FOCUS IN OROMO*

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This paper attempts to describe focused structures in Oromo in light of the generative framework of Chomsky [1976, 1981, 1986] and Williams [1977]. The framework recognizes two levels of grammar: sentence and discourse. Focus is believed to be part of the latter. Three types of focus have been identified in relation to the four major syntactic categories of the language. In NP's the feature is realized as /-tu/, in V(P)'s as /hin-/ , and in PP's as /-da/. These elements are not part of the inflectional or derivational morphology of the language. Adjectives use prosodic or structural devices when focused. The structural device is clefting, which the other categories also employ in addition to the elements mentioned above.

0. Introduction

In this paper, I shall attempt to give a formal account of focused structures in Oromo, a Cushitic language spoken in Ethiopia and Kenya, in the generative framework of Chomsky [1976, 1981, 1986] and Williams [1977]. The framework recognizes grammar as a composite of two subparts. These are sentence and discourse grammar. Each is believed to have its own rules and levels of application.

The rules of sentence grammar are factored out of an idealized body of data and make no reference to contexts, spatial, temporal, or cultural. Such rules define the form and meaning of sentences structurally. On the

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other hand, the rules of discourse grammar do refer to such contexts, as their relevant terms may not be contained within a single utterance. Such rules may take a set of utterances as their domain of application. They also operate at the level of LF (logical form), where pronominal and anaphoric references and the scopes of quantified NP's are determined in configurational terms. This is in contrast to the rules of sentence grammar, which are believed to operate at the syntactic levels of deep and surface structures (s-structures).

The two rules are sequential in nature. The rules of discourse grammar take as an input structures derived from the application of sentence grammar rules. Williams [1977:106] has assigned this sequential nature the status of a principle which he calls the "strict utterance principle". This principle states that all rules of discourse grammar apply after all rules of sentence grammar.

Focus, like other pragmatic functions such as topic or comment, is a property of discourse grammar in contrast to such grammatical functions as agent, patient, goal, etc., which fall within the domain of sentence grammar. The rules which assign the feature "focus" are therefore part of the rules of discourse grammar and hence operate at the level of LF in accordance with the principle stated above.

In what follows, I shall attempt to show how such rules operate in Oromo and also how the feature is realized in surface structures. The discussion will be as follows: in section 1, I shall discuss types of focus; in section 2, I shall consider the categories which can be assigned the feature; in section 3, I shall deal with the realizations of the feature; and finally, in section 4, I shall examine the assignment of the feature itself.

1. Types of Focus

Before dwelling on types, it is necessary to give a working definition for the term focus, as much of the discussion that follows depends on what is meant by this term. Functional grammarians like Dik [1978:149] define it as "the pragmatic function which represents the relatively most impor-
tant or salient information with respect to the pragmatic information of
the speaker and the addressee." Among generative grammarians, it is used
in relation to the semantic (structural) representation of a sentence. Such
a representation is divided into focus and presupposition. The focus is the
part which carries the information which the speaker believes to be new to
his addressee. The presupposition constitutes the part which he assumes to
be shared both by him and the addressee, and on which they agree as to its
truth or falsity (cf. Jackendoff [1972]). What is common to both defini-
tions is the fact that the term is used in relation to information which a
speaker believes to be important, and what is important from this point of
view of information structure is that which is new. Focus is, thus, a prag-
matic/semantic realization of constituents carrying such new information.

With this brief definition, we may now move on to the classification.
According to Rochemont [1980] and Culicover and Rochemont [1983], there are
at least three types of focus in any natural language. These are the fol-
lowing:

1.1. Presentational focus. This type of focus is associated with individ-
uals\(^1\) which are introduced into discourse and of which are made predica-
tions of their attributes or properties. This is demonstrated by struc-
tures like (1) below where the NP /aannan/ 'milk' is introduced as new in-
formation, and a predication is made of its attribute designated by the ad-
djective /adii/ 'white' and the copula /ga/ 'be'.

