Copulative and Narrative Patterns in Gur Focus Constructions

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1   Characteristic of *ex-situ* focus constructions

- focalization of term, verb and predication is possible in canonical position (+/- morphologically marked) (cf. column 1 and 2)
- subject focus or sentence focus on the other hand are always morphosyntactically encoded (cf. column 3)
- any non-subject constituent including nominalized verb can also be focalized *ex-situ* (cf. column 4)

1. Focus system in affirmation

Scope of focus	1. complement / complex VP	2. verb / predication		3. subject / sentence	4. non-subject
Structure	SV**x**O	SV(O)**x**	SV**x**	SV**x**(O) Konni S**x**V(O) others	OS(**x**)V Konni O**x**SV others
Buli Konni Dagbani	*ká* *-wÁ, -Á[1]* *lá*	*ká-mā* *mìŋ* *mì*	*-y(a)* *-yÁ* *-ya*	*lē* *-nÀ* *N*	*tè* *(di)[2]* *kà*
	pure focus constructions			-/+ topical status of sentence-initial constituent	
	absolute pattern			*copulative pattern narrative pattern*	

Focus as pragmatic and not necessarily marked notion:

   "The focal information in a linguistic expression is that information which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by S[peaker, A.S.] to be most essential for A[ddressee, A.S.] to integrate into his pragmatic information" (Dik 1997: 326)

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[1]   aspectually differenciated: *-wÁ* in the perfective, *-Á* in the imperfective
[2]   only after lexical subject

Assertive and contrastive focus subtypes apply to:

(a) term focus, (b) verb focus: verb's lexical meaning, (c) predication focus: predication operators (including verum / auxiliary focus) (cf. Hyman & Watters 1984; Güldemann 2003)

2   The absolute pattern (transitive example)

- WH-diagnostics: focus on object (*What has she eaten?*) or on VP including a postverbal complement (*What has she done?*).

What has the woman eaten?
She has eaten [beans]$_F$.

2. Buli:	**ò**	**ŋòb**	**kà**	**túé.**
	CL	eat	FM	beans

3. Konni:	**ù**	**ŋòbì-wá**		**túò.**
	CL	eat-PF:TR		beans

4. Dagbani:	**ò**	**dì-lá**		**túyà.**
	CL	eat-FM		beans

Buli:	S	V	*KA*	F
Konni:	S	V-*WA*		F
Dagbani:	S	V-*LA*		F

The verb shows tonal agreement with the discourse role of the subject in indicative (perfective) environments.

3   The copulative pattern

- WH-diagnostics: focus on subject (*Who has eaten (something)?*) or on sentence (*What has happened? What's the matter?*)

3.1 Structural features

Who has eaten the beans?
[Mary]$_F$ has eaten them.

