A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS OF FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS IN KĨMŨTHAMBĨ

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ABSTRACT

Focus is an aspect of information structure that is associated with the left periphery of the clause. It is a functional projection in the left periphery; FocP (Focus phrase), which projects its own specifier and head positions. Studies of the left periphery present varied details on how focused constituents are realized across languages and this kind of detail has not been examined in Kĩmũthambĩ. Hence the need to characterize Kĩmũthambĩ focus elements as features of the left periphery. Kĩmũthambĩ is a central Kenya Bantu language, which belongs to the larger Kikuyu-Kamba group (E50); classified as E531 Mwimbi- Muthambi. This study provides a description of focus marking in Kĩmũthambĩ and a syntactic analysis of this projection as an element of the left periphery guided by the Syntax of Cartography Approach. The study explores the various strategies for encoding focus in Kĩmũthambĩ and proposes that there are two domains for encoding focus; post verbally and in the left periphery. The study also analyses the interaction of focus constituents with other constituents in the left periphery in order to establish the position of FocP in the left periphery. The data used in this work was collected through elicitation from native speakers of Kĩmũthambĩ and the author's intuition as a speaker of the language. The findings of the study showed that Kĩmũthambĩ employs various strategies for focus. In in-situ focus, the focused element remains in its canonical position and does not carry the focus marker ni-. Conversely, in ex-situ focus, where the focused element is fronted, it is marked with ni-. Subject focus is expressed through cleft sentences and in the situation where a subject comes before a focus item, this was considered an aspect of topicalization, whereas wh-questions vie for the same focus positions. The focus marker ni- is essential for indicating focus, particularly in ex-situ positions. The present study contributes to the description of the language and also to typological and comparative studies of focus constructions in various languages.

Key words: Focus, Functional projection, left periphery, ex-situ, in-situ, Kĩmũthambĩ

INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates focus constructions in Kĩmũthambĩ being an aspect of information structure associated with the left periphery of the clause. In the left periphery of the clause, between the boundaries of ForceP and FinP Rizzi (1997) hypothesizes that there is an array of projections related to the information structure that includes the topic-focus system. The topic-focus domain contains phrases that that are pragmatically highlighted and include foci, topics and Wh-items (Doherty, 2016). Constructions that contain focused elements are regarded as focus constructions. Schwarz (2007) refers to focus as a term of information structure that generally refers to the most prominent information of a sentence. Aboh (2004) define focus as the element of the clause that indicates the most pertinent information in a particular discourse situation. They distinguish it from the non-focused which is the part of the clause that contains the presupposed and/or given information where given implies having been mentioned in the preceding discourse. According to Nweya (2018) describes the term focus as generally referring to that part of the sentence assumed to be the new information introduced in the discourse which is given more prominence than the others.

Languages indicate focus on constituents in a number of ways. Focus can be indicated phonologically by stress, tone or intonation, morphologically by use of special focus marking particles or clitics.

Focus can also be indicated syntactically where word order is affected and specifically when fronting of a constituent occurs or a language can use a combination of these different strategies (Aboh, 2004; Muriungi 2005; Abels & Muriungi, 2008; Nweya, 2018). According to Nurse (2008: 202) Narrow and Grassfield Bantu languages indicate focus through word order alteration, clefting, particles, tone, and reduplication of the verbal word, verb morphology, and even the shape of the object.

Fundamentally, focus can be grouped into broad and narrow focus. In narrow focus the domain extends over only a single constituent in a clause while in broad focus it involves more than one constituent for instance focus on the predicate or the entire sentence (van Valin, 1999). Cross-linguistically, therefore, various constituents can be focused in languages ranging from the subject and object NPs, PPs, and VPs/predicates using different strategies. According to Nweya (2018) African language families such as Bantu, Kwa and Chadic exhibit two main strategies of marking focus: the ex-situ and in-situ strategy. The ex-situ strategy also known as focus fronting involves displacing the focus constituent to the left periphery of the clause while the in-situ strategy allows the focused constituent to remain in its base position (Rizzi 1997, 2001, 2004; Aboh 2004, Bassong 2014).

METHODOLOGY

The study employs descriptive research design which falls within the qualitative paradigm of research. The population for this study was all Kĩmũthambĩ simple sentences. The study utilized purposive sampling in order to select respondents for the study. The researcher selected L1 speakers of Kĩmũthambĩ from Mũthambĩ sub-county as this is where most of them reside. Five respondents participated in the narration exercise where three respondents narrated personal accounts and two respondents narrated the pear story. The study utilized naturally occurring data, that is, data collected in spoken texts in natural settings of language use. The researcher recorded the respondents as they narrated personal accounts and also narrations of the mute pear story by Chafe (1980) as discussed in Bellman (1982). From the personal accounts, elicited pear stories focus constructions were identified and analyzed. Besides, the researcher used native speaker intuition to generate further sentences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Various constituents of the clause can be focused in Kĩmũthambĩ and as suggested for African language, Kĩmũthambĩ illustrates the ex-situ and in-situ strategies of focus marking. The constituents range from the subject and object NPs, PPs, and VPs/predicates.

Subject NP Focus

Subject NP focus involves placing a communicative prominence on the subject of the clause and it is mostly done by fronting the subject to the left periphery (Nweya, 2018). This is illustrated in Kĩmũthambĩ by (1) and (2) Notably, information focus can be determined by presenting question and answer pairs as the answer part shows the new information sought in the questions and therefore holds as focused information.

