Focus Markers and Universal Grammar

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1.   Introduction

This paper is concerned with the analysis of Focus constructions that include Focus Markers (FM) as obligatory elements to obtain Focus interpretation. We will show that the presence of FMs is not a parameter *per se*, but is crucially connected to specific and independent modules of Universal Grammar (UG).

In particular, the necessity of a Focus morpheme to identify new information will be shown to be related to *polysynthesis*, namely, the parameter which distinguishes those languages in which clitics only are visible for θ-role assignment through incorporation onto the verbal head (cf. Baker 1996). On the other hand, the particular morphosyntactic phenomena emerging in some of these languages will be related to the *pro*-drop parameter, that is to say, the capacity of a language to allow Null Subjects (e.g., Italian *vs.* English).

Our study will be particularly centred on Somali, though comparative data will also be presented to support the analysis, aiming to provide a comprehensive account of Focus Marking constructions and to shed new light on the interplay between syntax and information structure.

2.   Syntactic analysis of Focus constructions

2.1.   *An Operator analysis of Focus*

Within the framework of Generative Grammar, (nominal) Focus is commonly assumed to be a quantificational element (cf., among others, Brody 1990, Kiss ed. 1995, Rizzi 1997). Hence, like wh-constituents, Focus is an Operator that binds a Variable which is left in the position of lexical insertion. Specifically, Focus movement (occurring either in syntax or in Logical Form) targets a projection in the left periphery of the sentence that is generally called *Focus Phrase* (FocP):[1]

(1) $[_{FocP} MARY_i [_{Foc'} [_{IP} I saw t_i]]]$

Then, following Minimalist tenets (Chomsky 1995), it has been proposed that the focused constituent is endowed with a [+F(ocus)] feature that must be checked in overt syntax in order to be interpreted at the interfaces (cf. Horvath 1995, Frascarelli 2000a). In particular, in Frascarelli's (2000a) the-

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[1] The Focus constituent is capitalized, as in standard use. The IP label stands for "Inflectional Phrase", that is to say, the sentential constituent.

ory the verb assumes a crucial role in Focus constructions since it is argued to be [+F] checking category. So, the verb moves to the Foc° head to check this feature, while movement of the focused constituent is subject to parametric variation. The checking configuration to obtain Focus interpretation can be therefore realised either in a Spec-head configuration (after Focus movement) or in head-complement relation (leaving the Focus in situ), as shown below:

(2)   [$_{FocP}$ XP$_{[+F]}$ [$_{Foc'}$ verb [$_{IP}$ … t$_{XP}$….]

(3)   [$_{FocP}$ [$_{Foc'}$ verb [$_{IP}$ …. XP$_{[+F]}$ …]

Crucial support for the pivotal role of the verb comes from the observation that the Focus constituent and the verb are usually adjacent and that adjacency is even obligatory in some languages (cf. Tuller 1995, Vallduvì 1995, Ouhalla 1999). This is the case of the so-called "Focus-prominent languages".[2]

Finally, according to the exclusivity of the checking relation, Frascarelli (2000a) shows – on the basis of a syntax-phonology interface analysis – that [-focus] constituents are always extrasentential. In other words, nominal constituents that are not part of new information are extraposed as Topics.

2.2.   Somali Focus System[3]

In Somali every main declarative sentence must contain one and only one Focus constituent. In particular, two main types of Focus structures can be found: nominal Focus, realised by means of the FM *baa/ayaa*,[4] and verb Focus, marked by the presence of *waa*:[5]

(4)   Jaamacadda   MARYAN   baan /ayaan   ku   arkay.
         university-the Maryan FM.SCL1SG   in   see.PAST.1SG[6]
         'I saw MARYAN at the university.'

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[2] The relation between the Focus and the verb is also close from a phonological point of view. Indeed, recent studies on intonation and prosodic constituency have indicated that they form a single prosodic phrase across languages (cf. among others, Inkelas and Zec, eds. (1990), Hayes and Lahiri 1991, Frascarelli 2000a).

[3] The Focus system of Somali has been extensively illustrated and analysed in Andrzejewski (1975), Antinucci (1981), Puglielli (1981) and Svolacchia *et al.* (1995). For reasons of space we provide here only the information which is necessary for the ongoing discussion and refer to these authors for an exhaustive treatment of the relevant constructions.

[4] The nominal FMs *baa* and *ayaa* are held to be wholly equivalent (apart from regional characterisation and some stylistic differences; for details, cf. Puglielli 1981).

[5] Somali Focus system, one of the richest among Cushitic languages, also disposes of a third construction to realise Focus, i.e., the so-called "heralding construction" (introduced by the FM *waxaa*). This will not be treated in the present paper (cf., Andrzejewski 1975, Antinucci 1981, Saeed 1998).

