A Study of Noun Phrase Focus in Fulfulde: The Case Study of Adamawa Dialect

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Abstract

Focus constructions are syntactically rich aspects of Fulfulde grammar. This paper aims at investigating the nature of noun phrase (NP) focus in Fulfulde with particular reference to Adamawa dialect. The study employed two methodological techniques for data collection: observation and oral interview. These techniques were used in collecting data from different categories of native speakers. The Principles and Parameters theory was adopted as the theoretical framework for data analysis in the study. The study shows that noun phrase NP focus in Adamawa dialect of Fulfulde involves movement of the focused element which is accompanied with a focus marker (FM). The study has identified five different FMs that are commonly used in the dialect depending on the semantic requirement. They are: on, ni, faa, dey and tan.

Keywords: Adamawa dialect, Fulfulde, focus markers, noun phrase focus, principles and parameters theory

1. Introduction

Fulfulde is a native language of the Fulbe. It is spoken by over 15 million people as
a native language (Wilson, 1989), and by several million others as L2 or language of wider communication throughout West Africa. It is also spoken in some countries of North Africa, East Africa and Central Africa. The language is one of the African languages and one of the most widely spoken in West Africa, and the estimate total population of the Fulɓe in Africa was fluctuating. They were estimated to about 40 million, with the highest concentration in Nigeria, with a total population of 18.7 million, representing 11.0% of the total population of 175 million Nigerians in 2015 (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). Whereas the same medium released a different figure: 20 million as the total population Fulɓe in 2016 (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). However, the latest and more reliable figures were released by *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* reporting that the population of the Fulɓe is more than 27 million people (Simons & Charles, 2018).

In the early 19th century, Fulfulde has attained the highest level of prestige, after the establishment of *Fulɓe* states in West Africa sub-region (Victor, 1978). The states were: Fuuta Jaloo in the West, Sokoto in Hausaland, and Adamawa in the East. During that period, *Fulfulde* had become a lingua franca as well as an official language, especially in Adamawa (Victor, 1978).

Adamawa dialect is one of the six major dialects of Fulfulde identified by Arnott (1970, p. 3). The other five are: Fuuta Tooro, Fuuta Jaloo, Masina, Sokoto and Central Northern Nigeria. Despite the fact that certain varieties are identifiable with certain geographical areas, there is no clear cut demarcation for the dialects (Girei, 2009), and all the dialects are mutually intelligible because there is no great dialect diversity (Wilson, 1989). Adamawa dialect is spoken in Adamawa, Taraba, Southern Borno, Cameroon and Chad.

Focus constructions in Fulfulde, Adamawa dialect in particular, involve movement of elements from the extraction sites to the landing sites as well as the use of distinctive focus markers (henceforth FM). Minimal Link Condition (MLC) is also used to explain the ungrammaticality of focus-islands: When you have two focus-phrases, movement of one of them will be blocked by the MLC because the closest potential landing site will be occupied by the other. So, the aim of this paper is to
examine the nature of noun phrase (NP) focus in Adamawa dialect of Fulfulde.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Principles and Parameters (P&P) theory (Chomsky, 1981), and subsequent relevant works. This theory introduced three key concepts: the lexicon, which contains all the lexical items of the language; phrase structure rules, which combine lexical elements to form basic structures; and movement rules, which shift elements from one location (extraction site) to another (landing site) (Radford, 1988). The GB theory views and describes syntactic structures at two interrelated levels of representation; the S-structure and the D-structure from which the surface structure is derived through the application of movement rules.

The basic form of grammar where the relationship of the D-structure and S-structure is traceable through movement is illustrated in the diagram below.

Figure 1. The basic form of the grammar 1980s-90s (Cook & Newson, 2007, p. 62)

In the 1970s, Chomsky and Jackendoff developed and incorporated X-bar theory as a system of phrase structure grammar (Lamidi, 2008). The X-bar theory defined possible types of rules for the phrase structure, and later on it replaced the phrase structure. According to Cook and Newson (2007), “under this view, the X-bar principles regulate a category-neutral structure and categorial information enters as lexical items are inserted”.

