case roles on a scale of relative involvement in the action and claims that whenever a permutation moves a participant over several case roles, "...there is a surprise, an interruption, or a point where things go wrong" [1975:266]. The shifts from lines 36 to 37, 38 to 40, and 40 to 41 are all of this type. In each of these permutations, a participant who is totally re- moved from the action is shifted to the agent case role, thus bringing this entire sequence into even greater prominence.

Table 1. Overall discourse structure of the narrative "The woman and the
          thieves," showing the episode and paragraph divisions, the location
          of the subordinate clause-yaa discourse topic constructions, and
          the marking of discourse focus and climax

   Lines 1-5   Initial setting

   Line 6   Episode 1: maddaas aa

                   Line 6   Paragraph 1: maddaas aa
                   Line 12   Paragraph 2: Subordinate clause-yaa
                   Line 17   Paragraph 3: Subordinate clause-yaa

                   Lines 18-20 Discourse focus
                               construction: Event chain
                                              Collateral statement

   Line 21   Episode 2: maddaas aa

                   Line 21   Paragraph 4: maddaas aa
                   Line 24   Paragraph 5: Subordinate clause-yaa

                   Lines 27-33 Discourse focus
                               construction: Event chain
                                              Collateral statement
                                              Repetition

   Lines 36-44 Climax: Most marked event chain
                         Repetition
                         Rhetorical question
                         Participant reorientation

   Lines 45-47 Moral

   In summary, this narrative has provided an example of a discourse which is
structured as a series of episodes embedded in a narrative with its own dis-
course focus. Conversely, "The man who kept his promise" illustrates a narra-
tive which consists of a mere concatenation of episodes, with no embedding.
There are probably other ways in which a Central Somali narrative can be struc-
tured. It seems that in all of them, however, the same prominence markers are
employed, and combine together to provide discourse focus constructions.

5. Comparison of Pragmatic Roles in Elicitation Data and Narrative Discourse
   It is useful at this point to summarize the ways in which pragmatic roles
are marked syntactically in Central Somali narrative discourse. Section 2 de-
scribed the functions of yaa , word order, and +na in marking the corre-
sponding pragmatic roles of focus (new information and counterassertion), top-

Figure 1:   Comparison of surface form-pragmatic role pairs in
            question-response elicitation and narrative discourse

A.   Question-response elicitation

```
                                              word
         yaa                      +na         order      SURFACE
                                                         CONSTRUCTION

--------/-----\---------------------|-----------|--------------------
                                                         PRAGMATIC
      /         \                    |           |        ROLE
   Focus      Contrastive      Contrastive    topic     ROLE
 (newness or     focus           topic
 assertion)   (or counter-
              assertion)
```