(1a) N-uu   a- ra- gur- ir-   e   mugunda o-u
 Foc-Who 1SM- PST- buy- PFV- FV   3.farm- 3.DEM
 'Who bought that farm?'

(1b) NI-KĨRĨMĨ a-   ra- gur- ir- e   mugunda o-u
 Foc- Kĩrĩmĩ 1SM-PST-buy-PRF-FV   3.farm 3.DEM
 'It is Kĩrĩmĩ who bought that farm'

(2a) N-uu a-ra-ndik-ir-e barua
 Foc-who 1SM-FUT- visit-PFV-FV
 'Who wrote the letter?'

(2b) NI-CIBU   a-ra-ndik-ir-e
 Foc- chief   1SM-PST- write-APPL-FV
 'It is the chief that wrote the letter'

The question answer pair in (1) and (2) shows that the questions in (1a) and (2a) can be responded to by the subject NP in (1b) and (2b) respectively. The NP's *Kĩrĩmĩ* and *cibu* 'the chief'' are new information offered in the sentences. The subject occurs in sentence initial position and can be described as having been displaced to left periphery of the clause as a fronted constituent. This is justified by the fact that the NP obligatorily acquires the focus marker.

In Kĩmũthambĩ the morpheme <u>nĩ-</u> characteristically marks focus constructions. The *nĩ-* particle has been similarly analysed as the general focus particle for Gĩkũyũ (Mugane, 1997; Schwarz, 2003) and in Kĩtharaka as argued by Muriungi (2005) and Abels and Muriungi (2008) focus is marked by either *nĩ-/ ĩ-*. The focus marker *nĩ-* can only be one in clause such that if a fronted constituent carries the marker, no other constituent can carry the *nĩ-* as this is the focal point of the clause.

In subject NP focus, indicated by (1b) and (2b) the word order remains SVO, however, presence of the *nĩ-*focus particle prefixed to the NP's *Kirimi* and *cibu* 'chief' can be interpreted as evidence of overt movement of the subject NP to the left periphery (Nweya, 2018). Rizzi (1997) argues that focused constituents should be analyzed as contained within a separate FocP (Focus Phrase) headed by a Foc head (Focus marker). As such, following Rizzi's proposal we argue that structurally the subject NP moves from spec TP as it is apparent that the subject acquires a focus marker which suggests the subject has moved to Spec FocP and this unlike the context of a similar declarative sentence as indicated in (3) where the subject NP does not manifest a focus marker

(3) Kirimi   a-   ra- gur- ir- e   mugunda o-u

Kirimi 1SM- PST- buy- PRF- FV   3-farm 3-DEM

'Kirimi bought that farm'

In addition, the sentences analysed in (1b) and (2b) indicate focus marking of the subject NP using the ex-situ strategy. In- situ scenario for subject NP in <u>Kĩmũthambĩ</u> is in inapplicable.

While the subject NP under focus provides new information, it also possible that subject focus on it can be interpreted to have a contrastive sense. Landman and Ranero (2018) note that contrastive focus is signaled with one or more phases already introduced into discourse. Such an effect is realizable in the event the negative marker *ti-* is introduced in sentence structure as indicated by (4)

(4a) Ti mu-thigari,   ni- cibu   u-   ra-ndik- ir- e barua

Neg 1-police officer, Foc- 1-chief   RSP- PST-write- PFV- FV 9-letter

'It is not the police officer; it is the chief who wrote the letter'

Kihara (2017) notes that in Gikuyu *ti-* is a negative

focus marker and *ne-* is a positive one and when placed before a NP, it creates a form of contrastive or identification focus. Sentence (4a) in Kĩmũthambĩ alludes to the fact that police officer might have been mentioned to have written the letter however clarification is made as to who wrote the letter.

Presence of the focus marker *ni-* before the subject also marks the sentence as a cleft sentence. According Nurse (2007) clefts typically put a particular constituent into focus. The subject is fronted and the complement of the fronted subject argument takes the form of a cleft. The presence of the morpheme *u-* in the subject marker position, an alternation from the usual the third person subject marker *a-*, points to this fact. The sentence in (4a) has the morpheme *u-* in the verb as the subject marker which would have been otherwise *a-,* in simple clause as illustrated in (4b).

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      'It is not the police officer; it is the chief who wrote the letter'

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Presence of the focus marker *ni-* before the subject also marks the sentence as a cleft sentence. According Nurse (2007) clefts typically put a particular constituent into focus. The subject is fronted and the complement of the fronted subject argument takes the form of a cleft. The presence of the morpheme *u-* in the subject marker position, an alternation from the usual the third person subject marker *a-*, points to this fact. The sentence in (4a) has the morpheme *u-* in the verb as the subject marker which would have been otherwise *a-*, in simple clause as illustrated in (4b).

(4b) Cibu   ni-   a-   ra-   ndik-   ir-   e

barua
      1-chief Foc- SM- PST- write- PFV- FV 9-letter
      'The chief wrote a letter'

Sentence (5a) is therefore regarded as a cleft with *u* - surfacing as a relative subject pronoun. The same relative subject pronoun occurs in relative clauses as illustrated in (5)

(6) Mw-ana u-ria   u-   ra-   urit-e   a-kw- onek- a
      1-child I-RLPRN RSP- PST- lost- FV, 1SM-PRS- find- FV
      'The child who was lost has been found'

Object NP Focus

Object NP focus in Kĩmũthambĩ occurs in two ways. The new pertinent information may remain in -situ as generated by the question answer pair in (6).

