

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF  
THEOLOGY

DAASANACH FOCUS STRATEGIES  
AND THEIR PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS

BY

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JULY - 2000

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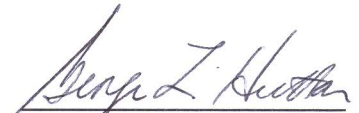
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A Project submitted to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Translation  
Studies

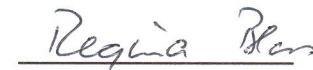
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## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

### 'DAASANACH FOCUS STRATEGIES AND THEIR PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS:

I declare that this is my work and has not been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

The Views presented herein are not necessarily those of Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners

(Signed)  \_\_\_\_\_  
Jackson L. Achinya

July, 2000

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea of this project derived from my study of grammar and semantics and pragmatics. The formal interplay between grammar and semantics and pragmatics, and the cognitive effects they yield in terms of information processing has been an area of great interest for me. My own teachers have, to a great extent, been responsible for kindling this curiosity.

The completion of the project in many ways owes to many people. First, I thank God for all His enabling. My own family has been a source of my emotional strength. My own wife, 'Dies, has been a source of my data gathering and I express my sincere appreciation for all the help she gave me. My own understanding of linguistics owes to my teachers, Drs. Huttar and Blass, and Mrs. Huttar whose understanding of the sounds of human language and sweet motherly spirit has been a continued source of encouragement to me. To have been taught by them must be considered a rare privilege. I am grateful to all of them for their humility and immense intellectual support. Had it not been for the financial support of Bible Translation & Literacy (East Africa) and Tear-Fund, I would not have accomplished this study. My sincere gratitude is expressed to both organizations. Lastly, but not least, many thanks to my multi-national classmates who shared with me a great deal of their field experience. May your labour of love for the Lord continue to bear more fruit.

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## KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

Adj.	Adjective
Alv.	Alveolar
ATR	Advanced Tongue Root
C	Consonant
C.Pl.	Common Plural
Cop.	Copula
Cstv.	Causative
Dem.	Demonstrative
DM	Direction Marker
D.O.T	'Daasanach Oral Text
Excl.	Exclusive
FM	Focus Marker
Fut.	Future
H	High
Impf.	Imperfective
Imp.	Imperative
Incl.	Inclusive
L	Low

Neg.	Negative
‘NP	Noun Phrase
Palat.	Palatal
Pers.	Person
PP	Postposition
Poss.	Possessive
QM	Question Marker
Rfx.	Reflexive
Rel.	Relativizer
RP	Resumptive Pronoun
Sg.	Singular
VP	Verb Phrase
Vd.	Voiced
Vl.	Voiceless
V	Vowel



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **The importance of the study**

In European languages focus is indicated by stress, but in African languages they are indicated with markers and also by tone. There is not much in the existing literature that addresses this. Focus is an important subject in African languages and needs to be understood properly, especially the semantic-pragmatic nuances that these markers impose in the processing and understanding of discourse or even in everyday utterances.

#### **Sources of data**

The data on which this project is based is derived from my own intuitions as a native speaker of 'Daasanach, and my wife who is also a native speaker of the language. I have occasionally confirmed findings with two other native speakers: Riikoi of the university of Nairobi, and my sister Gelga.

#### **The 'Daasanach People**

The 'Daasanach people live in the South West of Ethiopia in the areas around the east and west banks of the Omo River and its wide delta. Kenya 'Daasanach live around Illeret on the eastern shore of Lake Turkana. The population of the entire 'Daasanach community is about 30,000 (Grimes 1996, 260). But this figure is highly

conjectural. My own estimate is that the 'Daasanach probably number about 70,000 people. The 'Daasanach are bordered on the west by the Turkana and the Inyang'atom (both of whom speak an eastern-Nilotic language) and on the east by Kere, Hamar (Omotic language groups) and Arbore, Boran and Gabbra (Eastern Cushitic). The economy of the 'Daasanach is based on a balance between agriculture and pastoralism. In addition fishing is also practised, but on a much lower scale as a supplementary diet especially during the dry seasons. Commenting on the roles of cattle in 'Daasanach society Carr says this:

Cattle occupy a central position in 'Daasanach society, and their roles form a wide spectrum of variation, from what is conventionally referred to as economic, through many other aspects of concrete social relations, to symbolic (Carr 1977,99).

This basic statement about the centrality of cattle to 'Daasanach economy, values as well as social matrix of relationships is affirmed as follows: "The 'Daasanach should, however, be viewed as they view themselves, as transhumant pastoralists-they herd large numbers of animals, and livestock transactions are central to their subsistence, values and social relationships" ( Almagor 1978, 1).

## Language

The 'Daasanach language has been classified as Eastern Cushitic on the basis of grammatical gender, prefix-conjugation, and verb derivation, which clearly point in the direction of Cushitic ( Sasse,1974 ). Other related languages in this group are Somali, Bran, Rendille, Arbore and Elmolo (now dead! ). The 'Daasanach language has no regional variation and is therefore uniform across all tribal sections.

## Inventory of Phonemes

There are 28 consonants and 7 vowels in 'Daasanach.

### Consonants

		Labial	Dental Alv.		Palat.	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	Vl.			t		k	ʔ
	Vd.	b	d̪	d		g	
Implosive	Vd.	ɓ		ɗ	ɟ	ɠ	
	Vl.				tʃ		
Affricate	Vd.				dʒ		
	Vl.	f		s	ʃ		h
Fricative	Vd.	v	ð				
	Vd.	m		n	ɲ	ŋ	
Nasal	Vd.			r			
Flap	Vd.			r			
Trill	Vd.			r			
Approximant	Vd.			l	j	w	

Secondary articulatory processes like labialisation and palatalisation are productively common in 'Daasanach (see the section below on orthography).

	Vowels		
	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low	ɛ	a	ɔ

The above vowels have their corresponding long ones.

### Tones

'Daasanach is a tonal language and has both lexical and grammatical tones.

The basic tone features are high or low with compound tones (high -falling and low -rising) generally prominent on long vowels. Mid tones are also present. I must admit, though, that the phenomena of suprasegmental phonology, its basic features and grammatical functions in 'Daasanach have not been investigated. A future discussion of this topic and its treatment within autosegmental phonology would therefore be highly recommended.

Tone	Example	Gloss
H	<i>si</i>	'go'
L	<i>í</i>	'eye'
M	<i>'guō</i>	'possess'
HH	<i>áár</i>	'bull'
LL	<i>ààr</i>	'bulls'
HL	<i>raàr</i>	'yellow'

LH

'bada'

'bow'

Orthography

Phoneme	Graphemes	Digraphs
/b/	b	
/β/	'b	
tʃ		ch
/d/	d	
/d̥/	'd	
/d̥ʰ/	d'	
/ð/	*z	
/f/	f	
/g/	g	
/g̥/	'g	
/h/	h	
/j/	'j	
/k/	k	
/l/	l	
/m/	m	
/n/	n	
/ɲ/		ny
/ŋ/		*ng'
/j/	y	
[r,r̥]	r	
/s/	s	
/t/	t	

/ʃ/

sh

/v/

v

/w/

w

/ʔ/

'

NB.\*these phonemes in the current orthography are written as *dh* and *ng*'. To avoid redundancy and possibly confusion to mother tongue readers I have modified their transcription. For example, 'gong' 'go ('egg') and *dhadhhaa* ('to saw continuously'), would be easier to mother-tongue readers if they are rendered as 'goŋ' 'go and *zazzaa* respectively. The glottal stop [ʔ] appears both word-initially and word-finally but in the current orthography it is only indicated in word-final positions in monosyllabic words with the superscript ['].

