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# On the category of *na* in Dagara: a focus marker or/and an affirmative marker?

Alain Noindonmon HIEN

## Abstract

This paper proposes a reanalysis of the expression *na* in Dagara, which is sometimes analyzed as a focus marker. It is assumed in the literature that the morpheme *na* is a focus marker and that its syntactic position depends on what is focused in the sentence. According to some researchers, when *na* is used to focus a predicate, it occurs in a post-verbal position. On the other hand, when it is used to focus an argument or an adjunct, it occurs in a peripheral position. In this paper, I argue that the post-verbal *na* should not be regarded as a focus marker and that it is an affirmative marker that occupies the head of Polarity Phrase ( $\Sigma P$ ).

Keywords: Dagara / West African language / focus marker / affirmative marker /  
Polarity Phrase

## 1. Introduction

In Dagara, a Mabilia language spoken in Burkina Faso (West Africa), while the expression realized as *na* plays an important role in the structure of sentences, its distribution and syntactic analyses are still controversial. The purpose of this paper is to propose a reanalysis of this morpheme. Let us start by noting that this particle is always necessary to form a good affirmative sentence in the language. This is shown in (1)<sup>1</sup>.

- (1) a. Ayuo        wa            na.  
         Ayuo        came        PART  
         'Ayuo has come.'
- b. \*Ayuo        wa.  
         Ayuo        came  
         'Ayuo has come.'

(1a) is a perfectly acceptable affirmative sentence while (1b) is not. In (1a), the particle *na* is obligatory to form an affirmative sentence and can be considered as an affirmative marker. As shown in

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this paper: PART = particle, AFF= affirmative marker, NEG = negation, PST = past tense, FOC = focus marker, 1SG = first person singular pronoun, C = complementizer, NOM = nominalizer, DM = declarative marker.

(1b), its absence in an affirmative sentence makes the sentence unacceptable.

The same morpheme is used at the periphery of the clause in some sentences. When the peripheral *na* is used, the post-verbal one must be absent. These are illustrated below.

- (2) a. Bibiir     na         ka         Ayuo     nyé.  
           children PART     that         Ayuo     saw  
           'lit. It was children that Ayuo saw.'
- b. \*Bibiir     na         ka         Ayuo     nyé     na.  
           children PART     that         Ayuo     saw     PART  
           'lit. It was children that Ayuo saw.'

(2a) is acceptable and (2b) is an unacceptable sentence. In (2a), *na* is peripheral. As shown in (2a), when the peripheral *na* is in the sentence, the post-verbal *na* is absent. (2b) is then unacceptable because of the co-occurrence of the peripheral *na* and the post-verbal *na*. (2a-b) are focus constructions in the language. That is, in these sentences, the constituent associated with the peripheral *na* is a focused constituent.

Note that the peripheral *na* is realized as *nu* when it is associated with a singular noun phrase. This is shown below.

- (3) a. Bibiir     na         ka         Ayuo     nyé.  
           children PART     that         Ayuo     saw  
           'lit. it was children that Ayuo saw.'
- b. Bie         nu         ka         Ayuo     nyé.  
           child     PART     that         Ayuo     saw  
           'lit. it was a child that Ayuo saw.'
- (4) a. \*Bibiir     nu         ka         Ayuo     nyé.  
           children PART     that         Ayuo     saw  
           'lit. It was children that Ayuo saw.'
- b. \*Bie         na         ka         Ayuo     nyé.  
           child     PART     that         Ayuo     saw  
           'lit. It was a child that Ayuo saw.'
- c. \*Zāà       nu         ka         Ayuo     nyé     a         bie.  
           yesterday PART     that         Ayuo     saw     the        child  
           'lit. It was yesterday that Ayuo saw the child.'

- d. Zãà        na        ka        Ayuo    nyé       a        bie.  
 yesterday PART    that    Ayuo    saw       the       child  
 'lit. It was yesterday that Ayuo saw the child.'

