THE FOCUS STRUCTURE OF SOMALI

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1. Introduction
1.1 Aims

Although I'm not a practitioner of RRG I am a keen reader of its literature and, as an Africanist an admirer of both the foundational principles and the success in coming up with insightful analyses of a wide range of the languages of the world. More particularly, for this paper, I welcome the project to instantiate the integration of information structure and grammar into the model of language.

In this talk I want to discuss a particular kind of focus system, where pragmatic notions, more specifically information packaging notions like focus and topic are very heavily grammaticalized. This kind of system is found in various versions in the East Cushitic languages of North East Africa, though similar features are found all over Africa. I will use Somali as my example, partly because I know this language best and partly because most of the literature on focus in Cushitic has been on Somali. I have two basic aims:

(a) to try to explain some key syntactic and semantic constraints on focus structures in this kind of focus system; and
(b) to briefly discuss the typological implications

At the level of syntax I briefly examine the relationship between clause structure and focus structure. In the semantics I discuss the implications this system has for relationship between given and new, on the one hand, and presupposition and assertion, on the other. The general aim of the paper is to make clear the interdependence of focus structure and morphosyntax, which supports the RRG approach to information structure.

1.2. Terminology

The discussion of information structure, or packaging, is a terminological minefield so I will begin by defining some basic terms. In discussing Somali and related East Cushitic languages we can define our terms as follows:

By **topic** is meant sentence topic. This is a syntactic position occupied by a constituent whose referent is known and which provides background or contextual knowledge judged by the speaker to be useful to the hearer in comprehending the sentence.

By **focus** is meant a constituent occupying a specific syntactic position and also identified by an accompanying focus morpheme. The focused constituent is marked as of higher salience than non-focused constituents in the same sentence. One typical use of focus is to mark new information in a sentence. Another is to provide contrastive focus on one member of a set, which typically represents old, or given information.

These definitions rely on a distinction between *given* and *new*. Without going into details of different terminology I will assume a distinction between the various types of knowledge in (1a-c):

(1)　(a)　background/common/shared knowledge
　　　(b)　given (Chafe 1976)/ salient (Prince 1981)/activated (Dryer
　　　　　1996) information
　　　(c)　common ground (Clark 1996)

The terms in (1a) can be used to describe the knowledge (or beliefs) that the interlocutors might have independently of or prior to the talk we are examining; while those in (1b) reflect knowledge that is activated in the conversation and thus linguistically signalled in some way. Such signalling, for example, licensing the use of pronouns, has been much studied in the literature (e.g. Gundel et al. 1993 and Walker et al. 1998). For present purposes I leave aside the interaction between (1a), (1b) and other knowledge sources that combine to give rise to what Clark (1996) calls the *common ground* (1c), that is the set of assumptions taken for granted at any particular point in the communicative act.

An important difference between 1a and 1b of course is that the terms in 1a refer to states of knowledge while those in 1b are describe speakers' actions in discourse, i.e. they might be better described in terms of *information packaging* rather than *information structure* (to recall Lambrecht's 1994 discussion). In Halliday's terms they reveal the linguist's interest in meaning rather than knowledge or information; for Halliday linguistic devices:

(2)　"treat 'information' as meaning rather than knowledge and interpret language as a semiotic system, and more specifically as a social semiotic, rather than as a system of the human mind…meaning is a social, intersubjective process. If experience is interpreted as meaning, its construal becomes an act of collaboration, sometimes of conflict, and always of negotiation." (Halliday & Matthiessen 1992:2)

In this discussion I will use the terms *given* and *new* as terms in this process, where given could also be termed activated and new, non-activated, as we shall see. It seems reasonable to allow some kind of gradient between activated and inactivated, for example for referents that are fading from the current centre of attention ('semi-activated' in Dwyer 1996) or for referents that are inferable from activated elements, for which the term accessible is sometimes used (cf. Lambrecht 1994).

One main aim here is to explore the relationship of the grammatical markers of focus in East Cushitic with the notions of given (activated) and new (unactivated). As is well known there has been a strong tendency in the literature to associate focus with the marking of new information (similarly topic is described as marking given/activated information). If I may take just two examples separated in time, in early generative grammar, this was reflected in the oppositional use of the terms *presupposition* and *focus* in for example Jackendoff (1972). In a different, more recent approach Vallduví and Engdahl (1996) make a similar distinction between *ground* (old or known information) and *focus* (new information).

(3)   (a)   *presupposition* and *focus* (Jackendoff 1972)
      (b)   *ground* and *focus* (Vallduví and Engdahl 1996)

Where relevant I'll incorporate Vallduví and Engdahl's terminology to help make a distinction between elements of focus structure on the one hand, and types of pragmatic functions, on the other. So I'll use the terms *ground* and *focus* for the linguistically marked partition of information structure and terms like *presupposing*, *asserting*, *questioning*, for pragmatic functions; as in (4a).

(4)   (a)   *ground* and *focus* vs. *presupposing*, *asserting*, *questioning,* etc.
      (b)   *link* and *tail*

I will discuss grammatical evidence for the relationship between presupposition and the ground in Somali focus structures.

The present discussion will say little about topics. We do need to distinguish between left detached and right detached positions (in RRG terms) or what Vallduví and Engdahl (1996) distinguish as *link* and *tail* (4b). Both occur in Somali and we can also accept their characterisation where the *link* is roughly the 'anchoring point' for the sentence. It is a kind of organisational clue to the hearer, indicating where the new information is to be fitted into the existing state of knowledge. The *tail* is further old information which helps explain how the new information is to interact with the previous knowledge state.

