

Information Structure in Gĩkũyũ

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Overview

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- Focus types in Gĩkũyũ
- Information structure in Gĩkũyũ Complex sentences
- Topics and topic marking in Gĩkũyũ
- Tail-head linkage in Gĩkũyũ narratives
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Aim of the presentation

The main aim of this presentation is to show aspects of information structuring in Gikūyū within the Role and Reference Grammar framework.

Introduction

- Information structuring influences the morphosyntactic structure of sentences, hence the interest from syntacticians (Van Valin 2005).
- Information structure is an important factor in the grammar of Bantu languages, since it influences the word order, phonological phrasing, the conjugation system among other linguistic aspects (Van der Wal, 2011: 1735). In Aghem, focus marking pervades all levels of grammar (Hyman 2010)
- Gĩkũyũ is such a language whose word order and phonological phrasing is influenced by information structuring /packaging.
- Focus marking in Gĩkũyũ is elucidated in several studies e.g. Clements (1984), Bergvall (1987), Schwartz (2003,2007). Clements' work is the basis of Bergvall's and Schwartz's work, and all of them were based on different versions of Chomskyan theories.
- The study adopts the Role and reference Grammar (RRG) as the framework of analysis.

Information Structure in RRG

- Information structuring influences the morphosyntactic structure of sentences, hence the interest from syntacticians (Van Valin 2005).
- RRG adapts Lambrecht's (1986,1994,2000) theory of information structure.
- Languages use different means to indicate focus structure (e.g. syntax, morphology, prosody)
- Gīkūyū uses prosodic , morphological and syntactic means to package information in sentences.
- RRG adapted Lambrecht's (1994) focus types: narrow (argument) focus, predicate focus and sentence focus.
- In this talk I show how these focus types are realized in Gīkūyū.

The language

- The Gĩkũyũ is a Bantu language spoken in central Kenya by about 8.2 million people.
- It belongs to zone 50 and classified as (E51) by Guthrie (1967).
- Like most Bantu languages Gĩkũyũ has SVO word order.

Functions of *ne* in Gĩkũyũ

▪ Particle *nĩ* /*ne*/ is very ubiquitous in Gĩkũyũ grammar. The particle has a many functions in the language. Below are syntactic, semantic and pragmatic functions of *ne*.

➤ It is generally agreed that it is a focus marker/focus particle.

➤ It is an assertion /illocutionary marker (Bergvall 1987, Kihara 2017) when it occurs at the beginning of the verb complex e.g.

the declarative sentence : *Atumia ne mararema wega.*
'The women are ploughing well.'

➤ it heads a PP periphery : *Ahorwo ne ithε*

'He was beaten **by his father**'

➤ It introduces *reason*-adjunct e.g.

Ahorwo ne ithε ne korema.
He was beaten **by** his.father **because** being.unruly
'He was beaten by the father for being unruly.'

➤ It is a copula : *Kamau ne mwarimũ.*
Kamau **COP** teacher
'Kamau is a teacher.'

Predicate focus

- Predicate focus is the unmarked kind of focus (topic-comment structure) . The predicate comments on the topic, which is within the pragmatic presupposition but not in focus (Lambrecht 1994:131).

- In Gĩkũyũ , predicate focus is realized by an obligatory preverbal *ne* , whose absence in a clause changes the focus in a clause.

- 1). a. *Kamau ε ko?*
Kamau COP where
'where is Kamau?'
- b. *NE A-A-THI-IRE THUKURU_F.*
FM 1-PST-go-ASP-FV 9.school
' He went to school.'
- c. *A-a-thi-ire THUKURU_F.*
1-PST-go-ASP-FV 9.school
'He went to school.'

- In (1b) the topic (subject) 'Kamau' is optional since it is presupposed. The inclusion of *ne* in the answer in (1b) is obligatory in order to realize predicate focus. Without *ne* (1c) the focus is no longer on the predicate but on the object *thukuru*, which gets a contrastive reading, i.e. Kamau went to *school* and not anywhere else.
- Optional focus marking is associated with some of form of contrast (see É. Kiss 1998, Zimmerman 2008) and others.
- Many Bantu languages manifest a structural low focus position, usually referred to as the immediately after verb (IAV) position (cf. Watters 1979, Aboh 2007). Gĩkũyũ follows the same pattern.