[meʔ]

*me*' 'sweet'

[keʔ]

*ke*' 'leave'

[naʔ]

*na*' 'to stop or do'

[laʔ]

*la*' 'to be absent'

As far as vowels are concerned only five of them are currently used in the orthography, both in single and lengthened forms. These are two front vowels *i* and *e*, and three back vowels, *a*, *u*, and *o* being made explicit in written texts. Labialised and palatalized consonants and vowels are phonologically ambiguous with either - e.g., /bw/ or /bu/ - but in the current orthography /bu/ is used, for instance:

bw    bu    *buoy* 'cry'

ow    ou    *ouno* 'kidneys'

lj     li     *lieḍig* ‘sit down’

oi     oi     *soit* ‘string’

Long vowels are represented as follows:

i:     *liil*     ‘wound’

e:     *'dee*     ‘speech’

a:     *maa 'de*     ‘female calf’

u:     *ruu*     ‘raiding party’

o:     *soono*     ‘nose’

### Morphological and Syntactic Typology

The 'Daasanach language has a morphological type, which is somewhat fusional. The dominant morphological processes are

#### Prefixation

*ha si(e) -n*

Imp. go    Neg. ‘Don’t go’.

*Ka- lab*

DM throws

‘Throw towards’.

#### Suffixation

*Raf -e* sleep [past] ‘slept’

*raf -aa*

Sleep pl. ‘sleep’

*raf - sish* 'make to sleep'

sleep Cst.

### Reduplication

This processes is highly productive in the language.

*Si seesemo* 'keep going'

*fur fuufur* 'keep opening'

*ta' taata* 'keep pushing'

*laalo laalalo* 'dancing'

### Suprasegmental modification

Tone is used to perform certain grammatical operations, e.g., plurality or singularity of nouns and also as focus operator.

Examples:

[-Foc]

[+Foc]

1a. *Só* 'meat'(sg.)    *sò* 'pieces of meat'(pl.)

b. *áár* 'bull'(sg.)    *ààr* 'bulls'

2a. *yáá* *seze*    *yàà* *seze* (pl.)

'I have gone.'

'I went'

### Stem modification

3 *il* 'eye':    *inn* 'eyes'

### Syntax

As far as syntax is concerned 'Daasanach exhibits a basic SOV pattern:



4. *Salleeno* 'jie

S O V

'Salle drunk milk'

### **Previous Work on the Language**

The following people did preliminary surveys on the Daasanach language and attempted to classify it: Bryan (1945), Cerulli (1956), Moreno (?), Tucker and Bryan (1956), Tucker (1967), Bender (1971) and Sasse (1974). The latter four scholars classified 'Daasanach within the East Cushitic group of languages. Except Sasse (1974), I have not been able to access the work of the people mentioned above. Specifically as far as the treatment of focus in Cushitic languages is concerned, mention should be made of the following works: Saeed (1984), Sasse (1984), Wedekind (1990), Andrzejewski (1975), and Antinucci (1980).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO FOCUS IN EXISTING LINGUISTIC LITERATURE**

This chapter seeks to set the theoretical background for my discussion of the syntax and pragmatics of focus to be covered in the following chapters. In regard to the attempt to be made here I will choose the work of some linguists and discuss how they have tried to define and characterize the distinctions that exist between topic and comment, topic and focus, focus and presupposition, theme and rheme, old (given) and new information.

One influential approach to the phenomena above was that made by Halliday (1967) working within a systematic grammar framework. He adopted two parameters for analyzing utterances: information unit and “thematization.” Halliday postulated that speakers’ utterances (sentences) are composed of information units to which the notion of focus seemingly applies. The motivation by speakers to choose to focus on an element within the available information units “involves the selection, within each information unit, of a certain element or elements as points of prominence within the message” (Halliday 1967, quoted in Saeed 1984,17). Thus the dichotomy between given and new information is determined by this choice which a speaker makes to focus on an element from the available database. The given information is what is already made available to the hearer either from the discourse, the immediate

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situational context of the utterance, or even from the general encyclopedic entries of the hearer. Whatever is new information is that which is then highlighted or made prominent; that is, given focus. New information focus is not always marked, but is usually at the end of an utterance.

Halliday's second parameter is that of "thematization" and "operates at the sentence level and relates to the ordering of sentence elements relevantly to discourse context (Saeed 1984, 17)". The two relevant notions here are that of "theme" and "rheme". According to Halliday's definition the theme would constitute what is presently being talked about; the rheme is what is being commented or discussed about the theme. Let me demonstrate the distinction between theme and rheme with a simple English sentence.

(5) Albert Einstein is the person of the century.

According to Halliday the left-most constituent of the sentence, i.e. Albert Einstein, would be the theme and the rest of the sentence the rheme.

The distinction between old and new information is the same distinction that is reflected in the terms 'subject' and 'predicate', 'topic' and 'comment' or 'theme' and 'rheme'. Linguists of the "Prague School" have also given considerable attention to the principle phenomenon underlying the distinction between old and new information. Principle among them is Firbas (1964, 1974).

The second approach to the discussion of the above phenomenon is that pursued by writers working within the framework of functional grammar. These writers locate their discussion of notions like "topic" and "focus" around the pragmatic functions that these notions serve in discourse. Recalling their approach Saeed notes the

following:

This approach differs from Halliday's in that all the notions [above] are specified at the same level. There is a tripartite division into the sentence proper ("the predication"), elements, which may precede the sentence, "the theme", and elements that may follow, "the tail" (Saeed 1984, 17)

Accordingly then, the following pragmatic functions are identified:

Theme: the Theme specifies the universe of discourse with respect to which the subsequent predication is presented as relevant.

Tail: The Tail presents, as an 'after thought' to the predication, information meant to clarify or modify it (Dik 1980, quoted in Saeed 1984, 18).

The pragmatic roles, which sentence or predication elements serve within a sentence, are said to be the ones that govern their specific loci within the overall surface syntactic structure of the sentence. Dik defines them as follows:

Topic: the topic presents the entity 'about' which the predication predicates something in the given setting.

Focus: the focus presents what is relatively the most important or salient information in given setting (Ibid ).

The same distinction that exists between new and given information is also seen as the key element that governs the choice of focus, as is evident in the following quotation from Dik:

The topic will usually belong to the information shared between Speaker and Addressee, whereas the focus will usually mark information belonging to information not shared. The topic gives a lead as to where to integrate the new information (i.e. where to effect a change in his pragmatic information), and the focus presents the new information itself (i.e., contains the instructions as to what change to effect.) (Dik in Saeed p.18).

There are obvious overlaps in these terminologies as far as the distinction between new and old information is concerned. The *rheme*, *comment* and *focus* seem to fall in the same bracket and stand for the elements that are new in the sentence, while *theme* and *topic* stand for the given old information. Pragmatic information can also be

signaled by phonological means (i.e. intonation/stress) or by syntax (e.g. word order). Chomsky (1965,) and Jackendoff (1972) following the tradition of generative grammar have tended to use the term ‘*presupposition*’ and ‘*focus*’ for their discussion of the phenomenon underlying the distinction between new and old information.

Let’s see what Jackendoff says about this:

We will use *focus* of a sentence to denote the information in the sentence that is assumed and *presupposition* of a sentence to denote the information in the sentence that is assumed by the speaker to be shared by him and the hearer ( Jackendorf 1972, 230).

