

FOCUS WITHOUT INTONATION? SYNTACTIC FOCUS MARKING IN KIKUYU AND KITHARAKA

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Intonation Matters 2004

1 Introduction

(Original) Goals:

- provide empirical basis on focus constructions in Kikuyu (based on Question-Answer congruence)
- develop an account of the syntax of the particle *ne*

What I present here:

- brief overview of syntactic analysis
- Data on Q/A congruence and focus projection (comparison between Kikuyu and Kitharaka)
- Semantic Issues
 - Identificational vs. Presentational Focus (Exhaustivity)
 - Givenness

2 The Particle *ne* in Kikuyu

The particle *ne* appears in 3 environments:

- (1) a. Copula Clauses:
Karioki **ne** ∅ mo-rutani.
Karioki FM COP 1-teacher
Karioki is a / the teacher
- b. Preposed Focus Constructions (and Corresponding Questions):
ne [ma-e]_F Abdul a-ra-nyu-ir-ε.
FM 6-water A. 3.Sg-T-drink-ASP-FV
It is water that Abdul drank
- c. Regular declarative sentences (and corresponding Yes/No-questions):
Abdul **ne**-a-ra-nyu-ir-ε ma-e.
A. FM-SP-T-drink-ASP-FV 6-water
Abdul drank water. *or*
Abdul did drink water.

Note that *ne* itself is not the copula. In the 3rd person present tense case, the copula is null; in all other cases, it is formed with the stem *-re*.

The complete absence of *ne* results in focus on a postverbal element:

- (2) a.. Abdul a-ra-nyu-ir-ε [ma-e]_F
A. SP-T-drink-ASP-FV 6-water
Abdul drank WATER

ne cannot appear with negation, with another *ne*, or in relative clauses:

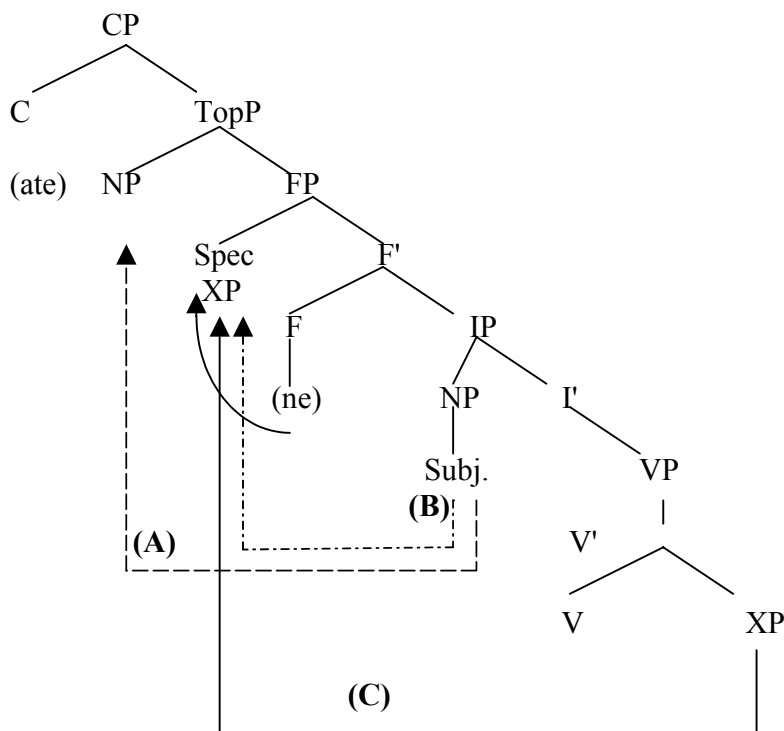
- (3) a. * Abdul ne-a-ti-ra-nyu-ir-ε ma-e
 A. FM-SM-NEG-T-drink-ASP-FV 6-water
 Abdul didn't drink water.
- b. *ne mae Abdul ne-a-ra-nyu-ir-ε
 FM 6-water A. FM-SM-T-drink-ASP-FV
 ?? Abdul DRANK WATER OR:
 It was WATER that Abdul DID drink
- c. *Abdul ne-o-ḏom-ir-ε i-βuku a-nyu-ir-ε ma-e
 A. FM-SM-read-ASP-FV 5-book SM-drink-ASP-FV 6-water
 Abdul, who read a/ the book, drank water

3 Basic Analysis

It seems desirable to provide a unified account of all of the occurrences of *ne*. The fact that the restriction to one *ne* per sentence is independent of the ‘particular’ *ne*-case involved makes a unified account even more compelling.