5. Buli: **(ká) márὲ àlē ŋɔ̀bī.** ***ŋɔ̀b**
   (FM) Mary LE eat

6. Konni: **márὲ ŋɔ́bí-nà hà.**
   Mary eat-NA CL

7. Dagbani: **márὲ ń-dí-lì.**
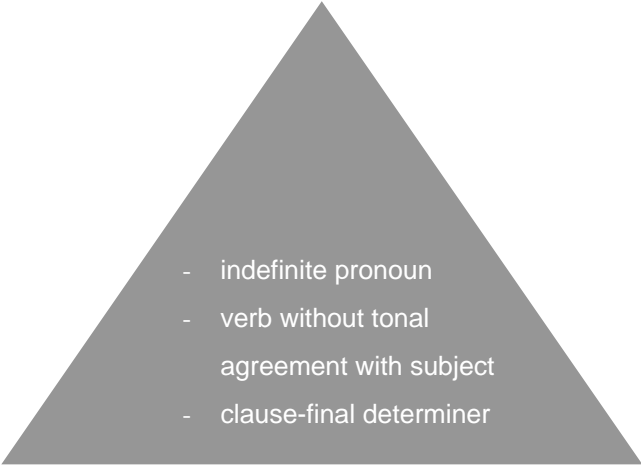   Mary N-eat-CL

Buli: F *LE* verb$_{inf}$
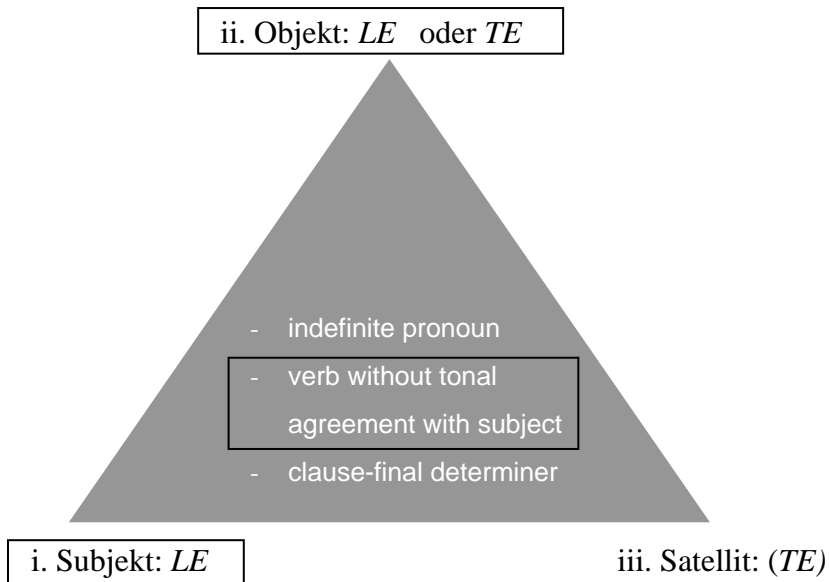
Konni: F verb$_{inf}$-*NA*

Dagbani: F *N* verb$_{inf}$

3.2 Comparison with relative clause

- structural features of relative clauses with restrictive reading shared throughout the **language sample**:

- indefinite pronoun
- verb without tonal agreement with subject
- clause-final determiner

- restrictive relative clauses in **Buli**:

ii. Objekt: *LE*   oder *TE*

- indefinite pronoun
- verb without tonal
  agreement with subject
- clause-final determiner

i. Subjekt: *LE*   iii. Satellit: (*TE)*

8a. **REL**   **núrú-bāā   lē chèŋ lā ...**
person-CL:IND LE go   DET
The people which have left, ...

8b. **F**   **núrúmá   lē chè̄ŋ.**
person.DEF LE go
The [people]_F have left.

- restrictive relative clauses in **Konni**:

9a. **REL**   **bʊ̀à-díéké   dì nígí-nà fʊ̀   wà ...**
child-IND:CL DI hit-NA   2sg DET
The child that has hit you, ...

9b. **F**   **m̀ bʊ̀àwá   yʊ́ágí-nà.**
1sg child.DEF bec.sick-NA
My [child]_F is sick.

- restrictive relative clauses in **Dagbani**:

10a. **REL   á-n   !ŋmé dó-só   máá ...**
            2sg-NI   hit   man-IND:CL   DET
            The man whom you have hit, ...

10b. **F   dóó máà ń-dúɣí-lì.**
            man DEF N-cook-CL
            The [man]F has cooked them.

Only part of the relative clause features are shared by SF (and NSF): use of a subordinating morpheme close to the verb and occurrence of an infinite verb form without tonal subject agreement.
→   SF construction contains a hypotactic predicate which conveys background information as a non- restrictive relative clause

4   The narrative pattern

-   WH-diagnostics: focus on sentence-initial non-subject constituent
-   The *ex-situ* focalization is however in most cases not just triggered by a simple WH-question, but requires certain ongoing debate, before the sentence-initial non-subject constituent is chosen as topic to be commented on.

4.1 Structural features

11. Buli: **(ká) john tè mī   fɔ̀b.   *fɔ̀bī**
            (FM) John TE 1sg:I   hit
            I have hit [John]F/T.

12a. Konni: túò,   ʊ́   ŋɔ̀bì.
              beans   CL:H   eat
              She has eaten [beans]$_{F/T}$.