[6] The list of the abbreviations used in the glosses is the following: ABS = absolutive case, ACC = accusative case, COP = copular form, DP = noun phrase, F = feminine, FM = focus marker, FUT = future tense, IP = inflectional phrase (i.e., sentence), M = masculine, NOM = nominative case, PART = past participle, PAST = past tense, PL = plural, PRES = present tense, PROG = progressive, PRON = pronoun, RED =

(5) Jaamacadda   Maryan waan   ku   ARKAY.
     university-the Maryan FM.SCL1SG   in   see.PAST.1SG
     'I SAW Maryan at the university.'

As is shown in (4)-(5), FMs are immediately adjacent to the focused constituent. Specifically, a nominal constituent marked for Focus (*MARYAM*, in (4)) must be left-adjacent to the FM *baa*, whereas, when new information is represented by the Verbal Complex (VC), this must immediately follow *waa*. Different locations or intervening DPs yield ungrammatical results:

(6) a.   *MARYAN jaamacadda baan /ayaan ku arkay.
     b.   *Jaamacadda baan /ayaan MARYAN ku arkay.

(7) a.   *Jaamacadda waan Maryan ku ARKAY.
     b.   *Jaamacadda Maryan ku ARKAY waan.

In their analysis of discourse categories in Somali, Svolacchia et al. (1995) have argued the FM is part of verb inflection. So, according to the checking mechanism illustrated above, we could account for Focus in Somali saying that the FM occupies the Foc° head (where it checks the [+F] feature) and – as Somali is a Focus-prominent language – only one option is available to realize Focus. Specifically, nominal Focus is interpreted in Spec-head relation after Move, while verb Focus checks [+F] in situ, as the complement of the FM:

(4')   [TopP *jaamacadda* [FocP *MARYAN* [Foc' *baan*k   [IP tk *ku arkay*]]]]
                          └ _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ ┘
                                    [+F]

(5')   [TopP *jaamacadda* [TopP *Maryan* [IP *waan*   [VC *ku ARKAY*]]]]

                                 └ _ _ _ _ _ [+F] _ _ _ _ _ ┘

This would be an elegant and straightforward explanation. However, there are some specific properties associated with the presence of FMs that remain unexplained in this kind of analysis and urge some integration.

3.   Specific properties associated with Focus Marking structures

3.1.   *Anti-agreement effects*

A major feature of Focus structures in which a FM is present is the so-called "Anti-agreement effect" (Puglielli 1981, Ouhalla 1993, Frascarelli 1999). Consider the following:

(8) Hilib   NIMANKÁAS   ayaa   cunayá.
     meat   men-those.**ABS** FM   eat.PRES.PROG.RED
     'THOSE MEN are eating meat.'

(9)a. *Hilib NIMANKÀASU   ayaa   cunayá.
        meat   men-those.**NOM** FM   eat.PRES.PROG.RED

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reduced paradigm, REL = relative (verb/clause), SC = small clause, SCL = subject clitic, SG = singular.

b.   *Hilib NIMANKAAS   ayay   cunayá.
          meat   men-those.ABS   FM.**3PL**   eat.PRES.PROG.RED

c.   *Hilib NIMANKAAS   ayaa   cunayaan.
          meat   men-those.ABS   FM   eat.PRES.PROG.**3PL**

As we can see, when the focused constituent is the subject (as in (8)), nominal Focus requires a different type of verbal form. Specifically, it triggers the presence of the so-called "Restricted Paradigm" (RED), in which agreement is reduced[7], the focused subject cannot show NOM Case, it cannot be resumed by a clitic (while clitic resumption is obligatory in all other cases) and the verb is marked by a stress of its own (while the extensive paradigm is characterized by low tones and is not stressed; cf. Andrzejewski 1975).

However, these effects all disappear when the focused subject is submitted to long movement:

(10)a. NIMANKAASU$_i$ baan   sheegay   inay$_i$
          men-those.**NOM**   FM.SCL1SG   say.PAST   that.**SCL3PL**
          hilib   cunayaan.
          meat   eat.PRES.PROG.**3PL**
          'I said that THOSE MEN are eating meat.'

b.   *Nimankaas baan sheegay in hilib cunayá.

As we can see in (10b), the relevant sentence is ungrammatical if the subject clitic is omitted and the verb shows a reduced form of agreement.

Interestingly, a similar alternating pattern can be also found in other languages which make use of Focus morphemes. Consider, for instance, Berber (from Ouhalla 1993):[8]

(11)   TAMGHARTA ay   yzrin   /*tzra   Mohand.
          woman-this   FM   see.PART / 3SGF.see.PAST Mohand
          'THIS WOMAN saw Mohand.'

