

FORMAL CORRELATES OF FOCUSING IN KIMATUUMBI\*

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Many African languages have a system of grammatical focusing which pragmatically highlights certain elements of a sentence. Such systems of focus often have significant consequences in the syntax and morphology of languages, in that selection of a particular type of focal morphology prevents syntactic rules from applying (or forces syntactic rules to apply). This paper investigates the focusing system of one Bantu language, Kimatuumbi. It is argued that the optimal account of Kimatuumbi focus is to allow the syntactic rules to apply blindly and to filter out the unacceptable conflicts in focus via a pragmatic filter.

1. Introduction

In Kimatuumbi, it is possible to bring certain elements into focus in a sentence by the proper selection of tense-aspect morphology. This paper investigates the syntactic, morphological and pragmatic problems associated with two distinct focusing strategies, with the goal of constraining syntax/pragmatics interactions. The first section of the paper discusses a verb tense which has the pragmatic property of bringing the action of the verb into focus; this tense is referred to as the "verb-focal" tense. The verb-focal past tense is contrasted with the more neutral perfective past tense, and it is shown that selection of the verb-focal past tense severely restricts a number of syntactic processes, whereas the neutral perfective past tense is not so restricted.

In the second section of the paper, two additional (progressive) verb

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\*Data for this paper were collected from Emmanuel Manday during the period 1978-1981. In this paper, I will use (nf) to indicate a morphological noun-focal tense, and (vf) to indicate a verb-focal tense. I thank Judy Aissen, Peter Cole, Alice Davison, Margaret Dunn, Georgia Green, Gaby Hermon, Larry Horn, Jerry Morgan, Russell Schuh, Susan Stucky and an anonymous reviewer for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

tenses are investigated, which I argue serve to bring the role of a verb into focus within a sentence. These verb-focal tenses are shown to behave exactly like the verb-focal past tense discussed in the first section with respect to syntactic and pragmatic restrictions. In addition, two other progressive tenses which place a noun of the sentence in focus are examined. These noun-focal progressive tenses are contrasted with the verb-focal progressive tenses, and it is shown that the selection of the verb-focal tenses appears to place restrictions on the syntax of the sentence in one way, whereas selection of the noun-focal tenses appears to place restrictions on the syntax in a complementary fashion. To take a specific example, if a noun-focal tense is selected, then the syntactic rule of Topicalization cannot apply to the object noun, although that rule can apply to the object if a verb-focal tense is selected. On the other hand, if a noun-focal tense is selected then the syntactic process of Postposing can apply (and is under certain circumstances obligatory), whereas if a verb-focal tense is selected, Postposing is impossible. A third set of progressive tenses is considered, and it is shown that these tenses are neutral with respect to focus, parallel to the neutral perfective tense.

One conceivable approach to handling the restrictions imposed by aspect choice would be to make the syntactic component highly complex, allowing one rule (Postposing) to make global reference to the future applicability of another rule (Topicalization). Neither Postposing nor Topicalization are by themselves obligatory. But if a noun-focal tense is selected and the only object noun is Topicalized, then Postposing becomes obligatory. Yet Postposing cannot be stated so as to be obligatory in case the verb selects noun-focal morphology and no noun follows the verb, since relative clauses can select the noun-focal tenses and have no postverbal objects (for reasons to be discussed below) without requiring application of Postposing. Since the dependencies between Topicalization and Postposing cannot be expressed by ordering Topicalization before Postposing or by ordering Topicalization after Postposing, no more straightforward syntactic solution is possible. An alternative approach, which I shall adopt here, is to make the syntactic component quite simple and to allow the unacceptability of certain sentences to be accounted for by the fact that they violate pragmatic constraints. Thus, I assume that the starred sen-

tences to be discussed here are in fact syntactically well-formed; they are, however, ill-formed, in that they violate pragmatic constraints.<sup>1</sup> I believe that the pragmatic constraints which are needed in this language are instances of more general focus-related constraints found in some other languages. The two constraints which will prove most important in Kimatuumbi are that a clause may contain only one focused constituent, and that focused nouns are placed immediately after the verb.<sup>2</sup>

Attempts have been made in various places to define "focus" in terms of other, presumably more primitive, notions. Givón [1975] characterises the focused constituent as the one with the most salient or important pragmatic information. Jackendoff [1972] characterises the focused constituent as the one containing the information which the speaker presupposes the hearer does not share. Chafe [1976] defines focus in three steps. In his view, part of the contrastive sentence is old information; there are a number of choices for the

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<sup>1</sup>It should be noted that the native speaker's reaction to these grammatical but unacceptable sentences is no different from his reaction to strictly ungrammatical sentences. There is no sense in which the "raw data" argue for a pragmatic solution over a syntactic solution.

<sup>2</sup>The restriction that only one item can be focused in a clause is not found in languages like English, where two items may be focused, for example "Who likes only meat?" or "Tom likes Sally". However, focusing plays at best a rather minor role in the grammar of English, in the sense that there are no morphological processes whose sole purpose is marking focus. But it is quite common in other languages, where focus is more important, for the occurrence of focused items to be subject to the "one-per-clause" restriction found in Kimatuumbi. Additional cases parallel to Kimatuumbi in prohibiting multiple foci include Makua [Stucky 1979], Aghem [Watters 1979], or Somali (Allon-Livnat [1983] and p.c.). One possibility is that languages may select one of two values for a "focal-sensitivity" parameter: either the language is insensitive to focus, or focal restrictions pervade the grammar. What we would not expect to find under this view is a language with focal distinctions on verbs, where the wh-question words cannot cooccur with verb-focal morphology but where a noun phrase modified with "only" could occur in the same position. That is, we would expect under the view espoused here that focal sensitivity is a general property of an entire grammar, not a property of particular rules. Note also that the correct restriction is indeed one focus per clause, not one focus per sentence, since it is possible for a focused verb to be embedded in a clause which is itself embedded in a clause which is itself the focus of the higher clause, as in *aammákjya Mamboondo pánga twaat[toolá eéla 'he is telling Mamboondo that we took the money'.*

new information, and the speaker asserts that one particular choice (the focused constituent) is the correct choice for the new information. I will not attempt here to compare these views of focus, nor will I attempt to argue that focus needs to be defined in terms of other notions rather than being a primitive notion itself. There is no problem identifying what is focused in Kimatuumbi, and there are no data in Kimatuumbi which help choose among competing definitions of focus.

