Focus constructions in Juba Arabic

NAKAO, Shuichiro
Japan Society for the Promotion of Science/Kyoto University

This paper describes the syntactic and semantic/pragmatic value of two ex-situ focus constructions—termed here as *yaú*-focus and *fí*-focus—in Juba Arabic, an Arabic-based creole spoken in South Sudan. Alongside the descriptive account, this paper argues the possible grammaticalization process (to be shown as EXISTENTIAL → (FOCUS COPULA) → FOCUS MARKER) that gave birth to the focus construction, in particular, *yaú*-focus.

Keywords: Juba Arabic, focus construction, grammaticalization, existential construction

1. Introduction

1.1. Focus construction in Arabic-based creoles

In the linguistic literature on African languages, an interesting type of cleft-like focus strategy including a special focus marker, often termed ‘emphatic copula’ or ‘focus copula,’ has been reported in a wide range of language families. To take a few examples, Swahili *ndí*- (Ashton 1947: 179–180), Dholuo *e*(ma) (Okombo 1997: 114–117) Labwor ɛ́nɛ́ ~ ɛ́ (Heine & König 2010: 85–86), Yoruba *ni* (Jones 2006), and Bura ˈáːn (Hartmann, Jacob & Zimmermann 2008) can mark argument focus on an ex-situ noun phrase occurring directly before each of them.

A similar construction has been reported in the two historically closely-related Arabic-based creoles, Nubi (spoken in Uganda and Kenya) and Juba Arabic (spoken in
Asian and African Languages and Linguistics 9


The aim of this paper is to describe the syntactic and semantic/pragmatic value and the lexical source of this morpheme, represented below as yaú [jau˩˥] and termed yaú-focus, in comparison with another focus strategy exhibited by fí (fí-focus), which is also reported for Nubi (Wellens 2005: 245). Previous studies have been mainly based on spontaneous data, thus in contrast, this paper utilizes elicited data. Our main questions are as follows:

[1] What are the (lexical) sources for yaú-focus and fí-focus?
[2] What kind of syntactic constructions do yaú-focus and fí-focus have?
[3] What kind of semantic value do yaú-focus and fí-focus carry?

To begin with the first question, previous studies have proposed that the pan-Arabic vocative particle yá is the source for yaú (Owens 1996: 165, Wellens 2005: 237, Manfredi & Tosco, forthcoming), on the supposition that the phonological representation of this morpheme is the same as the vocative particle in both Nubi and Juba Arabic. However, according to the author’s account (Juba Arabic lexically and grammatically distinguishes pitch), although yaú actually has an ‘allegro’ (reduced) form yǎ [ja˩˥] (cf. Nakao 2013: 97), it contrasts vocative ya [ja˩] and a conjunction yá [ja˥] ‘or.’¹ For example, (1) serves as a minimal pair for the pitch distinction in Juba Arabic (dé ‘DEM’ kélíb ‘dog’ and já ‘come’ are used as carriers for each morpheme).

(1) a. yǎ kélíb. (= yaú kélíb.) ‘Here is a dog.’
   dé yǎ kélíb. (= dé yaú kélíb.) ‘THIS is a dog.’
   yá kélíb já. (= yaú kélíb já.) ‘Then, a dog came’
   b. ya kélíb.
      ‘O dog; you, brat!’
   c. yú kélíb.
      ‘Or [it may be] a dog.’

Note that yaú (in the allegro form, yá) is actually quite multifunctional as shown in (1a). It marks existence in the first example, and focus, which is the main topic of this paper, in the second example, and it even functions as a conjunctural adverb in the last example. On the other hand, the lexifier of Juba Arabic, Sudanese Colloquial Arabic (abbreviated:

¹ Manfredi & Tosco (forthcoming) proposes yáwu as a distinct morpheme (vs. yá and vs. yawú). However, this form could not be identified by any of the author’s informants.
SCA), has a similar particle yāhū\(^2\) which reportedly marks existence, as in the next example (CLIK 2008: 12–13, the orthography is modified and the gloss is given by the author, according to the author’s informal interview with SCA speakers).

\[(2) \quad \text{A: } ‘\text{ind-ik } šābūn \text{ budra?}'\]  
with-2SG.F soap powder

‘Have you got powder soap?’

\[(B: \text{āī, } yāhū s-šābūn.}\]  
yes here.is.3SG.M DEF-soap(M)

‘Yes, here is the soap.’

From this fact, one may assume that Juba Arabic yaū was first inherited from SCA as an existential marker, and the other functions developed internally.\(^3\) Moreover, Juba Arabic has developed another existential marker fī as another focus marker, to be introduced in Section 2. This process can be represented as EXISTENTIAL > FOCUS MARKER.

This paper consists of five parts. Section 1 provides a brief description of argument order in Juba Arabic. Sections 2 and 3 describe the syntactic and semantic features of both fī-focus and yaū-focus, and Section 4 examines interrogative sentences. Finally, the hypothesis EXISTENTIAL > FOCUS MARKER is re-argued in the conclusion in Section 5.

1.2. Argument order and topicalization in Juba Arabic

Before introducing our main topic, namely yaū-focus and fī-focus, a brief description of the basic argument order and topicalization in Juba Arabic is given below.

In Juba Arabic, the most basic argument order consisting of (transitive) verbal predicate is SVO, as shown in (3a). Juba Arabic has a passive-like construction, as shown in (3b), wherein the passive verb is marked by the suffix -ū, and the subject of the passive sentence remains in situ. As shown in (4), these arguments exhibit topicalization or left-dislocation, wherein they appear at sentence-initial position and optional ‘pro’ may appear in situ, in order to mark their givenness, and the newness of the predicate.