(1) aannan-i adii -ga milk-nom white be

'milk is white'

Here, the presupposition that "something is white" must be taken for
granted by both parties of the discourse, as part of their shared knowledge
(cf. Epstein [1977]). In other words, this type of focus is not context
construable in the sense of Culicover and Rochement [1983], since it as-
sumes that both parties know the issue involved in the discourse. In view

\(^1\)By "individuals" is meant terms (constituents) that are introduced in-
to discourse as carrying new information.
of this, in the structure above, the subject /aannan/ 'milk' is intro-
duced into discourse as new information and as such is assigned presenta-
tional focus, indicated phonologically by the placement of the stress. Such
constituents appear in surface structures with phonetic content. In cases
where they are not focused, they may be missing from the structures given
that they can be recovered from the shared context, grammatical or pragmat-
ic. Hence (2), with a phonologically empty subject:

(2) e hőolaa bit-an-i 'they bought a sheep'
e sheep buy-3pl-pf

In (1), it is only the subject NP which is focused. In (3), we have
both the subject and the predicate focused.

(3) Túlluu-n hin-duf-a 'Tulluu will come'
T-nom foc-come-3ms²-impf

Such structures, where both categories are associated with the feature,
focus. In such structures, the subject is shown as focused by the stress
and the V(P) by the element /hin-/ , which is attached to the verb. This
element is a V(P) focus marker and is distributionally restricted to main
declarative clauses only. Hence, interrogative, imperative, and all types
of complement clauses would be unacceptable if they contained it. Observe
the following:

²3ms is the unmarked form. Note also the following abbreviations:

ncm. nominative
cs. causative
pf. perfective
impf. imperfective
imp. imperative
rfl. reflexive
comp. complementizer
neg. negative
foc. focus
TNS. tense
AGR. agreement
f. feminine
sgl. singulative
In negatives, there is a homophonous element /hin-/ which forms a discontinuous morpheme with the suffix /-n/. This /hin-/ is different from the focus marking /hin-/ phonologically, morphologically, and syntactically. Phonologically, the focus marking /hin-/ is characterized by a relatively high pitch, whereas the negative marking /hin-/ is not (cf. Owens [1985]; Gragg [1976]). In the case of the latter, it is the initial syllable of the verb stem to which it is prefixed that gets high pitch [Andrzejewski 1970], as in the examples below:

(5) a. hin-bit-e 'bought'
   b. hin-bín-n-e 'did not buy'

Morphologically, the negative marking /hin-/ is part of the word formation processes of the language, whereas the focus marking /hin-/ is not, since focus is a discourse, as opposed to a grammatical category. In other words, the focus marking /hin-/ is not part of the derivational

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3This is in perfect negatives only. In imperfect negatives, the form of the verb is /hin-stem-u/ as in:

   Tulluu-n hin-duf-u 'Tulluu will not come'
   T-nom neg-come-impf
morphology of the language. It is not part of the inflectional morphology either, since it is not a realization of such grammatical features as person, number, gender, case, tense/aspect, mood, etc., for which verbs are inflected. The fact that it belongs to neither of the morphological processes of the language supports the argument that it is a discourse rather than a grammatical formative.

Syntactically, the focus marking /hin-/ is restricted to main declarative clauses, whereas the negative marking /hin-/ is not. Consider the following examples:

(6) a. hin-naad-u              'don't eat!'  
    neg-eat-imp

    b. Tulluu-n [akka ñaaltuu-n hoolaa hin-bin-n-e] hin-beek-a
        T-nom that ñ-nom sheep neg-buy-neg-pf foc-know-impf
        'Tulluu knows that ñalltuu did not buy a sheep'

    c. eeñüu hin-guf-n-e        'who did not come?'
       who neg-come-neg-pf

These are structures from which the focus marking /hin-/ is excluded as shown in (4) above. Such distributional differences suggest that the two elements belong to different levels of the grammar.

1.2. Informative focus. This type of focus is associated with bare wh-NP's and their responses. The following is an example of the former.

(7) eeñüu guf-e            'who came?'
    who come-3ms-pf

Here, the wh-NP /eeñüu/ 'who' is focused by virtue of its being a question constituent, asking for new information in the discourse in which it forms a part. This is indicated by the stress placed on it. The presupposition on which the question is based is that "someone came". The response to such questions is also characterized by the same feature. Hence, a natural response to (7) above would be (8):

(8) Túlluu (guf-e)          'Tulluu came'
    Tulluu come-3ms-pf
In both (7) and (8), the focused constituents do not have the nominative marker /-n/. The structures would be unacceptable if the constituents showed up this element. The reason for this seems to be connected with the fact that the constituents are associated with the pragmatic feature of focus. Such constituents do not seem to be able to show the grammatical feature of case at the same time.