Narrow focus

- The focus domain in a narrow focus structure is confined to a single constituent. The focused unit could be a subject, object, oblique NP or the nucleus (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997:208). There is marked and unmarked narrow focus (Lambrecht 1994).
- Wh- questions show focus, since the answers they require are considered new information (focus) that is unknown by the hearer. Unmarked Wh-questions in Gikūyū occupy the final position e.g. (2a), but when marked, wh-words co-occur with focus particle *ne* e.g. (2b).

2) a. *Ma-a-rug-ir-ε* *kee?*
 2- PST-cook-ASP-FV what
 'What did they cook?'

b. *Ne kee ma-a-rug-ir-ε?*
 FM what 2- PST-cook-ASP-FV
 'What did they cook?'/what is it they cooked?'

a' *Ma-a-rug-ir-ε* *NYAMA_F?*
 2- PST-cook-ASP-FV 9.meat
 'They cooked MEAT.'

b'. *NE NYAMA_F ma-a-rug-ir-ε?*
 FM 9.meat 2- PST-cook-ASP-FV
 'They cooked MEAT./It is MEAT they cooked.'

- The object in (2a') is focused in its canonical position hence unmarked narrow focus position. In (2b') the focused object is displaced to clause initial accompanied by *ne*, which makes it a marked focused constituent.
- However, it is not all Wh-questions that have the canonical order. When a nominal subject is questioned in Gikūyū, the Wh- question is clause initial e.g. (3b) *noo* is *ne + o* 'who'

3) a. *Maito a-a-rug-ir-ε irio.*
 1.mother 1-PST-cook-ASP-FV 9.food
 'Mother cooked food.'

b. *Noo o-rug-ir-ε irio?*
 FM.who REL-cook-ASP-FV 9.food
 'Who cooked food?'

Narrow focus , cont'd ...

- Other than in situ position (4a) and ex situ position (4a'), Wh-word can occur in an intermediate position (4b) and corresponding answer in (4b').

(4) a. *Mw-ana a-a-re-ir-ε* *KEE_F?*
 1-child 1-PST- eat-ASP-FV what?
 'What did the child eat?'

a'. *NE KEE mw-ana a-a-re-ir-ε?*
 FM what 1-child 1-PST- eat-ASP-FV
 'What did the child eat?'

b. ***Mw-ana** NE KEE_F a-a-re-ir-ε?*
 1-child FM what 1-PST- eat-ASP-FV
 'What did the child eat?'

b' ***Mw-ana** NE NYAMA_F a-a-re-ir-ε?*
 1-child FM 9.MEAT 1-PST-eat-ASP-FV
 'The child ate MEAT/
 'As for the child , IT IS MEAT he ate.'

- Object focus with ditransitive verb. The object and the question word can alternate positions(5a, b) , an indication of the potential focus domain scope, and syntactic flexibility.

(5) a. *Mo-ra-ig-ir-ε* ***KEE_F** *thitɔɔ?*
 2-PST-keep-ASP-FV what 9.store
 'What did you keep in the store?'*

(b) . *Mo-ra-ig-ir-ε* *thitɔɔ **KEE_F?***
 2-PST-keep-ASP-FV 9.store what
 'What did you keep in the store?'

Narrow focus cont'd ...

- Focus on the verb constituent involves reduplication/copying of the verb (6b)

(6). a. *Maina a-re-εk-a ATEA_F?*
Maina 1-PST-do-FV what
'What is Maina doing?'
a'. *NE ATEA_F Maina a-re-εk-a?*
FM what Maina 1-PST-do-FV
'What is Maina doing?'

b. *Maina NE KO-REMA A-RA-REM-A_F.*
Maina FM 15-did-FV 1-PST-dig-FV
'Maina is digging'

- In (7) the verbal reduplication includes a pronominal while the referent RP is omitted since it is presupposed.