1.3   A tonal accent language

Somali has been described as a tonal accent language, which is an attempt to distinguish the tonal system from true tone languages like the West African languages Igbo or Ewe (and outside Africa, Chinese) on the on the one hand, and from pitch accent languages like Japanese on the other. Characteristic of the latter is the restricted number and placement of tonal prominences: at most one syllable in a word bears pitch prominence (in Japanese a HL pitch fall) and the location is restricted (we read for example that in Japanese nouns the position must be lexically stipulated; in verbs and adjectives it is the penultimate syllable).

Somali stands somewhat between the two types. Somali has a simple two system of two level tones HIGH (marked **á**) and LOW (marked **a**), as shown in (5).

(5)   Two level tones: HIGH (marked **á**) and LOW (marked **a**)

The tone bearing unit is the mora. Short syllables contain one mora and long vowels and diphthongs contain two moras. The are restrictions on the permutations of tones on words. With the exception of place names, basic words can only contain one high mora. There are in fact three basic accentual patterns, as shown in (6):

(6)   AP1:   HIGH tone on the last mora
      AP2:   HIGH tone on the penultimate mora.
      AP3:   no HIGH tone

Phonetic divergences from these patterns are caused when two moras are realised on a long vowel or diphthong, e.g.:

(7) high + low → falling   [MARKED ÀA]
     LOW + HIGH → HIGH – HIGH (sometimes RISING)   [marked **áa**]

Though these are predictable they are marked in examples here. As an example of varying phonetic realisations: Imperative forms of weak verbs have AP2, which has the exponents in (8):

(8) Imperative forms of weak verbs have AP2:
     hádal!   'Speak!'
     kèen!   'Bring (it)!'
     áamus!   'Be quiet!'

What distinguishes this type of system is the use made of the tonal distinctions. The tone patterns carry grammatical information, being characteristic of the category of a word, and signalling its grammatical information. So for nouns, for example, the tone pattern marks declension, gender, number, and case. Any lexical distinctions are 'accidental' so to speak following from grammatical distinctions. Some roots for example surface as either masculine or feminine nouns, distinguished only by the tone pattern:

(9) ínan   'boy'   inán   'girl'
     wíyil   'male rhino'   wiyíl   'female rhino'

In some declensions of nouns the plural is marked tonally:

(10) yèy   'wolf'   yéy   'wolves'
     Cárab   'an Arab'   Caráb   'Arabs'

In all nouns case is marked tonally:

(11) talíye 'commander'   absolutive case (object, isolation etc.)
     taliye   nominative
     taliyé   genitive
     táliye   vocative

Another feature of this system is that there is no intonational marking of sentence type (or as we will see later focus):

(12) English:
    1.   Ali went.
    2.   Ali went?
    Somali:

3.	*Cali*	*wuu*	*yimi.*
	Ali	waa+uu	went
		PF+he	
	'Ali went.'		
4.	*Cali*	*miyuu*	*yimi?*
	Ali	ma+uu	went
		QM+he	
	'Did Ali go?'		

No change of intonation on 3 can signal a question.

1.5   The focus morphemes

There are three types of focus morphemes identified for Somali, as listed in (13) and outlined below:

(13)   Focus morpheme   Function

	Focus morpheme	Function
1.	*bàa*	(a) narrow (NP) focus
		(b) sentence focus
2.	*waa*	predicate focus
3.	*wáxa*	cleft narrow (NP) focus

1.5.1 *Bàa* (*ayàa)*

The first type consists of the lexically empty morpheme *bàa* (variant *ayàa*). This is usually described as nominal focus marker, and follows the NP in focus, (see examples in (14) where the focused element is shown in square brackets, marked by a feature F). Examples of items focused by this morpheme are given in Appendix 1. It has two functions: the first is to mark narrow focus, typically on an NP. See for example the answer (a) in (14) where it focuses new information. The question in (14) identifies *inántii* 'the girl' as topic, and questions her location, focussing the question word. All the replies are grammatical but only (a) is an appropriate reply. As (14b) and (c) show, to focus the topic in the reply, or to use what we'll call in a moment predicate focus with *waa* would both be inappropriate. Replies (b) and (c) are appropriate to different questions: (b) to a question *Who is in that room*? and (c) to a question *Is the girl in that room*?

(14) Q: *Inántii*   *hálkày*   *joogtaa*?

	inán-tii	*hál-kée+bàa+ay*	*joogtaa*
	girl-the	place-which+NFOC+she	stay

    '[F Where] is the girl?', lit. 'The girl, [F which place] is she in?'

A:(a)   *(Inántii)*   *Qólkáas*   *bày*   *kú*   *jirtaa.*

	inán-tii	*qól-káas*	*bàa+ay*		
	girl-the	room-that+NFOC+she		in	is

    '(The girl), She's in [F that room].'

(b)   #*Inántíi   bàa   qólkáas   kú   jirtá.*
      girl-the   NFOC   room-that   in   is
      '[F The girl] is in that room.'

(c)   #(*Inántii   qólkáas*)   *way   kú   jirtaa.*
      girl-the   room-that   *wàa*+she   in   is
      'The girl, that room, [F she is in it].'

The use of this narrow focus for contrast can be seen in the proverb in (15):

(15)   *Libàax   yeedháy   iyo   libàax   aammusáy,   libàax   aammusáy   bàa   xún*
      lion   roared   and   lion   kept:silent   lion   kept:silent   NFOC   bad

      '(Of) a roaring lion and a silent lion, [F a silent lion] is worse.'