(3a-b) and (4d) are acceptable sentences while (4a-c) are not. As shown in (3a-b) and (4a-b), *na* becomes *nu* when it occurs with singular foci. Also note that the adjunct *zãà* 'yesterday' is associated with *na*, though it is not marked for plural number. (4c) is unacceptable because *zãà* occurs with *nu*. This seems to indicate that *na* is the default form from which *nu* is derived. The central question in this paper is how to analyze these morphemes.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: in section 2, I will review previous analyses of the morpheme *na*. In section 3, I will show the distribution and function of the peripheral *na* and the post-verbal *na*. In section 4, I will propose a reanalysis of the two morphemes. More specifically, I will argue that while the peripheral *na* is a focus marker that occupies the head of focus phrase (FocP), the post-verbal *na* is an affirmative marker that occupies the head of Polarity Phrase ( $\Sigma$ P). Section 5 will conclude the paper.

## 2. Review of the literature

Although the definition of the morpheme *na* varies from author to author, there is a consensus that it has a pragmatic function. According to Delplanque (1987) and Some (2013), the post-verbal *na* is used to mark affirmation and is considered as an affirmative (or assertive) marker. This is shown below:

- (5) a. ʔv        bɛlé    na        kɛ́       ʔa        daa       ló        na.  
 he        flattered AFF    that    DET    wood    fell       AFF  
 'lit. He flattered by lying that the wood fell.'
- b. ʔv        bɛ́        bɛlé    kɛ́       ʔa        daa       ló        na        é.  
 he        NEG    flattered that    DET    wood    fell       AFF    PART  
 'lit. He did not flatter by lying that the wood fell.'
- (Delpanque 1987: 143)

(5a) is an affirmative sentence<sup>2</sup>. In (5b), the matrix clause is negative while the embedded clause is affirmative. As shown here, the affirmative clause contains the post-verbal *na* while the negative

<sup>2</sup> Although Delplanque does not specify the dialect of Dagara from which his data are taken, I suspect that they are from Dagara Lobr, a dialect spoken in Burkina Faso and Ghana. The data used in this paper are from Dagara Wule, which shows phonological differences from the other dialects. Then, I do not adopt the orthography used in Delplanque (1987). Rather, I adopt an orthography that is based on *Lexique de la langue dagara* [*Lexicon of the Dagara language*], published in 2002 by the National Sub-committee for the Dagara Language, which was established in 1975 by the government of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) to document the language.

clause does not. Delplanque (1987) mentions that the post-verbal *na* is an affirmative marker that is attached to a finite verb in an affirmative sentence and that it is always excluded in negative sentences. Accordingly, when the negative marker *bé* is present in the clause, the post-verbal *na* is absent<sup>3</sup>.

Although Delplanque (1987) and Some (2013) assume that the post-verbal *na* is an affirmative marker, Hiraiwa and Bodomo (2008) observe that its equivalent in Dagaare, a very close dialect spoken in Ghana, marks focus. According to them, the syntactic position of this particle depends on what is focused in the sentence. It occurs in a post-verbal position when a predicate is focused and in a peripheral position when it is used to focus an argument or an adjunct. These are illustrated below:

(6) Dagaare (Hiraiwa and Bodomo 2008: 802)

- |    |                               |           |     |           |      |     |            |
|----|-------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------|------|-----|------------|
| a. | N                             | dà        | dá  | <b>lá</b> | bóɔ. |     |            |
|    | 1SG                           | PST       | buy | FOC       | goat |     |            |
|    | 'I bought a goat.'            |           |     |           |      |     |            |
| b. | Bóɔ                           | <b>lá</b> | ká  | n         | dà   | dá. |            |
|    | goat                          | FOC       | C   | 1SG       | PST  | buy |            |
|    | 'It is a goat that I bought.' |           |     |           |      |     |            |
| c. | *Bóɔ                          | <b>lá</b> | ká  | n         | dà   | dá  | <b>lá.</b> |
|    | goat                          | FOC       | C   | 1SG       | PST  | buy | FOC        |
|    | 'It is a goat that I bought.' |           |     |           |      |     |            |

According to Hiraiwa and Bodomo, in (6a-b), the peripheral and the post-verbal *lá* are focus markers (contrastive focus and information focus, respectively), which are mutually exclusive. (6c) is ungrammatical in Dagaare because the peripheral *lá* and the post-verbal *lá* co-occur<sup>4</sup>.

Just like *lá* in Dagaare, the post-verbal *na* and its peripheral counterpart are in complementary distribution in Dagara. This is shown below.