In structures like (7) and (8), the V(P) cannot be focused since structures like (9) are unacceptable:

(9)  *eeŋŋu hin-ɡuf-e  'who came?'
     who  foc-come-3ms-pf

This situation is different from the one observed in connection with presentational focus, where both subject and predicate constituents were associated with the feature without this leading to any problem. The situation here might suggest the intrinsic difference that exists between the two types of focus.

1.3. Contrastive focus. Unlike presentational focus, contrastive focus is context construable. The context may be one of disputation where, for example, a participant in a discourse believes that the information contained in a constituent uttered by his interlocutor is not true, but that something else is. Negative structures and non-bare wh-constituents and their responses contain examples of this type. Consider the following structures:

(10) a. T ulluu-n hin-ɡuf-n-e  'Tulluu did not come'
     T-nom  neg-come-neg-pf

     b. i. eeŋŋu-tu ɡuf-e  'who is it that came?'
        who-foc  come-pf
     ii. Fayyisaa-tu ɡuf-e  'it is Fayyisaa who came'
         F-foc  come-pf

In (10a), the focused constituent is the subject, Tulluu, as shown by the placement of the stress. The presupposition which constitutes the context to which the focused constituent is related, is the assertion,

4These are wh-NP's with the particle /-tu/.
/Tulluu ḍuf-e/ 'Tulluu came', and it is this assertion of Tulluu's coming which is negated and, hence, focused (cf. Givón [1979]).

Example (10bi) is a wh-question put forward in response to (10a). The wh-NP has the suffix /-tu/ . This suffix is a contrastive focus marker. The question is based on the wide scope interpretation of (10a) where the negated, and hence focused, constituent is 'Tulluu', rather than the V(P). Based on this interpretation, (10bi) asks the question, 'who is it then that came if it is not Tulluu?.' The response constituent like the questioned

5Eshetu [1989] has assumed that /-tu/ is one of the variants of the copula /da/ 'be'. I believe that it is not; it is a focus marker associated with (wh-)NP's which are assigned contrastive focus. The copula can occur as a predicate in both neutral and cleft constructions but /-tu/ cannot. Hence the following:

(i) a. Tulluu-n deeraa -da
    T-nom tall be
    'Tulluu is tall'
   
   b. *Tulluu-n deeraa -tu
    T-nom tall ?

(ii) a. Tulluu -da hoolaa kan bit-e
    be sheep comp buy-3ms-pf
   
   b. *Tulluu -tu hoolaa kan bit-e
    ? sheep comp buy-3ms-pf

(iii) a. Tulluu-tu hoolaa bit-e
    T-foc sheep buy-pf
   
   b. *Tulluu -da hoolaa bit-e
    be sheep buy-3ms-pf

Furthermore, whereas there is agreement neutralization in clauses where the subject NP has the element /-tu/ , as shown in the text, there is no such neutralization in structures where /da/ is used. Observe the following:

(iv) a. Čaaltuu -da hoolaa kan bit-t-e
    be sheep comp buy-f-pf sheep'
   
   b. *Čaaltuu -da hoolaa kan bit-Ø-e
    be sheep comp buy-Ø-pf

Such distributional restrictions suggest that /-tu/ and /-da/ are different elements.
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constituent itself, also has the same element /tu-/ as shown in (10bii), which has the interpretation, 'it is Fayyisaa (not Tulluu or anyone else for that matter) who came.'

The distribution of /-tu/ as a focus marker is restricted to contrastively focused subject (wh-)NP's. This restriction is contrary to Gragg's [1976] claim that it occurs virtually with any constituent. The fact that structures like the following are unacceptable puts his claim into question.

(11) a. *Tulluu-n eeźżu-tu arg-e (wh-NP, VP)
   T-nom who-foc see-3ms-pf
   'who is it that Tulluu saw?'

b. *Tulluu-n adli-tu barbaad-a (AP)) (AP)
   T-nom white-foc want-3ms-impf
   'it is white that Tulluu wants'

c. *Tulluu-n eeboo-n-tu leenča aįţee-s-e (PP)
   T-nom spear-with-foc lion • kill-cs-3ms-pf
   'it is with a spear that Tulluu killed a lion'

d. *Tulluu-n hoolaa bit-e-tu (V) (V)
   T-nom sheep buy-3ms-pf-foc

Excepting (11d) which employs /hin-/ when the V(P) is focused, all the other constituents with /-tu/ do undergo the process of clefting when focused. For example, corresponding to (11a) above, we have (12) below with the wh-NP clefted.

