

# **Information structure in Sara-Bagirmi**

A comparative approach to the synchronic state and diachronic development in the expression of information structure, with special attention to predicate-centered focus types

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# Zusammenfassung

Die Erforschung informationsstruktureller Ausdrucksformen hat in den letzten Jahrzehnten stark an Bedeutung gewonnen. Der Schwerpunkt liegt dabei auf der Untersuchung von Universalien, die der Kennzeichnung von “alten/bekannten” und “neuen/wichtigen” Informationen dienen. Auch wenn die Forschung diesem Thema bereits viel Raum gegeben hat, weiß man heute immer noch sehr wenig über die Realisierungsmöglichkeiten von Topik und Fokus in schlecht dokumentierten Sprachen.

Die vorliegende Dissertation leistet mit der Diskussion über die Fokusmarkierungsstrategien einer kleinen Sprachfamilie im Herzen Afrikas einen wichtigen Beitrag zur informationsstrukturellen Grundlagenforschung. Sie gibt einen Überblick über die Realisierungsmöglichkeiten von Topik und Fokus in sechs genealogisch verwandten Sprachen der Sara-Bagirmi-Gruppe (BAGIRMI, KENGA, MBAY, KABBA, NGAMBAY und SAR) und konzentriert sich dabei auf die Untersuchung der prädikatszentrierten Fokustypen. Diese bestehen aus i) Fokus auf der lexikalischen Bedeutung des Verbes, ii) Fokus auf dem Polaritätsoperator („Verum-Fokus“) und iii) Fokus auf dem Tempus-Aspekt-Modus-Operator. Die Arbeit beleuchtet somit nicht nur die grammatische Struktur unzureichend untersuchter Sprachen, sie liefert mit dem Schwerpunkt auf Nichttermfokus auch Einblick in ein vernachlässigtes Forschungsfeld.

Die Untersuchungen im Rahmen der Dissertation zeigen, dass die Sara-Bagirmi-Sprachen eine Vielzahl verschiedener Fokussierungsstrategien aufweisen. Obwohl alle sechs Sprachen zu einer Familie gehören, unterscheiden sich die vorhandenen Strategien formal und teilweise auch funktional voneinander. Der innerfamiliäre Vergleich der Gemeinsamkeiten und der Unterschiede erlaubt zum einen Rückschlüsse auf die Beziehung zwischen Form und Funktion im Allgemeinen. Zum anderen ermöglicht er konkrete Aussagen zur diachronen Entwicklung der ausgewählten Konstruktionen. Die Korpusstudie zu einer der Sprachen ergänzt die Forschungsarbeit. Sie stellt ausgewählte Merkmale der Fokusrealisierung vor und zeigt den Gebrauch der präsentierten Strategien im natürlichen Diskurs.

Die vorliegende Dissertation komplettiert die Datenbasis der empirischen Sprachforschung und bereichert mit ihren Ergebnissen die Sprachtheorie um wertvolle Erkenntnisse. So belegt z.B. die Analyse der Fokussierungsstrategien des Sara-Bagirmi die enge Verbindung zwischen prädikatszentrierten Fokustypen und TAM-basierten Kategorien. Sie zeigt außerdem, dass die Klassifikation der prädikatszentrierten Fokustypen neu überdacht werden sollte, da einige der untersuchten Sprachen neben den o.g. Typen auch grammatikalisierte Formen von Intensivierung oder Formen von „Gewissheit“ aufweisen.



## Abstract

The development of information structure and its expression has become increasingly important in the recent decades. The main focus is on the investigation of linguistic universals that are used to identify “old/given” and “new/important” information. Despite of a body of literature on this issue, little is known about the possibilities of realization of topic and focus in poorly documented languages.

This investigation contributes to basic informational research in the field of information on the focus marking strategies of a small language family in the heart of Africa. It gives an overview of the way in which topic and focus are implemented in six genealogically related languages of Sara-Bagirmi (BAGIRMI, KENGA, MBAY, KABBA, NGAMBAY and SAR). The focus is on the investigation of predicate-centered focus types. These consist of i) focus on the lexical meaning of the verb, ii) focus on the polarity operator (“truth-value focus”), and iii) focus on the tense-aspect-mode operator. The work thus not only illuminates the grammatical structure of insufficiently studied languages, but also provides an insight into a neglected field of research with emphasising non-term focus.

The results show that the Sara-Bagirmi languages have a variety of different focus strategies. Although all six languages belong to one family, the existing strategies differ formally and partly functionally from each other. The inter-familiar comparison of the similarities and the differences allows, on the one hand, conclusions about the relationship between form and function in general. On the other hand, it makes concrete statements on the diachronic development of the selected constructions. The corpus study on one of the languages complements the research work. It presents selected features of the focus realization and shows the use of the presented strategies in natural discourse.

This dissertation completes the database of empirical linguistic research and enriches the theory of language with valuable results. Thus, for example, the analysis of the focusing strategies in Sara-Bagirmi confirms the close relationship of predicate-centered focus types and TAM-based categories. It also shows that the classification of the predicate-centered focus types should be reconsidered, since some of the examined languages in addition to the above-mentioned types have grammaticalized forms of “intensification” or “definiteness/certainty”.



# Abbreviations

All examples are glossed according to the Leipzig Glossing Rules which comprise conventions for interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glosses. For glossed examples taken from the literature, the glosses have been adjusted in order to provide consistency.

The following abbreviations for grammatical category labels have been used in the glosses:

1	1 <sup>st</sup> person	LOC	Locative
2	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	NEG	Negative
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> person	OBJ	Object
ADV	Adverb	OBL	Oblique
BG	Background	P	Plural
C	Contrastive	PC	Predicate-centered
CONN	Connective	PERF	Perfect
COP	Copula(tive)	PFV	Perfective
DEF	Definitive	PN	Proper name
DEM	Demonstrative	POSS	Possessive
DET	Determiner	PROG	Progressive
DUPL	Reduplication	Q	Question
EMPH	Emphatic	QUAL	Qualitative
FIN	Finite	REL	Relative
FOC	Focus	S	Singular
FUT	Future	SUB	Subordination
G	Generic	SBJ	Subject
ID	Identification	TAM	Tense-aspect-modality
IDEF	Indefinite	TOP	Topic
INF	Infinitive	T	Term
IPFV	Imperfective	V	Verb
IT	Intransitive		

For figures and tables, I also used the following abbreviations:

BM	Background marker	IBV	Immediately before verb
COM	Comment	NP	Nominal Phrase
FM	Focus marker	PCF	Predicate-centered focus type
IAV	Immediately after verb	SOA	State of affairs



## 0 Preface

Information structure, i.e. the investigation of the formal means of encoding notions like information status, focus and topic, has grown to one of the leading enterprises in the current linguistic research. Yet, in addition to finegrained analyses of languages like ENGLISH and GERMAN, the picture needs to be completed by investigations of a broad variety of languages spoken worldwide. Assuming that information structure is essential to language communication, describing the system of information-structural categories in less documented languages bears huge potentials for enlarging our knowledge about the way in which information structure is expressed in natural language, also providing a testing ground for various notions related to this topic.

The present dissertation contributes to the current research on information structure, by taking into account the strategies of expressing focus, both from a synchronic and diachronic perspective. It aims at providing a comprehensive overview of how information structure is encoded in six genealogically related African languages (BAGIRMI<sup>1</sup>, KENGA, MBAY, KABBA, NGAMBAY, and SAR). A specialty of the present study is that it does not only take into account term focus, as a main field of investigation in the previous literature, but also provides a detailed account of predicate-centered focus types, understood as i) focus on the lexical meaning of the verb, ii) polarity focus and iii) focus on the tense-aspect-mood operator.

The interest in the focus system of the Sara-Bagirmi family is determined by the following questions:

1. Which focus marking strategies do the languages employ?
2. What is the form-function-relationship between these strategies?
3. Is it possible to detect a diachronic path of development of selected strategies?

My investigation aims at providing a comprehensive description of the system of focus in a poorly documented field of research and my thesis contributes data from underrepresented languages concerning the description of information structure. As will become clear, this investigation is worthwhile because the languages under description turn out to display a

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<sup>1</sup> In order to distinguish terms used to refer to individual languages from those referring to the language family as a whole, the former are typed in small caps (e.g. BAGIRMI), while the latter remain unmarked (e.g. Bagirmi).

broad range of strategies used to express focus, including several constructions which involve preposing and/or verbal iteration.

Next to term focus, I also survey non-nominal focus types to provide an overall description and an in-depth analysis of a less described aspect within information-structural research. In addition to now well-known predicate-centered focus types, I shall include two special types of predicate-centered focus in my work, which aims to specify the traditional categories: firstly, the constructions expressing “intensification” and secondly, the constructions marking “definiteness”.

One of the main sections in my thesis deals with the comparison of data within the language family. All six languages under study belong to the same family. Yet, the relevant constructions in each language demonstrate differences in form, and sometimes also in function. This allows us to draw conclusions regarding a more general form-function relation, as well as the further development of predicate-centered focus types in this language family. For selected constructions, I pursue a diachronic perspective. This contributes to the discussion on the close relationship between predicate-centered focus types and TAM-based categories, such as perfect, progressive or future.

The investigation makes use of primary data that is provided in reference grammars on the languages of the Sara-Bagirmi family. But in addition, new data was elicited in interviews with native speakers, by employing the material of the Questionnaire on Information Structure (Skopeteas et al. 2006). This first-hand data supplements and even corrects the picture that is conveyed by reference books and standard accounts on the languages. In order to determine how the focus constructions identified in the analysis are used in natural discourse, I carried out a corpus study completely investigating one smaller text section from the language KENGA.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters: Chapter I provides some general information on the languages and language family as a whole, presenting both the corpus of the analysis as well as the methodology implemented to determine information structure. Chapter II begins with a survey on the means of expression of information structure in Sara-Bagirmi. It includes data onthetic statements, topics and background information, and focus and foreground information. The second part presents a study on the historical development of selected constructions, along with a small corpus study of natural discourse in one of the sample languages. Finally, Chapter III concludes the thesis with a summary and proposal for further research.



This work was carried out during my research period at the Collaborative Research Center (Sonderforschungsbereich/SFB 632) “Information Structure: The Linguistic Means of Structuring Utterances, Sentences and Texts”, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) from 2003 to 2015. I appreciate valuable input and support from various scientists from The University of Potsdam, The Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and The Free University of Berlin, who specifically focus on this topic within the study of language.



# 1 Introduction into the research field

This section will provide information about the languages, which has formed the basis of my work and is ordered as follows: Section 1.1 deals with the language sample in detail, addressing the genealogical affiliation, the geographical distribution and the sociolinguistical situation. Section 1.2 presents the methodological framework and the data basis of my thesis, in addition to discussing the composition of the language sample. Section 1.3 focuses on grammatical issues, elucidating various selected phenomena, which no doubt influence the expressions of information structure.

## 1.1 The Sara-Bagirmi-language family: An Overview

This section introduces the Sara-Bagirmi language family in relation to the language sample of my work. It provides information on the genealogical affiliation (section 1.1.1), geographical distribution (section 1.1.2) and sociolinguistical situation (section 1.1.3).

### 1.1.1 Genealogical affiliation

The languages, which feature at the core of this work, belong to the Saraic (Hammarström et al. 2016) or Sara-Bagirmi (Lewis et al. 2016) language family. Lewis et al. (2016) classifies this language family genealogically as follows:

- (1) Nilo-Saharan > Satellite-Core > Satellites >  
Central Sudanic > West > Bongo-Bagirmi > **Sara-Bagirmi**

According to Lewis et al. (2016), the Sara-Bagirmi family consists of 28 languages, which are grouped together in two branches along with two additional unspecified languages.

<p><i>Sara-Bagirmi (28 languages)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Birri (bvg) (A language of Central African Republic)</li> <li>• Fongoro (fgr) (A language of Chad)</li> </ul> <p><i>Bagirmi (8 languages)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bagirmi</b> (bmi) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Berakou (bxv) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Disa (dsi) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Gula (glu) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Jaya (jyy) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• <b>Kenga</b> (kyg) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Morom (bdo) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Naba (mne) (A language of Chad)</li> </ul> <p><i>Sara (18 languages)</i></p> <p><i>Sara Proper (16 languages)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bedjond (bjv) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Dagba (dgk) (A language of Central African Republic)</li> <li>• Gor (gqr) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Gulay (gvl) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Horo (hor) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• <b>Kabba</b> (ksp) (A language of Central African Republic)</li> <li>• Laka (lap) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Mango (mge) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• <b>Mbay</b> (myb) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Ngam (nmc) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• <b>Ngambay</b> (sba) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• <b>Sar</b> (mwm) (A language of Chad)</li> </ul> <p><i>Sara Kaba (4 languages)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kaba Déme, Sara (kwg) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Kaba Naa, Sara (kwv) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Kulfa (kxj) (A language of Chad)</li> <li>• Sara Kaba (sbz) (A language of Central African Republic)</li> </ul> <p><i>Vale (2 languages)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lutos (ndy) (A language of Central African Republic)</li> <li>• Vale (vae) (A language of Central African Republic)</li> </ul>
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Figure 1: Sara-Bagirmi language family with ISO code and regional distribution (cf. Lewis et al. 2016) – language families in italics, sample languages for my work in bold

Figure 1 shows that the Bagirmi branch includes eight languages. The Sara branch is split into Sara Proper with 16 languages and Vale with two languages. The sample languages for my thesis belong to the Bagirmi (BAGIRMI and KENGA) and Sara Proper branch (KABBA, MBAY, NGAMBAY and SAR).

Hammarström et al. (2016) offers a more detailed classification within the (Sara-)Bongo-Bagirmi branch:

- (2) Nilo-Saharan > Satellite-Core > Satellites >  
 Central Sudanic > Sara-Bongo-Bagirmi > Sara-Bongo-Bagirmi Occidental >  
 Nuclear Sara-Bongo-Bagirmi > **Saraic**

The Saraic language family contains – in contrast to the Sara-Bagirmi family – only 25 languages, which are once again grouped together in three branches.

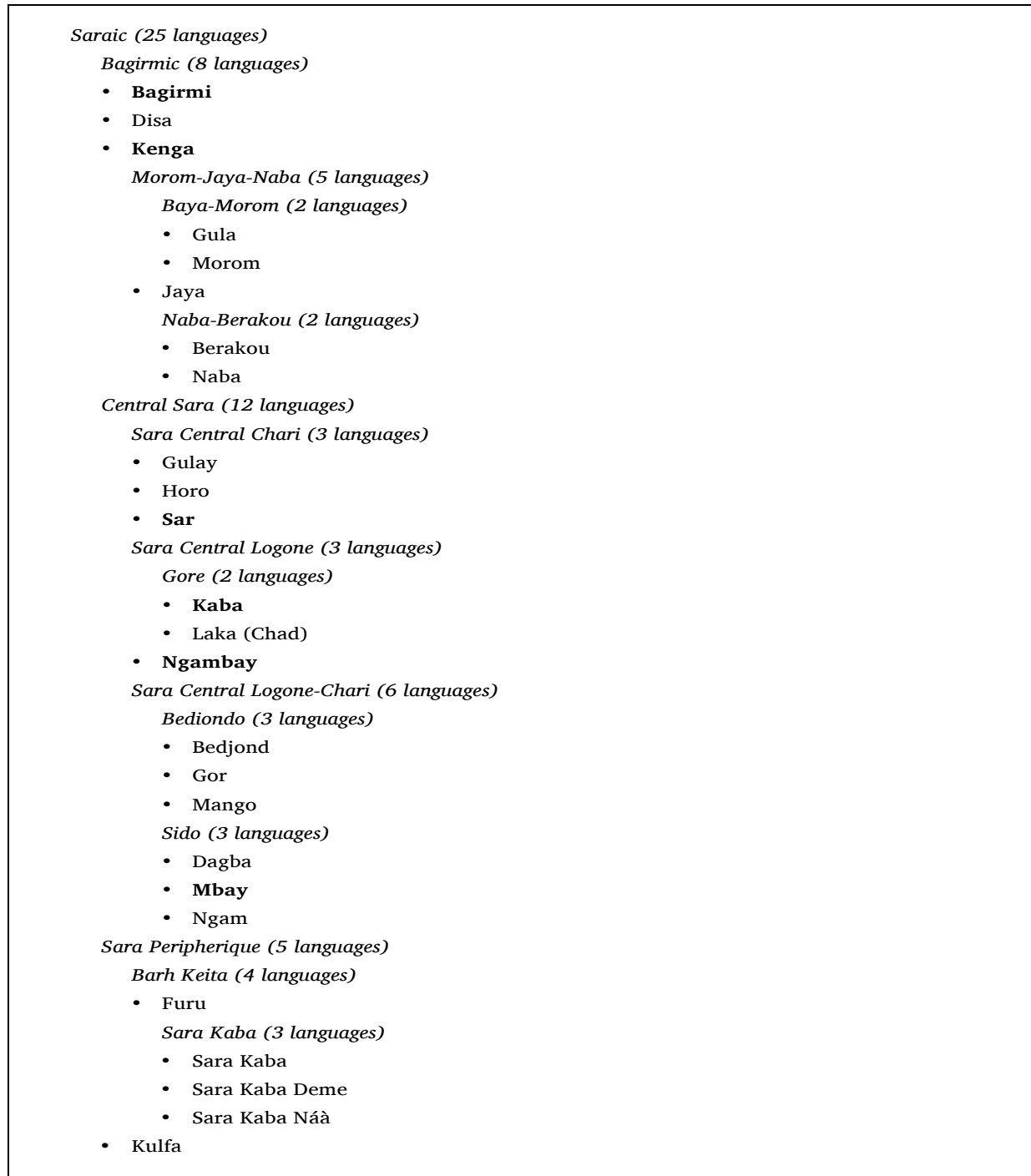


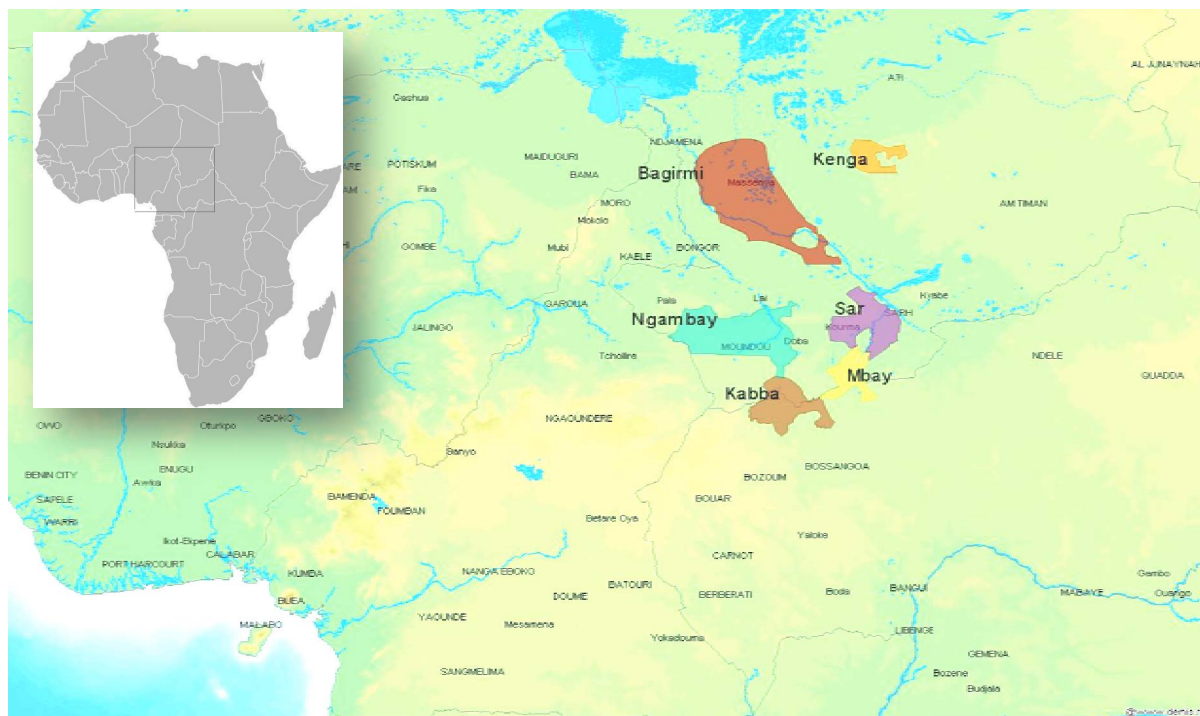
Figure 2: The Saraic language family (cf. Hammarström et al. 2016) – language families in italics, sample languages for my work in bold

Figure 2 shows that the Bagirmic branch consists of eight languages, the Central Sara branch comprising 12 languages, and the Sara Peripherique branch five languages. The sample languages belong to both the Bagirmic branch (BAGIRMI and KENGA) and the sub-groups of the Central Sara branch: SAR is part of Sara Central Chari, NGAMBAY and KABBA (here written as KABA): Sara Central Logone, where KABBA occurs in the sub-group Gore and MBAY belongs to Sara Central Logone-Chari in the sub-group Sido.

The differences between the proposed genealogical classifications indicate that there is no consensus on the criteria applied in the previous literature. For my work, this discrepancy is irrelevant because the general distribution is clear: Two of the languages (BAGIRMI and KENGA) belong to the Bagirmi(c) branch and four languages (KABBA, MBAY, NGAMBAY and SAR) belong to the Sara Proper or Central Sara branch. In my work, I will hereafter refer to the language family as “Sara-Bagirmi”, even if it is also classified as “Saraic”.

### 1.1.2 Geographical distribution

Sara-Bagirmi languages are spoken either in Chad or in the region bordering the Central African Republic and Cameroon (information from Lewis et al. 2016). The map shows where the sample languages are located:



Map 1: Location of the sample languages KABBA, MBAY, NGAMBAY, SAR, BAGIRMI and KENGA (areal information taken from Lewis et al. 2016)

More specifically, the six languages in my sample are spoken in the following regions:

BAGIRMI: Chari-Baguirmi region: Massenya subprefecture, Massenya area, Bousso subprefecture, Bousso area; Mayo-Kebbi Est and Moyen-Chari regions

KENGA: Guéra region: Guéra department, Bitkine subprefecture, Bitkine area

SAR: Moyen-Chari and Mandoul regions: Sarh, Koumra, Balimba, Bessada, Bédaya, Djoli, Matékaga, and Koumogo cantons

MBAY: Mandoul region: Barh Sara department, Moïssala area

KABBA: Ouham prefecture: Markounda subprefecture, Ouham-Pendé prefecture: Paoua subprefecture

NGAMBAY: Logone-Occidental region; Logone-Oriental region: Lanya department, La Nya Pendé department, Goré subprefecture; Mayo-Kebbi Ouest region: Mayo-Dallah department; Tandjilé and Mayo-Kebbi Est regions

The sample languages originate from an area that is characterized by the coexistence of three major language families, namely Afro-Asiatic languages (with several members of the Chadic languages), Niger-Congo languages (e.g. members of Adamawa-Ubangi family) and Nilo-Saharan languages (e.g. the Sara-Bagirmi family). Map 2 illustrates that most of the sample languages border with either Afro-Asiatic or Niger-Congo languages, or both:

The BAGIRMI-speaking area (no. 36) borders with Chadic Spoken Arabian (Semitic) and several Chadic (Afro-Asiatic) languages (MUSGU, MBARA, MASANA, KWANG, NDAM, MILTU, SARUA, and GADANG) in the South and Southwest.

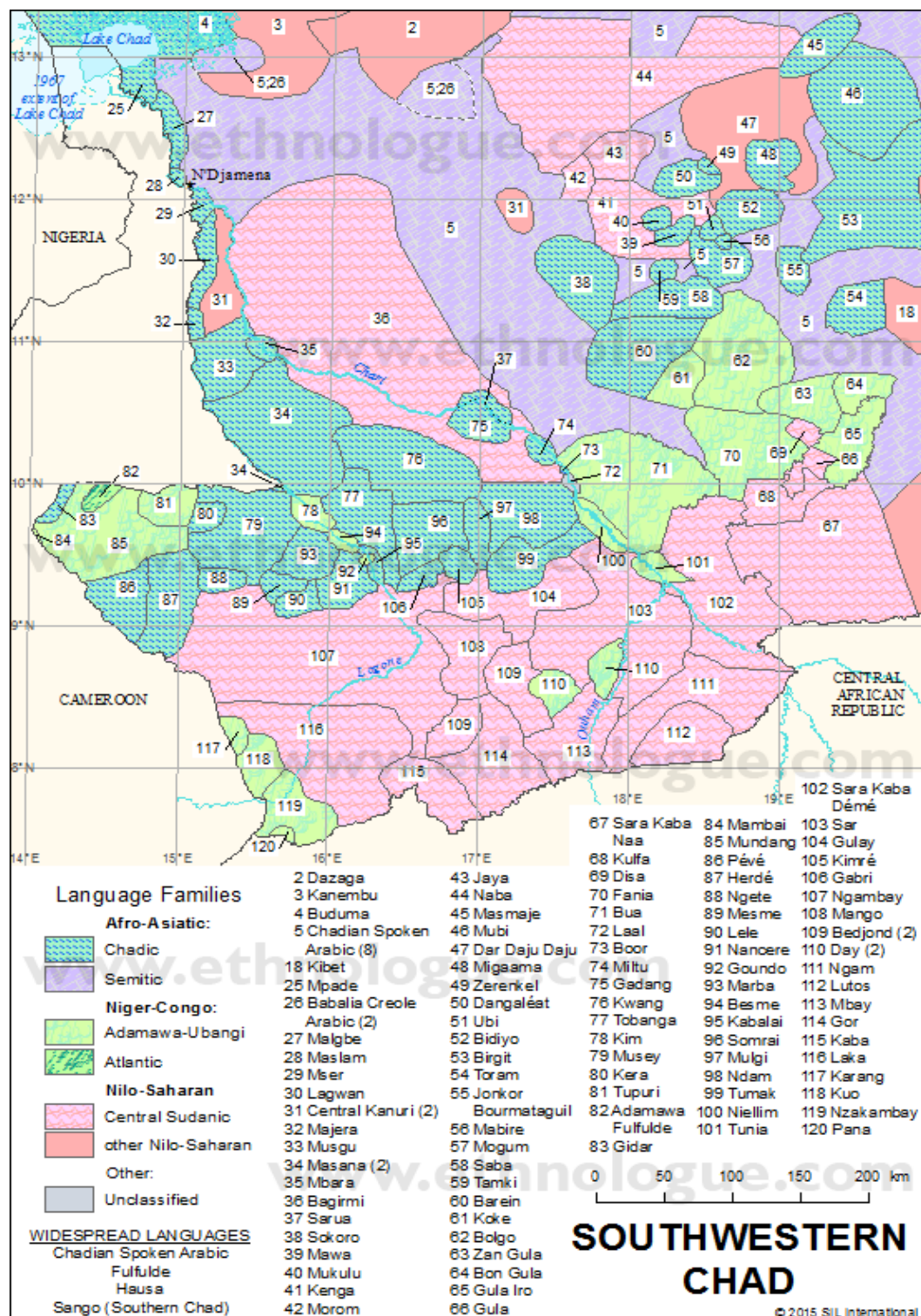
The KENGA language area (no. 41) is surrounded by Chadic Spoken Arabian, the Sara-Bagirmi languages MOROM and JAYA, as well as various Chadic languages (SARUA, SOKORO, MAWA, MUKULU, DANGALÉST, MOGUM and TAMKI).

The region of NGAMBAY (no. 107) meets the Chadic languages (HERDÉ, NGETE, MESME, LELE, NANCERE, KIMRÉ and GABRI) in the north, on Sara-Bagirmi languages (LAKA, KABBA, BEDJOND, MANGO and GULAY) in the south and on the Adamawa (Niger-Congo) language KARANG in the west.

The language area of KABBA (no. 115) borders with the Sara-Bagirmi languages (LAKA, NGAMBAY, GOR and MBAY) in the north, and on the Adamawa languages SUMA, KARE and PANA in the South.

The MBAY-speaking area (no. 113) is surrounded by the Sara-Bagirmi languages KABBA, GOR, BEDJOND, SAR, DAGBE and NGAM. In the north, it neighbours the Adamawa language DAY.

The region of SAR (no. 103) joins the Sara-Bagirmi languages GULAY, BEDJOND, MBAY, NGAM and SARA KABA DÉMÉ. In the south-west, it borders with the Adamawa language DAY and in the north with the Adamawa languages NIELLIM and TUNIA.



Map 2: Languages of southwestern Chad (Lewis et al. 2016)



### 1.1.3 Sociolinguistical remarks

Most of the languages under study are very small (statistics from Lewis et al. 2016). Both languages of the Bagirmi family have less than 50,000 speakers: BAGIRMI 44,800 speakers, and KENGA 40,000 speakers. The languages of the Sara family have a slightly higher number of speakers: MBAY has 88,300 speakers, KABBA 142,000 speakers, SAR has 183,000 speakers and NGAMBAY 1,377,000 speakers.

Although an account reflecting the existing contact-induced language change in the border region of Chad, the Central African Republic and Cameroon is certainly tempting, I restrict myself to comparison within the language family. Investigating pragmatic structures is very complex and the findings from the interfamilial comparison provide substantial food for thought for a study of this scale. However, an additional indepth analysis of external influences would go beyond the scope of the thesis.

Various aspects on the sociolinguistic situation of the area under study are discussed in Bender (1996) and Boyeldieu (1989, 2000a, 2006, 2010).

## 1.2 Data and methodology

This section provides an overview of my database, along with the methodological framework of my thesis. Section 1.2.1 will start by explaining how to identify the relevant information-structural expressions, before going on to further examine the used data sources in section 1.2.2. Section 1.2.3 will provide information about compiling the language sample.

### 1.2.1 Identifying information-structural categories

Identifying discourse-pragmatic phenomena in written or spoken language is a challenge. There is agreement on the fact that the retrieval of information-structural categories essentially depend on the analysis of the context. Properties of the context, in turn, can be most straightforwardly identified either in natural discourse, as shown in (3a), or by way of controlled elicitation e.g. in question-answer pairs (3b), or in statement-reaction-pairs (3c).

- (3a) Contrastive focus on the subject – marked by focus preposing  
 {Hyena said no, he wasn't the one who called him old.}<sup>2</sup>  
 Dògə-dògəm la èl yé.  
 PN FOC PFV.say.3S BG<sup>3</sup>  
 It was RABBIT<sup>4</sup> who'd said it. [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 8]
- (3b) Assertive focus on the subject – marked by focus preposing  
 {Who cooked millet gruel in the house yesterday?}  
 Boukar ɗáj táɗ djùm tɛŋ tɛprɛ ngalá.  
 PN FOC PFV.do gruel millet yesterday inside  
 BOUKAR cooked millet gruel in (the house) yesterday. [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 123]
- (3c) Contrastive focus on the object – “unmarked” for information structure  
 {Boukar bought a camel at the market yesterday.}  
 Ée'è, Boukar ndugo kro kɛɗɛ tɛprɛ kasko.  
 no PN PFV.buy donkey IDEF yesterday market  
 No, Boukar bought a DONKEY at the market yesterday. [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 141]

---

<sup>2</sup> The context, e.g. preceding statements or questions, is given in curly brackets.

<sup>3</sup> All glosses in the examples taken from Keegan (1999) are mine. In general, the glossing is restricted to relevant information, e.g. zero realization of 3<sup>rd</sup> person or the “aorist” is not marked explicitly.

<sup>4</sup> Capital letters in the translation always mark the constituent (or the part of constituent) in focus.

Naturally, the whole concept of focus will be explained in greater depth later on in section 2.4.1. However, for now, we are able to observe that the examples in (3a) and (3b) show focus on the subject, while the example in (3c) targets the object. Depending on the context, focus can (additionally) involve a contrast, as shown in (3a) and (3c). Nevertheless, this contrast is not always reflected in the structure, as indicated in (3c). This form-function mapping will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.4.1.2. At this point, I would like to focus on explaining my criteria for identifying information structure in the available data.

First of all, the information-structural configuration can usually be determined by the context. In example (3b), the contextual question *Who cooked millet gruel in the house yesterday?* asks for the subject, which is in focus in the answer: *BOUKAR cooked millet gruel in (the house) yesterday.*

If there is no context or the contextual information is ambiguous, then identifying focus becomes more complicated. This will be expounded upon in section 2.6.3.3. Nevertheless, there are several ways of recognizing the function. The example in (3a) is translated by a cleft construction: *It was RABBIT who'd said it.* It-clefts can be seen to express focus, or in other words: “the copular, together with its empty subject, serves as a kind of *focus marker* for the argument” (Lambrecht 2001: 470 – italics in original). One might observe how even the translation or the deviation from canonical sentence structure in the translation could help detect information structure.

In my thesis, I will demonstrate how information structure can be identified with an additional strategy, namely comparing the existing strategies within the language family. This comparative analysis is based on the idea that most pragmatic functions somehow require special encoding, so-called “focus constructions” (cf. Güldemann i.p.).

The term “construction” will be employed here within the framework of construction grammar. Tomasello (2003: 100) notes that “constructions are nothing more or less than patterns of usage, which may therefore become relatively abstract if these patterns include many different kind of specific linguistic symbols”. Goldberg (1995: 4) offers an initial definition of a construction: “C is a CONSTRUCTION iff<sub>def</sub> C is a form-meaning pair  $\langle F_i, S_i \rangle$  such that some aspect of  $F_i$  or some aspects of  $S_i$  are not necessarily predictable from C's component parts and may form other previously established constructions”. She modifies this definition eleven years later including the cognitive aspect:

Any linguistic pattern is recognized as a construction as long as some aspect of its form or function is not strictly predictable from its component parts or from other constructions recognized to exist. In addition, patterns are stored as constructions even if they are fully predictable as long as they occur with sufficient frequency (Goldberg 2006: 5).

According to the Goldberg definition (1995, 2006) describing constructions as form-meaning pairs, focus constructions can also be characterized in the same way i.e. as form-meaning pairs. Hence, they will be presented here as an amalgam of (special) form and function.

This investigation contributes to the notion of focus constructions established by Güldemann (i.p.), i.e., we compare constructions attested in one of the sample languages with structures found in other languages within the Sara-Bagirmi group. In order to describe the strategies used in each individual language and to compare the languages within the language family, it is useful to identify special “construction types”. Every language has its own inventory of strategies. For comparing the strategies, it is necessary to abstract away from minor details of each individual language and instead lay out major characteristics. Project B7 (SFB 632 “Information structure”) developed a set of focus constructions especially for the expression of predicate-centered focus, which is based on data from more than 26 African languages. The classification of strategies by construction types makes the language-individual strategies comparable; in addition, it allows us to make generalizations, e.g. about form-function relation. Furthermore, this enables us to identify similar strategies in related languages, as well as draw conclusions about the (functional) change of the constructions. Comparing focus constructions facilitates a comprehensive description of focus marking within the language family.

To sum up, I have identified the function of information structure by both considering the context and translation (or indication with regard to the function detected in the translation). In addition, I have compared the constructions used to express focus within the language family.

## **1.2.2 Data sources**

This section will provide an overview of the material used for my analysis. It will be subdivided into three parts, since I have referred to three different kinds of sources. Section 1.2.2.1 presents textual data, section 1.2.2.2 addresses elicited data and section 1.2.2.3 provides information about the data found in grammars and language descriptions.

### **1.2.2.1 Data from texts**

Corpora of natural discourses are unquestionably the best source for investigating expressions of information structure because they not only provide the required context, but also facilitate conclusions about the frequency.

Text samples in grammar books and special editions provide a valuable basis for analyzing written sources. I considered Stevenson (1956) for BAGIRMI, Neukom (2010) and an online-version of the New Testament for KENGA, Thayer & Thayer (1971) and Vandame (1963) for NGAMBAY, Moser (2009) for KABBA, Keegan (1999, 2009) for MBAY, and finally the online-version of the New Testament for SAR.

The methods for identifying information structure in text corpora are explained in section 1.2.1. At this point, let me emphasise the relevance of examining data from authentic natural discourse. In doing so for KENGA, it was possible to identify three additional focus constructions that are not mentioned in the grammars. This phenomenon will be explained in detail in section 2.6. Furthermore, corpora and text collections provide insights into the frequency and the distribution of the attested constructions, in contrast to grammar books and language descriptions. This will also be addressed later on in section 2.6.3.

### 1.2.2.2 Data elicitation

The most of the examples of BAGIRMI are first-hand data elicited in interviews with two native speakers of BAGIRMI, Mr Boukar Amine and Mr Abdelkadre Boukar. The interviews were taken in Berlin in the period between 2003 and 2007. My database consists of controlled data such as elicitations and translations, as well as less controlled data, e.g. narrations and descriptions. For the purpose of eliciting this data, I created a questionnaire based on the “focus translation” of QUIS (Skopeteas et al. 2006). In addition, I used visual stimuli from QUIS. The data for BAGIRMI elicited by these means was subsequently controlled by additional acceptability tests.

It has to be considered that the data elicitation was especially designed to detect information-structural categories in BAGIRMI. To determine potential intonation breaks, boundary tones, tone raising, register height etc., I carried out two perception tests (for detailed information see Jacob 2010: 136f.), which proved that prosodic focus marking can be excluded in BAGIRMI. On these considerations, prosody was neglected as a potential means of encoding focus in the remaining languages as well. Rather, the main emphasis was placed on the use of morpho-syntactic strategies in expressing information structure.

The BAGIRMI corpus of the present study comprises more than 700 question-answer pairs and statement-correction pairs. It reflects both the variety of focus according to scope (including wide and narrow focus) and the different semantic interpretations. For my investigations, I adopted the focus type classification from Drubig & Schaffar (2001: 1086).

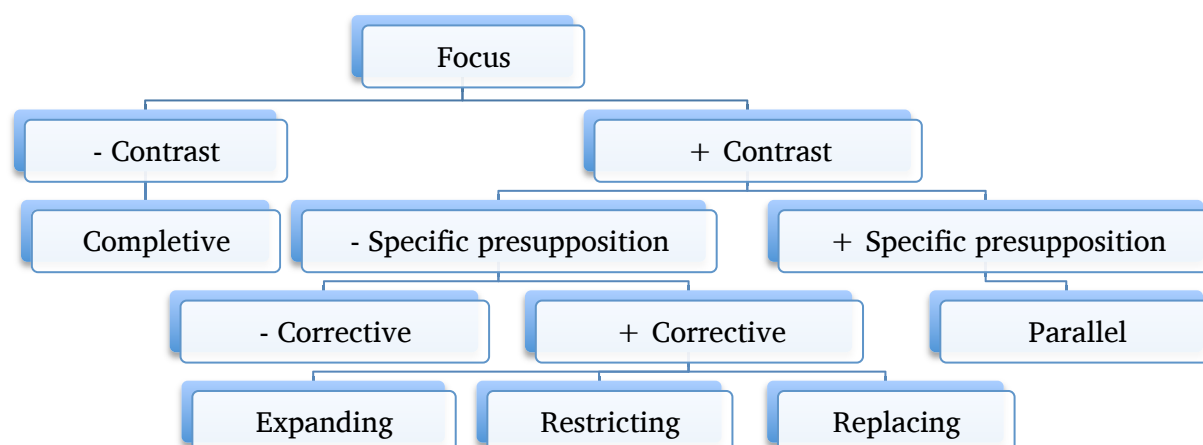


Figure 3: Classification of focus types (Drubig & Schaffar 2001: 1086)

Based on the elicitations, I collected over 750 acceptability judgments from speakers. These are mainly necessary for gathering negative evidence, as indicated in (4). The language consultant assesses the question-answer pairs as follows: Grammatically correct sentences that match the context (“correct answers”) are marked with a “√”. Grammatically correct sentences that do not match the triggering question (“unacceptable answers”) are marked with a “#”. Ungrammatical structures in the answer are marked with a “\*”. Moreover, all accepted sentences have been hierarchically ordered i.e. the consultants have identified the ‘best pair’ for each contextual group. This is marked in bold.

- (4) {Who cooked millet gruel?} – [Boukar (cooked millet gruel).]  
 √ **Nan dǎŋ táǎ djùm tɛŋ ná? – Boukar dǎŋ táǎ djùm tɛŋ ná.**  
 √ Nan dǎŋ táǎ djùm tɛŋ ná? – Boukar dǎŋ táǎ.  
 √ Nan dǎŋ táǎ djùm tɛŋ ná? – Boukar.  
 # Nan dǎŋ táǎ djùm tɛŋ ná? – Boukar táǎ djùm tɛŋ ná.  
 # Nan dǎŋ táǎ djùm tɛŋ ná? – Boukar táǎ.  
 \* Nan dǎŋ táǎ djùm tɛŋ ná? – Boukar dǎŋ.

In my opinion, combining the methods of elicitation with perception tests and acceptability judgments improves the quality of the data and assures a reliable database for the investigation.

### 1.2.2.3 Data from secondary sources: Grammars, sketches, text books

I also looked at second-hand data for each of the languages in the sample. In my thesis, I employed the following grammars, dictionaries with language descriptions and grammatical sections of educational text books: For BAGIRMI Abanga & Awak (2001), Gaden (1909),

Jacob (2006, 2010) and Stevenson (1969), for KENGA Neukom (2009, 2010), Palayer (2004) and Vandame (1968), for NGAMBAY Thayer & Thayer (1971), Thayer (1973) and Vandame (1963), for KABBA Moser (2004), for MBAY Fortier (1971) and Keegan (1997, 2009) and for SAR Delafosse (1897), Gakinabay & Wiesemann (1986) and Palayer (1970, 1989, 1992).

The use of these sources is problematic in several respects. Some grammars exclude pragmatic aspects totally, others employ poorly defined notions of the respective information-structural phenomena, and finally, there are inconsistencies and mistakes in the translations as well as regarding the interpretation of the individual markers. Some examples will be discussed below.

Older grammars such as Gaden (1909), Palayer (1970) or Fortier (1971) are restricted to grammatical features and disregard information structure. Modern grammars like Neukom (2010) and Moser (2004) or the educational book by Thayer & Thayer (1971), on the other hand, provide information about topic and focus – even dedicating a whole chapter to it. However, unfortunately, the authors often fail to acknowledge the complexity of the information-structural concept. In the grammar of NGAMBAY, Thayer & Thayer (1971 III: 66) describe the element *ḥá* as particle that indicates emphasis, claiming “it can be translated as ‘It’s ... that ...’”. Yet, the examples given offer confusing or inadequate translations:

- (5a) Construction with *ḥá* – for expressing focus on the object

ỹeè      **ḥá**,    deè    ar-eé                      né      k-ùsò.

3S      FOC 3P    PFV.cause-3S    thing    INF-eat<sup>5</sup>

Him, they gave him something to eat.      [NGAMBAY; Thayer & Thayer 1971 III: 50]

- (5b) Construction with *ḥá* – for expressing focus on the temporal adverbial

Bélé      **ḥá**,    dèè    d-áskəm    ndògò    koò      kènég-ḡ.

tomorrow FOC 3P    3P-can    buy      millet    then-of

Tomorrow first, they can buy millet.      [NGAMBAY; Thayer & Thayer 1971 III: 66]

In contrast, Vandame (1963: 121) offers a more comprehensible translation for the very same construction:

- (6a) Construction with *ḥá* – for expressing focus on the object

Ngán-i-je                      **ḥá**    m-ḥar.

child.P-POSS.2S-P    FOC    1P-PFV.call

Ce sont tes enfants que j’ai appelés.