<sup>3</sup>Note in passing that to have a natural negative sentence in Dagara, the final particle  $\epsilon$  is needed. If it is omitted, the sentence gets degraded. This is shown below.

- (i) Bic **ba** t̀̀ Ayuo ?( $\epsilon$ ).  
 child NEG insultedAyuo PART  
 'A child did not insult Ayuo.'

In (i), the omission of the final particle  $\epsilon$  makes the sentence degraded. In this paper, I assume that this final particle is optional, but I will leave it to future studies.

<sup>4</sup>Note in passing that Dagaare and Dagara exhibit certain phonological differences. For example, while the particle in consideration is pronounced as *na* in Dagara, it is pronounced as *la* in Dagaare.

- (7) a. M            ta            dà            **na**            buɔ.  
           1SG           PST            buy           PART           goat  
           'I bought a goat.'
- b. Bu-ri        **na**            ka            m            ta            dà.  
           goat-PL    PART           that           1SG           PST           buy  
           'I bought GOATS.'
- c. \*Bu-ri        **na**            ka            m            ta            dà            **na**.  
           goat-PL    PART           that           1SG           PST           buy           PART  
           'I bought GOATS.'

(7a-b) are acceptable while (7c) is not. (7a) contains the post-verbal *na* while (7b) contains the peripheral *na*. As shown in (7b), when the peripheral *na* is present in the sentence, the post-verbal counterpart is omitted. (7c) is unacceptable because of the co-occurrence of the peripheral *na* and the post-verbal *na*. The complementary distribution of the peripheral *na* and the post-verbal *na* could be explained by adopting Hiraiwa and Bodomo's (2008) assumption that they are both focus markers.

However, this does not seem to be very plausible as the post-verbal *na* is also in complementary distribution with negation while the peripheral *na* is not. Consider the following examples:

- (8) a. Ayuo        **ba**            t̀            a            bibiir        ε.  
           Ayuo        NEG            insulted    the           children    PART  
           'Ayuo didn't insult the children.'
- b. \*Ayuo        **ba**            t̀            **na**            a            bibiir        ε.  
           Ayuo        NEG            insulted    PART           the           children    PART  
           'Ayuo didn't insult the children.'
- (9) a. A            bibiir        **na**            ka            Ayuo        t̀.  
           the           children    PART           that           Ayuo        insulted  
           'lit. It was the children that Ayuo insulted.'
- b. A            bibiir        **na**            ka            Ayuo        **ba**            t̀            ε.  
           the           children    PART           that           Ayuo        NEG           insulted    PART  
           'lit. It was the children that Ayuo didn't insult.'

(8a) and (9a-b) are acceptable sentences while (8b) is an unacceptable sentence. In these sentences, *ba* is a negative particle. In (8b), *ba* occurs with the post-verbal *na* but the sentence is ungrammatical. (9a) contains the peripheral *na*. It is associated with the subject nominal phrase *a bibiir* 'the children', which is focused in the sentence. In (9b), the peripheral *na* and the negative particle *ba* co-occur and the sentence is still acceptable. Then, while the negative particle *ba* is in complementary distribu-

tion with the post-verbal *na*, it can occur with the peripheral *na*, which is associated with a focused constituent. Based on this, it may be that the post-verbal *na* does not have anything to do with focus as it is also in complementary distribution with negation. In what follows, I will provide an account for the distribution of the two particles.

### 3. The distribution and functions of the morpheme *na*

Although the peripheral *na* and the post-verbal *na* are assigned the same category in the literature (see Bodomo 1997, Hiraiwa and Bodomo 2008), their distribution and function are different. For example, as mentioned above, the peripheral *na* can occur with negation while the post-verbal counterpart cannot. This is further illustrated below:

- (10) a. Pol        nyé        **na**        a        bibiir.  
          Paul        saw        PART     the       children  
          ‘Paul saw the children.’
- b. A        bibiir        **na**        ka        Pol        **ba**        nyé        ε.  
          the        children    PART     that     Paul     NEG     saw       PART  
          ‘lit. It was the children that Paul didn’t see.’
- c. \*Pol        **ba**        nyé        **na**        bibiir     ε.  
          Paul        NEG     saw        PART     children PART  
          ‘Paul did not see children.’