Chomsky (1972b) *et al* has tended to identify focus with the surface structure, as a phrase, which carries the main stress of the sentence. This is especially true in English where stress and intonation contour is seen as the main determinant of the focal element in a sentence. Chomsky uses **Wh-** questions and the responses they elicit to bring out the distinction between focus and presupposition. See, for instance, the example given by Jackendoff:

(6) [=6.1 Jackendoff] Is it JOHN who writes poetry?

The “natural” response to this question would look something like this:

(7) [=6.2 Jackendoff] No, it is BILL who writes poetry ( Jackendorf 1972, 229).

Thus as far as this English example is concerned the capitalized word in (6.1) above ‘represents the main stress and highest pitch of sentence’ (*Ibid*). John is therefore the focus of the sentence while the presupposition is that someone writes poetry.

Also working within the theoretical framework of generative grammar is Lambrecht (1994). He has pursued an approach similar to that taken by Chomsky and Jackendoff. He prefers to use the term “generative”, ‘if “generative”’ as he says, ‘is

understood as referring to linguistic analysis which do not merely describe observed structures but which also attempt to explain why certain structures do not occur in a grammar” (Lambrecht 1994, xiii). Lambrecht’s theory conceives of an intimate relationship between the structure of sentences and the linguistic and extralinguistic contexts in which sentences are viewed as units of propositional information. He says:

The structure of a sentence reflects in systematic and theoretically interesting ways a speaker’s assumptions about the hearer’s state of knowledge and consciousness at the time of an utterance. This relationship between speaker assumptions and the formal structure of the sentence is taken to be governed by rules and conventions of sentence grammar, in a grammatical component that I call INFORMATION STRUCTURE [=Halliday [1967]]. In the information structure component of language, propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs undergo pragmatic structuring according to the utterance contexts in which these states are expressed as formal objects with morphosyntactic and prosodic structure (Lambrecht 1994, xiii).

Lambrecht’s grammatical component of information structure carries “four independent but interrelated sets of categories.” These are *presupposition* and *assertion*, *identifiability* and *activation*, *topic* and *focus*. Since linguistic structures in themselves do not merely exist as formal objects but are also constructed to express pragmatic relations, there is an important sense in which Lambrecht’s approach to the above notional categories helps us understand and interpret grammatical structures in which focus markers appear as prominent. Finally, focus as a notion “indicating pragmatically construed relations between propositions and their elements (topic and focus)” (p. 258) is defined thus:

Focus: The semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition (p.213).

It is important to realize that this definition applies to semantic, i.e., pragmatically

structured propositions, and not to the grammatical means by which they are realized in sentences. Although Lambrecht's approach to focus is conceptually similar to that of Jackendoff, Halliday and Chomsky, he criticizes it as a segmentation view of information (i.e. "new" versus "old"). His analysis of focus differs from that of his colleagues in that he takes a relational pragmatic category as his point of departure. The cognitive approach of *relevance theory* proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995) views focus as one way by which speakers guide listeners to recover the right implicatures in utterances at low processing costs. They argue that by focusing on a particular item in discourse, the speaker of an utterance guided by presumptions of relevance, has the intention that the hearer would arrive at the intended pragmatic interpretation of the utterance without expending a lot of processing effort in understanding it. Sperber and Wilson talk of *focal scale*, by which they mean that an utterance has a possible range of foci (i.e., different scopes) that yield various implications depending on speaker's intention at the time s/he produced the utterance. The implications in the focal scale have contextual effects as Sperber and Wilson underscore in the following quotation:

The processing of each implication can contribute to the overall relevance of the utterance in two ways: either by reducing the effort needed to process it, or by increasing its contextual effects. Even if it has no contextual effects in its own right, an implication can contribute to relevance by giving direct access to a context in which effects can be achieved, and thus reducing the processing effort needed to these effects (Sperber and Wilson 1995, 209).

Sperber and Wilson continue to argue that when a given implication in an utterance yields its own contextual effects and is therefore relevant, it is has *foreground implication* and if it is not, then it has *background implication* (original emphasis).

Their discussion of focus is based on stress assignment as a particular strategy used in English for drawing focus on a constituent in an utterance.

Blakemore (1987, 1992) and Blass (1990) following Sperber and Wilson also argue that focus markers and devices (e.g., stress and clefting) yield contextual effects in relevant respects, and in the process help the hearer to make the correct pragmatic interpretation. Such devices entail propositions (Sperber and Wilson's *grammatically specified entailments*) that determine what relevant background and foreground information are needed in order to process an utterance in its proper context. It is for this reason that Blass analyzes focus markers as devices that serve relevance relations functions in discourse; that is, "to facilitate processing by guiding the hearer towards the intended range of contextual effects (Blass 1990, 124)." She argues that focus markers indicate a scope that carries with it the contextual assumptions available to gain cognitive effects. Confirming what Sperber and Wilson (1985, 301-326) have argued,

Blass says:

[T]here is a reason for presenting propositions with the same truth-conditions in structurally different ways, by word order change and different accenting, or with different particle use operating within a certain scope. It has to do with a speaker's intention to make a certain context immediately available and to create certain contextual effects through inference in the hearer's mind and that in the most economical way, as far as processing effort is concerned (Blass 1998, 11-18).

Moreover, she argues that in Sissala the markers *ne* and *e* operate over different scopes to indicate topic as new information and 'contrastive' focus. In Sissala, contrastive focus is used for the purpose of cognitively eliminating an assumption held by the hearer. Both particles are pragmatic means by which



speakers achieve the communicative effects, and crucially determine the way information is processed and understood by hearers. The fact that such markers as *ne* and *e* interact with the phenomenon of focus and affect (cognitively) the way information is processed and understood in communication, should lead me to say something about discourse particles, what they are and their function in discourse.

### **Particles as Constraints on Relevance**

What are these? Why are utterances necessarily constrained, and what effects do constraints achieve in discourse? Well, according to the presumption of relevance, relevance prompts the hearer to process an utterance with the least amount of effort. So by design an utterance must yield adequate contextual effects for minimal processing effort. This is the criterion for the standard of optimal relevance in communication. Thus, if a speaker desires that her hearer will arrive at the intended interpretation of an utterance, it is in her own interest to make the intended context immediately accessible by whatever means available to her (linguistic, by gestures, by intonation, etc.). In the words of Blass (1990, 124) the speaker should “save the hearer processing effort by guiding him towards the intended range of contextual effects.” In this way a speaker averts the possible danger of being misinterpreted, and therefore being misunderstood.

### **Non-Truth-Conditional Particles as Constraints on Relevance**

There are two distinct categories of meaning inherent in all human languages: the conceptual and procedural meaning. With regard to these two levels of meaning, I explicitly concur with Rouchota and Jucker (1998, 2) when they say: “Words, and

linguistic devices in general, may encode concepts which form part of larger conceptual representations or they may encode information on how to process these representations.” Conceptual meaning relates and contributes to the content of a speaker’s assertions and yields the cognitive effects of the utterance, whereas procedural meaning “encourages the hearer to consider certain interpretive hypotheses rather than others saving him some processing effort in interpreting the utterance (ibid).”