(They are your children I/we have called. – PJ)      [NGAMBAY; Vandame 1963: 121]

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<sup>5</sup> All glosses in the examples taken from Thayer & Thayer (1971) are mine.

- (6b) Construction with *bá* – for expressing focus on the temporal adverbial  
 Bèrè      **bá**    m-a      k-àò      béi.  
 tomorrow FOC 1S-FUT INF-leave house  
 C'est demain qui je pars.  
 (It is tomorrow that I'm leaving. – PJ) [NGAMBAY; Vandame 1963: 122]

Based on the data, I assume that the construction with *bá* presented in the examples (5) and (6), is used to express focus. This will be explained in detail in section 2.4.2.2.1.3.

Moser (2004) presents the “discourse features” of KABBA on 50 pages and yet dedicates a mere five pages to “focus”, in which she identifies three morphological “focal markers” (Moser 2004: 410-415). If we take a closer look, we can see that only one of the markers is actually used to indicate focus, namely marker *á*, which will be presented in section 2.4.2.1.4.

The second marker is described in a rather confusing manner: “The focal marker *lá* refers to the preceding presupposition or topic in order to establish it as a sentence topic about which a comment follows” (Moser 2004: 413). She gives the examples in (7) to explain the function.

- (7a) Construction with “focal marker *lá*”
- |      |           |               |             |    |      |       |         |     |
|------|-----------|---------------|-------------|----|------|-------|---------|-----|
| Tína | <b>lá</b> | òrù           | n-àý        | mè | bòlò | tàjə  | té-nn   | ... |
| axe  | <b>lá</b> | 2S.PFV.remove | 3S-PFV.stay | in | hole | honey | LOC-DEM |     |
| [BG  | <b>lá</b> | ]             | [FOC        |    |      |       | ]       |     |
- (He answered saying: “Shame on you!) That axe which you removed stayed in the beehive (, so what about it?”) [KABBA; Moser 2004: 413]
- (7b)
- |     |      |           |              |           |
|-----|------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Né  | Baro | <b>lá</b> | núju         | Nàrègòtó. |
| 3S  | PN   | <b>lá</b> | PFV.engender | PN        |
| [BG |      | ]         | <b>lá</b>    | [FOC      |
- It is he, Baro, who engendered Naregoto. [KABBA; Moser 2004: 413]

The translation of both examples in (7) displays the background function of *lá*. We can see how it marks the preceding element as presupposed. Hence, I shall assume that the label of this information-structural marker does not match. It cannot be characterized as “focal marker” in the traditional sense (see section 1.3.4) and must therefore be described alternatively, as it fulfills the opposite function i.e. as a topic or background marker.

The third marker is mentioned in Moser (2004) in an equally confounding way: “The focal marker *dá* is a word that is used at a point of suspension, focus or departure in the discourse and to insist on some possible consequences of some action” (Moser 2004: 141). The exam-



ples found in the text collection (Moser 2004: 435ff. – appendix A), however, indicate a different function:

(8a) Construction with “focal marker *dá*”

Ngà Esú **dá** pà àre dé pàrà: ...  
 then PN **dá** PFV.say to 3P say  
 [BG ] **dá** [FOC ]

And Esu said (to them) ...

[KABBA; Moser 2004: 438]

(8b) Kanji lèé-m nèénn **dá** m-ínga bàá àáng.  
 fish of-1S this **dá** 1S-PFV.find simply NEG  
 [BG ] **dá** [FOC ]

(Esu answered and said:)

This, my fish I did not find it easily.

[KABBA; Moser 2004: 442]

I assume that *dá* functions as a topic or background marker because it marks the preceding element as presupposed. Marker *dá* is also found in other constructions too, since it indicates the end of a relative clause, as illustrated in (9a) or the end of a causal clause (9b).

(9a) Construction with marker *dá* – used as indicator for the end of a relative clause

Dèné nèénn ká e-tól-é-nn **dá** tò tóku tàr.  
 woman this REL 2S-PFV.kill-3S-DEM **dá** COP big problem  
 [ká **dá**]

The woman that you killed here, that is a big problem. [KABBA; Moser 2004: 415]

(9b) Construction with marker *dá* – used as indicator for the end of a causal clause

Tàjè tèe bbe **dá** ró dèné làá kà ngánn-é nèel-dé nya.  
 honey PFV.arrive home **dá** bodywife of.3S with child.P-3S happy-3P much  
 [ **dá** ]

Bee arrived home, so his wife and children were very happy.

[KABBA; Moser 2004: 414]

The examples highlight parallels to the background markers in other Sara-Bagirmi languages, which will be covered in section 2.3.3. Based on this observation, I can safely assume that *dá* must be characterized as a background indicator.

### 1.2.3 Compiling my language sample

Investigating information-structural expressions in insufficiently documented languages is, without a doubt, a challenge. Yet, exploring non-nominal focus types in these languages is even more complex. As laid out in preceding sections, the data for my thesis has come from a wide range of sources. For one of the languages, namely BAGIRMI, I am able to refer to self-elicited, first-hand data. For the other languages, I have only used published grammars, language descriptions, educational books, and comprehensive text collections. In addition, construction comparisons within the language family serve to complete the available material. Various aspects of the family-internal comparison are provided in Jacob (2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014).

It is worth noting at this stage that the comparative investigations represent the basis (or the starting point) for my present analysis. Having concentrated on collecting data for the expression of non-nominal focus, it seemed logical to restrict the sample to languages that provide data on this subject matter. This is true for BAGIRMI, KENGA, MBAY and SAR. Three of these languages, namely BAGIRMI, KENGA and MBAY, also enable speculations about the historical development of selected non-nominal focus constructions (see section 2.5).

The work, moreover, includes data from both KABBA and NGAMBAY. The two languages are listed here primarily for comparative purposes because they provide information about the range of focus realization in Sara-Bagirmi, as shown in section 2.4.2.2.1. NGAMBAY also features in section 2.3, contributing to data on topic and background marking.

Some languages of the Sara-Bagirmi language family will remain beyond the scope of attention. First of all, this applies to those languages which have not been described in reference books and grammatical sketches. Second, I excluded some of the languages for which we find grammars, descriptions and/or texts, because the constructions found in these languages do not contribute to the topic of the research. These are BAGIRO (FURU) described in Boyeldieu (2000b), DÉMÉ in Palayer (2006) and NGAM in Somté (2006, 2009). The literature available on NGAM provides no information on focus at all. It concentrates on other topics and excludes discourse-pragmatic issues completely. In the texts included in Somté (2009: 305-327), no conclusive instances of the constructions under investigation were found.

There is an additional, methodological reason for the exclusion of some of the languages mentioned above. It is straightforward to confine the language sample to two branches of Sara-Bagirmi, namely the Bagirmi branch (with BAGIRMI and KENGA) and the Central Sara branch (with SAR, KABBA, NGAMBAY and MBAY). DÉMÉ belongs to the Sara Peripherique branch, while the classification of BAGIRO is controversial. Hammarström et al. (2016) integrates it, like DÉMÉ, into the Saraic family (see section 1.1.1). However, Lewis et al. (2016) classifies

it together with GULA and YULU as a member of the Kara language group, which belongs to the Bongo-Bagirmi family – a neighbour of Sara-Bagirmi.

In order to guarantee a high quality and homogenous database, it is advisable to restrict the analysis to languages whose genealogical classification is consistent throughout the literature.

## 1.3 Sara-Bagirmi languages: A brief grammatical sketch

In this section, I outline some basic facts on the grammatical system of the languages under investigation. I have selected aspects of the grammatical system, which are relevant for information-structural investigations (as explained in section 1.2), as well as those which are typical for the language family.

Section 1.3.1 provides information about tonal marking, section 1.3.2 canonical sentence structure, section 1.3.4 information-structural markers and section 1.3.3 the verb system.

### 1.3.1 Tonal marking

Cross-linguistically, information-structural categories are frequently marked by prosody. This type of marking can not be addressed in the thesis because the available data gives no indication that prosodic focus marking has taken place.

All the same, it is worth noting that the languages under study are tone languages with three level tones: high tone (marked as á), mid tone (marked as a) and low tone (marked as à)<sup>6</sup>. Tonal variation causes lexical or grammatical differences in meaning:

- (10a) Tonal differences for marking grammatical variation
- |                 |                  |                            |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| [djè dj-ét táǎ] | (we) we're doing |                            |
| [djé dj-ét táǎ] | (we) we're doing | [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 119] |
- (10b) Tonal differences for marking lexical variation
- |       |                    |                            |
|-------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| [klá] | to divide          |                            |
| [kla] | snake (and rope)   |                            |
| [klà] | to send (somebody) | [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 119] |

Based on the analysis of two perception tests (Jacob 2010: 136f.), I shall assume that – certainly in BAGIRMI – tone is not used to mark information-structural expressions. However, it does most likely cause tonal shifts influenced by verbal iteration, e.g. as shown in section 2.3.3.1.

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<sup>6</sup> In the literature for certain languages, such as MBAY and KENGA, all three tones are marked (á, ā and à). For consistency reasons, particularly when comparing the data from BAGIRMI, I will abstain from explicitly marking middle tones. Unfortunately, neither Gaden (1909) nor Stevenson (1969) mark tones in BAGIRMI.

All the languages under study show subject-verb-object-(adjunct) word order:

- All examples in (11) represent *thetic* statements. I outline the notion of *theticity* in great detail in section 2.2. For now, I will concentrate on structural features. In (11), the subject always precedes the verb and the verb precedes the object, which can in turn precede an adjunct. We can therefore assume that in Sara-Bagirmi, SVO represents the canonical word order, or at least the canonical word order in the core clause. In some of the sample languages, a temporal frame setter often occurs – even in information-structural unmarked sentences or questions:

- In the subject question, the adjunct is the first element in the sentence. It is followed by marker *ná*, which indicates the preceding element as background. The subject position is occupied by the interrogative pronoun followed by the focus marker *dáŋ*. Verb and object are not marked by morphology pertaining to their information-structural status. Here, we can observe that the *ná* following the object is not a background marker: rather it functions as a determiner. The polyfunctionality of the marker *ná* will be discussed more fully in section

2.3.4.1. Interestingly, the marker *ná* occurs frequently with the preposed adverbial, although it is not obligatory:

- (13) *Wh*-question for the verb – temporal frame setter without morphological marking
- |           |           |        |      |      |      |         |     |     |       |
|-----------|-----------|--------|------|------|------|---------|-----|-----|-------|
| Tɛpre,    | Boukar    | taɗ    | ɗii  | gee  | sə   | kro     | nii | kii | ... ? |
| yesterday | PN        | PFV.do | what | EMPH | with | donkey  | DET | DEM |       |
| [ADJUNCT] | [SUBJECT] | [VERB] |      |      |      | [OBJECT |     |     | ]     |
- What did Boukar do with the donkey yesterday (at the market)?
- [BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

In MBAY, the temporal frame setter has no overt morphological marking:

- (14) Thetic statement – with temporal frame setter
- |          |           |     |          |     |      |     |       |       |          |           |
|----------|-----------|-----|----------|-----|------|-----|-------|-------|----------|-----------|
| Nɗɔɔ     | màdə-gə   | tá, | Bísə     | o   | Biya | o   | Bàtə  | o     | gèe-n    | kàw-n ... |
| day      | certain-P | LOC | dog      | and | goat | and | sheep | and   | want-VEN | go-VEN    |
| [ADJUNCT |           | ]   | [SUBJECT |     |      |     | ]     | [VERB |          | ]         |
- One day Dog, Goat and Sheep wanted to travel (to a certain small village).
- [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 19]

The example in (14) is the first sentence in the story “Why dogs chase trucks”. It starts with the temporal adverbial *ndɔɔ màdəgə tá* ‘one day’. The preposed adverbial – in parallel to the example (12) from BAGIRMI – occupies a sentence-initial position. In contrast to the structure in BAGIRMI, MBAY usually does not mark the preposed element morphologically. The locative marker *tá* cannot be viewed as a marker for the information-structural status because it belongs to the adverbial phrase. It occurs even if the adverbial phrase is placed at the end of the sentence:

- (15) Thetic statement – with the temporal adverbial in sentence-final position
- |           |          |           |          |         |     |
|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|---------|-----|
| Ndii      | èdè      | ngáy      | ndɔɔ     | màdə    | tá. |
| water     | PFV.fall | much      | day      | certain | LOC |
| [SUBJECT] | [VERB]   | [ADJUNCT] | [ADJUNCT |         | ]   |
- One day, the rain was pouring down.
- [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 10]

The examples in (14) and (15) receive the same interpretation, and the translation starts with ‘one day’ for both. The difference lies purely in the position of the temporal adverbial. The phrase *ndɔɔ màdə(gə) tá* is preposed in (14) and it occupies the sentence-final position in (15).

The tendency for placing (temporal) adjuncts in the left periphery can be explained by the inherent properties of adjuncts. Dik et al. (1990: 26) call adverbial constituents “satellites”.

Some classes of satellites, the so called “predication satellites” (including temporal and local settings, Dik et al. 1990: 32ff.) “are relatively free to occur in either sentence-initial or sentence-final position” (Dik et al. 1990: 52). From this, I may assume that in Sara-Bagirmi, the canonical position of (predication) satellites is indeed the sentence-final position. This is partly due to the fact that adjuncts on the right-hand side need never be marked, as seen for instance in (11a). If the adjunct appears in the left periphery, as in (12), it is often marked according to its pragmatical function.

The observation that some Sara-Bagirmi languages place topical or background information in the left periphery – even in non-pragmatically marked sentences – leads to the assumption that “background preposing” must be embraced as possible (or even preferred) sentence structure in these languages.

### 1.3.3 Verb system

The marking strategies for predicate-centered focus types (or operator focus), demonstrate a close relationship to the language-internal verb system. For this reason, we need to explore the characteristics in Sara-Bagirmi and, in particular, certain significant phenomena found in this language group. All the languages under study show an aspect-oriented TAM system. Beyond this common basis, comparing BAGIRMI and KENGA verb systems, two very close relatives, is highly insightful because substantial differences can be detected.

The TAM system of BAGIRMI is described by Stevenson (1969) as a dichotomy of the perfective and imperfective aspect<sup>7</sup> with two derivations:

TAM	Example	Translation	Function
<b>Perfective</b>	ma m-sa	I ate	For past events and states
<b>Perfect</b>	ma m-‘de ga	I have come	For completed events
<b>Imperfective</b>	mă kä-sa	I eat/I will eat	For events with no time reference
<b>Progressive</b>	ma m-et kä-sa	I am eating	For ongoing events

Table 1: The verb system of BAGIRMI (Stevenson 1969: 75, 83, 98, 122)

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<sup>7</sup> Stevenson (1969: 83) differentiates between the “definite aspect” (for denoting that the verb action is complete, momentary, ‘perfect’), here “perfective (aspect)”, and the “indefinite aspect” (for denoting that the verb action is incomplete, progressive, ‘imperfect’), here “imperfective (aspect)”.

The perfective and imperfective aspect represent the basic inventory, while the perfect and the progressive are derivations: The perfect is based on the perfective aspect (perfective + functional element *kA*, which will be explained in section 2.4.2.5.1.1), while the progressive is based on the imperfective aspect (imperfective + auxiliary *-et*).

It is worth noting that Gaden (1909: 16f.) and Abanga & Kidda Awak (2001: 52) classify the form of the imperfective aspect as “future”. This analysis refers to the interplay of both categories. Nevertheless, I shall still assume that Stevenson’s description is more suitable because the imperfective aspect is used predominantly for expressing events with no time reference. This function is best described by “imperfective” rather than “future”.

For KENGA, Neukom (2009: 467f.) adopts the Vandame classification (1968: XII) and specifies the TAM inventory with six forms:

TAM	Example	Translation	Function
<b>Simple form</b>	m-śsò	I eat/I ate	For events with no time reference
<b>Progressive</b>	m-śs k-òsò	I am eating	For ongoing events
<b>Future</b>	m(a) k-śsò	I shall eat	For vague future events
<b>Perfect</b>	m-śs gà	I have eaten	For completed events
<b>Resultative</b>	m-śs gà k-òsò	I had eaten	? <sup>8</sup>
<b>Definite future</b>	m-a kà k-òsò	I shall certainly eat	For certain future events

Table 2: The verb system of KENGA (Neukom 2009: 467)

The first three forms (simple form, progressive and future) can be characterized as basic inventory, followed by their derivations. It is worth noting that the “simple form” is a verb category, “unmarked for tense, aspect and mood. It is used both for present and past time reference. It is the context that determines time orientation” (Neukom 2009: 470).

All derivations contain the functional element *kA*. The perfect is based on the “simple form” (simple form + *kA*), the resultative is based on the progressive (progressive + *kA*), and the “definite future” is based on the “vague future” (future + *kA*).

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<sup>8</sup> The so-called “resultative” is listed solely for symmetric/parallel reasons. Neukom (2009: 474) argues that “this form focuses on the result of the action”. The structure will be set out in section 2.5.2.1.2.



Comparing the structure of the languages, we can see that both have a structurally bare form, namely the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI and the “simple form” in KENGA. Both languages also have a more complex basic form, namely the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI and the “vague future” in KENGA. At this stage, I want to draw attention to two points: firstly, the similarities between the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI and the “simple form” in KENGA, and secondly, the similarities between the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI and the “vague future” in KENGA.

As already mentioned, the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI and the “simple form” in KENGA display structural parallels because both verb forms are bare forms. Beyond these structural similarities, the verb categories typically differ in function. In BAGIRMI, the perfective aspect is predominantly used for marking perfective-past contents. In contrast, the “simple form” in KENGA fulfills a more basic function i.e. it is used for events with no specific temporal or aspectual reference. Table 3 compares the form and function of both verb categories:

	Perfective aspect in BAGIRMI	“Simple form” in KENGA
<b>Form</b>	Bare form	Bare form
<b>Function</b>	Marking perfective-past contents	Base function (not TAM reference)

Table 3: Form and function of perfective aspect in BAGIRMI and “simple form” in KENGA

Although these two aspectual forms show differences in function, they do provide the basis for expressing the perfect with the functional marker *kA*. In KENGA, this construction establishes the verb category “perfective”, which will be explained later on in section 2.4.2.5.2.1.

The second point is more complex because the verb categories – imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI and “vague future” in KENGA – partly differ in form and also in function. Nevertheless, I can assume that they have similar roots.

The “vague future” in KENGA is described by Neukom (2010: 123, with reference to Vandame 1968: 38) as periphrastic structure:

(16) The periphrastic structure – used for expressing the future

... mètbeekì sé, naáñ è k-àŋ bɛɛ.  
tomorrow BG 3S 3S.FUT INF-find well

(Donne-lui ce médicament,) demain il ira mieux. ((Give him this medicine,)

tomorrow he will be better. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 128]

The construction presented in (16) contains the auxiliary *a*, which occurs for marking 3<sup>rd</sup> person as è, along with the non-finite verb, marked by prefix *k(A)-*. Neukom (2010: 124ff.) assumes that the *a* is a future marker and comes historically from the verb *bàà* ‘go’.

The periphrastic structure is employed in typical “future time reference” domains (cf. Dahl 2000, Ultan 1978). It expresses the future, as shown in (16), obligation (17a) and to an extent “vagueness” i.e. when the speaker is not sure about the information he is providing, as shown in (17b).

(17a) The periphrastic structure – used for expressing modality or obligation

{Où est le bébé? – Je ne sais pas. (Where is the baby? – I don’t know. – PJ)}

Naaí      **a-ñ**                      **bòòbò.**

2S              2S.FUT-3S      INF.keep

(Quoi?) Tu devrais le garder.

((What?) You should keep it. – PJ)

[KENG; Neukom 2010: 126]

(17b) The periphrastic structure – used for expressing vagueness

Kɔl              sé      jɛrl-îñ                      è              **k-ààs-n**                      jee      kándo?

rope.REL      BG      length-POSS.3S      3S.FUT      INF-finish-CONN      leg      how.much

Quelle est la longueur de cette corde?

(Cette corde, sa longueur finira combien de pas (jambe))?

(What is the length of the rope?

(This rope, its length will end in how many steps (legs))? – PJ)

[KENG; Neukom 2010: 127]

To sum up, we can see from the examples that the periphrastic structure in KENG is used to specify the tense and the mode of the verb.

In BAGIRMI, the imperfective aspect “is characterized throughout by the use of the prefix *k(A)-* in Class I and Class II verbs” (Stevenson 1969: 83). With verbs of class III, IV, and V, the prefix *k(A)-* never occurs. The prefix is used in three ways: “to form a verbal noun ..., [to] function as a verb infinitive ... [and as] a form of the Indefinite aspect” (Stevenson 1969: 78f.). Here, it is worth considering that “the function of this prefix corresponds in many respects to the Gerund or Verbal Noun form in English with suffix *-ing*, and to a lesser extent to the English infinitive” (Stevenson 1969: 112).

In parallel to the “simple form” in KENG, the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI denotes events with no specific temporal reference (cf. Stevenson 1969: 98). It occurs to express the present, as shown in (18a), the future (18b), and general statements or the habitual (18c).

- (18a) Imperfective aspect – used for expressing the present  
 ŋgab kǎ-pa kag(a).  
 man IPFV-split wood<sup>9</sup>  
 The man splits the wood. [BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 102]
- (18b) Imperfective aspect – used for expressing the future  
 ŋan-ge kǎ-sa ja.  
 child-P IPFV-eat meat  
 The children will eat meat. [BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 102]
- (18c) Imperfective aspect – used for expressing the habitual  
 Kinja-ge kǎ-sa nyo.  
 hen-P IPFV-eat grain  
 Chickens eat grain. [BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 100]

In contrast to the periphrastic structure in KENGA, the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI displays a simple structure (cf. Stevenson 1969: 82), as illustrated in the examples in (16). I assume that the imperfective aspect is based historically on a periphrastic structure and the once existing auxiliary has now vanished. The former periphrastic structure occurs synchronically as simple structure with a finite verb, marked (with some verbs) by prefix *k(A)-*. On reanalyzing these structures, this prefix appears to refer to the finite verb, which is why the finite verb occurs in the imperfective aspect.

The potentially former periphrastic structure in BAGIRMI corresponds formally and in part functionally with the “vague future” in KENGA, as illustrated in the table:

	Imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI	“Vague future” in KENGA
<b>Form</b>	Simple structure	Periphrastic structure
<b>Function</b>	Base function (no TAM reference)	Marking future and modal contents

Table 4: Form and function of imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI and “vague future” in KENGA

Even though the verb categories show differences in function, they do provide the basis for expressing the (definite) future with the functional marker *kA*. In BAGIRMI, this construction establishes the verb category “future”, which will be explained in section 2.5.2.3.

Comparing the various verb categories in BAGIRMI and KENGA aims to illustrate the similarities within the Sara-Bagirmi language family. And although acknowledging this is necessary

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<sup>9</sup> All glosses in the examples taken from Stevenson (1969) are mine.



same sub-branch of Sara-Bagirmi (KENG is Bagirmi, and NGAMBAY is Sara). Meanwhile members of the same branch, like KENG and BAGIRMI (both Bagirmi), have markers with formal differences: the focus marker *dáy* in BAGIRMI and focus marker *bó* in KENG. I will revisit this phenomenon in section 2.4.2.6.

Furthermore, it is interesting that the markers can also differ in function: While the marker *ná* in BAGIRMI can be classified as polyfunctional marker – because it marks definiteness, the end of a (relative) clause, background information and topics – MBAY has different markers for all these functions.

Despite several similarities, most of the markers vary from language to language: they differ in form and they even occur in different constructions. In most Sara-Bagirmi languages, either the focus or topic part are marked by morphology. In contrast, MBAY features numerous constructions with obligatory morphological marking for both parts (focus and background).

In general, we can say that in Sara-Bagirmi, morphological marking is always subject to syntactic marking. Preposed elements have to be marked more frequently with regard to their information-structural status than remaining elements. For here, preposed focal elements have to be marked more frequently than preposed topical elements.

As will be outlined in the detailed analysis in Chapter II, this picture must be revised and completed by including a number of additional markers, also combined with various syntactic strategies.



## 2 Information structure in Sara-Bagirmi

### 2.1 Basic notions of information structure

Chafe (1976: 28) established the term “information packaging” to refer to the notion of how the information is sent, in contrast to the information itself. Under “information structure”, Krifka & Musan (2012: 1) understand “aspects of natural language that help speakers to take into consideration the addressee’s current information state, and hence to facilitate the flow of communication”. Information structure thus reflects the formal means exploited to organize utterances, sentences and texts according to the common ground of the interlocutors (Krifka 2007).

In general, utterances can be subdivided into categorical statements andthetic statements. The first category is pragmatically bipartite. Here, every utterance has a part expressing new or salient information, and a part presenting presupposed or background information. Thetic statements cancel the prototypical categorical interpretation, and therefore they lack the pragmatic bipartiteness (Sasse 1987, Güldemann 2010).

For categorical statements, Molnár (1991) introduces a – very abstract – model with three different layers:

1. Darstellung:	TOPIK	–	KOMMENTAR	(TKG)
2. Empfänger:	THEMA	–	RHEMA	(TRG)
3. Sender:	HINTERGRUND	–	FOKUS	(FHG)

Figure 4: The model of the communicative structuring according to Molnár (1991: 58)

Although the relationship between the issues within the layers is not fully understandable, the model helps to illustrate that there are functional differences of the terms “Kommentar/comment”, “Rhema/rheme”, and “Fokus/focus”.

With this remark in mind, one can imagine that the first layer (“topic-comment structure”) refers to the (abstract) content-based level, while both other layers represent the view of the discourse participants. In this work, the third layer (“focus-background structure”) will be in the center of interest, i.e. the level of the speaker, who has to decide which information is necessary for the addressee.

In the remaining part of this section, I will provide a detailed overview of the ways in which these notions of information structure are encoded in Sara-Bagirmi. Section 2.2 presents the strategies for expressingthetic statements, and section 2.3 the encoding means for topic or background information. Section 2.4 concentrates on the strategies for realizing focus or foreground. All sections start with a short introduction to the theoretical framework, presenting relevant constructions, and ends with a more or less comparative summary for the languages under study. The last two sections present several studies on predicate-centered focus. While section 2.5 focuses on the diachronic development of selected strategies, section 2.6 gives information about the distribution of focus and focus marking in one of the sample languages.



## 2.2 Thetic statements

### 2.2.1 General remarks on theticity

Thetic statements (from Greek *thetikós* ‘positive’) are understood here in the sense of Sasse (1987) as referring to pragmatically unstructured sentences:

The thetic statement forms a unit with respect to what it contributes to the discourse at a given point. It expresses a pragmatically unanalyzed state of affairs and presents it as a piece of complex information (Sasse 1987: 558).

Thetic statements can be seen as the opposite of categorical statements. While categorical utterances are characterized by their pragmatic bipartiteness consisting of a topic or background part and a focus or comment part, thetic statements “CANCEL a sentence-internal information structure” (Güldemann 2010: 86 – upper cases in original).

From a functional point of view, thetic statements occur in typical environments. Sasse (2006: 280ff.) identifies five discourse-functional domains of thetic statements:

Functions	Typical domains
<b>Annuntiative</b>	“Statements out of the blue”, e.g. newspaper headlines, ...
<b>Introductive</b>	First mentioned subject as a text-opening strategy
<b>Interruptive</b>	“Sudden events” and unexpected new situations
<b>Descriptive</b>	Scene-setting descriptions
<b>Explanative</b>	Established by a question “What happened?” or “Why do you do X?”

Table 5: Typical domains of thetic expressions (following Sasse 2006: 280ff.)

Thetic statements can be sub-divided in two different types of thetic expressions, namely in entity-central and event-central expressions:

An entity-central thetic statement is a type of utterance stating the existence of an entity, while an event-central thetic statement is one which states the existence of an event. The difference manifests itself most clearly in the distinction between the two widely quoted standard subtypes of thetic expressions, ‘impersonal’ (weather, etc.) and ‘presentative’ expressions (Sasse 1987: 526).

Cross-linguistically,thetic statements are often realized by the canonical sentence structure or by strategies used for expressing focus. Güldemann (2013: 12) sees a formal affinity between focus and theticity, and describes a specific pairing: While entity-central thetic statements make use of term focus strategies, event-central thetic statements are expressed by predicate-centered focus strategies.

## 2.2.2 The expression of thetic statements in Sara-Bagirmi

In the Sara-Bagirmi languages under study, I have found thetic statements with both types of statements, entity-central and event-central expressions, and they occur in the typical domains listed in Sasse (2006). All these languages express theticity by using the canonical sentence structure and by using adverbial frame setting. The data from BAGIRMI, KENGA and MBAY exemplify the situation in Sara-Bagirmi.

In BAGIRMI, thetic statements occur in typical domains and with both types of thetic statements. Example (21) refers to an entity. It fulfills the introductive or presentational function. The entity ‘book’ functions as the first mentioned subject:

- (21) Entity-central thetic statement with introductive function

Libre	kɛɖɛ	ét	jò	tabúr	ná	kíi.
book	IDEF	3S.PROG	IPFV.be	table	DET	DEM
[SBJ	]	[V	]	[OBL	]	

There is a book on the table.

(lit. A book is being on the table there.)

[BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

The examples in (22) represent the type of event-central thetic statements. Both express the explanative function, i.e. they are appropriate answers to the question ‘What happened?’.

- (22a) Event-central thetic statement with explanative function

{What happened?}

Ngaɓ	kɛɖɛ	píjà	bàl.
person	IDEF	PFV.play	ball
[SBJ	]	[V]	[OBJ]

A man played with a ball.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

- (22b) {What happened?}

Pindjàl	kɛɖɛ	ótʃò	ɗán	tókó.
glass	IDEF	PFV.fall	and	PFV.break
[SBJ	]	[V	]	

A glass has fallen down and is broken.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

The examples illustrate that thetic statements are possible with verbs of different valency: (22a) shows a transitive verb and (22b) two intransitive verbs.

Interestingly, all the examples from BAGIRMI contain only indefinite subjects, marked by indefinite marker *kɛdɛ*. This helps to distinguish thetic utterances from unmarked categorical utterances, as presented in section 2.3.2.

In KENGA, there is evidence for thetic statements with similar functions as in BAGIRMI:

(23a) Entity-central thetic statement with introductive function

M	táád-n	mèt-n	tàar	tùpiyù.
1S.FUT	INF.tell-CONN	after-CONN	story.CONN	lion
[SBJ]	[V	]	[OBJ	]

Je vais raconter l'histoire du lion.

(I will tell you the story of a lion. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 265]

(23b) Event-central thetic statement with the descriptive function (first clause) and entity-central statement with the explanative function (second clause)

Mààne	èèd	k-èède,	wɔɔɔ	ìng-ó	k-ɔɔɔ.
water	fall	INF-fall	snake	stay	INF-eat
[SBJ]	[V	]	[SBJ]	[V	]

Il pleuvait; un serpent était sorti à la chasse (pour manger).

(It rains; a snake went out for hunting. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 267]

Example (23a) serves as the first sentence of the story “La recontre avec un lion” (The story of a lion) the introductive function; example (23b) shows two other typical instances of thetic statements. The first clause fulfills the descriptive function; it is used for setting the scene or the frame, which is not necessary for the progression of the whole story. Even though there is no formal subordination, there exists some kind of dependency between the two clauses; the punctuation also shows that they belong to one pragmatic unit. While the first part refers to a side stage, the second part presents the main event.

Furthermore, the first part contains two verb forms: the finite verb *èèd* ‘to fall’, and the non-finite verb *k-èède* ‘falling’. This structure illustrates a type of “verbal iteration”, which is used in KENGA for indicating the progressive on the one hand, and for emphasizing the lexical meaning of the verb on the other hand. Here, the iteration must be interpreted as fulfilling the TAM-function only. As in Sara-Bagirmi languages, verbal iteration is a very common strategy for indicating predicate-centered focus, it will be discussed in greater detail in section 2.4.

Thetic statements in MBAY are expressed by the same means as in BAGIRMI and KENGA:

- (24) Entity-central thetic statement with the introductive function

Mòy màdə ì nò kə səmba dò dàkóygə báng ...  
 illness certain be BG that PFV.be.associated with resurrected precisely  
 [SBJ ] [V] [OBJ ]  
 There is a certain sickness associated with the Resurrected  
 (and its name is “Resurrected sickness”). [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 60]

Example (24) opens a new paragraph in a story about the resurrection of dead people. It introduces the entity ‘certain sickness’, which is presented for the first time in this story. The examples in (25) illustrate the structural variation of realizing thetic statements in Sara-Bagirmi.

- (25a) Event-central thetic statement with descriptive function

Ndii èdè ngáy ndɔɔ màdə tá.  
 water PFV.fall much day certain LOC  
 [SBJ] [V] [ADV ]  
 One day, the rain was pouring down. [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 10]

- (25b) Entity-central thetic statement with introductive function

Ndɔɔ màdə-gə tá, Bísə o Biya o Bātə o gèe-n kàw-n ...  
 day certain-P LOC dog and goat and sheep and want-VEN go-VEN  
 [ADV ] [SBJ ] [V ]  
 One day Dog, Goat and Sheep wanted to travel (to a certain small village).  
 [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 19]

Both examples in (25) contain the temporal adverbial *ndɔɔ màdə(gə) tá* ‘one day’, but in different positions: it occupies clause-final position in (25a), and clause-initial position in (25b), both without any morphological marking. The different positions of the adverbial were already mentioned in section 1.3.2. The examples from MBAY illustrate the word-order flexibility for adjuncts and the lack of morphological marking for preposed elements in this language. The structure with temporal frame setters is found in other Sara-Bagirmi languages as well:

- (26a) Entity-central thetic statement with introductive function

Lua kɛdɛ ná, ngaɓ kɛdɛ néè-nj mí.  
 year IDEF BG person IDEF woman-POSS.3S five  
 [ADV ] ná [SBJ ] [Ø] [OBJ ]  
 Once upon a time, there was a man with five wives. [BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

(26b) Event-central thetic statement with introductive function

bii	kàlaŋ	sé	naajé	j-ìŋg	kè-tɔɔl	tɔɔl	mààk-jé ...
day	IDEF	BG	1P	1P-stay	1P-kill	INF.kill	belly-POSS.1P
[ADV	]	sé	[SBJ]	[V	]	[OBJ	]

Un jour, on se reposait (on restait et tuait notre ventre) (en brousse sous un arbre).

(One day, we rested (stayed and killed our bellies) (under a tree in the bush. – PJ))

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 267]

In contrast to the example in (25b), both preposed adverbials in (26) are marked as background by morphology. In (26a), the temporal frame in BAGIRMI is marked by background marker *ná*, and in (26b), the temporal frame in KENGA is marked by background marker *sé*. In both sentences, the core clause is not pragmatically marked, and the verbal iteration in (26b) indicates – in parallel to the example in (23b) – only TAM-function.

The structure presented in (26) confirms the assumptions from the introduction (section 1.3.2) again: First, that adjuncts seem to be very flexible with respect to the word order, and second, that preposed elements in BAGIRMI and KENGA – in contrast to MBAY – show frequently an overt morphological marking concerning information structure.

### 2.2.3 Summary: Thetic statements

All the attested thetic statements from Sara-Bagirmi are expressed by the canonical sentence structure. With the exception of adjuncts, there is neither word order change nor any morphological marking concerning information structure. It is interesting that left-peripheral adjuncts are morphologically marked in BAGIRMI and KENGA, while they lack such marking in MBAY.

The Sara-Bagirmi languages under study show evidence for entity-central expressions as well as for event-central expressions. The examples illustrate that thetic statements can be found in (at least) three functional domains:

1. Introductive function: for the first mentioned subject or the first sentence of a story.
2. Explanative function: in answers to questions like ‘what happened?’
3. Descriptive function: for setting the scene or establishing a side stage.

As stated above, all examples of thetic statements presented here show no special encoding means for this function. One can assume that the languages make use of the canonical structure only, and there is no morphological marking according to information structure.

## 2.3 Topic and background

### 2.3.1 The concept of topic and background

Topic or background marks old, given or predictable information in a sentence (e.g. Chafe 1976, Prince 1981, Givón 1983, Gundel 1988). Nevertheless, topics can be new, and indefinite, too:

- (27) EInen Politiker, den kennt jeder.  
 One politician everybody knows. [GERMAN; Endriss 2009: 8]

In general, “topic is often regarded as the complementary notion of focus (or related notions such as ‘rheme’, ‘comment’ or ‘semantic focus’)” (Molnár 2006: 206), which will be presented in section 2.4.

Two kinds of topics will be distinguished here: Discourse topics are topics of larger units, which relate to the whole dialogue or discourse. Sentence topics are restricted to the predication of a single sentence. In the following, only the latter will be of central interest. Sentence topics can be further divided into “aboutness topics” and “frame setters”. The first subgroup indicates what the sentence is about (c.f. Reinhart 1981: 54). One can say that “the speaker announces a topic and then says something about it” (Hockett 1958: 201).

While aboutness topic refers predominantly to objects, frame setters are designated for (temporal, local or other) adverbials, as shown in (28).

- (28) A: How is John?  
 B: (Healthwise/As for his health), he is FINE. [ENGLISH; Krifka 2007: 45]

The function of frame setting is to “set the frame in which the following expressing should be interpreted” (Krifka 2007: 46).

Both aboutness topics and frame setters can occur together in one and the same sentence. The concept of “topic” as it is understood here subsumes aboutness topics and frame setters. Furthermore, the cover term “topic/background” refers to all kind of old, given or predictable information in the sentence.

Cross-linguistically, several encoding means are available for identifying topical or background information, e.g. topicalization, topic stress, pronominalization, diathesis, morphological marking by special markers, etc.

In Sara-Bagirmi, topic/background is sometimes not grammatically marked. In such unmarked cases, the subject can be analyzed as topic of the sentence by default, as illustrated in section 2.3.2. For an explicit marking of the topical constituent, Sara-Bagirmi languages use at least two strategies: First, the topical or background information occurs in the left periphery of the sentence, i.e. it is marked by preposing and sometimes by additional morphology, as explained in section 2.3.3. Second, the background information remains in-situ. This strategy requires morphological marking, and is shown in section 2.3.4.

Before discussing these different types in detail, it should be noted that some constructions presented in section 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 are used for expressing focus as well, and therefore, some of the constructions must be discussed in section 2.4 again. The separation of the sections in topic/background strategies on the one hand and focus/foreground strategies on the other hand is necessary. It will allow us to better understand the whole system of the background marking in Sara-Bagirmi and the interdependency with related functions.

### 2.3.2 Subjects as topic

In all Sara-Bagirmi languages under study, the subject in categorical sentences can be interpreted as default topic. Languages with SVO word order identify the (unmarked) left-most element as topic of the sentence, following the argumentation in Givón (1976: 154), that “the subject NP holds the most of the topic functions”. The rest of the sentence is always interpreted as comment:

- (29)     subject     verb object  
           [ TOP ]     [ COMMENT ]

Gundel (1988: 213) states “that in various languages expressions referring to topics are necessarily definite”. In BAGIRMI, definite nouns or proper nouns can be interpreted as topic:

- (30)     Proper noun as topical subject  
           {What did Boukar do?}  
           Boukar     taɗ     djùm     tɛŋɛ.  
           PN            PFV.do    gruel    millet  
           [ TOP ]     [ COMMENT            ]  
           Boukar cooked millet gruel.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

In example (30), the subject appears in its canonical clause-initial position, and it is not morphologically marked concerning information structure. Here, only the context, i.e. the preceding question about the verb phrase, indicates the information structure: The whole

verb phrase is the comment, while the subject is the topic. In BAGIRMI, definite subjects are often interpreted as topics. The examples withthetic statements, as shown in section 2.2.2, contain exclusively indefinite subjects. Here, the definiteness of the subject can be taken as criterion for distinguishingthetic statements from categorical statements.

In MBAY, definite or proper nouns can be interpreted as topical subject as well:

- (31a) Definite noun as topical subject

Ngon	sà	mápà	túu-bè.
child	PFV.eat	bread	all
[TOP]	[COMMENT		]

The child ate all the bread.

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 154]

- (31b) Proper noun as topical subject

Súu	bògà	bèlo	lò-mí.
PN	PFV.steal	bicycle	POSS-1S
[TOP]	[COMMENT	]	

Suu stole my bicycle.

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 154]

The example from KENGA shows that anchored nouns can be interpreted as topical subjects:

- (32) Anchored noun as topical subject

Màgàl-ĩn	ɓàà	k-ààs-n	tè	gen	bini.
hight-POSS.3S	3S.go	INF-finish-CONN	with	for	goat
[TOP	]	[COMMENT			]

Sa taille peut atteindre celle d'une chèvre.

(Its size can reach that of a goat. – PJ)

[KENG; Neukom 2010: 281]

According to Prince (1981: 236) anchored nouns can be interpreted as given or presupposed; as possessed noun *màgàl* ‘hight’ is linked to a contextual given or presupposed entity.

Following the scale of most predictable topics (Givón 1987: 177, 1983: 17), anaphoric pronouns are nearly the best candidates for representing the topic of the sentence. The example from NGAMBAY illustrates this with the bound subject pronoun.

- (33) Anaphoric pronoun as topical subject

M-        ra           kùlà          tàgónè.  
1S-      PFV.do work       yesterday  
[TOP]   [COMMENT                   ]

I did the work yesterday.

[NGAMBAY; Thayer & Thayer 1971 III: 65]



The data show that unmarked subjects can be interpreted as topics. However, Sara-Bagirmi languages also tend to overtly mark topic and/or background information.

### 2.3.3 Preposed topical or background information

Preposing of topical or background information is a productive and frequently used strategy in Sara-Bagirmi. Although this strategy is found in many of the languages, each language shows structural (and sometimes even functional) differences. The languages share the property that the preposed element often requires morphological marking. The background markers function as “pivot” (Güldemann et al. 2010: 8) or “index” (Güldemann 2016: 554), and will be presented in more detail in section 2.3.4. Section 2.3.3 focus on the constructions with preposed topics that will be discussed for BAGIRMI, KENGA, MBAY and NGAMBAY separately.

#### 2.3.3.1 Preposed topical/background information in BAGIRMI

Given elements in sentence-initial position function either as aboutness topic, as shown in (34a) for the object and in (34b) for the subject, or as a frame setter, as shown in (34c).

(34a) Object as aboutness topic

{And when did Boukar buy a donkey at the market?}

Kro ná, tɛpre kasko dǎŋ Boukar ndugo.  
donkey BG yesterday market T.FOC PN PFV.buy  
[TOP] ná [COMMENT ]

At YESTERDAY’S market, Boukar bought a donkey. (lit. As for the donkey,  
it was at YESTERDAY’s market, that Boukar bought it.) [BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

(34b) Subject as aboutness topic

{And when did Boukar buy a donkey at the market?}

Boukar lá, tɛpre kasko dǎŋ née ndugo kro.  
PN BG yesterday market T.FOC 3S PFV.buy donkey  
[TOP] lá [COMMENT ]

At YESTERDAY’S market, Boukar bought a donkey. (lit. As for Boukar,  
it was at YESTERDAY’s market, that he bought a donkey.) [BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

(34c) Temporal adverbial as frame setter

Tɛpre ná, Boukar taɗ djùm tɛŋ ngal kudj nii kii.  
yesterday BG PN PFV.do gruel millet in house DET DEM  
[FRAME] ná [TOP ] [COMMENT ]

As for yesterday, Boukar cooked millet gruel in the house. [BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

In (34a), the object occurs in the left periphery and is followed by marker *ná*. In (34b), the subject is preposed and marked by *lá*. While *ná* can be described as a generic background marker (Jacob 2010: 125ff.), *lá* is more specific, and used for subjects only. (34c) illustrates the co-occurrence of a frame setter and an unmarked aboutness topic in a single sentence. The temporal frame is preposed and marked by *ná*. The following subject can be analyzed as default topic, and the rest of the sentence is interpreted as the comment.