(10a) is an affirmative sentence and (10b-c) are negative sentences. (10a) only contains the post-verbal *na*. If it is accompanied by the negative particle as in (10c), the resulting sentence is degraded. Note that the negative particle and the peripheral *na* co-occur in (10b), which is perfectly acceptable.

Also, while the post-verbal *na* can occur in the matrix and the embedded clause of the same sentence simultaneously, the peripheral *na* cannot. This is shown below:

- (11) a. Bibiir    yèl        **la**        ka        Ayuo    dà        **na**        mobilli.  
          children said        PART     that     Ayuo    bought   PART     cars  
          ‘Children said that Ayuo bought cars.’
- b. Bibiir    **na**        yèl        ka        Ayuo    dà        **na**        mobilli.  
          children PART    said        that     Ayuo    bought   PART     cars  
          ‘lit. Children said that Ayuo bought cars.’
- c. \*Mobilli **na**        ka        bibiir    **na**        nyé.  
          cars        PART     that     children PART    saw  
          ‘lit. It was cars that the children saw.’

In (11a), the post-verbal *na* occurs in the matrix clause and the embedded clause of the sentence<sup>5</sup>. In (11b), the peripheral *na* occurs in the matrix clause while the post-verbal *na* is in the embedded clause. In (11c), the peripheral *na* occurs in both the matrix clause and the embedded clause but the sentence is unacceptable. These data indicate that each clause (i.e. the matrix clause and the embedded clause) must contain the post-verbal *na* while only one peripheral *na* is allowed in a complex sentence in Dagara.

Besides, the peripheral *na* exhibits agreement while the post-verbal *na* does not.

- (12) a. Bu-ɔ      **nu**      ka      Ayuo      dà.  
           goat-SG    PART    that    Ayuo      bought  
           'Ayuo bought A GOAT.'
- b. Bu-ri      **na**      ka      Ayuo      dà.  
           goat-PL    PART    that    Ayuo      bought  
           'Ayuo bought GOATS.'
- c. \*Bu-ɔ      **na**      ka      Ayuo      dà.  
           goat-SG    PART    that    Ayuo      bought  
           'Ayuo bought A GOAT.'
- d. \*Bu-ri      **nu**      ka      Ayuo      dà.  
           goat-PL    PART    that    Ayuo      bought  
           'Ayuo bought GOATS.'
- (13) a. Ayuo      dà      **na**      buɔ.  
           Ayuo      bought    PART    goat  
           'Ayuo bought a goat.'
- b. Ayuo      dà      **na**      bu-ri.  
           Ayuo      bought    PART    goat-PL  
           'Ayuo bought goats.'

As mentioned earlier and showed again here, the peripheral *na* becomes *nu* when it is associated with a singular noun. More specifically, *na* is used when a plural noun phrase appears as a focus while *nu* is only associated with a singular noun phrase<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, the post-verbal *na* resists a morphological change, except for the change of the initial consonant caused by assimilation, as in (11a).

#### 4. The syntactic reanalysis of the morphemes *na*

Although I agree with the previous works that the peripheral *na* is a focus marker, I do not share

<sup>5</sup> As shown in (11a), *na* becomes *la* when the preceding verb ends with /l/.

<sup>6</sup> Note that *na* is also associated with an adjunct, as mentioned earlier.



with them the idea that the post-verbal *na* also marks focus in the language. Rather, I claim that the post-verbal *na* is an affirmative marker that occupies the head of Polarity Phrase. The following observations support this claim.

#### 4.1. Question-answer pairs

Question-answer pairs indicate that while the peripheral *na* marks focus, the post-verbal counterpart does not have anything to do with focus marking. Considering the following examples:

- (14) a. Bina      **na**      ka      Ayuo      dà?  
           what.PL    PART    that    Ayuo    bought  
           ‘WHAT did Ayuo buy?’
- b. Simie      **na**      ka      Ayuo      dà.  
           peanuts    PART    that    Ayuo    bought  
           ‘It was peanuts that Ayuo bought.’
- c. ?? Ayuo      dà      **na**      simie.  
           Ayuo      bought    PART    peanuts  
           ‘Ayuo bought peanuts.’