(7) a. *NE ATEA_F Maina ε-εk-ir-ε Wamboi?*
FM what M. 1-PST-do-ASP-FV Wamboi
'What did Maina do to Wamboi?'
b. *Ne KO-MO-GOTH-A A-A-MO-GOTH-IR-ε_F.*
FM 15-10M-hit-FV 1-PST-10M-hit-ASP-FV
'He HIT HER./ 'It's TO HIT HER THAT HE DID.'

- Topic referents, being highly accessible, are typically expressed with less material (cf. Givón 1983), and that is what has happened in (7b) i.e. Wamboi is left out.

Narrow focus cont'd ...

- A subject can only be focused ex situ or in a passive (8c) with an obligatory *ne*.

(8) a. *Kamau ne a-ra-gor-ir-ε i-rato.*
 Kamau AM 1-PST-buy-ASP-FV 8-shoes
 'Kamau bought shoes.'

b. *NOO_F o-ra-gor-ir-ε i-rato?*
 FM.who 1.REL-PST-buy-ASP-FV 8-shoes
 'Who bought shoes?'

b.' *NE KAMAU_F o-ra-gor-ir-ε i-rato.*
 FM Kamau 1.REL-PST-buy-ASP-FV 8-shoes
 'It is Kamau who bought shoes.'

c. *I-rato i-ra-gor-ir-wo NOO_F*
 8-shoes 8-PST-buy-ASP-PASS by.who
 'Who bought the shoes?'

c.' *NE KAMAU_F.*
 FM Kamau
 'It is Kamau.'

- A focused subject results in resumptive relative pronominal prefix (*o-*) indicating a relative clause which together with *ne* form a cleft-like construction. Bergvall (1987) argues for a cleft analysis which Schwartz (2003) argues against, noting that the resumptive relative is not found in other ex situ constructions with other persons.
- e.g. *ne atumia ma-ra-gor-ir-ε i-rato* 'It is women who bought shoes.'

Narrow focus cont'd ...

- A negation test can confirm that there is a relative clause in (8b')

(9) a. *NE KAMAU_F o-ta-na gor-a i-rato.*
FM Kamau 1.REL-NEG-TNS-buy-FV 8-shoes
'It is Kamau who did not buy shoes.'

b. *Ti Kamau o-ta-na gor-a i-rato.*
NEG Kamau 1.REL-NEG-TNS-buy-FV 8-shoes
'It is not Kamau who did not buy shoes.'

- *Ne* does not occur in the same clause with a negation marker, now that there is one in (9) they must be two different clauses.
- Another note is that *-ta-* is the negation found in subordinate clauses, as opposed to *ti-* that is found in main clauses *se*
- In (10) a contrastive focused argument is realized by a pronoun (*ne + we*), which occurs in an intermediate position (between the subject and the verb complex).

(10) Kamau *NE WE o-ra-gor-ir-ε i-rato.*
Kamau FM 1.PRO 1.REL-PST-buy-ASP-FV 8-shoes
'It is Kamau who bought shoes/Kamau is the one who bought shoes.'

Bound Focus

- Bound focus is part of narrow focus .Focal operator (FO) words include exclusive operator ‘only’ and the additive-cum-scalar additive operators e.g. ‘even’, ‘also’.
- In Gĩkũyũ, exclusive operators are: *ɔ* ‘only’ , *nɔ* ‘only’ (*nɔ* is a coalescence of *ne* and *ɔ*) and the additive-cum-scalar additive operator, *ɔna* ‘even, also’ (*ɔna* has a conjunction *na* ‘and’ cliticised on to it).
- Particle *tu* is normally used together with *nɔ* and it is also ideophonic , to show finality .