(12) eeźju -da[ Tulluu-n kan arg-e]
    who be T-nom comp see-3ms-pf
    'who is it that Tulluu saw?'

Unlike /hin-/ which, as we have seen, is restricted to main declarative clauses, /-tu/ can occur with subject (wh-)NP's of complement clauses of all types and also with negative structures as shown in (13) and (14) respectively.

(13) a. Tulluu-n [ akka[ eeźju-tu hoolaa bit-e ]](hin-)beek-a
    T-nom that who-foc sheep buy-pf foc-know-3ms-impf
    ? 'who is it (that) Tulluu knows bought a sheep?'
b. Tulluu-n [\_akka[ Fayyisaa-tu hoolaa bit-e ]](hin-)-beek-a
   T-nom that F-nom sheep buy-pf foc-know-3ms-impf
   ?'it is Fayyisa that Tulluu knows bought a sheep'

(14) a. maal-tu hin-\_duf-n-e
    what-foc neg-come-neg-pf
    'who is it that did not come?'

b. fard-\_\_\_\_a-tu hin-\_duf-n-e
   horse-sgl-foc neg-come-neg-pf
   'it is the horse which did not come'

From the foregoing discussion, it seems that contrastive focus is shown by the element /-\_\_\_\_/ with subject (wh-)NP's, and by the process of clefting with non-subject constituents.

1.2. Categories. In the description of the types of focus, it has been shown that NP's and V(P)'s are indicated as focused by the elements /-\_\_\_/ and /hin-/ respectively and also by phonological means. A question that may arise from this is whether or not other syntactic categories such as AP's (adjectival phrases), PP's, and S's can also be focused and if so, whether or not they employ the above same device to show the feature.

According to Nomi Erteschik-Shir [1986], any category can be focused if
(i) the information contained in it can be denied,
(ii) it can be extracted (dislocated) as in topicalization,
(iii) it can be used to answer a wh-question.

According to these criteria, AP's, PP's, and infinitival clauses can qualify for focus assignment in this language since they can be denied, extracted, and used in response to wh-questions. Observe the following in connection with the PP /eeboo-n/ 'with a spear' in (15) and the AP /bay?e guddaa/ 'very big' in (16).

(15) Tulluu-n [eeboo-n] leen\_\_\_a a\_\_\_\_a jee-s-e
   T-nom spear-with lion kill-cs-3ms-pf
   'Tulluu killed a lion with a spear'
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(16) man-ni kun-(i) [bay?e gudda] -ða
house-nom this-nom very big be
'this house is very big'

a. bay?e gudda miti ... ʂaggaa -ða malee
very big not -be ... nice be but
'it is not very big ... but (it is) nice'

b. [s man-ni kun(-ni) t[::-] -ða → Ø] bay?e guddaa
house-nom this-nom be very big
lit. 'very big, this house (is)'

c. i. man-ni kun(-ni) [maal] fakkaat-a
house-nom this-nom what looks-3ms-impf
'what does this house look like?'

ii. bay?e gudda
very big

If it is the case that PP's and AP's are subject to focus assignment, then the next question to ask is how they show the feature. In contrastive focus, PP's employ the element /ða/ . This is demonstrated by the examples in (17).
(17) a. Tuluu-n ulee-ʤa⁶-n nama rukkut-e
    T-nom stick-foc-with man hit-3ms-pf
    'it is with a stick that Tuluu hit a man'

    b. Tuluu-n ǯawwee-ʤa-n leenʤa ajjene-s-e
    T-nom gun-foc-with lion kill-cs-3ms-pf
    'it is with a gun that Tuluu killed a lion'

    In these structures, the element /ʤa/ is incorporated into the PP's /ulee-n/ 'with a stick' and /ǯawwee-n/ 'with a gun' to show that these categories are focused. When they are not focused, such categories can appear without /ʤa/ as in the corresponding (18).

(18) a. Tuluu-n ulee-n nama rukkut-e
    T-nom stick-with man hit-3ms-pf
    'Tuluu hit a man with a stick'

    b. Tuluu-n ǯawwee-n leenʤa ajjene-s-e
    T-nom gun-with lion kill-cs-3ms-pf
    'Tuluu killed a lion with a gun'

    Focused PP's like /ulee-ʤa-n/ 'it is with a stick' in (17a) can also undergo the process of clefting when they are emphatically focused. This happens in contexts where the information contained in a focused category such as /ulee-ʤa-n/ is denied. In such cases, (17a) would appear as in (19).