The decision to relegate the problem of focusing in Kimatuumbi to pragmatics, rather than semantics, is based on an assumption about the nature of semantics, namely that semantics deals with truth conditions, word meanings, and coreference, and not with discourse, intentions, and emphasis. A different view of what separates semantics and pragmatics might easily lead to labeling the problem of focus in Kimatuumbi a semantic problem. If the distinction between pragmatics and semantics becomes more clearcut in the future, the conclusions of this paper may be reinterpreted in light of such clarification.

Finally, I assume that certain words and constructions (universally) have specific focus-related properties. Specifically, when a word is modified by the word which means 'only', that word is focused. Or, when a wh-question is asked about, say, an object in a sentence, then an appropriate response contains a noun in focus, rather than a verb in focus. Thus, an appropriate response to, "Who did John see?" might be, "Sue," but not, "He *kissed* her." And I assume that when two items in a discourse are being contrasted, those items are focused as well. These assumptions follow automatically from the characterisation of focus and are not idiosyncratic facts of Kimatuumbi.

## 2. Verb Focusing

There are two morphologically distinct past tense forms of the verb in Kimatuumbi. One form of the past tense, traditionally referred to as the perfective tense [Meinhof and van Warmelo 1932], is formed by suffixing the verb with -ite (or one of its allomorphs), and placing an agreement prefix on the verb which agrees with the subject of the sentence. Examples of the recent past tense perfective are given in (1).

- (1) nj-tém-ite                      'I chopped (recently)'  
       ls-chop-perf

tʏ-kálaang-ite lp-fry-perf	'we fried (recently)'
tʏ-té jik-e lp-cook-perf	'we cooked (recently)'
a-píindjik-e 3s-set trap-perf	'he set a trap (recently)'

A variant of the perfective may be formed by placing the further past prefix *-a-* between the subject prefix and the verb stem (with concomitant morphophonemic changes).

(2) n-aa-tém-ite 1s-fpast-chop-perf	'I chopped'
tw-aa-kálaang-ite lp-fpast-fry-perf	'we fried'
tw-aa-té jik-e /téleka/ lp-fpast-cook-perf	'we cooked'

A distinct past tense, the verb-focal past tense, can be formed by suffixing the vowel *-a* to the verb, placing the past tense prefix *-tʃ-* before the stem, and placing the subject prefix before the tense prefix *-tʃ-* (where the further past prefix *-a-* may stand between the subject prefix and the focus prefix).

(3) a-tʃ-kaatá 3s-vf-cut	'he cut (recently)'
ba-tʃ-kalaangá 3p-vf-fry	'they fried (recently)'
b-aa-tʃ-kalaangá 3p-fpast-vf-fry	'they fried'

Although the forms *naatʃteleká* and *naaté|jike* have the same meaning in terms of time-reference and both can be translated roughly as 'I cooked', the verb-focal tense cannot be used in the same ways as the neutral perfective tense. While the perfective is neutral as to what constituent of the clause is emphasised (or indeed whether anything is focused), the verb-focal past tense places special emphasis on the role of the action of the verb. Sentences with the verb-focal tense could thus be translated into English with contrastive stress on the verb.

(4) naaté j ke	'I cooked'
naat[teleká	'I <i>cooked</i> '
tykálaangjite	'we just fried'
tyt[kalaangá	'we just <i>fried</i> '

The perfective and verb focal tenses differ in terms of what types of questions they may be used to answer. The perfective forms in (5) may be used in answers to a wide range of questions, either a wh-question about a noun, or in an answer to the question 'why?'.<sup>3</sup>

(5) aaté j ke k ndoólo	'he cooked sweet potato'
3s-cooked s.p.	('what did he cook?')
aakálangjitee ñáma	'he fried meat'
3s-fried meat	('how did he feed the children?')
aawíle K wí yo	'K wí yo died'
3s-died K.	('who died?')
K wí yo aawíle	'K wí yo died'
K. 3s-died	('why is he crying?')
aatwétj k ndoló chaángu	'he took my sweet potato'
3s-took s.p. mine	('whose s.p. did he take?')

In contrast, the verb-focal tense cannot be used in an answer to a wh-question about a noun in the sentence, since a question about a noun requires a noun (which is the focus of the sentence) as the answer, whereas the verb-focal tense is allowed only in sentences where the verb is the focus of the sentence. But, the verb-focal tense can be employed in an answer to a question about the verb or in answer to the question 'why'.<sup>3</sup>

(6) aat[teleká k ndoólo	'he cooked sweet potato'
3s-cooked(vf) s.p.	('what did he do?')
	(*'what did he cook?')
K wí yo aat[wá	'K wí yo died'
K. 3s-died(vf)	('why is he crying?')

<sup>3</sup>I assume that 'why' requires a category which is focused as the answer, as all question words do. However, unlike 'who' or 'when', 'why' does not inherently require any particular category (noun versus verb) to be focused. On the other hand, 'why' is a noun phrase (translatable roughly as 'what reason') and as such is itself incompatible with a verb-focal tense, but not with a neutral or noun-focal tense, to be discussed later.

*aat[ʔwá	K[ʔw[ʔyo	('who died?')
3s-died(vf) K.		
aat[kalaangá	l[ʔso	'he fried yesterday'
3s-fried(vf) yesterday		('what did he do?')
		(*'when did he fry?')