In Schwarz (2003), I propose the following basic sentence structure for Kikuyu, where *ne* is understood as a focus marker that is the head of a Focus Phrase (FP)¹:

(4) Kikuyu Sentence Structure



¹ A similar proposal (which has inspired the one presented here) is made in Clements (1984), but the syntactic details differ quite a bit. A very similar proposal has been made by Muriungi (cf. Muriungi (2003) and (in preparation)) for Kitharaka, a closely related Bantu language.

Copula Clause: Topicalization of Subject (A), null-copula verb (non-null if not 3rd person present tense)

Preposed Focus: Focus-Fronting of object (C) or subject (B). In the first case, topicalization of subject (A) optional.

Declaratives: Topicalization of Subject (A); possibly Focus-fronting of entire VP?

Alternative Analysis (Bergvall 1987): preposed focus as cleft construction

Parsimony argument:

Cleft(-like)-structures are attested in other sentences (see (5) and (6)); we should try to account for the preposed focus constructions in the same way, rather than introducing a new syntactic phrase.

(5) [e] ne Ø ma [ate Kamau ne - ɔɔn - ir-ε i-buku]
 FM COP true that K. FM-(SP)-see-ASP-FV 5-book
 It is true that Kamau saw a book.

(6) e-ko-aria [ta [e] a-re i-buku [Kamau ɔɔn-etε]]
 SP – T – VS as-if it-be 5-book K. (SP)– see – ASP
 He speaks as if it is a book Kamau had seen

What role does *ne* play? Bergvall argues that it is a **marker of assertion**, rather than focus. According to her analysis, the different types of occurrences of *ne* all involve the same construction: *ne* always occurs preverbally. What makes copula constructions and cleft-sentences look a little different than other cases of preverbal *ne* is simply that the actual verb in these cases is phonologically null.

Problems:

- *ne* also appears in questions.
- topicalization in *ne*-sentences
- multiple wh-questions with *ne*-preposing possible

Focus and Topicalization

An argument against the cleft-analysis can be constructed if we look at the interaction of Topicalization² and Focus-movement. The following example shows a locative in its base position (a) and in a fronted position (b):

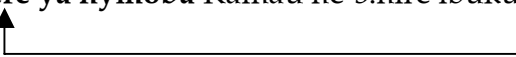
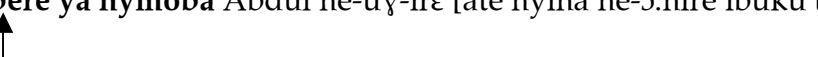
(7) a. Kamau ne-ɔ:n-ir-ε i-buku **mbere ya nymoba**
 K. FM-see-ASP-FV 5-book in-front 9-ASS 9.house
 Kamau saw a book in front of the house.

b. **mbere ya nymoba** Kamau ne-ɔ:nire ibuku t]


In front of the house, Kamau saw a book

² I am not making any claims about the exact nature of this phenomenon, because I have not tested the contextual restrictions for it. We may have to distinguish between Topicalization and Left Dislocation. I simply stick to the term Topicalization here for simplicity.

Restriction: Topicalization can only take place within the clause of the topicalized element.

- (8) a. Abdul ne-uγ-ir-ε [ate Kamau ne-ɔ:n-irε ibuku **mbere ya nymoba**]
A. FM-say-T-FV that K. FM-see-T-FV 5-book in-front 9-ASS 9.house
 Abdul said that Kamau saw a book in front of the house.
- b. Abdul ne-uγ-irε [ate **mbere ya nymoba** Kamau ne-ɔ:n-irε ibuku t]

 Abdul said that in front of the house Kamau saw a book.
- c. # **mbere ya nymoba** Abdul ne-uγ-irε [ate nyina ne-ɔ:n-irε ibuku t]

 In front of the house, Abdul said that (his) mother saw a/the book.