(6a) Nĩ-mbi mu-rume a-   ra- gur- ir-   e?

    What 1-husband 1SM- PST- buy- PFV-FV

    'What did the husband buy?'

(6b) Mu-rume   a-   ra- rug- ir-e NGAARI

    1-husband 1SM- PST- buy- PFV-FV 9-car

    'The husband bought a car'

In the in- situ situation the focused constituent remains in its base position and the element under focus does not carry the focus marker. The NP *ngaari* 'car' is not preceded by *nĩ-* and attempting to add the focus marker before an in-situ object leads to an ungrammatical structure as in (6c).

*(6c) *Mu-rume   a-   ra- rug- ir-   e   NI- NGAARI*

    1-husband 1SM- PST- buy- PFV-FV   Foc- *9- car*

    'The husband bought a car'

On the other hand, the focused objects can be fronted to sentence initial position as indicated in (7b), the ex-situ situation, and in this case the object NP must bear the focus marker. The absence of a focus marker would also result in an ungrammatical structure.

(7a) Nĩ-mbi mu-rume a-   ra- gur- ir-   e

    What 1-husband   1SM- PST- buy- PFV-FV

    'What did the husband buy?'

(7b) NI- NGAARI   Mu-rume   a-   ra-   rug- ir-   e

Foc- 9-car   1-husband 1SM- PST- buy- PFV-FV

'It is a car that the husband bought'

The object NP can also come after the subject as in (8). The NP in this situation also acquires the focus marker *nĩ-*.

(8) Mu-rume, NI-NGAARI   a-   ra-   rug- ir-   e

1-husband Foc- 9-car   1SM- PST- buy- PFV-FV

'It a car that the husband bought'

Sentence (8) illustrates a sentence initial subject *murume* 'husband' followed by a focused object *ngaari* 'car' after which comes the rest of the verbal complex. In such circumstances, Schwarz (2003) argues the sentence exhibits some sort of topicalization; the subject is topicalized so that it occurs before the focused object constituent.

In double object constructions either of the objects can be focused as indicated in (9). Sentence (9b) illustrates the direct object under focus while (9c) illustrates the indirect object under focus.

(9a) Mutwiri ni- a-   ra- gur- ir-   e   mu-ka ngaari

Mutwiri Foc-1SM- PST- buy- APPL- FV   1-wife 9- car

'Mutwiri bought his wife a car'

(9b) NI- NGAARI Mutwiri   a-   ra- gur- ir-   e   mu-ka

Foc-9-car Mutwiri   1SM- PST- buy- APPL- FV 1-wife

'It is the wife that Mutwiri bought a car'

(9c) NI- MU-KA Mutwiri   ra- gur-   ir- e ngaari

Foc-1-wife Mutwiri   1SM- PST- buy- APPL- FV 9-car

'It is the wife that Mutwiri bought a car'

In addition, one of objects can also be focused and the other topicalized as indicated in (10). The direct object *ngaari* 'car' is preposed before the focused constituent *ni-muka* 'the wife' as a topic.

(10) Ngaari, NI-MU-KA   Mutwiri a-   ra- gur- ir-   e

Car   Foc-1-wife   Mutwiri 1SM- PST- buy- APPL- FV

'As for the car, it is wife that Mutwiri bought it for'

It is also possible to have more than one constituent appear before the preposed focused constituent. Sentence (11) indicates the direct object *ngaari* 'car' fronted followed by the subject of the sentence *Mutwiri*. The two are then followed by the focused constituent *ni-muka* 'the wife'. We consider this topicalization of both the direct object and the subject since they occur before the focused constituent.

(11) Ngaari Mutwiri   NI- MU-KA   a-   ra- gur- ir-   e

9-Car   Mutwiri   Foc- 1-wife 1SM- PST- buy- APPL- FV

'The car, Mutwiri,it is wife he bought for'

Contrastive focus is also exhibited when object NP' s are fronted as in (12)
(12) Ageni   ri,   ni- mbeca   ba- ra- ret- ir-   e, ti   into
  1-vistors TM Foc 10-money 2SM- PST- bring- PFV-FV, Neg 10-items
  'As for the visitors it is money they brought not items'
Sentence illustrates a situation where the phrase *mbeca* 'money' is contrasted with *into* 'items. The sentence
provides details as to what was brought in regard regard to what might the hearer might have thought was
bought. The sentence also illustrates that the subject of the clause is also fronted as noted by the presence of
the topic marker (TM) *-ri* after the subject NP *ageni* 'visitors'

Adjunct Focus
Just like focus can occur on arguments of the verb, it is also possible to focus non-argument elements of the
clause such include prepositional phrases and adverbs. Sentence (13) and (14) indicate focus on a locative
prepositional phrase and temporal adverb respectively. As in the case of objects focus occurs the preposition
phrase and, in this case, they do not bear the focus marker. The prepositional phrase or adverb can also be
fronted and once this occurs, they bear the focus marker.

(13a) Ni-ku   bu-   ra- ki- ir-   e   mujie?
    Foc-where 2SM- PST-build- PFV-FV 3-home
    'Where did you build your home?'