According to the above distinctions, linguistic devices such as discourse connectives and non-truth-conditional particles may be thought to encode both conceptual and procedural meaning. The vital question to ask is: in what respects do these particles encode meaning? The obvious answer is that these particles encode meaning in relevant respects, as constraints on relevance. Since non-truth-conditional particles do not contain any conceptual meaning nor connect propositions, only a relevance-theoretic framework gives a true account of their grammatical presence in discourse. Blakemore (1987) analyzes non-truth-conditional particles *as semantic constraints on relevance*. Her hypothesis about these particles claims that they contribute to the criterion of optimal relevance by directing the interpretation and specifically by making the hearer know certain properties of the intended context and contextual effects for minimal processing effort. In other words these particles act as cognitive facilitators, playing the role of guiding the interpretation process. In cost-benefit terms they economize on processing effort (minimize processing costs) as well as saving both speaker and the hearer the risk of misunderstanding each other, and therefore of miscommunication. In relevance-theoretic perspective, then, the

function of these particles in discourse, as Blass reiterates, is “to constrain or guide the hearer’s search for optimal relevance.”

Blakemore (1992:146ff) distinguishes particles by the extent and degree to which they contribute towards the truth conditions of utterances that contain them. She gives some English examples such as *after all* and *moreover*, as examples of non-truth-conditional particles that counter the views of truth-conditional semantics, that all meaning can be analyzed only in truth-conditional terms. Grice (1975/1989) arrived at the same realization when he recognized that there are aspects of non-truth-conditional meaning that cannot be analyzed in non-linguistic terms and so introduced the term *implicature*.

Blakemore *et al.* propose a relevance-theoretic framework for analyzing the role non-truth-conditional particles serve in discourse. According to this approach, as Blakemore (1992, 149) asserts, “understanding utterances involves the construction of mental (propositional) representations which undergo inferential computations.” That is, in order for one to establish the relevance of a proposition, one must of necessity combine it with other (contextual) assumptions and make inferences. This is certainly the basis for Blakemore’s classification of discourse connectives and their functions in utterances: they act as *constraints on implicatures* (emphasis mine) and are therefore consistent with the principle of relevance. Discourse connectives such as *but*, *after*, *moreover* and inferential *so* do not comply with Grice’s representational/propositional meaning but encode procedural meaning; that is, they “simply encode instructions for processing propositional representations” (p.151).

Both Blass (1990) and Blakemore (1987, 1992) concur in their views about

the presence of non-truth-conditional particles in discourse across languages. They argue that only the principle of relevance provides the explanation for the existence of these particles in discourse. They repudiate (along with Rouchota & Jucker 1998 and Unger 1994) the analysis of connectives proposed within the coherence-based approaches of Schiffrin (1987), Mann and Thomas (1988). The latter suggest that the meaning of a connective is compatible with the coherence relation it indicates. After all, it is on the basis of the fact that human communicative behavior is governed by considerations of relevance that Blass and Blakemore propose that this should logically form the basis for a typology of non-truth-conditional particles. Blass's discussion of the Sissala particles *re* and *baa* and the uses of *auch* in German follow along similar lines of constraints on relevance. *Baa* has both truth- and non-truth-conditional uses.

#### Inferential Constraints and Parallelism

Blass (1990) and Blakemore (1987) discuss a number of inferential constraints in English. They discuss the functions which particles such as *after all*, *so* and *therefore* have in utterances. Depending on the utterances they appear in, the circumstances and intentions of the speaker, these particles may serve a variety of functions or processing instructions. They could be used to give a conclusion, as evidence to support a conclusion, etc., and so constrain the processing of utterances in a variety of ways given the presumption of relevance.

For example, the connection between two propositions connected with *so* is inferential, but the function of the particle is obviously non-truth-conditional. That is why Blakemore (1987) has called particles of these kind *semantic constraints on*

## *Relevance.*

Blakemore's (1987) analyses of examples of English particles are that they facilitate the interpretation by identifying what specific type of inference process the hearer is expected to go through. Thus, where a newly presented proposition, together with supporting propositions entails the proposition expressed by a preceding utterance, it is naturally interpreted as providing confirmation of the preceding utterance; where it entails the proposition expressed by some subsequent utterance, then it is naturally taken as providing evidence for the proposition expressed by that utterance. There is thus a logical and important link between the notion of evidence and inferential connection needed for the analysis of the particles and the notion of strengthening and contextual effect which are central to relevance-theoretical framework.

With regard to parallelism in processing Blass (1990, 139) observes:

Parallelism in processing is achieved when two utterances or assumptions are processed communication. Thus, if a speaker desires that his hearer/audience will arrive at the intended interpretation of an utterance, it is in his own interest to make the intended context immediately accessible by whatever means available to him (linguistic, gestural, by intonation, etc).

Furthermore, the speaker should 'save the hearer processing effort by guiding him towards the same or similar contexts, yielding the same or similar conclusion. For an utterance to achieve relevance by parallel confirmation, parallel inference processes to yield the same or similar contextual implication must process two conjuncts in parallel contexts.

Thus propositions introduced by *also* (English), *auch* (German) and *ma* (Sissala) are intended to achieve relevance by strengthening, or providing evidence for, a contextual implication derivable from two parallel clauses. Blass claims that unlike

German *auch* and the Sissala *ma*, the English *also* indicates to the hearer that relevance is not to be achieved either by backwards contradiction or backwards confirmation. She claims that the two conjoined utterances must be processed in parallel.

Blakemore (1992, 142) also discusses parallel implications. She says a speaker may intend her hearer to derive contextual effects *parallel* to the ones that she has derived from the speaker of the first utterance. She suggests that this type of parallelism is caused by the parallelism of the syntax. In regard to this Blakemore says, “The use of *too* and *also* indicates that the utterance should be processed in such a way as to yield the same sort of contextual effects as were derived from the previous utterance” (p.143).

Blakemore (citing Sperber and Wilson 1995) also discusses their term Sperber *grammatically specified entailments* on which the relevance of an utterance may depend. A clear distinction is drawn between background and foreground entailments, the former helping to determine the context of an utterance, the latter contributing to the main point of the utterance. As she points out, the main relevance of an utterance is derivable from the proposition as a whole. Sperber and Wilson further argue that there are syntactic devices that affect pragmatic interpretation only through interacting with focal stress assignment and clefting. Thus utterances can interact with the above strategies to constrain the interpretation of the utterances that contain them. König (1991) has given considerable attention to focus particles and their meaning in English and German. His analyses of the English focus particles *even*, *only*, *also*, *merely*, etc., and their German counterparts, *allein*, *nur*, *noch*, *auch*,

and *schon*, to mention just a few, show that these particles have certain semantic-pragmatic values in the way they are used in discourse. One of these values is focusing on a constituent in a sentence. König argues that the markers also indicate the scope over which they are to be used in given utterance contexts, and thereby determine what specific interpretations are to be recovered by hearers through the cognitive effects that are achieved. Moreover, he says that there are constraints on the placement of focus particles in syntax, and so one cannot haphazardly place a focus particle in any position in a sentence expecting that s/he will always obtain the same implicatures, and therefore the same meaning.