(11) a. *ɔNA MW-ARIMO_F ne a-ra-re-a ke-gwa.*
 FO 1-teacher FM 1-PRS-eat-FV 7-sugarcane
 ‘EVEN/ALSO THE TEACHER is eating sugarcane.’

b. *Mw-arimo a-ra-re-a ɔ KE-GWA TU_F.*
 1-teacher 1-PRS-eat- FV FO 7-sugarcane IDEO
 ‘The teacher is eating ONLY A SUGAR CANE.’

c. *Nɔ KE-GWA TU_F mw-arimo a-ra-re-a.*
 FO 7-sugarcane IDEO 1-teacher 1-PRS-eat- FV
 ‘IT IS ONLY A SUGARCANE that the teacher is eating.’

d. *Nɔ TU MW-ARIMO_F o-ra-re-a ke-gwa.*
 FM.OP IDEO 1-teacher 1.REL-PRS-eat- FV 7-sugarcane
 ‘IT IS ONLY THE TEACHER who is eating sugarcane.’

- The focused constituent in (11b) can be displaced to a clause initial position (11c) (*object cleft*) , while in (11d) the subject is raised. (*subject cleft*)

Sentence focus

▪ Sentence focus is marked on the entire sentence; the focus domain is on the whole sentence. The entire sentence is asserted.

▪ A distinct feature of sentence focus is the lack of a topical subject as in predicate focus.

(12) a. Q: *Ne kee ha-rea?*

FM what 16-there?

‘What is happening there?’ (Lit. what is there?)

b. A: *NE A-NDO MA-RA-ROA_F*

FM 2-people 2-PRS-fight

‘People are fighting’/ It is people (who are) fighting.]

c. *HE NA A-NDO MA-RA-ROA_F*

16.COP COMM 2-people 2-PRS-fight

‘There are people fighting.’

▪ The answer in (12b) is all new information that lacks an aboutness topic and (12c) is an existential sentences , an alternative answer to (12a) and like (12b) it lacks a topic.

Focus in Complex Sentences

- RRG has a general constraint that governs the potential focus domain in complex sentences that states :

The potential focus domain extends into a subordinate clause if and only if the subordinate clause is a direct daughter of (a direct daughter of) the clause node which is modified by the illocutionary force operator (Van Valin 2005:214).

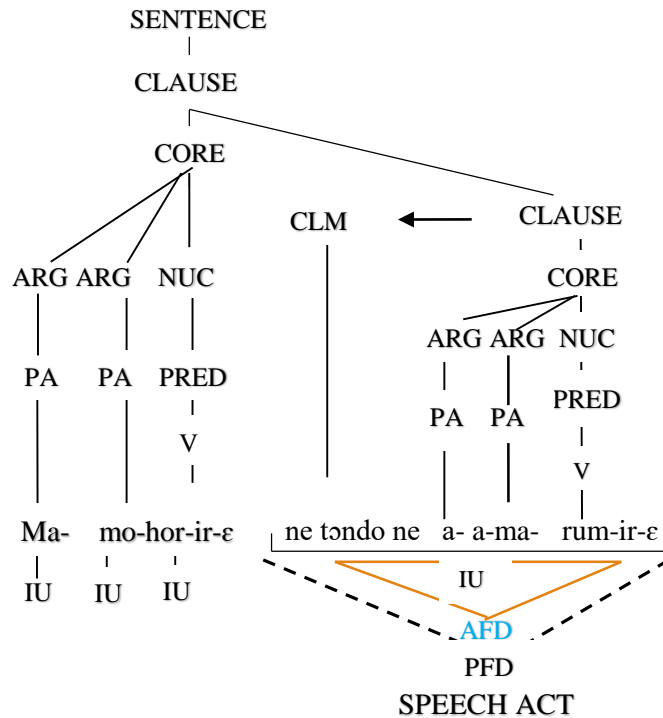
- Example (13) is a *reason*-adverbial clause which illustrates focus in complex sentences.

(13) a. *Ma-a-mo-hor-ir-ε* *NE KE_F?*
2- PST-10M-beat-ASP-FV FM why
'Why did they beat him?' [Lit. They beat him WHY?]

b. *Ma-a-mo-hor-ir-ε* *NE TONDO NE A-MA-RUM-IR-ε_F.*
2- PST-10M-beat-ASP-FV FM CLM AM 1-20M-insult-ASP-FV
'They beat him BECAUSE HE INSLUTED THEM.'