12b.   **wà, ǹ   hɔ̀gòwá dí gà.**
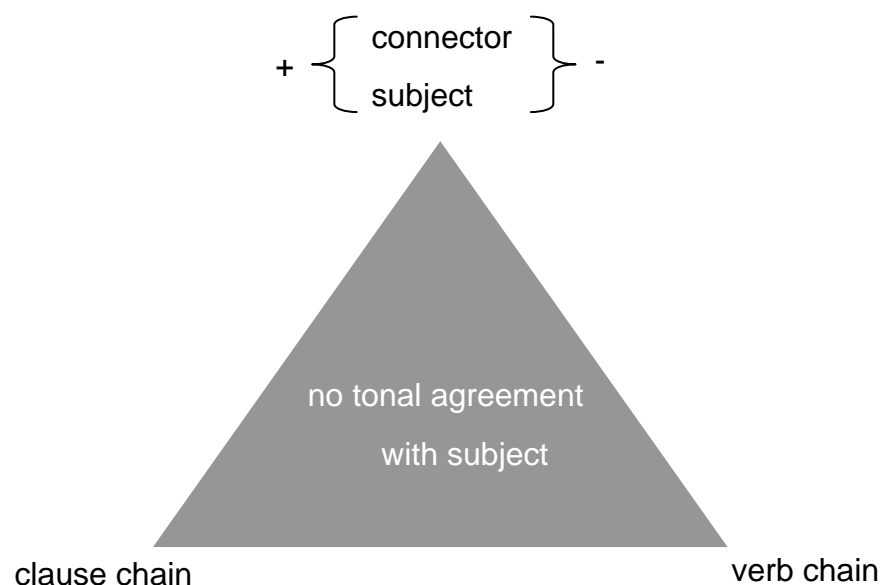   Wa   1sg   wife.DEF DI   geh
              My wife has gone to [Wa]$_{F/T}$.

13. Dagbani: **túyá kó-!ó   dì.**
              beans KA-CL   eat
              She has eaten [beans]$_{F/T}$.

Buli: T/F   *TE*   S   Verb$_{ntr}$
Konni: T/F $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} S_{Pron:H} \\ S_{Nom}\ DI \end{array} \right\}$ Verb$_{ntr}$
Dagbani: T/F   *KA*   S   Verb$_{ntr}$

4.2 Comparison with narrative clause

- available structures for the expression of sequential events in indicative:

- sequential clauses in narration in **Buli**:

14a.   A woman had three children,

NAR   **tè wà yāā tòm bí-kpāgní ...**

            TE CL then send child-head.DEF

            and she sent the eldest child ...

14b.   ... the youngest child brought the tomatoes home,

NAR   **tè   wà dìg.**

            TE   CL   cook

            and she (mother) cooked them.

- sequential clauses in narration in **Konni**:

15a.   There were a woman and her three children,

NAR   **ú   tòŋ jà-kòòrí ...**

            CL:H send thing-eldest.DEF

            and she sent the eldest child ...

15b.   to go and buy tomatoes for her to cook soup

NAR   **bòàwá   dí nàgì síé-gáàŋ ...**

            child.DEF DI follow road-?different

            and the child took a different road ...

- sequential clauses in narration in **Dagbani**:

16a.   A woman was standing with her three children,

NAR   **kà ò tɔ́m bí-kpíám ...**

            KA CL send   child-big

            and she sent the eldest child ...

16b.   ... the youngest child brought the tomatoes to the mother,

NAR   kà ó má !déé kà níŋ sùhù-píèlì.

KA CL mother take   KA   do   heart-wide

and his mother took them and was happy.

There is complete structural identity between the "non-focal" part of NSF and a sequential clause type used in narration.

→   NSF contains a paratactic predicate which conveys the comment on a marked non-subjectival topic

5   Conclusion

Ex-situ SF and NSF constructions:

- follow information structural principles above the simple clause level and can be analyzed as topic-marking strategies (rather than simply focalizing)
- are used whenever the grammatical subject does not also represent the topic of a clause: *ex-situ* SF introduces entities as major discourse topics independent from the narrative chain of events, *ex-situ* NSF introduces entities with respect to certain events

[+ topical subject]: (a) *canonical predicate: absolute pattern*
                = categorical statement

[- topical subject]: (b) *hypotactic predicate: copulative pattern*
                = topicless thetic statement, predicate provides supportive and descriptive backgrounding information (clausal topic) on which events can be based on; imperfective affinity

                (c) *paratactic predicate: narrative pattern*
                = marked topic followed by clausal comment, predicate provides events to develop narration further, perfective affinity

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