(12)   TAMGHARTA ay   nnan   [qa   tzra   /*yzrin
                            Mohand]
          woman-this   FM   said.3PL   that   3SGF.see.PAST /see-PART
                            Mohand.
          'THIS WOMAN they said saw Mohand.'

3.2.   The interpretation of "internal Topics"

Another interesting phenomenon emerging in FM constructions in Somali concerns a particular asymmetry in the realization of the subject clitic in the

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[7] The restricted paradigm has three forms: one for 3SGF, one for 1PL and one for all other persons (cf. Puglielli 1981).

[8] The particle *ay* has been given different labels in the literature ("verbal particle", "wh-COMP", and so forth). Berber *ay* is not a COMP because its behaviour is completely different from a real COMP element like *qa* (cf. Ouhalla 1993). On the other hand, its presence in (nominal) Focus construction, its position with respect to the Focus and the presence of a reduced (traditionally defined as "participial") form of the verb make this particle fully comparable to Somali *baa*. In other words, it must be considered a FM.

presence of a so-called "internal Topic".[9]

When the subject is not the Focus of the sentence, clitic resumption is obligatory in Somali, independently of the phi-features (person, number and gender) of the relevant subject. This is shown in (13) for 3rd and 2nd singular persons, in which the subject is realised as a left-hand Topic:

(13)a. Cali   MOOS   *baa/ buu   cunay.
        Cali   banana   FM/ FM.SCL3SGM   eat.PAST.3SGM
        'As for Cali, he ate a BANANA.'

b.   Adiga   MOOS   *baa/ baad   cuntay.
        you   banana   FM/ FM.SCL2SGM   eat.PAST.2SGM
        'As for you, you ate a BANANA.'

On the other hand, when the subject is realised as an internal Topic, then clitic resumption is optional for 3rd person Topics while it stands obligatory for 1st and 2nd persons:

(14)a. MOOS baa/buu   Cali   cunay.
        banana FM / FM-SCL3SGM   Cali   eat.PAST.3SGM
        'Cali ate a BANANA.'

b.   MOOS *baa/baad   adigu   cuntay.
        banana FM FM-SCL2SG you.NOM   eat.PAST.2SGM
        'You ate a BANANA.'

What this asymmetry seems to show is that a 3rd person (internal) Topic can be interpreted as the subject of the relevant sentence (making clitic resumption redundant), while such a shift of role is not available for 1st or 2nd person Topics. The question is, obviously, why this should be. If a subject position is available in Spec,IP in Somali, this should not be sensitive to the person feature of the subject. As we will show in the next section, an answer to this question can only be provided if we give an account of what a FM is.

4.   Focus Markers as copular forms

Drawing from Hetzron (1980) and Lamberti (1983), Frascarelli and Puglielli (2003) provide substantial evidence that FMs in Somali dialects derive from an original *copular form*, which includes a 3rd person clitic pronoun, as shown below:[10]

(15)   *ak   +   y   +   aa
         be   3SGM   PRES

This analysis entails a number of crucial consequences. First of all we reach the important generalization that nominal and verbal FMs derive from *the same* copular form. Second, this implies that Focus constructions in Focus

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[9] An internal Topic is an extraposed [-focus] constituent which is not realised in a peripheral position but, rather, in the *middle field* included between the FM and the Verbal Complex (for their discourse value as "weak" Topics, cf. Svolacchia *et al.* 1995).

[10] For reasons of space, we cannot provide here the relevant argumentation. We thus refer to the cited references for details.

Marking languages must be considered to originate from *cleft construction*, whose meaning can be compared to the English "*it is X that...*". Finally, from a syntactic point of view, this leads to the conclusion that Focus constructions in which a FM is present must be considered as *complex sentences* (as cleft constructions are). Specifically, within the Generative framework of grammar, these are structures in which a matrix copula (i.e., the FM) governs a subordinate *verbless clause* (even though it contains a copula, i.e., a "Small Clause", cf. Heggie 1993, Moro 1997, Frascarelli 2000b). This is therefore the structure that we assume for Focus Marking structures, as shown in diagram (16) below:

(16)
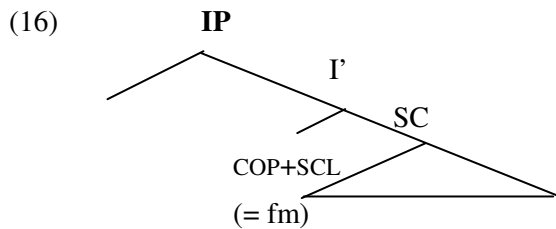
Let us now consider the internal structure of the relevant Small Clause, in the two types of Focus constructions (i.e., nominal and verbal), in order to account for their properties and asymmetries.