\(^2\) This form is for singular masculine, and SCA also has yāhá for feminine singular, and yāhúm for plural. Each form consists of the bound presentative morpheme yā- and a pronominal suffix (–hu ‘3SG.M,’ –ha ‘3SG.F,’ –hum ‘3PL(M)’). Each form can be followed by the corresponding proximate demonstrative (i.e. yāhú da, yāhá di, yāhúm dēl). Possible cognate morphemes for yā- is seen, for example, in the Arabic dialect of Šukriyya in Eastern Sudan as ayyā- (Reichmuth 1983: 109). Wellens (2005: 366–368) discusses the etymology of SCA, yā-, relating it to the vocative particle, but this etymology seems not to explain the forms in the Arabic dialect of Šukriyya.

\(^3\) According to the author’s informal interviews with SCA speakers, this morpheme never marks focus in SCA.
(3) a. [jôn]s bêredu [jêna dé].  
   [John] bathe [child DEM]  
   ‘John bathed this child.’

b. bi katul-ú [bágara dé]s bûkura.  
   IRR kill-PASS [cow DEM] tomorrow  
   ‘This cow will be killed tomorrow.’

(4) a. [jôn]s (úwo) bêredu jêna dé.  
   [John] (3SG) bathe child DEM  
   ‘As for John <GIVEN>, he bathed this child <NEW>.’

a’. [jêna dé], ána bêredu (úwo).  
   [child DEM] 1SG bathe (3SG)  
   ‘As for this child <GIVEN>, I bathed him <NEW>.’

b. [bágara dé]s, bi katul-ú (úwo) bûkura.  
   [cow DEM] IRR kill-PASS (3SG) tomorrow  
   ‘As for this cow <GIVEN>, it will be killed tomorrow <NEW>.’

As for the nominal and adjectival predicate, the copula does not appear in the present tense. The subject of these predicates can also be topicalized.

(5) a. jôn tâlib.  
   John student  
   ‘John is a student.’

b. jôn, úwo tâlib.  
   John 3SG student  
   ‘As for John <GIVEN>, he is a student <NEW>.’

1.3. Existential constructions

In contrast to the verbal/nominal/adjectival predicates, there is a syntactically distinct type of predicate construction that includes one of the four morphemes shown in (6). These morphemes are henceforth termed ‘existentials,’ and are considered a closed word class.

(6) a. fî ‘there is/are’ (EXS) < SCA. fî

b. māfî ‘there is/are not’ (NEG.EXS) < SCA. māfî

c. wenú ~ wonû ‘where is/are’ (INTERR.EXS) < SCA. wēnû
d. \( \text{yaú} \sim \text{yaú dé} \) ‘here is/are’ (FOC.EXS) \(<\) SCA. \( \text{yāhū} (\text{da}) \), cf. note 2.

The existentials exhibit the constituent order exemplified in (7–10), wherein the subject (exhibited here as \( \text{móyo} \) ‘water’) appears either before (7–10a) or after (7–10b) the existential predicate.

(7) a. \( \text{móyo fí fí talája.} \)
    b. \( \text{fí móyo fí talája.} \)
       (EXS) water (EXS) LOC refrigerator
       ‘There is water in the refrigerator.’

(8) a. \( \text{móyo máfí fí talája.} \)
    b. \( \text{máfí móyo fí talája.} \)
       (EXS) water (EXS) LOC refrigerator
       ‘There is no water in the refrigerator.’

(9) a. \( \text{móyo wenú?} \)
    b. \( \text{wenú móyo?} \)
       (INTERR.EXS) water (INTERR.EXS)
       ‘Where is water?’

(10) a. \( \text{móyo yaú (dê).} \)
    b. \( \text{yaú (dê) móyo.} \)
       (EXS (DEM)) water (EXS (DEM))
       ‘[See,] here\(^5\) is water.’

The examples (7–10a) seem comparable to the topicalization process in (4) and (5b), since the subjects preferably (or obligatorily) appear only before the existentials when they are semantically definite, that is to say, given information.

(11) a. \( \text{móyo dé fí fí talája.} \)
    b. \( \text{fí móyo dé fí talája.} \)
       (EXS) water DEM (EXS) LOC Juba
       ‘The water <GIVEN> is in the refrigerator.’

\(^4\) A (proximate) demonstrative, \( \text{dê} \), redundantly co-occurs with deictic adverbs, \( \text{hini dê ‘here,’ aléla dê ‘today,’ etc.} \)

\(^5\) The deictic interpretation of existential \( \text{yaú} \) is limited to the proximative meaning. Thus, (i) \( \text{yaú móyo ínú ‘Here is water (gloss: FOC.EXS water here)} \) is grammatical, but (ii) *\( \text{yaú móyo inák (gloss: FOC.EXS water there)} \) is ungrammatical.
To summarize, an existential (fí, máfí, wenú, yaú) as the predicate in a sentence can mark the information structure of the subject by means of the argument order. In addition to the above discussion, the next section examines another function exhibited by fí and máfí, as a type of focus marker.

2. fí-focus

2.1. Grammaticalization of fí and máfí

Among the existentials, fí and máfí appearing in sentence-initial position followed by a noun (phrase) can take a verbal predicate as in (12). The sentences can be interpreted in two ways: i. fí/máfí not as a predicate, and ii. fí/máfí as a predicate, syntactically shown in (12a)’. In the former interpretation, which is henceforth to be termed fí-/máfí-focus, the reading of the TAM of the sentence depends on the TAM marking of the verbal predicate.

(12) a. fí sabí tai táni já min béled.
   EXS friend POSS.1SG certain come from country
   i. ‘A friend of mine came from the country.’
   ii. ‘There is/was a friend of mine who came.’

   b. máfí zôl táni bi kôrè.
   NEG.EXS person certain IRR cry
   i. ‘No one will cry.’
   ii. ‘There is/will be no one who will cry.’
2.2. Semantic/pragmatic value of fí-/máfi-focus

To understand the grammaticalized function of fí and máfi as focus markers, let us first look at the following examples. Using the example in (13) as the base, the noun directly following fí-/máfi-focus cannot be a definite noun (marked here by dé ‘DEM’) as shown in (14), but it can be marked by indefiniteness-sensitive phrases as in (15) and (16).