The second function of this morpheme is to mark sentence focus, for example in all-new event, reporting sentences where there is no topic and any subject is not held to express topicality. These are sometimes called **thetic** sentences (e.g. Sasse 1996) and in Vallduví & Engdahl's terms, they are **groundless**.

As an example we might take a scenario where a parent returns home to find chaos and asks a question like that in (16) below, assuming this to be the first utterance in an exchange and therefore carrying no information linguistically marked as activated. Of course the use of names like 'Ali' in this example means that the identity of the individuals has to be known. We rely here on the distinction made earlier between background knowledge and activation.

The replies in (16) report a new event: (a) is the pragmatically appropriate reply; (b) and (c) are inappropriate (again marked #).

(16) Q: *Maxáa   dhacáy?*
            what+NFOC   happened
            '[F What] happened?'
   A: (a)   *Cáli   bàa   Fáarax   kú   dhuftay.*
            Ali   NFOC   Farah   on   struck
            '[F Ali hit Farah].'
      (b)   #*Cáli   Fáarax   bùu   kú   dhuftay.*
            Ali   Farah   NFOC+he   on   struck
            'Ali, he hit [F Farah].'
      (c)   #*Cali   Fáarax   wùu   kú   dhuftay.*
            Ali   Farah   *wàa*+he   on   struck
            'Ali, Farah, [F he hit him].'

It seems that the normal information structure for this kind of event report where everything is new is for the subject to be focused: focusing the object or treating the nominals as topics and using *waa* to for predicate focus is pragmatically inappropriate.

Another type of thetic sentences discussed in the literature is weather sentences. Here again we find the same pattern in Somali. The normal way of saying 'It's raining',

either unprovoked (if you look out the window, say) or in answer to a question 'What's the weather like?' is:

(17)   *Ròob   bàa   dá'ayaa*
        rain   NFOC   is:falling
        '[F Rain is falling]' = English 'It's raining'

Here again focus falls on the subject nominal.

The fact that in all-new or thetic sentences focus falls on the subject, is seems to form a parallel to the strategy of subject accentuation in thetic sentences in European languages, discussed by Sasse (1996) in his review of the EUROTYP survey of this area (Theme group 1).

In these cases we can use Lambrecht's terminology to say that while the focus is marked on the subject noun phrase, the focus domain is the entire sentence.

Having established these functions, it must be noted that the use of *bàa* focus is more restricted in negative sentences and in polar questions. In both of these *bàa* focus only has the contrastive function described above. We can compare the pair of negative sentences in (18), for example:

(18)   (a)   *Cali   má   bixín.*
                Ali   not   left:NEG
                'Ali didn't leave.'
        (b)   *Cáli   báan   bixín.*
                Ali   NFOC+not   left:NEG
                '[F Ali] didn't leave.'

Sentence (18b) is typically used against the background of a presupposition 'Someone left', a context that (18a) does not require. Focus in (18b) marks a contrast between Ali and the presupposed person(s) who did leave. We find a similar contrast in polar questions like the pair in (19):

(19)   (a)   *Cali   má   baxay?*
                Ali   QM   left
                'Did Ali leave?'
        (b)   *Ma   Cáli   bàa   baxáy?*
                QM   Ali   NFOC   left
                'Did [F Ali] leave?'

Again (19b) is typically used against a presupposition that someone left and compares Ali to this person, asking if they are the same. Sentence (19a) does not require such a presupposition.

The negative polar question in (20) has an even more specific licensing context:

(20) (a) *Ma   Cáli   báan   bixín*?
           QM   Ali   NFOC+not left:NEG
           'Didn't [F Ali] leave?'
      (b) i.   Someone left
           ii.   The someone = Ali

Here in a typical context the speaker would be communicating the two presuppositions in (20b): 'Someone left' and 'the someone = Ali'. The question asks for confirmation of this second presupposition, i.e. of the identity of Ali with the leaver. This functions something like the English cleft: *Was it not Ali who left*?

Thus *bàa/ayàa* focus has a narrower and more specific function in negative sentences and polar questions, requiring the support of more contextual assumptions. We will come back to this shortly.

1.5.2 *Waa*
The second focus morpheme is *waa*, which occurs before the verbal group and is usually identified as a predicate focus morpheme. In (21) *waa* marks new information in the predicate:

(21) Q: *Baabùur-kíi s*i*dùu   yidhi?*
           car-the   how+NFOC+he   did
           '[F What] did he do with the car?' (lit. ''[F How] did he do with the car?)
      A: *Wùu   iibiyey.*
           Waa+he   sold
           'He [F sold] it.'

A typical use of this is in positive replies to yes-no questions, where no nominal is focussed:

(22) (a) *Gábadh-íi   má   timi*?
           girl-the   QM   came
           'The girl, has she arrived?'
      (b) *Hàa, wày   timi.*
           yes   waa+she   came
           'Yes, she's arrived'
(23) (a) *Miyàanú   sóo   noqónayn*?
           QM+not+he   VEN   return:PROG:NEG
           'Isn't he coming back?', 'Won't he come back?'
      (b) *Hàa, wuu   sóo   noqónayaa.*
           yes   waa+he   VEN   return:PRES:PROG
           'Yes, he's coming back'.

In (22) and (23) all elements of the sentence are given (i.e. these are all ground sentences) and the speaker uses the *waa* sentence to affirm the predicate.