4.1.   Nominal Focus constructions.

Given the complex structure in (16), a nominal Focus sentence like (17) is derived as illustrated in (17') below:

(17)   CALI   baa   Soomali   ah.
        Cali   FM   Somali   be.PRES.RED
        'CALI is Somali.'

(17')   [$_{FocP}$ *CALI*$_k$ [$_{Foc'}$ *baa* [$_{IP}$ [$_{I'}$ t$_{baa}$ [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ [$_{IP}$ e$_k$ *soomaali ah*]]   t$_k$
         ]]]]]

As we can see, according to the analysis that we propose, the focused DP [CALI] and the relative clause [e$_k$ *soomaali ah*] (also a DP, as it is headed by a noun; cf. Kayne 1994) are *merged* (i.e., "inserted by the lexicon in the derivation", according to Minimalist terms) as *independent constituents within the Small Clause*. This amounts to saying that relativization is indeed involved in this kind of nominal Focus constructions (cf. Schachter 1973, Antinucci and Puglielli 1980, Appleyard 1989), but – crucially – the Focus constituent *is not* the head of the relevant relative clause.

In particular, the Focus constituent is the *predicative DP* of the relevant Small Clause, while the relative clause is its *subject*. The relative clause is, indeed, the thematic part of a nominal Focus construction (i.e., that part of

information that we give as presupposed)[11] and it is headed by an *empty pronoun* (indicated in (17') as "e"). This empty pronoun is a *semantic Variable*, that is to say, the piece of information that we lack and that we are going to *identify* through the predicative DP (i.e., the *Focus*).

In other words, a sentence like (17) above means that there is "a universe" of Somali people (i.e., [e] *Soomali ah* "[someone] who is Somali") and, within this universe, we identify a specific individual, that is to say, *CALI*. The relation between the relative clause and the Focus is therefore a *functional* one: the Focus constituent is an Operator (cf. section 1.1) providing the value for the Variable in the relative clause. Hence, it must *assume scope* over the Small Clause in order to check the [+F] feature and provide a value for the Variable (for Focus as an "identificational process" cf. also Ouhalla 1999). This amounts to saying that *CALI* in (17) can *never* be the subject of the (reduced) verb in the relative clause (which is headed by the empty pronoun): the Focus constituent is only *reinterpreted* as the subject of the main clause, in virtue of its identificational role. This explains anti-agreement effects (see below, section 5.1).

Before turning to verbal Focus constructions, it is important to notice that this analysis can provide a full explanation for the correlation between relativization and nominal focalization in different languages.[12] Consider, for instance, data from Ethiopian Semitic languages (Appleyard 1989):

(18)　BÄZUY　CÄRQə　'əxa　　　　ta　xämis　'əttəsärha.
　　　　　　　(TIGRINYA)
　　　with-this　cloth　COP.2SGM　　the　dress　you.make.REL.it
　　　'It is WITH THIS CLOTH that you will make the dress.'

(19)　əSSUNÄW　　　　'betun　　　　yaqqattäläw.　(AMHARIC)
　　　he.COP.3SGM　　house-the.ACC　he.burned.REL
　　　'It is HIM who burned the house.'

(20)　BÄHə　　　　MÄDÄR-u　　yäcänänä.
　　　　　　　(CHAHA)
　　　from-that　　place.COP　　we.came.REL
　　　'It was FROM THAT PLACE that we came.'

As we can see, in these languages the Focus is realised through a syntactic structure which is reminiscent of cleft constructions, in which the Focus is located immediately on the left of a copular element (or a form that is etymologically connected to a copula). In all these cases, the form of the verb is one specifically used in relative clauses.

Additional evidence comes from Hebrew (in (21)) and Standard Arabic (in (22)), in which the "cleft-like" construction to obtain nominal focalization is

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[11] Consider, for instance, the logico-semantic role of the relative clause in a cleft sentence like "it is MARY that *went to the cinema*".

[12] This correlation has often led the authors to derive one construction from the other. Nonetheless, to connect focalization and relativization meets semantic problems insofar as the nominal head of a relative clause is generally "given" information, contrary to what is commonly meant by a *Focus* constituent.