(14a) is a wh-question. In (14a), the wh-phrase *bina* ‘what’ is focused. This is done by combining *bina* ‘what’ with *na*<sup>7</sup>. Here the most salient information in this sentence is what Ayuo bought. (14b) is a felicitous answer to (14a). In (14b), *simie* ‘peanuts’ is focused. In this sentence, *simie* is considered as a focused constituent because it is combined with the peripheral *na*. Following researchers such as Aboh (2007), I assume that in an answer to a wh-question in Dagara, the constituent corresponding to a focused wh-phrase needs to be focused: If *simie* is not focused as in (14c), it cannot serve as an answer to (14a).

With this in mind, let us consider (15a-c).

- (15) a. ŋmɪŋmin    na      ka      Ayuo      ɪ      a      zɪɛ.  
           how      PART    that    Ayuo    do      the    sauce  
           ‘What did Ayuo do with the sauce?’
- b. Di-ib      ba      ka      ʋ      di      a      zɪɛ.  
           eat-NOM    PART    that    he      eat      the    sauce  
           ‘lit. It is eating that he ate the sauce.’

<sup>7</sup> Subject wh-phrases and object wh-phrases are marked for number in Dagara. In (16a), *bina* is the plural counterpart of *bò* ‘what’.

- c. ?? ɒ            di            na            a            ziɛ.  
                   he            ate            PART        the            sauce  
                   ‘He ate the sauce.’

In (15a), the focus is on what Ayuo does with the sauce. In this question, the target constituent is the predicate. That is, to answer (15a), the predicate must be focused. (15b) is a felicitous answer to (15a). In (15b), the action of eating is focused by nominalizing the verb and placing it to the left of the focus marker (i.e. the peripheral *na*)<sup>8</sup>. (15c) contains the post-verbal *na*, which Hiraiwa and Bodomo (2008) would consider as a predicate focus marker. Crucially, it is not felicitous as an answer to (15a). If the post-verbal *na* could be used to focus a predicate, as assumed in the literature (see Hiraiwa and Bodomo 2008 and related studies), (15c) would be a felicitous answer to (15a).

The same point can be made with the data below.

- (16) a. Nyinē    na        ka        fɒ        pɔ        a        buɔ?  
           where    PART    that    you    get    the    goat  
           ‘Where do you get the goat?’  
       b. Dà-ab    ba        ka        m        dà        a        buɔ.  
           buy-NOM PART    that    I        buy    the    goat  
           ‘lit. It is buying that I bought the goat.’  
       c. ?? M        dà        na        a        buɔ.  
           I        bought    PART    the    goat  
           ‘I bought the goat.’

In (16a), the focus is on how the goat is got. Here, the predicate is questioned through the wh-phrase *nyinē* ‘where’. Though *nyinē* ‘where’ asks about a place, it is also used to question a predicate. (16b) is a felicitous answer to (16a) while (16c) is not. In (16b), the action of buying is focused by nominalizing the verb *dà* ‘buy’ and placing it in the initial position of the sentence, with the verbal copy appearing in situ. In (16c), the post-verbal *na* occurs but the sentence is unacceptable as an answer to (16a). This indicates that the post-verbal *na* should not be taken to be a focus marker. That is, when we have the post-verbal *na*, the predicate is not focused. To focus a predicate, it must be nominalized and fronted (also see Some 2013).

#### 4.2. Contrastivity and exclusivity marking

Many authors (e.g. Aboh 2007, Halliday 1967, Saeed 1982, 2000) define focus as the part of a sen-

<sup>8</sup> Note that *na* becomes *ba* when the final consonant of the word it follows is /b/. Also note that in (15b), the copy of the focused verb appears in the presuppositional clause.

tence that gives the most relevant or salient information in a given discourse. According to them, an expression will be relevant or salient if it is either new or contrasted with another element in the preceding or subsequent discourse. In other words, focus involves novelty or contrastivity.

In Dagara, the peripheral *na* marks contrastivity and exclusivity while the post-verbal *na* does not. This is shown below.

- (17) a. *Zãà*        **na**        ka        Ayuo        wa.  
           yesterday FOC        that        Ayuo        came  
           ‘It was yesterday that Ayuo came.’
- b. Ayuo        wa        **na**        *Zãà*.  
       Ayuo        came        AFF        yesterday  
       ‘Ayuo came yesterday.’