Interestingly enough, König also looks at some historical aspects of the development of focus particles and suggests that they may have developed “from more concrete notions and, typically, also from members of major word classes” (p.43) before attaining the status of grammatical units through the processes of grammaticalisation. If König’s hypotheses are to be taken as obtaining for unbound focus particles, his views should also provide correct explanations for the historical development of focus markers that are bound morphemes such as the ones in ’Daasanach. There is nothing in the existing literature on focusing that takes into account the possibility of bound morphemes as devices that indicate foci in given linguistic structures. My argument is that they actually do so as other free morphemes that play the function of focusing.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FOCUS-MARKING STRATEGIES AND THEIR MORPHOSYNTACTIC AND PHONOLOGICAL FEATURES

This chapter is concerned with focus mechanisms, their syntactic properties and distribution across given grammatical structures. As Pillinger (1989), Saeed (1984), Sasse (1984), Oomen (1978), Antinucci (1980) and Wedekind (1990) have shown with other East Cushitic languages, the phenomenon of focus is similarly extremely important to 'Daasanach syntax. 'Daasanach uses a number of techniques to designate various focal structures. They include the following:

1. Markers
2. Suprasegmentals (especially tone and vowel lengthening)
3. The use of morphemes that intrinsically carry focus (Pillinger 1989, 33).

#### Focus Markers

The following are the markers that are used in 'Daasanach to focus on various grammatical constituents: *o*, *a*, *e*, *i*, *ha*, *he*, *in*, *-m* and *-at*. Let me demonstrate below how each of these markers operate across given syntactic structures.

*o* as Focus Marker

- (8) Lomar Aarat beech shie  
Lomar Aarat fish gave



‘Lomar gave Aarat fish’ [- Foc.]

- (9) Lomar +o Aarat beech shie  
Lomar Fm Aarat fish gave  
‘LOMAR gave Aarat fish’.

In this example the NP ‘*Lomar*’ is the focal referent being identified and is therefore suffixed with the focus marker o. We could do likewise with the remaining two object NPs, i.e. *Aarat* and *beech* without changing their syntactic slot:

- (10) *Lomar Aarat +o beech shie*  
Lomar Aarat Fm fish gave  
‘Lomar gave AARAT fish.’ [+Foc]

- (11) *Lomar Aarat beech +o shie*  
Lomar Aarat fish Fm gave  
‘Lomar gave Aarat FISH.’ [+Foc]

Thus the focus marker o has scope, and potentially moves across the entire constituent NPs and highlights them without causing any shift to their syntactic slot.

A simple rule for such an operation would look something like:

NP( <i>o</i> )	NP( <i>o</i> )	NP( <i>o</i> )	VP
Subject	Indirect object	Object	verb

The only exception to this rule occurs when a constituent, if it is front-shifted leaves a resumptive pronoun in its slot. But this is not necessarily focus but may be new information. Most ‘Daasanach nouns (subject and direct/indirect object) that naturally end with consonants take marker o when they are focused. These uses of o should, however, not be confused with grammatical o which is also a marker of

plurality in certain nouns, e.g.,

<b>Singular</b>		<b>Plural</b>
<i>lokod</i>	‘hide-skin’	<i>lokodo</i>
<i>'gul</i>	‘stick’	<i>'gulo</i>
<i>buul</i>	‘place for eating meat’	<i>'buulo</i>

e as focus marker

Other nominals also realize *e* as their ending when they are highlighted.

Examples:

- (12) *Lomar min galt shie*  
Lomar woman camel gave  
‘Lomar gave the woman a camel.’ [-Foc]
- (13) *Lomar min +e galt shie*  
Lomar woman Fm camel gave  
‘Lomar gave the WOMAN a camel.’ [+Foc]
- (14) *Lomar min galt +e shie*  
Lomar woman camel Fm gave  
‘Lomar gave the woman a CAMEL.’ [+Foc]

The noun constituents that appear to have the highest potential for taking *e* as their focus markers seem to be those that end in alveolars (i.e., t, d, n, s, r, and l) and a few labials (b, m, and f). See, for example, the following set of words:

**Non-focal (subject/ object)****Focal (subject / object)**

<i>soit</i>	‘string’	<i>soit + e</i>
<i>hiit</i>	‘thorn’	<i>hiit + e</i>
<i>hiris</i>	‘needles	<i>hiris + e</i>
<i>Dosh</i>	‘plant sp. (p1.)	<i>Dosh + e</i>
<i>tiish</i>	‘raw millet heads’	<i>tiish + e</i>
<i>kimid</i>	‘bird’ (sg. + generic)	<i>kimid + e</i>
<i>lokod</i>	‘skin’	<i>loko’d + e</i>
<i>liil</i>	‘wound’ (sg.)	<i>liil + e</i>
<i>salab</i>	‘oil’	<i>salab + o</i>
<i>sarab</i>	‘thigh’	<i>sarab + o</i>
<i>alb</i>	‘places’	<i>alb + o</i>
<i>aram</i>	‘songs’	<i>aram + o</i>
<i>am</i>	‘young goats and sheep’	<i>am + o</i>
<i>tim</i>	‘forest’	<i>tim + o</i>
<i>karaf</i>	‘gate’	<i>karaf + o</i>

It is important to mention at this juncture that only one unit of an utterance can be highlighted at a time and can therefore be focus-marked by various means. Because focus is a pragmatic status and has implications for the way information is processed by the hearer, the grammar of a language (certainly 'Daasanach if not others) cannot allow simultaneous foci operation on multiple constituents. For this reason the hearer of the following utterance would find it ungrammatical, as well as

pragmatically

speaking, incomprehensible:

(15) \**Char* +*o*    *Lomar* +*o*    *gil(l)* +*o*    *ginnine*  
Snake Fm    Lomar Fm    hand Fm    bit

The type of focus marker a particular noun phrase takes depends on a number of characteristics:

(i) Whether the NP in focus is C-final and what kind of consonant.

(ii) Whether the NP in focus is V-final

(iii) Whether the final Vs are lengthened or not.

Most C-final nominals realize *o* as their marker. See, for example the following

nouns:	<b>[-Focal ]</b>	<b>[+Focal]</b>
	<i>kurum</i> ‘gourd’ (sg)	<i>kurum +o</i>
	<i>naar</i> ‘trap’ (sg.)	<i>naar +o</i>
	<i>char</i> ‘snake’	<i>char +o</i>
	<i>kur</i> ‘knee’ (sg.)	<i>kur +o</i>
	<i>arab</i> ‘elephant’ (sg.)	<i>arab +o</i>
	<i>arb</i> ‘elephants’ (1.)	<i>arb +o</i>
	<i>tuur</i> ‘clan system’	<i>tuur +o</i>
	<i>ot</i> ‘breast’ (pl.)	<i>ot +o</i>
	<i>kach</i> ‘teeth’	<i>Kach +o</i>
	<i>beechee</i> ‘fish’	<i>beechee +o</i>
	<i>shad</i> ‘mud’	<i>shad +o</i>
	’gas                    ‘leg’	’gas +o
	<i>nyaarash</i> ‘leaves’	<i>nyaarash +o</i>
	’ <i>dil</i> hot ash’	<i>dil(l) +o</i>

<i>konof</i>	‘finger’	<i>konof+o</i>
<i>laag</i>	‘dung heap’	<i>laag+o</i>
<i>'guom</i>	‘food’	<i>'guom+o</i>
<i>gil</i>	‘hand’	<i>gil(l)+o</i>
<i>fas</i>	‘blood’	<i>gil(l)+o</i>
<i>haaz</i>	‘lake/river weed’	<i>haaz+o</i>
<i>kan</i>	‘placenta’ (sg.)	<i>kan+o</i>
<i>heiy</i>	‘satisfaction’	<i>heiy+o</i>
<i>aw</i>	‘fishing’	<i>aw+o</i>

Exceptions do occur however, with other nouns which though ending in similar consonants still realize either a or i as their focus markers. These nouns are rare compared to nouns that take e and o as their focus markers.

a as focus marker

The following NPs (either as subject, direct/indirect object) take a as their focus marker when they are highlighted in discourse.