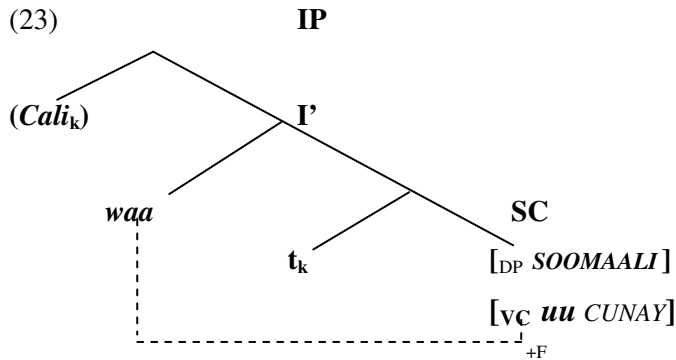realised by means of pronouns used as copular forms. Consider the following:

(21) Dani   more.   vs.   DANI   hu   more.   (from Doron 1985)
      Dani   teacher   Dani   3SGM   teacher
      'Dani is a teacher.'   'DANI is a teacher.'

(22) **HUWA al–ladi   ra'aytu.**   (from Ouhalla 1999)
      he   the-REL.PRON   see.PAST.1SG
      'It's HIM that I saw.'

This comparative analysis supports the hypothesis that Focus constructions in these languages are realised through *complex structures*, comparable to present cleft constructions. This can provide an immediate explanation for their cross-linguistic properties in a comprehensive way.

4.2.   Verbal Focus constructions.

Contrary to nominal Focus, verb Focus constructions do not involve a functional relation between a Focus-Operator and an empty pronoun. Indeed, quantifying implies a partitioning of the universe and this operation only pertains to nominal elements.

That is why in *Verb Focus constructions* the Small Clause does *not contain a relative clause* and the predicative Focus remains in situ, where it is assigned Focus in a head-complement configuration (cf. section 1.2).[13] So, a verb Focus sentence like *(Cali) wuu CUNAY* ("Cali/he ATE") or an equative sentence like *(Cali) waa SOMALI* ("Cali/he is SOMALI") are derived as follows:

(23)   **IP**

      (*Cali*ₖ)   **I'**

                  waa   **SC**

                        tₖ   [DP *SOOMAALI*]

                                     [VC *uu CUNAY*]
                                                    +F

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[13] This explains a famous asymmetry between nominal and verb Focus constructions in Somali. Consider the following examples:
(i)a.*CALI*ₖ *baa* [SC [eₖ *soomaali ah*] tₖ] *vs.* b.**Cali*ₖ *waa* [SC tₖ [e? *SOOMALI AH*]]
(ii)a.**CALI*ₖ *baa* [SC [*Soomali*] tₖ]   *vs.* b. *Cali*ₖ *waa* [SC tₖ [*SOOMALI*]]
As we can see, these data show that nominal Focus constructions require the presence of a relative clause headed by an empty pronoun to be identified, while verb Focus constructions exclude this condition. Hence, (ib) is ungrammatical because the [+F] predicate contains a non-identified Variable, while (iia) is ungrammatical because *CALI's* Operator movement has no trigger (i.e., the Small Clause does not contain a headless relative clause).

As we can see, the subject DP (if present) *must raise* to the Specifier position of the Inflectional Phrase not to interfere in the [+F] checking relation (according to general tenets; cf. section 1.2).

5.   Focus constructions: universal aspects and parametric variation.

The present proposal allows a uniform and comprehensive analysis of nominal and verb Focus Marking constructions, whose syntax is accounted for on the basis of a reduced set of generalizations, which are assumed to be valid cross-linguistically, namely:

1.   Focus Marking constructions involve a cleft-like complex structure;

2.   Focus is always a predicative element;

3.   The difference between nominal and verb Focus construction is only derivational.

However, a crucial question is left open by the present proposal, namely, why is a copular (cleft) construction required to realise Focus in Focus Marking languages, while this is only an option in others (like English or Italian)? In a Generative perspective, different syntactic behaviours are the consequence of parametric variation. It is therefore necessary to analyse the basic properties of Somali, in order to find out the source of the variation at issue.

5.1.   *Polysynthesis and pro-drop*

In a recent paper, Svolacchia and Puglielli (1999) have provided sound evidence that Somali is a polysynthetic language. This condition entails that argument roles (also, "θ-roles") are only assigned through *incorporation onto the verbal head* (the so-called "Morphological Visibility Condition"; cf. Baker 1996). This amounts to saying that in Somali the argument structure of a verb is only realised by means of *clitic pronouns*, which are disposed in a templatic structure within the Verbal Complex (cf. Puglielli 1981).[14]

This clearly leads to the conclusion that *DPs are never generated in argument position,* so that "in situ Focus" is not an option in such languages. Clitic elements, on the other hand, cannot be focused, hence full DPs are, in turn, necessary to meet discourse-pragmatic needs (i.e., the necessity of giving salience to an element of the sentence other than the verb). Moreover, a Focus is an Operator, so that it cannot be directly merged in extrasentential position: Quantifier Raising is required to obtain its interpretation. We have thus reached the point: in a polysynthetic language, a (to-be) focused DP must be necessarily generated in a *non-extraposed* position which is *not assigned an argument role*. This is exactly the definition of a predicative position for DPs and that is why a copular structure is needed.