(13) a. fí mára gí wógif fí maháta.
    EXS woman IMPERF stand LOC bus.stop
    ‘A woman is standing at a bus stop.’

b. máfi mára dé gí wógif fí maháta.
    NEG.EXS woman DEM IMPERF stand LOC bus.stop
    ‘No woman is standing at a bus stop.’

(14) a.*fí mára dé gí wógif fí maháta.
    EXS woman DEM IMPERF stand LOC bus.stop

b.*máfi mára dé gí wógif fí maháta.
    NEG.EXS woman DEM IMPERF stand LOC bus.stop

(15) a. fí mára táni gí wógif fí maháta.
    EXS woman certain IMPERF stand LOC bus.stop
    ‘A woman is standing at a bus stop.’

b. máfi mára táni gí wógif fí maháta.
    NEG.EXS woman certain IMPERF stand LOC bus.stop
    ‘No woman is standing at a bus stop.’

(16) fí júzu min nás bi tèfigu wíhída.
    EXS part from people IRR agree unity
    ‘A part of people will be for unity.’

This seems to parallel the argument order of existentials that we examined in (11), namely, both the subject of the existential predicate and the subject of a sentence marked by fí-/máfi-focus cannot be definite (or cannot represent given information).
Accordingly, it seems that all the elements following *fí-/máfi*-focus are new information; thus, *fí-/máfi*-focus functions as a marker of ‘sentence-focus.’ And if so, *fí-/máfi*-focus must be free from left-dislocation that moves nouns with given information (cf. Section 1.2). In other words, it should be only sentence-initial subjects that can be marked by *fí*-focus (as Wellens 2005: 254 describes for Nubi).

2.3. Syntactic value of *fí*-focus

Contradicting this assumption, the next example (17) shows that an object of a verbal predicate can be marked by *fí*-focus, with obligatory object movement. The example in (18) shows that the subject of the passive-verb predicate must be left-dislocated.

(17) 
\[
\begin{array}{l}
[fí mára] rájil tó dúgu (úwo). \\
[EXS \text{woman}] \text{man \ POSS.3SG \ hit} (3 \text{SG})
\end{array}
\]
‘There was a woman whom her husband hit (her).’

(18) a. 
\[
\begin{array}{l}
[fí bágara táni] katul-ú ma jôn. \\
[EXS \text{cow \ certain}] \text{kill-PASS \ with} \ \text{John}
\end{array}
\]
‘A cow was killed by John.’

b.*katul-ú \[fí bágara táni] ma jôn.
\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{kill-PASS} [\text{EXS \ cow \ certain}] \text{with} \ \text{John}
\end{array}
\]

In addition, *fí*-focus can occur in a finite clause as in (19); however, it cannot occur in a non-finite clause (in a causative construction, e.g., led by *wodí* ‘to give ~ CAUS’), as in (20).

(19) 
\[
\begin{array}{l}
aléla ána moksút, ashan [[fí sabí tai táni] \\
\text{today} \ 1SG \ \text{happy \ REAS \ [[EXS \ friend \ POSS.1SG \ certain]} \\
já min béled tai]. \\
\text{come \ from \ country \ POSS.1SG}
\end{array}
\]
‘Today I am happy because a friend of mine came from my country.’

(20) a. 
\[
\begin{array}{l}
ána wodí zôl táni kátulu bágara. \\
1SG \ \text{CAUS \ person \ certain \ kill \ cow}
\end{array}
\]
‘I made a person kill a cow.’

b.*ána wodí *fí zôl táni kátulu bágara.
\[
\begin{array}{l}
1SG \ \text{CAUS} \ \text{EXS \ person \ certain \ kill \ cow}
\end{array}
\]
Additionally, in the next example, \textit{fí yôm}, as a frequently occurring collocation, means ‘one day.’ Although such construction is unproductive, this example shows that even a non-argument noun can be marked by \textit{fí}-focus.

\begin{exe}
\ex \textit{fí yôm}, ána kán gi dóuru fí síka. \\
\end{exe}

\begin{exe}
\ex \text{EXS day} \text{1SG PAST IMPERF walk LOC road} \\
\end{exe}

‘One day, I was walking on the road.’

To summarize, \textit{fí}-focus (and \textit{máfí}-focus) functions to mark new information, but it does not exclusively mark sentence-focus. Next, we turn to another focus strategy utilized to mark argument-focus in Section 3.

\section{yaú-focus}

\subsection{Multifunctionality of yaú: What is (not) yaú-focus?}

As introduced earlier in Section 1.1, \textit{yaú} is a multifunctional particle. In addition to its function as an existential (cf. 1.3), it marks argument-focus as shown in (22), which is the main topic of Section 3. For now, \textit{yaú}-focus is interpreted as a kind of contrastive marker. Carrying this semantic value, \textit{yaú} cannot co-occur with the demonstrative \textit{dé}, and the interpretation is limited to an adverb ‘here,’ as shown in (23).

\begin{exe}
\ex nakáo yaú gi dúgu río. \\
\end{exe}

\begin{exe}
\ex \text{Nakao} \text{FOC IMPERF hit Rio} \\
\end{exe}

‘NAKAO (not others) is hitting Rio.’ / ‘It is Nakao who is hitting Rio.’

\begin{exe}
\ex a. nakáo \textit{yaú} \text{dé} gi dúgu río.  \\
\end{exe}

\begin{exe}
\ex \text{Nakao here DEM IMPERF hit Rio} \\
\end{exe}

\begin{exe}
\ex b. \textit{yaú} \text{(dé)} nakáo gi dúgu río. \\
\end{exe}

\begin{exe}
\ex \text{here (DEM) Nakao IMPERF hit Rio} \\
\end{exe}

‘Nakao, who is here, is hitting Rio.’

\begin{exe}
\ex * ‘NAKAO (not others) is hitting Rio.’ / ‘It is Nakao who is hitting Rio.’
\end{exe}

The existentials that we have observed in Section 1.3 are in complementary distribution. Thus, \textit{fí} ‘there is/are’ and \textit{wenú} ‘where is/are’ cannot co-occur in the same sentence as in (24a); although, \textit{yaú} \text{(dé)} can co-occur with \textit{fí}, since it is interpreted as an adverb. Additionally, \textit{yaú} (not as \textit{yaú dé}) also functions as a conjunctive adverb ‘then/thence,’ as in (25).
(24) a.*fí móyo wenú?
  EXS water INTERR.EXS
  ‘Where is water?’

b. fí móyo yaú (dē).
  EXS water here (DEM)
  ‘Here is water.’