(13b) Tu- ra- ki-   ir-   e   RUKINDU

   2SM- PST- build- PFV- FV Rukindu

   'We built (our home) at Rukindu'

(13c) NI- RUKINDU   tu- ra- ki-   ir-   e

    Foc-Rukindu   2SM- PST- build- PFV- FV

   'It is at Rukindu we built (our home)'

(14a) Ni- ri   ba- ra- thi-   ir- i-   e   kigerio?
    Foc- when 2SM- PST- complete- PFV- ASP- FV 7- exam
    'When did they complete the exam?'
(14b) Ba- ra-   thi-   ir-   i-   e   kigerio igoro
    2SM- PST- complete- PFV- ASP- FV 7- exam yesterday
    ' They completed the exam yesteday'
(14b) Ni-igoro   ba- ra- thi-   ir-   i-   e   kigerio
    Foc- yesterday 2SM- PST- complete- PFV- ASP- FV 7- exam
    'It is yesterday that they completed the exam'

The response in (13b) and (13c) have the direct object *mujie* 'home' omitted as this how the response would
be elicited. Sentence (13b) and (14b) illustrates the prepositional phrase *Rukindu* 'at Rukindu' and adverb
igoro 'yesterday' respectively appearing in verb phrase while sentence (13c) and (14c) have the preposition-
al phrase and adverb fronted, in which case they acquire the focus marker *ni-*.

Verbal Focus

Verbal focus in Kĩmũthambĩ is realized in a number of ways. It can occur in preverbal contexts of a declarative sentence where the focus marker occurs prefixed to the verb as in (15) and (16).

(15) Mu-ka   ni-   a-   re-   nuk-   ir-   e   Igoro

   1-Wife   Foc-   1SM-   PST-   leave-   PFV-   FV   Yesterday

   'The wife left yesterday'

(16) Mu-rume   ni-   a-   ra-   mu-   ri-   ag-   a   muno

   1-Husband   Foc-1SM-   PST-   OM-   beat-   IMP-   FV   a lot

   'The husband was beating her a lot'

Watters (1979) definition of focus asserted information in a sentence that the speaker believes or knows that the hearer does not share with him/her captures the context highlighted by verbal focus. The context of sentences (15) and (16) is that the action contains information that hearer needs to take note of. The verb is therefore under focus to assert the new information.

Verbal focus also does occur in the context of polar questions as indicated in (17) and (18). In this case preverbal focus appears in both the question and the response.

(17a) Karendi ni-   a-   ra-   gir-   ir-   e   m-wariwangina?

   Karendi   Foc-1SM-PST-go-   PFV   -APPL-FV   1-Sister

   'Did Karendi go for the sister?'

(17b) ii   ni-   a-   ra-   mu-   gir-   ir-   e

   Yes   Foc-   1SM-   PST-   OM-   go-   PFV-   FV

   'Yes, she went for her'

(18a)   Ni-   ba-   ra-   uk-   ir-   e   ki-atho-ni?

   Foc-   2SM-   PST-   come-   PFV-FV   7-party-LOC

   'Did they come to the party?'

(18b) ii   ni-   ba-   ra-   uk-   ir-   e

   Yes,   Foc-   2SM-PST   come-   PFV-   FV

   'Yes, they came'

It was noted that *nĩ-* are in complementary distribution with the negative marker. In the situation where the response is in the negative, the focus marker does not occur with the negative markers as indicated by (19)

(19) Ari,   ba-   ta-   uk-   ir-   e

   No   2SM-Neg-   greet-   PFV-   FV

   'No, they did not come'

As such, it can be argued that the negative marker also places prominence in a constituent and hence the reason why it cannot co-occur with the focus marker.

Verbal focus could also occur as answers to VP-oriented wh-questions as indicated by (20). Sentence (20b) responds to the wh- question in (20a)

(20a) *Ni-ku   Gakii   a-   ra-   th- ir-   e?*

      Foc-where Gakii 1SM- PST- go- PFV- FV

      'Where did Gakii go?'

(20b) *ni- a-   re-   nuk- ir-   e*

      Foc-1SM- PST- go- PFV- FV

      'She went home'

Verbal focus can also be achieved by through duplication of the verb. In such a situation a nominalized verbal form is fronted and it leaves a copy in its in-situ position as indicated in (21)

(21a) *Ni-atia   Mugendi   a- ra- ruth- ir- e ?*

      Foc-what Mugendi 1SM- PST- do- PFV- FV

      'What did Mugendi do?'

(21b) *Ni-ku-i-a   a- ra- i- ir-   e ngaari*

      Foc-steal 1SM- PST- steal- PRF-FV 9 car

      'As for stealing, he stole the car'

Sentence (21b) indicates the verb *kuia* 'steal' duplicated with the fronted form bearing the *nĩ-* focus marker while the copy in the verbal complex does not have the focus marker. The verb, therefore, appears twice; in-situ and in ex-situ position. According to Schwarz (2003) the verb that is fronted to the left periphery is in its infinitive form while the copy left in-situ as the verbal complex carries all inflection information about the subject, tense and aspect. It would therefore seem just impossible to completely omit the verb from its base position.

While verbal focus may involve duplicating the verb, it was also noted that such a structure can have a topicalized of the object as in (22)

(22) *Ngaari i, ni- kui- a   Mugendi   a- ra- mi- i-   ir-   e ti*

    9-car,   Foc- steal- FV   Mugendi 1SM- PST- 9OM- steal- PRF- FV

    ' As for the car Mugendi stole it'

Sentence (22) illustrates the object *ngaari* 'car' fronted to pre-subject position preceding the focused pre-posed verb *ni-kuia* 'it is stealing'. The two items precede the subject *Mugendi* suggesting that the focused constituent occupies the focus projection while the topicalized constituent occupies the topic projection in the left periphery.