<b>[-Foc.]</b>		<b>[+Foc.]</b>
<i>mas</i>	‘rope’	<i>mast+a</i>
<i>rub</i>	‘millet’	<i>rub+a</i>
<i>kad</i>	‘fruit sp.’	<i>ka'd+a</i>
<i>al</i>	‘place’	<i>al+a</i>
<i>kaar</i>	‘sheep disease’	<i>kaar+a</i>
<i>but</i>	‘buttocks’	<i>but+a</i>

(16) *Baali rub koy*

Baali millet ate

‘Baali ate millet’ [-Foc]

(17) *Baali rub +a koy*

Baali millet Fm ate

‘Baali ate MILLET.’ [+Foc]

18) *Am kaar hi faanne*

Lambs disease Rp attacked

‘The young flocks were attacked by *kaar*.’ [-Foc]

(9) *Am kaar + a hi faanne*

Fm Rp attacked

‘The young flock were attacked by KAARA.’ [+Foc]

*i* as Focus Marker

Proper and common nominals that take *i* as their focus marker are much rarer in 'Daasanach, but nominalized verbs have very high affinity for taking *i* as their focus marker. Just as is shown with the preceding foci operators, this marker should be distinguished from the nominals that lexically end in V-finals, e.g.,

*shiiri* ‘grass sp.’

*idi* ‘gum.’

*ali* ‘location.’

*siri* ‘higher ground.’

**Examples:**

(20) 'Guo il gaa dedezme.

cattle valley PP grazing

'The cattle are grazing in the valley.' [-Foc]

(21) 'Guo il(l) +i gaa dedezme.

Cattle valley Fm PP grazing

'The cattle are grazing in the VALLEY.' [+Foc]

in as a Focus Marker

This marker has two uses both of which are focus marking. It is used as a logical cause marker and as referent identifier.

a) As referent identifier.

(22) Salle een kurum gaa ije +ka 'jie

Salle milk gourd PP was Rel. drunk

'Salle drunk the milk that was in the gourd'. [-Foc]

(23) Salle **in** een kurum gaa ije +ka 'jie.

Salle Fm milk gourd PP was Rel. drunk

'SALLE drunk the milk that was in the gourd.' [+Foc]

(24) Een giri kurum gaa ije+ ka **in** Salle hi 'jie. [+Foc.]

milk which gourd PP was Rel. Fm Salle it drank

'Salle drank THE MILK WHICH WAS IN THE GOURD.'

b) As logical cause marker.

(25) Mu geer +e hi kulla **in** mu 'guom d'iize

3sg. belly Fm Rp pain Lcm s/he food refused

‘S/HE HAS STOMACH ACHE, that is why s/he refused to eat food.’

- (26) *Kooyan geer +e hi gaa boloy in sugul aa gale*  
Kooyan stomach Fm Rp PP burned Lcm school PP returned  
‘KOOYAN WAS HUNGRY, that is why he left school and came home instead.’

In example (25) the marker *in* indicates a logical cause relation for the action of the following predicate, i.e., the subject’s refusal to eat is a consequence of his/her stomachache. In (26), Kooyan’s hunger serves as the reason for his leaving school for home. The marker is also used for coding paratactic-cleft focus.

**paratactic-cleft focus:**

- (27) *Kara +(h)alla in Lomar hi ka size*  
stool Dem. Fm Lomar Rp Dm brought  
‘It is this stool that Lomar brought.’

**Paratactic WH-question:**

- (28) *Maa +ya in ko tune*  
pers. Qm Fm 2.sg. beat  
‘WHO beat you?’

ha as Focus Marker

The marker *ha* has several syntactic functions in ’Daasanach discourse, one of which is focus marking on predicate elements. Let me give an example of each of these uses.

- a) As negative imperative marker on VPs



(29) *ha si(e)+n* (root: *si* ‘go’)

Imp. go Neg.

‘Don’t go!’

b) As marker of imperfective tense

(30) *Yu ha seeme*

1.sg. Impf. go (Fut.)

‘I will go.’

(The normal marker of future tense is the morpheme *a* suffixed on verbs, but this may assimilate in the environment of + ATR vowels, e.g., *Seem +a*

(=*seeme* ‘will go’), *rogonm +a* (= *rogonmo* ‘will beg’).

NB: Except in the 1 sg, 2 sg and 3 sg & pl. forms of a verb in the future tense, *ha* is always followed by resumptive object pronouns: *ke* (1pl.incl.) *nyi* (1pl.excl.) and *hi* (2pl.)

c) As focus marker on predicates

In this case whatever follows *ha* is said to be highlighted (i.e., focused).

(31) *Arab luoch yies*

lion elephant killed

‘The lion killed the elephant.’ [-Foc]

(32) *Arab luoch ha (h)i yies*

Arab luoch Fm Rp killed

‘The elephant KILLED the lion.’ [Foc]

The object pronoun *hi* becomes cliticized on perfective future marker *ha* when the predicate is brought into focus.

So far in the preceding pages I have only dealt with focus operation of consonant-final nominals. My analysis has shown that focus markers appear as suffixes on structures with which each focus marker is associated. In the following pages I shall deal with the focus operation of V-final elements. A number of strategies are involved here in highlighting focus on elements that end in vowels.

### Tone

Tone as focus marker is employed especially on VV-final elements.

#### Examples.

(33) 'Guò he núú hile

Cattle Cop. kraal entered

'The cattle have entered the kraal.' [-Foc]

(34) 'Guô núú hile.

'The CATTLE have entered the kraal.' [+Foc]

(35) 'Guò nuû hile

Cattle kraal entered

'The cattle have entered the KRAAL.' [+Foc]

(36) yáá beech narie

I fish roasted

'I have roasted the fish.' [-Foc]

(37) yàà beech narie

'I roasted the fish.' [+Foc]

More of the V and VV-final elements are indicated below with their tone structures when focus is applied to them.

[-Foc.]

[+Foc.]

'dúú	'juice/truth	'duû
'dúú	'integrity'	'duû
gúú	'a month	guû
dúú'	'left-over'	duû
é	'village/home'	eê
gée	'solid fat'	geê
rúú	'a raid'	ruû
súú	'type of marriage'	suû
wáá	'bloat'	waâ
shaá'	'sickness'	shaâ
sé	'female cow'	seê
bée	'fish'	beê
'dée'	'word/speech'	deê
mée'	'name'	meê
rìì	'female goat'	riî
bìì	'universe'	biî
ùù	'excreta'	uiî

Basically the following two patterns of tone changes are to be observed for VV-finals.

<b>[-Foc]</b>	<b>[+Foc.]</b>	
HH	HL	[e.g. nuu 'kraal']
LL	LL	[e.g. 'uu']

As shown in the last VV-final nominals, nouns of this type basically maintain their low tones, both in the unfocused as well as in the focused forms.

### Vowel Lengthening

Certain V-final noun phrases that occupy object slots in the sentences can also undergo vowel lengthening (without being left-dislocated) when focus is applied to them.

(38) *Lomar olo 'deey*

Lomar donkeys tended

'Lomar tended the donkeys.' [-Foc]

(39) *Lomar oloo 'deey*  
 Lomar donkeys ended

'Lomar tended DONKEYS.' [+Foc]

Alternatively such V-final nominals can also be highlighted by the use of a copular pronoun 'he'. It is often argued that the principal function of the copula pronoun is to mark in the surface structure tense, mood, or aspect, as Lyons notes:

[Any verb that may be the equivalent of the verb] "to be" is not itself a constituent of deep structure, but a semantically-empty "dummy verb" generated by the grammatical rules of [certain languages] for the specification of certain distinctions (usually "carried" by the verb) when there is no other verbal element to

carry these distinctions. Sentences that are temporally, modally and aspectually “unmarked” ... do not need the “dummy” carrier (Lyons 1968, 322-23).