We can account for the fact that the verb-focal past tense cannot be appropriately used as an answer to a question about a noun with the hypothesis that the morphological "verb-focus" tense requires the action of the verb to be in focus.

The perfective and verb-focal tenses also differ in what types of clauses may be employed to complete a sentence that contains one of these verbs. If the first clause contains a perfective verb, then the second clause may appropriately contrast the postverbal noun of the first clause with the postverbal noun of the second clause. It may also appropriately contrast the verb of the first clause with the verb of the second clause, although examples contrasting the verb in the perfective are marginal.<sup>4</sup>

- (7) aatél[ʔke k[ʔndoólo, ñama l[ʔl[ʔ  
 he-cook s.p. meat Neg  
 'he cooked sweet potato, not meat'
- aatél[ʔke l[ʔso, k[ʔndaáj l[ʔl[ʔ  
 he-cook yesterday today Neg  
 'he cooked yesterday, not today'
- aakálang[ʔte Mamboóndo, L[ʔby[ʔle l[ʔl[ʔ  
 he-fried M. L. Neg  
 'Mamboóndo fried, not L[ʔby[ʔle'
- Mamboondó aakálang[ʔte, aayán[ʔte l[ʔl[ʔ  
 M. he-fried he-forged Neg  
 'Mamboondó fried, he didn't forget'

<sup>4</sup>The marginality of perfective sentences which have focused verbs follows from the fact that the verb is in focus, and there is a tense specifically designed for focused verbs, so it makes sense to use the verb-focal tense when the verb is focused. However, this is not an absolute requirement; focused perfectives are acceptable, if not optimal. Note that the possibility of focusing a morphologically neutral tense suggests that the focal properties of the verb

Mamboondó aatélíke lǐ kǐndoólo, aatélíkee mbá  
 M. he-cook Neg s.p. he-cook rice

'Mamboondo didn't cook sweet potato, he cooked rice'

When the first clause contains a verb-focal tense, however, the completion may contrast only the specific verb, i.e. 'cook' versus 'eat', and cannot contrast any noun of the sentence.

(8) aatǐteleká lǐlǐ kǐndoólo, aatǐkalaangá  
 3s-cook(vf) neg s.p. 3s-fry(vf)

'he didn't cook sweet potato, he fried it'

\*aatǐteleká lǐlǐ kǐndoólo, aatǐteleká mbá  
 3s-cooked(vf) neg s.p. 3s-cook rice

('he didn't cook sweet potato, he cooked rice')

aatǐgoonjá lǐlǐso, aatǐkulugá lǐlǐlǐ  
 3s-slept(vf) yesterday 3s-weeded Neg

'he slept yesterday, he didn't weed'

\*aatǐgoonjá lǐlǐso, kǐndaáj lǐlǐlǐ  
 3s-slept(vf) yesterday today Neg

('he slept yesterday, not today')

I furthermore assume that it is pragmatically inappropriate (or impossible) to contrast two nouns while placing the focus of the sentence on the verb.<sup>5</sup> As I have suggested, this connection between focus and contrast is quite intimate; a contrasted item is in focus (although the converse is not necessarily true). Recall that certain types of questions have inherent focusing properties; questions such as 'what did he do' inherently focus a verb, while questions such as 'who...' or 'where...' focus some noun.

It seems clear then that there is a pragmatic constraint in the language which requires selection of the verb-focal tense when the focus of the sentence

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are determined independently and are not a direct result of the selection of the verbal morphology.

<sup>5</sup>This I take to be a universal. Note also the oddity of English sentences such as \*I HIT Tom, and SALLY kissed Bill (acceptable only where the clauses are unrelated responses to two separate propositions).



is on the verb. In addition to these discourse-related restrictions, there are a number of strictly sentence-internal apparent syntactic restrictions on the type of items which may appear in a sentence with a verb-focal tense verb. These restrictions can best be explained as a consequence of the fact that while the verb-focal tense requires the verb to be focused, the syntactic construction in question places a noun in focus. Below I will discuss the ways in which the selection of the verb-focal tense appears to place restrictions on the application of the syntax, while the neutral perfective does not seem to entail any restrictions on the syntax.

For example, the verb *bá* 'be' cannot appear in the verb-focal tense.

- (9) *aab[le pák]índiilo* 'he was at the hut'  
 3s-be at-hut
- \**aat[bá pák]índiilo* ('he was at the hut')  
 3s-be at-hut

This fact is easily explained on the basis of the fact that *bá* has virtually no semantic content and thus could not be contrasted with some other selected verb (rather, the noun itself is focused by default). It should be observed that, unlike English, the verb 'be' in Kimatuumbi can never be focused. Whereas the assertion that John is tall can be focused with emphatic stress in "John IS tall", such constructions are impossible in Kimatuumbi. Sentences like \*AAB[LE pák]índiilo! for 'he WAS at the hut' are viewed as bizarre.

Another restriction on the verb-focal tense is that it cannot appear in a sentence with a wh-question word.

- (10) \**aat[teleká namáni]* ('what did he cook?')  
 3s-cooked(vf) what
- \**aat[kyymoná ñaj]* ('who did he see?')  
 3s-see(vf) who
- \**aat[lilá mwanjá namáni]* ('why did he cry?')  
 3s-cry(vf) why
- \**aat[tuumbuká ñaj]* ('who fell?')  
 3s-fell(vf) who

On the other hand, wh-words are freely acceptable with the perfective tense.