(19) ulee-ʤa-i⁷ [kuluu-n nama kan rukkut-e]
    stick-foc-with-be 5T-nom man comp hit-3ms-pf
    'it is certainly with a stick that Tuluu hit a man'
    lit. 'it is, it is with a stick that Tuluu hit a man'

    As stated above and also in footnote 5, the element /ʤa/ 'be' is a

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⁶In an earlier version, I argued that /-ʤa/ was a part of the postpositional element /-an/. A closer examination of more data has now revealed that it is a copula incorporated into PP's to show that they are focused (see also Temesgen [1988]).

⁷/-i/ is a variant of /-ʤa/ and occurs following stems ending in consonants.
copula in the syntax, because it can occur heading a predicate structure of the type in (20).

(20) Tulluu-n deeraa -da
    T-nom tall be

'Tulluu is tall'

Its incorporation into focused PP's seems to suggest that it has both syntactic and pragmatic functions. In other words, it is an element which belongs to both levels of the grammar.

AP's differ from all categories with respect to the manner in which they show focus. Unlike all the rest, which, as we have observed, employ certain elements to show the feature, they use either the phonological device of stress as in (21a) or undergo the process of clefting as in (21b).

(21) a. Tulluu-n adii barbaad-a
    T-nom white want-3ms-impf

'Tulluu wants white'

b. adii -da[Tulluu-n kan barbaad-u]
    white be T-nom comp want-3ms-impf

'it is white which Tulluu wants'

Regarding clauses, it seems that only infinitivals can be focused by undergoing the process of clefting. Hence (22a) but not (22b) is acceptable.

(22) a. buddeena ṭaa-čč-uu -da[Tulluu-n kan barbaad-u]
    bread eat-rfl-ing be T-nom comp want-3ms-impf

'it is eating bread that Tulluu wants'

b. ? akka Čaaltuu-n buddeena ṭaat-t-e -da[Tulluu-n kan barbaad-u]
    that Č-nom bread eat-f-pf be T-nom comp want-3ms-impf
    lit. 'that Čaaltuu ate bread is (the thing) Tulluu wants'

The questionableness of (22b) suggests that finite clauses cannot be clefted. The asymmetry between such clauses and infinitivals seems to be connected with the nature of infinitivals in Oromo. Such clauses are nominal, i.e. they are NP's categorially though they are sentential structurally. For example, in /buddeena ṭaa-čč-uu/ 'eating bread' in (22a) /ṭaa-čč-uu/ 'eating', which is the head of the clause, is a nominal, lexically derived
from the corresponding verbal /nàa-t/ 'eat'. As a nominal, it can occur in syntactic positions associated with bare NP's and, like other such NP's, it displays the appropriate case affix, as in the examples below.

(23) a. [buddeena nàa-cì-c-uu-n] gaarii -dà
  bread     eat-rfl-1ng-nom good     be
  'eating bread is good'

       b. Tulluu-n [buddeena nàa-cì-c-uu] barbaad-a
      T-nom    bread     eat-rfl-1ng want-3ms-impf
      'Tulluu wants eating bread'

The infinitival clause is in subject position, nominatively marked, in (23a), and in object position in (23b).

On the other hand, finite clauses are headed by (INFL)ection, a non-lexical category, according to Chomsky [1981]. Hence, only infinitivals allow clefting because they are headed by nominals, which are lexical categories.

From what has been observed in this section, it appears that the phrasal categories of the four major lexical categories, namely, nominals, verbals, adjectivals, and pre-/post-positionals are subject to focus assignment. In what follows, we shall consider the realizations of the feature in surface structures.

3. Realizations

As Dik [1978:19] has pointed out, languages may vary in the ways in which they show focus. Some have special markers, others use special orderings, and probably all use phonological means for marking the feature. It seems that Oromo uses all of these devices.

3.1. Particles. It has been observed in the preceding section that the distribution of affixal particles such as /-tu/, /hin-/ , and /-dà/ is restricted to focused NP's, V(P)'s, and PP's respectively. For purposes of illustration, let us compare the following pairs of structures again.