A second major property of polysynthetic languages (deriving from the Morphological Visibility Condition) is the requirement of an overt subject in

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[14] A number of facts support this argument like, for instance, obligatoriness of clitics, absence of non-finite subordination and multiple wh-questions. The interested reader can refer to Svolacchia and Puglielli (1999) for details.

every sentence. Hence, *pro*-drop is excluded and this exclusion is responsible for the phenomena connected with the focalization of subjects (like the anti-agreement effect; see below).

In a recent paper on Cushitic languages, Frascarelli and Puglielli (2003) have provided cross-linguistic evidence for these claims, showing that, on the one hand, the presence of FMs in Focus constructions is strictly connected to the polysynthesis parameter and, on the other, anti-agreement effects are only found in non *pro*-drop languages.[15] Consider the Table below:

	polysynthesis	nominal FM	pro-drop	anti-agreement
Somali	+	+	-	+
Rendille	+	+	-	+
Dabarre	+	+	+	-
Afar	-	-	+	-

6. Back to Specific Properties: Evidence for the Analysis

The analysis proposed is strongly supported by empirical evidence, since it provides an explanation for a number of specific properties and asymmetries in Focus constructions, left unsolved in previous analyses.

6.1. Anti-agreement effects

Anti-agreement in nominal Focus constructions is triggered by the *pro*-drop parameter. Consider (8) once more (repeated below as (24)) and its derivation:

(24) Hilib NIMANKÁAS ayaa cunayá.
 meat men-those.**ABS** FM eat.PRES.PROG.RED
 'THOSE MEN are eating meat.'

(25) [$_{FocP}$ [$_{Foc'}$ *baa* [$_{IP}$ [$_{I'}$ t$_{baa}$ [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ e *cunayá*] [$_{DP}$ *nimankaas*]]]]]]
 $\longrightarrow$

 [$_{FocP}$ [$_{DP}$ *NIMANKAAS*]$_k$ [$_{Foc'}$ *baa* [$_{IP}$ [$_{I'}$ t$_{baa}$ [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ e$_k$ *cunayá*] t$_k$]]]]]

As is shown, the Focus DP is not generated within the relative clause, but as the predicate of a subordinate Small Clause: this fully explains ABS marking. The subject of the relative clause is, on the other hand, an empty pronoun, and this explains the presence of anti-agreement (a sort of "participial" form of the verb): a Variable is realised in subject position while polysynthetic languages need overt subjects to produce inflection. So, when a nominal Fo-

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[15] The connection between anti-agreement and the *pro*-drop parameter is also immediately clear in non-Afroasiatic languages Consider, for instance, cleft sentences in English and French, as compared to *pro*-drop Italian:
(i)a. *It is ME* (1SG) *that goes* (3SG) *to America.*
 b. *C'est MOI* (1SG) *qui va* (3SG) *en Amérique.*
 c. *Sono IO* (1SG) *che vado* (1SG) *in America.*

cus *is said* to be the subject of the relative clause, this is actually only the effect of a *reinterpretation*: the Focus identifies the empty pronoun and it qualifies as *the first accessible subject* for the reduced verb in the relative clause.[16]

As for long movement data, the absence of anti-agreement is immediately explained by the presence of an *obligatory* subject in the subordinate clause. Let us then analyse the structure and derivation of sentence (10), repeated below as (26):

(26) NIMANKAASU$_i$ baan   sheegay *in/inay$_i$ hilib cunayaan.
      men-those.NOM   FM-SCL1SG say.PAST   that.SCL**3PL**   meat
      eat.PRES.**PROG.3PL**
      'I said that THOSE MEN are eating meat.'

(27) NIMANKAASU$_k$ baa [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ aan sheegay [inay$_k$ hilib cunayaan]]   t$_k$]

As we can see, in the presence of a complex sentence a subject pronoun (*ay*, in (26)) must be present in the subordinate clause,[17] which thus shows full inflection (according to polysynthetic tenets). However, this does not disrupt the quantificational role of the Focus DP that, moving from its predicative position in the Small Clause, assumes scope and identifies the overt pronoun in the subordinate clause (which serves as a Variable).[18]

6.2.   Internal Topics

As we have seen in (14a-b) – repeated below as (28a-b) – a 3rd person DP can be located between the FM *baa* and the verb (as an internal Topic) and be reinterpreted as the subject of the relevant sentence. On the contrary, 1st and 2nd persons cannot be found in that position unless a subject clitic is present on the FM (as in (28b)).