78
Government-Binding theory, which is now referred to as principles and parameters theory, is a model of Universal Grammar (UG) which claimed that human languages consisted of principles that were the same for any grammar, but it is the parameters that allow the grammars of the individual languages to vary in some ways, and there are so many modules that can be considered as sub-headings of GB, i.e. government and binding theory (Cook & Newson, 2007). GB is central to principles and parameters (P&P) theory. It has three levels: the Logical Form, D-structure and S-structure related to each other by a single movement rule referred to as (move α) (Matthews, 2007). In this model, the D-structure and S-structure refer to deep and surface structures proposed earlier by Chomsky. The D-structure is the basic or underlying structure and the S-structure is the surface or derived structure. P&P theory consists of sub-theories preferably called modules. In the X-bar syntax, the grammar incorporates the different modules and it has become a kind of interlock, a complete system of grammar.

3. Defining Focus Construction

Abubakar (1988/1989, p. 188) described focus as an emphasis which is generally defined as the way by which attention is focused on a word, phrase, clause or entire sentence. Focus is defined by Matthews (2007) as “an element or part of a sentence given prominence by intonational or other means”. In the same vein Erteschik-Shir (1997, p. 11) defines focus as “a discourse property which is assigned to a constituent in a context of conversation”. McIntosh (1984) sees focus as “a constituent that represents new or highlighted information, and which often, though not necessarily, receives contrastive stress”.

Focus constructions vary from language to language. Some languages use stress, intonation, or cleft in constructing a focus sentence. English, for example, uses cleft or pseudocleft in constructing focus sentences, where the focus position is always after the copula verb (Aarts, 2008, p. 222). Some languages use only one focus marker for every constituent while others use different focus markers
for different categories (Fakuade, Bashir & Hananiya, 2001). However, in Fulfulde, one general process that applies to almost all focus constituents is the alpha movement and the use of FM.

In his exploration of the role of focus structure in grammar, Erteschik-Shir (1997, p. 3) has proposed a model of grammar where he illustrates the interface between focus structure and syntax, and the semantics of focus structure.

Figure 2. The f-structure model (Erteschik-Shir, 1997, p. 3)

Erteschik-Shir developed this model of grammar, and describes focus structure (f-structure) as an annotated Structural Description (SD) in which topic and focus constituents are marked. The f-structure which is at the branching point feeds both the PF (phonological form) and the semantics, and it is sensitive to lexical information. While on the other hand, structure of a focus phrase (henceforth FP) can be illustrated in a tree-diagram as we can see below.

Figure 3. Structure of a focus phrase (Arokoyo, 2013, p. 15)

3.1 Focus Markers (FMs)

Focus markers are very common in African languages, and in Adamawa dialect, there are four different particles identified as functional FMs (Bello, 2016). Generally, all of them serve as focus markers because of their role in introducing prominence to
the information contained in a phrase. The FMs are the elements that are used as the operators in the focus constructions but we are not going to discuss them here. In the focus constructions, the FM is the head of the FP (Arokoyo, 2013, p. 16).

The issue of focus markers FMs in Fulfulde has been the case of dialectal context. Different FMs have been identified in different dialects. For example, ko, wo, yaa, yo, etc. are some of the FMs that are commonly used in dialects other than Adamawa. In Adamawa dialect, on is the most common particle used as an FM, which is a personal definite article. However, Bello (2016) identifies ni, dey and faa as three more particles that are commonly used in Adamawa dialect as FMs. In the process of this study, we identified another common particle tan ‘only’ as a FM.

3.2 Focus in other dialects

Scholars such as McIntosh (1984), Abu-Manga (1991) and Danjuma (2015) attempted at different times to investigate focus constructions in Fulfulde. McIntosh (1984) describes focus, paying more attention to grammatical and ungrammatical focus constructions. She worked on Kaceccereere, a variety of the Central Northern Nigeria dialect. Looking at the data presented, it is evident that focused NPs are fronted in the dialect. McIntosh (1984) identifies five features of focused NPs. They are:

- A focused NP usually requires a relative conjugation in the same clause.
- A focused NP is not referred to anaphorically in the same clause.
- If a focused NP is an anaphoric pronoun, then it has the form of an independent pronoun, rather than of a dependent pronoun.\(^1\)
- If a topic NP and a focused NP co-occur, the former precedes the latter.
- There is no pause after the focused NP.

