# Focus Marking Strategies in Kusaal

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# Aim

- This presentation explores focus marking strategies in Kusaal and will formulate a hypothetic generalization explicating the concept.

# Questions

- How are focus notions coded in Kusaal?

- What asymmetry can be drawn between Subject and Non-Subject Focus in Kusaal?

- What generalization can be made regarding focus marking in Kusaal?

# Methothology

- The discussion follows the order below:
- Background on the Kusaal language
- The notion of focus
- Test for focus
- Focus coding strategies in Kusaal
- Asymmetry between subject and non-subject focus in Kusaal
- Generalization on focus marking strategies in Kusaal
- Conclusion

# Tone in Kusaal

❑ Kusaal is a tonal language with evidence of three level tones: High (H), Mid (M) and Low (L) with a further downstep high tone (Bodomo &Abubakari 2017; Musah 2010; Spratt and Spratt 1968 and Niggli 2014).

❑ Tone is phonémic in Kusaal

(1)

| bāŋ | 'know (v)' | báŋ | 'bracelet/trap' | bàŋ | 'agama lizard' |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| bōk | 'to divine' | búk | 'to be weak' | bùk | to subside e.g. from anger' |
| kà | 'focus particle' | ká | ,and' | ká | ,that' |

# Sentence structure/word order

❑ Kusaal is strictly an SVO language with a simple sentence showing the following order:

➤ Subject NP (preverbal particles)-main verb- (postverbal particle) Object NP Adjuncts

(2) Dáú    lá    sà    dī    nέ    dííb    lá.

man    DEF    PAST    eat    FOC    food    DEF

'It is the food that the man ate yesterday (not say the fruit).'

# Preverbal and Postverbal Particles in Kusaal

| | Particles | gloss | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Time Depth | pàˈà | immediate past | Preverbal Particles |
| | sà | past (yesterday) | |
| | dàà | past (two days ago/less than a year) | |
| | dà | remote past (more than a year) | |
| | ὲὲntì | used to | |
| | nàn | yet to (future) | |
| Polarity | bò | negative | |
| | pʋ́ | | |
| Tense+Polarity | nà | future positive | |
| | kʋ̀ | future negative | |
| Mood | yáˈá | if/when | |
| | kừn/pừn | just | |
| Mood + Polarity | dá | negative imperative (present /future) | |
| | sáá | positive imperative (future) | |
| Others | sìd | actually, really | |
| | pừn | already | |
| | lέm | again | |
| Focus | kà | contrastive focus | Ex-situ |
| | nέ | " | In-situ |
| | ń | " | " |
| Other | lá | marker of assertion | Clause Final Determiner |

# The Notion of Focus

- The definition of focus adopted here is an amalgamation of Rooth (1992, 1996) and É. Kiss (1998).

- All focus constructions in Kusaal are understood to evoke alternatives out of which one is chosen.

- The morphological or syntactic mode of focus expression in Kusaal is directly linked to a particular focus interpretation.

# The Notion of Focus

- Assuming a context where a stranger wants to buy medicine in town and wants to find where that can be possible.

(3) a.Q:  Yà   ká   bà   kūōs   tíˈímá   Bɔ́k?

    where FOC 3PL sell medicine Bawku

      'Where do they sell medicine in Bawku?'

  b. Ans.1:  Bà   kūōs   tíˈímá   dáˈán   lá.

      3PL sell medicine market. LOC DEF

    'They sell medicine in the market/you can buy medicine in the market.' (new information)

# The Notion of Focus

c. Ans.2: # Bà kūōs    tíˈímá        **nɛ́**    dáˈán        lá.

      3PL sell    medicine        FOC    market.LOC    DEF

    'They sell medicine IN THE MARKET/It is in the market that they sell medicine.' (contrastive focus)

# Focus particles in Kusaal

❑ Focus particles are particles that mark focus, but otherwise have no meaning.

❑ Focus particles in Kusaal: *kà*, *ń* and *nɛ́*

❖ *kà*...............................*Ex-situ Non-Subject Focus particle*

❖ *ń*...........................In-situ Subject Focus Particle

❖ *nɛ́*...............................*In-situ Non-Subject Focus Particle*

# The particle *kà*

(4) a. Q: Bɔ́bʊ́n     kà     pʊ́ˈá    lá     sà     dā̄?

        what   FOC      woman DEF    PAST    buy

        'What did the woman buy?'


   b.   Súmá̄         lá    kà     pʊ́ˈá    lá     sà     dā̄.

  groundnut        DEF   FOC     woman DEF    PAST   buy

       'It's the groundnut the woman bought.'


   c.   * Súmá̄     lá    Ø         pʊ́ˈá    lá     sà     dā̄.

      groundnut   DEF FOC         woman DEF     PAST    buy

       Lit.:   'it's the groundnut the woman bought.'