- (11) aatélíke ńámanj 'what did he cook?'  
 3s-cook what
- aammwénj ńáj 'who did he see?'  
 3s-him-see who
- aalííjite mwanjá ńamánj 'why did he cry?'  
 3s-cried why
- aatúmbwíke ńáj 'who fell?'  
 3s-fell who

A third restriction on the verb-focal tense is that it cannot occur in a sentence with any noun modified by *báaí* 'only' or *tú* 'only'. This restriction follows from the hypothesis that the verb-focal tense places the action of the verb in focus, whereas the words *báaí* 'only' and *tú* 'only' place the preceding word (verb, noun, adverb, or whatever) in focus.<sup>6</sup>

- (12) \*Mambóondo *báaí* aatíkulúgá ('only Mambóondo weeded')  
 M. only 3s-weeded(vf)
- \*naatítoolá kítaáby *báaí* ('I took only a book')  
 I-took(vf) book only
- \*naatíkyympéyá mwaana *túy* *ńáma* ('I gave only the child meat')  
 I-gave(vf) child only meat
- \*naatísoomá íjiso *tú* ('I read just yesterday')  
 I-read(vf) yesterday only

The perfective tense does not place any restrictions on the use of *báaí* or *tú*, since that tense does not require the verb to be in focus and thus is not incompatible with a focused noun.

- (13) aakúlwígee nn'ynda wáangu *tú* 'he weeded only my field'  
 3s-weed field mine only
- naampéj Lìbyùlùle *báaí* *mbá* 'I gave only Lìbyùlùle rice'  
 I-him-gave L. only rice

<sup>6</sup>This follows from the meaning of the word and need not be stipulated in the grammar. It should be pointed out that in Kimatuumbi, the words *báaí* and *tú* always immediately follow the phrase which they modify. Thus, *naatwétj kítaáby tú* only means 'I took (just a book)' and not 'I (only took) a book'.

naakálangjite tǔ 'I just fried'  
I-fried only

The unacceptability of the sentences in (12) is to be explained on the basis of the hypothesis that *báaí* and *tǔ* place the preceding element in focus, whereas the verb-focal tense requires the verb to be in focus. For the data in (12), both the verb and some noun of the sentence are in focus, and I assume a constraint against having two focused elements in a clause.

One approach that might be taken to account for the unacceptability of the sentences in (12) is to state that, at some level of the grammar, the lexical items *báaí* and *tǔ* cannot appear in a sentence with the verb-focal tenses. But this restriction is incorrect, since just in case the words *báaí* and *tǔ* stand after the verb, they place focus on the verb and are therefore compatible with the verb-focal tenses.

- (14) aatǎkulgá tǔ 'he only weeded'  
3s-weeded(vf) just
- naatǎkalaangá báaíi ñáma 'I only fried meat'  
I-fry(vf) only meat
- naatǎtoolá tǔ kǐtaáby, naatǎkǔkǐpiimá lǎǎǎ 'I just took the book, I  
I-took only book I-it-bought Neg. didn't buy it'

A fourth apparent syntactic restriction on the verb-focal past tense is that it cannot appear in a relative clause. This restriction can be explained under the hypothesis that the verb-focal tense places the verb in focus, whereas in a relative clause, the head of the clause (or its trace in the clause) is in focus. Relative clauses may, however, be formed off of nouns in clauses containing the perfective tense, which does not have the requirement that the verb be focused. A relative clause is formed by prefixing an agreement morpheme, *ya-* in the examples in (15), to the verb, and applying a special tone rule to the verb stem.

- (15) ñama yanáakalaangǎte 'the meat that I fried'  
meat wh-I-fried
- \*ñama yanáatǎkalaangá ('the meat that I fried')  
meat wh-I-fried(vf)

mìkóngo yatwáatemíté yaabóǝ      'the trees that we chopped have  
trees wh-we-chop they rotted      rotted'

\*mìkóngo yatwáat[temá] yaabóǝ      ('the trees that we chopped have  
trees wh-we-chop(vf) they rotted      rotted')

The fifth sentence-internal restriction on clauses containing the verb-focal past tense is that a syntactic rule of Subject-Postposing cannot apply in such clauses. There is a syntactic movement rule which postposes the subject of the sentence to the position immediately after the verb; note that the postposed subject may not appear in any other postverbal position.

(16) Lìbùlùle aawíle  
L.      3s-died  
'Lìbùlùle died'

aawíle Lìbùlùle  
3s-died L.  
'Lìbùlùle died'

Mamboondó aakálangítee ñáma  
M.      3s-fried      meat  
'Mambóondo fried meat'

aakálangíte Mamboondoo ñáma  
3s-fried      M.      meat  
'Mambóondo fried meat'

Kìwíiyó aatélikée mbaa kwaajilí ya Lìbùlùle  
K.      3s-cooked rice for-sake of L.  
'Kìwíiyó cooked rice for the sake of Lìbùlùle'

aatélikée Kìwíiyoo mbaa kwaajilí ya Lìbùlùle  
3s-cooked K.      rice for-sake of L.  
'Kìwíiyó cooked rice for the sake of Lìbùlùle'

\*aatélikée mbaa Kìwíiyó kwaajilí ya Lìbùlùle  
3s-cooked rice K.      for-sake of L.  
( 'Kìwíiyó cooked rice for the sake of Lìbùlùle')

Apart from the syntactic fact that the Subject-Postposing rule changes word order, application of the Subject-Postposing rule has the additional pragmatic

effect of placing contrastive focus on the postposed Subject NP (applying the postposing rule is the major strategy for focusing a Subject). Thus, it would be appropriate to contrast the postposed subject with another subject, but not with an object.

- (17) aatél|ke L|bɔlúlee mbá, K|wíiyo l|l|l|  
 3s-cooked L. rice K. neg.

'L|bɔlúlee cooked rice, not K|wíiyo'

- \*aatél|ke L|bɔlúlee mbá, ñama l|l|l|  
 3s-cooked L. rice meat Neg.

('L|bɔlúlee cooked rice, not meat')

- aasóm|te U|kumú kwaaj|l|l| ya Mambóondo, L|bɔlúlee l|l|l|  
 3s-read U. for-sake of M. L. Neg.