Abu-Manga (1991) discussed focus in the context of Sokoto dialect, arguing that in terms of transmission and reception, sentences are divided into two types: declarative and non-declarative. According to him, declarative sentences refer to utterances which declare information anew, where focus is restricted to the action
itself rather than any other element of the utterance. While the non-declarative sentences focus emphases on other elements of the utterance rather than the action. He presented the following as examples of focused NPs.

1. (a) O meemii deftere Deftere o meemi
   He touched a book It is a book that he touched
(b) O fiyi baccel Baccel a fiyi
   He beat child It is a child that he beat (sic) (Abu-Manga, 1991)

Danjuma (2015), in his Ph.D. Thesis, in comparison with Hausa and Ngas, discusses Fulfulde focus constructions briefly, identifying one FM (on) which he argues that is obligatory in Fulfulde focus constructions. Though on is a remarkable FM in Adamawa dialect, there are other FMs identified in (Bello, 2016, p. 109). Whereas Abu-Manga (1991) and Apel (2015) prove that generally, FM is not necessary in all Fulfulde focused constructions. According to Sylla (1982), as cited by Apel (2015), the process of verb focus in Pulaar is by zero suffix. The various suffixes for the verbs depend on the tenses of the verbs as well as the voice.

2. [ Background ] [ Focus ]
   Mammadu ruf-ø kos-am dam
   PN spill-PFV1 milk-23 23.DEF
   [Mammadu SPILLED THE MILK.]

Apel (2015) discusses verb focus in Pular where indirect speech seems to be used as the process of verb focus in the dialect. The -u suffix which is attached to a verb root to derive a commanding verb is used in a context of past tense marker -i. So, the use of -u instead of -i to mark past tense serves as a process of focusing on the affected verb. e.g.

3. [BG] [ Focus ]
   o yaar-u leemunnee-re nden
1. PRO drink-PFV1 orange-5 DEF
   ‘He DRANK THE ORANGE.’

4. Discussion

The constituents of focus are the phrases that contain the information meant to be prominent by the speaker. In languages like Yorùbá, Basà and Fulfulde, the ex-situ as a focus marking strategy is a peculiar phenomenon, because focused units are fronted by the application of movement rules (see Arokoyo, 2013, pp. 11-20; Imoh, 2014, pp. 84-100, and Abu-Manga, 1991, pp. 1-11). Likewise, in Fulfulde, when the NP is focused, it moves to the specifier position of the focus phrase FP.

4.1 Types of constituents that can be focused in Fulfulde

The constituents that can be focused in Fulfulde can be divided into two types: NPs and non-NPs. The NP focus deals with the noun phrases that occupy three different structural positions, viz: NP as a subject, NP as an object and NP as a prepositional complement, as well as the pronouns that represent them. On the other hand, the non-NP focus refers to adjective phrase, verb phrase and adjunct phrase. Each of the subject-NP, object-NP, prepositional object-NP, adjective and adjunct are fronted as a matter of focus.

4. Subject-NP Focus

\[
[FP \text{ Buuba, on } [IP t, [VP sood-i deftere]]]
\]

Buuba FM - buy-PAST book

‘Buuba is the one who bought a book.’

5. Object-NP Focus

\[
[FP \text{ Deftere, on } [IP Buuba [VP sood-i t, ]]].
\]

book FM Buuba buy-PAST -

‘It is a book that Buuba bought.’
6. Prepositional Object-NP Focus

\[_{FP} \text{Nder saare, on }_{IP} \text{ o }_{VP} \text{ nyukk-i t\_}],

in house FM s/he hide-PAST

‘It was in the house that she hid’

7. Verb Focus

\[_{FP} \text{[IP Gaaga] }_{VP} \text{ dill-i luum-o on ]]

Gaaga go-PAST market-CM FM

‘What Gaaga did was go to the market.’