# The particle ǹ

(5) Dáú     bɛ́     dɔ́ɔ́gín     lá.

    man     EXIST    room.LOC     DEF

    'There is a man in the room.'

(6) Dáú     ń     bɛ́     dɔ́ɔ́gín     lá.

    man    FOC     EXIST   room.LOC     DEF

   'It is a man that is in the room (rather than a woman).'

'That is a brave man in the room (not a coward (man)).'

# The particle nɛ́

- Assuming a context where a school child is seen crying by the road side with a friend standing by him. A passer by asks to know what is wrong with the child as in (7a), and another gives the response in (7b) but the friend of the child corrects the wrong answer with the response in (7c).

(7) a. Bɔ́     dá˥ámìd          bííg     láá?

      what   worry            child   DEF

        'What is wrong with the child?'

# The particle nɛ́

b. Kɔ́m        mɔ̄r     ò.

hunger        have    3SG

'He is hungry'


c. Àyéí,  kɔ́mpʋ̀       mɔ̄r   ò,        ò        lígídɛ́  bɔ̄rɩ́g     nɛ́.

no,  hunger NEG    have    3SG,  3SG.POSS money lose    FOC

'No, he is not hungry; IT IS HIS MONEY THAT IS MISSING /LOST.'

# Test for Focus: Natural/ Spontaneous Context

- This test involves the creation of contexts or scenarios where speakers are presented with situations that will naturally incite/elucidate responses with exhaustive focus interpretations. Another angle is to present speakers with utterances with focus interpretation and ask their intuitions about when these utterances could be used felicitously or more naturally (Van der Wal (2013:5).

# Natural/ Spontaneous Context

- Context 1a: There are two people, a man and a woman, which one of them bought a goat? (contrast/ exhaustivity)

- Context 1b:You expect the woman to buy a goat (correction, unexpectedly)

(8) Dáʊ́     lá       ń       sá      da ̄         búʊ́g.

   man       DEF    FOC    PAST   buy.PERF      goat

   'It is the man that bought a goat.'

# Weak Quantifiers

- The indefinite quantifiers *síʼá/ síébá* 'some' and *bíʼél/bíʼélá* 'a few' cause a narrow focus interpretation anytime they co-occur with the focus particles *kà, ń* and *nɛ́* in Kusaal.

- This, as also observed by (Skopeteas & Fanselow 2010:1387 cf Van der Wal 2013), is because "the definite quantifiers 'some' and 'a few' are upward entailing, i.e. they imply that the denoted quantity reaches at least a minimum from a scale of potential quantities" (cf Van der Wal 2013:15).

# Weak Quantifiers

(9) Tì   sà̀      pāām              lígídi          lá      síébá́.

  3PL   PAST    get.PERF            money            DEF     some

    'We got the/some of the money'

     (…, so we can solve the problem)

     #(…., so we cannot solve the problem)

- The upward entailment quality of the quantifier in (9) makes it possible to interpret the sentence as 'receiving/getting all the required money or getting at least a substantial amount of the required money which can be used to address the situation at hand'.

# Weak Quantifiers

■ On the contrary when the focus particles *kà, ń* and *nɛ́* are used with the indefinite quantifiers, *si'a/sieba* 'some', the derived interpretation excludes the upward entailing quality of the quantifier resulting in an interpretation with a narrow focus (10b).

# Weak Quantifiers

(10) a. Lígídi   là       síébá   kà       tì       sá       pāām.

      money   DEF     some   FOC     3PL     PAST    get

        'It is some/part of the money we got'

    b.Tì       sà       pāām   nέ       lígídi   lá       síébá.

     3PL     PAST    get     FOC    money  DEF    some

     'It is some/part of the money we got'

     # (…, so we can solve the problem)

     (…., so we cannot solve the problem)

# Part as a whole relationship

- Context: *Asibi* is looking for a child to send on an errand. There are a lot of children playing at the playground. For lack of time, she only wants to get the name of one of them and she finds out from *Akuda*:

(11)     Q: Àsíbí: fʋ̀ mī'ī̄   bánɛ́ dí'émìd     yíŋ     láá?

            2SG   know those   play-IMPERF  outside  LA

            'Do you know those playing outside?'

# Part as a whole relationship

(12) Ans.: a. Àkúdà: έέn,    Àzúmà          bɛ́     bà

　　　　　　　　　　Yes,  Azuma         COP.be their

　　　　　sύύgi-n.

　　　　　middle-LOC

　　　　　　　'Azuma is among them'


b.  Àkúdà: ? έέn,      Àzúma ḿ      bɛ́      bà      sύύgi-n.