1.5.3 *Wáxa*
The third type of focus is a cleft-like structure where an expletive element *wáxa* occurs before the verb and focused elements occur after the verb. This morpheme, like *bàa/ayàa* is typically used with nominals and can also be used to introduce new

information and to provide contrastive focus. There are a number of differences between *wáxa* focus and our first type, which we will not go into here, but typically *wáxa* is used to postpose and focus long or 'heavy' constituents:

(24) (a) *Maxáad   dóonaysaa?*
         maxáy+bàa+aad   doonaysaa
         what+NFOC+you   want:PROG
         '[F What] would you like?

     (b) *Wáxaan   dóonayaa koob shàah áh oo áan sonkór laháyn*
         wáxa+I   want   cup tea   be and not sugar have:NEG
          'I would like [F a cup of tea without sugar]'

Again, a characteristic list of constituents focused by *wáxa* is given in the Appendix.

These are the three types of focus morphemes that have been identified. Our discussion here will concentrate on the nominal focus morphemes *bàa* and *ayàa*, say less about predicate focus with *waa*, and even less about *wáxa* clefts.

It is important to note that as with the marking of sentence type, the use of these morphemes means that there is no intonational focus marking in Somali. See (25) below:

(25) (a) *Cali   wùu   yimi.*   = Predicate focus
         Ali   *wàa*+he   went
          'Ali, he [F went].'

     (b) *Cáli   baa   yimí.*   = Narrow focus on NP
         Ali   NFOC   went
          '[F Ali] went'

No prosodic prominence on *Cáli* in sentence (a) or *yimí* in (b) will signal focus on the NP or predicate.

2.   Focus and clause structure

I would like to make two points at the level of syntax. The first is to review the evidence that focus occupies a particular structural position in the clause; and the second is to suggest that the notion of focus domain might help explain a strong constraint against focus in subordinate clauses.

2.1.   Discourse configurationality

Somali has been described as a 'discourse configurational' language, for example in Kiss (ed. 1995). This is of course because its word order, and phrase structure, cannot be described in terms of grammatical relations like subject, object, etc. but instead we must make reference to discourse notions like focus and topic. To take *bàa/àyaa* sentences for example, the order may be given as:

(26)   [TOPIC*   FOCUS   (other NP)   V-COMPLEX   TOPIC*]

See for example, numbers (5) and (2) in the Appendix.

One prominent feature of the sentence is the verbal complex (called the verbal group VGP in Saeed 1999), where a satellite of clitics occurs in a fixed order before the verb and basically contains the whole argument structure of the sentence. Its structure may be described by the template (27):

(27) [$_{VC}$ S PRO - O PRO I - ADP - ADV I -   ADV II -   O PRO II   -   V]

The elements of the template are given in (28) and an example in (29):

(28)   VC elements
           S PRO: subject clitic pronoun
           O PRO I: object clitic pronoun - first series
           ADP: verbal adpositions
           ADV I: VENITIVE *sóo* or ALLATIVE *síi*
           ADV II: adverbials *wada* 'together' or *kala* 'apart'
           O PRO II: object clitic pronoun - second series
           V: main verb or infinitive and auxiliary verb

(29)   (a)   *London   bay   iigá   sóo   iibsatay*
               London   bàa+[$_{VC}$ *ay   i + ú + ká   sóo   iibsatay*]
               L.   NFOC   she   me+for+from   VEN   bought
               'She bought it for me from [$_F$ London].'
        (b)   [$_{VC}$ S PRO - O PRO I + ADP + ADP - ADV I - V]

Note that adpositions occur in the VC; and that it retains the SOV order that is usually proposed historically for Cushitic.

Looking at the basic *bàa*/*àyaa* focus, what is striking is that there is an absolute constraint against focused elements occurring post-verbally. In order to have a focus after the verb a speaker must employ a *wáxa*-cleft construction. Even here question words may not occur. This rigidity of focus structure (in the terms discussed by Van Valin 1999) contrasts with the flexibility of the grammatically unconstrained word order.

2.2   Structure of the clause

There are two sets of syntactic facts that have led linguists to propose some internal hierarchical structure to string of elements in (26). Firstly, there are two important differences between the topic and focus elements in (26):

(30)   (i)   Topic nominals may have a coreferential clitic pronoun in the verbal
                group while focused elements may not do so;
        (ii)   Topic elements can always be omitted to leave a grammatical sentence
                while deleting a focus element renders the sentence ungrammatical.

These differences have suggested to most observers that topics and focus elements have different phrase structure positions, with topics being outside some inner construction, corresponding to the main predication. Or schematically,

(31)   [$_\alpha$ TOPIC*   [$_\beta$ FOCUS   (other NP)   V-COMPLEX]   TOPIC*]
        where α = sentence; β = clause

The second group of facts arises because attaching the focus morpheme to an element is not a syntactically inert process. We can see this most easily in examples where focus is attached to the subject of a sentence. Compare the pair:

(32)   (a)   *Nimánkii   wày   yimaaddeen.*
                nimán-kii   wàa+ay   yimaaddeen
                men-the   VFOC+they   came:PL
                'The men came.'
        (b)   *Nimánkíi   bàa   yimí.*
                men-the   NFOC   came:SG
                '[$_F$ The men] came.'

The main differences are given in (33).
(33)   Features of focused subjects
(a) A focused subject is not subject marked but occurs in the absolutive case.
(b) A verb agreeing with a focused subject shows a much reduced set of agreement markers (Andrzejewski's 1968 'restrictive paradigm') and in positive paradigms a distinct accentual pattern, AP1.
(c) A focused subject may not be doubled by a clitic pronoun in the verbal group.