B.   Narrative discourse

```
         event    col-
 no      chain    lateral
 surface & repe-  state-                        word
 marker  tition   ments     yaa      +na        order      SURFACE
                                                           CONSTRUCTION

-|--------|--------|-----/--\---------|----------|------------------
 |        |        |    /    \        |          |          PRAGMATIC
Non-     Dis-    Contras- Event Dis-  Contras-  Sen-        ROLE
event   course   tive (or      course tive      tential
                 counter-
                 assertion)

          FOCUS                        TOPIC
```
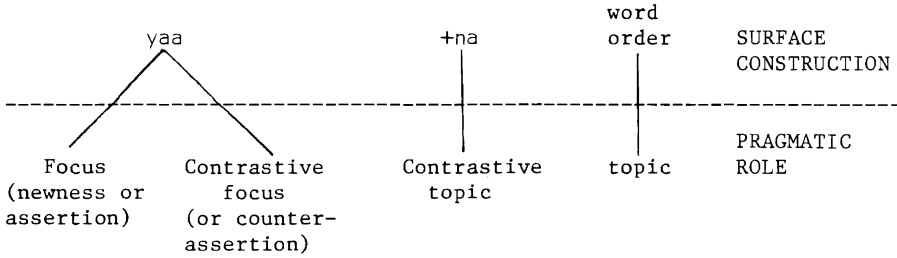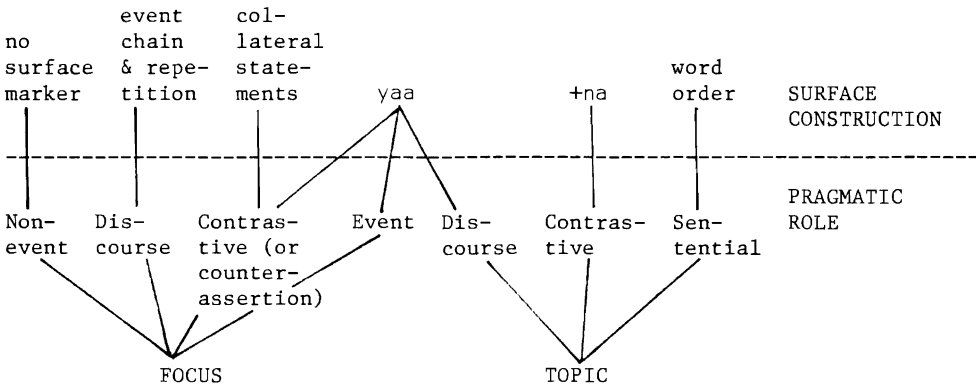
ic, and contrastive topic. These generalizations, however, were shown to hold only for a question-response elicitation framework. Pragmatic roles are marked quite differently in narrative discourse (see Figure 1).

The function of yaa is particularly noteworthy. It continues to mark the most salient new information in the clause, with the restriction that it occurs only in event clauses (and is in fact one of the main markers distinguishing between event and nonevent clauses). In addition, subordinate clause-yaa-event clause constructions function as boundary markers for episodes within a narrative. In this position, these constructions establish a setting, or framework of aboutness, for the following episode. Thus yaa , which appears to be strictly a marker of focus in elicitation data, functions as a topic-marker in narrative discourse.

The other noteworthy difference is the existence of discourse focus constructions. By definition, these constructions could not be illustrated in question-response elicitation data, yet they have been shown to be formally well-defined and quite important in providing coherence to narrative discourses.

6. Conclusion

The elicitation method of data collection and analysis has a crucial place in both the initial identification and later analysis of syntactic constructions in previously unstudied languages. With respect to the analysis of pragmatic roles, which is by definition a discourse notion, elicitation data are still important in identifying the relevant constructions and indicating their functions. However, results obtained in an elicitation framework may not have a general applicability. I have shown in this paper that results obtained from elicitation data are not representative of pragmatic roles in naturally occurring narrative discourse. Similarly, it is possible, perhaps likely, that the pragmatic roles identified in Central Somali narrative discourse will not be valid for other genres in the same language. Future research should document pragmatic roles in a broad range of discourse genres in order to provide a fuller picture of their function in Central Somali.

APPENDIX

"The Woman and the Thieves"

Line #	Nonevent	Event

1.
                               inti   ku hor maay Diideey
                               the time before what happened (was)

                               inni islaanto iddiye   roogdi
                               that woman-one village-her stayed at

2.
                               hartishe   maay ke terrey
                               husband-her what to she said (was)

  ["iddi   reer aawkey   yaa mbahee"]
    village-the people father-my FOC to-I-go

3.   marki ruusGe   siiyi yaa
       when   permission he gave FOC

                               bati
                               she went

4.   haddii bati
       when   whe went

                               maay inseeteey   iddi
                               where to-she got (was) village-the

                               reer   aawshe
                               family father-her

5.   marki iddi   aawshe
       when   village-the father-her

       hoobe seeti
       when   she got there

                             iddi   yaa roogdi   mudde
                             village-the FOC she stayed a period (of)

                             lama bilood ama sedde bilood Don
                             two   months or   three months altogether

6.   maddaas aa le erri
       then   FOC -A was said

  ["maddun wal ki sigootiyee
   now   -A IN you will be escorted.

  iddaa   ngalbidaasa "]
  village-your to-you will be taken home.