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[16] In this line of analysis, it is interesting to point out that a further reduction is in progress concerning anti-agreement. As we know (cf. note 6), Somali restricted paradigm still maintains a distinction for the 1pl person. However, in present spoken Somali such a distinction is disappearing in favour of a unique 3sg form. Consider (i) and its structure in (ii):

(i) *Libaaxa*   ANNAGA *ayaa*   *dilayná*   / $^?$*dilayá*.
    lion-the   we   FM   kill.PAST.RED.1PL /   kill.PAST.RED.**3SGM**
    'WE have killed the lion.' (lit.: 'It is US that **has** killed the lion')

(ii) [$_{Top}$*libaaxa*[$_{FocP}$ ANNAGA$_{k\,1pl}$ [$_{Foc}$ FM$_{3sg}$ [$_{IP}$ [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$ [$_{IP}$ e$_{1pl/3sg}$ *dilayná/dilayá*]]t$_k$]]]]]]

As shown in (ii), this linguistic change is immediately noted if we assume that FMs are original copular forms which include a 3SGM pronoun. So, in a sentence like (i) a conflict arises between Focus identification and a sort of "control" operated by the FM. Since the latter represents a simplification for the system, this is the direction that spoken Somali is assuming in recent times.

[17] Relativization is indeed a matrix phenomenon in Somali.

[18] As is well known (weak) pronouns can be Variables bound by a DP or a QP. Consider [*Every man*]$_k$ *thinks he$_k$ is a genius*.

(28)a.   MOOS baa Cali cunay.
    'Cali ate a BANANA.'

b.   MOOS *baa /baad adigu cuntay.
    'You ate a BANANA.'

The reason for this asymmetry is now clear. A 3rd person Topic can be rein-terpreted as a subject because its phi-features match with the feature (origi-nally) included within the FM (cf. (15)), which operates a sort of "control" on the participial agreement of the relative clause. 1st and 2nd person Topics, on the other hand, are not allowed in that position because *they are not ac-cessible subjects for the empty pronoun* heading the relative clause. Their features determine, in fact, a mismatch with the 3rd person feature included within *baa*:

(28a') $[_{DP} MOOS]_k$ FM_{3sg} $[_{SC} [_{DP} [_{TopP} Cali_{3sg}$ $[_{IP} e_{3sg}$ *cunay* $]]]$ t_k $]$

(28b') $[_{DP} MOOS]_k$ FM_{3sg} $[_{SC} [_{DP} [_{TopP} *adigu_{2sg}$ $[_{IP} e_{3sg}$ *cunay* $]]]$ t_k $]$

This analysis also explains why internal Topics are not permitted in verb Focus constructions. Consider, for instance, the following:

(29)a.   Soomali, Cali waa AHAA.
    Somali Cali FM be.PAST.3SGM
    'Cali was Somali.'

b.   Cali waa AHAA, soomaali.

c.   [?]Cali soomaali waa AHAA.

d.   *Cali waa soomaali AHAA.

As we can see, no constituent can be located between *waa* and the focused verb (while the presence of an internal Topic between the subject and the verb only produces a slight marginal effect). The relevant ungrammaticality is fully expected in the present analysis: an internal Topic in that position disrupts the head-Complement configuration which is necessary for [+F] assignment in verb Focus constructions (cf. section 1.2):

(29') (*soomaali*) $[_{IP}C_k$ $[_{IntTop}$(*soomaali*) $[_{I'}waa$ $[_{IntTop}$(**soomaali*)$[_{SC}t_k$ $[_{VC}A$-
  HAA$]]]]]]]$ (*soomaali*)

6.3.   *Morphosyntactic evidence: case assignment*

While examining the anti-agreement effect in Somali (cf. section 5.1), we have pointed out that ABS marking on (what is reinterpreted as) the subject is due to the predicative role of the focused DP in the Small Clause format. Further support for the present analysis comes from another Cushitic lan-guage, Afar.

Afar is not a polysynthetic language, hence argument roles are realised by full DPs and in situ realization is the unmarked option for Focus. However, cleft constructions are also possible and they present an interesting Case marking alternation. Consider the following (data from Bliese 1981):

(30)   ÁWKA   [huurí-h   adda-l   kullumta   habtém]
       boy.ABS   boat-of   inside-in   fish
       left.3SGF.**NOMINALIZER.NOM**
       'A BOY left the fish inside the boat.'