Comparing the negative sentences in (34), we can add a further difference (35):

(34)   (a)   *Nimánkii   má   imán.*
                men-the   not   came:NEG
                'The men didn't come.'
        (b)   *Nimankíi   báan   imán.*
                nimán-kíi   bàa+áan   imán
                men-the   NFOC+not   came:NEG
                '[F The men] didn't come.'

(35)   Negative *bàa/ayàa* sentences employ the negative word *áan* 'not' rather than *má* 'not'.

As has often been noted, this range of behaviours, while unusual for main clauses, is exactly paralleled by relative clauses where the head nominal is also subject of the clause, as we can see by comparing (36a-c):

(36)   (a)   *buugágga   ay   nimánku   keenàan*
                books-the   they   men-the   bring:PL
                'the books which they the men bring'
        (b)   *nimánka   (*ay)   buugágga   keená*
                men-the   (*they)   books-the   bring:SG
                'the men who bring the books'
        (c)   *nimánkaan   buugágga   keenàyn*
                nimán-ka+áan   buugágga   keenàyn
                men-the+not   books-the   bring:NEG
                'the men who don't bring the books'

Given that it is in just these two contexts, relative clauses and focus, that we see such effects, it seems plausible to try to provide some structural account of the parallel. It seems reasonable to conclude, in particular, that the focused element, like the head of a relative clause, is outside some inflectional domain within which agreement processes operate. There have been basically three approaches to this in the literature:

(37)   Focus/relative clause parallelism
        (a) Historical: grammaticalization (Heine & Reh 1983)
        (b) Movement rule in syntax (Saeed 1984, Svolacchia et al. 1995)
        (c) Static, construction parallelism (Lecarme 1991, Mereu 1999)

Whatever about the details of individual accounts this suggests further structure for our string in (24), i.e.:

(38)   [$_\alpha$ TOPIC*   [$_\beta$ FOCUS   [$_\chi$ (other NP)   V-COMPLEX]]   TOPIC*]
        where α = sentence; β = clause; χ = core

We note again that focus may not occur post-verbally.

2.3   Focus and Subordinate clauses

There is another important connection between focus and syntax: focus is restricted to main clauses: it may not be used occur in subordinate clauses. For example if one tries to get a Somali to translate English examples where intonational focus falls on a nominal in a subordinate clause, the sentences will be restructured to allow focus in a main clause:

Example (39) has the whole of the subordinate clause in focus:

(39)   *Wúxuu*   *íi sheegay*   *ínuu Berberá   tegáy*
        wáxa+he   me+to   told   that+he   B.   went
        'He told me that [$_F$ he went to Berbera]'

If you try to trigger narrow focus within the subordinate clause (contrastive focus on *Berbera*) then a restructuring like (40) will occur, where the subordinate clause is recast as a main clause.

(40)   *Wúxuu   igú   yidhi   'Berberàan   tegay'*
        wáxa+he   me+to   said   Berbera+FOC+I   went
        'He said to me [$_F$ 'I'm going to [$_F$ Berbera]]'

A similar example is in (41):
(41) (a)   *Sùuq-a   ayày   tegay ín-ay   dhár   sóo   iibsato*
            market-the   FOC+she   went   that-she   clothes   VEN   buy
            She went to [F the market] to buy clothes.
     (b)   She went to the market to buy [F clothes].
     (c)   *Dhár   ayày   sùuq-a   u sóo   iibsánaysay.*
            clothes-the   FOC+she   market-the   in VEN   was:buying
            'She went shopping for [$_F$ clothes] in the market.'

We may be able to propose an explanation for this constraint. As has been argued by a number of writers, including myself (Saeed 1999), complement clauses in Somali are in fact syntactically relative clauses, in this case on the bleached nominal *in* (N F) amount, thing'. Indeed all subordinate clauses in Somali are relative clauses on nominal heads.

This independently motivated fact means that a general constraint on focus domains proposed by Robert van Valin (1998) may provide us with an explanation for the subordinate constraint on Somali focus:

(42)   "The potential focus domain in complex sentences: A subordinate clause may be within the potential focus domain if it is a direct daughter of (a direct daughter of…) the matrix clause node." (Van Valin 1998: 11)

This constraint essentially predicts that a relative clause within a sentence will not form an independent focus domain. This prediction is borne out by the Somali facts.

A corollary of this for Somali is that question words, which must receive narrow focus, cannot occur in subordinate clauses. A question word may only be a main clause constituent coreferential with a subordinate clause argument as in (43) and (44):

(43) *Naagtée*   *ayày*   *akhristeen* *bùuggíi* *ay*   *qortáy*?
      woman-which   NFOC+they   read   book-the   she   wrote
      'Which woman did they read the book which she wrote?'
(44) *Kumàad*   *rumeysántahay*   *hádalka* *áh* *ínuu*   *imàankíi*
      who+NFOC+you   believe   talk-the   be   that-he   imam-the
      lá   *kulmay*?
      with   met
      'Who do you believe the claim that he met the imam?'

As can be seen such questions are not then subject to a subjacency constraint.[81]

3.   The semantic force of focus
3.1   Modal force

In addition to the marking of new information and contrast it seems that there are other semantic and pragmatic factors involved. It was noted in Saeed (1984, 1993), and supported by Ajello (1995), that the focus words seem to have an epistemic modal force. We can look at this with a fairly traditional analysis of a simple example of nominal focus in (45) below.