7.   ha bati
                           B   she went

8.   maddun   iddiye   waa haan nagati
                           time-this village-her FOC B-to-returned

9.   maay lahaa siiyeey   eleenko iiye
                           what -A/B given   (was) ram-one and

                           teneg Daise eh
                           tin   ghee being

10.   wal ha ka sigootiyi
                           -A B IN she was escorted

11.   marki sii   haan dareeraasi   jid aa
        while like that B   she was walking, road FOC

        haa haitey   sii   haan dareeraasi
        B   she had, like that B   she was walking

12.   lama lan tuugo   oo talaadayan   meel   faDiyan yaa
        two men thieves who are plotting (and) a place sitting FOC

                           nkoiti
                           to-she came

13.   nimankii yaa salaanti
                           men-the   FOC she greeted

14.   id   aa warsiti
                           village FOC she asked about

15. ["arladun   see li nki jera"   yaa terri
     land-this how -A in are there? FOC she said

    "meel fulan wal ki jera"
     place certain -A at there are.

    "ooke   ki hooyidi koree" "haa"]
     tonight to-go home can-I? yes.

16.   mooddi
                           she passed

17.   hoobe mooddi   islaantiba bartiye   maaddi   yaa
        when she passed woman-the image-her almost gone FOC

                           lamadii lamba erren
                           two-the men   said

    ["wariya hibilow" "hoo"   "islaantun hoolashe   wedita
     hey you.   yeah.   woman-this animal-her leading,

     sife iyeena wal nki   diirna adina hoola   ku ke Da?ada
     way she-& -A NEG/IN reached you-& property M IN you rob,

     weele kortee" "haa weele kora" "see weelaasa" "ku hor
     do   can-you? yes do   I can.   how you do it?   in front

```
koiyee islaante garrunaa madegii Datiisaa   Dowee"  erri
I come woman-the cane  FOC head-the its middle I hit.  said

kow "tan iyeede eh   ma  jertoo"    erri     "sife ya?ani
one   this one     being NEG there is.  he said   way  that is

iyeena kii-n-ke   kasna hoolana    unu kuke Gaadana ani
she-&  you-NEG-IN knows property-& we  M IN take     I

weelee"   waa erri    "see weelaasoow"  "hiinDoole iske
will do.  FOC he said  how you do it?     blind      R to-

weelee"  waa erri    "ul  Deeraa   Gaadadee     jidke
I make.  FOC he said  stick long-FOC I will take, road-the

Datiisaa   an faDeedee adina oo hor   koy"   yaa erri]
middle-FOC I  will sit you-& in front come.  FOC he said
```

18.   talaaden   ogtaa
         they planned, know it!

19.   islaantiba ma dabakanna
         woman-the NEG they follow-&

                        inte Gaadenna
                        here they took-&

                        hor   goobenna
                        in front they circled-&

                        kow aa jidke   Datiis nfaDeedi
                        one FOC road-the middle in-he sat

20.   ullo   Deer yaa Gaadadi
                        stick-one long FOC he took

21.   maddaas aa
         then   FOC

                        erri   lanke
                        he said man-the

  ["shangarte weeraasa eeyu" "anuwu"   "adina" "ana hibilee hibileeyuu
    sound-the calling who?   it's me. you-&?   I   so and so

    so?oti   ahaa iddeey   yaa njeedi" "anina lan hinDoole eh ahaa
    traveller I am village-my FOC to-going. I-&   man blind   I am,

    id   geedde eh ku Dumeey   islaanle   ahaa ini i kalmeeto
    village shifting M I am lost, Muslim-only I am, that me you help

    meel islaan faDeeye   i jeeto   fadee" "walaalow   ana waana
    place Muslim are settled me to reach I want. brother-oh I   also

    ulusaa   tenegona wedeey   neef idi enna wedee
    am heavy, tin-one-& I'm carrying, animal sheep also I'm leading,
```

```
     see ke weelee"   "neefkii    ida eh ani kiinjiidee"       waa erri
     how do I do it?   animal-the sheep  I   for you will lead. FOC he said