The combination of a preposed adverbial frame, the preposed object as aboutness topic and the (inherent) topical subject is also possible:

- (35) Temporal and local adverbial as frame setter and object as aboutness topic  
 {Did Boukar buy the donkey at the market yesterday or did he wash it?}  
 Tεpre kasko **ná**, kro **ná**, Boukar ndugo ndùgo<sup>10</sup>.  
 yesterday market BG donkey BG PN PFV.buy INF.buy  
 [FRAME ] ná [TOP] ná [TOP ] [COMMENT ]  
 Boukar BOUGHT the donkey at the market yesterday. (lit. As for yesterday's  
 market, as for the donkey, Boukar BOUGHT it.) [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The utterance starts with the adverbial frame for temporal and local reference marked by *ná*. The next element is the preposed object, also marked by *ná*. The core clause contains the information-structurally unmarked subject and a verbal-iteration construction. While the subject must be interpreted as topic, the iterated verb is the comment. This structure is used to mark focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. In BAGIRMI, this construction occurs frequently for indicating focus, thus it will be discussed in more detail in section 2.4.2.3.1.

For the expression of contrastive topics, BAGIRMI uses another preposing construction:

- (36a) Parallel contrast (with proper nouns)  
 {I know that Sue and Anne bought a Toyota and a Benz. But who bought what?}  
 Sue **lé**, ndugo Toyota, Anne **go**<sup>11</sup> **lé**, Benz.  
 PN C.TOP PFV.buy PN PN C.TOP PN  
 [TOP] lé [COMMENT ] [TOP ] go lé [COMMENT]  
 Sue bought the Toyota and Anne (bought) the Benz. [BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

<sup>10</sup> The tonal shift is triggered by the verbal iteration.

<sup>11</sup> In the literature, there is no information about the origin and/or the function of element *go*.

(36b) Parallel contrast (with relativized nouns)

{What about your children, what subjects do they like?}

Nén ga ngol ná lé, ge ndoyo an mbòdjò,  
 child REL old DET C.TOP PFV.want thing P count  
 [TOP ] lé [COMMENT ]  
 nén ga mbass ná go lé, ge ndoyo an ndjàn liber.  
 child REL little DET C.TOP PFV.want thing P write book  
 [TOP ] go lé [COMMENT ]

The older one likes math, the younger one likes literature. [BAGIRMI; Jacob, f.n.]

The examples in (36) show parallel focus, which occurs typically in pair-list answers to multiple *wh*-questions (Drubig & Schaffar 2001: 1086). Here, all information is given; only the relation is new. Even though all topics contain a contrast (“contrastive topics”), they show structural differences: The first contrastive topic is followed by *lé*, the second one by *go lé*. It is worth noting that marker *ná* in (36b) indicates the end of the relative clause. This function will be presented in section 2.3.4.1 again.

To sum up, BAGIRMI employs three markers for the expression of background information in preposing constructions. The marker *ná* is used as a generic background marker (with many more functions than marking background information – to be discussed in section 2.3.4.1), while *lá* is restricted to identifying the subject as topic, and (*go*) *lé* to express (parallel) contrast on the topic:

Structure	Function
[...] <i>ná</i> , ...	Object as topic      Adjunct as frame
[...] <i>lá</i> , ...	Subject as topic
[...] ( <i>go</i> ) <i>lé</i> , ...	Contrastive topic

Table 6: Form and function of preposed topical/background information in BAGIRMI

### 2.3.3.2 Preposed topical/background information in KENGA

In parallel to BAGIRMI, KENGA uses preposing to indicate aboutness topics, as in (37a) and (37b), and the adverbial frame setting, as in (37c).

## (37a) Object as aboutness topic

{Tu nous as promis d'apporter des cadeaux! (You've promised to bring gifts! – PJ)}

Naáñ sé maám ní-deek-té tééyò.

3S BG 1S 1S-say-PERF.NEG PERF.NEG

[TOP] sé [COMMENT ]

Je n'ai jamais dit cela. (This, I've never said that. – PJ) [KENG; Neukom 2010: 84]

## (37b) Subject as aboutness topic

{Les voleurs disent à la victime: (The thieves tell the victim: – PJ)}

Naaí lè kál-ì ki, naajé kè-mii.

2S BG be.alone-2S LOC 1P 1P-five

[TOP] lè [COMMENT ]

Tu es tout seul, et nous sommes cinq. (You are alone, but we are five.

(lit. As for you, you are alone, but we are five.) – PJ) [KENG; Neukom 2010: 228]

## (37c) Temporal adverbial as frame setter

Mètbeekì sé gòtò è tɛɛf-n òòdíó?

tomorrow BG weather 3S.FUT INF.do-CONN how

[FRAME] sé [TOP] [COMMENT ]

Demain, quel temps fera-t-il?

(As for tomorrow, what will the weather be? – PJ) [KENG; Neukom 2010: 82]

KENG seems to behave similar to BAGIRMI: The pronominal object in (37b) occurs in the left periphery and is followed by the background marker *sé*; the pronominal subject in (37b) is preposed and marked by the background marker *lè*. For setting a (temporal) frame, the preposed adverbial is marked by *sé*, followed by the subject as topic, and the comment.

Although the data from KENG show functional parallels to the data from BAGIRMI (*sé* corresponds to the generic background marker *ná*, and *lè* to the subject topic marker *lá*), they are different distributionally. In KENG, both markers don't show the restriction known from their distribution. They are likewise used for indicating subjects as topic, as shown in (38a), and prepositional phrases as frames, as shown in (38b).

## (38a) Subject as aboutness topic

{Les voleurs disent à la victime: (The thieves tell the victim: – PJ)}

Naaí sé kál-ì ki, naajé kè-mii.

2S BG be.alone-2S LOC 1P 1P-five

[TOP] sé [COMMENT ]

Tu es tout seul, et nous sommes cinq. (You are alone, but we are five.

(lit. As for you, you are alone, but we are five.) – PJ) [KENG; Neukom 2010: 91]

- |         |      |     |          |                  |        |      |    |      |
|---------|------|-----|----------|------------------|--------|------|----|------|
| Băl     | naaí | lè, | naajé    | kà               | jée    | đim  | gè | èyo. |
| without | 2S   | BG  | 1P       | kA <sup>12</sup> | people | some | P  | NEG  |
| [FRAME  |      | lè  | [COMMENT |                  |        |      |    |      |

(Without you, we are nothing. – PJ)

[KENG; Palaver 2004: 106]

Structure	Function		
[...] sé, ...	Subject as topic	Object as topic	Adjunct as frame
[...] lè, ...	Subject as topic		Adjunct as frame

Table 7: Form and function of preposed topical/background information in KENGA

In MBAY, given information can be marked in a similar way as in BAGIRMI and KENGA by using preposing structures. This strategy is used to express aboutness topics, as shown by the object topic in (39a) and the subject topic in (39b), or by frame setters in (39c) and (39d).

- |       |           |          |             |      |       |       |
|-------|-----------|----------|-------------|------|-------|-------|
| Gúsə  | <b>dá</b> | nàní     | m-ngá       | àṇə  | m-aw  | mbaa. |
| money | BG        | if       | 1S-PFV.find | then | 1S-go | trip  |
| [TOP] | dá        | [COMMENT |             |      |       |       |

then I'd go on a trip. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 157]

<sup>12</sup> The functional element  $kA$  will be presented in section 2.4.2.5.2.

## (39b) Subject as aboutness topic

ḡóbá ḡee mbaa **dá** òo ngáy.  
 road village trip BG be.long much  
 [TOP ] **dá** [COMMENT ]

The road to that village was very long. [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 19]

## (39c) Temporal adverbial as frame setter

ḡar-á **dá** túr-gə à téé-n ngáy.  
 rainy.season-LOC BG ant-P FUT come-VEN much  
 [FRAME] **dá** [TOP ] [COMMENT ]

In the rainy season, the little black ants are all over. [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 157]

## (39d) Temporal adverbial as frame setter

Nḡo kə kòḡ-məṭá **dá** Súu àw gòḡá baa-á.  
 day of DET-three BG PN PFV.go back river-LOC  
 [FRAME] **dá** [TOP] [COMMENT ]

Three days later, Suu went back again to the river. [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 35]

In (39a), the object is preposed, marked by *dá*, and followed by a conditional clause, which uses the construction [nàní ... àṇə ...] for expressing ‘if ..., then ...’. The subject in (39b) appears in the left periphery and is marked by *dá* as well. The examples in (39c/d) show the co-occurrence of a frame setter marked by *dá* and the following (unmarked) subject as topic of the sentence. In these examples, *dá* is used for indicating subjects, objects and adjuncts as topics/frame setters, but *dá* can also be replaced by *à*, as shown in (40).

## (40) Subject as aboutness topic

Bèlo lò-á **à** kàn lòo ngár ngáy à à<sup>13</sup> ày ngəḡə àí.  
 bike of-3S BG if place sand much BG IPFV drink running NEG  
 [TOP ] **à** [COMMENT ]

When an area is very sandy, his bike won’t go fast. (lit. As for his bike,  
 when an area is very sandy, it can’t win the race. – PJ) [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 157]

The preposed subject is marked by *à*, which is followed by a conditional clause. Here, the *à* appears twice, and in both cases, it functions as the background marker: First, to mark the object as the topic of the sentence, and second, at the end of the conditional clause.

<sup>13</sup> Keegan (1997: 70f.) classifies this element as a habitual marker. This marker is not necessary with “adjectival verbs”, but such combination expresses the inchoative reading (Keegan 1997: 75). Because the function of the marker is not restricted to the habitual reading, it is glossed here as imperfective.

(41) Subject as aboutness topic

Kàm-dá      tá      ká      mətá      nò      náḡ-kàá      tàa                  yòo      lò-n<sup>14</sup> ...  
of-them    LOC of     three    BG each-one   PFV.take   magic   of-3S.LOG  
[TOP                                       ]    nò   [TOP   ]   [COMMENT                                       ]

(to enable him to win the woman from his friends). [MBAY; Keegan 1999: 45]

To sum up, MBAY uses three different markers for indicating background information:

Structure	Function
[...] <b>dá</b> , ...	Subject as topic      Object as topic      Adjunct as frame
[...] <b>à</b> , ...	Subject as topic
[...] <b>nò</b> , ...	Subject as topic

Table 8: Form and function of preposed topical/background information in MBAY

MBAY uses preposing for topics or frame setters less frequently than other Sara-Bagirmi languages presented here. It makes use of subordination. The form and function of subordination in MBAY will be discussed in more detail in section 2.3.4.3.

<sup>14</sup> In MBAY, the gloss 3S refers to *á* as well as to *ṇ*, because both refer to an object in 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular. While *ṇ* functions as logophoric pronoun, *á* doesn't show such restriction:

- |     |  |             |     |    |                 |                          |
|-----|--|-------------|-----|----|-----------------|--------------------------|
| i)  | Súu  | èl-á        | àn  | kə | àdə- <b>n̄</b>  | bíkə.                    |
|     | PN   | PFV.tell-3S | say | P  | PFV.give-3S.LOG | pen                      |
|     | Suu <sub>i</sub> told him <sub>j</sub> to give him <sub>i</sub> a pen. |             |     |    |                 | [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 163] |
| ii) | Súu  | èl-á        | àn  | kə | àdə- <b>á</b>   | bíkə.                    |
|     | PN   | PFV.tell-3S | say | P  | PFV.give-3S     | pen                      |
|     | Suu <sub>i</sub> told him <sub>i</sub> to give him <sub>k</sub> a pen. |             |     |    |                 | [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 163] |

The logophoric pronoun *n̄* in i) requires reference to the subject, the object affix *á* in ii) does not.

### 2.3.3.4 Preposed topical/background information in NGAMBAY

NGAMBAY uses preposing for identifying aboutness topics (42a), and frame setters (42b):

(42a) Subject as aboutness topic

Ma lé, m-ra kùlà tàgónè.

1S BG 1S-PFV.do work yesterday

[TOP] lé [COMMENT ]

Me, I did the work yesterday. [NGAMBAY; Thayer & Thayer 1971 III: 66]

(42b) Temporal adverbial as frame setter

Tàgónè lé, m- ra kùlà kènég.

yesterday BG 1S- PFV.do work then-of

[FRAME] lé [TOP] [COMMENT ]

Yesterday, I did (the) work then. [NGAMBAY; Thayer & Thayer 1971 III: 66]

In (42a), the subject appears in the left periphery and is marked by *lé*. (42b) shows the co-occurrence of the frame setter and the unmarked subject topic. Although I have no example of objects, the available examples show that marker *lé* is used for subjects and non-subjects:

Marker	Function
[...] <i>lé</i> , ...	Subject as topic Adjunct as frame (Object as topic)

Table 9: Form and function of preposed topical/background information in NGAMBAY

### 2.3.4 Background marking (without extra-posing)

In addition to the strategies for identifying topics presented in the previous section, this section focuses on strategies that employ morphological marking without extra-posing – at least for the background part. As outlined in the introduction, these strategies are very commonly used for identifying the background part(s) in focus constructions. For this reason, it seems more appropriate to use here the term “focus-background structure” rather than “topic-comment structure”. Many of the constructions presented in this section contain background markers with more than one function. Some markers are used to express definiteness or they occur at the end of relative or causal clauses. As these functions interact with topic/background marking, thus they will be presented here as well.



#### 2.3.4.1 Background marking in BAGIRMI

(43a) *Wh*-question with *wh*-subject pronoun

(43b) *Wh*-question with attributive *wh*-pronoun

(44a) Definiteness marked by *ná*

kro      ná  
donkey DET  
the donkey (a donkey we have in mind) [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 126]

(44b) Definiteness marked by *nii*

ngal kudj     **nii**     kii  
in     house     DET   DEM  
in the house (we can see over there)     [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 126]

*Ná* occurs as determiner, too – even in the focused part of the sentence:

- (45) Definiteness marked by *ná*  
 {Who cooked millet gruel?}  
 Ngaɓ ná ɗáŋ táɗà.  
 person DET T.FOC PFV.do  
 [FOC ] ɗáŋ [BG]  
 The MAN did (it). [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

Beyond assigning definiteness, as shown in (44) and (45), *ná* functions as pragmatic marker. With this function, it appears also at the end of relative clauses. Relative clauses in BAGIRMI are always introduced by *ga* and finished by marker *ná*:

- (46) Relative clause marked by *ná*  
 {Who bought the donkey yesterday at the market?}  
 Ngaɓ ga ndugo kro kéɗɛ tɛprɛ kasko ná, née Boukar.  
 person REL PFV.buy donkey IDEF yesterday market BG 3S PN  
 [ga ná]  
 The person that bought a donkey at the market was Boukar. [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

From a pragmatic point of view, one can assume that *ná* is a polyfunctional background marker; it is used for identifying the old, given or presupposed information in the sentence.

Returning to the structure of (43a), here repeated as (47).

- (47) [Naŋ]<sub>FOC</sub> ɗáŋ [taɗ djùm tɛŋ ngal [kudj]<sub>DEF</sub> nii kii]<sub>BG</sub> ná wà?  
 [FOC] ɗáŋ [BG ] ná

In (47), marker *ná* appears twice. First, it occurs as *nii* and assigns definiteness to the preceding noun. Second, it appears immediately before the question particle. In this position, it takes scope over the whole verb phrase and marks it as background. As stated above, this construction is information-structurally double marked by morphology: The focus part is marked by *ɗáŋ*, and the background part is marked by *ná*.

Marker	Function
<b>ná</b>	Definiteness      Background (focus and relative constructions)      Preposed topics and frame setter
<b>lá</b>	Preposed topics
<b>(go) lé</b>	Preposed topics

Table 10: Form and function of background marking in BAGIRMI

KENGA shows the same distribution of the generic background marker as BAGIRMI. Here, marker *sé* appears in focus constructions for indicating the non-focused part:

- The subordinated clause *kén naaí áán* ‘when you arrived’ is marked by the background marker *sé*. The main clause is not explicitly marked, but it can be interpreted as focus, because it contains the (inherently focused) question particle. Marker *sé* is used to mark definiteness:

- |       |   |                         |
|-------|---|-------------------------|
| (49a) | Definiteness marked by <i>sé</i><br>gààbà <b>sé</b><br>man      DEF<br>l'homme (the man – PJ) | [KENG; Neukom 2010: 81] |
| (49b) | gààb-mí <b>sé</b><br>man-DEM   DEF<br>cet homme (qui est là) (this man over there – PJ)       | [KENG; Neukom 2010: 81] |

In addition, it indicates the end of a relative clause:

(50) Relative clause marked by *sé*

Naaí áák gààb-ní dòn gínj ki sé?  
 2S 2S.see man-REL on.CONN camel LOC BG  
 [ní sé]

Tu vois l’homme sur le chameau (l’homme qui est sur le chameau)?

(Do you see the man (who is) on the camel? – PJ) [KENG; Neukom 2010: 79]

In KENG, marker *sé* is a polyfunctional marker. The summary lists its functions including the findings from section 2.3.3.2:

Marker	Function
<i>sé</i>	Definiteness      Background (focus and relative constructions)      Preposed topics and frame setter
<i>lè</i>	Preposed topics and frame setters

Table 11: Form and function of background marking in KENG

### 2.3.4.3 Background marking in MBAY

In MBAY, the markers mentioned in section 2.3.3.3 can occur in constructions without preposing as well. For indicating focus, MBAY shows – in contrast to BAGIRMI and KENG – obligatory “morphological double marking”. That means that both pragmatic parts of the sentence must be explicitly marked for their information-structural status: The focus part is marked by a focus marker, and the background part is marked by a background marker.

MBAY exhibits many different pragmatic markers. Keegan (1997: 116ff.) separates these so-called “end-of-clause markers” into two groups. First, the markers *dá*, *nò* and *yé*, which mark the end of a relative clause that modifies a definite noun, and second, the markers *à*, *àne* and *dá*, which occur in *if*-clauses only. Interestingly, marker *dá* is found in both groups. The data show that at least marker *dá* cannot be limited to such (syntactic) function, because it is predominantly used for information-structural purposes, especially for indicating topical information. I assume that all these markers are always used for indicating background. Unfortunately, Keegan (1997) gives no information about the development of the markers or parallels to possible lexical cognates.

Marker *nò* occurs predominantly in constructions indicating definiteness:

- The example shows that the construction [ń ... dá] is used for expressing ‘when’. The first element of the construction, the demonstrative *ń*, is not a typical marker, nevertheless, it must be considered as belonging to the construction. In the literature, *ń* is described as complementizer (Keegan 1997: 119ff.). Interestingly, it occurs in focus constructions as well:

(54) Background marking by *dá*

Ngon    *ń-tèn*    **dá**    *k-ày*            *kàsè*    *ń*    *à*    *ày*            **dá.**  
 child    DEM    BG    INF-drink    alcohol    that    IPFV    drink    BG  
 [            *ń*            *dá*]    [FOC]            [            *ń*                            *dá*]

This boy really drinks a lot.

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 151]

The example contains more than one background part: First, the preposed aboutness topic, marked by [*ń ... dá*], and second, the in-situ background part, marked by [*ń ... dá*] again. Such “multiple backgrounds” are found in nearly all Sara-Bagirmi languages. The structure presented in (54), especially the form and function of the verbal iteration in the focus part, will be explained in more detail in section 2.4.2.2.1.

To summarize, MBAY has (at least) four background markers, which show the following functions. Interestingly, these markers are in focus constructions obligatory:

Marker	Function
<b>nò</b>	Definiteness Preposed topics
<b>dá</b>	Background (focus and other constructions) Preposed topics and frame setters
<b>yé</b>	Background (focus constructions)
<b>à</b>	Preposed topics

Table 12: Form and function background marking in MBAY

#### 2.3.4.4 Background marking in NGAMBAY

In NGAMBAY, marker *lé* can be used in constructions without preposing. If *lé* follows a noun, it assigns definiteness to it:

(55) Definiteness marked by *lé*

maktub-jə    **lé**  
 book-P            DEF  
 the books

[NGAMBAY; Thayer & Thayer 1971 III: 18]

(56) Relative clause marked by *lé*

When I go to the market, I see you then only.

[NGAMBAY; Thayer & Thayer 1971 III: 66]

Marker	Function		
lé	Definiteness	Background (relative constructions)	Preposed topics and frame setters

### 2.3.5 Summary: Topic and background

Strategies	BAGIRMI	KENGA	MBAY	NGAMBAY
Unmarked	[TOP] [COM]	[TOP] [COM]	[TOP] [COM]	[TOP] [COM]
Preposing	[TOP] ná	[TOP] sé	[TOP] dá	[TOP] lé
	[TOP] lá	[TOP] lè	[TOP] à	
	[TOP] (go) lé		[TOP] nò	
In-situ	[BG] ná	[BG] sé	[BG] nò	[BG] lé
	[FOC] dǎŋ [BG] ná	[FOC] [BG] sé	[FOC] la [BG] yé	
			[FOC] [BG] ní dá	
	[REL ga] ná	[REL mí] sé	[REL ní] dá	[REL gǎ] lé

Table 14: Strategies for marking topical/background information in Sara-Bagirmi

All languages presented here identify the (pragmatically unmarked) subject of the sentence as default topic, and the verb phrase as comment. Therefore, no special marking for the subject is required (cf. Givón 1976: 154, Fiedler et al. 2010: 242ff.). For the actual interpretation, topical/background information can be marked by morphosyntactic means. The languages under study use preposing structures and in-situ strategies as well.

As shown in the table, each language has its own inventory of background markers. In all constructions, the background marker takes scope over the previous constituent, i.e. it is always left-scoping. One can assume that all languages have a generic marker for many of the functions: Marker *ná* in BAGIRMI, marker *sé* in KENGA, marker *dá* in MBAY, and marker *lé* in NGAMBAY. In addition to this generic marker, there are some special markers. Here, it is interesting that MBAY uses information-structural markers often in fixed constructions.

Some of the constructions with background markers show restrictions to special functions:

Function	BAGIRMI	KENGA	MBAY	NGAMBAY
<b>Definiteness</b>	[BG] ná	[BG] sé	[BG] nó	[BG] lé
<b>Subordination</b>	[REL ga] ná	[REL mí] sé	[REL ní] dá	[REL gó] lé
<b>Background</b>	[FOC] dáj [BG] ná	[FOC] [BG] sé	[FOC] la [BG] yé [FOC] [BG ní] dá	
<b>Topic (SBJ)</b>	[TOP] ná/lá	[TOP] sé/lè	[TOP] dá/à/nó	[TOP] lé
<b>Topic (OBJ)</b>	[TOP] ná	[TOP] sé/lè	[TOP] dá	
<b>Contrastive</b>	[TOP] (go) lé			
<b>Frame setting</b>	[TOP] ná	[TOP] sé	[TOP] dá	[TOP] lé

Table 15: The functions of topic/background marking strategies in Sara-Bagirmi

The table shows that the background markers fulfill different functions; they

- express definiteness,
- occur at the end of relative clauses,
- indicate the background part in focus constructions, or
- identify preposed topics.

Beyond these common features of the markers, there are language-internal characteristics. BAGIRMI uses the marker *ná* for nearly all of the functions. In addition, there are two special



markers, which are restricted to special usages. Marker *lá* marks subjects as topics only and marker (go) *lé* marks exclusively (parallel) contrastive topics. In KENGA, a similar coincidence is found for the generic marker *sé* and the additional marker *lè*. Interestingly, both markers do not show such clear spreading as in BAGIRMI. MBAY uses probably the marker *dá* as generic marker. The marker *nò* indicates definiteness, and the marker *yé* is restricted to background marking, but only in a fixed construction with focus marker *la*. Unfortunately, the literature for NGAMBAY gives no information about a bigger range of functions of the marker *lé*.

As already noted above, the languages under study use very frequently constructions with background markers for indicating focus. Constructions with more than one background marker in a single sentence are not extraordinary.

## 2.4 Focus and foreground

This section presents the focus marking strategies existing in Sara-Bagirmi. As said already for the preceding sections, it is not an attempt to give an exhaustive list of all focus strategies available in Sara-Bagirmi. Rather, the examples presented from only a few sample languages seek to highlight the (major) strategies within the language family.

After an introduction to the concept of focus and its realization in section 2.4.1, section 2.4.2 presents the formal encoding means used for expressing focus in Sara-Bagirmi, and section 2.4.3 the functional variety of focus.

### 2.4.1 The concept of focus and foreground

#### 2.4.1.1 The nature of focus

According to Dik (1997), focus is characterized as the most important or salient information in an utterance. This definition covers with emphasis on importance and saliency not the entire concept of focus. Previously mentioned information can also gain prominence for the means of contrast. An overall definition that unifies the notion of novelty, significance and contrast explains focus as a category involving “the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions” (Krifka & Musan 2012: 7).

Depending on the scope of the element in focus, one can differentiate between narrow term focus and non-term focus. The latter one includes wide focus, i.e. i) focus on the whole verb phrase and sentence focus, and ii) narrow predicate-centered focus (in the sense of Güldemann 2009, Güldemann et al. 2010). Figure 5 illustrates the concept of predicate-centered focus, which is in the centre of interest in this work.

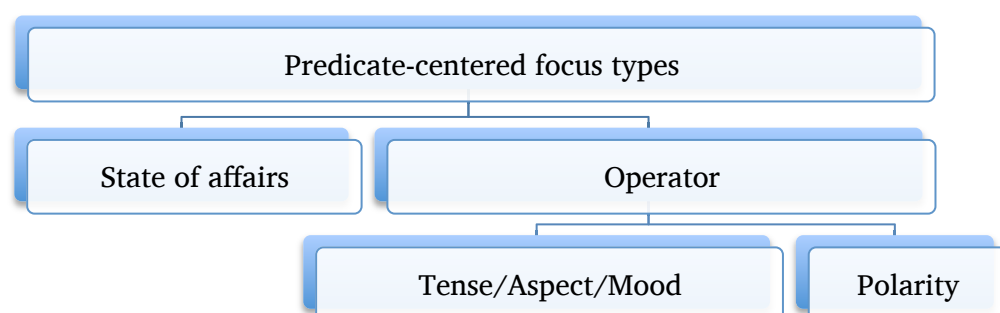


Figure 5: Basic sub-classification of PCF (Güldemann 2009, Güldemann et al. 2010)

Predicate-centered focus types subsume i) focus on the lexical meaning of the verb (“state of affairs” or SoA focus) and focus on sentential operators. The latter one can be split into ii) focus on the tense, aspect or mood operator (TAM focus), and iii) focus on the truth value of the utterance (polarity focus).

The special position of predicate-centered focus in contrast to non-predicate focus types results from the function of the predicate. It bears the illocution of the sentence and is associated with finiteness (in the sense of Klein 1998). The predicate plays a central role in the sentence. It could be defined (together with the object) as default focus.

Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb refers – like term focus – to a lexical element:

(57) Q: What did the princess do with the frog?

A: She KISSED him.

[ENGLISH; Güldemann et al. 2010: 1]

TAM focus and polarity focus indicate focus on a sentential operator. While TAM focus emphasizes the tense, aspect or mood operator, as shown in (58), polarity focus can be interpreted as focus on the “truth value”, as shown in (59).

(58) Q: Is the princess kissing the frog (right now)?

A: She HAS kissed him.

[ENGLISH; Güldemann et al. 2010: 1]

(59a) A: I cannot imagine that the princess kissed the slippery frog.

B: Yes, she DID kiss him.

[ENGLISH; Güldemann et al. 2010: 1]

(59b) A: The princess kissed the slippery frog.

B: No, she DIDN'T kiss him.

The examples in (59) illustrate the presence of alternatives. For both contexts, the reply can be positive (*Yes, she DID kiss him.*) or negative (*No, she DIDN'T kiss him.*). In the literature, the surveys on “truth value” go back to Gussenhoven (1984). Höhle (1992: 118) investigated this phenomenon with respect to the GERMAN stress and coined the term “verum”. Although most authors refer to “truth value” and “verum”, here the term “polarity” will be used, because it includes negative polarity, as shown in (59b), as well.

#### 2.4.1.2 Remarks on formal encoding of focus

The formal encoding of focus differs from language to language. Here, I will concentrate on the realization of predicate-centered focus types. This sub-group of focus can be marked e.g. i) by prosodic means, like stress on the lexical verb, the auxiliary, or the complementizer (as in GERMAN), ii) by morphological means, like focus markers, special verb morphology, or

additional lexical material, or iii) by morphosyntactic means, like the conjoint/disjoint distinction (as in many Bantu languages), *do*-support/*tun*-periphrasis, or verbal iteration.

The interpretation of focus is often ambiguous, i.e. one structure bears more than one function, as shown in the example from GERMAN:

- (60) Die Prinzessin KÜSST den Frosch/ihn.  
The princess KISSES the frog/he.

This sentence can indicate – with the suitable context, as created in the following examples – focus on the lexical meaning of the verb (61a), focus on the polarity operator (61b), or focus on the TAM operator (61c).

- (61a) {What does the princess do with the frog?} Sie KÜSST den Frosch/ihn.  
(61b) {Does the princess really kiss the frog?} Sie KÜSST den Frosch/ihn.  
(61c) {When will the princess kiss the frog?} Sie KÜSST den Frosch/ihn (gerade).

The ambiguity can be explained by the fact that the host of predicate-centred focus marking usually is the predicate. This is evidence that the finite verb contains three semantic constituents that may be highlighted: i) the lexical meaning, ii) the tense marking, or iii) finiteness (which leads to polarity focus). Disambiguation is possible when the predicate consists of more than one element, e.g. in periphrastic structures with an auxiliary and a lexical verb. If the lexical verb is marked as focus (in ENGLISH or GERMAN realized by stress), the structure refers exclusively to focus on the lexical meaning of the verb, as shown in (62b). If the auxiliary bears the stress, the structure refers to operator focus, as shown in (62c).

- (62a) The princess KISSES the frog. Predicate contains lexical and functional host  
(62b) The princess is KISSING the frog. Splited host: stress is on the lexical host  
(62c) The princess IS kissing the frog. Splited host: stress is on the functional host

In addition to periphrastic structures, languages can split the predicate by repeating the verb (cf. “predicate partition” by Güldemann et al. 2015a). This strategy is very productive in Sara-Bagirmi languages, and will thus be discussed in section 2.4.1.3 in greater detail. As already said, stress on verbs that lack such “predicate partition” is highly ambiguous; but the ambiguity can be dissolved, if needed, by adding lexical material, which targets clearly focus on the relevant element:

- (63a) Die Prinzessin KÜSST den Frosch.  
The princess KISSES the frog. – Not: She throws him against the wall.

- (63b) Die Prinzessin küsst den Frosch **tatSÄCHlich**/**WIRKlich**.  
 The princess DOES (indeed) kiss the frog. – Not: She doesn't kiss him.
- (63c) Die Prinzessin küsst den Frosch **jetzt geRAde**.  
 The princess IS kissing the frog (right now). – Not: She'll kiss him tomorrow.

As shown in (63b), polarity focus can be expressed by adding *tatsächlich* or *wirklich* 'indeed/ really'. Focus on the TAM operator can be marked by adding *jetzt gerade* 'just now', as illustrated in (63c). One can see that the stress always moves to the additional (adverbial) material when the operator is in focus.

Some languages express the functional differences among the predicate-centered focus types by different structures. Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb could be marked e.g. by the same means as term focus, while operator focus could be expressed by special strategies.

The formal encoding of operator focus often depends on language-internal conditions, because it interacts in some languages with other verbal categories. In BAGIRMI, the construction for marking TAM focus is restricted to the perfective aspect, while the construction for marking polarity focus occurs only in the imperfective aspect. This is supported by at least two observations. First, some languages realize pragmatic functions (operator focus) by the same means as grammatical functions (TAM marking), and second, some TAM forms have a greater focal potential than others. In many languages, the progressive, for instance, could be analyzed as an "inherently focused verb category" (Güldemann 2003: 323) that often lacks (additional) focus marking. The same holds for the perfect, which refers sometimes to focus on the perfect operator.

In addition, polarity focus often requires a special encoding. In GERMAN or ENGLISH, focus on the lexical meaning of the verb and TAM focus are realized by stress on the predicate, while polarity focus shows deviating marking strategies. In GERMAN, it can be expressed by using subordinate strategies or the *tun*-periphrasis, and in ENGLISH, it is expressed by the *do*-support. This can be explained by the fact that the polarity operator takes (per default) scope over the whole proposition, whereby the TAM operator takes scope over exclusively the finite part of the predicate. The functional difference between polarity focus and the other predicate-centered focus types is displayed by different encoding means. Here, the presence of a negator allows disambiguation by "predicate partition" again:

- (64a) Die Prinzessin hat den Frosch **NICHT** geküsst.  
 The princess (really) DIDN'T kiss the frog.
- (64b) Die Prinzessin hat den Frosch nicht **GEKÜSST** (, sondern an die Wand geworfen).  
 The princess didn't KISS the frog (, but throw him against the wall).

- (64c) Die Prinzessin **HAT** den Frosch nicht geküsst (, sie wird ihn aber noch küssen).  
 The princess **DIDN'T** kiss the frog (, but she **WILL** kiss him).

In GERMAN, the location of the stress illustrates the differences in scope. For negative polarity focus, the stress is on the negator, as shown in (64a). The stressed negator takes scope over the whole proposition – this is a clear case of sentence negation. In contrast to this, neither TAM focus nor focus on the lexical meaning of the verb show stress on the negator. Negative focus on the lexical meaning of the verb is realized by stress on the lexical verb, as shown in (64b), and negative TAM focus is realized by stress on the auxiliary, as shown in (64c). Both examples display constituent negation.

### 2.4.1.3 Remarks on formal encoding of focus in Sara-Bagirmi

The Sara-Bagirmi languages under study show a great variety of focus marking strategies. Many of these strategies combine syntactic and morphological means; others use primarily syntactic or morphological marking. Some strategies are used for term focus only; others are preferably used to mark predicate-centered focus.

One of the main strategies for marking saliency is extraposing. In Sara-Bagirmi, mainly preposing structures are found, and they always follow the same pattern: The pragmatically marked element occurs not in its canonical position, but in the left periphery of the sentence. All languages under study use this strategy, especially for the expression of term focus. In addition to this syntactic marking, the construction also makes use of morphological markers. The need for explicit marking can be explained by the fact that the left periphery can host topical elements as well (cf. Rizzi 1997, Güldemann i.p.). Thus, the information-structural status of the construction with preposed elements must be clearly indicated.

Predicate-centered focus is frequently marked by structures with verbal iteration. “Verbal iteration” is used here as a cover term for a special form of repetition: two lexically identical verb forms co-occur; one of these verb forms is finite and the other one, non-finite. To avoid terminological misunderstandings, I should note here that “repetition” (which includes verbal iteration) should not be confused with “reduplication”:

*Repetition* and *reduplication* are superficially similar phenomena characterized by the iteration of linguistic material. By definition, repetition and reduplication differ in the following way: whereas repetition applies across words, and is therefore subsumed under syntax or discourse, reduplication applies within words, and is consequently taken to be part of morphology. Accordingly, the distinction between repetition and reduplication rests crucially on the notion of *word* (Gil 2005: 31 – italics in original).

While Gil (2005) emphasizes the structural differences, Stolz (2015) implicitly contradicts and presents a more functionally-based distinction:

REDUPLICATION and REPETITION are not distributed over disjunct domains (such as word-based morphology for REDUPLICATION and syntax for REPETITION). Both are licit inside and outside the word. They may even conspire word-internally. Still, their distribution is not the same because REPETITION sides with pragmatics and style whereas REDUPLICATION is a matter of grammar and lexicon (Stolz 2015: 80 – upper cases in original).

I will classify verbal iteration in Sara-Bagirmi as a sub-group of repetition in the sense of Stolz (2015): Its predominantly pragmatic function confirms the functional distribution.

The repetition of the verb fulfills a similar function as a periphrastic structure, as described in 2.4.1.2. The partition of the predicate allows a clear disambiguation, because the complex information hosted on the predicate can be distributed over the finite and the non-finite part of the verbal complex. The information-structural marking of at least one of the verb forms indicates focus either on the lexical meaning of the verb or on a sentential operator (for expressing TAM or polarity focus).

Structurally, verbal iteration can be embedded in different constructions. It occurs either in biclausal split structures, as shown in (65a), or as in-situ verb doubling, as shown in (65b).

- (65a) Verb preposing structure:  $[V_{INF}] \quad [... V_{FIN} ...]$   
 (65b) In-situ verb doubling structure:  $[... V_{FIN} ... V_{INF} ...]$

In split structures, the non-finite verb form is preposed, it means that it occurs in the position before the clause, and it is followed by the core clause with the finite verb form. In-situ verb doubling structures show always an inverse order of the verb forms: the finite verb precedes the non-finite verb.

The split structures, namely the structures with preposed non-finite verb forms, can be further differentiated, according to Güldemann et al. (2010), into “verb focus preposing” with the structure in (66a), and “verb topic preposing” with the structure in (66b):

- (66a) Verb focus preposing:  $[V_{INF}]_{FOC} \quad [... V_{FIN} ...]_{BG}$   
 (66b) Verb topic preposing:  $[V_{INF}]_{BG} \quad [... V_{FIN} ...]_{FOC}$

Both constructions show differences in form and function. One can assume that the function of each construction triggers the special form. Güldemann et al. (2010) illustrates the structural consequences of the functional differences as follows:

Verb focus preposing is characterized by a preposed predicate, which must be interpreted as focus. The intra-clausal predicate is more or less marked as background. It is reduced or deranked or, simply said, less asserted, as shown in (67a). The interpretation of verb focus preposing could be described as ‘*VERBing X VERB*’. It usually marks focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. In contrast, verb topic preposing is characterized by a preposed predicate, which must be interpreted as topic, because the intra-clausal predicate is asserted, as shown in (67b). The interpretation of verb topic preposing could be described as ‘As for *verbing*, (I assert that) *X verbs*’ or ‘*X DOES verb*’, which usually express operator focus.

(67a) [Preposed predicate]<sup>FOCUS</sup> (PIVOT) [Less asserted reduced predicate]<sup>TOPIC</sup>

(67b) [Preposed predicate]<sup>TOPIC</sup> (PIVOT) [Asserted main clause predicate]<sup>FOCUS</sup>

In contrast to the preposing structures, some in-situ verb-doubling constructions are marked by syntax as well, but they lack often additionally morphological marking. I assume that morphological marking is redundant, since the non-finite verb form occurs in a dedicated focus position.

## 2.4.2 Formal encoding of focus

This section provides an overview over the strategies used for realizing focus in Sara-Bagirmi. Section 2.4.2.1 starts with unmarked focus in Sara-Bagirmi. The following sections present marked focus constructions. Section 2.4.2.2 concentrates on “focus preposing”, and section 2.4.2.3 on “topic preposing”. This strategy has not to be confused with topics in the left periphery (in section 2.3.3), because the constructions presented here can be characterized as special strategies for indicating focus. Section 2.4.2.4 focuses on constructions with in-situ verb doubling, which are exclusively used for realizing predicate-centered focus. Beyond the primarily syntactic constructions, there are morphological constructions as well, which will be presented in section 2.4.2.5. Section 2.4.2.6 summarizes the findings and compares the strategies with each other. It points to clear similarities and language-internal differences as well.

### 2.4.2.1 Unmarked focus

Sara-Bagirmi languages make – as many other languages (cf. Fiedler et al. 2010) – the well-known differentiation between subjects and non-subjects in terms of how focus is realized: Focused subjects must be marked, while focused non-subjects need not to be marked. They can appear in their canonical position without any morphological marking:



- (68a) Canonical sentence structure – for expressing assertive focus on the object  
 {What did Boukar buy at the market yesterday?}  
 Boukar ndugo kro kɛɛ tɛprɛ kasko.  
 PN PFV.buy donkey IDEF yesterday market  
 Boukar bought A DONKEY at the market yesterday. [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]
- (68b) Canonical sentence structure – for expressing focus on the polarity operator  
 {Les enfants ont (bien) dormi, n'est-ce pas?  
 (Did the children sleep well, didn't they? – PJ)}  
 Gààn ge tòòɗ-gà paac.  
 child P 3P.sleep-PERF all  
 Les enfants ont tous bien dormi.  
 (All the children slept very well. – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 259]
- (68c) Canonical sentence structure – for expressing focus on the temporal adverbial  
 M-ndoko kubbu-je tàkónè.  
 1S.PFV-buy clothes-P yesterday  
 I bought clothes YESTERDAY. [KABBA; Moser 2004: 410]

The examples in (68) show that non-subject focus does not require formal focus marking. This holds especially true for “assertive focus” in the sense of Dik (1997: 331ff.) and Lambrecht (1994: 282ff.). The so-called “communicative point” refers to the difference between assertive or information focus, which is typically found in answers to *wh*-questions, as shown in (69a), and contrastive focus, which is typically indicated by a presented or pre-supposed alternative, as shown in (69b).

- (69a) Assertive focus  
 {What have you done with my money?} I SPENT it. [ENGLISH; Dik 1997: 335]
- (69b) Contrastive focus  
 {John bought apples.} No, he bought BANANAS. [ENGLISH; Dik 1997: 333]

While assertive focus is primarily used to fill an information gap, as shown in (69a), contrastive focus implies that “a particular focus content or a particular speech act containing a focus is unexpected for the hearer from the speaker’s perspective” (Zimmermann 2008: 348). Example (69b) shows “replacing” as a sub-group of contrastive focus, where one existing piece is replaced by another. In general, one would expect more marking for contrast than for assertive focus. Interestingly, BAGIRMI does not show such functional differentiation. It realizes contrast, as shown in (70), by the same means as assertive focus, as shown in (68a).

(70) Canonical sentence structure – for expressing contrastive focus on the object

{Did Boukar buy a camel at the market yesterday?}

Ée'è, Boukar ndugo kro kɛɛ tɛprɛ kasko.

no PN PFV.buy donkey IDEF yesterday market

No, Boukar bought A DONKEY at the market yesterday. [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 140]

The example (70) shows the same type of contrastive focus (“replacing”) as illustrated in (69b), but it is expressed by the canonical sentence structure without any morphological marking. As discussed in Jacob (2010: 140f.), morphosyntactic focus marking is triggered in BAGIRMI only by structural requirements, and not by the communicative point.

Although non-subjects do not require any morphosyntactic focus marking, there are several strategies for indicating the information-structural status in a clear way. These strategies will be presented in the following sections, starting with focus preposing structures.

#### 2.4.2.2 Focus preposing structures

In most Sara-Bagirmi languages, focus preposing is restricted to mark terms as focus. MBAY and SAR use this strategy for both term focus and non-term focus:

(71a) Term focus preposing: [NP]<sub>FOC</sub> [...]<sub>BG</sub>

(71b) Verb focus preposing: [V<sub>INF</sub>]<sub>FOC</sub> [... V<sub>FIN</sub> ...]<sub>BG</sub>

The so-called “verb focus preposing” is the sub-group of focus preposing structures, which is primarily used for expressing predicate-centered focus. The construction consists of preposing and verbal iteration, where the non-finite verb form appears at the left periphery and is interpreted as focus.