(25) ána géni ma úwo, yaú ána ríja.
  1SG stay with 3SG then 1SG come.back
  ‘I stayed with him, and then I came back.’

Returning to our topic, yaú as a focus marker can occur before nominal (and adjectival) predicates. This construction is a problem that is discussed later in Section 4.1.

(26) a. dé kélib.
  DEM dog
  ‘This is a dog.’

b. dé yaú kélib.
  DEM FOC dog
  ‘THIS (not ‘that’) is a dog.’

3.2. Syntactic value of yaú-focus

3.2.1. yaú-focus and movement

In parallel to fí-focus, the left-dislocation of the yaú-focused element is obligatory, as shown in (27). For example, the subject of a passive verb cannot occur in situ with yaú-focus. Additionally, as shown in (28), yaú-focus cannot occur in the non-finite clause in the same way as fí-focus can.

(27) a. azil-ú [zôl dē] wozîr.
  select-PASS [person DEM] minister
  ‘This person was elected for the minister.’

b. [zôl dē yaú] azil-ú wozîr.
  [person DEM FOC] select-PASS minister
  ‘THIS PERSON (not others) was elected for the minister.’

c.*azil-ú [zôl dē yaú] wozîr.
  select-PASS [person DEM FOC] minister
Another important point is, the subtle syntactic asymmetry: the subject can be focused by *yaú* by all the author’s informants, but for non-subject NPs, the informants disagreed as to whether they can be focused by *yaú*. Taking (29a) as the base, *yaú* focuses the subject of a sentence as in (29b), without problem.

(29) a. ána wodí le jôn gurûs.
   1SG give DAT John money
   ‘I gave John money.’

b. *[ána *yaú]* wodí le jôn gurûs.
   [1SG FOC] give DAT John money
   ‘I (not others) gave John money.’

However, two young Juba Arabic speakers of the Tenet people disagreed on the non-subject NPs. One could focus the direct/indirect object by *yaú* (obligatorily left-dislocated), but the other judged that it requires relativization (by *al* ‘REL’ and optional demonstrative *dé* to mark relative clause ending) of the predicate as in (29c–d). In addition, they also disagreed on non-argument NPs shown in (30)–(31) in the same way.6

(29) c. *[jôn *yaú]* *(al)* ána wodí le úwo gurûs.
   [John FOC] (REL) 1SG give DAT 3SG money
   ‘I gave JOHN money.’

d. *[gurûs *yaú]* *(al)* ána wodí le jôn.
   [money FOC] (REL) 1SG give DAT John
   ‘I gave John MONEY.’

(30) gába *yaú* *(al)* úmon rûwa fógo *(dê)*.
    forest FOC (REL) 3PL go LOC.3SG (DEM)
    ‘They went to the FOREST (not other places).’

---

6 For other constituents that are not nouns, the grammaticality of *yaú*-focus seems to be unstable. For example, as the following examples show, an adverb (i) and a gerund (ii) are not commonly focused by *yaú*. (i) ? wên *yaú* úmon rûwa. (gloss: where FOC 3PL go) ‘WHERE did they go?’ (ii) ? *karâbu* *yaú* úmon gi âmulu. (gloss: destroy.GER FOC 3PL IMPERF do) ‘They are doing DESTRUCTION.’
3.2.2. Syntactic strangeness of \textit{yaú}-focus

The relativization of the predicate in a \textit{yaú}-focus sentence is, however, not limited to non-subject NPs. As the next example (22b) shows, the subject focused by \textit{yaú} can be followed by a relativized predicate. Moreover, the demonstrative \textit{dé} optionally occurs in front of the NP focused by \textit{yaú}, as shown in (22c–f).

(22)’

a. \textit{nakáao} \textit{yaú} \textit{dígu} \textit{rió}.

b. \textit{nakáao} \textit{yaú} \textit{al} \textit{dígu} \textit{rió} \textit{(dé)}.

c. \textit{dé} \textit{nakáao} \textit{dígu} \textit{rió}.

d. \textit{dé} \textit{nakáao} \textit{yaú} \textit{dígu} \textit{rió}.

e. \textit{dé} \textit{nakáao} \textit{al} \textit{dígu} \textit{rió} \textit{(dé)}.

f. \textit{dé} \textit{nakáao} \textit{yaú} \textit{al} \textit{dígu} \textit{rió} \textit{(dé)}.

\begin{tabular}{lllll}
\textit{DEM} & \textit{Nakao} & \textit{(FOC)} & \textit{(REL)} & \textit{IMPERF} \textit{hit} \textit{Rio} \textit{(DEM)}
\end{tabular}

‘NAKAO (not others) is hitting Rio.’ / ‘It is Nakao who is hitting Rio.’

Examples (22c–f)’ seem strange when we compare them to the cross-linguistically typical ‘cleft sentences,’ namely because the syntactic position of \textit{yaú} is never filled.

