ASPECTS OF KUSAAL GRAMMAR: THE SYNTAX INFORMATION STRUCTURE INTERFACE

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This dissertation covers two central areas for two fundamental objectives. The first is to provide a general discussion on some aspects of the grammar of Kusaal, a Mabia (Gur) language spoken in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Togo. This is relevant since not much is known in the literature on this language, especially speaking of the Kusaal spoken in Ghana. The section on Kusaal grammar gives a general perspective on the phonology, morphology as well as the syntax of the language.

The second objective is to draw attention to some issues of current interest in both descriptive and theoretical linguistics. Thus, the second section is of more interest to linguists working on information structure as well as those using the Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG) framework (Bresnan et al 2016; Bresnan 2001; Kaplan and Bresnan 1982; Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011etc). Kusaal combines various strategies for packaging discourse related information. Whilst information focus is morphologically null, contrast and exhaustivity is marked using the particles *n*, *nɛ* and *ka* (examples 1-2)

In addition to the above, the dissertation also draws attention to some issues in previous analysis of information structure within the Lexical Functional Grammar framework. It is observed that there are mismatches between the c-structure and the i-structure leading to instances of ambiguities in the interpretations of mostly contrastive focus constructions as opposed to information focus constructions. The i-structure is argued to be inadequately resourced to capture the different subtypes of focus constructions in Kusaal. The i-structure for the information focus construction in (3b) is the same as that of the contrastive focus construction in (4b) although the two have different c-structures and different focus interpretations (3-4). Using prominence to differentiate subtypes of focus, (Choi 1996), does not solve the problem since all focus types receive some degree of prominence in Kusaal (5).

In addressing the above problem, the dissertation provides alternative suggestions by building on the proposals of King (1997) and Choi (1996) and also following the suggestions of Mycock (2006) and more importantly Butt (2014). It is suggested here that an additional predicate attribute referred to as discourse type (DTYPE), with a value that subcategorizes subtypes of focus and topic notions be introduced in the i-structure. DTYPE will have attributes that provide finer grained details of the discourse subtype: contrastive focus, information focus, contrastive topic and familiarity topic. The value for DTYPE will conform with the discourse status of the constituent in question together with the corresponding particle if any or the feature specification of the said discourse status determined by the language in question. Discourse particles or feature specifications will be referred to as discourse form (DFORM). For instance a DTYPE can have the value {contrastive focus} and DFORM of the value {nɛ́} for Kusaal and DTYPE value {contrastive focus} with a corresponding feature specification, thus, DFORM value {+NEW +PROM} for German. The Predicate Funtor (PRED FN) is captured in the i-structure using REF(ERENCE). The i-structures for the sentences in (3b) and (4b) will then be projected as in (6a) and (6b) respectively.The suggested proposal when adopted has a cross linguistic tendency of eradicating ambiguities as well as mismatches in the interpretations of constructions relating to various aspects of information structure.

(1) | Dáú | ń | bɛ́ | dɔ́ɔ́gìn | lá. |
| man | FOC | COP | room.LOC | DEF |

'It is a man that is in the room.' (Contrastive focus)

(2) a. Aduk saw the woman.

b. | Dáú | lá | kà | Àdúk | sà | nyɛ̄. |
| man | DEF | FOC | Aduk | PAST | see |

'It is the man that Aduk saw (not the woman).' (Contrastive focus)
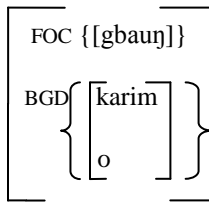

c. | Àdúk | sà | nyɛ̄ | nɛ́ | dáú | lá. |
| Aduk | PAST | see | FOC | man | DEF |

'It is the man that Aduk saw (not the woman).' (Contrastive focus)

(3) Q: What did s/he read?

   Ans.: a. Ò   kārīm   gbáúŋ   lá.
             3SG   read   book   DEF
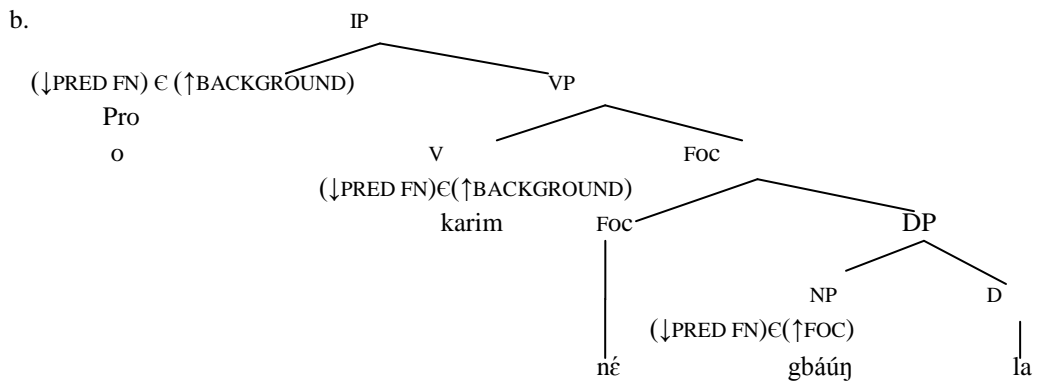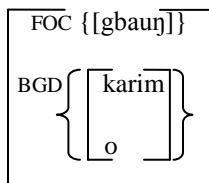   'S/he read the book.' (Information focus)