(45) Q: *Maxàynu*   *ráacaynaa*?
           what+NFOC+we   travelling:by
           '[F What] are we travelling by?'

---

[81] Note that Somali does not show weak-crossover effects for focus/Q:
      Kúmàa   *hooyádìis*   *jecéshahay*?
      kúma+bàa   *hooyó+dìis*   *jecéshahay*
      who+NFOC   mother-his   love
      '[F Who$_i$] does his$_i$ mother love?']

(46)   A: *Jèeb   bàynu   ráacaynaa.*
               jeep   NFOC+we   travelling:by
               'We are travelling by [F a jeep].'

The information structure of the question Q in (45) can be seen to consist of two parts:

(45')   a.   Ground: we are travelling by (something)
        b.   Focus: what?

We might conventionally take the pragmatic actions similarly to be divided into two:

(45'') a.   Presupposes: we are travelling by something
        b.   Asks: what is the something?

The information structure of the answer A in (46) can also be seen to consist of two parts:

(46')   a.   Ground: we are travelling by (something)
        b.   Focus: a jeep

and the pragmatic actions would similarly be divided into two:

(46'') a.   Presupposes: we are travelling by something
        b.   Identifies: the something is a jeep

Looking at the answer in (46) for a moment, what seems to be involved in the use of focus here is a double commitment from the speaker: to the commitment of the existence of an entity in the focused constituent, and to the factuality of the ground.

Recognising this factive element allows us to account for some constraints on the use of focus. The first is the distribution across sentence types. Somali sentence types fall into two main groups:

(47)   SENTENCE TYPES

                A   B

    declarative   interrogative   imperative   optative   potential
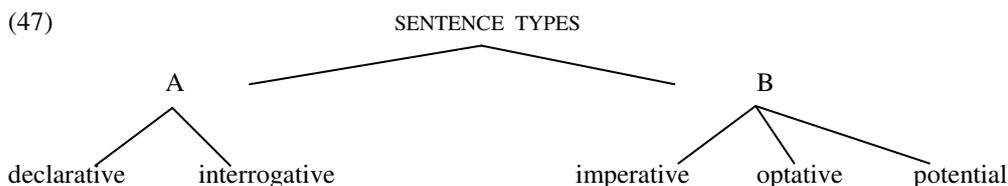
The distinction between the two groups is very clear in the grammar. The A-type sentences carry the full range of tense, aspect and mood (TAM) distinctions, so the verb may be marked for example for tense (past/present/future) and aspect (habitual/progressive), as in the examples in (48) below. The B-type sentences carry no TAM distinctions and occur in just one form; see the examples in (49).

(48)   TAM distinctions in A-type: declarative

(a)   *wùu*   *sugay*   Past perfective
       waa+he   wait:PAST:PERF
       'He waited'

(b)   *wùu*   *sugaa*   Present habitual
       waa+he   wait:PRES:HAB
       'He waits'

(c)   *wùu*   *sugayaa*   Present progressive
       waa+he   wait:PRES:PROG
       'He is waiting'

(d)   *wùu*   *sugayayay*   Past progressive
       waa+he   wait:PAST:PROG
       'He was waiting'

(e)   *wùu*   *sugi*   *donaa*   Future (carries speaker certainty)
       waa+he   wait:INF will
       'He waited'

(49)   Lack of TAM distinctions in B-types:

(a)   *Súg/Súga*!   Imperative
        wait:IMP:SG/ wait:IMP:pl
        'Wait! (sg/pl)

(b)   *Há*   *sugo*!   Optative (wishes, hopes, blessings)
        OM   wait:OPT
        'May he wait!'

(c)   *Shòw*   *sugee*   Potential
        PM   wait:POT
        'Perhaps he'll wait, Maybe he'll wait'

The semantic difference between the two types is that the B-types are contra-factive (to use a term from Lyons 1977) or *irrealis* types, while the A-types are either factive or non-factive, i.e. neutral for factivity, or *realis* types.   The significant fact for our discussion is that focus cannot occur in contra-factive sentence types. So for example, nominals occur in optatives (as can be seen in the examples) but there's no way to place focus on such nominals, i.e. no way to say 'May ALI wait!' to contrast with 'May MOHAMED wait!'. I take this to be a consequence of a clash between the commitment in focus to the factuality of the ground with the contra-factive sentence.

3.2   Negation

This modal force also places constraints on the interaction of focus with negation. As I mentioned, focus is quite uncommon in negative sentences. This, we might assume, has something to do with the more restricted context for negatives than positive sentences generally: in one form of words, we might say that negative sentences often require more licensing presuppositions. Thus we find that a sentence like (50):

(50)   *Fáarax*   *báan*   *tegín.*
               Farah   FOC+NEG   went:NEG
               '[F Farah]didn't go.'

has as its main use negative contrast: typically a presupposition of (a) above would be that someone went and the speaker uses this sentence to assert that it wasn't Farah. It would not be used simply to add new information to a discourse, instead the non-focus version (51) would occur:

(51) *Fáarax* *má* *tegín*
      Farah NEG went:NEG
      'Farah didn't go'.