'U|kumú read for the sake of Mambóondo, L|bɔlúlee didn't'

- \*aasóm|te U|kumú kwaaj|l|l| ya Mambóondo, kwaaj|l|l| ya L|bɔlúlee l|l|l|  
 3s-read U. for-sake of M. for-sake of L. Neg.

('U|kumú read for the sake of Mambóondo, not for L|bɔlúlee')

These facts can be explained on the basis of a more general principle that placing a noun immediately after the verb puts that noun in focus. The pragmatic effect of movement into post-verbal position is most clearly seen either in the application of Subject-Postposing above or else in the application of a movement rule which places locative phrases immediately after the verb.

- (18) aasóm|te k|taábɔ mɔk|l|l|ndiilo  
 3s-read book in-hut

'he read a book in the hut'

- aasóm|te mɔk|l|l|ndiilo k|taábɔ  
 3s-read in-hut book

'he read a book in the hut'

- aammwén| L|bɔlúlee palúusi  
 3s-him-saw L. at-well

'he saw L|bɔlúlee at the well'

- aammwén| páluusi L|bɔlúlee pak|l|l|ndiilo l|l|l|  
 3s-saw at-well L. at-hut neg.

'he saw L|bɔlúlee at the well, not at the hut'

Having investigated the pragmatic consequences of Subject-Postposing, we can now predict that Subject-Postposing should not be able to apply in a clause which has a verb-focal past tense. This prediction is borne out.

- (19)  $\frac{\text{Lìbùlù'le}}{\text{L.}} \frac{\text{aat'ítuumbuká}}{\text{3s-fell(vf)}}$  'Lìbùlù'le fell'  
 \* $\frac{\text{aat'ítuumbuká}}{\text{3s-fell(vf)}} \frac{\text{Lìbùlù'le}}{\text{L.}}$  ('Lìbùlù'le fell')

Since the verb-focal tenses place the focus of the sentence on the verb, but application of Subject-Postposing places the subject in focus, it follows that Subject-Postposing would not apply in a sentence with a verb-focal tense verb, since to apply that rule would imply the impossible supposition that both the subject and the verb are being focused.

I have discussed here a number of pragmatic and syntactic consequences of employing the verb-focal past tense in Kimatuumbi. It has been shown that the verb-focal tense places the focus of the sentence on the verb and that this placement has the consequence that no other elements can be focused. The restriction on multiple foci is manifested in a number of ways: as a constraint on what would be an appropriate continuation of a sentence containing a verb-focal form, as a constraint on what types of questions such a sentence may be used as an answer to, as a constraint on the position or occurrence of inherently focusing elements such as *báaf* and *tù*, and as an apparent constraint on the application of certain syntactic processes, such as Relativisation, Wh-Question Formation, and Subject Postposing.

### 3. Noun Focusing Versus Verb Focusing

In the preceding section, I discussed the past-tense form which has the pragmatic correlate of placing the action of the verb in focus. This tense was contrasted with the perfective tense, which is neutral in terms of focusing. The past tense presents a fairly simple picture of the focal system; there we encounter only the distinction "verb-focal" versus "neutral". One set of restrictions was encountered with the verb-focal tense, while the neutral tense seems to have no restrictions on its use. In a different tense, the progressive, there is a contrast between a verb-focal form and a noun-focal form, as

well as a periphrastic form which is neutral with respect to focus. This three-way contrast in focal properties leads to a much more complex set of apparent restrictions on the syntax. Yet I will show that these differences follow in a straightforward manner from the general characteristics of focusing in Kimatuumbi which I have already outlined.

The verb focal form of the progressive is created in a fashion analogous to the formation of past tense verb-focal verbs; the prefixes *-eendá-* and *-eendeé-* stand between the subject prefix and the verb stem (with concomitant morphophonemic fusion of the vowels of the subject prefix and the tense-prefix).

- |      |                   |                    |
|------|-------------------|--------------------|
| (20) | ∅-eendá-teleká    | 'he is cooking'    |
|      | 3s-vf-cook        |                    |
|      | n-eendá-kalaangá  | 'I am frying'      |
|      | 1s-vf-fry         |                    |
|      | n-eendeé-kalaangá | 'I was frying'     |
|      | 1s-vf-fry         |                    |
|      | tw-eendeé-goonjá  | 'we were sleeping' |
|      | 1p-vf-sleep       |                    |

The noun-focal progressive tense is formed by prefixing the subject prefix directly to the stem and, in the past tense progressive, suffixing the vowel *-e* after the stem. For reasons to be discussed below, some noun always follows the verb.

- |      |                |        |                       |
|------|----------------|--------|-----------------------|
| (21) | a-kata         | kaámba | 'he is cutting rope'  |
|      | 3s-cut(nf)     | rope   |                       |
|      | a-kata-e       | kaámba | 'he was cutting rope' |
|      | 3s-cut-pst(nf) | rope   |                       |
|      | n -kalangaa    | ñáma   | 'I'm frying meat'     |
|      | 1s-fry(nf)     | meat   |                       |
|      | t -kalanga-ee  | ñáma   | 'we were frying meat' |
|      | 1p-fry-pst(nf) | meat   |                       |

Finally, the neutral periphrastic progressive is formed along the pattern SP-ká-ba ka-SP-ROOT.

- |      |          |              |                  |
|------|----------|--------------|------------------|
| (22) | n -ká-ba | ka-n -teleká | 'I am cooking'   |
|      | I-TA-be  | TA-I-cook    |                  |
|      | t -ká-ba | ka-t -teleká | 'we are cooking' |
|      | we-TA-be | TA-we-cook   |                  |

tw-aa-ká-ba ka-tɔ-teleká 'we were cooking'  
 we-pst-TA-be TA-we-cook

The forms *n-eëndá-kalaangá*, *nj-ká-ba ka-nj-kalaánga*, and *nj-kalanga* (*ñáma*) are equivalent in tense reference and could be translated as 'I'm frying'. Similarly, the forms *n-eendeé-kalaangá*, *n-aa-ká-ba ka-nj-kalaánga*, and *nj-kalangae* (*ñáma*) are equivalent in tense reference and could be translated as 'I was frying'. However, there are significant differences in the pragmatic implications and (apparent) syntactic properties of these two verb tenses. Again, I shall argue that the apparent syntactic restrictions on these tenses follows from their pragmatic properties.