(17a) contains the peripheral *na*, analyzed as a focus marker, while (17b) has the post-verbal *na*, which I consider to be simply an affirmative marker. In (17a), *zãà* ‘yesterday’ is placed in the initial position of the sentence, where it is combined with the peripheral *na*. (17a) implies that Ayuo did not come today or any other day, except for yesterday.

On the other hand, (17b) contains the post-verbal *na*, and it does not imply, for example, that Ayuo came only yesterday. Ayuo may have come today or any other day including yesterday. The fact that the peripheral *na* marks contrastivity and exclusivity while the post-verbal *na* does not indicates that they are different and should be treated differently. I assume that while the peripheral *na* should be analyzed as a focus marker occupying the head of FocP, the post-verbal *na* should be considered as an affirmative marker that occupies the head of ΣP.

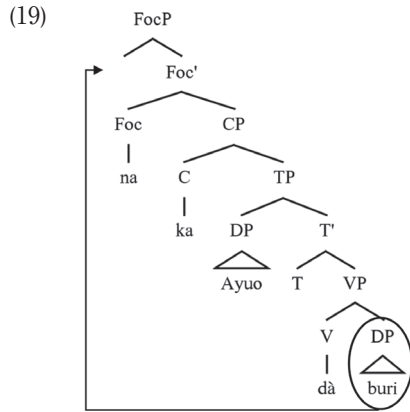
#### 4.3. Syntactic analyses of the focus marker and the affirmative marker

As mentioned above, I assume that the peripheral *na* is a focus marker that occupies the head of FocP. It attracts a focused constituent to its specifier position, as shown below.

- (18) a. Bu-ri        **na**        ka        Ayuo        dà.  
           goat-PL FOC        that        Ayuo        bought  
           ‘Ayuo bought GOATS.’
- b. \***Na**        ka        Ayuo        dà        bu-ri.  
       FOC        that        Ayuo        bought        goat-PL

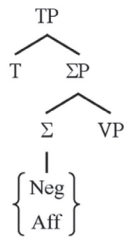
*Na* is a functional head whose left side (i.e. the specifier position in the generative syntacticians’ terms) must be filled in. For (18), I assume the structure in (19). As shown in (18), *huri* must move to the left of the peripheral *na*, the focus marker. I assume that movement of *huri* to the left of the focus

marker is attributed to the fact that the left side of a focus marker must be occupied by a phrase in Dagara and that (18b) is unacceptable because the left side of *na* is empty.

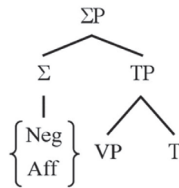


As for the post-verbal *na*, I assume that it is an affirmative marker that occupies the head of Polarity Phrase ( $\Sigma$ P). According to Laka (1990, 1994), the head of the polarity phrase is occupied by affirmative or negative particles and is located above or below TP depending on languages. For example, in English, it is below TP while in Basque it is located above TP.

(20) a. English



b. Basque



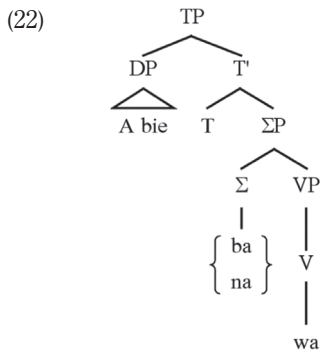
Based on the assumption that negative and affirmative particles occupy the same syntactic position, Laka (1990, 1994) claims that they should not be able to co-occur in the same clause in languages with overt negative and affirmative particles. In Dagara, the negation marker and the post-verbal *na* are mutually exclusive. This is mentioned earlier and is illustrated again below.

(21) a. A        bie        wa        na.  
           the        child    came    AFF  
           'The child came.'

b. A        bie        ba        wa        ε.  
           the        child    NEG    came    PART  
           'The child didn't come.'

- c. \*A            bie            ba            wa            na            ε.  
           the            child        NEG        came        AFF        PART  
           ‘The child didn’t come.’