However there are extra constraints on the use of focus and negation which we can attribute to the modal force of the latter. See the examples in (52):

(52) Q: *Kumàa* *yimí?*
         kuma+bàa
         who+NFOC came
         '[F Who] came?'
         Ground: somebody came
   A: (a) *Cáli* *bàa* *yimí*
             Ali NFOC came
             '[F Ali] came.'
      (b) *Cidna* *má* *imán*
             no-one not came:NEG
             'Nobody came.'
      (c) ?*Cidna* *báan* *imán*
             no-one NFOC+not came:NEG
             '[F Nobody] came.'
      (d) ?*Waxáan* *imán* *cídna*
             wáxa+not came:NEG no-one
             'There came [F nobody]' 'Who came was [F nobody]'

I've marked replies (52c) and (52d) as semantically ill-formed because there seems to be no context in which their use is appropriate, despite the grammatical parallel with (52a). This seems to be because the modal force of focus (acceptance/re-assertion of the ground) clashes with the negative nominal's denial of the ground.

It is interesting to compare this behaviour with the observation that has been made in several places that from the English evidence presupposition is too strong a notion to characterise the ground in information questions and their relevant answers. It has been pointed out that in examples like (53) below, since the reply denies the ground, it cannot be said to presuppose it (in the sense of accepting it as a belief):

(53) Q: Who saw John?
      A: NOBODY saw John.
      Ground: someone saw John

The basic claim is that for English intonational focus, the ground merely has to be 'held in mind' rather than believed. In Relevance Theory, for example, (Sperber and Wilson 1995) what focus does, pragmatically speaking, is involve the ordering of implications, a weaker notion than presupposition. On the other hand cleft sentences do seem to presuppose the ground, hence the strangeness of:

(54)   Q: Who saw John?
          A: #It was NOBODY that saw John.
          Ground: someone saw John

As our examples above show, the situation with Somali focus is different from English prosodic focus. *bàa/ayàa* focus cannot be used to focus *nobody* in examples like these. This suggests that in this regard, Somali nominal focus parallels English clefts rather than prosodic focus.

3.3   Illocutionary force

As mentioned above, my identification of this modal force in Somali focus has been subsequently supported by other writers. Interestingly, it has been described by Ajello (1995) in terms of a speech act:

(55)   "il fenomeno della focalizzazzione in generale abbia stretta affinità col concetto di modalità, e corresponda in tutte le sue manifestazioni ad un atto illocutivo di sottoscrizione della verità dell'informazione contenuta nell'enunciato. In altre parole, anche quando la focalizzazzione verte su un sintagma nominale, essa rappresenta l'asserzione che un tale sintagma nominale non è virtuale, ipotetico, ma reale e che esse ha un certo ruolo all'interno della predicazione principale." (Ajello 1975: 16)

'the phenomenon of focus in general has a strong affinity with the concept of modality, and corresponds in all its manifestations to an illocutionary act of commitment to the truth of the information contained in the utterance. In other words, whenever focus falls on a nominal constituent, this represents the assertion that the nominal is not virtual, or hypothetical but real and that it has a certain role inside the main predication'

One way of falling in with this approach would be to say that the narrow use of nominal focus asserts or re-asserts the content of the ground.

We could then perhaps explain the sentence type constraint by saying that the preparatory conditions (in the sense of Searle 1969) for uttering commands, optative-type wishes and potential sentences for a proposition P would rule out cases where P is also being asserted (or in a weaker version: is already in the common ground) and therefore they would rule out focus in these sentence types.

4.   CONCLUSION

Our discussion has identified a certain kind of focus system in Somali that is of interest typologically. It has, among others, the features in (56) below:

(56) a.   There is no prosodic marking of focus structure.
     b.   Rigid focus structure contrasts with flexible grammatical word order.
     c.   Subordinate clauses are relative clauses and do not form focus domains.
     d.   Focus morphemes have an epistemic modal force that resembles clefts in other languages.
     e.   As a result of (d), focus does not occur in contra-factive / *irrealis* sentence types.

More generally, it should be clear that basic clause structure cannot adequately be described without reference to focus structure. The two are intimately bound and I take this to be a validation of the RRG approach to these two axes of linguistic structure.

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Appendix

Examples of constituents focused by *bàa/ayàa* (adapted from Saeed 1999: 190-2). Focused elements in bold in Somali and in square brackets in English.

A.   NPS ACTING AS ARGUMENTS OF THE VERB

These may be object (1,2,3) or subject (4) and may be indefinite (2,4) or definite (1,3). The focus is a question word in (2).

(1)   *Sayidkuna*   **gabaygan**   *ayuu*   *ka*   *tiriyey*   *dilkaas*   *Koofil*
    Dauid-the-and   poem-this   NFOC+he   about   composed   killing-that   Corfield
    'And the Sayid$_i$, [$_F$ this poem] he$_i$ composed about that killing of Corfield' [S1 27.12]

(2)   Is*maaciil*   **mux***uu*   *guuguulaha*   *ugu*   *sheegayaa*?
    Ismail   what+NFOC+he   hoopoe-the   about   saying
    'Ismail$_i$, [$_F$ what] is he$_i$ saying about the hoopoe? [S2 21.26]'

(3)   **Cigaal**   *baa*   *geelodii*   *la*   *raaciyey.*
    Igal   NFOC   camels-their   one   sent:with
    '[$_F$ Igal] was sent along with their camels.'   [S5 14.1]

(4)   *Ka*   *dib*   **abaar**   **xun**   *bàa*   *dhacday*
    more   after   drought   bad   NFOC   happened
    'Later [$_F$ a severe drought] occurred.'   [SHS 79.3]