(24) a. i. Tulluu-n hoolaa bit-e
  T-nom    sheep  buy-3ms-pf
  'Tulluu bought a sheep'

         ii. Tulluu-tu hoolaa bit-e
            T-foc    sheep  buy-pf
            'it is Tulluu who bought a sheep'
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b. i. Tulluu-n nama rukkut-a 'Tulluu hits a man'
   T-nom man hit-3ms-impf

ii. (Tullun-n) nama hin-rukkut-a 'Tulluu hits a man'
   T-nom man foc-hit-3ms-impf

c. i. (Tulluu-n) eeboo-n leenča aįįje-s-e
   T-nom spear-with lion kill-cs-3ms-pf
   'Tulluu killed a lion with a spear'

ii. (Tulluu-n) eeboo-ńa-n leenča aįįje-s-e
   T-nom spear-foc-with lion kill-cs-3ms-pf
   'it is with a spear that Tulluu killed a lion'

As stated earlier on in connection with /hín-/ , such elements are not
a part of the nominal or verbal morphology of the language, in the sense
that they are not realizations of such grammatical features as person, num­
ber, gender, tense/aspect/mood, etc. They have, therefore, been recog­
nized as discourse elements (as opposed to grammatical elements) designating
the pragmatic feature of focus.

3.2. Special ordering. By this is meant changing the syntactically derived
patterns of sentences for various communicative effects. The rules which
change such basic patterns are different from those rules which convert D­
structure into S-structure because the latter are syntactic, motivated by
independent principles of UG (universal grammar) [Chomsky 1981]. In fact,
it is on such syntactically derived structures that the former type of rules
operate for the reasons mentioned. Among such rules are dislocation and
clefting. The former is associated with topicalization, whereas the latter
is related to focus.

As shown in the preceding section, all the major categories, with the
exception of verbals, undergo the process of clefting when focused, as il­
lustrated in (25).

(25) a. Tulluu -ńa[^hoolaa kan bit-e]
   Tulluu-be $sheep comp buy-3ms-pf
   'it is Tulluu who bought a sheep'
b. hoolaa -ḍa[ Tulluu-n kan bit-e] (NP,VP)
   sheep-be ŠT-nom comp buy-3ms-pf
   'it is Tulluu who bought a sheep'

c. adii -ḍa[ Tulluu-n kan barbaad-u] (AP)
   white-be ŠT-nom comp want-3ms-impf
   'it is white which Tulluu wants'

d. ulee-n -i [ Tulluu-n kan nama rukkut-e] (PP)
   stick-with-be ŠT-nom comp man hit-3ms-pf
   'it is with a stick that Tulluu hit a man'

e. *buddeena ḳaat-e -ḍa[ Tulluu-n kan goq-e] (VP)
   bread eat-3ms-pf be ŠT-nom comp do-3ms-pf
   ? 'it is ate bread that Tulluu did'

The ill-formedness of (25e) might appear to be related to the fact that
verbs show the feature in situ by employing the element /hin-/. But
this observation is not strong, particularly when considered with the fact
that other categories, which also show the feature in situ, do undergo the
process of clefting without this causing any problem. It seems that the
reason for the ungrammaticality of structures like (25e) has to do with the
feature [+TENSE], which only verbals are characterized by. The other cate­
gories are [-TENSE], and it seems that only they are subject to the process
of clefting.

3.3. Prosodic features. Other than the two devices already considered,
prosodic features like stress are used to show focus. This is the situa­
tion, for example, in presentational focus where the subject of a clause is
associated with the feature. In such cases, the VP is assigned a low level
stress,\(^8\) as in the following:

(26) nam-ōon-ni hoolaa bit-an-i
    man-pl-nom sheep buy-3pl-pf
    'the man bought a sheep'

As stated earlier on, such focused NP's appear in surface structures
with phonetic content only when focused. If the focused constituent is a

\(^8\)This is the unmarked one in this study.
complement as in (27) below, the subject may either be missing or associated with a low level stress.

(27) (nam-onn-ni) hōolaa bit-an-ni 'the men bought a sheep'
    man-pl-nom sheep buy-3pl-pf

In such structures, the verb also occurs either without /hin-/ or with its reduced form /-n/, which gets encliticized onto a preceding constituent. Hence, (27) above may have the alternative realization shown in (28) below.

(28) (nam-onn-ni) hōolaa-n / hin- / bit-an-i
    man-pl-nom sheep-foc buy-3pl-pf

' the men bought a sheep'

4. Assignment

In the preceding section, we have observed the various realizations of focus. In this section, we shall consider the assignment of the feature itself.