Wh-questions in Kĩmũthambĩ

As noted in the previous section (3.0) various constituents can undergo focus in clause structure. Literature on wh-questions indicates a similarity between focus constructions and wh-questions. This assumption is mostly based on similarities existing between wh-questions and focalized constituents. For instance, fronted wh-phrases are marked with the same morpheme as fronted focus constructions and therefore wh-constructions can be assumed to have the same positional possibilities as the focus constructions (Arsene, 2015). Van Valin (1999) indicates that content questions like who, what, when. where ask for new information and have therefore been said be inherently focused.

Kĩmũthambĩ has wh-questions introduced by wh-word such *uu* 'who', *mbi* 'what', *kuu* 'where' *niki* 'why', *atia* 'what', *rii* 'when'. Just like focused constructions wh-constructions are realized following two key strategies; in situ and ex-situ strategy. Sentences in (23) Illustrate a wh-question in situ position.

(23 a) *Bu- ra- gur- ir- e mbi?*
    1SM- PST- buy- PFV- FV what
    'what did you buy?'
(23b) *A-na ba- ra- thi- ir- e kuu?*
    2-children 1SM- PST- go- PFV- FV where
    'Where did the children go?'
(23c) *A- ra- mu- rwi- ir- e atia?*
    1SM- PST- 1OM- tell- PFV- FV what
    'What did she tell him/her?'

In this position as in focus constructions the wh-word does not bear the focus marker, on the other hand, wh-questions in ex-situ position where the wh-word is fronted, have the wh-word obligatorily bearing the *nĩ-* focus marker as indicated in (24)

(24a) *Ni-mbi bu- ra- gur- ir- e ?*
    What 1SM- PST- buy- PFV- FV
    'what did you buy?'
(24b) *Ni-kuu a-na ba- ra- thi- ir- e ?*
    Where 2-children 1SM- PST- go- PFV- FV
    'Where did the children go?'
(24c) *Ni-atia a- ra- mu- rwi- ir- e ?*
    What 1SM- PST- 1OM- tell- PFV- FV
    ' What did she tell him/her?'

Questions questioning the subject, bear *nĩ*-marker unless the question is phrased in its passive form as illustrated in (25)

(25a) *N-uu u- ra- gur- ir- e karendi?*
    Foc-who RSP -PST-marry- PFV- FV Karendi
    'Who is it that married Karendi?'
(25b) *Karendi a- ra- gur- ir- w- e ni uu?*
    Karendi 1SM-PST-marry- PFV- PASS- FV by whom
    'Karendi was married by whom?'

Sentence (25a) depicts a cleft wh- question due to the occurrence of the *u*-relative subject pronoun

that was noted to introduce relative clauses. The passive form (25b) exhibits the morpheme *ni-* before the interrogative word 'whom', this is as a preposition introducing the 'by phrase' and not a focus marker although they have the same form.

The fact that whenever an item is queried in a wh-construction, the argument or adjunct representing the answer to that query surfaces in the position of the wh-question indicates that questions are inherently focused. It is therefore argued that that wh-words/phrases and other focused constituents have the same distribution as they compete for the same position (Arsene, 2015).

The feature on focus projection head that attracts focused constructions also attracts the wh-word to Spec FocP. In additional, the fact that focused constructions cannot occur in wh-questions including those without the focus marker as indicated in (26) indicates that they compete for the same position.

(26) * *A-na ni- ba- ra- thi- ir- e kuu?*
    2-children **Foc**- 1SM- PST- go- PFV- FV where
    'Where did the children go?'

The interaction of wh-operators and topics also provide proof that wh-questions occupy the same position as focused constituents.

(27a) *Mw-iji u-ria ri ni- mbi a- ra- i- ir- e?*
    1-boy 1-DEM TM Foc-what 1SM- PST- steal- PFV -FV
    'That boy, what did he steal?'

The sentence in (27a) illustrates the interaction between the topic construction *mwiji uria* ' that boy' and the wh-word *ni-mbi* 'what'. The topicalized constituent is higher in the clause than the focused wh-word. The response for question in (28a) would be as illustrated in (27b).

(27b) *Mwi-ji u-ria, ni-mbeca a- ra- i- ir- e*
    1-boy 1-DEM Foc- 10- money 1SM- PST- steal- PFV- FV
    'That boy it is money that he stole'

The new information provided *ni-mbeca* 'it is money' occurs as a focused constituents which occupies the same position occupied by the wh-question *ni-mbi* 'what', indicating that focused and non-focused questions have the same distribution as focused arguments. Apart from that, sentence (27a) illustrates the subject *mwiji-uria* 'that boy' occurring as a fronted constituent and wh-words occurs in preverbal position but after the clausal subject. In such a situation the wh-word is considered to still occupy its target focus position that is FocP and the preceding subject is a fronted topic constituent occupying TopP. The foregoing discussion reveals that focused and non-focused wh-questions have the same distribution as focused arguments and adjuncts.