B.   NPS ACTING AS PREDICATE NOMINALS

(5)   *Ninka*   *reerka*   *lihi*   **deeqsi**   *buu*   *ahaa*
    man-the   family-the   had   generous:person   NFOC+he   was
    'The man$_i$ who had the family, he$_i$ was [$_F$ a generous person]'   [SHS 56.8]

C.   NPS ACTING AS ADVERBIALS

(6)   *Arooska*   *weyn*   **had**   **dhow**   *baan*   *dhigaynaa*
    wedding-the   big   time   near   NFOC+we   arrange:PROG
    'The big wedding, [$_F$ soon] we will be arranging it.'   [SHN 72.12]

D.   THE INTENSIFIER (ADVERBIAL) *aad*

(7)   *Soomaalidu guurka* **aad** *bay   u   tixgelin jirtey*
Somalis-the   marriage-the   much   NFOC+they   ADP value   used
'The Somalis_i, marriage_j, they used to value it_j [_F very highly].'   [s2 1.12]

E.   RELATIVE CLAUSES AS ARGUMENTS

(8)   *Markaana*   **dad   badan oo reer   Masar ah**   *ayaa   qaatay*
time-that-and   people many   and nation Egypt be   NFOC   took
diinta   islaamka
religion-the   Islam-the
'And then [_F many Egyptians] converted to Islam.' (lit. 'And then [_F many people who were of the nation of Egypt] took the religion of Islam')   [T4 22.16-17]

(9)   **Libaax   oo   ah   boqorkii   habardugaag**   *baa beri bukooday   oo*
lion   and is   king-the   beasts   NFOC day fell:ill   and
awoodi   kari   waayey in   uu   ugaarsado
have:capacity   be:able   failed   that   he   hunt
'One day [_F Lion, who is the king of beasts,] fell ill and lost the ability to hunt.'   [SHS 83.13-14]

E.   RELATIVE CLAUSES AS ADVERBIALS

(10)   **Inta   qofku   nool   yahay**   *ayuu   awood   leeyahay   oo*
amount-the   person-the   alive   is   NFOC+he   potential   has   and
wax   qabsan   karaa
thing   take:MIDDLE:INF   can   [BCH 25.29-30]
'[_F As long as a person is alive], he has potential and can achieve something.'

F.   *Ín* 'that' COMPLEMENT CLAUSES (8.4.1)

(11)   *Berri*   **inuu   soo   fufi   doono**   *baan   ku   fekeraa*
tomorrow   that+it   VEN   sprout   will   NFOC+I   on   think
'I reflect [_F that it will sprout back again] tomorrow.'   [FS 41.8]

G.   COMPLETE SENTENCES AS REPORTED SPEECH

(12)   **Gacaliso   maxaad   iga   doonaysaa?** - *buu   weydiiyey*
dear   what+you   me+from   want:PRES.PROG   NFOC+he   asked
yaxaaskii
crocodile-the   [SHS 79. 24-5]
' "[_F Dear, what do you want from me?]" – he_i asked him, the crocodile_i.'

2.   Constituents focused by *wáxa* (adapted from Saeed 1999: 194-5)

The typical use of a *wáxa(a)* construction is to place into focus a long noun phrase or a clause occurring after the verbal group. *Wáxa(a)*, unlike *bàa/ayàa*, is not used to focus question words (cf 2 above), nor the intensifier *aad* (cf. 7 above) and indeed does not generally focus shorter, non-clausal adverbials.   As with *bàa/ayàa*, *wáxa(a)* may not focus the verb, or any element of the verbal group. The focused element may be a

subject (13 below), an object (14), a predicate nominal (15) or an adverbial (16). It may be a noun phrase (13), an *ín* 'that' clause (14), or a direct quotation (42):

(13)   *Waxaa   keena   **uun   aad   u   yar   oo   la   yiraahdo   'Fiiruus'***
       wáxaa   brings   creature   INTENS ADP small and one calls   'virus'
       'What causes it is [$_F$ a very small organism called a virus]' [BCH 10. 34-5]

(14)   *Waxa   la   wada   ogsoonyahay   **nolosheennu   in   ay   ku***
       wáxa   one   together   aware-is   life-our   that it to
       xidhantahay   roobka
       bound-is   rain-the
       'It is well known to all [$_F$ that our life is bound to the rain]' [S2 19.29-30]

(15)   *Saahid   Qamaan   wuxuu   ahaa   **nin   gabayaa   ah   oo   aad   ugu***
       Sahid   Qaman   *wáxa*+he was man poet   be   and INTENS ADP+ADP
       xeel   dheeraa   gabayada   xikmadda, waanada iyo duurxulka
       cleverness deep-was   poems-the wisdom, counsel   and oblique:language
       'Sahid Qaman was [$_F$ a poet who was very ingenious at the poetry of wisdom, counsel and of veiled language].'   [S1 12.3-4]

(16)   *Waxaa   la   doortay   **goortii   Cismaan   la   dilay***
       wáxaa   one   chose   time-the   Osman   one killed
       'He was chosen [$_F$ when Osman was killed]' (lit. '*Wáxa* one chose him [$_F$ the time when one killed Osman]')   [T4 27.5-6]

(17)   *Kii   labaadna   wuxuu   yiri: **"Aniguna   waxaan rabi lahaa***
       the:one second-and   *wáxa*+he said: "I-and   *wáxa*+I like would
       uubata   badan   oo   arigaada   marisa"
       wolves   many   and   goats-your   wipe:out
       "And the second one, what he said was: [$_F$ "And what I would like is many wolves to wipe out your goats]."   [FS 51.6-7]