4.1.1 Subject-NP Focus

Subject is a syntactic element in language which represents someone or something, of which something is said (Matthews, 2007, p. 387). The subject-NP is one of the constituents that can be focused in Fulfulde. The art of focusing on a subject-NP in Adamawa dialect involves a short movement from the SPEC position of infinitival phrase (IP) to the SPEC position of the focus phrase (FP). As it was explained earlier, there are about four distinct focus markers identified in this dialect. So, in the process of focusing on the subject-NP, after the transformational rule Move-α is applied to move the subject-NP from its original position as a SPEC of IP to its landing site, as a SPEC of the FP, a particular FM can be selected to accompany the NP as a licence. Since the FMs are many, the criteria for selecting a particular FM rest with the functional role the speaker wants the FM to play for his/her hearer in conveying the prominence of the information.

The criteria may include contrastiveness, speciality, or clarification. In the absence of these three, an NP can be focused on common ground of prominence. Though some information may take any of the FMs just to indicate prominence, some information needs a particular marker more than the others, in order to clarify, warn or add flavour to the prominence of the information. This is quite obvious when three different FMs are used to focus on one and the same constituent. Let us imagine a scene: a man came here last night, and two persons argue about him. If Mr A asks, “Who came
here last night?” Mr B, assuming to have known, in answering first, can use on as the appropriate FM to focus NP of his answer. If Mr C wants to deny, the better FM to use is ni, while a third party to intervene is supposed to use dey FM to clarify the fact. However, on can be used in all the three situations in an ordinary sense, but the use of the other two uniformly may be odd because of their additional role as speciality and clarification carriers respectively. Let us look at the subject–NP focus from its source. That is to say, the two levels of the structure are represented one after the other. In any given number, we have (a) and (b) for the D-structure and the S-structure respectively.

The S-structure indicates the trace of the movement of the focused element from the D-structure to the S-structure.

8. (a) [IP Halimatu [AP nyaw-dó]]
   Halimatu   nyaw-dó.
   Halimatu   sick-CM
   ‘Halimatu is sick.’

(b) [FP Halimatui on [IP t; [AP nyaw-dó]]]
   ‘Halimatui on ti nyaw-dó’.
   Halimatu FM   sick-CM
   ‘Halimatu is the one who is sick.’

9. (a) [IP Mbee-wa [VP rim-i bik-kon did'-on]]
    Mbee-wa   rim-i   bik-kon   did'-on.
    goat-CM give birth-PAST child-CM two-CM
    ‘A goat gave birth to two kids.’

(b) [FP Mbee-wai on [IP t; [VP rim-i bik-kon did'-on]]]
    Mbee-wa, on t; rim-i   bik-kon   did'-on.
    goat-CM FM - give birth-PAST child-CM two-CM
    ‘It is a goat that gave birth to two kids.’
10. (a) [IP Binta [VP aaw-i folle-re]]
   Binta aaw-i folle-re.
   Binta plant-PAST sorrel-CM.
   ‘Binta planted sorrel.’
(b) [FP Bintai on [IP t_i [VP aaw-i folle-re]]]
   Binta, on t_i aaw-i folle-re.
   Binta FM plant-PAST sorrel-CM
   ‘Binta is the one who planted sorrel.’

11. (a) [IP Gaa-ri [VP tekk-in-an]]
   Gaa-ri tekk-in-an.
   gruel-CM fat-CAUS-FUT
   ‘Gruel can fatten.’
(b) [FP Gaa-ri, on [IP t_i [VP tekk-in-ta]]]
   Gaa-ri, on t_i tekk-in-ta.
   gruel-CM FM fat-CAUS-PRE
   ‘Gruel is the thing that fattens.’

12. (a) [IP Bisa [VP ɓur-i haakoo-ji fuu]]
   Bisa ɓur-i haakoo-ji fuu.
   moringa pass-PAST soup-CM all
   ‘Moringa soup is the best.’
(b) [FP Bisa, on [IP t_i [VP ɓur-i haakoo-ji fuu]]]
   Bisa, on t_i ɓur-i haakoo-ji fuu.
   moringa FM pass-PAST soup-CM all
   ‘Moringa is the best soup.’

13. (a) [IP sulan-ndi [VP ngat-i mo]]
   Sulan-ndi ngat-i mo.
   serpent-CM bite-PAST him
‘A serpent bit him.’