Structure of the Focus Phrase in Kĩmũthambĩ

Syntactic focalization involves an element marked under focus in an in-situ or ex-situ situation. The in-situ situation has the constituent remaining in its base generated position while ex-situ situation involves leftward movement of the focused element to the left periphery to a position adjacent to a morphologically realized focus marker overtly or covertly (Cinque 1990, Aboh 2004, Rizzi 1997). Since focus is associated with a functional category Foc (focus), focus features are checked via movement in a spec-head (specifier-head) relation. This checking can be done either overtly before spell-out when the focus occurs ex- situ or covertly at LF when they occur in situ (Rizzi, 1997). In addition, Aboh (2004) notes that the assumption behind the two focus positions lies in the fact that there high FocP in the left periphery and a low FocP in the VP that host in-situ focus constituents. The focus head may be overtly realized by focus marker as in the case of fronted constituents in the left periphery. Fronted focus constituents therefore move to Spec FocP so that they can mark [+focus] at the Foc head position. On the other hand, the focus head could realize as a null constituent as in the in-situ focus however this does not undermine focus interpretation.

Accordingly, many languages exhibit a focalization process that requires leftward movement of the focused element to the left adjacent position of a morphologically realized focus marker overtly or covertly (Rizzi, 1997, 2001, 2004; Aboh, 2004; Bassong, 2014; Nweya, 2018). Following these assertions Schwarz's (2003) observes that in Gĩkũyũ the focus marker *nĩ-* heads focus projection and similarly Landman and Ranero (2018) in the analysis of the Kuria focus marker state that *ne-* heads FocP. As such, we postulate that focalization Kĩmũthambĩ involves a process that requires movement of the focused element to a focus Projection headed by the focus marker. The Foc head carries the [+focus] feature and is morphologically realized in Kĩmũthambĩ by the focus marker *nĩ-*. The focus head attracts constituents with matching features to the position immediately to the left of the focus marker is Spec FocP, the focus site, a position that hosts any focused element (Biloa, 2013; Aboh, 2004; Rizzi 1997).
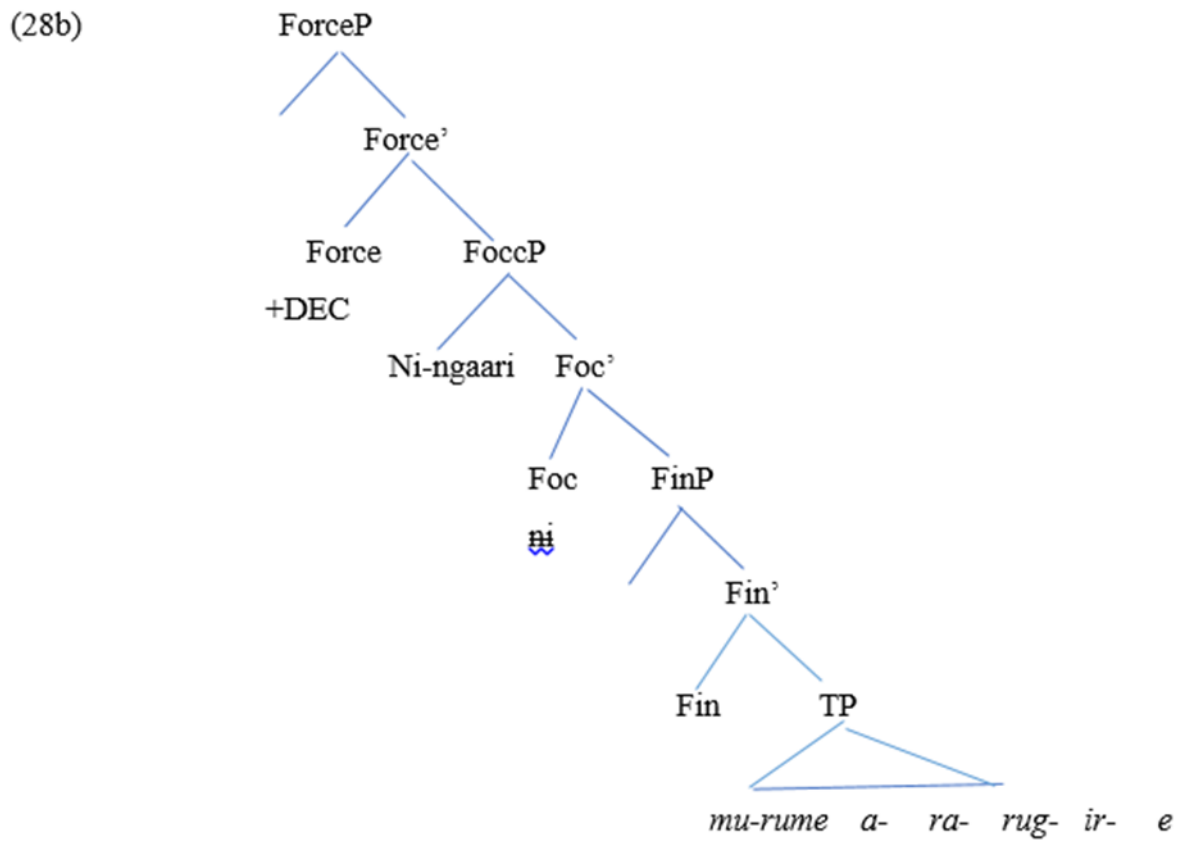
The focus features are checked via movement of the focus constituent to Spec FocP. As such, FocP is present in the structure only when there is a focus category to be sanctioned by spec-head requirement. This means that the focused category in [spec FocP and Foc expressed by the focus marker must be in a spec-head configuration, and no other constituent should intervene between them. Therefore, when the focused constituent raises to Spec FocP and establishes a spec-head relation with the head *nĩ-*, it surfaces at the focused constituent as a prefix by cliticizing to the constituent in Spec FocP position (Schwarz, 2003, 2007).