- The in situ Wh-word obligatorily *ne*-marked and the focal adverbial clause replaces the wh-question , retaining the pre-clausal *ne* particle. The preverbal *ne* particle in adverbial clause is marked as assertive marker (AM)
- Figure 1 represents example (13b).

Focus in Complex Sentences



Focus in complex sentences

- Danckaert & Haegeman (2012) noted incompatibility of the main clause phenomena (MCP) in English conditional clauses. MCP includes syntactic phenomena e.g. argument fronting, locative inversion, VP preposing, negative inversion, etc.
- Gĩkũyũ conditionals allow some MCP phenomena. Gĩkũyũ marks conditionals morphologically with *nge-* and lexically with *ɔkɔrwɔ*, *kɔrwɔ*, *angedkɔrwɔ*, and with *ɔna*.

(14) a. *O-nge-hakor-a* *thenge* *ne* *e-nɔr-ag-a*.
1-COND-castrate-FV 9.hegoat AM 9-fat-ASP-FV
'If you castrate a he-goat it gets fat.'

b. *Thenge* *o-nge-me-hakor-a=re* *ne* *e-nɔr-ag-a* [argument fronting]
9.hegoat 1-COND-9OM-castrate-FV=TM AM 9-get.fat-ASP-FV
'A he-goat if you castrate it, it gets fat.'

c. *Thenge* *ti* *o-nge-me-hakor-a* *e-nɔr-ag-a*.
9.hegoat NEG 1-COND-9OM-castrate-FV 9-get.fat-ASP-FV
'A he-goat, it is not when you castrate that it gets fat./

d. *Ne* *o-nge-hakor-a* *thenge* *e-nɔr-ag-a*.
FM 1-COND-castrate-FV 9.hegoat 9-get.fat-ASP-FV
'It is when you castrate a he-goat that it gets fat.'

Summary of Focus marking

- The examples presented so far , show that Gīkūyū marks predicate and narrow focus with particle *ne*, except the unmarked narrow object focus. Marked focus obligatorily requires *ne* .
- Subject focus is marked focus , realized *ex situ* or in peripheral PP. Subject focus for 3rd person singular has a resumptive relative marker *o-* unlike other persons that do not show it, which makes a bi-clausal construction.
- Bound focus is contrastive narrow focus and it makes use of focus operators and also FM *ne* . Other than syntax, bound focus explicitly employs prosody as focus marking i.e. use of ideophonic particle *tu*.
- Sentence focus is indicated by *ne*-initial clause construction or a an existential construction introduced by *ha-* the locative noun class marker.
- From a RRG framework, all marked foci (preverbal *ne*-marked constituents) fall in the PrCS.
- The potential focus domain (PFD) in clauses is the immediately after the verb (IAV) potential.
- Focus in complex sentences obeys the IAV ; conditional clauses allows MCP phenomena.
- A notable feature of the focus realisation in Gīkūyū is the variable position (flexible syntax) yet focus is rigidly marked. This phenomenon situates Gīkūyū in the flexible syntax - rigid focus type following Van Valin (1999). It is the syntax that conforms to the language's focus structure requirements.

Topics and Topic Marking in Gĩkũyũ

- Gĩkũyũ has a enclitic =re , that is so prevalent in their speech that Barlow (1961 : 13) says that they are ‘addicted’ to it . I consider this enclitic a topic marker (cf. Bennett 1986); it cliticised to phrases (e.g. 15 a) and clauses (15b,15b’ & 15c).

(15) a. *Kamau=re ne a-a-thi-ir-ε thukuru. *Ne Kamau=re a-a-thi-ir-ε thukuru.*

Kamau= **TM** AM 1-PST-go-ASP-FV 9.school
 ‘As for Kamau , he went to school.’

b. *O-nge-hakor-a thenge=re ne e-nɔr-ag-a.*
 1-COND-castrate-FV 9.hegoat=**TM** AM 9-fat-ASP-FV
 ‘If you castrate a he-goat, it gets fat.’

b’ . *Thenge o-nge-me-hakor-a=re ne e-nɔr-ag-a.*
 9.hegoat 1-COND-**9OM**-castrate-FV=**TM** AM 9-get.fat-ASP-FV
 ‘A he-goat if you castrate it, it gets fat.’

c. *Rerea mo-gɔ-ɔk-a=re mo-ka-rɛh-ε ogembe.*
 when 2-FUT-come-FV=**TM** 2-FUT-bring-FV 9.millet
 ‘When you will come, (you) bring with you millet.’