(b) \[ fp \text{sulan-ndi, faa [ip t, [vp ngati mo]]} \]

\begin{align*}
\text{Sulan-ndi, faa t, ngat-i mo.} \\
\text{serpent-CM FM bite-PAST him}
\end{align*}

‘It is a serpent that bit him.’

14. (a) \[ ip \text{kusel [vp weln-ata haa-ko]} \]

\begin{align*}
\text{Kus-el weln-an haa-ko.} \\
\text{meat sweeten-HAB soup}
\end{align*}

‘Meat makes soup tasty.’

(b) \[ fp \text{kusel, dey [ip t, [vp weln-ata haa-ko]]} \]

\begin{align*}
\text{Kusel, dey t, weln-ata haa-ko.} \\
\text{meat FM sweeten-HAB soup}
\end{align*}

‘It is meat that makes soup tasty.’

15. (a) \[ ip \text{Adamu [vp janngin-i ɓe]} \]

\text{Adamu janngin-i ɓe. Adamu teach-PAST them}

‘Adamu taught them.’

(b) \[ fp \text{Adamui ni [ip t, [vp janngin-i ɓe]]}. \]

\[ \text{Adamui ni t, janngin-i ɓe. Adamu FM - teach-PAST them} \]

‘Adamu was the one who taught them.’
4.1.2 Object-NP focus

The object-NP is a syntactic element that occupies the position of verb complement. The object-NP is an internal argument of verb, so it is θ-marked and case-marked by the verb (Arokoyo, 2013, p. 75). Object-NPs can be divided into two: object-NP as a complement of the preposition and object-NP as a complement of verb which is our concern here. When the object-NP of verb complement is focused, it moves from its logical position to occupy the position of the specifier of the focus phrase (FP), and leaves the extraction site empty, but its trace remains there. The focused element and its trace are co-indexed.

17. (a) Yimɓe ngiɗi jawdi jotta. ‘people love wealth nowadays’

\[
[\text{[IP yim-ɓe [VP ngiɗ-i njaw-di jotta]]}]
\]

yim-ɓe ngiɗ-i njaw-di jotta.

people-CM love-PAST wealth-CM now

‘People love wealth nowadays.’

(b) Njawdi on yimɓe ngiɗi jotta. ‘What people love nowadays is wealth’

\[
[\text{[FP njaw-di, on [IP yim-ɓe [VP ngiɗ-i ti jotta]]]}}]
\]

‘What people love nowadays is wealth.’
Njaw-di, on yim-ɓe ngid-i ti jotta.
wealth-CM FM people-CM love-PAST now
‘What people love nowadays is wealth’

Here in the example above, the two levels of structure are represented one after the other, (17a) is the D-structure and then (17b) is S-structure. The non-focused constituent which is the D-structure conveys ordinary information, while the S-structure, which is the focused one, conveys prominence or highlighted information.

18. (a) O heɓi buhu jeego haa babal man. ‘He got six bags (of maize) on the land’

\[
\text{IP o}\ [\text{VP heɓ-i buhu jeego [PP haa bab-al man]]}\\
\text{O heɓ-i buhu jeego haa bab-al man.}
\]
he get-PAST bag six at land-CM the
‘He got six bags (of maize) on the land.’

(b) Buhu jeego on o heɓi haa babal man. ‘What he got on the land are six bags.’

\[
\text{FP buhu jeego, on [IP o [VP heɓ-i t_i [PP haa bab-al man]]]}\\
\text{Buhu jeego, on o heɓ-i ti haa bab-al man.}
\]
bag six FM he get-PAST currently at land-CM the
‘What he got on the land are six bags.’

19. (a) Mi dillan luumo. ‘I shall go to the market.

\[
\text{IP mi [IV dill-an luum-o]]}\\
\text{Mi dill-an luum-o.}
\]
go-FUT market-CM
‘I shall go to the market.

(b) Luumo on mi dillata. ‘It is market that I shall go to.’

\[
\text{FP luum-oi on [IP mi [VP dill-ata ti]]}\\
\text{Luu-mo on mi dill-ata ti.}
\]
Market-CM FM I go-FUT —
‘It is market that I shall go to.’