Therefore, an example of a sentence with a fronted focused object, where the object raises to Spec, FocP, as in sentence (28) which is repeated from (7b) would have the structural representation of the left periphery as in (28b)

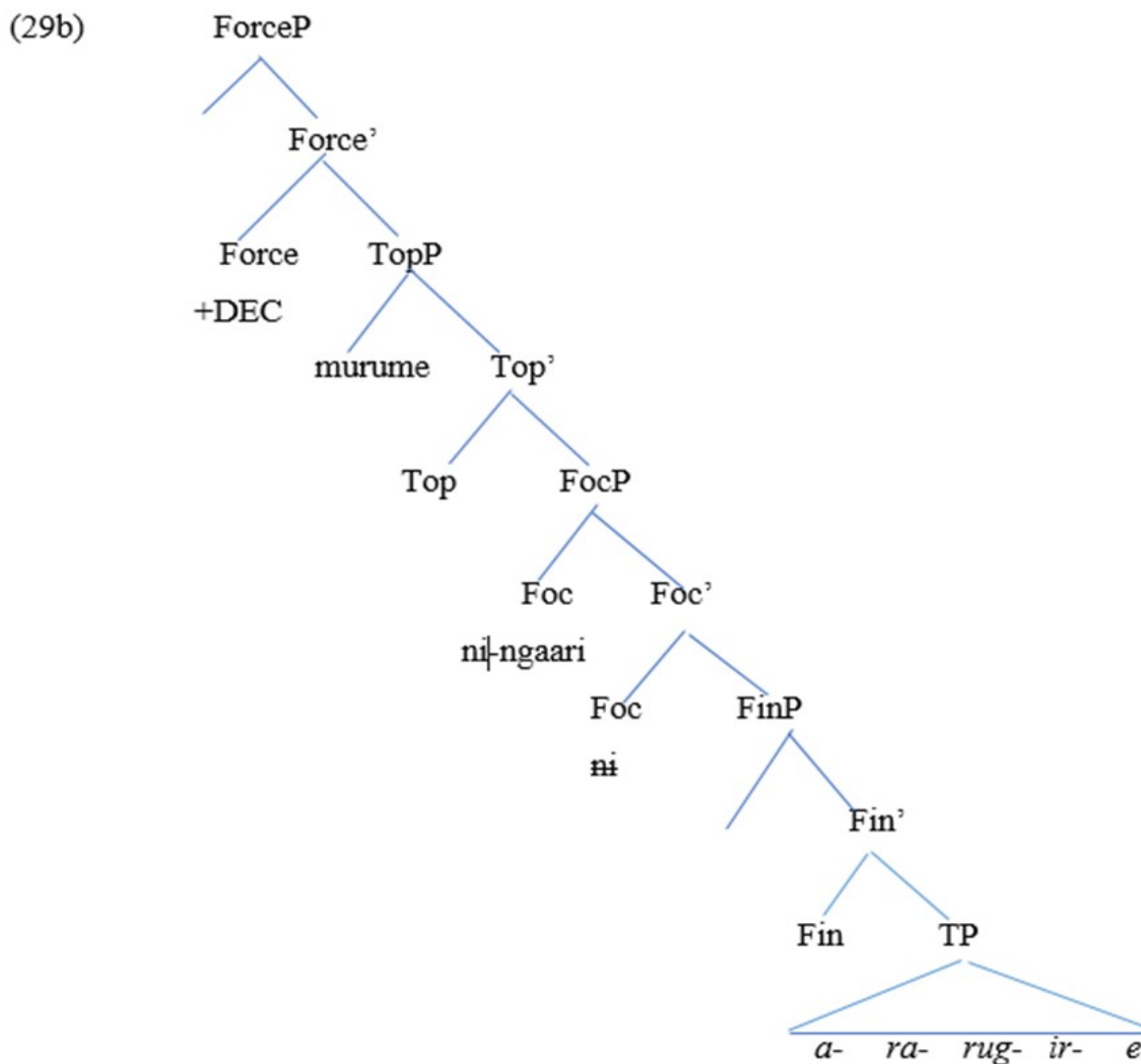*(28b) NI- NGAARI*   *mu-rume   a-   ra-   rug-   ir-   e*

Foc- 9-car   1-husband 1SM- PST- buy- PFV-FV

'It is a car that the husband bought'

(28b)

```
                        ForceP
                       /    \
                          Force'
                         /    \
                     Force    FoccP
                              /    \
                    +DEC
                          Ni-ngaari   Foc'
                                     /    \
                                  Foc    FinP
                                          /    \
                                  ni
                                        Fin'
                                       /    \
                                    Fin     TP
                                           /    \
                             mu-rume  a-  ra-  rug-  ir-  e
```

The object can also be preceded by the subject as illustrated by sentence (29). As noted previously, the subject moves to occupy TopP and the focused constituent Spec FocP as in (29)

(29a)   Mu-rume,   NI- a- ra- rug- ir- e
NGAARI

      1-husband Foc- 9-car   1-husband 1SM- PST- buy- PFV-FV

      'It a car that the husband bought'