Although the marking of term focus and predicate-centered focus is realized by using the same type of construction, it will be subdivided here into two groups. Focus preposing for marking term focus is presented in section 2.4.2.2.1, where I discuss the strategies used in BAGIRMI, KENGA, NGAMBAY, KABBA, MBAY, and SAR. Focus preposing for expressing predicate-centered focus will be in the center of interest in section 2.4.2.2.2, and it will be illustrated with examples from MBAY and SAR.

#### 2.4.2.2.1 Term focus preposing

Term focus preposing in Sara-Bagirmi usually follows the same structure: The focal part is preposed and marked by a morphological focus marker. In BAGIRMI, KENGA, NGAMBAY and KABBA, the left-scoping focus marker functions as a “pivot” (Güldemann et al. 2010: 8) or “index” (Güldemann 2016: 554) that separates the focus part from the background part:

- (72) NP < FM core clause  
[FOC] FM [BG]

In MBAY, the background part is (in addition to the morphological marking of the focus part) marked explicitly by a background marker. Here, the obligatory background marker must be seen as part of the construction:

- (73) NP < FM core clause < BM  
[FOC] FM [BG] BM

In SAR, the marker takes scope over the element that follows. Beyond this focus marker, the construction requires an “index” that separates the focus part from the background part:

- (74) FM > NP – core clause  
FM [FOC] [BG]

Structures with preposed terms are found in all of the languages under study. Section 2.4.2.2.1.1 presents term focus preposing in BAGIRMI, section 2.4.2.2.1.2 in KENGA, section 2.4.2.2.1.3 in NGAMBAY, section 2.4.2.2.1.4 in KABBA, section 2.4.2.2.1.5 in MBAY and section 2.4.2.2.1.6 in SAR.

##### 2.4.2.2.1.1 Term focus preposing in BAGIRMI

BAGIRMI uses a construction which shows focus preposing in combination with morphological marking by the left-scoping focus marker *ɗáj*. The marker can take scope over subjects, as shown in (75a), objects (75b), or adjuncts (75c).

- (75a) Term focus preposing – scope over the subject  
{Who cooked millet gruel in the house yesterday?}  
Boukar *ɗáj* táɗ djùm tɛŋ tɛprɛ ngalá.  
PN T.FOC PFV.do gruel millet yesterday inside  
[FOC] *ɗáj* [BG]  
BOUKAR cooked millet gruel in (the house) yesterday. [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 123]

## (75b) Term focus preposing – scope over the object

{What did Boukar buy at the market yesterday?}

Kro kɛɖɛ **ɗáj**, Boukar ndugo tɛprɛ kasko.  
 donkey IDEF T.FOC PN PFV.buy yesterday market  
 [FOC ] **ɗáj** [BG ]

Boukar bought a DONKEY at the market yesterday. [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 125]

## (75c) Term focus preposing – scope over the temporal adverbial

{Where did Boukar buy a donkey?}

Tɛprɛ kasko **ɗáj**, Boukar ndugo kro.  
 yesterday market T.FOC PN PFV.buy donkey  
 [FOC ] **ɗáj** [BG ]

Boukar bought a donkey AT THE MARKET YESTERDAY.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 128]

The examples show that the extraposition of non-subjects – in addition to the morphology – is marked by a pause, which is indicated by the komma between the preposed and the non-preposed part, as shown in (75b-c). Subjects lack such prosodic marking, as shown in (75a). Regardless this formal difference, I assume that both, subjects and non-subjects, are extraposed, because the focus marker occurs in preposing structures only. Marker *ɗáj* can be analyzed as term focus marker, which takes scope over the preceding term. It is only attested with nominal elements.

## 2.4.2.2.1.2 Term focus preposing in KENGA

The construction with the marker *ɓó* is attested with scope over subjects, as shown in (76a), objects (76b), or adjuncts (76c).

## (76a) Term focus preposing – scope over the subject

Maám **ɓó** m-a-ì k-ɛɖɛ.  
 1S T.FOC 1S-FUT-2S INF-give  
 [FOC ] **ɓó** [BG ]

C'est moi qui vais te le donner.

(It is ME who will give it to you. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 223]

- (76b) Term focus preposing – scope over the object

{À qui as-tu donné l'argent? (Whom did you give the money? – PJ)}

Korrà (ki) **ḃó** m-ɛɖ-iñ gûrs.

PN LOC T.FOC 1S-give-3S money

[FOC ] ḃó [BG ]

C'est à Korra que je l'ai donné.

(It is KORRA, whom I gave the money. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 224]

- (76c) Term focus preposing – scope over the temporal adverbial

{Quel jour ne travailleras-tu pas? Aujourd'hui ou demain?

(When will you not work? Today or tomorrow? – PJ)}

Jáákì **ḃó** mí-jèè tɛɖ èyo.today FOC 1S-FUT.want INF.do NEG<sup>15</sup>

[FOC ] ḃó [BG ]

C'est aujourd'hui que je ne veux pas travailler.

(It is TODAY that I will not (work). – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 224]

In parallel to BAGIRMI, the focus marker *ḃó* in KENGA can be described as a dedicated marker for term focus (cf. Neukom 2010: 223). In contrast to BAGIRMI, term focus preposing in KENGA is characterized by extraposing and morphological marking. There is no (additionally) prosodic marking. The construction is found with focus-sensitive particle *kìc*, emphasis marker *kéè* and negation, too:

- (77) Term focus preposing with scope over the subject

{Et là-bas, tu te construis ta case toi-même et tu y habites.

(And there, you build your own house and you live there. – PJ)}

Něm něm *kìc* **ḃó** *kéè*

person DUPL also FOC EMPH

[FOC ] *kìc* **ḃó** *kéè*

tónd mèt-n k-ɔg-ŋ ðim èyo.

3S.want after-CONN INF-pay-CONN thing NEG

[BG ]

Personne ne (te) demande de payer quelque chose.

(NOBODY wants you to pay for anything (lit. EVERYBODY don't want you to pay for anything). – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 262]

<sup>15</sup> The glossing deviates from Neukom (2010). It displays the description in Palayer (2004: 72, 162).

[KENG: Neukom 2010: 175]

The marker occurs in constuctions with scope over subjects, as shown in (78a), objects (78b), or adjuncts (78c). Unfortunately, the literature and the texts give no information either about other constructions used for expressing focus or about constructions indicating predicate-centered focus.

#### 2.4.2.2.1.4 Term focus preposing in KABBA

KABBA uses focus preposing in a construction with focus marker *á*, which is – at least – attested with scope over subjects, as shown in (79a), and objects (79b).

(79a) Term focus preposing – scope over the subject

Dèné ngo-màndè ké bàánn bbá màndè bè á wòy ...  
 woman child-beautiful REL like.this before beautiful much FOC PFV.die  
 [FOC ] á [BG ]

How can a beautiful girl like this die ... [KABBA; Moser 2004: 445]

(79b) Term focus preposing – scope over the object

Kubbu á m-ndoko tàkónè.  
 material FOC 1S-PFV.buy yesterday  
 [FOC ] á [BG ]

This is the material I bought yesterday. [KABBA; Moser 2004: 412]

In the literature, no information about the focus realization of adverbials or other focus types is found.

#### 2.4.2.2.1.5 Term focus preposing in MBAY

MBAY has, in contrast to other Sara-Bagirmi languages, a construction with focus preposing and morphological marking of both parts, the focus part and the background part. This “double marking” is obligatory:

(80a) Term focus preposing – scope over the subject

Súu la ndà ngon-ñ yé.  
 PN G.FOC PFV.hit child-3S.LOG BG  
 [FOC] la [BG ] yé

It was Suu<sub>i</sub> who hit his<sub>i</sub> child. [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 158]

(80b) Term focus preposing – scope over the object

Ngon-á la Súu ndà-á yé.  
 child-3S G.FOC PN PFV.hit-3S BG  
 [FOC ] la [BG ] yé

It was his child that Suu hit. [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 158]

The preposed element is marked as focus by the generic focus marker *la*, the rest of the sentence is marked as background by the background marker *yé*. Beyond the examples with term focus, the construction [FOC *la* BG *yé*] is found with non-term focus as well. This will be presented in section 2.4.2.2.2.

#### 2.4.2.2.1.6 Term focus preposing in SAR

In contrast to the constructions in other Sara-Bagirmi languages, SAR uses preposing structures without the left-scoping markers. It marks the preposed element by the right-scoping identification marker *ì*. The background part is always introduced by the complementizer *òn*:

##### (81a) Term focus preposing – scope over the subject

<i>ì</i>	<i>màdí</i>	<i>òn</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>tàgábe</i>	<i>ní</i> .
ID	friend.POSS.1S	that	PFV.arrive	yesterday	BG
<i>ì</i>	[FOC]	<i>òn</i>	[BG	]	<i>ní</i>

C'est ton ami qui est venu hier.

(It is YOUR FRIEND who arrived yesterday. – PJ) [SAR; Palayer 1970: 159]

##### (81b) Term focus preposing – scope over the temporal adverbial

<i>ì</i>	<i>tàgábe</i>	<i>òn</i>	<i>màdí</i>	<i>de</i>	<i>ní</i> .
ID	yesterday	that	friend.POSS.1S	PFV.arrive	BG
<i>ì</i>	[FOC]	<i>òn</i>	[BG	]	<i>ní</i>

C'est hier qui ton ami est arrivé.

(It is YESTERDAY when your friend arrived. – PJ) [SAR; Palayer 1970: 159]

The *òn* seems to be structurally required for indicating the biclausality of the construction:

##### (82a) Information-structural unmarked sentence

<i>Lábə</i>	<i>əsà</i>	<i>dəə</i> .
PN	PFV.eat	meat
[TOP]	[COMMENT	]

Labe a mangé la viande. (Labe ate meat. – PJ)

[SAR; Palayer 1989: 285]

##### (82b) Subject as aboutness topic

<i>Lábə</i>	<i>òn</i>	<i>əsà</i>	<i>dəə</i> .
PN	that	PFV.eat	meat
[TOP]	<i>òn</i>	[COMMENT	]

Labe, il a mangé la viande.

(As for Labe, he ate meat. – PJ)

[SAR; Palayer 1989: 285]



(82c) Assertive focus on the subject

Ì	lábə	̀̀	əsà	dəə.
ID	PN	that	PFV.eat	meat
ì	[FOC]	̀̀	[BG	]

C'est Labe qui a mangé la viande.

(It is LABE who ate meat. – PJ)

[SAR; Palayer 1989: 285]

Palayer (1989: 285) detected the information-structural influence of the extraposition, but unfortunately, he did not say anything about the function of the extraposed part. I assume that SAR exhibits two different preposing structures: the structure with a preposed (about-ness) topic on the one hand, as shown in (82b), and the structure with a preposed focus element on the other hand, as shown in (82c). Both structures, (82b) and (82c), differ in form and function. They include the *̀̀* which is glossed here as complementizer. In contrast to *̀̀*, the identificational marker *ì* occurs only in (82c). One can assume that it functions as right-scoping focus marker. The absence of this (obligatory) focus marker in (82b) is the crucial criterion for distinguishing both constructions from each other:

(83a) Structure with a preposed topic: [NP]<sub>TOP</sub> *̀̀* [...]

(83b) Structure for term focus preposing: *ì* [NP]<sub>FOC</sub> *̀̀* [...]

The phenomenon that only the absence of the morphological focus marker differentiates two constructions is found in KENGA as well, and will be described in section 2.4.2.3.2.1 again.

Comparing the focus constructions from 1970 in (81b) and 1989 in (82c), one can see that the marker *ní* following the background part is getting lost. This phenomenon is not mentioned in Palayer (1989). Nevertheless, I assume that both examples refer to one construction with the following characteristics: The right-scoping identificational *ì* marks the preposed element as focus, and the background part is introduced by the complementizer *̀̀*.

Term focus preposing in SAR is found with scope over the subject or an adverbial. The construction [*ì* FOC *̀̀* BG] occurs with scope over non-terms as well. This will be discussed in section 2.4.2.3.2.2.

#### 2.4.2.2.2 Verb focus preposing

In contrast to term focus preposing, verb focus preposing is characterized by the occurrence of verbal iteration. The non-finite verb form appears at the left periphery and is interpreted as focus. The finite verb form occurs in its canonical position in the core clause, and is interpreted as background:

$$(84) \quad \begin{array}{ccc} V_{\text{INF}} & - & \dots V_{\text{FIN}} \dots \\ [\text{FOC}] & & [\text{BG} \quad ] \end{array}$$

Based on the structure in (84), the languages under study differ formally. In one construction, both parts, the focus part and the background part, are obligatorily marked by morphology:

$$(85) \quad \begin{array}{ccccccc} V_{\text{INF}} & < & \text{FM} & \dots & V_{\text{FIN}} \dots & < & \text{BM} \\ [\text{FOC}] & & \text{FM} & & [\text{BG} \quad ] & & \text{BM} \end{array}$$

This construction is attested in MBAY only. Another construction shows morphological background marking, but lacks focus marking. Here, an “index” is required that separates the focus part from the background part:

$$(86) \quad \begin{array}{ccccccc} V_{\text{INF}} & - & \dots & V_{\text{FIN}} \dots & < & \text{BM} \\ [\text{FOC}] & & & [\text{BG} \quad ] & & \text{BM} \end{array}$$

This construction is found in MBAY as well. In SAR, the construction is characterized by the combination of right-scoping focus marker and “index”:

$$(87) \quad \begin{array}{ccccccc} \text{FM} & > & V_{\text{INF}} & - & \dots & V_{\text{FIN}} \dots \\ \text{FM} & & [\text{FOC}] & & [\text{BG} \quad ] \end{array}$$

Verb focus preposing is in the languages under study only attested in MBAY and SAR. Both languages use similar structures for expressing term focus and non-term focus. The other languages usually indicate term focus and predicate-centered focus by different means. Cross-linguistically, the use of the parallel strategies for expressing term focus and focus on the lexical meaning of the verb is not uncommon, because both fulfill similar functions, namely the marking of narrow focus on a lexical element.

The structures with verb focus preposing in MBAY will be presented in section 2.4.2.2.2.1, while section 2.4.2.2.2.2 concentrates on verb focus preposing in SAR.

#### 2.4.2.2.2.1 *Verb focus preposing in MBAY*

MBAY uses two constructions, which can be characterized as verb focus preposing: First, the construction [FOC la BG yé], as shown in section 2.4.2.2.2.1.1, and second, the construction [FOC í BG dá], as shown in section 2.4.2.2.2.1.2.

## 2.4.2.2.1.1 Verb focus preposing with the structure [FOC la BG yé]

The construction [FOC la BG yé], already presented in section 2.4.2.2.1.5, includes preposed terms on the one hand, as shown in (88a), and preposed non-terms on the other hand, as shown in (88b).

(88a) Term focus preposing in MBAY: [NP]<sub>FOC</sub> la [...] <sub>BG</sub> yé

(88b) Verb focus preposing in MBAY: [V<sub>INF</sub>]<sub>FOC</sub> la [... V<sub>FIN</sub> ...] <sub>BG</sub> yé

In contrast to term focus preposing, verb focus preposing involves verbal iteration:

(89) Verb focus preposing

... nà	<b>tɔɔ</b>	la	<b>tɔɔ</b>	yé.
but	INF.be.broken	G.FOC	PFV.be.broken	BG
	[FOC]	la	[BG]	yé

(No, I did put water in the pot;) it's just that it's BROKEN.

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 148]

The first verb, the non-finite verb form, is preposed and marked by the generic focus marker *la*. The second verb, the finite verb form, is marked by the background marker *yé*.

In contrast to my analysis, Keegan (1997: 147f.) describes the construction as “Verb Phrase + /la/ + Infinitive + /yé/”. As in many other Sara-Bagirmi languages, the non-finite form in MBAY is identical to the finite form (at least with verbs with an initial consonant). Vowel-initial verbs can be differentiated by infinitive prefix *k-* (Keegan 1997: 42), see also the information in section 1.3.3. Unfortunately, there is no example with this identifying prefix. Nevertheless, I analyze and gloss the structure in (89) as [V<sub>INF</sub> la V<sub>FIN</sub> yé]. My assumption is mainly based on the similarity between the construction mentioned in this section and the construction, which will be presented in section 2.4.2.2.2.1.2.

## 2.4.2.2.2.1.2 Verb focus preposing with the structure [FOC ní BG dá]

Beyond the construction presented in preceding section, MBAY possesses another focus preposing construction involving verbal iteration:

(90a) Verb focus preposing

Mótò	dá	<b>màjè</b>	ní	<b>màjè</b>	dá.
motorcycle	BG	INF.be.good	that	PFV.be.good	BG
[TOP]	dá	[FOC]	ní	[BG]	dá

This motorcycle is terrific! (lit. As for the motorcycle,  
it is GOOD that it is good. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 151]

- (90b) Ngon    *ń-tèn*    *dá*    **k-à̀y**    *kàsə*    *ń*    *à*    *à̀y*    *dá*.  
 child    DEM    BG    INF-drink    alcohol    that    IPFV    drink    BG  
 [TOP            ]    *dá*    [FOC            ]    *ń*    [BG        ]    *dá*  
 This boy really drinks a lot! (lit. As for this boy,  
 it is much ALCOHOL DRINKING, he drinks. – PJ)                      [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 151]

Both examples start with an aboutness topic marked by *dá*, followed by the non-finite verb, the complementizer *ń*, the finite verb and the background marker *dá*. Here, glossing and analysis of the verb forms are based on the description in the literature (Keegan 1997: 151).

In parallel to the construction in SAR, presented in section 2.4.2.2.1.6, I assume that the element *ń* seems to be structurally required for indicating the biclausality of the construction. Keegan (1997: 119ff.) classified *ń* as a complementizer for introducing relative clauses:

- (91) Relative clause – marked by complementizer *ń*  
 M-oo    ngon    *ń*    *ḃògə*    *biyā*    *lò-í*    **nò**.  
 1S-see    child    that    PFV.steal    goat    POSS-2S    BG  
 I saw the child who stole your goat.                                      [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 146]

I assume that the combination of *ń* and *dá* indicates pragmatic function, as shown in (92a), while *ń* and *nò* is restricted to relative structures, as shown in (92b).

(92a) [...]<sub>FOC</sub>    [*ń* ... *dá*]<sub>BG</sub>

(92b) [NP]    [*ń* ... *nò*]<sub>REL</sub>

Bond & Anderson (2014: 223) analyze the same data, and gloss *ń* in the examples in (90) as particle to avoid the unintended interpretation as complementizer.

The auxiliary *à* in (90b) is part of the verb phrase. Keegan (1997: 70f.) calls it “habitual marker”, which usually doesn’t occur with stative or “adjectival verbs”. The combination of these verbs and the marker expresses inchoative reading (Keegan 1997: 75). I assume – as well as Bond & Anderson (2014: 224) – that the marker *à* indicates the imperfective.

It is worth noting that the object is not involved in the doubling. As seen in (90b), the object *kàsə* ‘alcohol’ occurs only in the preposed part, but is absent in the background part. This observation confirms the assumption of Güldemann et al. (2010: 8) that focus preposing can be characterized by a less asserted or reduced predicate in the non-extrapolated part.

The structure [FOC *ń* BG *dá*] can be analyzed as verb focus preposing: The preposed non-finite verb is not morphologically marked, but it must be interpreted as focus, because it gets its interpretation by the morphologically marked background part.

#### 2.4.2.2.2.2 Verb focus preposing in SAR

In parallel to MBAY, the construction [*ì* FOC *òn* BG], already presented in section 2.4.2.2.1.6, is found with preposed terms on the one hand, as shown in (93a), and preposed non-terms on the other hand, as shown in (93b).

(93a) Term focus preposing in SAR: *ì* [NP]<sub>FOC</sub> *òn* [...]<sub>BG</sub>

(93b) Verb focus preposing in SAR: *ì* [V<sub>INF</sub>]<sub>FOC</sub> *òn* [... V<sub>FIN</sub> ...]<sub>BG</sub>

The following example shows verb focus preposing in SAR:

(94) Verb focus preposing

*Ì k-òy òn lábə òy.*

ID INF-be.dead that PN PFV.be.dead

*ì* [FOC] *òn* [BG]

C'est de mort, qu'est mort Labe (il est bien mort).

(Labe is DEAD (he is really dead). – PJ)

[SAR; Palayer 1989: 274]

The structure involves verbal iteration: The first verb, the non-finite verb form, is preposed and marked by the right-scoping focus marker *ì*. The background part starts with the complementizer *òn*. As said already in section 2.4.2.2.1.6, the *òn* seems to be structurally required for indicating the biclausality of the construction.

### 2.4.2.3 Topic preposing structures

Like focus preposing, topic preposing is characterized by a preposed element. In contrast to focus preposing, however, the preposed element is not the focal part of the sentence, but the topical part(s). Topic preposing should not be confused with preposed topics, as presented in section 2.3.3. Whereas these structures have the function of marking (contrastive) topics, this section is about special focus marking strategies.

Verb topic preposing is the sub-group of topic preposing structures, which is predominantly used for expressing predicate-centered focus. In parallel to verb focus preposing, it includes verbal iteration. In contrast to verb focus preposing, here the non-finite verb form in the left periphery is always interpreted as topic:

(95a) Term topic preposing: [NP]<sub>BG</sub> [...]<sub>FOC</sub>

(95b) Verb topic preposing: [V<sub>INF</sub>]<sub>BG</sub> [... V<sub>FIN</sub> ...]<sub>FOC</sub>

In the languages under study, topic preposing structures are attested in three languages. BAGIRMI uses topic preposing only for indicating term focus, in KENGA and SAR topic preposing is restricted to marking predicate-centered focus.

In the following, topic preposing will be subclassified in the same way as focus preposing in section 2.4.2.2. Here, the differentiation is much more complicated. While section 2.4.2.3.2 presents verb topic preposing in KENGA and SAR, section 2.4.2.3.1 concentrates on a very special construction in BAGIRMI. This construction will be called “term topic preposing”, although the preposed element is not (only) a term.

### 2.4.2.3.1 Term topic preposing in BAGIRMI

BAGIRMI uses – in addition to term focus preposing – topic preposing for the encoding of term focus. The construction can be characterized by the following structure:

- (96) ... ná (... ná) NP  
[BG] BM [BG] BM [FOC]

The examples present the formal variety of the construction:

- (97a) Term topic preposing – for marking the object as focus  
{WHAT did Boukar buy at the market yesterday?}  
Tɛpre kasko ná, Boukar ndugo ná, kro kɛɛ.  
yesterday market BG PN PFV.buy BG donkey IDEF  
[BG ] ná [BG ] né [FOC ]  
Boukar bought A DONKEY at the market yesterday. [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 125]
- (97b) Term topic preposing – for marking the local adverbial as focus  
{WHERE did Boukar cook the millet gruel yesterday?}  
Tɛpre ná, Boukar taɗ djùm tɛŋ ná, ngal kudj nii kii.  
yesterday BG PN PFV.do gruel millet BG in house DET DEM  
[BG ] ná [BG ] ná [FOC ]  
Boukar cooked millet gruel IN THE HOUSE yesterday. [BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 127]

On can see that all non-focused elements, the temporal frame as well as the whole core clause (containing subject and verb in (97a), and subject, verb and object in (97b)) occur in the left periphery. Both preposed parts are morphologically marked by the background marker *ná*. Here again, the extraposition is marked by a pause, which is indicated by the komma.

The focused element occurs in clause-final position. It is not focus-marked itself, e.g. by the dedicated term focus marker *dáj*. As the only (information-structurally) unmarked element it must be interpreted as focus, because it is outside the background domain. The examples show that the element in clause-final position can be accompanied by the indefinite marker *keɗe*, as shown in (97a), or marked as definite, as shown in (97b).

This construction is part of a widespread phenomenon, e.g. it is found in several African languages as well (cf. Güldemann 2016). This special type of focus marking “removes all but one potential focus host from the assertion domain” (Güldemann 2016: 577). In Jacob (2010), I called this phenomenon “indirect focus marking” for separating this strategy from the “direct focus marking” in the same language. The latter strategy is called here “term focus preposing”, presented in section 2.4.2.2.1.1. Güldemann (2016) coins the more function-based term “maximal backgrounding” (or “focus without focus encoding”).

The clause-final focus position in BAGIRMI is the dedicated focus position. It can be occupied by terms, as shown in this section, or by non-finite verbs, as shown in section 2.4.2.4.1.

#### 2.4.2.3.2 Verb topic preposing

Verb topic preposing describes a construction, which shows the combination of preposing and verbal iteration with the following structure:

- (98)      $V_{\text{INF}} \quad - \quad \dots V_{\text{FIN}} \dots$   
           [BG]                    [FOC    ]

The non-finite verb form is preposed and must be interpreted as topic, while the finite verb form occurs in its canonical position in the core clause, and is interpreted as focus.

Verb topic preposing is attested in KENGA and SAR. In both languages, no morphology is required for identifying the focus and/or the background part of the construction. Nevertheless, both parts can be optionally marked – at least in KENGA. Section 2.4.2.3.2.1 presents verb topic preposing in KENGA, and section 2.4.2.3.2.2 verb topic preposing in SAR.

2.4.2.3.2.1 *Verb topic preposing in KENGA*

The construction in KENGA shows the typical combination of preposing and verbal iteration:

- (99) Verb topic preposing – marked by emphasis marker *kée*

**Kúrsù**            **e**            **kúrs**            **kée**, ...  
 INF.cultivate 2S.FUT INF.cultivate EMPH  
 [TOP ]            [FOC            ]            **kée**

Tu as beaucoup labouré, (mais celui qui a de l'argent, il se lève et vient au moment de la récolte avec son peu d'argent et t'achètera tout le mil.)

(You DID cultivate. (lit. As for cultivating, you (will have) CULTIVATED),

(but he who has the money comes at harvest with his little money and buy you all of the mill.) – PJ

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 261]

The non-finite verb *kúrsù* 'cultivating' is preposed, and the second form of *kúrs* appears with auxiliary *e*, consisting of the pronominalized subject and TAM information, as periphrastic verb form 'you will cultivate'. Here, glossing and analysis of the verb forms are based on examples with verbs that identify the non-finite form by prefix *-k*, as shown in (100) and (101). The past-perfective interpretation of the future-tense structure could be explained by the polyfunctionality of the TAM categories in KENGA, as discussed already in section 1.3.3.

The first verb form in (99) is information-structurally unmarked, but it must be analyzed as background information, because the following periphrastic element is marked by emphasis marker *kée*, which is introduced already in section 2.4.2.2.1.2. This part contains the full assertion of the sentence, and thus must be interpreted as focus. The focus lies on the clause-internal operator, which is hosted on the finite verb form. The (unmarked) preposed element is defocalized.

The example in (100) shows the same structure, but it differs in morphological marking:

- (100) Verb topic preposing – marked by focus-sensitive particle *kìc*

òò    tèèc sé,    gaaj    **k-ààña** **kìc**    òɲ    **ààñ** èyo, ...  
 and exit BG then INF-run also can run NEG  
 [            ] sé            [TOP ] **kìc**            [FOC            ]

Il est sorti, mais il ne pouvait pas aller vite (courir, il ne pouvait pas courir), (il s'est éloigné lentement et il est monté sur la montagne et est entré dans son trou.)

(He came out, but he couldn't go fast (lit. As for running, he could NOT run),

(he walked away slowly and he climbed the mountain and entered his hole.) – PJ

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 267]



Here, the non-finite verb form *k-ààñā* ‘running’ is preposed, and precedes the additive particle *kìc* ‘also’. The core clause consists of the verb *əŋə* ‘(he) can’<sup>17</sup>, the finite verb form *ààñ* ‘(he) run’, and the negation particle. This part is not morphologically marked for information structure.

Although the focus part is not explicitly marked, the preposed verbal element is in the scope of the focus-sensitive particle *kìc* ‘also’. Such additive particles associate with focus and (contrastive) topics as well (cf. Krifka 1999: 115ff.). In (100), the particle lacks the typical “additive function”, i.e. the context gives no information about any other verbal action where the running can be added. Thus, it could rather be analyzed as a functional element that helps to organize the information structure of the sentence. I assume that the additive particle marks the preceding element as topic. Interestingly, verb topic preposing can occur without any morphological marking:

(101) Verb topic preposing – marked by negation and the preposition *gen*

Gen	k-ə̀ndε	nəm	əŋ	ə̀ndε	ə̀yo.
for	INF-enter	someone	can	enter	NEG
[TOP	]	[FOC			]

Mais personne ne pouvait y entrer (pour entrer, personne ne pouvait entrer).

(As for entering, no one could enter. – PJ)

[KENG; Neukom 2010: 268]

Neither the preposed verbal element nor the core clause is pragmatically marked by morphology. Nevertheless, there are at least three indications for taking this example as verb topic preposing: First, the negation in the core clause, second, the preposition *gen* in the preposed part, and third, the absence of morphological focus marking in the preposed part. Partee (1993) assumes that negation functions as a focus-sensitive operator; thus, it is inherently focused, and need not to be marked explicitly. The preposition *gen* ‘for’ fulfills the same function as *as for* in ENGLISH. It identifies the relevant element as topic. The core clause in (101) must be interpreted as focus. Although the preposed part has no morphological marking, it can be analyzed as topic. The left periphery in KENGA provides both topic and focus position. If the preposed element is in focus, it must be marked by morphology, as shown in section 2.4.2.2.1.2. The lack of the focus marker *ḍó* in the left periphery excludes the focus interpretation; the preposed part can only contain topical information. All the explanations together make the analysis plausible.

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<sup>17</sup> The verb *əŋə* has several meanings. When it occurs in the first position of a serial verb construction, it functions as ‘can’ (cf. Neukom 2010: 194, Palayer 2004: 136).

#### 2.4.2.3.2.2 Verb topic preposing in SAR

In contrast to KENGA, the construction in SAR displays verb topic preposing without marking:

- (102) Verb topic preposing

bògè      lábè      bògè      ngáy.

INF.steal    PN    PFV.steal    much

[TOP] [FOC] [ ]

Pour ce qui est de voler, Labe vole beaucoup.

(As for stealing, Labe (really) STEALS a lot. – PJ)

[SAR; Palayer 1989: 274]

The first verb form *bògà* ‘stealing’ is nominalized and preposed, the second verb form *bògà* ‘(he) steals’ appears within the core clause. Here, glossing and analysis of the verb forms are based on the description in the literature (Palayer 1989: 274).

Although there is no morphological marking for information structure in the entire sentence, the preposed element must be analyzed as topic. This interpretation is most likely given by the absence of the obligatory morphology in verb focus preposing structures, presented in section 2.4.2.2.2. The core clause, in turn, consists of the finite verb form and an adverbial. It must be interpreted as focus, because it contains the full assertion of the sentence.

#### 2.4.2.4 In-situ verb doubling structures

In addition to the preposing strategies, Sara-Bagirmi languages use strategies without preposing. The structures presented in this section are, however, marked by another syntactic means, and they always contain verbal iteration. As illustrated in section 2.4.1.3, in-situ verb doubling is characterized by the co-occurrence of two lexically identical verbs, a finite one and a non-finite one, whereby the finite verb form always precedes the non-finite verb.

In-situ verb doubling in Sara-Bagirmi differs from other structures by the total lack of morphological marking. In some languages, the information-structural status is partly indicated by syntax. Here, the focal element occurs in a dedicated focus position. Structural details differ across the languages under study with respect to the position of the non-finite verb: In KENGA, the non-finite verb follows the finite verb; that is, it occupies the position immediately after the verb (IAV), as shown in (103a). In BAGIRMI, the non-finite verb occurs in clause-final position, as shown in (103b). Both positions can be characterized as dedicated focus position – at least in the relevant language.

- (103a) In-situ verb doubling (IAV focus position):                    [... V<sub>FIN</sub>                    [V<sub>INF</sub>]<sub>FOC</sub> ...]

- (103b) In-situ verb doubling (clause-final focus position): [... V<sub>FIN</sub> ...]<sub>BG</sub> [V<sub>INF</sub>]<sub>FOC</sub>

For the constructions in MBAY, I assume that the in-situ verb doubling is primarily structurally required. It occurs only in combination with other elements, like the complementizer, as shown in (104a), or a focus-sensitive particle, as shown in (104b).

(104a) In-situ verb doubling (with complementizer *ká*): [... V<sub>FIN</sub> ...]<sub>BG</sub> [V<sub>INF</sub> *ká* ...]<sub>FOC</sub>

(104b) In-situ verb doubling (with additive particle *ta*): [... V<sub>FIN</sub> ...]<sub>BG</sub> [V<sub>INF</sub> *ta* ...]<sub>FOC</sub>

In both constructions, the relevant function is primarily triggered by the complement or the particle.

The constructions with in-situ verb doubling found in Sara-Bagirmi will be presented separately. Section 2.4.2.4.1 concentrates on in-situ verb doubling in BAGIRMI, section 2.4.2.4.2 on in-situ verb doubling in KENGA, and section 2.4.2.4.3 presents the in-situ verb-doubling constructions in MBAY.

#### 2.4.2.4.1 In-situ verb doubling in BAGIRMI

In the construction with in-situ verb doubling in BAGIRMI, the non-finite verb form occupies the clause-final position:

(105a) In-situ verb doubling – non-finite verb in clause-final position

{Did Boukar cook millet gruel or did he eat it?}

Boukar **táɗ** djùm tɛŋ **táɗà**.

PN PFV.do gruel millet INF.do

[BG ] [FOC]

Boukar COOKED millet gruel.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 129]

(105b) Boukar **sàa** djùm tɛŋ **k-sàa**.

PN PFV.eat gruel millet INF-eat

[BG ] [FOC]

Boukar ATE millet gruel.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The finite verb form appears in its canonical position: It follows the subject and precedes the object. In addition, the non-finite verb form occurs, and occupies the clause-final position. There is no morphological marking according to information structure in the whole construction. Nevertheless, I assume that the construction is marked by syntax: The clause-final position in BAGIRMI is dedicated to indicate (morphologically unmarked) focus. This was already discussed in section 2.4.2.3.1 for term focus. Here, the focus strategy is the same: The non-finite verb must be interpreted as focus, because it occurs in the dedicated clause-final focus position. The construction is used frequently. It allows variation in valency and TAM:

- (106a) In-situ verb doubling – with transitive verbs in the progressive

{Is Boukar selling a donkey at the market today?}

É'è, n'djaniki kaso ná, Boukar ét **ndugo** kro **ndugo**.  
 no today market BG PN 3S.PROG IPFV.buy donkey INF.buy  
 [BG ] ná [BG ] [FOC ]

No, Boukar is BUYING a donkey at the market today. [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

- (106b) In-situ verb doubling – with intransitive verbs in the progressive

{Are the boys carrying or pushing the log?}

Djé dj-ét **kùn** **kùnù**.  
 3P 3P-PROG IPFV.take INF.take  
 [BG ] [FOC ]

They are CARRYING. [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

- (106c) In-situ verb doubling – with intransitive verbs in the future

{Will Boukar eat millet gruel tomorrow?}

É'è, pádjàr ná, Boukar ké **táď** **táďà**.  
 no tomorrow BG PN 3S.FUT IPFV.do INF.do  
 [BG ] ná [BG ] [FOC ]

No, Boukar will COOK (it) tomorrow. [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The examples show that in-situ verb doubling occurs e.g. with transitive verbs in the progressive (106a) or with intransitive verbs in the progressive (106b) and in the future (106c).

#### 2.4.2.4.2 In-situ verb doubling in KENGA

In this construction, the non-finite verb form follows the finite verb form immediately:

- (107) In-situ verb doubling – non-finite verb in IAV position

{... si tu n'as pas de travail, tout cet argent-là, où vas-tu le trouver?

{... if you don't have work, everything is expensive, where will you find it? – PJ}}

Jéé mètĩĩ sé, naadé màla **ààr k-ààr** nààba, ...  
 person certain BG 3P themselves fear INF-fear work  
 [BG ] sé [BG ] [FOC ] [BG ]

(Le travail, tu dois le chercher. Si tu as trouvé le travail, tu auras beaucoup de travail.) Certains ne veulent pas (craignent) travailler eux-mêmes, (sinon, ici en ville, il y a beaucoup de travail.)

((You have to look for work. If you find a job, you have a lot of work.) Some people FEAR the work, (but in the city is much work.) – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 264]

In parallel to the examples in BAGIRMI, in-situ verb doubling in KENGA displays the canonical sentence structure. In contrast to BAGIRMI, the position immediately after the verb is not occupied by the object, but by the non-finite verb form, followed by the object. This structure is characterized by the close relationship of both verb forms. Potentially additional material such as objects or adverbials, occur after the non-finite verb.

In this construction, the non-finite verb occupies the IAV position. This position is in many SVO languages a dedicated focus position: “... the basic position for the focused or emphasized constituent is that position which is filled by the object in a neutral sentence” (Harries-Delisle 1978: 464). Hyman (2013: 24) generalizes this to a broader typology stating that “SOV languages may syntacticize the immediately-before-verb (IBV) position and SVO languages the immediate-after-verb (IAV) position for focused elements”.

#### 2.4.2.4.3 In-situ verb doubling in MBAY

As said in the introduction, MBAY displays constructions with a combination of in-situ verb doubling and other elements, in which the doubling is primarily structurally required.

The construction with in-situ verb doubling, which hosts a complement clause introduced by the complementizer *ká* will be presented in section 2.4.2.4.3.1, and the construction with in-situ verb doubling, which hosts the additive particle *ta* will be discussed in section 2.4.2.4.3.2.

##### 2.4.2.4.3.1 In-situ verb doubling with the structure [ $V_{FIN}$ $V_{INF}$ *ká*]

MBAY possesses a construction with in-situ verb doubling and a complement clause, which is introduced by the complementizer *ká*:

(108a) In-situ verb doubling – followed by complementizer *ká*

Ngóo	<b>njàr</b>	<b>njàr</b>	<i>ká</i>	màjè	kùr	àí.
gourd	PFV.be.cracked	INF.be.cracked	that	PFV.be.good	repair	NEG
[BG	]	[FOC				]

The gourd is so cracked that it's not worth repairing. [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 150]

(108b)	Ngon	<b>sà</b>	mángò	<b>sà</b>	<i>ká</i>	lòo-tii-á	kàm-á	too-á	ngáy.
	child	PFV.eat	mango	INF.eat	that	tomorrow	stomach-3S	PFV.hurt-3S	much
	[BG		]	[FOC					]

The child ate so much mango that the next day his stomach hurts a lot.

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 150]

Keegan (1997: 150) describes the construction as “Verb Phrase + Infinitive + /ká/ + Sentence”. In parallel to the in-situ verb doubling construction in BAGIRMI, the construction in MBAY displays the canonical sentence structure: The finite verb form follows the subject and precedes – at least in (108b) – the object. In contrast to BAGIRMI, the non-finite verb form in MBAY is not in clause-final position. It is immediately followed by the complement clause introduced by the complementizer *ká*. Keegan (1997: 129 f.) describes *ká* as an element which expresses ‘to such a degree that’. I assume that the in-situ verb doubling (or the non-finite verb or a verbal noun) is primarily required to host the complement clause.

#### 2.4.2.4.3.2 In-situ verb doubling with the structure [ $V_{FIN}$ *ta* $V_{INF}$ ]

The second construction involving in-situ verb doubling in MBAY includes the particle *ta*:

(109a) In-situ verb doubling – including particle *ta*

Mbùr	lò-á	<b>màjè</b>	ta	<b>màjè.</b>
boule	POSS-3S	PFV.be.good	just	INF.be.good
[BG		]	ta	[FOC]

Her ‘boule’ is very good.

(lit. Her ‘boule’ is good, just good. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 147]

(109b) **ày**                      kàsè                      ta                      **k-ày**  
 PFV.drink              alcohol              ta              INF-drink  
 [BG                      ]              ta              [FOC]

to do nothing but drink

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 147]

The examples show – in parallel to the examples in (108) – that the finite verb form occurs in its canonical position. Here, it is worth noting that the particle *ta* always occurs in between two of the relevant elements. It appears e.g. also with doubled nouns:

(110) Particle *ta* – in between two doubled nouns

Súu	ì	<b>nan-ń</b>	ta	<b>nan-ń</b>	...
PN	ID	uncle-POSS.1S	ta	uncle-POSS.1S	

Suu is only my uncle (, he’s not my father).

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 147]

The example confirms the structural necessity of doubling. The particle *ta* seems to occur in between two elements only. Here, I assume that at least the second one must have nominal properties.

### 2.4.2.5 Morphological focus marking

In contrast to primarily syntactic strategies, as presented in preceding sections, some Sara-Bagirmi languages use strategies with primarily morphological focus marking. This strategy is mainly characterized by the lack of extra-posing or the insertion of verbal copies, i.e. with verbal iteration. The constructions presented in this section are based on the canonical sentence structure, but they contain a morphological element, which indicates the interpretation as focus.

BAGIRMI and KENGA use constructions with the functional element *kA* (which is represented as *gà* or *kà* in KENGA, and as *gà*, *ka*, *kä* or *ké* in BAGIRMI). These constructions have a lot in common, but they show formal and function differences as well. Therefore, the morphological focus marking strategies will be presented separately for both languages. Section 2.4.2.5.1 concentrates on the constructions with *kA* in BAGIRMI, and section 2.4.2.5.2 on the constructions with *kA* in KENGA. Section 2.5.2 will give further information about these constructions (and their restrictions) and tries to figure out their potential development.

#### 2.4.2.5.1 Morphological focus marking in BAGIRMI

In BAGIRMI, the constructions with *kA* can be subdivided into structures in the perfective aspect, as shown in (111a), and structures in the imperfective aspect, as shown in (111b).

(111a) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect: [SBJ *V<sub>FIN</sub>* OBJ *kA*]

(111b) Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect: [SBJ *kA* *V<sub>FIN</sub>* OBJ]

As described in the introduction (section 1.3.3), both categories must be characterized synchronically as “simple structures”, although the imperfective aspect seems to underly a structural change (from periphrastic to simple structure). In the perfective aspect, the functional element *kA* occupies the clause-final position, while it occurs in the construction with the imperfective aspect in pre-verbal position.

The construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect will be presented in section 2.4.2.5.1.1, and the construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect in section 2.4.2.5.1.2.

##### 2.4.2.5.1.1 Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect

The construction presented in this section is based on the perfective aspect. Here, the functional element *kA* occupies the clause-final position:

- (112a) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect – scope over the polarity operator

{Did the woman eat the beans?}

Awa, né sà monjo ná gà.

yes 3S PFV.eat beans DET kA

Yes, she DID eat the beans.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

- (112b) {Did you see him?}

Awa, ma m-ak-iny ga.

yes 1S 1S.PFV-see-3S kA

Yes, I DID.

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 130]

- (112c) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect – scope over the TAM operator

{Has she eaten or is she still eating?}

Né sà gà.