The object-NP focus is found to have involved movement of the NP from its logical position to become the structural subject of the sentence. This movement is referred to as Ā-movement, because the NP moves from an argument position to a non-argument position. The landing site for the object-NP is the specifier position of the FP.

In order to present the phenomenon clearer, we analyse further one of the examples above on a tree-diagram as we can see below. The diagram illustrates both the D-structure and S-structure of the sentence under discussion in a way. The movement of the focused element is also demonstrated by co-indexing the moved (focused) NP and its trace.

20.

In focus construction the focused NP moves from its logical position in the D-structure known as the extraction site to its landing site as the SPEC of the FP
which replaces Complementiser Phrase CP. The landing site for the focused NP is always the SPEC position of the FP, while the FM is the head of FP and occupies the slot of the F.

4.1.3 Prepositional object-NP focus

The prepositional object-NP is the complement of the preposition which can be a noun or its equivalent (Fakuade, 2012, p. 200). In Fulfulde, focusing on the prepositional object-NP is somewhat complicated, because it is different from the subject-NP. The prepositional object-NP does not move in isolation, but along with the preposition. However, this is not to claim that it is impossible, but conditional. The movement observes what is called selectional restriction of verbs. The main verbs such as jooɗ ‘to sit’, yaha ‘to go’, sakkina ‘to through’ do not allow only the NP to move leaving the preposition behind. However, when the verb ‘to be’, that is don ‘is’, is used in the sentence, the NP can optionally move alone, and the preposition cannot remain there, but drops automatically. English is one of the languages that allow wh-movement to “strand” a prepositional phrase (Carnie, 2013, p. 465). The case of prepositional stranding which is possible in English is impossible or ungrammatical in Fulfulde. Preposition in Fulfulde can either move along with its complement or drop automatically from the structure after any form of movement that moves its complement. Let us now illustrate the whole PP movement first, before the other.

21. (a) $[[\text{IP } \text{ɓe } [\text{VP njoọd-i } [\text{PP les lek-ki}]]]]$
   
   Be njoọd-i les lek-ki.
   they sit-PAST under tree-CM
   ‘They sat under a tree.’

   (b) $[[\text{FP les lek-ki, on } [\text{IP } \text{ɓe } [\text{VP njoọd-i } [\text{PP ṯi }]]]]]]$

   Les lek-ki, on be njoọd-i ṯi,
   under tree-CM FM they sit-PAST —.
   ‘Under a tree is where they sat down.’
22. (a) \([_{IP} o \ [_{VP} yan-i \ [_{PP} nder waw-ru man]]]\)
\[
O\ yan-i\ nder\ waw-ru\ man.
\]
he fall-PAST in well-CM the
‘He fell down the well.’
(b) \([_{FP} nder waw-ru man, faa\ [_{IP} o \ [_{VP} yan-i \ [_{PP} t_i]]]()]\)
\[
Nder\ waw-ru\ mani\ faa\ o\ yan-i\ t_i.
\]
in well-CM the FM he fall-PAST —.
‘It is down the well he fell.’

23. (a) \([_{IP} mi \ [_{VP} yejjit-i\ ɗe \ [_{PP} haa maayo]]]\)
\[
Mi\ yejjit-i\ ɗe\ haa\ maayo.
\]
I forget-PAST them at river
‘I forgot them at the river.’
(b) \([_{FP} haa maayo ni\ [_{IP} mi \ [_{VP} yejjit-i\ ɗe\ t_i]]()]\)
\[
Haa\ maayo,\ ni\ mi\ yejjit-i\ ɗe\ t_i.
\]
at river FM I forget-PAST them
‘I forgot them at the river.’

24. (a) \([_{IP} o \ [_{VP} dōn-no \ [_{PP} haa saa-re]]]\)
\[
O\ dōn-no\ haa\ saa-re.
\]
he be-PERF at house-CM
‘He was at home.’
(b) \([_{FP} haa saa-re,\ dey\ [_{IP} o \ [_{VP} won-no \ [_{PP} t_i]]]]()\)
\[
Haa\ saa-re,\ dey\ o\ won-no\ t_i.
\]
at house-CM FM he be-PERF —
‘He was at home.’