(29b)

```
                    ForceP
                      /\
                    Force'
                    /\
               Force    TopP
               +DEC     /\
                   murume    Top'
                            /\
                         Top    FocP
                               /\
                             Foc    Foc'
                          ni-ngaari  /\
                                   Foc    FinP
                                    ni     /\
                                         Fin'
                                         /\
                                      Fin    TP
                                           /‾‾\
                                    a- ra- rug- ir- e
```
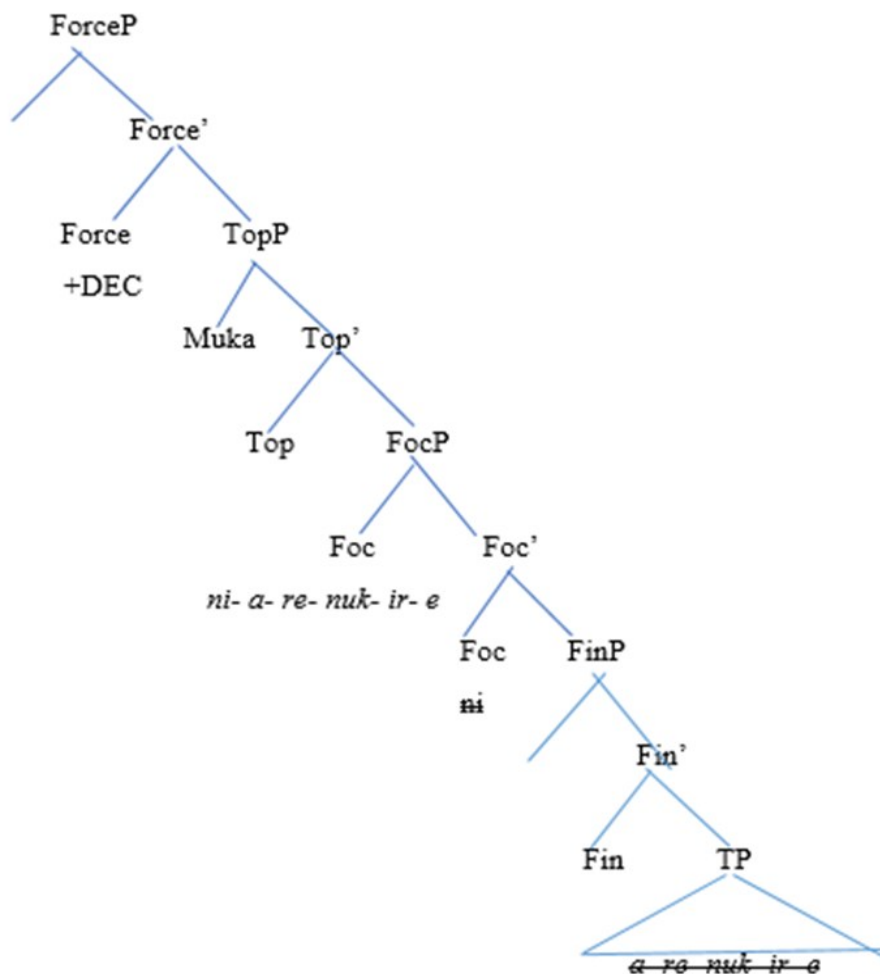
Sentences that exhibit verbal focus and specifically where the verb is reduplicated will have the nominalized verb fronted and occupy Spec Foc where it merges with the focus marker while the copy is left in the VP. However, for structures that have preverbal *nĩ*-focus as exemplified in (30a), they are analyzed as involving movement the whole TP to Spec Foc, where it acquires the focus marker. According Schwarz (2007) motivation for moving the whole into the focus phrase is due to the fact that preverbal focus marking expresses focus on the entire sentence. Just like in structures where the subject precedes a focused object, the subject moves to occupy TopP to achieve the required word order.us Structure (30b) illustrates this.

(30a) Mu-ka   ni-   a-   re-   nuk-   ir-   e   Igoro

    1-Wife Foc- 1SM- PST- leave- PFV- FV   Yesterday
    'The wife left yesterday'

(30b)

ForceP tree: ForceP → Force'; Force' → Force (+DEC) and TopP; TopP → Muka, Top'; Top' → Top, FocP; FocP → Foc (*ni- a- re- nuk- ir- e*), Foc'; Foc' → Foc (*ni*), FinP; FinP → Fin'; Fin' → Fin, TP; TP → *a re nuk ir e*

Conclusion

This study indicates that the focus constructions in Kĩmũthambĩ can either be in-situ or ex-situ. In the in-situ situation the focused constituent does not bear the focus marker. However, in the ex-situ strategy they do bear the focus marker *ni-* Focus on a subject compared to object focus occurs only in ex-situ position and the constituent focused must be accompanied by the focus marker *ni-*. Sentences under subject focus were analyzed as clefts. Object Focus in the language was realized as either in-situ or ex-situ. In the in-situ situation the focused constituent remained in its canonical position and it did have the focus marker *ni-*. In the ex-situ situation, the constituent is fronted and it acquires the focus marker *ni-*. In the situation where the clausal subject occurred before the focused constituent, the clausal subject was argued to be a topic occupying TopP. Wh- questions were also analyzed in the language and it was noted that they compete for the same position as focus constituents in the left periphery. In the left periphery, it was argued that the focus markers *ni-* occupies the FocP projection with the focus marker occupying the head position. Once a constituent raises to Spec FocP it establishes a spec-head relation with the *ni*-focus marker in the head position and surfaces on the focused constituent by encliting on the focused constituent as a prefix.

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