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                                        IP
              (↓PRED FN) ∈ (↑BACKGROUND)   VP
                      Pro
                       o   V   DP
                                    (↓PRED FN)∈(↑FOC)
                                          karim   NP   D
                                              (↓PRED FN)∈(↑BACKGROUND) |
                                                    gbáúŋ   la

         b. i-structure

         FOC {[gbauŋ]}

         BGD {[karim o]}
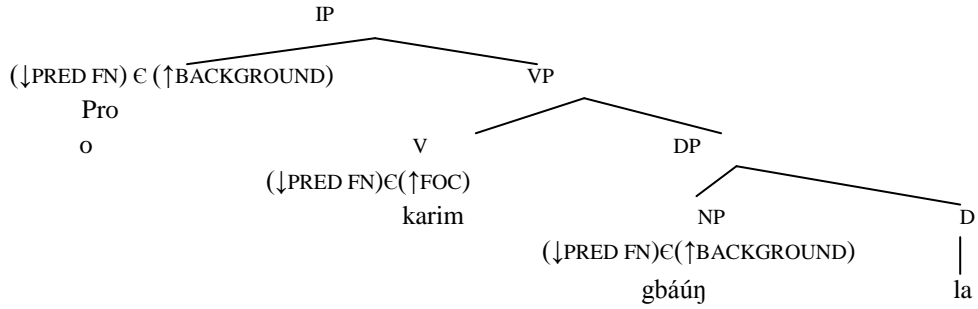
(4) Q: Ò   kārīm   nɛ́   bɔ́?
        3SG   read   FOC   what
        'What (specifically) did s/he read?'

   Ans.: a. Ò   kārīm   nɛ́   gbáúŋ   lá.
             3SG   read   FOC   book   DEF
             'It is the book that s/he read (not the newspaper for instance). (Contrastive focus)

         b.   IP
              (↓PRED FN) ∈ (↑BACKGROUND)   VP
                      Pro
                       o   V   Foc
                                    (↓PRED FN)∈(↑BACKGROUND)
                                          karim   Foc   DP
                                                                    NP   D
                                                            (↓PRED FN)∈(↑FOC)
                                                       nɛ́   gbáúŋ   la

         c. i-structure

   FOC {[gbauŋ]}

         BGD {[karim o]}

(5) Context: Assuming a context where a child is beaten but the culprit is not known. Whilst A in (5a) thinks *the woman beat the child*, B in (5b) thinks *Aduku beat the child* and C in (5c) corrects both A and B by indicating that *it is the man who beat the child*. The use of the long form of the noun *Aduku* instead of *Aduk* is a mark of emphasis accompanied by strong prominence. Though *Aduku* in (5b) is an example of information focus, it is as prominent as *dau la* 'the man' in (5c) which is an example of contrastive focus marked using the subject focus particle *nʹ*. [N=NEW, P=PROMINENCE]

a. [Púˈá   lá]₊N-P   bʊ̄ˈ   bííg   lá.
   woman   DEF   beat   child   DEF
   'The woman beat the child. (Information focus)

b. [Àdúk.ú]₊N+P   bʊˈ   bííg   lá.
   Aduk.Emph.   beat   child   DEF
   'Aduku beat the child. (Information focus)

c. Àyéí,   [dáú   lá]₊N+P   ń   bʊ̄ˈ   bííg   lá.
   no   man   DEF   FOC   beat.perf.   child   DEF
   'No, it is the man who beat the child (not the woman, not Aduk).' (Contrastive focus)

(6)   a. i-structure   b. i-structure
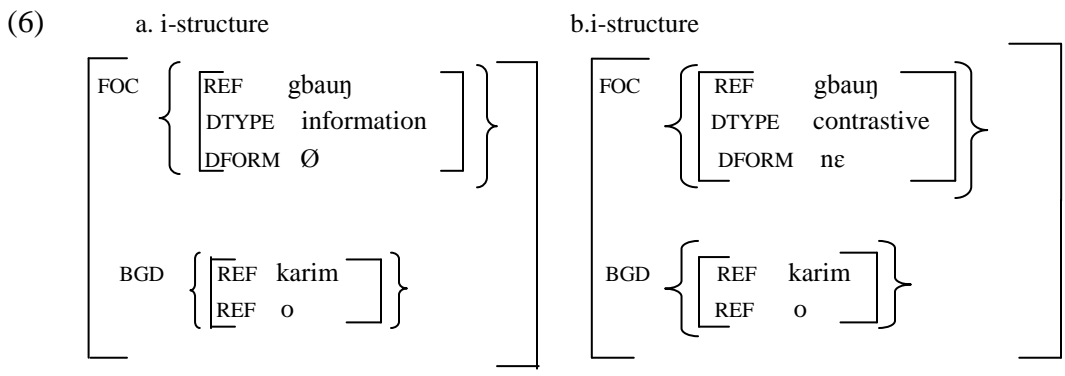
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