3S PFV.eat kA

She HAS eaten.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

As described in the introduction, the perfective aspect is a major verb category, which shows SVO word order. It is used primarily if “the verb action is complete, momentary, ‘perfect’ – it may also denote a state” (Stevenson 1969: 84). The functional element *kA* indicates a completely terminated action (Gaden 1909: 20) or a completed action (Stevenson 1969: 130). In the literature, it always occurs – due to the lack of tonal marking – as *ga*. The examples illustrate that the construction with *kA* is found with scope over the polarity operator, as shown in (112a) and (112b), and the TAM operator, as shown in (112c).

#### 2.4.2.5.1.2 Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect

The construction presented in this section is based on the imperfective aspect. It contains the functional element *kA*, which occupies the pre-verbal position:

- (113a) Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect

Gab enaa ka k-ot’o.

person DEM kA IPFV-fall<sup>18</sup>

Cet homme va sûrement tomber.

(This man will surely fall. – PJ)

[BAGIRMI; Gaden 1909: 17]

- (113b) ngab enna kä k<sup>w</sup>-oco.

person DEM kA IPFV-fall

This man will surely fall.

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 47]

<sup>18</sup> All glosses in the examples taken from Gaden (1909) are mine.



I assume that this construction seems to underly a structural change. The once existing auxiliary for marking future tense is vanished, and the former periphrastic structure occurs synchronically as simple structure with a finite verb. The remaining prefix *k(A)-* is reanalysed as referring to the imperfective aspect.<sup>19</sup>

The functional element *kA* – not to be confused with the prefix *k(A)-* – occurs in BAGIRMI in imperfective structures only (Stevenson 1969: 98). It is found with different notations. In Gaden (1909), it always occurs as *ka*, as shown in (113a), and in Stevenson (1969) as *kä*, as shown in (113b). In my own data, gathered in the years 2003 until 2008, I prefer the notation as *ká*. I assume that *ka/kä/ká* always refers to the same element<sup>20</sup>. In the examples, it is always given as noted by the relevant author.

The functional element *kA* implies the certainty that the action is completed (Gaden 1909: 17). With this description, Gaden obviously detects the formal and functional parallels to the construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect, presented in section 2.4.2.5.1.1. Stevenson (1969: 47) calls *kA* “emphasizing particle”. As shown in the examples, the construction is found with scope over the polarity operator.

#### 2.4.2.5.2 Morphological focus marking in KENGA

In KENGA, the morphological focus marking can be subdivided into simple verb structures with *kA*, as shown in (114a), and periphrastic structures with particle *kA* (114b).

(114a) Simple verb structure with *kA*: [SBJ V<sub>FIN</sub> *kA* OBJ]

(114b) Periphrastic structure with *kA*: [SBJ V<sub>AUX</sub> *kA* V<sub>INF</sub> OBJ]

In contrast to BAGIRMI, the functional element occurs in both constructions in KENGA – more or less – in the same position, namely immediately after the finite verb, as shown in (114a), or after the auxiliary, as shown in (114b). The construction with simple structure and *kA* will be presented in section 2.4.2.5.2.1, and the construction with periphrastic structure and *kA* in section 2.4.2.5.2.2.

<sup>19</sup> For detailed information on the verb system in BAGIRMI see section 1.3.3.

<sup>20</sup> Stevenson (1969: 5) compares his conventions for <ä> with the data from Gaden: Where Stevenson uses <ä> (*kä taḍa* ‘he will do’), Gaden notes <a> (*ka tada*). Stevenson’s notation of <ä> refers to a mid central vowel (between [ɛ] and [ɔ]) (Stevenson 1969: 1). My language consultants realized the vowel as [ə] as well. The difference in notation may refer to a weakening of the vowel quality during the time from open [a]/[ɑ] in Gaden (1909) to central [ə] in Stevenson (1969) and Jacob (2006, 2013b).

#### 2.4.2.5.2.1 Construction with simple structure and *kA*

The first construction with *kA* in KENGA is based on the “simple form”, in which the functional element *kA* occupies the position immediately after the finite verb:

##### (115a) Construction with simple structure and *kA*

{Tu me donnes ton couteau? – Je l’ai perdu. – Mais hier tu l’avais encore? (Could you give me your knife? – I have lost it. – But you still had it yesterday? – PJ)}

À’á, m-ííg-íñ **gà**.

no 1S-lose-3S *kA*

Non, je l’avais déjà perdu.

(No, I HAD already lost it. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 122]

##### (115b) {Le locuteur voulait encore chauffer de l’eau sur le feu.

(The speaker wanted to heat water on the fire again. – PJ)}

Áà, naaí é-tɔɔl **gà** pòòdò!

oh 2S 2S-kill *kA* fire

Oh, tu as déjà éteint le feu!

(Oh, you HAVE already extinguished the fire. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 122]

The “simple form” is a major verb category in KENGA. In parallel to the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI, the simple form in KENGA can be characterized as bare form. In contrast to the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI, it “is unmarked for tense, aspect and mood. It is used both for present and past time reference. It is the context that determines time orientation” (Neukom 2009: 470).

In the literature, the notion of *kA* differs from author to author. It always occurs in the form of *gà*, but while Vandame (1968: 42) and Palayer (2004: 59) treat it as independent particle, Neukom (2010: 120) classifies it as verbal suffix, which occurs always as last part of the finite verb, i.e. it follows all morphemes within the verbal complex, like object reference, as shown in (115a), pronominal suffix *-ki* (in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural), or the ventive suffix *-dó*. In this work, I adopt the writing conventions of Vandame (1968) and Palayer (2004), and present *kA* as independent element.

#### 2.4.2.5.2.2 Construction with periphrastic structure and *kA*

This section presents the construction with periphrastic structure and the functional element *kA*, which occupies the position between the auxiliary and the non-finite verb, as shown in (116).

(116) Construction with periphrastic structure and *kA*

mí-a-ǵó      ǵà      ǵàà.  
 1S-FUT-VEN   *kA*    INF.go

I will certainly come.

[KENGA; Neukom 2009: 469]

The example displays the periphrastic structure: The verbal complex consists of the auxiliary *a*, the particle *ǵà*, and the non-finite lexical verb. The auxiliary *a* refers to the future. The lexical verb in this construction is always non-finite. The auxiliary is realized – especially in combination with bound pronouns – by tonal marking, as shown in (117). Here, the low tone on *a* indicates the amalgamation of the auxiliary and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular.

In the literature, the functional element *kA* is found with different notations. Vandame (1968: 41) describes it as independent marker for expressing the near future, and Neukom (2010: 127) characterize it as verbal suffix. Here again, I adopt the writing conventions of Vandame (1968), and present *kA* as independent element. Furthermore, Vandame (1968) uses the notion *kà* only, but Neukom (2010) alternates – without any explanation – between two forms, namely *ǵà*, as shown in (117a), or *kà*, as shown in (117b).

(117a) Construction with periphrastic structure and *kA* – represented as *ǵà*

À-m              ǵà      túǵù.  
 3S.FUT-1S      *kA*    INF.wash

Il me lavera certainement.

(He'll certainly wash me. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 127]

(117b) Construction with periphrastic structure and *kA* – represented as *kà*

À                  kà      túǵù.  
 3S.FUT           *kA*    INF.wash

Il lavera certainement. (He'll certainly wash. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 127]

Although the vowel- and consonant quality differs, it is given here as found in the literature. Interestingly, Neukom (2010, 2009) glosses *kA* always as perfect. With this convention, he obviously detects the strong relationship between the construction with *kA* in the simple structure, as presented in section 2.4.2.5.2.1, and the construction with *kA* in the periphrastic structure.

In parallel to the construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI, as introduced in section 2.4.2.5.1.2, the construction presented with examples (116) and (117) takes scope over the polarity operator.

Beyond the constructions presented here, the functional element *kA* occurs also in other constructions in KENGA. This will be discussed in section 2.5.2.

### 2.4.2.6 Summary: Formal encoding of focus

The focus strategies in Sara-Bagirmi can be subdivided in strategies with primarily syntactic means, which are partly complemented by additional morphology (and prosody), as presented in sections 2.4.2.2, 2.4.2.3 and 2.4.2.4, and strategies with primarily morphological means, which are based on the canonical sentence structure, as presented in section 2.4.2.5. Beyond the focus marking strategies, focused non-subjects need not to be marked. They can appear in their canonical position without any morphological (or prosodic) marking, as presented in section 2.4.2.1.

Table 16 summarizes the attested focus marking strategies in Sara-Bagirmi and provides the (simplified) pattern of the sentence structure for each strategy.

Strategy / Sentence structure	[pre-clausal]	[clause-internal]
Term focus preposing	[NP] <sub>FOC</sub>	[...]BG
Verb focus preposing	[V <sub>INF</sub> ] <sub>FOC</sub>	[... V <sub>FIN</sub> ...]BG
Term topic preposing	[...]BG	[NP] <sub>FOC</sub>
Verb topic preposing	[V <sub>INF</sub> ]BG	[... V <sub>FIN</sub> ...] <sub>FOC</sub>
In-situ verb doubling		[... V <sub>FIN</sub> (...) V <sub>INF</sub> (...)] <sub>FOC</sub>
Morphological marking		[... kA (...)] <sub>FOC</sub>

Table 16: Focus marking strategies with the relevant sentence structure in Sara-Bagirmi

There are four strategies in which the relevant element occurs in pre-clausal position: two strategies mark the preposed element as focus, and two strategies indicate the preposed element as being “defocalized” – in the latter cases, the focus lies in the core clause – even if the focused element is not explicitly marked by morphology. The two remaining strategies, in-situ verb doubling and morphological marking, do not make use of the left periphery.

Table 17 shows the distribution of the strategies across the languages under study and provides information about the structure.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> This list is not exhaustive, i.e. some fields in the table are unfilled only due to the lack of examples, not necessarily due to the lack of the relevant structure in the language.

Language /Strategy	Term focus preposing	Verb focus preposing	Term topic preposing	Verb topic preposing	In-situ verb doubling	Morpholog. focus mark.
Bagirmi	[NP] <i>dáj</i> , [...]		[...] <i>ná</i> , [NP]		[... V <sub>FIN</sub> ... V <sub>INF</sub> ]	[... kA] [... kA ...]
Kenga	[NP] <i>óó</i> [...]			[V <sub>INF</sub> ] [V <sub>FIN</sub> ]	[... V <sub>FIN</sub> V <sub>INF</sub> ... ]	[... kA ...] [... kA ...]
Ngambay	[NP] <i>óá</i> [...]					
Kabba	[NP] <i>á</i> [...]					
Mbay	[NP] <i>la</i> [...] <i>yé</i>	[V <sub>INF</sub> ] <i>la</i> [...] /V <sub>FIN</sub> ] <i>yé</i> [V <sub>INF</sub> ] <i>h</i> [...] /V <sub>FIN</sub> ] <i>dá</i>			[V <sub>FIN</sub> ... V <sub>INF</sub> <i>kó</i> ...] [V <sub>FIN</sub> ... <i>ta</i> V <sub>INF</sub> ...]	
Sar	<i>ì</i> [NP] <i>h</i> [...]	<i>ì</i> [V <sub>INF</sub> ] <i>h</i> [...] /V <sub>FIN</sub> ]		[V <sub>INF</sub> ] [V <sub>FIN</sub> ]		

Table 17: Focus marking strategies and their marking devices in the languages under study

In the table, one can see that term focus preposing occurs in every language under study. For KABBA and NGAMBAY, it is the only strategy found in the available literature. BAGIRMI and KENGA use four of the six strategies, namely constructions with preposing, in-situ verb doubling and morphological focus marking. In the other languages, only preposing structures are attested.

Based on the data, term focus preposing can be described as the most unmarked strategy for emphasizing terms in Sara-Bagirmi. Although it occurs in every language under study, the constructions differ with respect to the morphological marking. BAGIRMI, KENGA, NGAMBAY, and KABBA, make use of structures with a dedicated left-scoping focus marker. Here, one could speculate about the relationship of the markers, e.g. between *óó* and *óá*, or between *á* and *óá*, or between *á* and *dáj* (cf. Jacob 2012). The constructions in MBAY are more complex than the others, because they require the combination of a left-scoping focus marker with a left-scoping background marker. SAR makes use of quite a different structure. Focus is indicated by the right-scoping copula-like element *ì* and the right-scoping complementizer *h*. One of the constructions in MBAY makes use of the same element, the complementizer *h*. Here, I assume that the complementizer is structurally required (for indicating the biclausality of the construction). It occurs in structures with preposed aboutness topics, too. In BAGIRMI, the extraposition is partly marked by a pause indicated by a comma.

Verb focus preposing is attested in MBAY and SAR only. In each language, verb focus preposing makes use of the same morphologically encoding means as term focus preposing.

Term topic preposing is a very special strategy, which is attested only in BAGIRMI. It is characterized by a clear separation of focused and non-focused material. Here, the focused ele-

ment is not (morphologically) marked itself. It must be interpreted as focus, because it is outside the (morpho-syntactic marked) background domain.

Verb topic preposing is found in KENGA and SAR. Interestingly, it lacks (obligatory) morphological marking. It receives in both languages its interpretation by the absence of obligatory morphological focus marking in the preposed part. Therefore, the focus cannot be on the preposed element, but inside the core clause.

In-situ verb doubling shows different structural features. In BAGIRMI and KENGA, it indicates focus by placing the non-finite verb form in the dedicated focus position. The in-situ verb doubling in MBAY could be structurally required as a host for functional elements.

Morphological focus marking is attested in BAGIRMI and KENGA. It is characterized by the occurrence of the functional element *kA*.

The following section concentrates on the function of the focus marking strategies attested in Sara-Bagirmi.

### 2.4.3 Functional variety of focus

The languages under study use several constructions for expressing focus. This concentrates on the function of the constructions presented in the preceding sections on the one hand, and on the relationship of form and function on the other hand. Table 18 gives information about the functional distribution of the attested focus marking strategies:<sup>22</sup>

Language /Strategy	Term focus preposing	Verb focus preposing	Term topic preposing	Verb topic preposing	In-situ v. doubling	Morphol. foc. mark.
Bagirmi	Term focus		Term focus		PCF	PCF
Kenga	Term focus			PCF	PCF	PCF
Ngambay	Term focus					
Kabba	Term focus					
Mbay	Term focus	PCF			PCF	
Sar	Term focus	PCF		PCF		

Table 18: Focus marking strategies and their functional scope in the languages under study

<sup>22</sup> The list is not exhaustive, i.e. blank (sub-)fields only mean lack of examples.

One can see that the languages under study use different structures for marking term focus and predicate-centered focus. The structural separation of the strategies reflects the functional differences: Structures with a preposed term, like term focus preposing and term topic preposing, expresses term focus. Structures with a preposed non-finite verb, like verb focus preposing and verb topic preposing, express predicate-centered focus. The two remaining strategies, in-situ verb doubling and morphological focus marking, exclusively indicate predicate-centered focus. In the following, I will take a closer look at the constructions used for expressing predicate-centered focus. Table 19 gives an overview over the constructions.

Language	Structure	Function
Bagirmi	[... V <sub>FIN</sub> ... V <sub>INF</sub> ]	Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb
Bagirmi	[... V <sub>PFV</sub> ... kA]	Polarity focus (restricted to past-perfective)
		TAM (perfect) focus
		Perfect
Bagirmi	[... kA V <sub>IPFV</sub> ...]	Polarity focus (restricted to future tense)
		Future
Kenga	[V <sub>INF</sub> ] <sub>BG</sub> [... V <sub>FIN</sub> ...] <sub>FOC</sub>	Polarity focus
Kenga	[... V <sub>FIN</sub> V <sub>INF</sub> ...]	Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb
		Progressive
Kenga	[... V <sub>FIN</sub> kA ...]	TAM (perfect) focus
		Perfect
Kenga	[... V <sub>AUX</sub> kA V <sub>INF</sub> ...]	Polarity focus (restricted to future tense)
Mbay	[V <sub>INF</sub> ] <sub>FOC</sub> la [... V <sub>FIN</sub> ...] <sub>BG</sub> yé	Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb
Mbay	[V <sub>INF</sub> ] <sub>FOC</sub> ñ [... V <sub>FIN</sub> ...] <sub>BG</sub> dá	Intensification
Mbay	[... V <sub>FIN</sub> ... V <sub>INF</sub> ká ...]	Intensification
Mbay	[... V <sub>FIN</sub> ... ta V <sub>INF</sub> ...]	Intensification
Sar	ì [V <sub>INF</sub> ] <sub>FOC</sub> ñ [... V <sub>FIN</sub> ...] <sub>BG</sub>	Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb
Sar	[V <sub>INF</sub> ] <sub>BG</sub> [... V <sub>FIN</sub> ...] <sub>FOC</sub>	Polarity focus

Table 19: Form and function of predicate-centered focus types in Sara-Bagirmi

While in MBAY and SAR every construction has its special function, most of the constructions in BAGIRMI and KENGA are used with more than one function. In the following, I will go in detail to the (pragmatic) functions of the attested constructions. Section 2.4.3.1 concentrates on focus on the lexical meaning of the verb, section 2.4.3.2 on polarity focus, and section 2.4.3.3 on TAM focus. Section 2.4.3.4 introduces to a more specific function, the expression of intensification. The grammatical functions (perfect, progressive and future) and the relation to the pragmatic functions will be presented later in section 2.5.2. Section 2.4.3.5 summarizes the findings and compares the formal encoding strategies in the languages under study with the function(s).

### 2.4.3.1 Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

In Sara-Bagirmi, focus on the lexical meaning is expressed by verb focus preposing in MBAY and SAR, and by in-situ verb doubling in BAGIRMI and KENGA.

MBAY and SAR use focus-preposing structures for indicating term focus and for focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. The formal coincidence can be explained by the fact that both, term focus and focus on the lexical meaning of the verb, fulfill similar functions, namely the marking of narrow focus on a lexical element.

In MBAY, focus on the lexical meaning of the verb is expressed by verb focus preposing with the structure [FOC la BG yé]. For the sake of convenience, the example presented in section 2.4.2.2.1.1 is repeated here as (118a).

(118a) Contrastive focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

... nà      **tɔɔ**                      la      **tɔɔ**                      yé.  
          but      INF.be.broken      G.FOC      PFV.be.broken      BG  
          (No, I did put water in the pot;) it's just that it's BROKEN.

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 148]

(118b) {Your wood is bad.}

... nà      **ndusə**                      la      **ndusə**                      yé.  
          but      INF.be.worm.eaten      G.FOC      PFV.be.worm.eaten      BG  
          (No, the wood is fine;) it's just that it's WORM-EATEN. [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 148]

Keegan (1997: 147f.) describes the function of the construction in (118) as follows: “A different sort of emphasis, one which reaffirms something that has been questioned or denied, is expressed by this type of verb phrase. It can also be used to provide an explanation different from one that has already proposed.” With this observation, Keegan refers to one of the main features of contrastive focus, namely the contradiction (see also section 2.4.2.1).



I assume, based on the context, that the construction is used to express contrastive focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. The examples in (118a) can be paraphrased as “The pot is BROKEN (as opposed to unbroken or intact, but I didn’t put water in it).” and in (118b) as “The wood is WORM-EATEN (as opposed to bad or so bad that it cannot be used).”

In parallel to MBAY, SAR uses verb focus preposing with the structure [ì FOC ñ BG] for marking focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. The example presented in section 2.4.2.2.2 is repeated here as (119).

(119) Assertive focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

Ì k-òÿ ñ lábə òÿ.

ID INF-be.dead that PN PFV.be.dead

C’est de mort, qu’est mort Labe (il est bien mort).

(Labe is DEAD (he is really/quite dead). – PJ)

[SAR; Palayer 1989: 274]

Based on the translation, I assume that the example expresses focus on the lexical meaning of the verb: “Labe is DEAD (as opposed to be alive).” Unfortunately, this is the only example given in the literature with this structure.

Güldemann et al. (2010: 9) assume that verb focus preposing is a strategy, which is used primarily for expressing focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. Verbal iteration respectively the split of the predicate into a lexical host, the non-finite verb form, and an operator host, the finite verb form, disambiguates the structure. If the lexical part of the predicate is marked as focus, the construction indicates focus on the lexical meaning of the verb.

In contrast to MBAY and SAR, BAGIRMI and KENGA express focus on the lexical meaning of the verb by in-situ verb doubling. In BAGIRMI, this strategy is exclusively used to mark focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. The examples presented in section 2.4.2.4.1 are repeated here as (120) and (121).

(120a) Selective focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

{Did Boukar cook millet gruel or did he eat it?}

Boukar táɗ djùm téŋ táɗà.

PN PFV.do gruel millet INF.do

Boukar COOKED millet gruel.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2010: 129]

(120b) Boukar sàa djùm téŋ k-sàa.

PN PFV.eat gruel millet INF-eat

Boukar ATE millet gruel.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The construction is used to disambiguate focus on the lexical meaning from other focus interpretations. It occurs frequently, especially with selective focus, as shown in (120), and corrective focus, as shown in (121).

(121a) Corrective focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

{Is Boukar selling a donkey at the market today?}

É'è, n'djaniki kaso ná, Boukar ét **ndugo** kro **ndugo**.  
 no today market BG PN 3S.PROG IPFV.buy donkey INF.buy  
 No, Boukar is BUYING a donkey at the market today. [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

(121c) {Will Boukar eat millet gruel tomorrow?}

É'è, pádjàr ná, Boukar ké **táď** **táďà**.  
 no tomorrow BG PN 3S.FUT IPFV.do INF.do  
 No, Boukar will COOK (it) tomorrow. [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

In KENGA, in-situ verb doubling is used to express focus on the lexical meaning of the verb as well. The example presented in section 2.4.2.4.2 is repeated here as (122).

(122) Assertive focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

{... si tu n'as pas de travail, tout cet argent-là, où vas-tu le trouver?  
 (... if you don't have work, everything is expensive, where will you find it? – PJ)}

Jée mètĩĩ sé, naadé màla **ààr k-ààr** nààba, ...  
 person certain BG 3P themselves fear INF-fear work

(Le travail, tu dois le chercher. Si tu as trouvé le travail, tu auras beaucoup de travail.) Certains ne veulent pas (craignent) travailler eux-mêmes, (sinon, ici en ville, il y a beaucoup de travail.)

((You have to look for work. If you find a job, you have a lot of work.) Some people FEAR the work, (but in the city is much work.) – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 264]

I assume that the example marks focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. Although the object is overtly expressed, it cannot (pragmatically) be included in the focus part, because it is presupposed in the preceding discourse. Here, one can imagine the paraphrasis “Some people FEAR the work (as opposed to like the work).”

In-situ verb doubling is found frequently, and allows variation in valency. It occurs e.g. with stative verbs, as shown in (123a), and with transitive verbs (with a pronominalized object), as shown in (123b).

(123a) Assertive focus on the lexical meaning of the verb – stative verbs

... òò òòn k-òòno.

and be.arrogant INF-be.arrogant

(Certains veulent (disent) choisir leur travail) et sont orgueilleux.

((Some people want choose their work,) because they are ARROGANT. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 264]

(123b) Assertive focus on the lexical meaning of the verb – transitive verbs

Naaí ́s ̀y l̀, naaí ááy-gà sé, t̀ɔl-i t̀ɔlɔ.

2S 2S.eat NEG BG 2S 2S.drink-kA BG 3P.kill-2S INF.kill

Si tu n’as pas mangé et tu en bois, cela te tue. (If you drink it

although you didn’t eat, it KILLS you. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 270]

The example in (123a) can be paraphrased as “Some people are ARROGANT (as opposed to diligent).” and in (123b) as “It KILLS you (as opposed to it cures you).”

Although in-situ verb doubling occurs frequently in KENGA, it indicates not always focus. The construction is used to express the TAM-based function progressive as well. The functional range of in-situ verb doubling and the potential functional change will be discussed in more detail in section 2.5.2.1.

In BAGIRMI and KENGA, in-situ verb doubling indicates focus by syntactic means only. For KENGA, the expression of focus by using this strategy can be motivated as follows:

#### 1. Deviation of the default sentence structure

The default sentence structure (in SVO languages) is characterized by a close relationship of verb and object. The default focus position lies inside the comment (cf. Lambrecht 1994), as illustrated in (124a). In KENGA, the insertion of lexical material, the non-finite verb form, interrupts this relation, as shown in (124b).

(124a) Default sentence structure: [SBJ]<sub>BG</sub> [V OBJ]<sub>FOC</sub>

(124b) Deviation of default structure: [SBJ]<sub>BG</sub> [V]<sub>BG/FOC</sub> --- [OBJ]<sub>BG/FOC</sub>

The verb phrase is no longer the “locus of focus”. Focus could be either on the verb or on the object. The respective other element, in turn, must be interpreted as background.

#### 2. Structural split of the predicate

The insertion of the non-finite verb entails a structural split of the predicate. This can be analyzed being functionally parallel to verb focus preposing. The verbal iteration allows the partition of the predicate into focal and non-focal information: The finite verb hosts the grammatical content, and the non-finite verb hosts the lexical content. While the grammati-

cal content is not in focus, as shown in (125a), the lexical content must be interpreted as focal, because it occupies the dedicated focus position of the sentence, as shown in (125b).

- (125a) Finite verb with grammatical content (not in focus):  $[V_{FIN}]_{BG} [V_{INF}]$   
 (125b) Non-finite verb with lexical content in focus position:  $[V_{FIN}] [V_{INF}]_{FOC}$

### 3. Defocalization of the object

The object is dislocated from the dedicated focus position. With this dislocation, it loses the position-triggered focus interpretation, and this causes the “defocalization” of the object. It occurs not longer in the focus position, and thus, it must be interpreted as belonging to the background part of the sentence:

- (126) Defocalization of the object:  $[SBJ]_{BG} [V_{FIN} [V_{INF}]]_{FOC} [OBJ]_{BG}$

The in-situ verb doubling in KENGA shows similarities with the in-situ verb doubling in BAGIRMI: The dedicated focus position is occupied by a non-finite verb, which must be interpreted as focus. The difference between both constructions lies in the interpretation of the dedicated focus position or – in terms of information structure – the “locus of focus”. BAGIRMI defines it more clause-oriented, thus the focus position is clause-final, as shown in (127a). In KENGA, this position is strictly bound on the finite verb, i.e. it can be characterized as verb-oriented, as shown in (127b).

- (127a) Dedicated focus position (clause-oriented):  $[SBJ] [V] [OBJ]$   
 (127b) Dedicated focus position (verb-oriented):  $[SBJ] [V \text{ } OBJ]$

## 2.4.3.2 Polarity focus

As said in section 2.4.1, the expression of operator focus often depends on language-internal restrictions. With this in mind, I will separate the constructions indicating polarity focus in Sara-Bagirmi as follows: Section 2.4.3.2.1 presents polarity focus in general, and section 2.4.3.2.2 polarity focus with TAM-based restrictions.

### 2.4.3.2.1 Polarity focus in general

In KENGA and SAR, polarity focus is marked by verb topic preposing. Güldemann et al. (2010: 9) assume that verb topic preposing is used primarily for expressing operator focus. Here again, the split of the predicate into a lexical host, the non-finite verb form, and an operator host, the finite verb form, disambiguates the structure. If the operator host of the

predicate is in focus, the construction indicates operator focus. This can be paraphrased as ‘as for *verbing*, (I assert that) X *verbs*’ or ‘X DOES *verb*’ (Güldemann et al. 2010: 6).

In KENGA, verb topic preposing indicates exclusively polarity focus. The examples presented in section 2.4.2.3.2.1 are repeated here as (128) and (129).

- (128) Assertive focus on the polarity operator – affirmative polarity

**Kúrsù** e **kúrs** kée, ...  
INF.cultivate 2S.FUT INF.cultivate EMPH

Tu as beaucoup labouré, (mais celui qui a de l’argent, il se lève et vient au moment de la récolte avec son peu d’argent et t’achètera tout le mil.)

(You DID cultivate. (lit. As for cultivating, you (will have) CULTIVATED),  
(but he who has the money comes at harvest with his little money and buy you all of the mill.) – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 261]

While example (128) shows affirmative polarity, example (129) displays negative polarity.

- (129) Assertive focus on the polarity operator – negative polarity

òò tèèc sé, gaan **k-ààña** kic òŋ **ààñ** èyo, ...  
and exit BG then INF-run also can run NEG

Il est sorti, mais il ne pouvait pas aller vite (courir, il ne pouvait pas courir), (il s’est éloigné lentement et il est monté sur la montagne et est entré dans son trou.)

(He came out, but he couldn’t go fast (lit. As for running, he could NOT run),  
(he walked away slowly and he climbed the mountain and entered his hole.) – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 267]

I assume, based on the translation, that both examples express polarity focus in a clear way. For the example (128), one can paraphrase “You DID cultivate (as opposed to you didn’t cultivate).” or “I believe that you did cultivate.” For (129), one can say “He could NOT run (as opposed to he could run).” or “He really couldn’t run.”

In parallel to KENGA, verb topic preposing in SAR indicates polarity focus as well. The example presented in section 2.4.2.3.2.2 is repeated here as (130).

- (130) Focus on the polarity operator

**ḡògè** lábə **ḡògè** ngáy.  
INF.steal PN PFV.steal much

Pour ce qui est de voler, Labe vole beaucoup.

(As for stealing, Labe (really) STEALS a lot. – PJ) [SAR; Palayer 1989: 274]

The translation implies focus on the polarity operator in the sense of: “I am sure that he steals a lot (as opposed to I am not sure).”

#### 2.4.3.2.2 Polarity focus under TAM sensitivity

In BAGIRMI and KENGA, polarity focus can be expressed by using the constructions with the functional element *kA*. In contrast to the constructions presented in the preceding section, the constructions with *kA* interact with verbal categories. This causes formal restrictions, which, in turn, reduces the functional range.

In BAGIRMI, the construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect is used to mark polarity focus, as shown in (131b).

(131a) Canonical sentence structure – with perfective aspect, but without *kA*

{What did the woman do?}

Né sà monjo ná.

3S PFV.eat beans DET

She ate the beans.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

(131b) Polarity focus – expressed by the construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect

{Did the woman eat the beans?}

Awa, né sà monjo ná gà.

yes 3S PFV.eat beans DET *kA*

Yes, she DID eat the beans.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The examples show formal and functional differences. In contrast to the canonical sentence in (131a), the example in (131b) expresses focus on the polarity operator. It is worth noting that this construction is based on the perfective aspect. Therefore, it is exclusively used for encoding polarity focus of past-perfective contents.

The construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect is used to express polarity focus as well. In contrast to the construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect, it is restricted to future time reference. The example presented in section 2.4.2.5.1.2 is repeated here as (132).

(132) Polarity focus in the future

Gab enaa **ka** k-ot’o.

person DEM *kA* IPFV-fall

Cet homme va sûrement tomber.

(This man will surely fall. – PJ)

[BAGIRMI; Gaden 1909: 17]

The translation with ‘surely’ implies focus on the polarity operator in the sense of: “I am sure that this man will fall (as opposed to he will not fall).”

In parallel to BAGIRMI, the construction with the periphrastic structure and the functional element *kA* in KENGA expresses – in addition to verb topic preposing, as presented in section 2.4.3.2.1 – polarity focus, as shown in (133b).

(133a) Canonical sentence structure – with periphrastic structure, but without *kA*

...      naáñ      è                      k-òŋ              bɛ̀ɛ.  
             3S          3S.FUT              INF-find      well

(Donne-lui ce médicament,) demain il ira mieux.

((Give him this drug,) tomorrow he’ll be better. – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 128]

(133b) Polarity focus – expressed by the construction with periphrastic structure and *kA*

{Donne-lui ce médicament, demain il ira mieux.

(Give him this drug, tomorrow he’ll be better. – PJ)}

ḃòrsé      naáñ      à              kà      k-òŋ              bɛ̀ɛ      sum.  
             now      3S          3S.FUT      kA      INF-find      well      only

Maintenant il ira mieux.

(Now he WILL be better. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 128]

Both examples contain the future time reference, but they show formal and functional differences. While the example in (133a) expresses only the future, the construction in (133b) marks polarity focus in the future. The first sentence can be understood as “I hope that the drug will cure him (but I am not sure).”, but the second sentence contains certainty: “I am sure that he will be better (as opposed to I am not sure).”

Section 2.5.2 will focus on the development of the constructions with *kA*. It will go in greater detail to these constructions and their functional range as well.

### 2.4.3.3 TAM focus

TAM focus marking is attested in BAGIRMI and KENGA, and in both languages, it is expressed by using the constructions with the functional element *kA*. As said in section 2.4.3.2.2, the constructions with *kA* interact with verbal categories. This interaction causes formal restrictions, which reduces the function again.

In BAGIRMI, the construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect expresses – in addition to polarity focus, as presented in section 2.4.3.2.2 – TAM focus. The example presented in section 2.4.2.5.1.1 is here repeated as (134).

## (134) Selective focus on the TAM (perfect) operator

{Has she eaten or is she still eating?}

Né sà gà.

3S PFV.eat kA

She HAS eaten.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The construction in BAGIRMI presented in this section is based on the perfective aspect. Therefore, it is restricted to TAM focus of past-perfective contents, as shown in (134): “She HAS eaten (as opposed to she is still eating).”

In parallel to BAGIRMI, the construction with the simple structure and *kA* in KENGA is used to express a similar function. The example presented in section 2.4.2.5.2.1 is repeated as (135).

## (135) Contrastive focus on the TAM (perfect) operator

{Tu me donnes ton couteau? – Je l’ai perdu. – Mais hier tu l’avais encore? (Could you give me your knife? – I have lost it. – But you still had it yesterday? – PJ)}

À’á, m-íig-ín gà.

no 1S-lose-3S kA

Non, je l’avais déjà perdu.

(No, I HAD already lost it. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 122]

Although the construction in KENGA is based on the “simple form”, which is unmarked for tense, aspect and mood (Neukom 2009: 470), it indicates TAM focus of past-perfective contents. The context makes clear that the example must be understood as “I HAD already lost it (as opposed to I have lost it just now – as expected by the person who ask).”

#### 2.4.3.4 Intensification

Beyond the “canonical” functions of predicate-centered focus, presented in preceding sections, I found – at least in one of the languages under study – constructions, which are used to express a more specific function. These constructions show formal similarities with the other constructions, but they indicate somehow intensification. Although section 2.5.1 will go in greater detail to the nature of intensification and their sub-classification, this section introduces the expression of intensification in MBAY.

The construction with the structure [FOC ñ BG dá] in MBAY shows – in parallel to the structure [FOC la BG yé], presented in section 2.4.3.1 – verb focus preposing. Although both constructions show a similar form, they differ in function. While the structure [FOC la BG yé] is used to indicate focus on the lexical meaning of the verb, the structure [FOC ñ BG dá] marks intensification. The examples from section 2.4.2.2.1.2 are repeated as (136a) and (137b).



## (136a) Qualitative intensification

Mótò            dá            **màjè**                    ní            **màjè**                    dá.  
 motorcycle   BG            INF.be.good            that   PFV.be.good            BG

This motorcycle is terrific! (lit. As for the motorcycle,  
 it is GOOD that it is good. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 151]

(136b) Tèjè            ní-tèn            dá            **yikə**                    ní            **yikə**                    dá.  
 honey   DEM            BG            INF.be.sweet            that   PFV.be.sweet            BG

This honey is very sweet. (lit. As for the honey, it is SWEET that it is sweet. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 151]

Keegan (1997: 151) characterizes the construction as it “serves to give greater emphasis to the verb phrase”. Based on the translation, one can see that the construction itself expresses intensification (and partly exclamation too) – without any intensifying (adverbial) lexic.

Bond & Anderson (2014: 223ff.) analyze the same data, and describe the structure of the example in (136b) as expressing “property proclivity”: It points on a high level on a semantic scale for property proclivity. For this function, I prefer the term “qualitative intensification”, which is characterized by an increasing of the inherent verb properties. Here, one can imagine that the goodness in example (136a) and the sweetness in the example (136b) is more than normal or more than expected.

The construction is also found with active verbs. While the verb *ḥògè* ‘steal’ in (137a) is intransitive, the verb *ày* ‘drink’ in (137b) is transitive.

## (137a) Quantitative intensification

**ḥògè**            ní            à            **ḥògè**                    dá.  
 INF.steal            that   IPFV steal            BG

He really steals a lot.

(lit. It is much STEALING, he steals. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 151]

(137b) Ngon            ní-tèn            dá            **k-ày**                    kàsə            ní            à            **ày**                    dá.  
 child   DEM            BG            INF-drink alcohol            that   IPFV drink            BG

This boy really drinks a lot! (lit. As for this boy,

it is much ALCOHOL DRINKING, he drinks. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 151]

Notwithstanding the differences in valency, the function of both examples is the same. The intensification is – in contrast to the examples in (136) – to be linked to a more or less countable value, which will be called here “quantitative intensification”.

Bond & Anderson (2014: 223f.) describe the structure as indicating “event frequency”. I assume that this interpretation is not adequate, because the structure is not primarily used to

emphasize the frequency of the event. It expresses rather quantitative intensification, which includes – beyond the quantity of the object – the quantity of the event. This, in turn, subsumes i.a. the duration and the frequency of the event. Both examples can be interpreted as expressing intensification on the quantity of the object ('he steals or drinks a CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT') on the one hand, and event quantity<sup>23</sup> ('he steals or drinks FREQUENTLY') on the other hand.

Beyond the construction [FOC ñ BG dá], intensification can be expressed by in-situ verb doubling, e.g. by the construction with the structure [V<sub>FIN</sub> V<sub>INF</sub> ké]. The examples presented in section 2.4.2.4.3.1 are repeated here as (138b) and (139a).

(138a) Qualitative intensification

Njòr      dá      àtə      k-àtə      ké      màjə      sà      àí.  
eggplant   DET   PFV.be.bitter   INF-be.bitter   that   PFV.be.good   eat   NEG  
The eggplant was so bitter that it wasn't good to eat.      [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 150]

(138b) Ngóo    njàr                      njàr                      ké      màjə                      kùr      àí.  
gourd   PFV.be.cracked   INF.be.cracked   that   PFV.be.good   repair   NEG  
The gourd is so cracked that it's not worth repairing.      [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 150]

The examples in (138) imply qualitative intensification. With active verbs, as shown in (139), the construction marks quantitative intensification.

(139a) Quantitative intensification

Ngon    sà      mángò    sà      ké      lòo-tii-á      kàm-á      too-á      ngáy.  
child   PFV.eat   mango   INF.eat   that   tomorrow   stomach-3S   PFV.hurt-3S   much  
The child ate so much mango that the next day his stomach hurts a lot.  
[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 150]

(139b) Bèrà-kòsè    ɗaa      kàlà      ɗaa      ké      kòr      tỳ      tógá-á.  
farmer   PFV.do work   INF.do   that   fatigue   more.than   strength-POSS.3S  
The farmer worked so hard that fatigue surpasses his strength.  
[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 150]

The third strategy for marking intensification is the in-situ verb doubling construction with the structure [V<sub>FIN</sub> ta V<sub>INF</sub>]. The examples from section 2.4.2.4.3.2 are repeated as (140a) and (142b).

<sup>23</sup> For more information about the nature of event quantification and plurality see Ferreira (2005).

## (140a) Qualitative intensification

Mbùr lò-á mājè ta mājè.  
 boule POSS-3S PFV.be.good just INF.be.good

Her ‘boule’ is very good.

(lit. Her ‘boule’ is good, just good. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 147]

## (140b) Daa dá ngèrà ta ngèrà.

meat DET PFV.be.gristly just INF.be.gristly

This meat is nothing but gristle.

(lit. This meat is gristly, just gristly. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 147]

Before going in detail to the function of the construction, it is necessary to investigate the function of particle *ta*. Keegan (2009: 535) translates *ta* as ‘only’ or ‘doing nothing but’. I assume that *ta* cannot be restricted to the function as ‘only’. It shows rather parallels to the meanings of ENGLISH *just*, which is described in the literature (König 1991: 121f. < Cohen 1969) with up to six meanings. I argue that the particle *ta* covers at least three of them:

(141) The meanings of *just*

‘only’ – I just want two apples.

‘simply/emphasis’ – That’s just marvelous.

‘barely’ – He just made it by the skin of his teeth. (König 1991: 122)

In the available texts of MBAY (Keegan 1999), particle *ta* isn’t found even once. Exclusivity or restriction is realized by the particles *kòóní*, *bè* or *kàri*, which can be translated as ‘only’. I have the intention that – in addition to the extended meaning of *ta* – the structural complexity of *ta* could be the reason for its absence in natural discourse.

The translation of *ta* as ‘only’ is misleading. In combination with intensification, one would expect that ‘only’ refers to the endpoint of the (intensifying) scale, which can be paraphrased e.g. for the example in (140a) as “Her ‘boule’ is the best.” I assume that this interpretation is not intended, but rather the “normal” intensification as “Her ‘boule’ is very good.”

With active verbs, the construction marks quantitative intensification:

## (142a) Quantitative intensification

Ndii èdè ta k-èdè.  
 water PFV.fall just INF-fall

It does nothing but rain.

(lit. The rain falls, just falls. – PJ)

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 147]

- (142b) ày                      kàsə      ta      k-ày  
 PFV.drink      alcohol just INF-drink  
 to do nothing but drink  
 (lit. to drink alcohol, just drink – PJ) [MBAY; Keegan 1997: 147]

Bond & Anderson (2014: 241f.) classify this structure as “exclusive situation focus”. I guess that this interpretation is misleading again because the exclusivity or the restriction is triggered by the translation of *ta* as ‘only’. The examples in (142) don’t refer to exclusive focus in the traditional sense, i.e. there is no restriction to the event of drinking. “He does nothing but drink” implies that someone drinks all the time or that he drinks a lot, but it doesn’t imply that he doesn’t do other things beyond the drinking, like eating, sleeping, speaking, going to the bathroom, ... Thus, I assume that all the examples show intensification – at least rather than exclusivity.

#### 2.4.3.5 Summary: Functional variety of focus

In the languages under study, predicate-centered focus is attested with four functions:

##### 1. Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

This function is expressed by verb focus preposing in MBAY and SAR, and by in-situ verb doubling in BAGIRMI and KENGA.

##### 2. Polarity focus

This function is attested with verb topic preposing in KENGA and SAR, and with morphological focus marking in BAGIRMI and KENGA.

##### 3. TAM focus

This function is found in BAGIRMI and KENGA only, and it is always indicated by morphological focus marking.

##### 4. Intensification

This function is attested in MBAY only. It is expressed by verb focus preposing and by in-situ verb doubling.

Table 20 compares the focus marking strategies with the attested functions.

Language /Strategy	Verb focus preposing	Verb topic preposing	In-situ verb doubling	Morphological focus marking
Bagirmi			SoA focus	TAM focus Polarity focus
Kenga		Polarity focus	SoA focus	TAM focus Polarity focus
Ngambay				
Kabba				
Mbay	SoA focus Intensification		Intensification	
Sar	SoA focus	Polarity focus		

Table 20: Predicate-centered focus and their function in the languages under study

The structural separation reflects the functional differences: Verb focus preposing expresses focus on the lexical meaning of the verb or intensification, and verb topic preposing marks exclusively polarity focus only. This confirms the functional differentiation between focus preposing and topic preposing argued by Güldemann et al. (2010). In-situ verb doubling indicates focus on the lexical meaning of the verb or intensification, and morphological focus marking expresses polarity focus or TAM focus.