Although this function of the pronoun is demonstrably true for 'Daasanach, however, the pronoun is also used to mark focus on objects.

(40) *Lomar olo he 'deey*

donkeys Cop. tended

'Lomar tended DONKEYS.'

(41) *Lomar kara he gaze*

Lomar stool Cop. lost

Lomar lost STOOL.' [+Foc]

(42) *Lomar koro he seze*

Lomar island Cop went

Lomar went to the ISLAND.' [+Foc]

### **The Use of Morphemes that intrinsically Carry Focus**

'Daasanach has several morphemes that are lexically empty in meaning, but that are used for focusing. They are *kin*, *gon*, and *uba*. Their difference with those former markers already described is that while the former ones attach themselves on to the nominals they mark, these ones do not but occur independently.

(43) *Har kin aar oitaka laalo*

If Fm dance know dance

‘If YOU REALLY KNOW HOW TO DANCE, DANCE.’

(44) *Yu gon kaanala gaala*

1sg. Fm now.this go home

‘I will GO HOME NOW.’

(45) *Heella uba mu maa+lle* (The Gospel of Mark in ’Daasanach, 14:69)

This Fm him person.poss.

‘Even THIS MAN IS HIS MAN.’

### **Syntactic Scope of ’Daasanach Focus markers**

This section is concerned with identifying the types of syntactic domains over which the various focus-marking strategies mentioned in chapter three are applied to. I reiterate here that any constituent in a sentence in ’Daasanach is potentially capable of being marked for focus by tone or by a number of other focus-markers.

Focus on subject NPs

(46) *Lomar+o Aarat beech shie*

Lomar Fm Aarat fish gave

‘LOMAR gave Aarat fish’.

Focus on Object NPs

Direct object:

- (47) Lomar Aarat beech +*o* shie  
 Lomar Aarat fish Fm gave  
 ‘Lomar gave FISH to Aarat.’

Indirect object:

- (48) Aarat +*o* Lomar hi beech shie  
 Aarat Fm Lomar Rp fish gave  
 ‘Lomar gave AARAT fish.’

### Focus on Pronominal Subject NPs

Particle *i* as marker of focus on pronominals

- (49) *Muun* +*i* *ke* 'bil 'diisa  
 ICp (incl.) Fm we (excl.) house build  
 ‘WE will build the house.’
- (50) *Nyiin* +*i* *nyi* 'bil 'diita  
 ICP (excl.) Fm we(excl.) house build  
 ‘WE will build the house.’
- (51) *Kuun* +*i* 'bil 'diita  
 2c.sg. Fm house build  
 ‘YOU will build the house.’

(Focused second person pronominal subject is not followed by a resumptive pronoun.)

- (52) *Itin* +*i* *hi* 'bil 'diita  
 2c.Pl. Fm Rp house build

‘YOU will build the house.’

(53) *Mu iin +i ’bil ’diisa*

3c.sg. Rfx. Fm house build

‘S/HE will build the house.’

(54) *Gaal iin +i ’bil ’diisa*

3 c.pl. Rfx Fm house build

‘THEY THEMSELVES will build the house’.

As has already been shown in 2.2 above, tone can also be used to focus subject/object NPs.

(55) *Yàà um ka size*

I Children Dm. brought

‘I am the one who brought the children home.’

(cf. *Yáá’ um ka size*: ‘I have brought the children home’.)

Inalienably possessed object NPs also use tone for focus.

(56) *Lomar ’jaal +lé hi tune*

Lomar father poss. RP beat

‘Lomar was beaten by HIS father.’

(cf. *Lomar ’jaallè hi tune*: ‘Lomar’s father beat him.’)

The marker *i* can also be used to mark focus on nominalized verbs and adjectives that end in /-t/ and /nt/.

Active VP-/Adj.form [-Foc]

Nominalized form [+Form]

*’der* ‘tall’

*’dermit+i* ‘tallness’



<i>shuol</i>	‘hide’	<i>shuolit+i</i>	‘hiding’
<i>gaan</i>	‘short	<i>gaant+i</i>	‘shortness’
<i>fag</i>	‘far’	<i>fagint+i</i>	‘Being far’

(57) *Sheelech+chu he gaant neb*  
 friend. my Cop. shortness dislike  
 ‘My friend does not like shortness.’ [-Foc]

(58) *Gaant +i sheelech+chu hi neb*  
 shortness Fm friend my Cop. dislike  
 ‘My friend dislikes SHORTNESS’

In the above examples, the focused nominalized verb and adjective both occupy object slots with the focus marker *i* being attached to them. There other nouns that are formed from similar verbs, adjectives and adverbs but that take *o* as their focus marker. As mentioned earlier, the type of ending a particular grammatical constituent realizes partly depends on the kind of consonant the noun ends with.

#### Focus on VPs

VP elements take three types of focus markers, the preverbal *ha* and two suffixes *-m* and *-at*.

(59) *Arab luoch yies*  
 Elephant lion killed  
 ‘The elephant killed the lion.’

If the question ‘what did the elephant do to the lion?’ were to be posed, then the relevant predicate focal element would look like this:

(60) *Luoch Arab* **ha** +i *yies*

Fm. Rp killed

‘The lion KILLED the elephant.’

**NB.** The pronoun *hi* is co-referential with the NP subject *arab* (‘elephant’) in the preceding utterance but becomes cliticised (and reduced *-i*) to the focus marker when the VP is brought into focus. Similarly other pronominal subject pronouns come in between the focus marker and the verb phrase but they do not become cliticised to the focus marker.

(61) **Ha** *yu* *tune*

Fm Ic.sg. beat

‘I BEAT’.

(62) **ha** *nyi* *tune*

Fm Ic.pl (excl.) beat

‘WE (excl.) BEAT.’

(63) **ha** *ke* *tune*

Fm We (incl.) beat

‘WE (incl.) BEAT.’

(64) **ha** *nyi* *tunne*

Fm. Ic.pl (excl.) beat

‘WE BEAT THEM/HIM/HER/IT.’

(65) *ha hi tune*

Foc. 2pl. Beat

‘THEY/SHE/HE/IT BEAT YOU.’

The use of *-m* and *-at* as markers of foci is well demonstrated in the following

’Daasanach oral history text. Note that the markers appear as suffixes on verbal elements. The repetitions in the text are used for heightened effect.