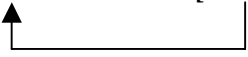

This provides us with a test for sentences with preposed *ne*. If we can topicalize an element from the part of the sentence that would be a relative clause, according to the cleft-analysis, then it seems like this analysis is false. And, indeed, such constructions are perfectly fine:

- (9) a. **mbere ya nymoba** ne ibuku Kamau ɔ:n-irε
 In front of the house, it was a book that Kamau saw

What is even more interesting is that the subject also can be fronted in the same way:

- (9) b. **Kamau** ne ibuku ɔ:n-irε mbere ya nymoba
 Kamau saw a BOOK in front of the house

Both of these would be adequate answers to a question like *What did Kamau see in front of the house?* On the other hand, this Topicalization is impossible in the sentences that Bergvall suggested as analogous to the *ne*-sentences:

- (10) a. * **Kamau** ne ma [ate t ne-ɔ:n-ir-ε i-buku mbere ya nyomba]

 It is true that Kamau saw a book.
- b. * ekoaria [ta **Kamau** a-re ibuku [t ɔ:n-etε mbere ya nyomba]]

 He speaks as if it is a book Kamau had seen

Multiple wh-questions

Further evidence that preposed *ne*-constructions are not clefts: They participate in multiple wh-questions. Generally, this seems not to be possible in languages that use a clefting strategy for fronting wh-words.

- (11) a. Noo w-εnd-iri-ε kee?
FM-who PP-sell-ASP-FV what
 Who sold what?

The relative-marker and a diachronic speculation

Potential problem for FP-analysis: subject-agreement is the same as in relative clauses ('o' instead of 'a')

possible response:

- it is plausible that the synchronic FP has developed out of a cleft construction (general tendency (cf. Heine and Reh 1983); different stages of loss of relative marking can be observed in different Bantu languages: North-Sotho is losing relative pronouns in focus constructions (Sabine Zerbian, (p.c.) and (in preparation)); Kitharaka is losing relative agreement marking on the verb (Peter Muriungi (p.c. and (in preparation))).
- Could be independent phenomenon of anti-agreement (cf. Schneider-Zioga (2000)).

4 Questions and Answers and the Particle *ne*

In **wh-questions** and **answers** to them, the question word or the part of the answer filled in for the question word appear in a preposed position with the particle *ne*:

- (12) a) **ne-kee** Abdul a-ra-nyu-ir-ε?
FM – what A. SP-T-drink-ASP-FV
 What did Abdul drink?
- b) **ne [ma-e]_F** Abdul a-ra-nyu-ir-ε.
FM 6-water A. 3.Sg-T-drink-ASP-FV
 It is water that Abdul drank

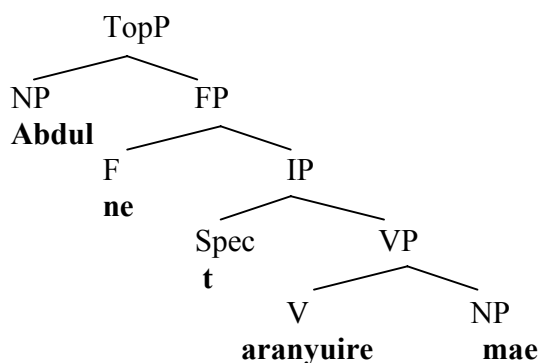
Alternatively, the question word and the according element in the answer can appear in-situ:

- (13) a) Abdul a-ra-nyu-ir-ε **kee**?
A. SP-T-drink-ASP-FV what
- b) Abdul a-ra-nyu-ir-ε **[ma-e]_F**
A. SP-T-drink-ASP-FV 6-water
 Abdul drank **Water**

Beyond Narrow Object Focus

4.1 The Case of Preverbal *ne*

- (14) Abdul **ne-a-ra-nyu-ir-ε** ma-e
A. FM-SP-T-drink-ASP-FV 6-water
 Abdul drank water.