One can see that two strategies, i.e. verb topic preposing and morphological focus marking, are used to indicate operator focus, i.e. polarity focus and TAM focus. The remaining strategies, i.e. verb focus preposing and in-situ verb doubling, express focus on the lexical meaning or intensification.

As said before, many constructions used for expressing predicate-centered focus can be characterized as polyfunctional. They are found with pragmatic functions on the one hand, and with grammatical functions, like TAM indication, on the other hand. Section 2.5.2 will go in detail to the relationship of predicate-centered focus and TAM categories.

## 2.5 Studies on functional change

This section focuses chiefly on the diachronic development of selected – mostly polyfunctional – strategies, which are also used for pragmatic and grammatical functions. The analysis of functional change found in Sara-Bagirmi is based on the idea that any change in grammatical rules requires the insertion of intermediary stages between stage A and stage B, as illustrated in (143).

(143)  $A > \{A/B\} > B$  (Hopper & Traugott 1993: 36)

The intermediary stages of functional change can be divided up into three sub-stages, as Heine & Reh (1984) describe:

- (144a) **Desemanticization:** “A lexical item receives a second, non-lexical function, which may ultimately become its only function” (Heine & Reh 1984: 36).
- (144b) **Expansion:** “has the effect of extending the function of a linguistic unit to other contexts, categories or syntactic slots – Desemanticization may be considered as a special case of Expansion” (Heine & Reh 1984: 39).
- (144c) **Simplification:** “can be considered as an ‘optimization of existing rules’ or as analogical leveling ... It has the effect of extending the range of contexts to which rules are applied” (Heine & Reh 1984: 41).

In the following study, I aim to clarify the functional change for certain constructions in three languages of my sample. Based on Givón’s idea (1979) “from discourse to syntax”, I argue that the structures presented in this section show an expansion from (exclusive) pragmatic function to (partly exclusive) grammatical function. Hence, for the functional change in Sara-Bagirmi, the model in (143) can be adapted accordingly:

(145) pragmatic function  $> \{\text{pragmatic/grammatical function}\} > \text{grammatical function}$

Most of the constructions presented here are polyfunctional i.e. they are used to express more than one function. I assume that this polyfunctionality displays the ongoing language change: The construction is in transition between stage A and stage B. However, if there is only polyfunctional data available, it is difficult to establish the direction of the development. This is why I used language-internal information (as described in grammars and attested in texts) to identify the functional change, in addition to contrasting amassed data with that of constructions found in related languages. Comparing the strategies naturally completes the picture and helps us to understand the relevant structures in question.

As mentioned initially, I predict that the constructions presented here start with pragmatic function and expand over time to include grammatical function. In order to demonstrate this fully, I have split the section into two parts. Section 2.5.1 presents the development from predicate-centered focus to intensification, while section 2.5.2 examines the expansion from predicate-centered focus to TAM-based categories. Section 2.5.3 will then summarize the findings and determine a correlation between all the processes within the language family.

### 2.5.1 From PCF to intensification: Data from MBAY

This section addresses a special (sub-)section of predicate-centered focus, namely intensification. It presents data from MBAY, which possesses – beyond a variety of canonical focus marking strategies – three constructions, expressing intensification in some way (see sections 2.4.2.2.1.2 and 2.4.2.4.3).

In this section, I want to investigate the semantic concept of intensification, as well as prove the close relationship between predicate-centered focus and intensification. Following a brief introduction to the nature of intensification and its cross-linguistic application in section 2.5.1.1, section 2.5.1.2 strives to classify the subgroups of intensification, based on the examples given in sections 2.4.2.2.1.2 and 2.4.2.4.3. Section 2.5.1.3 then goes on to reveal the potential functional change of focus preposing in MBAY.

#### 2.5.1.1 The concept of intensification

“Intensification is a direct indication of a speaker’s desire to use and exploit the expression of hyperbole [...] it is a vehicle for impressing, praising, persuading, insulting, and generally influencing the listener’s reception of the message” (Partington 1993: 178). Lorenz (1999: 24) adds that intensification signals personal commitment, truth and value judgments, and belongs to the functional category of epistemic modality. Intensification is always indisputably linked to the notion of scalarity or a degree of modification:

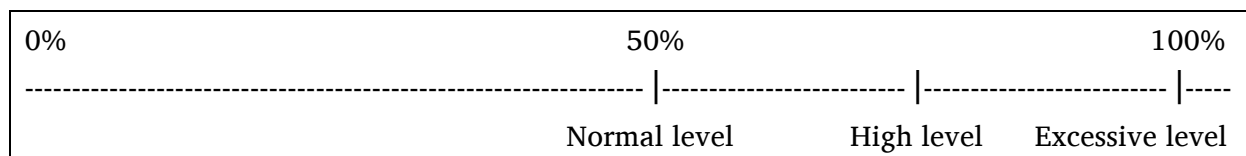


Figure 6: Scale of modification

One can well imagine that intensive contents refer to either a high degree or high level on a scale, as shown in (146b). They can even reach the endpoint of the scale, as denoted in (146c).

- (146a) Normal level: The princess is beautiful.
- (146b) High level: The princess is so beautiful.
- (146c) Excessive level: The princess is the fairest of all.

I expect intensification to share at least three properties with focal expressions. First of all, it reflects the speaker’s attitude towards the proposition. Secondly, it is used to express emphasis and saliency, which according to Dik (1997), is the major property of focus. And thirdly, it can be employed, as many other focal categories, to express counter-expectation, as shown in (147b).

- (147a) Expected level: The frog is ugly.
- (147b) Unexpected level: The frog is VERY ugly.

Moreover, intensification and polarity focus share the expression of epistemic modality. Both are used to signal personal commitment and truth and value judgments, and they control the sentential operator, which takes scope over the mood of the sentence. Interestingly though, they differ in terms of conceptual configuration. Polarity focus refers to a strong binary configuration. Negative polarity is located on the minus pole, while positive polarity is located on the plus pole:

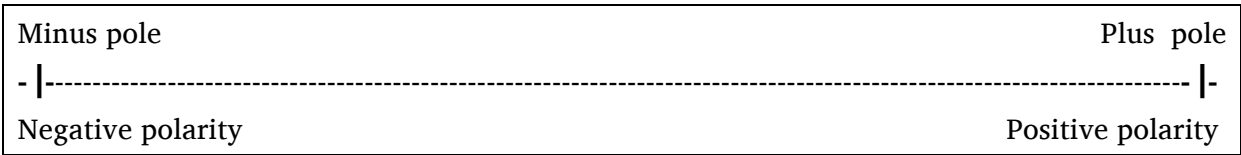


Figure 7: Binary interpretation of polarity focus

In contrast, intensification refers to a more subtle scale. One could say that activating any point in the spectrum between high and excessive levels expresses intensification:

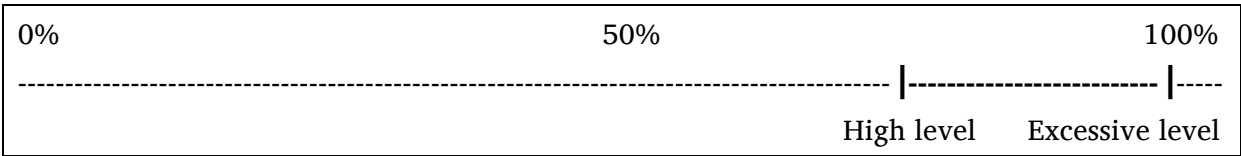


Figure 8: Scalar interpretation of intensification

Recognizing the semantic concept of intensification usually depends on language-specific circumstances. In many languages, intensification is expressed by adverbial intensifiers that imply *very*, *much*, *often*, ... (Traugott 2006, Kennedy & McNally 2005). Other languages use the same means for encoding focus when expressing intensification. In BAMBARA (Mande), the marker *dé* indicates polarity focus, as shown in (148a), as well as intensification (148b).



## (148a) Polarity focus in BAMBARA

{Amadu didn't come.}

À nà-nà dɛ́.

3S come-PFV.ITR PC.FOC

(No) He did come.

[BAMBARA; Prokhorov 2014: 64]

## (148b) Intensive in BAMBARA

À ká júgu dɛ́!

3S QUAL nasty PC.FOC

He is very nasty!

[BAMBARA; Dumestre 2003: 321 &lt; Prokhorov 2014: 61]

The example shows that focus on the polarity operator is marked in the same way as intensification.

### 2.5.1.2 Classifying intensification

MBAY uses at least three constructions for marking intensification. Table 21 provides information about the examples explored in sections 2.4.2.2.1.2 and 2.4.2.4.3. They are listed with their relevant parameters i.e. construction type, verb semantic and functional type of intensification:

Nr.	Gloss	Construction type	Verb semantic	Type of intensification
1	Be sweet	Verb focus preposing	Stative	Qualitative
2	Be good	Verb focus preposing	Stative	Qualitative
3	Steal	Verb focus preposing	Active (intrans.)	Quantitative (object/event)
4	Drink alcohol	Verb focus preposing	Active (trans.)	Quantitative (object/event)
5	Be bitter	In-situ verb doubling ( <i>ká</i> )	Stative	Qualitative
6	Be cracked	In-situ verb doubling ( <i>ká</i> )	Stative	Qualitative
7	Eat mango	In-situ verb doubling ( <i>ká</i> )	Active (trans.)	Quantitative (object)
8	Do work	In-situ verb doubling ( <i>ká</i> )	Active (trans.)	Quantitative (object)
9	Be good	In-situ verb doubling ( <i>ta</i> )	Stative	Qualitative
10	Be gristly	In-situ verb doubling ( <i>ta</i> )	Stative	Qualitative
11	Fall	In-situ verb doubling ( <i>ta</i> )	Active (intrans.)	Quantitative (object/event)
12	Drink alcohol	In-situ verb doubling ( <i>ta</i> )	Active (trans.)	Quantitative (object/event)

Table 21: Examples with glosses, construction type, verb semantic and function

One can see that the valency i.e. the difference between transitive and intransitive verbs, seems to exert no influence on the function. Structures with verbs, which can be translated such as ‘steal’ or ‘rain’, can denote quantitative intensification of the (inherent) object, in other words: ‘steal a lot of things’ or ‘rain a lot of rain’. The interpretation of intensification primarily depends on the verb semantic i.e. the difference between active and stative verbs:

1. Structures with stative/adjectival verbs always emphasize the inherent quality of the verb e.g. the sweetness, the goodness, the bitterness ...
2. Structures with active verbs always highlight the quantity. Here, the intensification can either be restricted to the (inherent) object (‘it rains a CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT’) or it involves the whole event (‘it RAINS FREQUENTLY’).

The observations found in MBAY data could be regarded as a general rule that holds true for other languages, in addition to other structural encoding means for intensification. I assume that intensified stative verbs will always indicate an unexpected high quality of the state:

(149a) Intensifying the inherent quality of an “adjectival verb”

[The princess was beautiful.]<sub>INTENS</sub> > The princess was very beautiful.

(149b) Intensifying the inherent quality of a stative verb

[The princess remember the day.]<sub>INTENS</sub> > The princess remember the day very well.

Intensified active verbs refer to the unexpected (high) quantity of the event. The interpretation can indicate either the object’s quantity, as shown in (150a) or that of the event (150b).

(150a) Intensifying the quantity of the object

[The princess kissed frogs.]<sub>INTENS</sub> > The princess kissed many frogs.

(150b) Intensifying the frequency of the event

[The princess kissed frogs.]<sub>INTENS</sub> > The princess kissed frogs frequently.

The high quantity of an event can be interpreted in different ways: it can refer to an increase in the frequency, as observable in (150b), or it can highlight the duration (151b). For intransitive verbs, the intensification can involve the inherent object, as shown in (151a).

(151a) Intensifying the quantity of the (inherent) object

[The frog croaked.]<sub>INTENS</sub> > The frog croaked many croakes.

(151b) Intensifying the duration of the event

[The frog croaked.]<sub>INTENS</sub> > The frog croaked the whole night.

For this reason, the examples in (150) and (151) are interpreted as “quantitative intensification”, while the examples in (149) refer to “qualitative intensification”.

### 2.5.1.3 Functional change: From PCF to intensification

As determined in section 2.4.2.2.1, verb focus preposing includes several constructions – due to morphological double marking in MBAY. One of these is used for indicating focus, as set out in (152a), whilst another focus-preposing construction conveys intensification (152b). Both examples from section 2.4.2.2.1.2 are repeated below:

(152a) Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

... nà      tɔɔ      la      tɔɔ      yé.  
 but      INF.be.broken      G.FOC      PFV.be.broken      BG  
 (No, I did put water in the pot;) it's just that it's BROKEN.

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 148]

(152b) Intensification

ɓògò      ní      à      ɓògò      dá.  
 INF.steal      that      IPFV steal      BG  
 He really steals a lot.

[MBAY; Keegan 1997: 151]

The example in (152a) presents the construction [FOC la BG yé], which is used to mark focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. The example in (152b) displays the construction [FOC ní BG dá], which is used to fulfill the more specific function of marking intensification.

The partially formal co-incidence of both constructions could be viewed as clues for functional similarities. I expect both constructions to start with the same function, namely the expression of predicate-centered focus. The construction [FOC ní BG dá] is more than likely subject to further development, and synchronically speaking, it is exclusively employed to voice intensification:

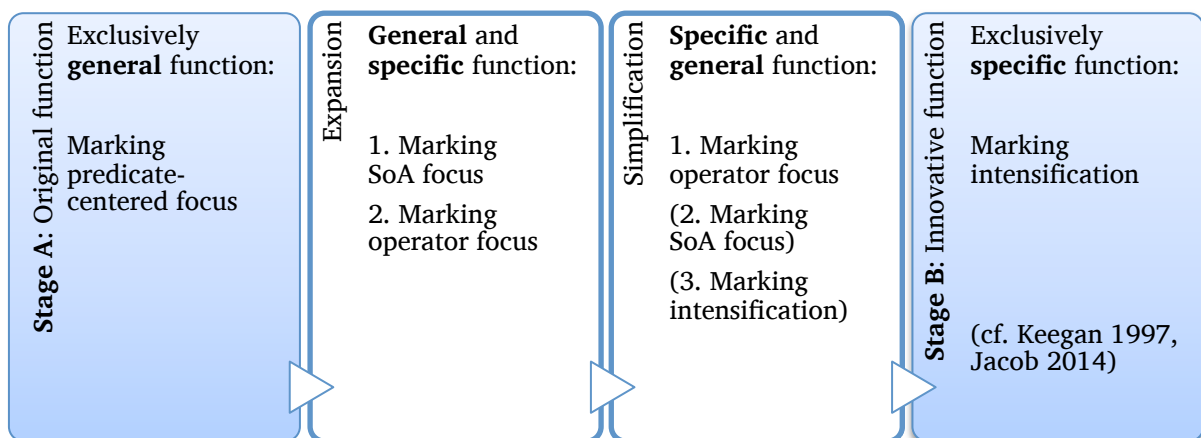


Figure 9: Evolution of the verb-focus preposing construction [FOC ní BG dá] in MBAY

The construction [FOC *ń* BG *dá*] might start with a general function, as shown in the blue box in the left, which could then be extended to express predicate-centered focus throughout, as illustrated in the adjacent white box (“Expansion”). As a result, one can envisage “simplifying” the expression of intensification, as shown in the right-hand white box, while the blue box on the end illustrates the synchronic stage: The construction is used solely to indicate intensification.

## 2.5.2 From PCF to TAM: Data from BAGIRMI and KENGA

Beyond the functional change of verb-focus preposing in MBAY – from predicate-centered focus marking to intensification marking – BAGIRMI and KENGA both provide essential information about the development from predicate-centered focus marking to TAM marking.

Section 2.5.2.1 pinpoints the extension of in-situ verb doubling: from the pragmatic function (focus on the lexical meaning of the verb) to the progressive. Section 2.5.2.2 then goes on to explain the path from operator focus marking to the perfect, while section 2.5.2.3 ventures from operator focus marking to the future. This inevitably leads one to observe that functional change always moves in the same direction: from pragmatic function to grammatical function. Each section will start with a brief introduction and end with a concise summary.

### 2.5.2.1 From PCF to the progressive: Data from KENGA

Synchronically, BAGIRMI and KENGA use different constructions for expressing the progressive. BAGIRMI recognizes this function via more cross-linguistically typical means, such as periphrastic structure with *ét(u)* ‘be in a place’, as noted in (153a). In KENGA, this function is fulfilled by in-situ verb doubling, as expounded in section 2.4.2.4.2 and once again in (153b) below:

(153a) Progressive in BAGIRMI – expressed by periphrastic structure

(Née)    *n-ét*            *ndugo*        *kitàb*        *kəɖɛ*.  
 3S        3S-PROG    IPFV.buy    book        IDEF

He is buying a book.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2006: 31]

(153b) Progressive in KENGA – expressed by in-situ verb doubling

*mí-ʒs*        *k-ʒsɔ*

1S-eat    INF-eat

je suis en train de manger (I’m eating – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 130]

I assume that in-situ verb doubling in KENGA displays a functional change. It is developed from a once pragmatic function to a more grammatical one:

(154) PCF marking > {SoA focus/TAM (progressive) marking} > progressive marking

In order to justify the above assumption, section 2.5.2.1.1 briefly introduces the nature of the progressive. Section 2.5.2.1.2 then investigates in greater detail both the form and function of the in-situ verb doubling construction in KENGA – on top of the data provided in section 2.4.2.4.2. This is followed by an excursion to another structure found in KENGA, namely the periphrastic structure, which is used to express the continuative or durative (see section 2.5.2.1.3). The excursion aims to help us understand the interplay of both constructions and their distribution in the language. Finally, section 2.5.2.1.4 will summarize the findings and examine the development of in-situ verb doubling in KENGA.

#### 2.5.2.1.1 The relationship between PCF and the progressive

“Progressive views an action as ongoing at reference time” (Bybee et al. 1994: 126). It could be classified as a special case of imperfectivity (Comrie 1976: 24f.):

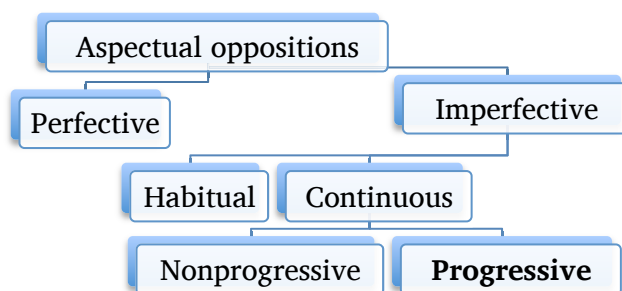


Table 22: Classification of aspectual oppositions (Comrie 1976: 25)

Dahl (1985: 92f.) lists three features that distinguish progressive from imperfective aspect:

- (155a) **Time reference:** “In contradistinction to perfective/imperfective, which is strongly correlated with the distinction between past and non-past time reference, progressive is usually independent or almost independent of time reference ... it is used both of the present, the past and the future” (Dahl 1985: 92f.).
- (155b) **Habitual meaning:** “Progressive is quite infrequently extended to habitual meaning” (Dahl 1985: 93).
- (155c) **Dynamic verbs:** “Progressive is normally used only of dynamic – that is non-stative – situations” (Dahl 1985: 93).

The progressive is characterized by the “pragmatic component of inherent focality”. In several Bantu languages, it occurs frequently in direct communicative interaction of dialogues, and is equally excluded from sentences in which the focus is not on the predicate (Güldemann 2003: 352ff.).

Historically, most progressive structures are based on locative expressions or structures implying continuity of an activity (Bybee & Dahl 1989: 77ff.). For encoding purposes, progressives indicate a tendency towards being marked periphrastically (85% of all cases in Dahl 1985: 91). Moreover, the progressive can also be expressed using “reduplication” (Parkvall 2003: 20f.), due to high iconicity.

#### 2.5.2.1.2 In-situ verb doubling

Although in-situ verb doubling in KENGA has already been introduced (section 2.4.2.4.2), the construction will be explained again here for convenience sake:

(156a) In-situ verb doubling

{Que fais-tu? (What do you do? – PJ)}

M-ai k-ài màne.

1S-drink INF-drink water<sup>24</sup>

Je bois de l’eau. (I’m drinking water. – PJ)

[KENGA; Vandame 1968: 37]

(156b) mí-túg túgù

1S-wash INF.wash

je suis en train de laver (I’m washing – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 130]

The examples show the co-occurrence of two lexically identical verb forms, whereby the finite form precedes the non-finite form. Overt marking of the non-finite form naturally depends on the structure of the verb. Vowel-initial verbs are always marked by prefix *k-* (Neukom 2010: 142), as shown in (156a), others not (156b). The non-finite verb form immediately follows the finite verb form i.e. no element can appear between the verbs: all markers, adverbials or objects follow the non-finite verb form, as seen in (156a).

In the literature (Neukom 2010: 130, Vandame 1968: 37), in-situ verb doubling is described as a strategy for indicating the progressive. Interestingly, it is also found to have other functions:

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<sup>24</sup> All the glosses in the examples from Vandame (1968) are mine.

- (157a) In-situ verb doubling – for expressing the progressive

{Que fais-tu? (What do you do? – PJ)}

M-**śs**      **k-śsɔ**.

1S-eat      INF-eat

Je mange. (I'm eating. – PJ)

[KENGA; Vandame 1968: 37]

- (157b) In-situ verb doubling – for expressing the inchoative

Naáñ    **śs**    **k-śsɔ**.

3S      eat    INF-eat

Il se met à manger. (He starts to eat. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 132]

Yet, even though both examples display the same structure with the same verb, they are translated differently: (157a) expresses the progressive, and (157b), the inchoative. This can be taken as a first indication that the construction cannot be restricted to expressing the progressive: it appears to contain more information.

Secondly, the construction occurs frequently with stative or non-dynamic verbs:

- (158a) In-situ verb doubling – with stative verbs

Măñ    sé    **àm**      **k-àma**.

woman DET be.pregnant    INF-be.pregnant

Cette femme est enceinte.

(This woman is pregnant. – PJ)

[KENGA; Vandame 1968: 37]

- (158b) Kăl-ín      **àc**      **k-àce**.

clothes-POSS.3S    be.red    INF-be.red

Son vêtement est rouge (il ne rougit pas).

(His clothes ARE RED (they not become red). – PJ)

[KENGA; Vandame 1968: 37]

- (158c) {Qu'a-t-il?} (What is with him? – PJ)}

đim̃    tɛd-ín    ɛ̀yo, naáñ    **òòr**      **k-òòr**      sum.

thing    do-3S    NEG 3S    be.tired    INF-be.tired    only

Rien, il est seulement fatigué.

(Nothing, he is just TIRED. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 131]

The examples in (158) illustrate the use of in-situ verb doubling with the verbs 'be pregnant', as shown in (158a), 'be red' (158b), and 'be tired' (158c). Recognizing Dahl's claim (1985: 92f.) that the typically progressive is used only in dynamic situations, this observation contradicts, and confirms the hypothesis that the construction cannot express the progressive only.

Thirdly, in-situ verb doubling is found with habitual meaning:

(159a) In-situ verb doubling – for expressing the habitualis

Bís      í      sé      **dóóŋ**      **dóóŋò**.

dog      DEM DET bite      INF.bite

Ce chien mord (habituellement). (This dog usually bites. – PJ)

[KENG; Vandame 1968: 51]

(159b) Àmbîs-ím      **t-ók**      **t-ók**      órgò.

cat-POSS.1S P-catch P-INF.catch mouse

Mon chat prend habituellement des souris. (My cat usually catches mice. – PJ)

[KENG; Vandame 1968: 52]

Both examples express habitual meaning. While (159b) indicates the habitual function with the prefix *t-*, marking “verbal plurality” (Neukom 2010: 98f.), (159a) conveys this function via tonal change (high tone on both verb forms). Although the progressive is quite infrequently extended to habitual meaning (Dahl 1985: 92f.), both examples contain in-situ verb doubling. This observation once again endorses the hypothesis that the construction cannot express the progressive.

Fourthly, it is interesting to note that in-situ verb doubling can be combined with the functional element *kA*:

(160) In-situ verb doubling – with *kA*

m-ók      gà      **kòso**

1S-manger kA INF.manger

j’ai mangé (I ate – PJ)

[KENG; Neukom 2010: 132]

Vandame (1968: 42f.) states that this marker is not incompatible with in-situ verb doubling:

(161a) In-situ verb doubling – without *kA*

mí-tòòd      tòòdo.

1S-lie INF.lie

Je suis couché. (I’m lying in bed. – PJ)

[KENG; Vandame 1968: 43]

(161b) In-situ verb doubling – with *kA*

mí-tòód      gà      tòòdo.

1S-lie kA INF-lie

Je suis couché (je ne me relèverai pas).

(I’m lying in bed (I will not get up again). – PJ)

[KENG; Vandame 1968: 43]



While (161a) largely fulfills TAM function (marking the progressive), (161b) marks focus on the perfect operator ('I'm ALREADY lying in bed.'). The combination of in-situ verb doubling and *kA* signals that the action has been completed or the state has been achieved. Neukom (2009: 467) calls this construction "resultative" and integrates it – in contrast to Vandame (1968) – paradigmatically in the TAM system (see section 1.3.3). The combination of in-situ verb doubling and *kA* occurs only once in the corpus of natural discourse (see section 2.6):

(162) In-situ verb doubling – with *kA*

̀̀̀̀ kén ààñ t̀̀̀̀̀ g̀̀̀̀ t̀̀̀̀̀ d̀̀̀̀n k̀̀̀̀, k̀̀̀̀-tááđ-íñ paac.

and SUB run release *kA* INF.release much also 1P-say-3S all

Ceux qui ont souvent gagné (qui avaient couru et qui étaient sorti), on les indique tous. (Those who have often won (who had ran and had left), indicate it all. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 277]

The example demonstrates the usage of the "resultative" in a serial-verb construction of the verbs *ààña* 'run' and *t̀̀̀̀̀* 'release' for expressing 'win' (Neukom 2010: 193). As discussed later in section 2.5.2.2.3, this illustrates that marker *kA* occurs very frequently as a grammatical marker of the perfect, even in this construction. The relevant clause combining functional marker and in-situ verb doubling provides – as is typical for the perfect – background information, while the successive clause remains in focus.

All the examples suggest that the construction is not exclusively used for expressing the progressive. It equally fulfills, as asserted in section 2.4.2.4.2, a rather pragmatic function, namely marking focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. This function will now be illustrated here again along with an additional example, which requires a modicum of interpretation to ensure thorough understanding. It is part of a debate with the topic "Living in the country or in the city?", in which the townsman boasts about the money he earns in town (as shown in the context), while the villager praises the good supply situation:

- (163) In-situ verb doubling – expressing focus on the lexical meaning of the verb  
 {En ce moment, tu travailleras, et lorsque tu as gagné de l'argent, tout le mil que tu as cultivé et pour lequel tu as travaillé longtemps, je viendrai te l'acheter avec de l'argent.}

(At this time, when you want to get money for the millet you cultivated with so much effort, I will come to you to buy it from you with my money. – PJ)

Gòt-ń àr sé, maám m-ṣs k-ḏs bɛ̀ɛ,  
 place-REL here BG 1S 1S-eat INF-eat well

naasé ṣs-ki kamb daŋ gè, ...  
 2P 2P.eat-2P leave.CONN soap P

Ici, on mange bien, là-bas vous mangez les feuilles du savonnier, (les résidus de l'arbre cáàmì, et toutes les choses qui n'ont pas d'huile.)

(Here, I EAT well, there you eat soap leaves, (rests of caami tree leaves, and all the things without oil). – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 262]

The example begins with a sentence-initial frame setter, followed by the pronominalized subject as a contrastive aboutness topic. Together with the finite verb form, it provides background information, while maintaining the non-finite verb form in focus. The clause-final adverbial belongs to the background part because it is presupposed by the discourse topic. I therefore assume the example expresses focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. For a more in-depth understanding, the dialogue will be paraphrased in (164). Here, one can imagine the villager exerting focus on the lexical meaning of the verb, as depicted in (164c).

- (164a) Context: What do you prefer, living in town or in the country?  
 (164b) Townsman: I personally prefer the financial situation in town ('I have MONEY').  
 (164c) Villager: I personally prefer the supply situation in the village ('I EAT well').

It is well worth noting that the second clause in the example in (163) employs the same verb, but without doubling. Here, it is impossible to detect any difference between both verbs (in the first and second clause) according to their TAM interpretation; both fulfill the same "habitual-style" function. Nevertheless, they differ in pragmatic function. While the first clause implies focus on the lexical meaning of the verb ('I personally EAT well.'), the second one clearly displays object focus ('As for you, you eat SOAP LEAVES, ...').

### 2.5.2.1.3 Excuse: The construction with *utu*

This section focuses on the serial-verb construction with *utú* ‘be at’ and a lexical verb:

(165) Construction with *utú*

M-*utú* m-*śsə̀*.

1S-*utu* 1S-eat

Je mange encore. (I’m still eating. – PJ)

[KENG; Neukom 2010: 199]

In the literature (Neukom 2010: 198ff., Vandame 1968: 39ff.), the *utú* construction is said to mark the continuative. Interestingly, it can co-occur with in-situ verb doubling:

(166a) In-situ verb doubling

Maàn èeɗ k-èede.

rain fall INF-fall

Il pleut. (It rains/It’s raining. – PJ)

[KENG; Vandame 1968: 40]

(166b) In-situ verb doubling with *utú* – for marking the continuative

Maàn *utú* èeɗ k-èede.

rain *utu* fall INF-fall

Il continue à pleuvoir. (It’s still raining. – PJ)

[KENG; Vandame 1968: 40]

While in-situ verb doubling in (166a) highlights the fact that the event happens at speech time (“progressive”), the combination of doubling and *utu* in (166b) emphasizes that the event is happening (“continuative”).

From a theoretical or cross-linguistic point of view, “progressiveness is the combination of continuousness with nonstativity” (Comrie 1976: 12). For this very reason, one can assume that in-situ verb doubling in KENG is used – at least sometimes – to express the dynamic quality of an action (‘It’s raining right now.’), while the continuative is used to mark the state of the subject (‘The rain is happening.’). My intuition tells me that the *utu* construction also fulfills pragmatic function, as well as in-situ verb doubling; it expresses focus on a special kind of TAM, namely the durative operator.

Structures using *utu* are found with other TAM forms too. They occur when employing the “vague future”, as depicted in (167b), the “definite future” (both TAM forms are presented in detail in section 2.5.2.3.2), as shown in (168b), and with the simple form, as already presented in (165).

- (167a) Periphrastic structure with
- à*
- for marking the “vague future”

Naán     *à*             *k-òoio*.

3S        FUT        INF-be.dead

Il mourra. (He will die. – PJ)

[KENGA; Vandame 1968: 40]

- (167b) Periphrastic structure with
- à*
- and
- utú*
- for expressing focus on the durative operator

Naán     **utú**     *à*             *k-òoio*.3S        *utu*     FUT     INF-die

Il est encore devant mourir, il n'est pas encore mort mais ça va venir.

(He's still ahead of death; he's not dead yet, but it's going to come to that. – PJ)

[KENGA; Vandame 1968: 40]

- (168a) Construction with simple structure and
- kA*
- for marking the “definite future”

Naán     *à-kà*             *k-òoio*.3S        FUT-*kA*        INF-be.dead

Il va mourir (prochainement).

(He's going to die (soon). – PJ)

[KENGA; Vandame 1968: 40]

- (168b) Construction with simple structure and
- kA*
- with
- utú*
- focus on the durative operator

Naán     **utú**     *à-kà*             *k-òoio*.3S        *utu*     FUT-*kA*     INF-die

Il continue à être sur le point de mourir.

(He's on the verge of death/he's about to die. – PJ)

[KENGA; Vandame 1968: 40]

All the examples show that *utu* structures are used to mark focus on the durative operator. Fascinatingly, the auxiliary *utu* co-occurs with the simple form, “progressive” and both types of the future – though never in the “perfect”, as will be described in section 2.5.2.2.3. The incompatibility of *utu* and the post-verbal marker *kA* can only be explained in terms of contradictory functions. Both elements refer to different types of TAM focus: While the *kA* construction is used to express focus on the perfect operator, the *utu* construction marks focus on the durative operator.

Taking a look at the descriptions in the literature, it would appear that *utu* constructions have been losing significance over the past few decades. Unlike Vandame (1968), Neukom (2010, 2009: 467) does not integrate this construction in the verb paradigms (although he does list the less frequent “resultative”). In fact, he categorizes it as a serial-verb construction and provides just a few examples. Here, it is interesting that the *utu* construction occurs frequently in sentences with operator focus:

- (169) Construction with simple structure and *kA* with *utú* – focus on the durative operator  
 {Le repas a été servi, mais les invités sont trop occupés pour manger. L’hôte  
 demande: Votre repas-là, vous vous en souvenez?

(The meal was served, but the guests were too busy to eat. The host demands:  
 The meal, do you remember? – PJ)}

J-**ùtu** kə k-òso.

1P-utu kA INF-eat

On va manger. (We are going to eat. (lit. We will CONTINUE to eat.) – PJ)

[KENG; Neukom 2010: 200]

The example in (169) reveals a structural anomaly. In contrast to Vandame’s example in (168b), the auxiliary *a* for marking the future does not appear in (169). One can assume that the functional marker *kA* adopts – just like in BAGIRMI (see section 2.5.2.3.2) – the grammatical function (marking the future), in addition to the pragmatic function (expressing focus on the certainty operator). Functionally, the example in (169) must be interpreted as an indicator of focus on the durative operator. The marker *kA* fulfills a primarily grammatical function. It expresses the future, just as the *kA* construction in BAGIRMI does.

As said in the beginning, structures using *utu* co-occur even with in-situ verb doubling:

- (170) In-situ verb doubling with *utú* – for marking focus on the durative operator  
 {Ton couteau, tu l’as trouvé depuis l’autre jour?

(Have you found your knife since the other day? – PJ)}

À’á, m-**utú** m-òŋ-íñ k-òŋ jáákì.

no 1S-utu 1S-find-3S INF-find today

Non, je viens de la retrouver aujourd’hui.

(No, I have JUST found it today. – PJ)

[KENG; Neukom 2010: 200f.]

The example in (170) seems to identify contrastive focus on a TAM operator. Yet, although the context is reasonably clear, it still is not easy to distinguish the precise interpretation. This is due to the complex combination of the telic verb ‘find’<sup>25</sup>, the serial-verb construction (for expressing focus on the durative operator) and in-situ verb doubling (for marking the progressive or focus on the lexical meaning of the verb). The question ‘Have you found your knife since the other day?’ is answered by ‘No, (I haven’t found it meanwhile, but) I have

<sup>25</sup> As mentioned in section 2.4.2.3.2.1, the verb *òŋ* has several meanings. Here, it functions as a lexical verb glossed as ‘find’; Palayer (2004: 136) also lists the meaning of ‘meet’.

JUST found it'. The example must therefore be viewed as focus on the durative operator, indicated by the translation with *just*. In ENGLISH, "the temporal adverbial *just* does not necessarily refer to the immediate past but may also refer to the moment of utterance: We are just having dinner." (König 1991: 122, FN 16).

In the text corpus of KENGA, presented in section 2.6, the *utu* construction is not attested. The lexical element *utu* occurs as an adverb, as shown in (171).

(171) The adverbial use of *utú*

...    *nàka*    *mòtó*    ***ùtú***.  
           thing    three    be.there

(Chez nous les kenga,) il y a trois raisons (pourquoi on ne peut pas vivre avec sa femme dans la maison.)

((For us Kenga people,) there are three reasons (why one cannot live together with his wife in a house.) – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 272]

Neukom (2010: 201) compares *utu* with the auxiliary *ét(u)* 'be in a place' in BAGIRMI, which marks in a periphrastic structure the progressive:

(172a) Periphrastic structure with *etu* – for expressing the progressive

I    ***et***    *kä-ma*    *b<sup>w</sup>ob-i*.  
 2S    PROG    IPFV-help    father-POSS.2S

You are helping your father.

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 106]

(172b) (Née)    *n-ét*    *ndugo*    *kitàb*    *kəḏɛ*.

3S    3S-PROG    IPFV.buy    book    IDEF

He is buying a book.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2006: 31]

In contrast to KENGA, in-situ verb doubling in BAGIRMI is exclusively used to indicate focus on the lexical meaning of the verb, as discussed in section 2.4.2.4.1. The periphrastic structure with *ét(u)* and in-situ verb doubling can co-occur in the same sentence:

(173a) In-situ verb doubling and *etu* – for marking focus on the lexical meaning of the verb  
 {Is Boukar eating millet gruel in the house today or cooking?}

...    Boukar    ***ét***    ***táɗ***    *djùm*    *tɛŋ*    ***táɗà***.  
           PN    PROG    IPFV.do    gruel    millet    INF.do

(As for today in the house,) Boukar is COOKING millet gruel. [BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

(173b) ...    *làbà*    *n-ét*    ***k-sà***    ***k-sà***    *wa?*

or    3S-PROG    IPFV-eat    INF-eat    Q

(Is Boukar COOKING the millet gruel) or EATING?

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The structural distinction between both functions (in-situ verb doubling for expressing predicate-centered focus and periphrastic structure with *ét(u)* to mark the progressive) licenses the co-occurrence of both encoding strategies.

#### 2.5.2.1.4 Functional change: From PCF to the progressive

The examples presented here show that KENGA – at least according to earlier data – uses the *utu* construction mainly for indicating focus on the continuative/durative operator and in-situ verb doubling to express the progressive and focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. KENGA could thus be characterized by the co-existence of two strategies with similar or overlapping functions. In contrast, the periphrastic structure with *ét(u)* in BAGIRMI is used exclusively for marking the progressive and in-situ verb doubling indicates sole focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. Hence, the structural distinction licenses the co-occurrence of both encoding strategies. Interestingly, the periphrastic and in-situ verb doubling structures, can both co-occur in KENGA too, as demonstrated in (166b) and (170). This co-occurrence must be treated as an indicator of ongoing language change i.e. at least one of the (former) predominantly pragmatic functions must be extended to grammatical function. Based on the data, I assume in-situ verb doubling exhibits this evolution:

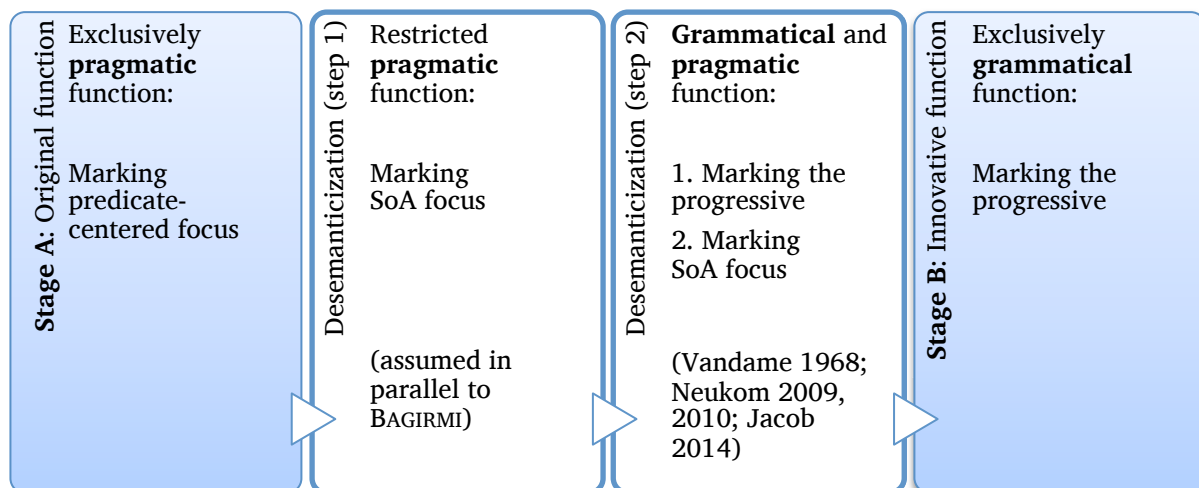


Figure 10: Evolution of in-situ verb doubling in KENGA

I assume that in-situ verb doubling starts with an exclusively pragmatic function, quite probably for the entire range of predicate-centered focus types. In parallel to BAGIRMI, it could be restricted to expressing focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. This could be seen as first stage of desemanticization, as described in the left-hand white box. The expansion of the construction displays the synchronic scenario, which could be classified as the second stage of desemanticization: in-situ verb doubling fulfills pragmatic function (marking focus

on the lexical meaning of the verb) as well as grammatical function (expressing the progressive), as detailed in the right-hand white box. Meanwhile, the blue box on the right illustrates the potential further development. By the same token, it is conceivable that the construction is, in fact, limited to grammatical function.

### 2.5.2.2 From PCF to the perfect: Data from BAGIRMI and KENGA

As addressed in section 2.4.2.5, BAGIRMI and KENGA use constructions with the functional element *kA* to mark operator focus. In both languages, the same construction occurs when signalling the perfect. In the literature, *kA* is mostly described as a “perfect marker”. I assume that both constructions, namely the construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI and the construction with simple structure and *kA* in KENGA, display a functional change. The pragmatic function (operator focus marking) is extended to include grammatical function (perfect marking):

(174) PCF marking > {operator focus/TAM (perfect) marking} > perfect marking

In this section, we will take another look at the constructions; try to characterize polyfunctionality and illustrate how the construction have developed. Before exploring Sara-Bagirmi data in detail, the nature of the perfect must first be introduced (section 2.5.2.2.1). Section 2.5.2.2.2 broaches then the relevant construction in BAGIRMI, while section 2.5.2.2.3 investigates the equivalent in KENGA. To round up, section 2.5.2.2.4 summarizes the findings, compares the data from both languages and examines the construction’s development.

#### 2.5.2.2.1 The relationship between PCF and the perfect

Givón (2001: 293ff.) describes the perfect as the most complex grammatical aspect and characterizes it in terms of four main features:

- (175a) **Anteriority:** In the perfect (as well as in the past-perfective reading), the event’s or state’s initiation point precedes the temporal reference point.
- (175b) **Perfectivity:** The perfect and past-perfective share the feature of accomplishment or completion (or a terminal boundary) prior to reference time. The presence or absence of a terminal boundary depends on the inherent perfectivity of the verb (stative verbs have no terminal boundary: ‘he’s been here all day’).
- (175c) **Counter-sequentiality:** The perfect is in contrast to past-perfective used to code “out-of-sequence” events, e.g. it marks the deviation of the normal order of events; past-perfective is much more frequent and marks the in-sequence: A, B, C, D, ..., while perfect is less frequent and marks the out-of-sequence: A, C, **B**, D, ...



- (175d) **Lingering (or deferred) relevance:** Characterized by its relevance, the perfect behaves contrarily to the past-perfective. In perfective, the event is relevant at the event time (i.e. when it occurred), in perfect, the event is relevant to some relevance time.

As regards the function of the perfect, Hyman & Watters (1984: 248) argue that “the perfect tense is considered to fall outside of the aspect system since ‘it does not involve a viewpoint on the internal temporal constituency of the situation’ (Watters 1980: 15, following Comrie [1976])”. Given this information, one would expect the perfect to have a less aspectual, but more temporal function.

Hyman & Watters (1984) ardently claim the perfect can be classed as redundantly focal for predicate-centered focus, and therefore, has no non-focal counterpart. This can be explained by the semantics behind the perfect i.e. “focusing of the completedness of the action” (Hyman & Watters 1984: 248).