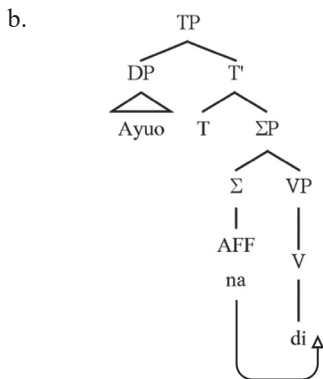
This distributional fact can be explained if the post-verbal *na* is an affirmative marker, competing with the negation marker for the head position of the polarity phrase, as shown below. Their complementary distribution follows from this assumption.



The structure in (22) directly explains the fact that the negation marker precedes verbs in Dagara (see (21b) for instance). A question arises, however, as to why the affirmative marker (namely, the post-verbal *na*) follows verbs. I have no clear answer to the question and just follow a reviewer’s suggestion that the affirmative marker is a phonological clitic that is attached to the verb by phonological affix hopping, as shown in (23b).

(23a) is an affirmative sentence containing the post-verbal particle *na*. It is analyzed as shown in (23b), where the affirmative marker *na* moves to be attached to the verb through affix hopping, which can be responsible for attaching the tense suffixes to verbs in English.

- (23) a. Ayuo        di            na.  
           Ayuo        ate            AFF  
           ‘Ayuo has eaten.’



Returning to the complementary distribution of the peripheral *na* and the post-verbal *na* observed above, I conjecture that it is partially attributed to the function of the two morphemes. The presence of the peripheral *na* indicates that there is a focused constituent in the sentence while the presence of the post-verbal *na* indicates there is no focused constituent in the sentence<sup>9</sup>. The same phenomenon is observed in languages such as Somali. In Somali, there are three particles (*bàa*, *ayàa*, and *wáxa*) that are used to mark focus in a sentence (see Saeed 1982, 2000 and Tosco 2002 for details), as shown in (24).

- (24) a. Cali            warqáddíi    bùu/ayuu    íi            dhiibay.  
           Ali            letter-the    *bàa/ayaa*    me-to        passed  
           ‘Ali passed THE LETTER to me.’
- b. Cali            wúxuu        íi            dhiibay    warqáddíi.  
           Ali            *wáxa’*        me-to        passed       letter-the  
           ‘Ali passed me THE LETTER.’  
           (Saeed 2000:134)

Saeed observes that *warqáddíi* ‘the letter’ and *Cali* ‘Ali’ are focused in (24a-b), respectively. According to Saeed, when there is no focused constituent in the sentence, the particle *waa* is used (see also Tosco 2002). This is illustrated in (25).

- (25)    Cali            warqáddíi    wuu            íi            dhiibay.  
           Ali            letter-the    DM            me-to        passed  
           ‘Ali passed the letter to me  
           (Saeed 2000:134)

Saeed (2000) and Tosco (2002) argue that *bàa*, *ayàa*, and *wáxa* are focus markers while *waa* is a declarative marker and that they do not co-occur in a sentence in Somali. They undergo a phonological change when they are combined with –uu, a clitic pronoun. According to them, the focus markers and the declarative marker cannot co-occur in a sentence in Somali because the declarative marker *waa* is used to indicate the absence of a focused constituent while the particles *bàa*, *ayàa*, and *wáxa* are employed to signal the presence of a focused constituent.

I assume that Dagara behaves like Somali in that the two languages indicate the presence and the absence of a focused constituent overtly.

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<sup>9</sup> Also note that the post-verbal *na* is used when sentences do not contain negation. As mentioned earlier, negation and the focus marker can occur in the same clause. Taking that into consideration, one can assume that  $\Sigma$  P and FocP are mutually exclusive only when the head of  $\Sigma$  P is occupied by the affirmative marker.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have considered the post-verbal and the peripheral *na* in Dagara and proposed a reanalysis of the former. Previous studies treat them as instances of a focus marker. Those studies claim that *na* is a focus marker and that its syntactic position depends on what is focused in sentences: when a predicate is focused, *na* occurs post-verbally; when *na* is used to focus an argument or an adjunct, it occurs in the peripheral position. In this paper, I have argued that the peripheral *na* and the post-verbal *na* should be treated differently. More specifically, I have argued that the post-verbal *na* does not have anything to do with focus marking on the basis of the observation that the post-verbal *na* does not focus a predicate. Considering that it cannot co-occur with the negation marker, I have suggested that it be analyzed as an affirmative marker.

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