In parallel to the restrictions on employing the verb focal tense with *-tɔ-* discussed in the preceding section, the verb-focal progressive tenses may be appropriately employed to answer a question about the verb, but not to answer a question about any noun of the sentence.

- |      |                             |                            |
|------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| (23) | <i>eendákalaangá ñáma</i>   | 'he is frying meat'        |
|      | 3s-fry(vf) meat             | ('what is he doing?')      |
|      |                             | (*'what is he frying?')    |
|      | <i>Kjwɔjɔ eendákɔmpuutá</i> | 'Kjwɔjɔ is beating him'    |
|      | K. 3s-him-beat(vf)          | ('why is he crying?')      |
|      |                             | ('what is Kjwɔjɔ doing?')  |
|      |                             | (*'who is beating him?')   |
|      | <i>neendágoonjá</i>         | 'I was sleeping'           |
|      | 1s-sleeping(vf)             | ('why didn't you answer?') |
|      |                             | ('what were you doing?')   |
|      |                             | (*'who was sleeping?')     |
|      | <i>eendáteleká  jɔso</i>    | 'he was cooking yesterday' |
|      | 3s-cooking(vf) yesterday    | ('what was he doing?')     |
|      |                             | (*'when was he cooking?')  |

On the other hand, the noun-focal verb tenses may be appropriately used in an answer to a question about some noun, but not in an answer to a question about the verb. It should be noted that the noun which constitutes the answer must appear immediately after the verb. This follows from the earlier statement that a noun is focused by placing it immediately after the verb.

- |      |                        |                          |
|------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| (24) | <i>njkalangaa ñáma</i> | 'I'm frying meat'        |
|      | 1s-fry(nf) meat        | ('what are you frying?') |
|      |                        | (*'what are you doing?') |



agonja	Mambóondo	'Mambóondo is sleeping'
3s-sleep(nf) M.		('who is sleeping?')
		(*'why did you leave?')
		(*'what is Mambóondo doing?')
a katae	l l so	'he was cutting it yesterday'
3s-it-cut(nf) yesterday		('when was he cutting it?')
		(*'what was he doing with it?')
ʏkʏmʏ akatae	kaámba	'ʏkʏmʏ is cutting rope'
U. 3s-cut(nf) rope		('what is ʏkʏmʏ cutting?')
		(*'who is cutting rope?')

The noun-focal and the verb-focal tenses differ as to what types of sentences may be used as completions, when a sentence employing one of these tenses is followed by a clause contrasting something in the first clause with something in the second clause. If a sentence uses a noun-focal verb, then the completion must contrast the postverbal noun with some other noun. If a sentence uses a verb-focal verb, the completion must contrast the verb and not any noun of the sentence.

- (25) n|lyaa      ñáma, k|ndoólo l|l|l|  
 1s-eat(nf) meat s.p.      Neg.  
 'I'm eating meat, not sweet potato'
- neendá|yáa ñáma, neendákw|l|kalaangá l|l|l|  
 1s-eat(vf) meat 1s-it-fry      Neg.  
 'I'm eating meat, I'm not frying it'
- \*atelekaee mbá, a|lyáe l|l|l|  
 3s-cook(nf) rice 3s-it-eat Neg.  
 ('he was cooking rice, not eating it')
- \*eendeékalaangáa ñáma, k|ndoólo l|l|l|  
 3s-frying(vf) meat s.p.      Neg.  
 ('he was frying meat, not sweet potato')

Thus, based on these discourse-level pragmatic properties of the two tenses, we can conclude that the verb focal progressive tenses place the verb in focus in the sentence, just as the verb focal past tense does. And, if the present analysis of Kimatuumbi verb tenses is correct, we should also predict that the syntactic restrictions on the use of the verb focal progressive tenses should be

the same as those observed for the past tense verb focal tense. This prediction will be verified. Furthermore, from the discourse-level restrictions on the use of the noun-focal tense, we would also predict a set of restrictions on the syntactic use of the noun focal tense which is complementary to the restrictions which are imposed on verb-focal tenses. This prediction will also be verified.

In addition to the discourse related constraints on progressive verb forms, there are correlated with the choice of verb tense a number of sentence-internal restrictions which can be explained on the basis of the pragmatic requirements of the verb-focal and noun focal tenses. For example, the wh-question words *ñaj* 'who', *mwanja namánj* 'why', and *namánj* 'what' cannot appear with the verb focal tense, but may appear only with the noun focal tense.

- (26) akata ñáj 'who is cutting?'  
 3s-cut(nf) whō
- \*eendákaatá ñaj ('who is cutting?')  
 3s-cut(vf) who
- Ūkumú akatae namánj 'what was Ūkumú cutting?'  
 U. 3s-cut(nf) what
- \*Ūkumú eendeékaatá namánj ('what was Ūkumú cutting?')  
 U. 3s-cut(vf) what
- ɔlila mwanjá namánj 'why are you crying?'  
 2s-cry(nf) why
- \*weendá|ilá mwanjá namánj ('why are you crying?')  
 2s-cry(vf) why

When the words *báaí* or *tú* 'only' stand after a noun phrase and thus put that noun phrase in focus, the verb-focal tense cannot be used, and, instead, the noun focal tense must be used.