Although according to Hyman & Watters (1984), the perfect falls outside of the aspectual system, it is in addition to the progressive (see section 2.5.2.1.1) often cross-linguistically expressed by the same encoding means as other aspect categories e.g. using periphrastic structures, as illustrated for GERMAN:

- (176) Periphrastic structure – for indicating the perfect  
 Die Prinzessin **hat** den Frosch **geküsst**.  
 The princess has kissed the frog.

The periphrastic structure displays the characteristically “predicate split”, as presented in section 2.4.1.2. This, in turn, facilitates a visible distinction between the lexical and functional part of the predicate, which helps to determine the function.

In parallel to the progressive, amongst other categories such as the persistive and experiential, the perfect “demonstrate[s] a pragmatic relevance for the immediate speech situation” (Güldemann 2003: 353f.).

#### 2.5.2.2.2 Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI

As discussed in section 2.4.2.5.1.1, the construction examined here is based on the perfective aspect and contains the functional element *kA*. This element always occupies the clause-final position: [SBJ V OBJ *kA*]. The construction is used for expressing predicate-centered focus, as observed in section 2.4.3. In the literature, the construction is described as having

mainly TAM-based function, triggered by the functional element *kA*. Gaden (1909) deduces that *kA* refers to a completely terminated action:

(177) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect

Ma m-sa **ga.**

1S 1S.PFV-eat *kA*

J'ai mangé (complètement). (I ate it up. – PJ)

[BAGIRMI; Gaden 1909: 20]

Stevenson (1969: 130) calls *kA* a postposition, which “emphasizes completed action”. It is used to denote a past or completed action and its occurrence, due to the function of the particle, is restricted to the perfective aspect<sup>26</sup>. Stevenson (1969: 85) infers that *kA* triggers the TAM-based interpretation, especially for stative verbs:

(178a) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect – for indicating past tense

Ma m-*bol* tobio **ga.**

1S 1S.PFV-fear lion *kA*

I feared the lion.

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 85]

(178b) Perfective aspect (without *kA*) – for indicating present tense

Ma m-*bol* tobio.

1S 1S.PFV-fear lion

I fear the lion.

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 85]

While the example in (178a) suggests a past state, the example in (178b) denotes a present state. According to Stevenson (1969: 85), it is not possible to use the imperfective aspect for expressing the present state. Cross-linguistically speaking, this observation is not extraordinary because many languages employ stative verbs in a specific way. Here, the stative verb *bol* ‘fear’ is interpreted as present, even in the perfective aspect. The occurrence of *kA* helps to disambiguate between the perfective and present interpretation of states.

Furthermore, the *kA* construction “serves to differentiate past from present time ... with Class III and V verbs” (Stevenson 1969: 130). As explained in section 1.3.3, the verb system in BAGIRMI consists of both the perfective and imperfective aspect. Unfortunately though, the combination of some personal pronouns (1<sup>st</sup> person plural and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural) and verb classes III, IV, and V (those omitting prefix *k(A)*-<sup>27</sup>) is identified by the same person clitic in the perfective and imperfective aspect.

<sup>26</sup> For detailed information on the aspectual system of BAGIRMI see section 1.3.3.

<sup>27</sup> For detailed information on the use of prefix *k(A)*- in BAGIRMI see section 1.3.3.

Table 23 shows that three of the six lines (1<sup>st</sup> person plural and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural) reveal ambiguities between the perfective and the imperfective aspect. The 1<sup>st</sup> person singular differs with regard to the resumptive clitic in the perfective aspect (*ma m-ndug<sup>wo</sup>* vs. *mä ndug<sup>wo</sup>*), while the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular and plural are characterized by the presence of *kA* in the imperfective aspect (*i ndug<sup>wo</sup>* vs. *i kä ndug<sup>wo</sup>* and *se ndug<sup>wo</sup>-ki* vs. *se kä ndug<sup>wo</sup>-ki*). This construction will be explained in fine detail in section 2.5.2.3.2. The 1<sup>st</sup> person plural and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural display no differences between the perfective and imperfective aspect.

Person	Perfective aspect		Imperfective aspect	
1S	<i>ma m-ndug<sup>wo</sup></i>	‘I bought’	<i>mä ndug<sup>wo</sup></i>	‘I buy’
2S	<i>(i) ndug<sup>wo</sup></i>	‘you bought’	<i>(i) kä ndug<sup>wo</sup></i>	‘you buy’
3S	<b><i>ne (n-)ndug<sup>wo</sup></i></b>	‘he bought’	<b><i>ne ndug<sup>wo</sup></i></b>	‘he buys’
1P	<b><i>je ndug<sup>wo</sup></i></b>	‘we bought’	<b><i>je ndug<sup>wo</sup></i></b>	‘we buy’
2P	<i>(se) ndug<sup>wo</sup>-ki</i>	‘you bought’	<i>(se) kä ndug<sup>wo</sup>-ki</i>	‘you buy’
3P	<b><i>je ndug<sup>wo</sup></i></b>	‘they bought’	<b><i>je ndug<sup>wo</sup></i><sup>28</sup></b>	‘they buy’

Table 23: Conjugation of *ndug<sup>wo</sup>* ‘buy’ (class III) in the perfective aspect (Stevenson 1969: 84) and imperfective aspect (Stevenson 1969: 99) – formal ambiguities are marked in bold

The formal similarities of the perfective and imperfective aspect trigger the use of the *kA* construction. It helps, once again, to disambiguate the TAM-based interpretation:

(179a) Perfective aspect

*je ndug<sup>wo</sup>*

1P PFV.buy

we bought

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 84]

(179b) Imperfective aspect

*je ndug<sup>wo</sup>*

1P IPFV.buy

we buy

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 99]

<sup>28</sup> The table exposes formal similarities between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural. This can only be explained by the lack of tonal marking in Stevenson (1969). My data shows a clear distinction between both forms: *djè dj-ét tádâ* ‘we’re doing’ and *djé dj-ét tádâ* ‘they’re doing’ (Jacob 2010: 119).

(179c) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect

Je je ndug<sup>wo</sup> ja ga.

1P 1P PFV.buy meat kA

We bought meat.

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 131]

An identical structure can be observed in examples in (179a) and (179b). Nevertheless, they are translated differently according to TAM reference. In parallel to the examples in (178), the difference between (179a) and (179b) can only be put down to formal ambiguities – while the example in (179c), on the other hand, is not at all ambiguous and incontestably refers to the past-perfective.

In the literature (Gaden 1909: 20, Stevenson 1969: 93, 130), the *kA* construction is said to only occur with affirmatives. Interestingly though, recent data does not imply such restrictions:

(180a) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect – for marking positive polarity focus

{The woman hit Peter.}

Áwà, née ná tuk-inj gà.

yes woman DET PFV.hit-3S kA

Yes, the woman DID hit him.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

(180b) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect – for marking negative polarity focus

{The woman ate the beans.}

È'é, née ná tuk-inje lí gà.

no woman DET PFV.hit-3S NEG kA

No, the woman DIDN'T hit him.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

In both of the above examples, the focus is placed on the polarity operator: (180a) demonstrates positive polarity focus (the preceding statement is confirmed) and (180b) shows negative polarity focus (the preceding statement is contradicted). I may deduce that the expansion and inclusion of negative contents must represent a sign of ongoing language change. This expansion must, in fact, be regarded as a recent phenomenon, since it was explicitly excluded in former grammars. It can therefore be assumed that restriction on the construction's affirmative contents has been lost over time. This notion will be revisited in the comparative section 2.5.2.2.4.

Having accrued this information about the *kA* construction in the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI, I now will turn to the construction with simple structure and *kA* in KENGA. This construction does indeed show slightly formal differences but it is equally used to express a very similar function.

The construction presented here contains the functional element *kA*, which occupies the position immediately after the verb: [SBJ V **kA** OBJ]. The construction is used for expressing predicate-centered focus (see section 2.4.3), as well as indicating the perfect.

(181a) Construction with simple structure and *kA* – for expressing the perfect

[KENG: Neukom 2009: 467]

[KENG: Neukom 2009: 467]

In contrast to the data from BAGIRMI, the construction is indeed restricted to affirmatives. For expressing the perfect in negation, the functional marker *kA* is replaced by *té*:

Je n'ai rien caché. (I haven't hidden anything. – PJ) [Kenga; Neukom 2010: 211]

The example illustrates that the combination of the perfect and negation in KENGA is possible, although it cannot be expressed by the construction with *kA* (cf. Vandame 1968: 42, Neukom 2010: 120, 211). The formal separation into “affirmative perfect” marked by *kA* and “negative perfect” marked by *té* is found only in KENGA; BAGIRMI uses the same structure for both affirmative and negative perfect.

The *kA* construction can be viewed as typical for the expression of the perfect. Moreover, it is frequently detected in the “head” of “tail-head constructions”, as shown in (183). Dik (1997: 438) describes tail-head linking as a “device for creating coherence in a discourse ... In Tail-Head linking a clause starts with a constituent which briefly summarized a crucial part of the preceding clause or context”. Generally speaking, “the head presents the previously mentioned state of affairs as a pragmatic presupposition for the next assertion” (Reesink 2014: 256).

(183) Construction with simple structure and *kA* – used in a “tail-head-construction”

Céép-m	PMUT	sé	j-à-n-ó	ḃàà	tè	kátkàt-îñ.
gamble-CONN	PN	BG	1S-FUT-OBL-VENT	go	with	paper-POSS.3S
			[tail			]

In the PMUT gamble, one brings the paper (his paper – PJ).

kè-ḃàà-n	gà	tè	kátkàt-îñ	sé, ...
1S-go-OBL	kA	with	paper-POSS.3S	BG
[head				sé]

When one brings his paper (When one has brought his paper – PJ),

(the names of all horses are written on it). [KENGA; Neukom 2009: 469]

In example (183), the tail of the first sentence (‘one brings the paper’ – focus part) becomes the head of the second sentence (‘one has brought his paper’ – background part) and the resumption then reflects the update of common ground. While the tail indicates future tense (with present tense reading<sup>29</sup>), the head shows the *kA* construction for expressing the perfect.

As affirmed in section 2.4.3.3, the construction partly functions as an operator focus indicator. It expresses contrastive focus on the perfect operator. In contrast to BAGIRMI, however, it is not used to mark focus on the polarity operator.

#### 2.5.2.2.4 Functional change: From PCF to the perfect

From a synchronic point of view, both languages employ the construction with *kA* presented in this section mainly for expressing the perfect. In addition to the common function, it differs structurally: In BAGIRMI, the functional element *kA* occupies the clause-final position, as depicted in (184a), whilst in KENGA, it occurs in post-verbal position, as laid out in (184b).

<sup>29</sup> This example confirms the hypothesis in section 1.3.3, which claims that the “vague future” in KENGA could be employed to express the present too – in parallel to Stevenson (1969: 98) for BAGIRMI.

- (184) Construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI: [SBJ V<sub>FIN</sub> OBJ *kA*]  
 Construction with simple structure and *kA* in KENGA: [SBJ V<sub>FIN</sub> *kA* OBJ]

The formal differences associated with the position of *kA* can be explained by language-internal differences, which are linked to the dedicated focus position in the relevant language, as detailed in section 2.4.3.1. In BAGIRMI, the dedicated focus position is clause-final, whilst in KENGA, it comes immediately after the verb. Nevertheless, the functional marker *kA* occupies the dedicated focus position in both languages.

As stated earlier on, I anticipate that both the construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI and the construction with simple structure and *kA* in KENGA genealogically stem from the same roots. With this in mind, I now aim to illustrate the potential development of this construction in both languages, based on the model by Heine & Reh (1984: 36ff.). I shall begin by addressing the construction in BAGIRMI.

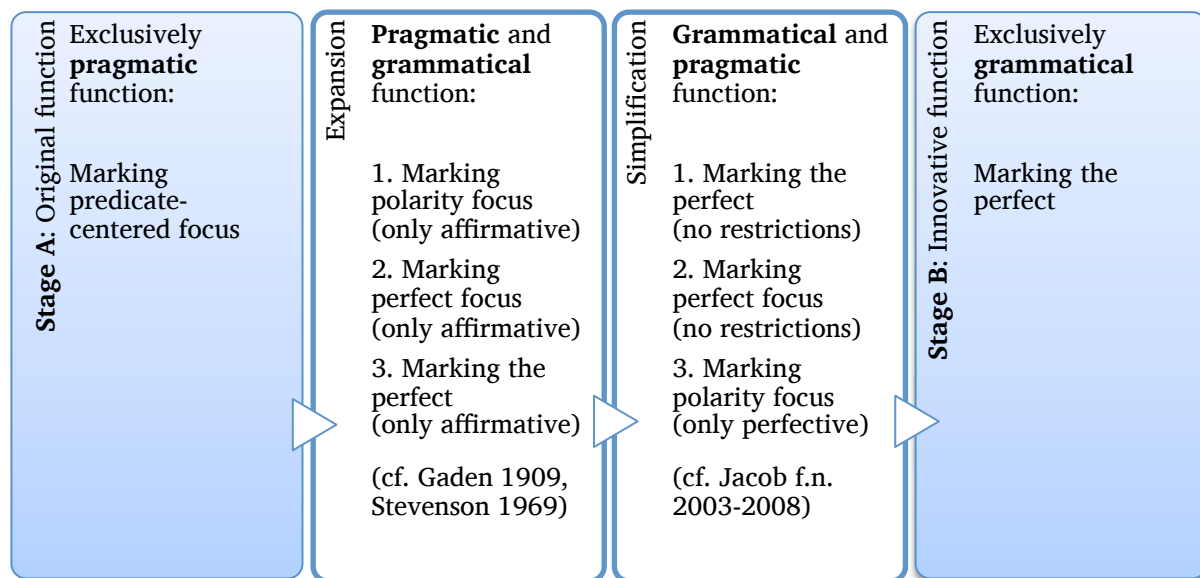


Figure 11: Evolution of the construction with *kA* in the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI

For this construction, an exclusive pragmatic function can be expected (see left-hand blue box). The construction then shifts from (exclusive) pragmatic function to (additional) grammatical function. This particular stage of development incites two observations: on the one hand, there is the restriction to affirmatives, whilst on the other, it leads to “expansion”. Hence, the construction can now be classed as polyfunctional because it is employed for both pragmatic function (indicating operator focus) and grammatical function (expressing the perfect). This stage is described in the literature (Gaden 1909, Stevenson 1969), as noted in the left-hand white box. In order to eliminate gaps in the BAGIRMI grammatical system,

the construction is “simplified”. Recent data (Jacob f.n.) suggests the construction is used principally for grammatical function, as shown in the right-hand white box. And as a final stage in the process, one can envisage the construction spurring further development (see blue box). The development of the *kA* construction in KENGA can be illustrated in a similar way:

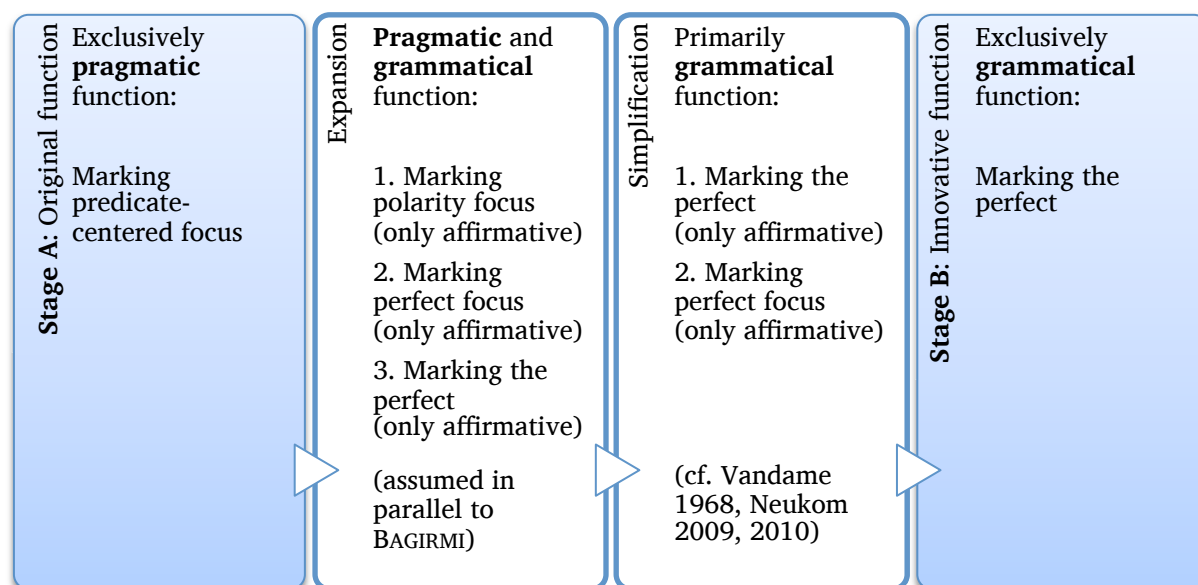


Figure 12: Evolution of the construction with simple structure and *kA* in KENGA

For the construction in KENGA, the figure presupposes an original exclusive pragmatic function (see left-hand blue box). From this, one can speculate that the construction – in parallel to that in BAGIRMI – shifts from pragmatic function to grammatical function, which leads to “expansion”. The polyfunctional construction is used to express both operator focus and the perfect, as described in the left-hand white box. The stage elaborated in the grammars (Vandame 1968, Neukom 2009, 2010) conveys the next step i.e. “simplification”. The data shows that the construction is regarded as typical for the perfect, as voiced in the right-hand white box – while the adjacent blue box on the end implies further development.

It has been observed that the construction in KENGA – in contrast to BAGIRMI – is not proven to mark polarity focus. This is due to the fact that KENGA employs special encoding strategies to express polarity focus, namely “verb topic preposing” (see section 2.4.2.3.2.1), as well as the *kA* construction, which will be examined in section 2.5.2.3.2.

While the restriction to affirmative contents has been lost in the BAGIRMI construction, the KENGA equivalent retains this, at least for the functional marker *kA*, and conveys the perfect in negation using an additional element. In BAGIRMI, the expansion to negative contents can represent functional change. Similarly, in KENGA, the construction relays a functional change



too, as indicated by the possibility of the occurring in the background part(s) of the sentence – as the typical perfect.

### 2.5.2.3 From PCF to the future: Data from BAGIRMI

BAGIRMI and KENGA employ a specific construction to communicate certainty that an event will happen in the future. In line with the constructions presented in section 2.5.2.2, these contain the functional element *kA*. As affirmed in section 2.4.2.5, the position of the functional element exerts an influence on the function. If the particle occupies a postverbal position, it signals either operator focus or the perfect. By contrast, for preverbal position, it marks either polarity focus or the future. Hence, although the constructions differ synchronically in form and function, I assume that they originate from the same roots.

Next to the *kA* construction presented in this section, I would expect the same development as for the other constructions. The pragmatic function (marking operator focus) expands to incorporate a grammatical function (marking the future):

(185) PCF marking > {operator focus/TAM (future) marking} > future marking

This section will take a look at the construction again, tries to characterize polyfunctionality and illustrate how the construction has developed. It is organized as follows: After a brief introduction to the concept of “future time reference” (section 2.5.2.3.1), section 2.5.2.3.2 starts with the *kA* construction in KENGA, before delving into data from BAGIRMI in section 2.5.2.3.2. Finally, section 2.5.2.3.4 summarizes the findings, compares the data from both languages and discusses how the construction has developed in BAGIRMI.

#### 2.5.2.3.1 The relationship between PCF and (definite) future

The future is recognized for having an exceptional position within the TAM system. “From the epistemological point of view, the future has a rather different status from both the present and the past” (Dahl 2000: 309). The nature of the future raises “considerable controversy over whether Future tense should be recognized as such, or whether future time reference should rather be considered a mood” (Comrie 1995: 1248). A grammaticalized future time reference “clearly satisfies the definition of tense; but the future is necessarily less certain than the present or the past, and uncertainty is a modal notion” (Comrie 1995: 1248).

Bybee et al. (1994) differentiates between “primary futures” and “aspectual futures”: The first group is seen to “evolve from a fairly restricted range of lexical sources – from constructions involving movement verbs, from markers of obligation, desire, and ability, and from temporal adverbs ... [, and the second group] may arise as one use of a form whose

principal function is the marking of present tense or perfective or imperfective aspect” (Bybee et al. 1994: 244).

In addition, they point out “that future is less a temporal category and more a category resembling agent-oriented and epistemic modality” (Bybee et al. 1994: 280). The epistemic qualification of the future can be observed in “future grams which, in addition to expressing predication, bear an indication of how convinced the speaker is that the event will come about” (Bybee et al. 1994: 247f.). Elliott (2000: 68) emphasizes that “there are a number of Australian languages where tense does not necessarily reflect reality status, and even future events may be marked realis”. Here, the co-occurrence of realis marking and future tense may not express that the event has been initiated – just the certainty that it will occur. The modal component of the future is also described by Ultan (1978):

Future tenses show a greater tendency to evolve from and developed into modal categories representative of varying degrees of uncertainty which is in conformity with the inherent degrees of uncertainty of futurity (Ultan 1978: 83).

In some languages, the inherent degrees of uncertainty influence the encoding of the future tense. The participants in the discours situation (interlocutors) or the assertions regarding the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person are expressed by other means than the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. For interlocutors, there is no need to differentiate assertions in terms of evidentiality. In contrast, assertions concerning the 3<sup>rd</sup> person might well require a differentiation between events with awareness of a discussed matter and events without such knowledge.

KENGA and BAGIRMI both use constructions with the functional element *kA* for encoding predicate-centered focus and future time reference.

#### **2.5.2.3.2 Construction with periphrastic structure and *kA* in KENGA**

As detailed in section 2.4.2.5.2.2, KENGA possesses a construction with the periphrastic structure and the functional element *kA*, which occupies the position between the auxiliary and the non-finite verb: [SBJ V<sub>AUX</sub> *kA* V<sub>INF</sub> (OBJ)]. The construction is used to express focus on the certainty operator i.e. certainty that the event will happen in the future.

Naturally, the “definite future” (Neukom 2010: 127ff.) differs from “vague future” (Neukom 2010: 123ff., Vandame 1968: 38), both of which occur in KENGA paradigmatically. Table 24 shows that the construction with periphrastic structure and *kA* in KENGA is used throughout the whole paradigm. In contrast, the construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI reveals several restrictions.

Person	Vague future			Definite future		
1S	m-a	túgù	‘I will wash’	m-a	kà túgù	‘I will certainly wash’
2S	a	túgù	‘you will wash’	a	kà túgù	‘you will certainly wash’
3S	à	túgù	‘he will wash’	à	kà túgù	‘he will certainly wash’
1P	j-à	túgù	‘we will wash’	j-à	kà túgù	‘we will certainly wash’
1P incl.	j-àà-ki	túgù	‘you will wash’	j-à-ki	gà túgù	‘you will certainly wash’
2P	aa-ki	túgù	‘you will wash’	a-ki	gà túgù	‘you will certainly wash’
3P	à	túgù	‘they will wash’	à	kà túgù	‘they will certainly wash’

Table 24: Conjugation of *túgù* ‘wash’ in “vague future” (adapted from Neukom 2010: 123f.) and “definite future” (adapted from Neukom 2010: 127)

### 2.5.2.3.3 Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI

The construction presented in this section is based on the imperfective aspect. As explained in section 2.4.2.5.1.2, it contains the functional element *kA*, which occupies the pre-verbal position: [S *kA* V (O)]. The construction is used to express focus on the certainty operator with future time reference, as depicted in (186a).

(186a) Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect

ne    **kä**    taḍa  
 3S    *kA*    IPFV.do  
 he’ll certainly do it [BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 47]

(186b) Imperfective aspect (without *kA*)

ne            taḍa  
 3S            IPFV.do  
 he does / he shall do [BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 99]

The example in (186a) fulfills a chiefly pragmatic function: the speaker expresses certainty that the event will happen in the future. In contrast, the example in (186b) fulfills grammatical function i.e. it indicates the imperfective aspect, which can be interpreted with either a present tense (‘he does’) or future tense (‘he shall do’) reading.

According to Stevenson (1969: 103), the construction shows restrictions: “This [*kA*] is an emphasizing particle, used only with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (singular and plural).” This leads one to

speculate that the restriction to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person could be triggered by pragmatic causes, i.e. the 3<sup>rd</sup> person could be treated differently to the speech-act participants (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person). Hence, in BAGIRMI, evidentiality could be expressed via grammatical means, what is often the case in “vague” TAM categories like the irrealis or future time reference. Nevertheless, I shall assume this hypothesis cannot be confirmed, since the restriction to the 3<sup>rd</sup> person doesn’t exist. The functional element *kA* occurs in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person as well:

(187a) Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect – for 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular

I	<b>kä</b>	taḍ	‘di?	
2S	<i>kA</i>	IPFV.do	what	
What will you do?				[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 101]

(187b) Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect – for 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural

Se	<b>kä</b>	k-ai-ki	dawa.	
2P	<i>kA</i>	IPFV-drink-2P	medicine	
You (P) will drink medicine.				[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 101]

The examples in (187) display exactly the same structure as (186a). Stevenson (1969: 103) tries to follow the description of Gaden (1909: 17) and distinguishes the elements as follows: “It [the emphasizing particle] is not to be confused with *kä* which appears in the normal conjugation with the 2<sup>nd</sup> person”. However, he also states to the contrary in another source: “Note that the particle *ka*, used with the 2<sup>nd</sup> person in the Indefinite aspect of verbs may be used with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person as an emphasizing particle” (Stevenson 1969: 47). Clearly, he does not suspect formal, but instead, functional differentiations.

Based on the data in Stevenson (1969), I expect the *kA* construction to fulfill a pragmatic function (focus on the certainty operator) with a subject in 3<sup>rd</sup> person and also indicate grammatical function (marking the future) with a subject in 2<sup>nd</sup> person. The latter function appears to be grammaticalized. If there is no subject, the construction is interpreted as a reference to the 2<sup>nd</sup> person, as well as the future tense:

(188) Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect – for marking future tense

Pajar	<b>kä</b>	k-ak-um(a).	
tomorrow	<i>kA</i>	IPFV-see-1S	
You’ll see me tomorrow.			[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 101]

Surprisingly, the *kA* construction is also found with presential reading for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person:

(189) Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect – for marking present tense

(i) **kä** k-ak(a)  
 2S kA IPFV-see  
 you see

[BAGIRMI; Stevenson 1969: 36]

The presence of *kA* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person is detected just as frequently for the imperfective aspect (Stevenson 1969: 36) i.e. the TAM interpretation (i.e. future time reference) always depends on the context. Jacob (2006: 31) illustrates with self-elicited data that the present is usually expressed by the periphrastic structure of the progressive, while the imperfective aspect primarily indicates the future. In the verb paradigm for the future, the marker *kA* always occurs with 2<sup>nd</sup> person, as shown in (190b/e), but it does not occur with 3<sup>rd</sup> person (190c/f).

(190a) Imperfective aspect – for marking future tense

(Màa) **má** ndugo kitàb kɛɖɛ.  
 1S 1S.FUT IPFV.buy book IDEF  
 I will buy a book

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2006: 31]

(190b) (ì) **ká** ndugo kitàb kɛɖɛ.  
 2S kA IPFV.buy book IDEF  
 You (S) will buy a book.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2006: 31]

(190c) (Née) **ná** ndugo kitàb kɛɖɛ.  
 3S 3S.FUT IPFV.buy book IDEF  
 (S)he will buy a book.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2006: 31]

(190d) (Djè) **djà** ndugo kitàb kɛɖɛ.  
 1P 1P.FUT IPFV.buy book IDEF  
 We will buy a book.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2006: 31]

(190e) (Sè) **ká** ndugo-kii kitàb kɛɖɛ.  
 2P kA IPFV.buy-2S book IDEF  
 You (P) will buy a book.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2006: 31]

(190f) (Djé) **djá** ndugo kitàb kɛɖɛ.  
 3P 3P.FUT IPFV.buy book IDEF  
 They will buy a book.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob 2006: 31]

The data implies that the *kA* construction for 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects represents the obligatory expression of the future. In contrast, the *kA* construction for 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects must be treated as an optional strategy – used for indicating focus on the certainty operator. Unfortunately, this assumption is again not entirely correct. In contrast to the verb paradigm in (190), which is based on data given by the same language consultant as the following ex-

amples, the *kA* construction occurs even with 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects for expressing an exclusively grammatical function (marking the future):

- (191) Construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect – for marking future tense

Boukar **kó** k-sàa djùm téŋ pádjàr làbà?

PN kA IPFV-eat gruel millet tomorrow Q

Will Boukar eat millet gruel tomorrow?

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The example proves that the *kA* construction is used to express future time reference. With this function, it fulfills with both 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person the same function (future time reference). Hence, the *kA* is attested e.g. in focus constructions for expressing focus on other elements besides operator focus. The construction's function is no longer seen to indicate focus on the certainty operator, since this conflicts with the primary focus interpretation e.g. as subject focus, as shown in (192a), or focus on the lexical meaning of the verb (192b).

- (192a) Focus preposing (with term focus marker *dájŋ*) – for expressing focus on the subject

{Will Zara buy a donkey at the market tomorrow?}

É'è, Boukar **dájŋ** **kó** ndugo kro pádjàr kasko.

no PN T.FOC kA IPFV.buy donkey tomorrow market

No, BOUKAR will buy a donkey at the market tomorrow.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

- (192b) In-situ verb doubling – for expressing focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

{Will Boukar eat millet gruel tomorrow?}

É'è, pádjàr ná, Boukar **kó** **tád'** **tádà**.

no tomorrow BG PN kA IPFV.do INF.do

No, Boukar will COOK (it) tomorrow.

[BAGIRMI; Jacob f.n.]

The synchronic coincidence of a polyfunctional *kA* construction can be explained by ongoing language change in BAGIRMI. The data in the literature (Gaden 1909, Stevenson 1969) proves there is a structure with at least two functions: firstly, marking focus on the certainty operator with 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects, and secondly, marking the future with 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects. Recent data, moreover, suggests a functional change. The construction partly loses pragmatic function and is used even with 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects for grammatical function.

#### 2.5.2.3.4 Functional change: From PCF to the future

The languages BAGIRMI and KENGA use *kA* constructions for expressing predicate-centered focus, particularly on the certainty operator. While KENGA uses the *kA* construction paradigmatically and primarily for indicating predicate-centered focus, this function seems to

have been lost in BAGIRMI. Comparing the data from both languages enables us to conceive potential developments to the construction.

As discussed, KENGA uses two constructions for expressing the future: the periphrastic structure without *kA* [ $V_{AUX}$   $V_{INF}$ ], marking mainly the grammatical function (future time reference), and the periphrastic structure with *kA* [ $V_{AUX}$  *kA*  $V_{INF}$ ] for fulfilling pragmatic function (focus on the certainty operator). Both constructions occur throughout the whole paradigm and allow explicit marking i.e. the speaker can decide whether he provides predominantly grammatical or pragmatic information.

With BAGIRMI, it is an entirely different matter. There is neither a paradigm for expressing the future nor the possibility of marking focus on the certainty operator. Both functions are subsumed in the construction [*kA*  $V$ ]: with 2<sup>nd</sup> person subjects, it expresses grammatical function (future time reference), while with a 3<sup>rd</sup> person subjects, it fulfills both a grammatical and pragmatic function. I strongly suspect that the expansion to grammatical function is a relatively new phenomenon since it is only found in recent data. In fact, this seems to highlight the direction of functional change with great clarity; the former primarily pragmatic structure can be seen expanding to a predominantly grammatical structure:

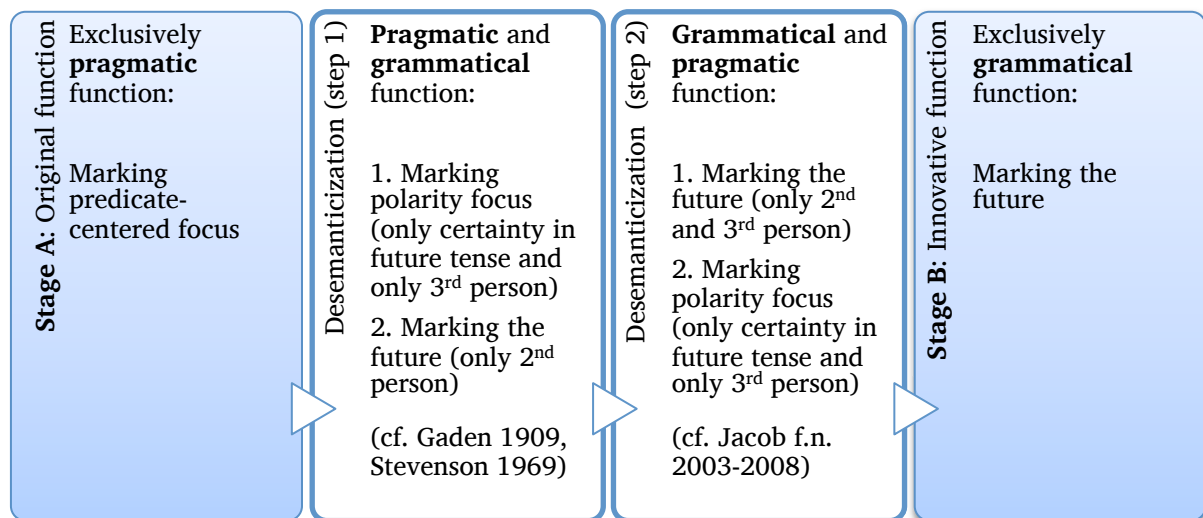


Figure 13: Evolution of the construction with *kA* in the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI

The construction appears to start with an exclusive pragmatic function e.g. focus on the certainty operator (see left-hand blue box). This function is partially extended to incorporate future time reference, as identified for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (Gaden 1909, Stevenson 1969) and laid out in the adjacent white box. In KENGA, this coincidence is detected synchronically for the whole verb paradigm (Vandame 1968, Neukom 2010). In BAGIRMI, by contrast, the pragmatic function has been completely lost i.e. it is used in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person largely for

fulfilling the grammatical function (see right-hand white box). The blue box on the right pinpoints potential further development. The construction could realistically be used as a paradigm to express the future.

### 2.5.3 Summary: Functional change

Preceding sections have ascertained that some of the sample languages employ the same structures for expressing predicate-centered focus, amongst other functions. In this section, I aim to collate all the information from these previous sections in order to provide a more complete picture. I assume that most of the language-internal differences mark ongoing language change and can be explained by differing organization of verb systems.

For development within the TAM system, I will present three hypotheses:

#### *1. In-situ verb doubling establishes in KENGA the progressive*

BAGIRMI encodes the progressive by employing a construction in the imperfective aspect with an auxiliary meaning ‘be in a place’. In-situ verb doubling is exclusively attested with focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. KENGA, in contrast, lacks such clear form-function mapping. The periphrastic structure with the auxiliary has practically vanished and in-situ verb doubling takes over both functions: the grammatical (expressing the progressive) and the pragmatic (marking focus on the lexical meaning of the verb). Here, in-situ doubling substitutes a disappearing structure.

#### *2. The construction with simple structure and kA establishes in KENGA the perfective*

The functional element *kA* occurs with the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI, whilst in KENGA, it is found with the simple form. Although both verb categories partly correspond with each other, as argued in section 1.3.3, they do differ in function. While the perfective aspect in BAGIRMI contains temporal-aspectual information, the simple form in KENGA can be characterized as bare form, which is applied to events with no specific temporal or aspectual reference. Such reference to the past-perfective can only be provided by the construction with *kA*. This construction thus completes the TAM system of KENGA by conveying the perfective.

#### *3. The construction with kA in the imperfective aspect establishes in BAGIRMI the future*

The TAM system of KENGA lists two paradigmatic structures for marking future time reference. The “vague future” is identified by a periphrastic structure, which corresponds structurally with the imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI, as posited in section 1.3.3. The second structure, namely the construction with periphrastic structure and *kA*, is exclusively employed in KENGA for fulfilling pragmatical function, expressing focus on the certainty operator.



In BAGIRMI, the imperfective aspect is, at least in the literature (Stevenson 1969), used to express future time reference. Recent data suggests that the *kA* construction in the imperfective aspect is increasingly used to indicate the future. From this, one could deduce that the construction completes the TAM system of BAGIRMI, facilitating the unambiguous reference to the future. Based on the above observations, one can assume that the verb system of BAGIRMI is – in addition to the major TAM categories i.e. perfective, imperfective, and progressive – influenced by three constructions with primarily pragmatic function:

Structure	TAM function	Information-structural function
[SBJ V <sub>PFV</sub> OBJ]	Perfective	
[SBJ V <sub>PFV</sub> <b>OBJ kA</b> ]	<b>Perfect</b>	<b>Focus on the perfect operator</b>
[SBJ V <sub>IPFV</sub> OBJ]	Imperfective	
[SBJ <b>kA</b> V <sub>IPFV</sub> <b>OBJ</b> ]	<b>Future</b>	<b>Focus on the certainty operator</b>
[SBJ V <sub>AUX</sub> V <sub>IPFV</sub> OBJ]	Progressive	
[SBJ V <sub>FIN</sub> <b>OBJ</b> V <sub>INF</sub> ]		<b>Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb</b>

Table 25: Classification of the BAGIRMI verb system – revisited version (the primarily pragmatic constructions are marked as bold)

The table shows that the structure [SBJ V<sub>PFV</sub> OBJ kA] expresses the perfect and focus on the perfect operator, while structure [SBJ kA V<sub>IPFV</sub> OBJ] marks the future and focus on the certainty operator, and finally, structure [SBJ V<sub>FIN</sub> OBJ V<sub>INF</sub>] indicates focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. In KENGA, the verb system comprises two major TAM categories: the simple form and the future. It is made up of three constructions with pragmatic function:

Structure	TAM function	Information-structural function
[SBJ V OBJ]	Simple form (aorist)	
[SBJ V <b>kA</b> OBJ]	<b>Perfective, Perfect</b>	<b>Focus on the perfect operator</b>
[SBJ V <sub>AUX</sub> V <sub>INF</sub> OBJ]	Future	
[SBJ V <sub>AUX</sub> <b>kA</b> V <sub>INF</sub> <b>OBJ</b> ]		<b>Focus on the certainty operator</b>
[SBJ V <sub>FIN</sub> V <sub>INF</sub> <b>OBJ</b> ]	<b>Progressive</b>	<b>Focus on the lexical mean. of the verb</b>

Table 26: Classification of the KENGA verb system – revisited version (the primarily pragmatic constructions are marked as bold)

The structure [S V kA O] expresses the perfective, perfect and focus on the perfect operator. The structure [S V<sub>AUX</sub> kA V<sub>INF</sub> O] indicates focus on the certainty operator. And the structure [S V<sub>FIN</sub> V<sub>INF</sub> O] marks both the progressive and focus on the lexical meaning of the verb.

Beyond the expansion into TAM categories, I assume that the intensification in MBAY can be analyzed in precisely the same way:

*Focus preposing with the ní and dá establishes in MBAY the grammatical category of intensification*

In MBAY, intensification is expressed using a specific construction. As stated in section 2.5.1.3, I postulate that the construction [FOC ní BG dá] starts with pragmatic function and is subject to further development, in parallel to the construction [FOC la BG yé], which is used to express general focus. Synchronically, the construction [FOC ní BG dá] is exclusively employed to mark intensification. Without question, this extraordinary function enriches the grammatical system of MBAY and, all in all, helps to disambiguate focus from the expression of intensification.

## 2.6 Corpus study: Focus and focus marking in KENGA

This section gives general information about focus and focus marking in natural discourse. It is based on a small-scale corpus study of KENGA, which not only aims to elucidate distributional aspects of focus and focus marking, but also both the presence and absence of the focus constructions, as outlined in preceding sections. Hence, the study fulfills a twofold function: to explain the distribution of focus constructions in KENGA on the one hand, whilst also illustrating general tendencies with regard to focus realization. Moreover, it serves to further emphasize the importance of corpus analysis, which fills in data gaps sourced from published descriptions and more or less controlled elicitation. Thus the study, in this context, essentially attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How are different focus types distributed in the corpus?
2. Are there distributional differences according to text genre?
3. Which recognized focus strategies occur in this corpus of spoken language?

The study is structured as follows: Section 2.6.1 introduces the corpus and methodological aspects of the analysis. Section 2.6.2 provides information about the distribution of focus according to scope, section 2.6.3 addresses markedness, including the formal and functional markedness, while section 2.6.4 examines distribution over text genre. In section 2.6.5, the application of the focus marking strategies attested in the corpus will be discussed. And finally, section 2.6.6 presents a summary of the findings, offering insights into aspects of further research.

### 2.6.1 Data and methodology

The grammar of KENGA (Neukom 2010) comprises a corpus of 19 texts, which provide the basis for describing grammatical phenomena:

Three dialogues

“Greetings in the morning”

“Discussion about living conditions”

“Directions”

## Four stories

- “The story of a lion”
- “The snake in the house”
- “The fire in the village”
- “The name of Mount Kenga”

## Three procedurals

- “Production of boule”
- “Production of beer”
- “Production of matches”

## Two explanations

- “Betting game”
- “Playground game”

## Four descriptions of everyday lives

- “Fog”
- “Divorce”
- “Hunting mice”
- “Kenga dialects”

## Three descriptions of animals

- “Badger”
- “Lynx”
- “Pelican”

For the purpose of analysis, all texts can be subdivided into three text genres. Those where speakers interact with each other, I classify as “dialogues”: hence, the corpus contains three dialogues. Secondly, all stories can be considered “narrations”, which means the corpus also comprises four narrations. And as for the remaining 12 texts, they can be roughly defined according to fulfilment of either functional or practical functions – bunched beneath the umbrella “descriptions”.

In total, the corpus amounts to 2,167 words over 224 sentences, which in turn, can be split up into 422 clauses. This figure also includes clauses that must be excluded from the analysis. There are 27 clauses, which can be characterized asthetic utterances (most with introductory function), and 39 clauses, which contain solely non-verbal or elliptical sentence fragments. Both the thetic clauses and the non-verbal clauses lack the pragmatic bipartiteness, which is characteristic for categorical utterances. So, although ellipsis is frequently

used for expressing focus, it cannot be incorporated here. Twenty-nine of the clauses occur within questions and 32 include negation. Both must also be excluded from the analysis, since structural differences between assertions and questions, as well as between affirmative and negative expressions, could sway results. Nevertheless, many of the questions and negations do indeed contain focus. The remaining 294 clauses can freely be described as “affirmative categorical clauses”. Figure 14 illustrates in greater detail the distribution of the clauses found in the whole corpus.