     "hinDoo aa  beellina     maayyee galnya hoogaa      ku lahaa
      eyes   FOC I have lost-& maybe    hands  strength-FOC in I have.

     ada ulle      inGoboi"     "hayeh"]
     you stick-the me-for-grab.   OK.
```

22.
```
                      neefkii    yaa nDiibti
                      animal-the FOC to-she handed
```

23.
```
                      ullii     yaa nGobati
                      stick-the FOC of-she took hold
```

24.
```
     waali la dareeroob dareeroob      iridii yaa Data
     as they were walking and walking, sun-the FOC middle

     nke    gaabati     maana nDiina          yaa
     for-at became short, NEG-& did it set (yet), FOC

                      lankii  kala  ku   hor   koiyi
                      man-the other from front came
```

25. ["nebede" "nebed allaay"]
    peace.   peace (of) God.
```
     iskasaayana           ogtaa     lamade lan
     R-they are knowing, know it!, two-the men

     lakiin iyeede ma  kasaasa
     but     she   NEG is knowing
```

26.
```
                      maay terreey
                      what she said (was)
```
    ["aaboow   meelotun   meel ooke   unne ke hoiyenna
     father-oh places-these place tonight we   at spend the night
```
     ama jerti oo    id eh   islaan meel  ku Dowya" "haa" "intee"
     is  there which village Muslim place to close?  yes.   where?
```
   "meel fulaan aa la faDiyi"   yaa erri]
   place certain FOC -A they are settled. FOC he said
```
       lamada  lanna is ogyina ogaw
       two-the men-& R  know,  know it!,