As we have already said in the introduction of this sub-heading, there are some certain examples of prepositional object-NP moving alone when it is focused. Though the preposition does not move to the focus phrase position, it does not remain there
either, it disappears from the S-structure.

\[ F \]

25. (a) \[[\text{IP} \ o \ [\text{VP} \ d\text{on} \ [\text{PP} \ haa \ ngesa]]]]\]
   \[ O \ d\text{on} \ haa \ nges-a. \]
   he be at farm-CM
   ‘He is at the farm.’

(b) \[[\text{FP} \ ngesai \ on \ [\text{IP} \ o \ [\text{VP} \ won-i \ [\text{PP} \ t_i]]]]\]
   \[ Nges-a_i \ on \ o \ \text{won-i} \ t_i. \]
   farm FM he be-PAST —.
   ‘Farm is where he is.’

(c) *\[[\text{FP} \ nges-a_i \ on \ [\text{IP} \ o \ [\text{VP} \ won-i \ [\text{PP} \ haa \ t_i]]]]\]
   *Nges-a_i on o won-i haa t_i.
   farm-CM he be-PAST at —.
   ‘He is at the farm.’

26. (a) \[[\text{IP} \ o \ [\text{VP} \ d\text{on} \ [\text{PP} \ haa \ saa-re]]]]\]
   \[ O \ d\text{on} \ haa \ saa-re. \]
   he be at house
   ‘He is at home.’

(b) \[[\text{FP} \ saa-re_i \ ni \ [\text{IP} \ o \ [\text{VP} \ won-i \ [\text{PP} \ t_i]]]]\]
   \[ Saa-re_i \ ni \ o \ \text{woni} \ t_i. \]
   house-CM FM he be —.
   ‘He is at home.’

(c) *\[[\text{FP} \ saa-re_i \ ni \ [\text{IP} \ o \ [\text{VP} \ won-i \ [\text{PP} \ haa \ t_i]]]]\]
   *Saa-re_i ni o woni haa t_i.
   house-CM FM he be —.
   ‘He is at home.’
4.1.4 Focus-islands and the Minimal Link Condition

Islands and the Minimal Link Condition (MLC) phenomena are common constraints that are involved in the discussion of movement of syntactic elements. Though MLC has been used mostly to account for the wh-island constraint, it is also used to account for a variety of other locality effects with DP and head movement (Carnie, 2013). Focused NPs move to get in the specifier of the F[+FOCUS] and there is a restriction where movement must always target the nearest potential position or landing site, and this is the locality condition known as the Minimal Link Condition (MLC).

28. (a) Mi tammi [\text{CP} Buubai on [\text{IP} Adamu janngin-i t\_i]].
   ‘I think Buuba FM Adamu teach-PAST -
   ‘I think Buuba is the one that Adamu taught.’

(b) [\text{FP} Adamuj on[\text{IP} mi nani [\text{VP} tj janngin-i Buuba]]]
   Adamuj FM I heard tj teach-PAST Buuba
   ‘Adamu is the one who taught Buuba’
(c) Mi nani [IP Adamu [VP janngin-i Buuba on]]
I heard Adamu teach-PAST Buuba FM
‘What I heard Adamu did was teach Buuba’

In the examples above, from (a-c) object-NP, subject-NP and the predicate are focused respectively. The traces of the focused NPs and their indices are indications that in (a) and (b) the NPs moved, whereas in (c) the FM is placed at sentence final to mark the predicate. Though we are not discussing verb focus here, by implication example (27c) is necessary. We justify this in the course of presentation.

However, in any attempt to combine the movements of the two NPs, the sentence becomes either ungrammatical or the focus ceases to mark any NP but the predicate. As we noticed above, each focused NP moves independently of the other, because when two NPs are focused and moved the sentence becomes ungrammatical. Let us consider (29) below.

29. *[FP1 Adamu on [IP mi tammi [FP2 Buuba, on[IP tį janngin-i tį]]]]

In (30) we assume the subject-NP Adamu moved first and filled the closest potential landing site, i.e. the specifier of FP2. When the object-NP Buuba moved to check its focus-feature, the closest landing site has already been occupied by Adamu, therefore, it landed at specifier position of FP1. However, the sentence is ungrammatical because the movement violates MLC as we can see below.