In addition, time adverbs (e.g., \textit{umbári} ‘yesterday’), TAM adverbs (\textit{kán} ‘PAST’ and \textit{kedé} ‘SUBJUNCTIVE’), and the modal particle (\textit{ma} ‘EMPHATIC’) can intervene between the focalized NP and the focus marker \textit{yaú}. Although, these adverbial elements themselves are actually not focused by \textit{yaú}, as shown in (32c), (33c), (34b), and (35b). In contrast, a prepositional phrase cannot intervene in this position, as shown in (36).

(32)’

a. \textit{úwo} \textit{yaú} \textit{rúwa fí gába} \textit{umbári}.

b. \textit{úwo} \textit{yaú} \textit{umbári} \textit{rúwa fí gába}.

c. \textit{úwo} \textit{umbári} \textit{yaú} \textit{rúwa fí gába}.

d. \textit{umbári} \textit{úwo} \textit{yaú} \textit{rúwa fí gába}.

\begin{tabular}{lllll}
\textit{yest.} & \textit{3SG} & \textit{(FOC)} & \textit{(yest.)} & \textit{go LOC} \textit{forest} \textit{(yest.)}
\end{tabular}

‘HE went to the forest yesterday.’ (*‘He went to the forest YESTERDAY’

\newpage

\begin{thebibliography}{99}

\bibitem{ref1}
\bibitem{ref2}
\bibitem{ref3}
\bibitem{ref4}
\bibitem{ref5}
\bibitem{ref6}
\bibitem{ref7}
\bibitem{ref8}
\bibitem{ref9}

\end{thebibliography}
(33) a. úwo yaú rúwa fi gába kán.
b. úwo yaú kán rúwa fi gába.
c. úwo kán yaú rúwa fi gába.
d. kán úwo yaú rúwa fi gába.
(PAST) 3SG (PAST) FOC (PAST) go LOC forest (PAST)
‘HE has been to the forest before.’ (*‘He has been to the forest BEFORE.’)

(34) a. úwo yaú kedé rúwa fi gába.
b. úwo kedé yaú rúwa fi gába.
c. kedé úwo yaú rúwa fi gába.
(SUBJ) 3SG (SUBJ) FOC (SUBJ) go LOC forest
‘Let HIM (not others) go to the forest.’ (*‘LET him go to the forest.’)

(35) a. úwo yaú ma rúwa fi gába.
b. úwo ma yaú rúwa fi gába.
c. ma úwo yaú rúwa fi gába.
(EMPH) 3SG (EMPH) FOC (EMPH) go LOC forest
‘(You must know,) HE went to the forest.’

(36) * úwo fi gába yaú rúwa.
3SG LOC forest FOC go
‘It is he who went to the forest.’

More interestingly, the negative particle (má ‘NEG’) can occur directly after yaú (37a), between the focalized NP and yaú (37b), and between sentence-initial demonstrative dé (which is obligatorily introduced in this construction, probably because the negative particle má usually leads a predicate, and requires a syntactic subject) and the focalized NP without a clear semantic distinction. The negative particle má canonically occurs in the pre-predicate position and cannot precede any adverbs as shown in (38b). Thus, the construction in (37b) is strange even in Juba Arabic.

(37) a. (dé) úwo yaú má rúwa fi gába.
b. (dé) úwo má yaú rúwa fi gába.
c. dé má úwo yaú (al) rúwa fi gába (dé).
DEM (NEG) 3SG (NEG) FOC (REL) (NEG) go LOC forest (DEM)
‘HE did not go to the forest.’
(38) a. úwo kán mâ kûruju lûbiya.
   b./*úwo mâ kán kûruju lûbiya.

   3SG (NEG) PAST (NEG) cultivate cowpea
   ‘He had not cultivated cowpeas.’

From the above observations, it can be concluded that the syntactic position of focal yau does not allow us to regard it as a ‘(focus) copula,’ in the same way as other similar focus constructions in African languages (cf. 1.1).7

3.3. Semantic/Pragmatic value of yau-focus

Turning to the topic of the semantic/pragmatic value of yau-focus, let us discuss potential questions arising in (39) in terms of yau-sensitive constructions and contexts.

(39) a. Does yau-focus mark exhaustivity?
   b. Does yau-focus mark new information?
   c. In what kind of context is yau-focus preferred?

First, for question (39a), the NPs modified by iya ‘any’ cannot be focused by yau, as shown in (40) and (41). This fact seems to reject the notion that yau-focus marks exhaustivity of the focused NP.

(40) a. iya zôl bi ákider já íni.
   b.*iya zôl yau bi ákider já íni.

   any person (FOC) IRR can come here
   ‘Any person can come here.’

(41) a. úwo bi ákulu íya ákil.
   b.*[iya ákil] yau (al) úwo bi ákulu.

   [any food] FOC (REL) 3SG IRR eat
   ‘S/he eats any food.’

Actually, Juba Arabic has adverbs to mark exhaustivity, such as barâu ‘alone/only’ and bês ‘just/only.’ Such adverbs do co-occur with yau-focus as in (42a, b), but marking by yau-focus is not obligatory (42c). In contrast, the adverb kamân ‘also, too’ can co-occur

---

7 Also, Miller (1987) states that yau functions as a copula when it is followed by a nominal/adjectival predicate. However, this statement should not be instantly rejected, and we will discuss a similar observation in Section 4.1.
with *yaú*, as in (43). These examples may allow us to assume that *yaú*-focus does not exactly mark exhaustivity.

\[
(42) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
\text{a. } & \text{úwo } \text{yaú } \text{barâu } \text{bêś } \text{rùwa } \text{fi } \text{gába.} \\
\text{b. } & \text{úwo } \text{barâu } \text{bêś } \text{yaú } \text{rùwa } \text{fi } \text{gába.} \\
\text{c. } & \text{úwo } \text{barâu } \text{bêś } \text{rùwa } \text{fi } \text{gába.} \\
\end{array}
\]

3SG (FOC) alone just (FOC) go LOC forest

‘Only HE went to the forest.’

\[
(43) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
\text{a. } & \text{úwo } \text{yaú } \text{kamân } \text{rùwa } \text{fi } \text{gába.} \\
\text{b. } & \text{úwo } \text{kamân } \text{yaú } \text{rùwa } \text{fi } \text{gába.} \\
\end{array}
\]

3SG (also) FOC (also) go LOC forest

‘HE also went to the forest.’