Structures with the focus particles /-tu/, /hin-/, or /-da/ can be treated as having the following S-structure representation.

(29)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S \\
\downarrow \\
NP \\
\downarrow \\
PP \\
\downarrow \\
P \\
\downarrow \\
NP \\
\downarrow \\
N \\
Tulluu \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
VP \\
\downarrow \\
V \\
\downarrow \\
NP \\
\downarrow \\
N \\
leengo \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{spear with lion}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{kill-cs-3ms-pf}
\end{array}
\]

'Tulluu killed a lion with a spear'

At the level of LF, where the assignment is believed to take place, (29) would have the representation shown in (30) below, with the feature assigned to the subject NP Tulluu, for example:
The feature \([\text{FOC}]\) then manifests itself as /-tu/ in the case of contrastive focus, and as (') in the case of presentational focus, the latter assigned at the level of PF (phonetic form). The resulting structures would then look like those in (31).

(31) a. Tulluu-tu eeboo-n leen\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\) a\(\text{\textgreek{y}}\)ee-s-e
   T-foc spear-with lion kill-cs-3f
   'it is Tulluu who killed a lion with a spear'

b. Tu\(\text{\textgreek{l}}\)u-n eeboo-n leen\(\text{\textgreek{a}}\) a\(\text{\textgreek{y}}\)ee-s-e
   T-nom spear-with lion kill-cs-3ms-pf
   'Tuluu killed a lion with a spear'

As in bare-wh-questions and their responses (1.2), there is a process of partial agreement and case neutralization taking place when the focus marker /-tu/ is attached to Tulluu in (31a). This is further demonstrated by the following structures.

(32) a. i. i\(\text{\textgreek{s}}\)ee-n hoolaa bit-t-e
   she-nom sheep buy-f-pf
   'she bought a sheep'

ii. i\(\text{\textgreek{s}}\)ee-tu hoolaa bit-\(\phi\)-e
   she-foc sheep buy-\(\phi\)-pf
   'it is she who bought a sheep'

b. i. is\(\text{\textgreek{s}}\)an-i hoolaa bit-an-i
   they-nom sheep buy-3pl-pf
   'they bought a sheep'

ii. issan-tu hoolaa bit-\(\phi\)-e
   they-foc sheep buy-\(\phi\)-pf
   'it is they who bought a sheep'

A question which is likely to arise here concerns the reasons why such neutralizations take place. The question is crucial in the sense that the phenomenon is not apparent in the derivation of structures at the syntactic levels. The reason might be related to the level at which focused structures are derived. As stated earlier on, such structures are derived at a post-syntactic level. At the syntactic levels of D- and S-structures, sub-
ject NP's have to be identified as such by the agreement relation holding between them and verbs. It is this relation which, in fact, licenses them to occur in their positions. At the post-syntactic level, where focus is assigned, that is, after they have been identified in the syntax by agreement elements, the agreement elements may cease to appear since, at this level, the identification of the subject NP's is taken over by the pragmatic feature of focus. In other words, grammatical features seem to get suppressed at the level where pragmatic features prevail.

5. **Conclusion**

In summing up, we have followed Williams [1977] in treating focus as a property of discourse grammar. We have identified three types of focus and also established the categories to which the feature is assigned. These include projections of all major lexical categories. The realization of the feature has also been described. In NP's, it manifests itself as /-tu/ and as (') in presentational and contrastive focus. In V(P)'s, it is shown by the prefix /hin-/ and in PP's by the element /da/.

Structurally, focus is expressed in the form of cleft constructions. All but verbals undergo this process. The difference between, say, a focused NP with /-tu/ and a similar NP which undergoes the process of clefting is that the former is limited to subject (wh-)NP's whereas the latter is not. In both, the type of focus is contrastive.

It has also been observed that in cleft structures and in others in which the subject NP is contrastively focused, indicated by the element /-tu/, there is a process of case and agreement neutralization taking place. Verbals lose all features of agreement just as in the same way nominals lose their case endings. This we have tried to explain in terms of the levels at which syntactic and pragmatic features operate. It has been suggested that at the discourse level of grammar, syntactic features get suppressed and pragmatic features take off. In other words, constituents which have been identified by syntactic (grammatical) features at the level of sentence grammar get identified by pragmatic features at the level of discourse grammar. Such neutralizations of grammatical features may indi-
cate the level of grammar a particular structure is in.

REFERENCES