*Any bookochka buul koiyat any Inykabelo*  
*Leka buul koiyat;anyallo buul*  
*Koiyat... chuure yeka ’die buul koiy...*  
*Iish gaali mu ’de: silize, hafich, yal.*  
*Aale iish gaali eeze gaal he kiem,*  
*’gasleka nazem, e ye ’du ’dieka Do fuem...*  
*Do lieDiat ’guo Dib eeyat Aale he diiyyimem...*  
*Aale kidh hol katunem...maa Oro gaali*  
*Shuuneat ,gaal hol argeat (D.O.T.)*

**Translation:** The spotted bull ate the meat-shelter, it ate the meat shelter; this animal ate the meat shelter; at night it came out of the kraal and ate the meat shelter. ... They cut grass: *silize, hafich* and *yal*. And they took the grass and went along the same way they had come from. When they reached their home they marched in single line formation. And they sat and immediately began to sing the cattle song. Afterwards they began to sing cattle song. Afterwards they begun discussions...they fought with foreign tribes...they found an Oro man; they met each other.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF FOCUS: A RELEVANCE –THEORETIC**  
**PERSPECTIVE**

**Introduction**

In Chapter Two above I attempted a survey of some basic approaches to focus and related notions, and showed how these various notions are defined and characterized in the existing linguistic literature. What the various approaches and analyses have revealed is that focus markers serve important roles in the construal of meaning and meaning relationships in human communication. The latter uses are pragmatic and help in the interpretation of human communication in effective and economical way. In this chapter the communicative functions of focus will be pursued although in a limited way because of constraints of scope imposed on this paper. The framework I adopt for my discussion of the communicative functions of focus is that of relevance theory proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1995).

Focus and focus-related phenomena -just as nearly all linguistic phenomena - is closely bound up with pragmatic considerations. Sperber and Wilson (1995) have applied the notion of the principle of relevance for focus. Their analysis treats of focus as a case of procedural encoding of meaning (see ch.2), whereby focus is seen as directly applying to the inferential phase of meaning construal (i.e., to the procedural information as opposed to the representational or conceptual information). A brief discussion of procedural meaning is given below.

## Ostensive-inferential Communication and Procedural Meaning

### Pragmatic Interpretation of Utterances and Inference

Sperber and Wilson make a distinction between information that is explicitly encoded in the grammar of an utterance and that which is conveyed implicitly. A concrete example is given below to spell out the distinction.

Context: A mother addressing her daughter

Mother: Safi, can you go to the market?

Daughter: I have a headache.

We can say that the second utterance explicitly expresses the proposition that Safi has a headache. But on the other hand, it implicitly conveys the information that she does not want to go to the market. The latter proposition is recovered via inferential procedures. Sperber and Wilson (1995) refer to the former explicitly conveyed information as explicature, and the latter implicitly conveyed information as implicature. Implicated premises according to their model belong to the procedural phase of comprehension, and affect various stages of hypothesis formation as communication is progressively transacted. Procedural information can do one of two things:

Either it (a) imposes constraints on which hypotheses can be formed,  
or  
(b) provides the accessibility of certain information to be recovered over others.

The importance of constraining, according to relevance theory is underscored by Breheny, who says:

Firstly, it bridges an explanatory gap between the information that the grammar provides, and our intuitions about the effect of the use of focus. Secondly, it can also account for certain constraints in the material follows the focally stressed element (Breheny, in Rouchota, V. and A. Jucker, ed. 1998, 57).

In ostensive-inferential communication the following situation is perceived as

holding true:

The communicator produces a stimulus which makes it mutually manifest to the communicator and audience that the communicator intends, by means of the stimulus, to make manifest or more manifest to audience a set of assumptions 1 (Sperber & Wilson 1995, 155.).

According to Sperber and Wilson's relevance-theoretic notion, the particular "stimulus which signals the communicator's 'informative intention' (ibid.) is governed by underlying principles of relevance. They say that "an act of ostensive communication automatically communicates a *presumption of relevance* and of *optimal relevance* (p.156) The Principle of Relevance and the definition of optimal relevance are each given below:

-The (Second) Principle of Relevance: Every act of ostensive communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance (Sperber & Wilson 1995, 260).

-The revised presumption of optimal relevance:

- (a) The ostensive stimulus is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's effort to process it.
- (b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences (Sperber & Wilson 1995, 270).

Essentially what is meant that cognitive effects are achieved to gain new information in the context of the already given information. The cognitive effects (=contextual effects) may be in the form of implications, contradictions, or even strengthenings, et cetera.

How does Sperber & Wilson's notion of relevance apply to focus in 'Daasanach'?

Although I have not discussed other theories here, I believe Relevance Theory is the only theory that provides explanatory principles that accommodate the difference between "unfocused" and "focused" constituent(s) in grammar. The notion of *scope*, *background*, and *foreground entailments* (broadly defined as contextual effects) are

particularly useful. Focus structures in 'Daasanach may signal one of the following:

- (a) New information
- (b) Answer to Wh-questions
- (c) Cognitive elimination as in contrastive focus

Let me demonstrate each of these pragmatic uses with concrete examples.

(68) *Lomar Aarat beech shie* (focus neutral)

Lomar Aarat fish gave

'Lomar gave Aarat fish'

(68) *Lomar Aarat beech+o shie*

Lomar Aarat fish Fm gave

'Lomar gave Aarat FISH'

In example (69) 'FISH' is the new information and therefore receives the focus marker *o*. The speaker may choose to put the new information at the beginning of the utterance, e.g.,

(69) *Beech+o Lomar hi Aarat shie*

Fish Fm Lomar RP Aarat gave

'Lomar gave Aarat FISH'

The structural dislocation of the focused constituent to the front is not unique as far as focus is concerned. It is merely a speaker's choice in conveying this particular kind of information. Notice that the position of front-shifted constituent is filled with a resumptive pronoun *hi*, although it can also appear after the subject in which case it is co-referential with it. Suppose the above information was conceived in a communicative situation whereby the speaker asks the hearer the question: 'Who

gave the child fish?’ The respondent may have two options in giving a ‘natural’ response to the question: s/he may name the particular person by his/her actual name, or s/he may use a sentence with the answer in focus:

(70) Lomar,

or, (71) *Lomar+o veel beech shie*

Lomar Fm child fish gave

‘LOMAR gave the child fish.’

Again imagine a communicative situation whereby two participants are talking and one of them is ignorant of the given information, and says:

(72) A: *Lomar veel beech shie*

Lomar gave fish to the child.’

(73) B: *He Lomar muuniny; Aarat +o veel beech shie*

Cop. Lomar not AARAT Fm child fish gave

‘Not Lomar; AARAT gave the fish to the child.’

In (73) speaker B is negating and eliminating the assertion of speaker A. This is ‘contrastive’ focus and serves the pragmatic function of cognitive elimination.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this paper I have mainly been concerned with showing how focus is achieved in 'Daasanach syntax. Chapter One of the paper discussed theoretical approaches to focus and related terms in the linguistic literature. Chapter Two specifically dealt with various strategies that are used to focus on constituents in 'Daasanach grammar. I have shown that segmental morphemes as well as tone are used to focus on elements. This chapter is rather weakly developed in that it does not sufficiently account for the structural distribution of focus markers and their co-occurrence restrictions in 'Daasanach discourse. I hardly said anything about the pragmatic roles of 'Daasanach resumptive pronouns. Further research in this direction will be highly appreciated, as it may lead to a better understanding of antecedent semantic-pragmatic uses of these elements in discourse. I am aware that this paper has dealt with a great of the theoretical treatment on focus. I should have dealt with more of the data in 'Daasanach.

The last chapter adopted relevance-theoretic framework for the pragmatic uses of focus in 'Daasanach. In this approach I have favoured the views of Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995). I have shown that focus in 'Daasanach may be used to give new information, to answer WH-questions or to cognitively eliminate an assertion as in contrastive focus. I see procedural approaches to meaning (*contra* presuppositional approaches) –and in particular Relevance Theory –as the best

theory that lays down empirically valid principles for explaining both conceptual and procedural meaning, and for accounting for foci structures in 'Daasanach syntax. The Principle of Relevance gives a psychologically real account of human communication.

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