Turning to the next question in (39b), if *yaú*-focus marks that the focalized NP is new information, one would expect the elements occurring after *yaú*-focus to be given information. In the next example, *yaú*-focus clearly marks only the new information (i.e., Hare).

\[
(44) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
\text{a. } & \text{Presupposition: (in a folktale) Fox did not know who stole his cowpea.} \\
\text{b. } & \text{taraú, árnab } \text{yaú } \text{séregu } \text{lùbiya } \text{ tô.} \\
& \text{in.fact hare FOC steal cowpea POSS.3SG} \\
& \text{‘In fact, HARE (not others) <NEW> stole his cowpea <GIVEN>.’} \\
\text{c.?taraú, árnab } \text{séregu } \text{lùbiya } \text{ tô.} \\
& \text{in.fact hare steal cowpea POSS.3SG} \\
& \text{‘In fact, HARE (not others) stole his cowpea.’} \\
\end{array}
\]

However, contradictorily, the next example in (45) shows that *fi*-focus (which marks new information) can be included in the predicate part of the *yaú*-focus construction.

\[
(45) \quad \begin{array}{ll}
\text{dé } \text{yaú } \text{úfura } \text{al } \text{fi } \text{zôl } \text{áfura } \text{umbári.} \\
\text{DEM FOC hole REL EXS person dig yesterday} \\
& \text{‘This is the hole that a certain person dug yesterday.’} \\
\end{array}
\]

Thus, if *yaú*-focus does not exactly mark exhaustivity or new information, what kind of focus is *yaú*-focus? The third question (39c) can be answered by examining the construction and context wherein *yaú*-focus preferably occurs.
First, since Juba Arabic has no morphological device to mark comparative or superlative, *yaú*-focus is instead used to mark similar concepts, as shown in (46).

(46) úwo *yaú* wêled towil shedîd fi fêsîl tómon.

3SG FOC boy tall very LOC class POSS.3PL

‘HE is the tallest boy in their class.’

When counterfactual and factual events are contrasted in a complex/compound sentence (optionally marked by *bidal* ‘instead’), *yaú*-focus is preferred as in (47).

(47) a. *bidal* úwo *yaú* kán bi já le ána,

instead 3SG FOC PAST IRR come DAT 1SG

lakín méri *yaú* já.

but Mary FOC come

‘He would have come to me, but (actually) Mary came instead of him.’

b. kán sultân *yaú* bi mútu,

PAST chief FOC IRR die

lakín kèlib dé *yaú* mútu.

but dog DEM FOC die

‘The chief was to die, but (instead) the dog died.’

In addition to these constructions, there are several contexts wherein *yaú*-focus is preferred. The next examples show that *yaú*-focus is preferred when the speaker is required to ‘choose’ something instead of other possible alternatives. In (48a), the speaker contrasts a ‘small (bottle of) water’ to a ‘large’ one, and in (49), ‘Mama Rose’ is contrasted to other persons who cooked.

(48) a. móyo abu sukêr *yaú* kwês.

water REL small FOC good

‘Small (bottle of) water is good. (It suits my needs.)’

b. móyo abu sukêr (úwo) kwês.

water REL small (3SG) good

‘(Generally speaking) Small (bottle of) water is good.’

(49) a. ána dêr mulâ al mama-rôz *yaú* rákabu.

1SG want stew REL Mama-Rose FOC cook

‘I want the stew that Mama Rose (and no other) cooked.’
b.?ána dêr mulâ al mama-rôz rákabu.
1SG want stew REL Mama-Rose cook
‘I want the stew that Mama Rose cooked.’

In addition to the choosing context, *yaú*-focus is preferred for counter-arguments. In the next example, speaker B gainsays the utterance made by speaker A.

(50) A. íta wóduru wên?
2SG get.lost where
‘Where were you lost? (Where were you, I did not see you for a while).’

B. ãna fí. íta *yaú* wóduru.
1SG EXS 2SG FOC get.lost
‘I have been around here. YOU were lost. (I did not see YOU for a while)’

From all the examples examined in this section, it should be concluded that *yaú*-focus paraphrastically means ‘the very [NP] followed by *yaú*, not the other possible alternatives which are associated with the [NP].’

In the next section, we examine this conclusion by means of interrogative sentences with/without *yaú*- and *fí*-focus.

4. Focus constructions and interrogative sentences

4.1. Interrogatives and *yaú*-focus

As discussed in Section 3.3, *yaú*-focus marks non-alternativeness of the focalized NP. Accordingly, *yaú*-focus frequently occurs in content-interrogative sentences. At first glance, the focalization of interrogatives by *yaú*-focus seems optional, as (51a) and (51b) are semantically and pragmatically the same.

(51) a. íta ákulu sunú?
2SG eat what
b. sunú *yaú* (al) íta ákulu?
what FOC (REL) 2SG eat
‘What (single thing) did you eat?’

---

8 In this sense, the function of *yaú*-focus in Juba Arabic seems to conform to the definition of “focus” in the alternative semantics (cf. Hartmann, Jacob & Zimmermann 2008).
However, when the interrogative is modified by focus adverbs, e.g., bès ‘just/only,’ yaú-focus is obligatorily utilized as in (52), and NPs that are not the interrogatives in a sentence cannot be focalized by yaú-focus as in (53). Also, the interrogative argument can remain in situ after yaú-focus only when the sentence contains two interrogatives, but in this construction, only the subject can be focused by yaú, as shown in (54).

(52)  a. íta ákulu sunú bès?
     2sg eat what just
b. sunú bès yaú (al) íta ákulu?
     what only FOC (REL) 2SG eat
     ‘Only what did you eat?’