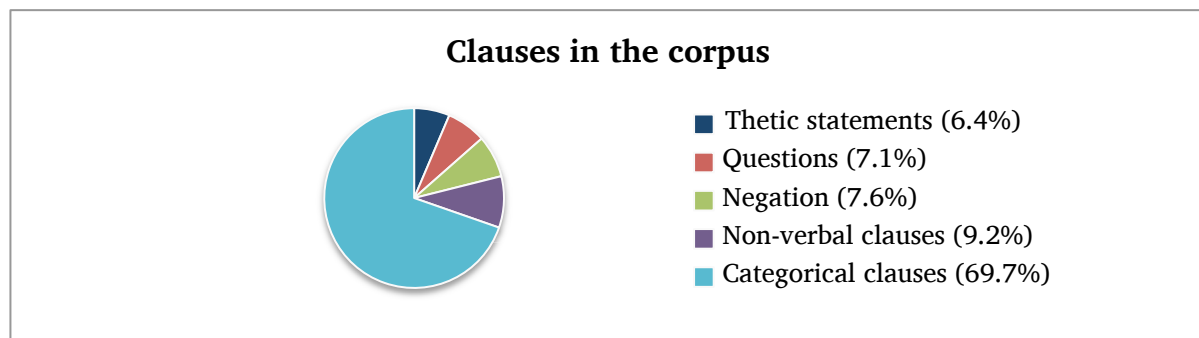


Figure 14: Distribution of all clauses in the corpus

As previously mentioned, the analysis in this section concentrates on affirmative full verbal clauses with a focus-background structure. It is therefore worth noting at this stage that these 294 clauses include 189 main clauses (64.3%) and 105 subordinate clauses (35.7%). On clause level, most of the subordinate clauses in the corpus provide background information, although by the same token, they usually show the same bipartiteness main clauses do. Without question, the information-structural interaction of main and subordinate clauses on sentence level is a fascinating and well-known phenomenon (cf. Matić et al. 2014). Nevertheless, the study focuses on analyzing the information structure at clause level. And for this reason, it is based on all 294 clauses, without taking into account the distinction between main and subordinate clauses.

### 2.6.2 The distribution of focus according to scope

As clarified earlier in section 2.4.1.1, the focal scope can be either wide or narrow. Wide focus includes i.a. focus on the verb phrase and can even extend to a whole clause, while narrow focus includes focus on both terms and predicate-centered focus types. To identify focus types, I adopt Güldemann & Fiedler’s twofold approaches (2014: 2): firstly, by determining the main pragmatic contexts where these focus types are expected, and secondly, by analyzing the distribution of linguistic structures already known from the literature.

With the first approach, it is vital to acknowledge that there is no one-to-one relationship between form and function. The relationship is rather one-to-many (Güldemann et al. 2015b: 162), which naturally leads to formal and functional ambiguities (cf. Matić et al. 2014, Givón 1975). In other words, one form can be used to express more than one function (“formal ambiguity”), as shown in (193), and similarly, one function can be expressed by different strategies (“functional ambiguity”), as shown in (194).

(193a) Assertive focus on the object

{What did the woman eat?} She ate [beans]<sub>FOC</sub>.

(193b) Assertive focus on the verb phrase

{What did the woman do?} She [ate beans]<sub>FOC</sub>.

Both the examples show the same form, even though they differ in function. Here, only the context enables the function to be identified. The question *What did the woman eat?* indicates narrow focus on the object, as shown in (193a), while the question *What did the woman do?* denotes wide focus, as shown in (193b). The following examples illustrate the formal variety:

(194a) Assertive focus on the object

{What did the woman eat?} She ate [beans]<sub>FOC</sub>.

(194b) Assertive focus on the object

{What did the woman eat?} What she ate was [beans]<sub>FOC</sub>.

Both sentences fulfill the same function but differ in form. In (194a), assertive focus on the object is expressed by the same ‘unmarked’ construction as in the example in (193a). In contrast, the example in (194b) demonstrates a cleft structure. Although both examples in (194) reveal the same context, it is worth observing that cleft constructions are frequently used to express contrast or exhaustivity. Section 2.6.3.3 will be focusing on this form-function mapping in further detail. The second approach by Güldemann & Fiedler (2014) involving the consideration of structures found in the literature, will then be examined later on in section 2.6.5.

With the difficulty of scopal assignment in mind, I count the focus instances in the KENGA corpus, irrespective of formal marking: In sum, there are 271 instances of verb phrase focus, nine instances of term focus, and 14 instances of predicate-centered focus:

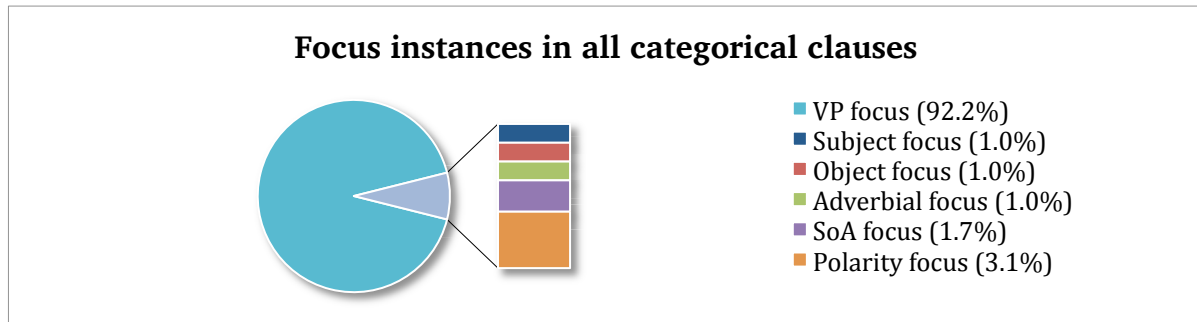


Figure 15: Distribution of focus instances: wide (VP) focus vs. narrow focus

The figure shows that the majority of the 271 instances in the corpus indicate wide focus (92.2%). For narrow focus, one can see that 14 instances (4.8%) indicate predicate-centered focus, whilst only nine instances (3.0%) include term focus. More specifically, there are three instances of subject focus (1.0%), three instances of object focus (1.0%) and three instances of adverbial focus (1.0%). For predicate-centered focus, there are five instances of focus on the lexical meaning of the verb (1.7%), and nine instances of polarity focus (3.1%). In the following sections, the instances of polarity focus will be subdivided into seven clauses that express “polarity focus in general” (2.4%), as presented in section 2.4.3.2.1, in addition to two clauses that indicate focus on the certainty operator (0.7%), as observable in section 2.4.3.2.2.

### 2.6.3 The distribution of marked and unmarked focus

Focus markedness can be viewed in at least two different ways and must be distinguished. “Formal markedness” refers to the relevant clause structure. It differentiates clauses with canonical sentence structure from those with non-canonical structure: formally marked clauses always show a deviation from canonical structure. “Functional markedness” refers to the “communicative point”, as iterated in section 2.4.2.1. It differentiates between assertive focus, as shown in example (195a), and contrastive focus (195b), as repeated below.

(195a) Assertive focus

{What have you done with my money?} I SPENT it. [ENGLISH; Dik 1997: 335]

(195b) Contrastive focus

{John bought apples.} No, he bought BANANAS. [ENGLISH; Dik 1997: 333]

Thus, one can assume that every functionally marked clause contains either a contrast or contradiction.

The following sections present the distribution of the different focus types according to markedness in the corpus. While section 2.6.3.1 starts with formal markedness, section 2.6.3.2 focuses on functional markedness. The correlation between formal and functional markedness will be laid out in section 2.6.3.3.

### 2.6.3.1 Formally marked focus

Of the 294 affirmative categorical clauses, only 17 clauses (5.8%) are formally marked for focus. 277 clauses (94.2%) are unmarked. Before going into detail regarding the markedness of narrow focus, it is essential to note that wide focus is always unmarked in the corpus. This observation needs to be explained via the default information-structural configuration: the subject, situated in its canonical sentence-initial position, is prototypically interpreted as topic, while the default focus position can actually be located in the comment itself i.e. within the verb phrase (cf. Li & Thompson 1976, Lambrecht 1994, Fiedler et al. 2010). The 23 instances of narrow focus illustrate the following distribution:

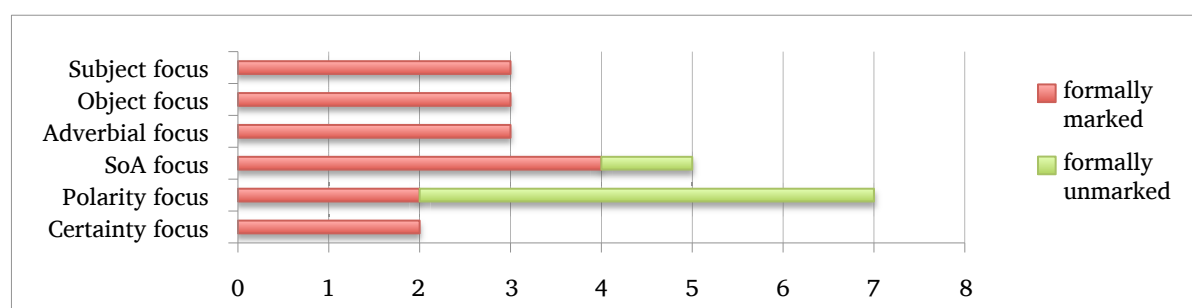


Figure 16: Distribution of formally marked and unmarked narrow focus instances

Figure 16 depicts that all occurrences of subject focus (three clauses), object focus (three clauses), adverbial focus (three clauses) and focus on the certainty operator (two clauses) are formally marked. In contrast, focus on the lexical meaning of the verb and polarity focus include both marked and unmarked cases. Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb is formally marking in four out of five clauses, while polarity focus, in contrast, reveals corresponding marking in just a third of all focus instances. Here, only two out of seven clauses show formal focus marking. All in all, 17 focus instances out of 23 (73.9%) are identified by special encoding means, while 6 instances out of 23 (26.1%) lack such formal marking.

Although the distribution of the strategies will be analyzed later on in section 2.6.5, it is worth noting that the data partly shows a form-function mapping. From this, I can assume that formal marking depends primarily on the communicative point, as discussed above in section 2.4.2.1. This aspect will be further elaborated in the following section.



### 2.6.3.2 Functionally marked focus

From the 294 categorical clauses, only 12 clauses (4.1%) are functionally marked for focus i.e. they show contrast in some way. The majority of 282 clauses (95.9%) indicate assertive focus. Verb phrase focus, however, is neither formally nor functionally marked, which is why it proves more interesting and worthwhile to look at the 23 instances of narrow focus:

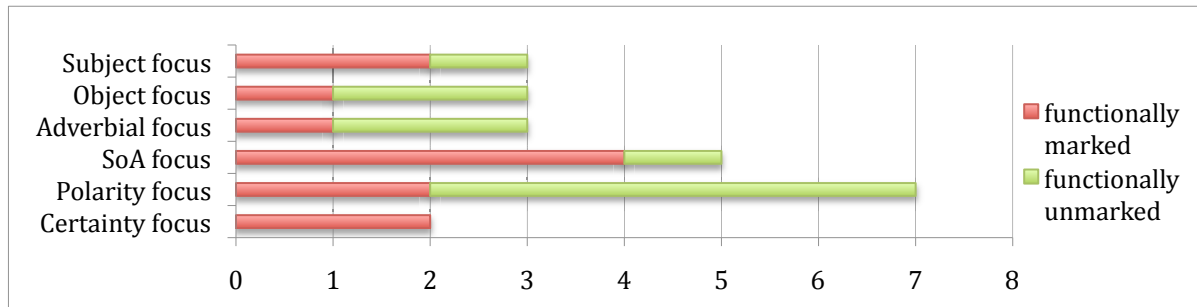


Figure 17: Distribution of functionally marked and unmarked narrow focus

Figure 17 illustrates that most types of focus include both functionally marked and unmarked cases. Subject focus indicates contrast in two out of three clauses, while only one in three clauses for both object and adverbial focus respectively displays contrast. For predicate-centered focus, the distribution is completely inconsistent. Focus on the lexical meaning of the verb includes four clauses with contrast but also one without. Polarity focus, in turn, contains only two clauses with contrast and five without. Focus on the certainty operator is an exception, as both instances are functionally marked here.

In total, 12 instances out of 23 (52.2%) express more or less contrast, whilst 11 instances out of 23 (47.8%) indicate assertive focus. This distribution, however, is rather random and can only be explained by the small number of instances within the corpus. Though here again, one can detect form-function mapping. The distribution of functional markedness can be best analyzed in relation to formal marking.

### 2.6.3.3 The relation of formal and functional focus marking

Table 27 contrasts the instances of formal marking, as set out in section 2.6.3.1, with the functional markedness (section 2.6.3.2).

Focal scope/ Marking	Formally unmarked		Formally marked		Functionally unmarked		Functionally marked	
Subject focus	0%	0/3	100%	3/3	66.7%	1/3	66.7%	2/3
Object focus	0%	0/3	100%	3/3	33.3%	2/3	33.3%	1/3
Adverbial focus	0%	0/3	100%	3/3	33.3%	2/3	33.3%	1/3
SoA focus	20%	1/5	80%	4/5	20%	1/5	80 %	4/5
Polarity focus	71.4%	5/7	28.6%	2/7	71.4%	5/7	28.6%	2/7
Certainty focus	0%	0/2	100%	2/2	0.0%	0/2	100%	2/2
Numbers in total		6/23		17/23		11/23		12/23

Table 27: Distribution of formal and functional markedness for narrow focus instances

The table shows that all predicate-centered focus types can be characterized by complete concordance of formal and functional markedness, while the term focus types are clearly quite inconsistent. Even though term focus is always formally marked, it may express assertive or contrastive focus. For predicate-centered focus types, one can identify a correlation between formal and functional markedness. All formally unmarked instances express assertive focus, whilst all formally marked instances voice contrastive focus. This will be exemplified here for polarity focus.

In the corpus, polarity focus is realized by either verb topic preposing, as presented in section 2.4.2.3.2.1 and reiterated in (196a) or by canonical sentence structure, as exemplified in (196b).

(196a) Contrastive focus on the polarity operator

**Kúrsù** e **kúrs** kéè, ...  
 INF.cultivate 2S.FUT INF.cultivate EMPH

Tu as beaucoup labouré, (mais celui qui a de l'argent, il se lève et vient au moment de la récolte avec son peu d'argent et t'achètera tout le mil.)

(You DID cultivate. (lit. As for cultivating, you (will have) CULTIVATED),

(but he who has the money comes at harvest with his little money and buy you all of the mill.) – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 261]

(196b) Assertive focus on the polarity operator

{Et chez vous les gens vont bien, n'est-ce pas?

(At your place, the people are doing well, aren't they? – PJ)}

Áà, jée gè bὲ.

yes people P well

Les gens vont bien. (The people are doing well. – PJ) [KENG; Neukom 2010: 259]

While the example in (196a) is marked for focus by using a focus marking strategy, the example in (196b) demonstrates neither a deviation from basic word order, nor any morphological marking with respect to information structure. Both examples indicate focus on the polarity operator but they differ when it comes to the communicative point. While the example in (196a) elaborates a clear contrast ('You DID cultivate. – as opposed to NOT cultivating'), the example in (196b) reveals confirmation ('Yes, the people are doing well.').

The corpus data has brought to light that either the presence or absence of formal marking depends partly on the scope of focus. While term focus is always marked, predicate-centered focus allows for greater variation. Based on the corpus, one could reliably assume that term focus always requires formal focus marking ("obligatory focus marking"), while non-terms may or may not be marked for focus ("optional focus marking"). This observation appears somewhat random and can be explained by the small number of instances within the corpus. For this, I'll assume that formal marking depends primarily on the communicative point, as discussed above in section 2.6.3. The data shows – at least for predicate-centered focus types – that contrast requires formal marking.

For the KENG corpus, one can detect a relationship between form and function:

1. Formally unmarked focus instances always express assertive focus.
2. Contrastive focus requires formal marking.
3. Assertive focus may be marked formally or not.

The interplay of form and function will be discussed again in section 2.6.5.

## 2.6.4 The distribution of focus marking across text genre

The occurrence of focus instances, as well as focus marking, shows varying distribution as far as text genre is concerned. Fiedler (2013: 2) infers that the degree of control has an influence on the structuring of information in discourse i.e. focus is less marked in natural discourse, such as free conversation, than in controlled elicitations. To explain this observation fully, one must take into account the differences between oral and written texts. Miller & Weinert (1998) point out the characteristics of spontaneous speech produced in real time,

where there is no opportunity for editing and where short-term memory limitations of both speaker and hearer are involved. This is why focus marking occurs more often in oral speech than in written texts. Miller (2006: 204) adapts this observation for GERMAN. Oral speech is characterized by a frequent use of prosodic focus marking. The absence of intonation in writing influences the preference of syntactic constructions, like *it*-clefts.

Apparent differences according to the markedness in natural discourse could be explained by the inherent properties of the different text genres as well. While dialogues are characterized by a relatively high degree of interaction, descriptions display a comparatively low degree of interaction. This can be explained by the fact that dialogues are based on negotiations. Every speech-act participant wants to consolidate his or her position and does so usually with considerable emphasis. In contrast, descriptions do not show such emphasis because there is no need for negotiation. Narrations can be placed in between dialogues and descriptions, since the presentation depends on the narrator. If he uses direct speech in the narration, this element must be counted as dialogue. And yet, even if the narration does not contain direct speech, the narrator can still intensify the story or highlight important aspects in order to create contrast. With this in mind, one could imagine the following scale:

Less focus marking -----				-----	More focus marking
Descriptions/procedurals	>	Narrations	>		Dialogues

Figure 18: Scale of anticipated focus marking in natural discourse

Furthermore, there is another criterion, which probably influences the distribution of focus marking in natural discourse: namely the communicative point, as addressed in section 2.6.3.2. One can expect that monologues (including narrations and descriptions) show less contrastive focus than dialogues:

Less contrastive focus -----				-----	More contrastive focus
Monologues		>			Dialogues

Figure 19: Scale of anticipated contrast in natural discourse

This assumption can be confirmed by the above-mentioned observation, which illustrates how dialogues include features of oral communication or direct speech with a much higher degree of interaction and negotiation than monologues.

The KENGA data analysis shows differences in markedness according to text genre. The table below contrasts the instances of narrow focus with formal marking and shows the distribution of formal focus marking within the relevant text genres:

Text type	Narrow focus instances		Formally marked focus		Functionally marked focus	
<b>Dialogues</b>	14.4%	17/118	9.3%	11/118	7.6%	9/118
<b>Narrations</b>	6.9%	2/29	6.9%	2/29	0%	0/29
<b>Descriptions</b>	2.7%	4/147	2.7%	4/147	2%	3/147
<b>In total</b>		23/294		17/294		12/294

Table 28: Distribution of focus marking across text genre

Table 28 shows all instances of narrow focus (including term and predicate-centered focus) and their distribution across text genre. Dialogues contain the highest percentage of focus instances (14.4%), followed by narrations (6.9%) and descriptions (2.7%). Although the number of clauses is not always balanced within all text genres and the percentage variance is not all that significant, one can still see that the occurrences of narrow focus display the expected distribution according to the above assumptions i.e. dialogues contain more information-structural content than the other text types.

The third column lists the formally marked instances of narrow focus, which reveals the same pattern as the focus instances in the second column. Dialogues contain the highest percentage (9.3%), followed by narrations (6.9%) and descriptions (2.7%). This again appears to be consistent with the above-stated hypothesis.

If one includes the functional markedness, however, we get a slightly different picture. In the fourth column of the table, dialogues are shown to contain the highest percentage of functionally marked focus (7.6%), followed by descriptions (2%) and narrations (0%). Although the difference between narrations and descriptions is not statistically substantial, it does contradict the above hypothesis regarding hierarchy. At any rate, there is still more focus marking in dialogues than in monologues.

Even though the KENGA corpus is very small indeed and the clauses are not sufficiently balanced, the data confirms the tendency that dialogues contain more contrast than monologues, and this in itself, satisfies expectations.

## 2.6.5 The distribution of strategies used for marking focus

Six strategies for expressing focus are attested in the KENGA corpus.

### 1. Unmarked focus

The possibility of focus being formally unmarked is investigated in section 2.4.2.1. In the corpus, this strategy is found 271 times with verb phrase focus, once with focus on the lexical meaning of the verb and five times with polarity focus. All the attested cases of formally unmarked focus express assertive focus, as the below example for polarity focus shows:

(197) Assertive focus on the polarity operator

{Tu habites à Abena, n'est-ce pas? (You live in Abena, don't you? – PJ)}

M-tíŋ Àbén sé.

1S-live PN BG

J'habite à Abena. (I live in Abena. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 282]

The example displays neither a deviation from basic word order, nor any morphological marking in relation to information structure. Functionally, it indicates focus on the polarity operator. And the speaker confirms the content in question.

### 2. Focus preposing

The construction  $[NP]_{\text{FOC}} \text{ bó } [...]_{\text{BG}}$  is described in section 2.4.2.2.1.2. In the corpus, it is used solely for term focus. It marks subject focus (three instances), object focus (three instances) and adverbial focus (two instances). Interestingly, this construction is found with assertive focus, as shown in (198a) and contrastive focus (198b).

(198a) Assertive focus on the subject

{Quand il y a du brouillard, les gens veulent qu'il finisse vite. Mais d'autre part, les gens n'aiment pas non plus que le soleil chauffe beaucoup.

(When there is fog, people want it to disperse quickly. But on the other hand, they don't like it when it gets too hot. – PJ)}

Tɛd-íñ paac bó òòñɔ paac.

making-3S all FOC is.difficult all

Vivre ça, c'est difficile.

(GETTING THROUGH THAT, it is difficult. – PJ)

[KENGA, Neukom 2010: 272]

## (198b) Contrastive focus on the subject

{Si quelqu'un arrive en premier, et si l'autre court et n'est pas encore arrivé,  
le premier prendra le soulier, il courra et rejoindra son groupe.

(If someone comes first, and if the other one runs and has not yet turned up, then  
the first person will take the shoe; he will run and catch up with his group. – PJ)}

Ààñ térl-gà nùm, nááǎdé bó círì.

run return-kA when 3P FOC surpass

S'il court et parvient à rejoindre son groupe, ce sont eux qui gagnent. (If he runs  
and manages to catch up with his group, they are the ones who win. – PJ)

[KENGA, Neukom 2010: 279]

In both examples, the subject is the first element in the relevant clause and is followed by focus marker *bó*. Notice how the translation in (198b) reflects the contrast on the subject by using a cleft construction ('They are the ones who win'), while the example in (198a) lacks such contrast. Here, the construction indicates assertive focus.

### 3. Topic preposing

The construction [ $V_{\text{INF}}$ ]<sub>BG</sub> [...  $V_{\text{FIN}}$  ...]<sub>FOC</sub> is described in section 2.4.2.3.2.1 and attested only once in the corpus. This example is presented earlier in section 2.6.3.3 and repeated here as (199).

## (199) Contrastive focus on the polarity operator

**Kúrsù** e **kúrs** kèè, ...

INF.cultivate 2S.FUT INF.cultivate EMPH

Tu as beaucoup labouré, (mais celui qui a de l'argent, il se lève et vient au moment  
de la récolte avec son peu d'argent et t'achètera tout le mil.)

(You DID cultivate. (lit. As for cultivating, you (will have) CULTIVATED),

(but he who has the money comes at harvest with his little money and buy you all  
of the mill.) – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 261]

In the corpus, topic preposing expresses only contrastive polarity focus.

### 4. In-situ verb doubling

The construction [...  $V_{\text{FIN}}$  [ $V_{\text{INF}}$ ]<sub>FOC</sub> ...] is described in section 2.4.2.4.2. This strategy is found four times in the corpus and is exclusively employed to express focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. Take a closer look at the example in (200).

- (200) Contrastive focus on the lexical meaning of the verb

... òò òòn k-òòno.

and be.arrogant INF-be.arrogant

(Certains veulent (disent) choisir leur travail) et sont orgueilleux.

((Some people want choose their work,) because they are ARROGANT. – PJ)

[KENGA; Neukom 2010: 264]

The lexical verb occupies the dedicated focus position immediately after the finite verb. In the corpus, this construction is exclusively found with contrastive focus.

### 5. The construction with the functional marker *kA*

The construction [... V<sub>AUX</sub> *kA* V<sub>INF</sub> ...]<sub>FOC</sub> is described in section 2.4.2.5.2.2 and attested twice in the corpus. In both cases, it marks contrastive focus on the certainty operator:

- (201) Contrastive focus on the certainty operator

{Et cela, si tu n'as pas de travail, tout cet argent-là, où vas-tu le trouver?

(And that, if you don't work, where will you find all that money? – PJ)}

Nààba sé màà, a-kà jée bès.

work DET itself 2S.FUT-*kA* INF.search EMPH

Le travail, tu dois le chercher.

(As for the work, you HAVE TO look for it. – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 264]

In example (201), the verbal complex consists of the auxiliary *a* to indicate the future, the functional marker *kA* and the non-finite lexical verb followed by the marker *bès*. The construction signals contrastive focus on the certainty operator. The speaker focuses on the certainty that something will happen in the future – as opposed to the speaker not being sure.

### 6. Morphological focus marking with focus or emphasis markers

The corpus includes two examples, which cannot be seen to realize focus using one of the above-listed strategies. These are both presented below.

The first example shows canonical sentence structure. Focus is indicated by marker *bès*:

- (202) Contrastive focus on the polarity operator – marked by emphasis marker
- bès*

{À gauche ou à droite? (To the left or to the right? – PJ)}

dóóòò sé òp dààn ki bès.

path DET split middle LOC EMPH

La route passe au milieu.

(The road crosses through the middle. – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 283]



Neukom (2010: 174) describes *bès* as a sentence-final marker, which emphasizes the preceding elements:

- (203) Contrastive focus on the polarity operator – marked by emphasis marker *bès*  
 {Quelles parties du bœuf est-ce qu'on mange?– On mange tout. – Même les jambes?  
 (What parts of the beef do you eat? – We eat everything. – Even the legs? – PJ)}  
 Gòò kén m-ḏeek-ĩĩ sé **bès**.  
 as SUB 1S-say-3S BG EMPH  
 Comme je l'ai dit. (As I said. – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 175]

I infer from the corpus data and the examples in the literature that marker *bès* is primarily used to express predicate-centered focus or non-term focus. The second example includes the focus marker *ḃó*, which occurs in focus-preposing constructions as well:

- (204) Contrastive focus on the local adverbial – marked by focus marker *ḃó*  
 {Veux-tu vivre en ville ou à Abtouyour?  
 (Do you want to live in the city or in Abtouyour? – PJ)}  
 Maám sé m-jèè tíng nàṅ-jé gè tú **ḃó** jígà.  
 1S BG 1S-want INF.live village-POSS.1P P LOC FOC be.good  
 Moi, je pense qu'il vaut mieux habiter dans notre village.  
 (I personally think it is better to live IN OUR VILLAGE(S). – PJ) [KENGA; Neukom 2010: 260]

The example shows canonical sentence structure once again. Focus is indicated by the left-scoping focus marker *ḃó*. It occurs adjacent to the relevant phrase that consists of a noun and locative marker *tú*<sup>30</sup>. Interestingly, the focus marker is followed by *jígà* 'be good'. It is likely that elements such as the verbal noun *jígà* are structurally required, since *ḃó* cannot occur in sentence-final position. The preceding question confirms the assumption that every *ḃó* is followed by *jígà*:

<sup>30</sup> Neukom (2010: 52f.) glosses *ki* and *tú* as dative. The first one is the general marker, while the second occurs only in combination with the plural marker *gè*. In my work, *ki/tú* is glossed as LOC because it functions as "place-time attribute": *nàṅṅà* 'terre' (earth/ground – PJ) > *nàṅṅà ki* 'par terre' (on the ground – PJ) (Neukom 2010: 53).

(205) Alternative question – marked by focus marker *ḥó*

Naaí á-jèè tíng tàa géégèr ki **ḥó** jígà lḥú céng **ḥó** jígà?  
 2S 2S-want INF.live in PN LOC FOC be.good or PN FOC be.good  
 Veux-tu vivre en ville ou à Abtouyour?

(Do you want to live in the city or in Abtouyour? – PJ) [KENG; Neukom 2010: 260]

It is worth noting that in the literature (Palayer 2004: 31, Neukom 2010: 223), *ḥó* is limited to constructions with preposing: “Nous précisons que l’emploi de particule est limité aux constituants placés en début de phrase, que ce soit le sujet ou un constituant déplacé en tête de phrase” (Neukom 2010: 223). The structural restriction that *ḥó* occurs solely in the left periphery can be explained by the fact that *ḥó* requires an element to follow it in sequence, as shown in (204) and (205).

The focussing strategies found in the KENG corpus display a more or less strict form-function relation:

Strategy	Type of constituent in focus			
“Unmarked”			SoA	Polarity
Focus preposing	Subject	Object	Adverbial	
Topic preposing				Polarity
In-situ verb doubling			SoA	
Construction with <i>kA</i>				Certainty
Focus marker			Adverbial	Polarity

Table 29: The relation of form and function in the KENG corpus

Four of the six strategies are attested in the corpus with only one function:

1. Focus preposing is exclusively used for expressing term focus.
2. Topic preposing exclusively marks polarity focus.
3. In-situ verb doubling is used for marking focus on the lexical meaning of the verb.
4. The construction with *kA* indicates focus on the certainty operator.

In contrast to the predominantly syntactic constructions, the use of the morphological focus markers seems to be more flexible, since they are used for both term focus and predicate-centered focus.

With respect to the second approach by Güldemann & Fiedler (2014), namely the consideration of structures found in the literature, it is worth bearing in mind that the vast majority of constructions presented in this study are not available in the literature. There is information about emphatic particles (Neukom 2010: 175-178), and a thorough examination of information structure (Neukom 2010: 223-228). Yet unfortunately, the author only mentioned focus preposing and only partially addressed morphological marking. Constructions like topic preposing, in-situ verb doubling, and periphrastic structure with *kA* do not appear in the description. The fact that most of the constructions can only be found in the corpus, confirms the immense importance of corpus studies as an instrument for detecting grammatical structures.

### 2.6.6 Summary: Corpus study

Although the corpus is very small, the analysis highlights tendencies and provides information about the distribution of focus instances in natural discourse, the relationship of marked and unmarked focus and the differences within text genres in KENGA.

#### 1. How are different focus types distributed in the corpus?

In general, one can see that the instances of term focus and predicate-centered focus are relatively equal in the corpus. Unfortunately though, for reasons highlighted, the study cannot be taken as representative of all Sara-Bagirmi languages. In particular, the high occurrence of focus on the lexical meaning of the verb must be treated as an exception. It could be explained by the construction's polyfunctionality, which is used for expressing this predicate-centered focus type, as discussed in section 2.5.2.1.2.

#### 2. Are there distributional differences according to text genre?

For the relationship between formal and functional markedness, the study provides important insights overall: One can assume that in KENGA, formally unmarked focus instances can never express contrast i.e. every contrast requires formal marking. In addition, the study has proven that the distribution of focus and focus markedness within different text genres is consistent with the hypothesis that dialogues include more focus marking than narrations and descriptions.

It is interesting that KENGA seems to differentiate between strategies for marking term focus and strategies, which are predominantly used for announcing predicate-centered focus. As

presented in section 2.4.2.2, MBAY and SAR employ similar strategies for indicating term- and predicate-centered focus. Hence, this observation is, yet again, not representative for the entire Sara-Bagirmi group.

### 3. Which recognized focus strategies occur in this corpus of spoken language?

The corpus study has brought to light that the grammars of KENGA (Neukom 2010, 2009, Vandame 1968, Palayer 2004) mention only one focus strategy, namely focus preposing. Constructions like topic preposing, in-situ verb doubling and periphrastic structure with *kA*, do not appear. Such structures are attested in the corpus study only.

My study confirms the findings in Apel et al. (2015), an investigation of natural discourse in three genealogically unrelated African languages. That particular study contains information from two additional African languages (PULA and GAMO), which extends beyond my KENGA data and further accentuates the importance of corpus studies. Such investigations are imperative, not only for gaining a complete picture of the focus constructions, but for fully understanding the actual use of focus constructions and assessing their frequency. The comparative analysis on focus marking in natural discourse substantiates that every language has its own inventory of strategies. Nevertheless, the study does pinpoint cross-linguistic universals, with regard to distribution of focus and strategies employed for expressing focus. One could ascertain that more or less every language provides strategies for expressing predicate-centered focus, as well as structural means for clear disambiguation of focus, since nearly every language differentiates between term focus and predicate-centered focus. Furthermore, many languages exhibit – at least to a certain extent – a fine-grained system of disambiguating predicate-centered focus types internally. In other words, they are able to differentiate e.g. between focus on the lexical meaning of the verb and focus on the polarity operator.

### 3 Conclusion

The present investigation dealt with the formal means of encoding information structure in six genealogically related African languages (BAGIRMI, KENGA, MBAY, KABBA, NGAMBAY, and SAR), with special emphasis on predicate-centered focus types. As a whole, this is a poorly investigated field of research. No survey of the information structural properties of these languages was available prior to completing this investigation.

The main aim of this work is twofold. On the one hand, it describes the relevant strategies of expressing information structure in each individual language. On the other hand, it compares the data within the language family, to detect possible ways of historical developments. In addition, a small corpus study for one of the languages illustrates the use of focus constructions in natural discourse.

The disposition started with surveyingthetic statements, which in Sara-Bagirmi always display the canonical sentence structure. In the next step, I reviewed the representation of topic and background. I have shown that all languages under investigation always identify the subject of the sentence as the default topic expression, while the verbal phrase is interpreted as a comment. In addition, the languages special means of marking topical or background information were described. These mainly involve morphosyntactic strategies, in that the languages use special syntactic constructions combined with various morphological markers. Importantly, the background markers identified in Sara-Bagirmi may be highly ambiguous: they can express definiteness, but they also act as closing elements of relative clauses, indicators of background information in focus constructions, or they modify preposed topics.

The main part of the investigation deals with the realization of focus and foreground. Three main questions are in the centre of attention:

1. Which focus marking strategies do the languages employ?
2. What is the form-function-relationship between these strategies?
3. Is it possible to detect a diachronic path of development of selected strategies?

Regarding the first question, it was shown that multiple strategies are employed to express focus. In order to describe the strategies used in each individual language and to compare the languages within the language family, it is useful to identify special “construction types” (Güldemann i.p.). In the languages under investigation, six different focus constructions are attested:

1. Term focus preposing
2. Verb focus preposing
3. Term topic preposing
4. Verb topic preposing
5. In-situ verb doubling
6. Morphological focus marking

From the formal point of view, these strategies can be divided into two major groups: First, we find focus marking strategies employing primarily syntactic means of expression, which are partly accompanied by additional morphology (and prosody). Second, we find focus constructions using morphological means, while the structure of the clause remains unchanged. The types of focus constructions displayed in 1 to 5 above belong to the first group, while the type in 6 represents the latter one. It is worth noting that most of the languages use more than only one construction type to express focus.

Turning to the question regarding the mapping between form and function of focus expressions, the languages under study confirm theoretical assumptions claiming that differences in the formal encoding of focus are related to differences in the pragmatic conditions. There are strategies used to mark term focus and strategies designated to express predicate-centered focus. One can clearly see that the structural separation of the strategies reflects the functional differences: Structures with a preposed term, like term focus preposing and term topic preposing, express term focus. Structures with a preposed non-finite verb, like verb focus preposing and verb topic preposing, express predicate-centered focus. In-situ verb doubling and morphological focus marking indicate exclusively predicate-centered focus.

Term focus preposing can be described as the less marked strategy for emphasizing terms in Sara-Bagirmi. Verb focus preposing is attested in two languages (MBAY and SAR) only. It is worth noting that each strategy makes use of the same encoding means as its term focus counterpart in the relevant language. Term topic preposing is a very special strategy, which is attested in one of the languages (BAGIRMI) only. Verb topic preposing is found in two languages (KENG and SAR). All these strategies have in common that they use the left periphery for expressing focus. The extra-posed material must always be marked either as topic or as focus. Here, the strategies differ in using “explicit marking” (morphological markers) on the one hand and “implicit marking” (absence of obligatory morphological focus marking) on the other hand. The position of the morphological marker depends on language-internal

requirements. BAGIRMI, KENGA, NGAMBAY, KABBA, and MBAY use left-scoping markers, only SAR shows a right-scoping marker.

In-situ verb doubling is attested in three languages. In BAGIRMI and KENGA, it indicates focus by placing the non-finite verb form in the dedicated focus position. By indicating the same function, both strategies differ slightly in form: In KENGA, the non-finite verb occupies the position immediately after the verb (IAV), and in BAGIRMI, the non-finite verb occurs in clause-final position. In MBAY, this construction type could be structurally required as a host for functional elements.

Morphological focus marking in Sara-Bagirmi is always based on the functional element *kA*. This construction type is attested in two languages (BAGIRMI and KENGA), in which it is characterized as polyfunctional. If the functional element occurs in bare form (perfective aspect in BAGIRMI and “simple form” in KENGA), the construction is primarily used to express TAM focus. In derivational structures (imperfective aspect in BAGIRMI and “vague future” in KENGA), the construction is used to mark polarity focus.

One major advantage of this investigation is the attempt at deriving a diachronic relationship between the different focus marking strategies attested in Sara-Bagirmi. It provides insights into the way how selected strategies emerged over time. For analyzing this development, I compared similar strategies within the language familie with each other. One can see that the intermediate stages of the ongoing language change allow insights into the direction of the functional change in Sara-Bagirmi.

Based on the present data, it can be observed that formal means originally used to express pragmatic features develop towards expressing grammatical information. I illustrated this development on three selected examples. They clearly show that a) in-situ verb doubling in KENGA develops towards a progressive marker, b) the construction with *kA* in KENGA yields the perfective marker, and c) the construction with *kA* in BAGIRMI evolves into a future tense marker. In parallel to the expansion to grammatical features there is an additional example. It shows that focus preposing in MBAY leads to the establishment of the category of intensification.

The diachronic developments outlined above share one common feature. They always proceed from expressing pragmatic features to expressing grammatic functions. It must be concluded that the processes involving a change in the system of encoding information structure in Sara-Bagirmi always leads to enriching the grammatical system of these languages.

Leaving aside the results of the individual questions and looking forward to arriving at a more general outcome relevant for the theory of focus, it can be suggested that one of the major results of this study is the necessity if re-considering the current classification of

predicate-centered focus types in the literature. Based on the elaborations regarding intensification effects via the use of focus constructions, it can be proposed to re-classify the system of predicate-centered focus types as follows:

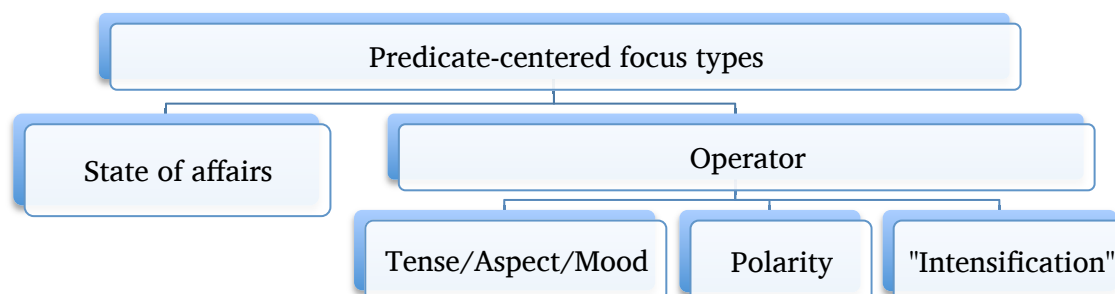


Figure 20: Basic sub-classification of PCF (adapted from Güldemann 2009, Güldemann et al. 2010)

In my opinion, intensification can be considered an individual type of predicate-centered focus because it shares (at least) three properties of focal expressions: a) it conveys the speaker's attitude towards the degree to which properties of the proposition hold, b) it is related to the expression of emphasis and salience, and c) it is based on the assumption that properties of the proposition hold beyond the expectation of the speaker.

I propose to integrate intensification into the scheme of predicate-centered focus types, and locate it between TAM focus and polarity focus as a sub-category of operator focus. This threefold classification of operator-bound focus types is necessary because the predicate-centered focus types differ substantially. While polarity focus indicates the truth value of the proposition, it distinguishes between true statements and false statements. TAM focus concentrates on differentiation within TAM categories: realis vs. irrealis, past vs. non-past etc. Intensification clearly emphasises an operator, but it can neither be grouped together with polarity focus nor with TAM focus. The predicate-centered focus type "intensification" differentiates the degree to which particular aspects of the proposition are marked as expected, or presupposed, and unexpected, i.e. focused. These aspects may relate to the dimensions of quality, quantity or frequency of the respective proposition.

Given these results, the following questions of further research in linguistic theory and language typology arise. What is the status of intensification the general concept of which I have discussed in section 2.5.1.1. Is this a category which requires its own system of grammatical marking? If such a system evolves, does it procede in the same way as in the languages of the Sara-Bagirmi family. Furthermore, it is tempting to see if the languages emplying special means of encoding intensification also make use of the strategies described for Sara-Bagirmi, e.g. verbal iteration.



Resuming the elaborations regarding the relationship between predicate-centered focus and TAM marking, further research should address the direction of change sketched above. In section 2.5, I analyzed selected constructions from a diachronic perspective. For the languages under study, one can observe a change from pragmatics to grammar, e.g. from indicating predicate-centered focus to expressing functions in the domain of verbal TAM-based categories. The question that arises is whether this process represents a universal tendency observable in a broad cross-linguistic plan, or merely represents a language specific phenomenon attested in this language family only.

In order to arrive at a complete picture of the phenomena, we need more data from each individual representative of the Sara-Bagirmi language family, either by data elicitation in the field or by compiling and studying corpora for each language. At this point, one could expand the investigations to the languages of the peripheral branch, like BAGIRO (FURU), DÉMÉ or NGAM. In my opinion, it is extremely fruitful to put some effort into the intensive research on poorly documented languages. The findings will be contributing the studies of languages all over the world.

In order to investigate whether the phenomena at issue are language or family specific or rather universal, one should take into account the situation in the surrounding languages, like the Chadic languages spoken in the same area. This would enable us to detect possible language contact scenarios, supplemented by valuable insights into socio-cultural questions as well. If the neighboring languages outside the Sara-Bagirmi family also display similar properties, this would indicate that there is a language-contact scenario going on here. But if we find out that the languages in the region do not share the respective properties, while other languages from other areas do, this would indicate that the features observed are universal and that they are subject of language specific representations.

Further research can include data from languages outside the language area. If they confirm the existence of similar data, one can assume that the phenomena are more universal than language-specific or areal-typical. It will be inspiring to compare the data from Sara-Bagirmi languages with languages outside the Sara-Bagirmi family (see Apel et al. 2015).



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# **Appendix 1: Lebenslauf**

Lebenslauf für die elektronische Veröffentlichung entfernt



## **Appendix 2: Selbstständigkeitserklärung**

Ich erkläre ausdrücklich, dass es sich bei der von mir eingereichten Arbeit um eine von mir selbstständig und ohne fremde Hilfe verfasste Arbeit handelt.

Ich erkläre ausdrücklich, dass ich sämtliche in der oben genannten Arbeit verwendeten fremden Quellen, auch aus dem Internet (einschließlich Tabellen, Grafiken u.Ä.) als solche kenntlich gemacht habe. Insbesondere bestätige ich, dass ich ausnahmslos sowohl bei wörtlich übernommenen Aussagen bzw. unverändert übernommenen Tabellen, Grafiken o.Ä. (Zitaten) als auch bei in eigenen Worten wiedergegebenen Aussagen bzw. von mir abgewandelten Tabellen, Grafiken o.Ä. anderer Autorinnen und Autoren die Quelle angegeben habe.

Mir ist bewusst, dass Verstöße gegen die Grundsätze der Selbstständigkeit als Täuschung betrachtet und entsprechend geahndet werden.

Berlin, den 9. Februar 2017