　　　　　Yes,      Azuma  FOC   COP.be their    middle-LOC

　　　　　'It is Azuma who is among them.'

# Part as a whole relationship

- *Akuda* in (12a) mentions the name of a child who is among the children who are playing. It will be contradictory as well as illogical to use the exhaustive in-situ subject particle *m(n)*, as in (12b), in this context since it will capture only part of the entire group of children playing outside. What this implies is that the stronger the effect of an exhaustive focus interpretation, whether by implicature or in the semantics, the less appropriate it will be as a response to a mention-some question (see Van der Wal 2013:10).

# Linguistic strategies of expressing Focus in Kusaal

❑ **Morphological marking of focus**

➢ Morphological marking of focus is devoid of any kind of syntactic changes or word order permutations.

(13) Púˈá lá        sà       kūōs    nɛ́    súmá.

    woman DEF     PAST    sell    FOC    groundnut

 'The woman sold GROUNDNUT/It is groundnut the woman sold.'

(14) Dáú    ń      bɛ́    dɔ́ɔ́gín        lá.

    man    FOC    EXIST  room.LOC     DEF

 'It is a man that is in the room (rather than a woman).'

 'That is a brave man in the room (not a coward (man)).'

# Syntactic Focus Marking

❑ Syntactic focus marking involves word order alternation of the focused constituent relative to the other constituents in the sentence (see Fiedler et al 2010:238/9, Heinea and Reh 1984:147).

(15) What did the woman sell: beans or groundnut?

a. Súmá        kà        púˈá        lá  sà    kūōs.

   groundnut   FOC     woman      DEF  PAST   sell

‘It is GOUNDNUT the woman sold.’

# Prosodic Focus Marking

❑ Focus prominence takes different forms cross-linguistically (Selkirk 2004).

Prosodic properties of focused marking (Selkirk 2004:1)

a. appearance of special tonal morphemes

b. appearance of default pitch accent

c. demarcation by a prosodic phrase edge/boundary

d. presence of main stress of a prosodic phrase

e. appearance in a higher pitch range

f. vowel length under main phrasal stress

# Prosodic Focus Marking

❑ Focus is realized by prominence in its focus domain /focus needs to be maximally prominent (Büring 2010:178; (Féry and Ishihara 2010:40)).

❖ **Prosodic properties of focused marking in Kusaal**

➢ presence of main stress on a prosodic phrase

➢ vowel length under main phrasal stress

# Prosodic Focus Marking

❑ All focused constituents/phrases in Kusaal are prominent.

(16) Who beat the child?

a.  A: [Àdúk.ú]                    bū̄     bííg    lá.

    Aduk.Emph                      beat    child   DEF

    'Aduku beat the child. (new information)


b. B. Àyéí,  [Asíbí-í]   ń        bū̄     bííg    lá.

    no            man  DEF   FOC    beat.perf.      child   DEF

    'No, it is the man who beat the child (contrastive focus)

# Asymmetry between Subject and Non-Subject Focus in Kusaal

- A distinction is noticeable in the ways subject and non-subject focused constituents are marked in Kusaal:

- (i) a marking asymmetry, which requires non-subject focused to be marked both in-situ and ex-situ whereas subject focus are marked only in-situ

# Asymmetry between Subject and Non-Subject Focus in Kusaal

- (ii) a prosodic asymmetry which makes it possible for subject focus to use the long forms of nouns as well as final vowel lengthening both of which are not necessary though possible in non-subject focus

- (iii) a structural asymmetry which requires that in-situ non-subject focus is marked differently from ex-situ non-subject focus

# Marking Asymmetry

- Kusaal is partly consistent with the observation of Fiedler et al (2010) that non-subject focus in Mabia, Kwa and Chadic (Hausa) need not be restricted to in-situ and partly defies their claim that NSF cannot or need not be marked syntactically (Fiedler et al 2010:242). Though they did not give an example from a Mabia language, the data below from Hausa is used to support the claim.

# Marking Asymmetry

- Hausa (West Chadic), *optional object marking (Fiedler et al 2010:243)*

(17)   Q: i. What is Kande cooking?

Ans.: a.  Kandeˊ  taˊ-naa  daɗa    **kiifii**    Unmarked NSF

Kande   3SG.F.IPF        cooking          fish

'Kande is cooking (A) FISH.'


ii: Kande is cooking meat.

b.  **Kiifi   (nee)**   Kandeˊ taˊ-kee  daɗaawa      Marked NSF

fish     FM       Kandeˊ 3SG.F-IPF.REL   cooking

'It is (A) FISH that Kande is cooking.'

# Marking Asymmetry

❑ Answering a question similar to (17ii) as in (18ii) in Kusaal, it is obligatory to use *nɛ́* in-situ as in (18b) and *kà* ex-situ as in (18dc).