(53)  * íta yaú ákulu sunú?
     2SG FOC eat what

(54)  a. munú (yaú) jíbu sunú umbári?
     who (FOC) bring what yesterday
     ‘Who brought what yesterday?’
   b. *sunú yaú (al) munú jíbu umbári?
     what FOC (REL) who bring yesterday

In contrast, when the predicate of the yaú-focus is nominal/adjectival, as introduced in Section 3.1, yaú-focus can precede interrogatives (i.e., predicate) as in examples (55b) and (56b). What is more interesting, the interrogatives cannot be left-dislocated or marked by yaú-focus in such constructions, as in (55c–d) and (56 c–d).

(55)  a. ísim táki munú?
     name POSS.2SG who
     ‘What (literally, Who) is your name?’
   b. ísim táki yaú munú?
     name POSS.2SG FOC who
     ‘What is your name?’
   c. *munú ísim táki?
     who name POSS.2SG
   d. *munú yaú ísim táki?
     who FOC name POSS.2SG
Moreover, there is another type of asymmetry that is related to the problem above. The topic of the sentence cannot be focused by *yaú* when it is followed by a verbal predicate as in (57), but *yaú*-focus can mark the topic as in (58b) and a subject NP after a topic as in (58c) when they are followed by a nominal/adjectival predicate.

(56) a. shókol tô sunú?
    job POSS.3SG what
    ‘What is his job?’

    b. *?shókol tô *yaú* sunú?
    job POSS.3SG FOC what
    ‘What is his job?’

    c. *sunú shókol tô?
    what job POSS.3SG

    d. *sunú *yaú* shókol tô?
    what FOC job POSS.3SG

Moreover, there is another type of asymmetry that is related to the problem above. The topic of the sentence cannot be focused by *yaú* when it is followed by a verbal predicate as in (57), but *yaú*-focus can mark the topic as in (58b) and a subject NP after a topic as in (58c) when they are followed by a nominal/adjectival predicate.

(57) a. súzi, jéna tô dúgu jéna taí.
    Suzy child POSS.3SG hit child POSS.1SG
    ‘As for Suzy, her child hit my child.’

    b. *(dé) súzi yaú jéna tô dúgu jéna taí.
    (DEM) Suzy FOC child POSS.3SG hit child POSS.1SG

(58) a. fil dé, ída tô towîl.
    elephant DEM hand POSS.3SG long
    ‘As for this elephant, its trunk is long.’

    b. *(de) fil dé yaú ída tô towîl.
    (DEM) elephant DEM FOC hand POSS.3SG long
    ‘As for this ELEPHANT (not others), its trunk is long.’

    c. fil dé, *(dé) ída tô yaú towîl.
    elephant DEM (DEM) hand POSS.3SG FOC long
    ‘As for this elephant, its TRUNK (not legs, ears, etc.) is long.’

These facts may allow us to conclude that the syntactic distribution of *yaú*-focus depends on whether the predicate is verbal or nominal/adjective.
4.2. Answering typical content-interrogative sentences with yaú-focus

We have discussed the unobligatoriness of yaú-focus in (content-)interrogative sentences in the above section. As we might expect, yaú-focus is also unobligatory for answering. As (59) shows, yaú-focus just optionally occurs in an answer to an interrogative sentence containing yaú-focus.

(59) Q. munú yaú ákulu lúbiya dé?
   who FOC eat cowpea DEM
   ‘Who ate the cowpeas?’
   A₁. sultán yaú ákulu lúbiya dé.
       chief FOC eat cowpea DEM
   A₂. sultán ákulu lúbiya dé.
       chief eat cowpea DEM
   ‘The chief ate the cowpeas.’

The non-exhaustiveness of yaú-focus (cf. 3.3) can also be tested in an answer to an interrogative sentence. When presented with the presupposition in (60) and questions in (60’) and (60)” prepared by the author, one of the author’s informants answered as follows. In these answers, only the first nominated NP is marked by yaú-focus.

(60) There was a ceremony. The attendants were ministers, officers, and artists. In addition, the president and bishops were also invited, but they did not come.

(60’) Q. munú yaú já?
   who FOC come
   ‘Who came?’
   A. wúzara yaú já, nàs kÚbàr ta makáštib já,
       minister.PL FOC come people big.PL POSS office.PL come
   fanan-İn kamán já, wa nàs kán ketír.
       artist-PL also come and people PAST many
   ‘The ministers came, the big-mans in the office came, the artists came, and the people [there] were a lot.’

(60)” Q. munú yaú má já?
   who FOC NEG come
   ‘Who did not come [to the festival]?’
   A. reîs yaú má já, wa bîshop má já.
       president FOC NEG come and bishop NEG come
“The president did not come, and the bishop did not come.”

In another interesting case, an informant answered the question prepared by the author (61) as follows. In this example, the predicate of the question-sentence and answer-sentence disagree, and actually the predicate in the answer contains new information, cf. (44).

(61) Q. *sunú yaú kárabu?*

    what FOC break.down

‘What broke down?’

A. *listik yaú gídu.*

tire FOC get.pierced

‘The tire (of my car) is punctured.’

4.3. Answering interrogative sentences with *fí-* and *yaú-*focus

In addition to the matters discussed above, there is another type of content-interrogative sentence that requires an answer in which the entire sentence is focused (all elements in the answering sentence are new information). As we have seen, *fí-*focus can mark sentence-focus, wherein all the constituents in a sentence are new information.

As a result, all sentences without focus (A₁), with *fí-*focus (A₂), with *yaú-*focus (A₃), and with both focus markers (A₄) could be used to answer an interrogative sentence as in (62).

(62) Q. *malú?*

    what’s.up

‘What’s up?’

A₁. *arabíya tai kárabu.*

A₂ *fí arabíya tai kárabu.*

A₃ *arabíya tai yaú kárabu.*

A₄ *fí arabíya tai yaú kárabu.*

(ExS) car POSS.1SG FOC break.down

‘My car broke down.’