- (27) agonja Mamboondo báaí 'only Mambóondo is sleeping'  
 3s-sleep M. only
- \*eendágoonjá Mamboondo báaí ('only Mambóondo is sleeping')  
 3s-sleep M. only
- nilyaee mbaa báaí 'I was eating only rice'  
 1s-eat rice only
- \*neendeélyá mbaa báaí ('I was eating only rice')  
 1s-eat rice only

- akatae kaám̄ba t̄ú 'he was cutting only rope'  
 3s-cut rope only  
 \*eendeékaatá kaám̄ba t̄ú ('he was cutting only rope')  
 3s-cut rope only

On the other hand, when the words *báaí* and *t̄ú* stand after the verb, they place the verb in focus. Therefore, only the verb focal tense can be used with postverbal *t̄ú* and *báaí*.

- (28) eendágoonjá *báaí* 'he is only sleeping'  
 3s-sleep(vf) only  
eendeételeká t̄ú |í|í|í| 'he wasn't only cooking'  
 3s-cook(vf) only neg.  
 \*agonja *báaí* ('he is only sleeping')  
 3s-sleep(nf) only  
 \*atelekae t̄ú ('he was just cooking')  
 3s-cook(nf) only

The constraint against having two focused items in a clause also correctly predicts that in the noun-focal tense, it will be impossible to have both a *wh*-word and a noun modified by 'only', and that it will be impossible to have a *wh*-word or a noun modified by 'only' in a relative clause.

- (29) \*mwaana ywaátolá kjtaábú t̄ú ('the child who took only the book')  
 child wh-took(nf) book only  
 \*mwaana ywaátolá namánj ('the child who took what?')  
 child wh-took what  
 \*apala ñájj ñama t̄ú ('who wants only meat?')  
 3s-want(nf) who meat only

A general constraint on the occurrence of the noun-focal progressive tense is that this tense must be followed by something in the clause which is the focus of the sentence. Thus, the following examples with noun focal verbs in sentence final position are all ill-formed.

- (30) \*atéleka ('he is cooking')  
 \*Mamboondó akálaangae ('Mamboondo is frying')  
 \*mwanja namánj atélekae ('why was he cooking?')

However, this constraint on the non-finality of the noun-focal tenses is lifted in relative clauses, where a noun focal verb may (but need not) appear at the

end of the clause.

- (31) naammwénj myndy ywaábuúka  
 1s-him-see man wh-3s-leave(nf)  
 'I saw the man who is leaving'
- aw|le mwaana ywaákaláangaé  
 3s-dead child wh-3s-fry(nf)  
 'the child who was frying is dead'
- naatwét|| ñama yaútélékaé  
 1s-take meat wh-2s-cook(nf)  
 'I took the meat you were frying'
- naatwét|| ñama yaútélékyae Mambóondo  
 1s-take meat wh-2s-cook(nf)-for Mamboondo  
 'I took the meat you were frying for Mamboondo'

So, the restriction on using the noun-focal verbs clause-finally is not a surface (or even a deep) syntactic restriction. The correct restriction is that these verbs may be used only when a noun is focused. Given the hypothesis that the focal requirement imposed by the verb is satisfied by the NP trace of the relative clause, we can explain the acceptability of having a noun-focal tense in clause final position just in relative clauses, where there is no phonetically realized NP present within the phrase containing the focal verb.

On the basis of behavior of the nonprogressive verb focal tense, we would expect it to be impossible to have a verb focal tense form in a relative clause, due to the conflicting requirement of noun focus imposed by the relative clause. This expectation is borne out.

- (32) \*ywaéendeékalaangá ('the one who is frying')  
 wh-3s-fry(vf)
- \*ñama yaéendeékalaangá ('the meat that he was frying')  
 meat wh-3s-frying(vf)
- \*malombé ganéendátii kwá ('the corn I am pulling')  
 corn wh-1s-pull(vf)

The selection of verb tense has an influence on other syntactic processes besides Relativization. The application of the Subject Postposing rule can be seen to interact with the selection of verb tenses in an interesting and predict-

able way. If the verb-focal tense is selected, then Subject-Postposing is blocked, just as it was when the simple past verb-focal tense was selected.

- (33) \*eendákalaangá Mambóondo ('Mambóondo is frying')  
 3s-fry(vf) M.  
 \*eendeéiyá K|w|íyo ('K|w|íyo is eating')  
 3s-eat(vf) K.  
 \*eendákuympéyá K|w|íyo Mamboondoo mbá ('K|w|íyo is giving Mambóondoo  
 3s-him-give K. M. rice rice')

In contrast, if the noun-focal tense is selected, Subject-Postposing is acceptable.

- (34) ateleka Mamboondoo mbá 'Mambóondo is cooking rice'  
 3s-cook(nf) M. rice  
 batelekae baanaa ñáma 'the children were cooking meat'  
 3p-cook(nf) children meat

Moreover, if there is only one noun phrase in the sentence and that noun phrase is the Subject, when a noun focal tense is selected, Subject-Postposing becomes obligatory.

- (35) agonja Mambóondo 'Mambóondo is sleeping'  
 3s-sleep(nf) M.  
 \*Mamboondó agóonja ('Mambóondo is sleeping')  
 M. 3s-sleeping(nf)  
 atemae K|w|íyo 'K|w|íyo was chopping'  
 3s-chop(nf) K.  
 \*K|w|íyó atémae ('K|w|íyo was chopping')  
 K. 3s-chop(nf)

Again, this restriction is explainable on the basis of the hypothesis that the noun-focal tense requires some noun, which stands immediately after the verb, to be the focus of the sentence. In the cases where Subject Postposing is obligatory, the necessity of applying the rule derives from the fact that the verb requires a focused noun, which must stand after the verb, and in these sentences, there is only one noun, the subject.

There is another syntactic process in Kimatuumbi which interacts with the system of focus. Any postverbal element may be preposed to stand before the verb by a Topicalization rule (recall that preverbal position is the position for top-

icalized material). This rule is generally applied to an item which is background information.