       iridina   Diidi maddun
       sun-the-& fell  now
```

27.
```
     kun      aleenkii hadegge  ma  goiynee
     this one ram-the  rope-the NEG cut
```

28.
```
                      siibi
                      he removed it
```

29.
```
                      madasheey aa  ku siibi
                      head-his  FOC M  he removed (from the rope)
```

30.   erretaa   saaradeey
                                 back-the-FOC he put it on

31.   la   baihi
                                 with (it) he went

32. ["hayeh ni kihee   aay"]
    ok,   us let's make go, mother

33.   israihen
                                 R they went

34.   sidi   ndareereyen ndareereyen   maay erreey
       like that they were walking and walking, what he said was

   ["abbay   galanteey fududdaa eleenkii inni siibidi   yaa
    elder sister hand-my   is light ram-the that it escaped FOC

    taawiyee fiiri" yaa erri]
    I think, look! FOC he said

35.   hoobe riid   ha deeshi   eleenkii maleh
         when behind she looked, ram-the there was not

   ["eleenkii meellun Dowaa   ha deereey   geedun   reedsheey
    ram-the   place-this close-FOC B he reached, tree-this behind

    inte eh ha deereey   fiiri" yaa erri   "tenegona wededee"
    there B he reached, look!   FOC he said tin-a-& I'm carrying.

    "haa   tenegge inti Dig" yaa erri   "ani hayee   sheen teneg
     yes, tin-the here put. FOC he said I   will have it, bring tin,

    galanteey ha ka siin" yaa erri]
    hand-my   B in put.   FOC he said

36.   teneggii yaa kor   faDeedi
                                 tin-the FOC on top he sat

37.   ha roorteey
                                 B she ran

38.   eleenkii yaa ha weeddidi
                                 ram-the FOC B she looked for

39.   eleen aman Deer erretii le saaradi
       a ram time long back-the -A kept on,

       intee le ke aragee
       where -A at will be seen?

40.   baihi
                                 he went

41.   ha nagateey
                                 B she came

42. teneggii me yaalaa
    tin-the   NEG is there

43.   ha nagateey
                             B   she came

44.   lankii hanDoolage haayi iiye teneggii me yaalan
         man-the blind   he was and tin-the NEG are there

45. [maay terreey   "insheffi?adoi   shar ma ke daaraaso"]
    what she said was   do not help people, evil NEG at will touch.

46.   ya?ani lankun   hoo iyee inin kaalmeena
         that is, man-this if she had not helped,

         shar ma aragfanne ogtaa
         evil NEG see-would, know it!

47.   taas   aa saas   hatoi
         that one FOC like that let it be

List of Abbreviations:

     -A agentless passive   IN   instrumental
      B movement towards the   NEG   negative
         speaker   QUES question
      M movement away from the   R   reciprocal action
         speaker

        English translation of "The Woman and the Thieves"

1. Long ago there was a woman, and she was living at her own village. 2.
(One day) she said to her husband, "I will go to visit my father's family."
3. So when he had given her permission, she went. 4. When she went, even-
tually she arrived at her father's village. 5. When she got there, she
stayed for a period of two or three months. 6. *Then*, someone said, "You will
be sent home now." 7. So she went back. 8. At this time, she went back to
her own village. 9. What she was given was a ram and a tin of ghee. 10.
She was escorted back home with these things [i.e. they were her going-away
presents]. 11. While she was walking (she was taking a road back), [and]
while she was walking, 12. she came to two men who were thieves, who were
sitting at a place and plotting together. 13. She greeted the men. 14. She
asked about [her] village. 15. "How are the people settled in this area?"

she asked. "They are at a certain place." "Can I get home tonight?" "Yes."
16. She passed by them. 17. When she had gone, so that her image was almost
out of sight, the two men said to each other, "Hey you." "Yeah." "This woman
who is leading her animal, do you know any way you can steal her belongings
without harming her?" "Yes, I can do it." "How will you do it?" "I will come
from in front of the woman and will club her over the head" said the one.
"That method is not acceptable" said (the other one). "I will show you a way
with which I will steal her property while she doesn't even know who I am" he
said. "How will you do that?" "I will make myself to be blind" he said. "I
will take a long stick and I'll sit in the middle of the road; and you will
(then) come from in front" he said. 18. So they planned—do you know it?!
19. They did *not* follow the woman. Rather they took another route, and cir-
cled around in front of her, and the one sat in the middle of the road. 20.
He had taken a long stick. 21. *Then* the man said, "Who is making that sound?"
"Me." "And who are you?" "I am so and so, a traveller going to my own village."
"And I am a blind man, and am lost because my village has shifted away. I am
a Muslim. What I want is for you to help me get to a place where Muslims are
settled." "But brother, I am also burdened, I am carrying a tin and leading a
sheep, so what will I do?" "The sheep I will lead for you" he said. "I may
have lost my eyes, but my arms are still strong. You grab this stick for me."
"ok." 22. She gave the animal to him. 23. She took hold of the stick. 24.
As they walked on and on, and the sun was almost to go down (but it had not set
yet), the other man came from in front of them. 25. "Peace." "God's peace."
The two men know each other, do you know it?! But she is not aware. 26. She
said "Oh father, is there a place around here where we can sleep tonight,
which is a Muslim village and nearby." "Yes." "Where?" "They have settled at
such and such a place" he said. And the two men are knowing each other (know
it!), and the sun fell right then. 27. This one (thief) did not cut the
ram's rope. 28. Rather he removed it. 29. He   removed the ram's
head out from [the rope]. 30. He put it [the ram] on his back.
31. He went with it. 32. "Ok, let's go mother." 33. So they went together.
34. After they had been walking and walking, what he said was, "Elder sister,
my hand has become light, I think that the ram has slipped out of the rope.

Look!" he said. 35. When she looked behind, there was no ram. "The ram
has reached to only that close place, just behind that tree. Go look!" he
said. "But I am carrying this tin." "Oh yes, put the tin here" he said.
"Bring it, I will keep it by putting my hand on it" he said. 36. So he sat
on top of the tin. 37. She ran back. 38. She looked for the ram. 39. A
ram which has been carried on somebody's back for a long time, how can it be
found? 40. He went. 41. She came back. 42. The tin is not there. 43.
She came back. 44. The blind man and the tin are not there. 45. She said,
"If you do not help people, no harm will come to you." 46. That is, if she
had not helped this man, she would not have been tricked, do you know it?!
47. That one [i.e. this story] let it be like that.

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