In addition, there is another possible type of interrogative sentence wherein the interrogative is marked by *fí-*focus. To answer this type of interrogative sentence, as in
(63), — *yaú*-focus (A₁), *fí*-focus (A₂), and both focus markers (A₃) can be used in a similar way to (62).

(63) Q. *fí* munú bi ákulu lúbiya?
   EXS who IRR eat cowpea
   ‘Will anyone eat cowpea?’

A₁. sultân *yaú* bi ákulu lúbiya.
A₂. *fí* sultân bi ákulu lúbiya.
A₃. *fí* sultân *yaú* bi ákulu lúbiya.

(59)’ Q. munú *yaú* ákulu lúbiya dé?
   who FOC eat cowpea DEM
   ‘Who ate the cowpeas?’

A₃.*fí* sultân ákulu lúbiya dé.
EXS chief eat cowpea DEM
A₄.*fí* sultân *yaú* ákulu lúbiya dé.
EXS chief FOC eat cowpea DEM

5. Conclusion

Given our discussion of the focus constructions in Juba Arabic, the syntactic and semantic/pragmatic value of *fí*-focus (with *máfí*-focus) and *yaú*-focus can be summarized as follows, thus answering questions [2] and [3] raised in Section 1.1.

[2]’ a. *yaú*-focus [NP *yaú*] and *fí*-focus [/fí NP] obligatorily left-dislocate the focalized element in a sentence, cf. (18) and (27).
   b. *fí*-focus can be schematically represented as [/fí NP] + predicate, cf. 2.3.

---

9 Although the data is lacking, this question could be answered as ‘No man will eat cowpea.’
c. *yaú*-focus can be schematically represented, according to the nature of the focalized NP and predicate of *yaú*-focus (cf. 3.2 and 4.1), as:

i. \([(\text{DEM}) \text{subject NP (ADV) } yaú] + (\text{REL +}) \text{ verbal predicate}\\ (\text{The predicate cannot contain an INTERR.})\\

ii. \([(\text{DEM}) \text{non-subject NP (ADV) } yaú] + (\text{REL +}) \text{ verbal predicate}\\ (\text{The predicate cannot contain an INTERR, and it is obligatorily relativized according to the idiolect.})\\

iii. \((\text{TOP +}) [(\text{DEM}) \text{subject NP } yaú] + \text{nominal/adjectival predicate}\\ (\text{The predicate can contain an INTERR.})\\

iv. \([(\text{DEM}) \text{TOP } yaú] + \text{subject NP + nominal/adjectival predicate}\\

[3]’ a. *fi*-focus only marks indefinite NPs (new information, cf. 2.2), but *yaú*-focus marks any NP including those marked by *fi*-focus (cf. 4.3).

b. *yaú*-focus marks non-alternativeness of the focused NP (paraphrastically, ‘the very [NP] followed by *yaú*, not the other possible alternatives which are associated with the [NP]’), cf. 3.3 and 4.2.

c. *fi*-focus marks both sentence-focus and/or argument-focus, cf. 2.2, 2.3, and 4.3.

Additionally, the first question can be answered briefly as follows:

[1]’ *yaú*-focus and *fi*-focus seem to have been grammaticalized from existential lexemes, namely *yaú* ‘here is/are’ and *fi* ‘there is/are,’ whose cognate forms are also seen in the lexifier, Sudanese Colloquial Arabic, cf. 1.1 and 1.3.

As shown in Section 2.1, *fi*-focus clearly shows the exact grammaticalization path shown in (64). Although it is not introduced in this paper, a precedent for similar grammaticalization seems to exist, for example, in Chinese (Li & Thompson 1989: 509–519).

\[(64) \text{ EXISTENTIAL > FOCUS MARKER}\\

However, in contrast, the grammaticalization path of *yaú*-focus seems to require more discussion, since it is not likely that *yaú*-focus followed the path shown in (64) from the crosslinguistic perspective.

As we have discussed in 4.1 (cf. [2c]’), there is a syntactic asymmetry whereby the verbal predicate cannot contain an interrogative, while the nominal/adjectival predicate can. Also note that a non-subject argument is (idiolectally) required to relativize the
verbal predicate as discussed in 3.2. In this sense, the *yaú*-focus on a subject NP followed by the nominal/adjectival predicate (i.e., [2c, iii’]) has experienced the most stable grammaticalization (namely, it can be accounted for as a focus copula in this construction), and it later expanded its use as *yaú*-focus on a subject (i.e., [2c, i’]), that on a non-subject (i.e., [2c, ii’]) and that on a topic (i.e., [2c, iv’]). If these facts are taken into consideration, it should be concluded that *yaú* first grammaticalized from (focus) existential into (focus) copula, and then from (focus) copula into focus marker as shown in (65). This two-step process seems to meet the crosslinguistically usual path to grammaticalization, as proposed by Heine & Kuteva (2002).

(65) a. (FOCUS) EXISTENTIAL > FOCUS COPULA
cf. Heine & Kuteva 2002: 99, LOCATIVE COPULA > EQUIVATIVE COPULA
b. FOCUS COPULA > FOCUS MARKER
cf. Heine & Kuteva 2002: 95, COPULA > FOCUS

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 the first, second, third person
ADV adverb
CAUS causative verb
DAT dative (preposition)
DEF definite particle
DEM demonstrative
EMPH emphatic modal particle (= *ma*)
EXS existential (= *fí*)
NEG.EXS negative existential (= *máfí*)
INTERR.EXS interrogative existential (= *wenú ~ wonú*)
FOC.EXS focus existential (= existential *yaú*)
F female
FOC focus (= *yaú*-focus)
INTERR interrogative
IMPERF realis imperfect TAM marker (= *gí*)
IRR irrealis imperfect TAM marker (= *bí*)
LOC locative (preposition)
M male
NEG negative
NP noun phrase
References