(31)   [a'maháa kitoobá-l   síini-h   baahóonuwaanama]
         this books-of it   you-for   they.put.FUT.3PL.**NOMINALIZER.ABS**
       '(It is that) they will put this for you in books.'

These data show that in nominal Focus constructions (cf. (30)) *the relative clause is marked by NOM Case*, while the focused DP *carries ABS Case* (which is specifically used for predicative DPs in copular constructions). On the other hand, when Focus is on the whole predication (as in (31)), then the nominalizer suffix shows ABS Case. Such an alternation – left unsolved in Afar grammars – is made clear by the Small Clause format we propose for copular constructions, in which the Focus is always the predicate and the relative clause has a subject role.

Evidence of Case marking is also provided by Somali equative sentences (a case of verb Focus constructions; cf. section 3.2). As the following example shows, the subject DP of an equative sentence is marked for NOM Case:

(32)   Wiilku   waa   SOOMAALI.
       boy.ART.**NOM**   FM   Somali
       'The boy is Somali.'

The predicative DP, on the other hand, must be marked for ABS Case, independently of its position:

(33)   Q.   ***Waa ayo Cali?*** ('Who is Cali?')

a.   Cali   waa   gabarta   *walaalkeedu   /   walaal-
      keeda.
      Cali   FM   girl.ARTDEF.   brother.POSS3SGM.NOM
            ABS
      'Cali is the girl's brother.'

b.   *Cali gabarta walaalkeedu waa yahay.

c.   *Gabarta walaalkeedu Cali waa yahay.

This is also fully expected according to the analysis that we propose.

*6.4.   Additional evidence: "One sentence one Focus"*

To conclude, let us consider some evidence that emerges from the analysis of apparent multiple Focus constructions in Somali. As is commonly known, in Focus Marking languages, only one Focus can be found in each sentence, so that sentences like (34) are excluded as ungrammatical:

(34)   *MARYAN   baa   Xamar   way   TAGTAY.
        Maryan   FM   Mogadishu   FM3SCLF
             go.PAST.3SGF

However, this general rule seems to be disrupted by the acceptability of sentences like the following:

(35)   Axmed waa   yimid   baan   maqlay.
        Axmed fm   come.past.3sgm fm.1scl hear.past.1sg
        'I heard THAT AXMED CAME.'

The present analysis can explain these asymmetries, showing that the validity of this biunivocal relation (one sentence ↔ one Focus) crucially depends on the Small Clause format that we propose and the three generalizations given in section 4). Consider first the structure of sentence (35):

(35')
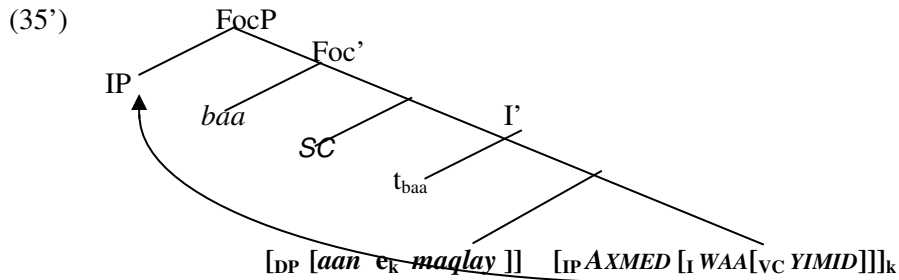
As we can see, the two FMs *are* contained within separate clauses in (35) and the identificational role of the nominal Focus (which is, in this case, a sentential complement) is not disrupted. This makes the relevant sentence fully acceptable.

On the other hand, in a sentence like (34), even if the two FMs are contained within separate clauses, *MARYAN* cannot be interpreted as Focus because the subject IP in the Small Clause does not contain a semantic Variable to be identified:

(34')   *MARYAN$_k$ *baa* [$_{SC}$ [$_{IP}$ *Xamar way TAGTAY*]   t$_k$]

7.   Conclusions

In the light of the present analysis, Focus constructions and their effects are fully explained on the basis of two independently motivated assumptions, which can be considered part of UG, namely:

1. FMs entail the presence of a copular construction;
2. Focus constituents are predicative elements; in particular, nominal Foci are Quantifiers (i.e., identificational Operators).

As for specific properties, we have identified two parameters that can account for cross–linguistic variation in Focus constructions, namely:

1. Polysynthesis: requiring copular constructions to express Focus;
2. Pro-drop: determining anti-agreement effects in the presence of an empty semantic Variable in subject position.

If our analysis is correct, it represents an important tool for typological research. Our strong predictions can be considered a hypothesis on the universal structure of Focus constructions, to be verified over a wider number of languages in future research.

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