(18) i. What did Aduk cook?

a.  Àdúk        dū̄g    (nɛ́)    zí'ímí.                    Marked NSF

   Aduk        cook    FOC     fish

   'Aduk cooked FISH/ It is FISH Aduk cooked.'

# Marking Asymmetry

ii. Aduk cooked meat.                                        Marked NSF

b. Àdúk          dǖg      nɛ́      zíˈímí.

   Aduk          cook    FOC    fish

   'Aduk cooked FISH/ It is FISH Aduk cooked.'


c. zíˈímí          kà      Àdúk   dǖg.

   fish          FOC    Aduk   cook

   'Aduk cooked FISH/ It is FISH Aduk cooked.'

❑ NSF cannot be said to be unmarked in Mabia in general and Kusaal to be specific

# Marking Asymmetry

- Additionally, SF in Kusaal is marked both prosodically and morphologically.

(19) a.   Àdúkú        dūg     zími.              Marked SF
          Aduku        cook    fish
     'ADUKU cooked fish/ It is ADUKU [who] cooked fish.'

   b. Àdúkú     ń        dūg              zími.     Marked        SF
      Aduku     FOC      cook             fish
   'ADUKU cooked fish/ It is ADUKU [who] cooked fish.'

# Structural Asymmetry

- Structurally, Kusaal shows strong asymmetry between SF-marking and NSF-marking (see Fierdler et al 2010: 244-6 for other Mabia languages).

- The structural differences in marking SF and NON-SF can be grouped into two:

  ➢ different particles used for in-situ SF and in-situ NSF

  ➢ different particles used for in-situ NSF and ex-situ NSF marking.

# Structural Asymmetry

(20) S: The woman bought the goat.

Ans.: a. Ayei, dáú lá <span style="color:red">ń</span> dāˈ búúg lá.

no, man DEF FOC buy goat DEF

'No it is THE MAN that bought the goat.'

(21) S: The man bought a cow.

b. Dáú lá dāˈ <span style="color:red">nέ</span> búúg lá.

man DEF buy FOC goat DEF

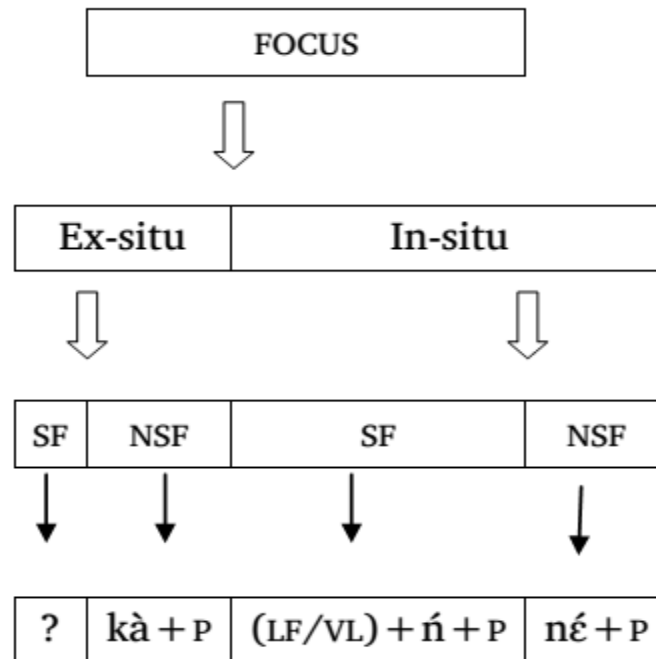' It is A GOAT that the man bought.'

# Structural Asymmetry

(22)  Q: What did the man buy?

    Ans.:  a. Búʋ́g  <span style="color:red">kà</span>  dáú  lá  da̅.

          goat  FOC  man  DEF  buy

          'The man bough A GOAT.'


      b. Dáú  lá  da̅  <span style="color:red">nɛ́</span>  búʋ́g  lá.

          man  DEF  buy  FOC  goat  DEF

          'THE MAN bought the goat.'

# Syntactic, prosodic and morphological focus strategies in Kusaal

# Generalization…

- In general, Kusaal combines three focus marking strategies for focus related information packing.

- Though the language does not have a default focus marker, the particles kà, ń and nɛ́ are used for contrast and exhaustivity.

- All focus constituents are also prominent with additional with additional use of vowel lengthening and vowel insertion for subject focus.

- There are both structural and morphological asymmetries between subject and non-subject focus constituents in Kusaal.

# Conclusion

❑ This discussion has looked at focus marking strategies in Kusaal.

❑ It is observed that Kusaal combines morphological, syntactic and prosodic focus strategies in packaging focus related information.

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# THANK YOU