- The RP ‘Kamau’ in (15a) is separated from the main clause by a prosodic pause; the conditional clause in (15b) is attached to =re (recall Haiman’s (1978) conditional clauses are topics). (15b’) uses a clitic and a RP and the TM together.
- RPs and clauses cliticised to =re occupy the Pre detached position [PrDP] . For RPs such as ‘Kamau’ in *Kamau a-a-thi-ir-ε thukuru*, occupy the extra core slot (ECS), which is a clause-internal position, unlike the PrDP RPs that are extra clausal (cf. Van Valin 2013). It is only a ECS RP that accepts both FM *ne* and TM =re; a PrDP does not.
- Plausible to say that ECS topics are clausal topics and PrDP topics are discourse topics.

Tail-head linkage in Gĩkũyũ narratives

- Tail-head linkage (THL) is a discourse pattern whereby the main verb of the preceding utterance is repeated for purposes of discourse cohesion (Guillaume 2011). Sample THL patterns in Gĩkũyũ are illustrated in (16); (16a) is from an elicited narrative and (16b) is from Bennett et al. (1985: 278).

(16) a. *Hende emwe ne kw-are mo-thuuri omwe na mo-tumia w-ake.*
 Time one AM 17-COP 2-man one and 2-wife 2-his
 ‘One time, there was a man and his wife.’

Mo-thuuri ocio=re a-re mo-turi na=ke mo-tumia wake a-a-rem-ag-a irio.
 2-man 2-DEM= TM 2-COP 2-smith and =pro 1-wife 1-his 1-TNS-ASP-FV 9.food
 ‘That man, he was a smith and his wife cultivated crops.’

b. *Tene ne kw-are mo-thuuri omwe a-ge-thie ko-reithia hando wero-ine a-ke-ana i-tumbe re-a nderi re-tetwo.*
 early AM 17-COP 2-man one 2-SEQ-go INF-graze somewhere desert-LOC 2-SEQ-see 5-egg 5-of 7.stork 5-bandoned
 ‘Long ago there was a man, he went to graze in a dry place, he saw an abandoned egg of a stork

Ana i-tumbe re-u re-a nderi=re a-ke-re-ya a-ke-inoka na-re.
 2.see 5-egg 5-DEM 5-of 7.stork=TM 2-SEQ-5OM-take 2-SEQ-go.home with-5-it
 ‘(When) he saw that egg of the stork, he took it (and) went home with it.’

I-tumbe re-rea re-ke-igwo nginya re-ge-toreka.
 5-egg 5-PRN 5-SEQ-keep until 5-SEQ-hatch
 ‘the egg was kept until it hatched.’

- Example of THL is the repetition of ‘*ana* ‘see’ (16b). Note that it is attached to *=re* which makes it given unit. In (16b), the RP *mo-thuuri* ‘man’ has attaches to *=re* on second mention, and when the narrator wants to ‘switch reference’ and introduce second mention of the wife, he uses *na-ke* ‘and she’ which has a cataphoric reference with ‘wife’.
- THLs and other *=re-* marked units, serve to show givenness in Gĩkũyũ narratives.

Conclusion

- Information structuring in Gĩkũyũ is much connected to the grammar of the language, i.e. information structuring has grammatical ramifications.
- Focus marking in Gĩkũyũ can be accounted for by the typology of focus put forward in RRG.
- Aspects of information structuring in complex sentences are evident in Gĩkũyũ . Unlike in English, conditional clauses accept select MCP items.
- Conditional clauses in Gĩkũyũ support the claim that conditionals can be topics (cf. Haiman 1978)
- Tail-head linkage clauses in Gĩkũyũ narratives are part of showing givenness in the language.

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Thank you for your attention