30. *[FP1 Buuba, on [IP mi tammi [FP2 Adamu, on[IP tį janngin-i tį]]]]

The two NPs here both start in the embedded clause, i.e. FP2, and it is the closest potential landing site for either of them. Let us consider the D-structure of the sentence here. The potential landing sites for the focused-phrase are underlined:
31. \[ [FP_1 \text{F}_\text{FOCUS}] [IP \text{mi tammi} [FP_2 \text{F}_\text{FOCUS}] [IP \text{Adamu janngin-i Buuba}]]] \\

If we start by moving object-NP \textit{Buuba} to this position, we can check off \textit{Buuba’s focus}-feature, and by this movement the Minimal Link Condition is met because the movement has targeted the closest potential landing site:

32. \[ [FP_1 \text{F}_\text{FOCUS}] [IP \text{mi tammi} [FP_2 \text{Buuba} F \text{on} [IP \text{Adamu janngin-i t}]]] \]

> ![Diagram]

Now the other focus-phrase in the above sentence has to check its \textit{focus}-features, but the closest potential position is filled by \textit{Buuba}. While movement to the specifier of FP1 would allow it to check its \textit{FOCUS} feature, this would be a violation of the MLC, as the movement skips the first potential position. Even though FP1 can be filled by any NP that moves first to check its \textit{focus}-feature, the focused NP has to land at the FP2 first, before moving again to FP1, a situation that can block the movement of another NP as well as focusing it.

33. \[ [FP_1 \text{Adamu} F \text{on} [IP \text{mi tammi} [FP_2 \text{t} \text{F}_\text{FOCUS}] [IP \text{t} \text{janngin-i Buuba}]]] \]

> ![Diagram]

Any attempt to focus on the other NP will either render the sentence ungrammatical or shift the focus from the NP to the predicate of the sentence, because the NP cannot be focused and remain intact.

34. \[ ?[FP_1 \text{Adamu} F \text{on} [IP \text{mi tammi} [FP_2 \text{t} \text{F}_\text{FOCUS}] [IP \text{t} \text{janngin-i Buuba faa}]]] \]

In this dialect, two different FMs can be used to mark two different constituents known as dual presentational focus (cf. Fakuade, Bashir & Hananiya, 2001). Though you cannot focus on two different NPs, you can focus on an NP and the predicate. So, the sentence above is only grammatical if the second FM after \textit{Buuba} (the object-NP)
is meant to mark the predicate. That is why it is marked with a question mark instead of an asterisk.

5. Conclusion

This paper investigated the nature of Noun Phrase NP focus in Fulfulde, with particular reference to Adamawa dialect. It analysed some natural data that made it possible to describe NP focus in the dialect properly. The study, using observation and oral interview, has collected and analysed ample data about NP focus in the dialect in question, and discovered that in the dialect, nouns take FMIs as independent particles and are fronted in the process of focusing. In essence, movement plays a central role in NP focus in the dialect. Contrary to the Sokoto dialect where the difference between the verbs focus and focus of other elements are identifiable through the type of sentence, i.e. declarative or non-declarative (Abu-Manga, 1991), in Adamawa dialect, all NPs are fronted as a matter of focus. Adamawa dialect is similar to Kaceccereere variety in terms of movement of the focused NPs but the former differs from the latter by selecting FMIs for its focused NPs.

Finally, MLC is also used to explain the ungrammaticality of focus-islands: When you have two focus-phrases, movement of one of them will be blocked by the MLC because the closest potential landing site will be occupied by the other. Though the fronting as a parameter is not a new phenomenon, some of the differences between Adamawa dialect and other dialects of Fulfulde informed the need to add this data from the dialect to the field of linguistics.

Notes

1 The so called independent pronouns are currently found to be rather focused pronouns by Bashir, Muhammad and Bello, in a paper titled “Study of Pronoun Focus in Fulfulde” published in Journal of Linguistics, Language and Culture, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2017.

2 In sentences other than focus constructions the FPs are the Complementiser Phrases CPs.
References


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