- (36) ñamá aatélííke 'he cooked meat'  
 meat 3s-cook(nf)
- mbá Mamboondoó aalííle 'Mamboondo ate rice'  
 rice M. 3s-ate(nf)
- Ūkumú baammwéní baána 'the children saw Ūkumú'  
 U. they-him-see children

This rule has the opposite effect of Subject Postposing: it moves a noun out of the position of focus and thus applies only to old information, i.e. non-focused constituents. We would therefore expect that Topicalisation should be possible with the verb focal tenses, since the noun cannot be the focus of a sentence with the verb-focal tenses. This expectation is realized: it is in fact preferable to topicalize an object noun phrase when a verb-focal tense is selected.

- (37) ñamá aatííyá 'he ate meat'  
 meat 3s-ate(vf)
- Kíwííyó eendákũmpuutá 'he is beating Kíwííyó'  
 K. 3s-him-beat
- ñamá eendeékũnkalaangyá Kíwííyó 'he was frying meat for Kíwííyó'  
 meat 3s-him-fry-for K.

The rule of Topicalization may also apply to an object noun phrase when the verb is a noun focal tense, providing that some other noun phrase stands after the verb. This intervening NP may be either the postposed subject of the sentence or another object noun phrase.

- (38) ñamá níínkalangya Mamboondo 'I'm frying meat for Mamboondo'  
 meat I-him-fry-for M.
- mbá alyae Kíwííyó 'Kíwííyó was eating rice'  
 rice 3s-eat K.
- kíndoólo alyae lííso 'he was eating sweet potato yesterday'  
 s.p. 3s-eat yesterday

These data, too, are predictable, since the remaining postverbal noun serves as the focus of the sentence. And, just in case there is no other noun in the sentence which may serve as the focus of the sentence, the Topicaliza-

tion rule is blocked when a noun-focal tense is selected. The postverbal noun must be the focus of the sentence, and focused material cannot be topicalized.

- (39) alyae mbá 'he was eating rice'  
 3s-eat rice  
 \*mbá alyáe ('he was eating rice')  
 rice 3s-eat
- agonjae lĩĩso 'he was sleeping yesterday'  
 3s-sleep yesterday  
 \*lĩĩso agóonjae ('he was sleeping yesterday')  
 yesterday 3s-sleep
- nĩtema mĩkóongó 'I am chopping trees'  
 1s-chop trees  
 \*mĩkóongó nĩtéma ('I am chopping trees')  
 trees 1s-chop

#### 4. Discussion

I have shown here that the selection of verb tenses seems to have a significant effect on a number of syntactic processes in Kimatuumbi. Subject Postposing, for example, is blocked by verb-focal tenses, but the rule appears to be obligatory with noun-focal tenses which have no underlying postverbal noun phrase. Topicalization may be blocked in noun focal tenses (although only when applying the rule would leave the sentence with no postverbal clause) but is never blocked when the clause contains a verb-focal tense. The position of the words *bááí* and *tú* 'only' may be affected by the selection of verb tense. They may not stand after the verb if a noun focal tense is selected and must stand after the verb if a verb-focal tense is selected. Nouns from clauses having verb-focal tenses may not be relativised, whereas nouns from clauses having noun focal tenses may be relativised. Wh-question words may appear in clauses with noun-focal tenses but may not appear in clauses with verb focal tenses.

The way in which these facts are to be accounted for formally depends, of course, on one's general theory of syntax. If one attempts to formulate these restrictions on word order and morpheme cooccurrence within a theory of autonomous syntax, one will require significant complications of the statement of Relativisation, Topicalization, Subject Postposing, Wh-Question formation, and other rules. The restrictions on each of these rules would include reference to the

tense-aspect morphology of the verb in order to identify noun-focal tenses, verb-focal tenses, and neutral tenses. Certain of the restrictions would require global conditions, so, for example, Topicalization may apply in a clause with a noun focal tense only if Subject Postposing has already applied, or Subject Postposing must apply with noun focal tenses, just in case Topicalization is going to apply. Fewer complications are required if one adopts a model of syntax which treats focus as a syntactic entity (something like an EMPH node), and states the restrictions on word order and morpheme cooccurrence in terms of the presence and position of the FOCUS trigger. While this solution may be made workable for sentence-internal syntax, it still leaves unexplained the various restrictions on the use of focal tenses across sentences, i.e. in responses to questions, etc.

A much simpler account of the grammar of Kimatuumbi can be given if the syntactic rules are not subjected to these types of conditions. The observed restrictions on sentences have been accounted for here by two fairly simple pragmatic statements governing the use of verb tenses: a verb-focal tense places the verb of the clause in focus, and a noun-focal tense places a noun of the clause in focus. There are also independently needed statements which describe the pragmatic effect of various syntactic processes. For example, post-verbal position is the position for focused material, Topicalization applies to background information, *tú* focuses the preceding phrase, etc. Given the principle that two items of a clause cannot be focused, any combination of factors which yields two focused elements is therefore filtered out. Similarly, if no constituent is in focus, but the selection of the verb tense requires that some element be focused, the sentence is filtered out. A simpler view of the syntactic component is then plausible (a view similar to the autonomous syntax hypothesis), by a judicious division of labor: we may allow the syntactic component to account for general facts of word order and morpheme distribution by one set of rules, and we allow the pragmatic component to express the rule-governed conditions on the appropriate use of sentences.

In light of the straightforward pragmatic analysis proposed here, a strictly syntactic solution hardly seems preferable. Moreover, a purely syntactic solution must still incorporate parts of the pragmatic solution in order to account



for the discourse related restrictions on using focal tenses in answers to questions or in conjoined clauses. Occam's Razor clearly requires exorcizing the strictly syntactic analysis of Kimatuumbi focus.

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