What exactly is focused in these sentences? Barlow (1951: 117) writes that preverbal *ne* gives “definiteness or emphasis to a statement”. The contexts that I have tested suggest that preverbal *ne* can express two different kinds of focus:

Focus on the Truth Value

- (15) a. Abdul ne-a-ra-nyu-ir-ε ma-e?
 A. FM-SP-T-drink-ASP-FV 6-water
 Did Abdul drink water?
- b. ee. Abdul ne-a-ra-nyu-ir-ε mae.
 Yes. Abdul did drink water.

All-new Focus/ Sentence-Focus

- (16) ne-kee ke-oru?
 FM-what #-bad
 What is bad? (*meaning*: What is wrong? What happened?)
- b. Abdul ne-εndi-ri-ε nyomba
 A. FM-sell-ASP-FV 9.house
 Abdul sold the house.

In the first case, *ne* can receive strong stress, especially when contradicting somebody else. A possible analysis for the first case would be that a truth-value operator that is connected to an illocutionary operator is moved into the focus position. In the second case, where the entire sentence should be in focus, the entire IP, or at least the verb including inflectional morphology (I^0) could be moved into the focus position. This distinguishes cases of sentence focus from focus on the verb, as we shall see below.

4.2 Focus on the Verb and the VP

As we have just seen, preverbal *ne* does not express narrow focus on the verb. This can be marked in another way, by putting the infinitive form of the verb in the focus position while retaining a copy of it in the base position.

- (17) a. Abdul ne-a-ǰek-ir-ε?
 A. FM-SP-laugh-ASP-FV
 Did Abdul laugh?
- b. Aja. Abdul ne-ko-rer-a a-rer-ir-ε.
 no. A. FM-SP(INF)-cry-FV SP-cry-ASP-FV
 No. Abdul cried.
- (18) a. ne atea Kamau ek-ir-ε na nyomba?
 FM what K. (SP)-do-ASP-FV with 9.house
 What did Abdul do with the house?
- b. Kamau ne-kw-εndia εnd-iri-ε nyomba
 K. FM-SP(INF)-sell (SP)-sell-ASP-FV 9.house
- b'. Kamau ne-kw-εndia a-me-εnd-iri-ε
 K. FM-SP(INF)-sell SP-OP-sell-ASP-FV
 Abdul sold the house/ it.

Finally, there is the case of VP-focus. For intransitive VP's, this can best be illustrated by constructions involving a control verb like want:

- (19) a. ne atea Abdul a-r-end-a γ w-ek-a?
 FM what A. SP-T-want-FV SP(INF)-do-FV
 What does Abdul want to do?
- b. ne [ko-nyu-a]_F Abdul a-r-end-a (ko-nyu-a)
 FM SP(INF)-drink-FV A. SP-T-want-FV
 Abdul wants to DRINK.

Here the repetition of the verbal infinitive is optional, which seems reasonable, as there is no need to express any inflectional information as was the case in (18b).

4.3 Focus Projection: Kikuyu vs. Kitharaka

Focus Projection in Kikuyu

In cases of transitive VP's in focus, focus projection seems to take place:

- (20) a. ne atea Abdul ek-ir-ε?
 FM what A. (SP)-do-ASP-FV
 What did Abdul do?
- b. ne [mae]_F Abdul [a-nyu-ir-ε]_F
 FM 6-water A. SP-drink-ASP-FV
 Abdul drank WATER.

What is particularly interesting here is that the phrase that is in focus is discontinuous. In some cases, it seems to be possible to move the entire VP into the focus position. It is not quite clear at this point, however, what distinguishes these from cases like (20):

- (21) a. What happened to Abdul? Why is he wet?
- b. ne [konyua mae]_F Abdul anyuire
 FM SP(INF)-drink 6-water A. SP-drink-ASP
 Abdul drank WATER.

Some Differences between Kikuyu and Kitharaka

Although Kikuyu and Kitharaka are both closely related and display the same basic syntactic patterns in how they express focus, they differ substantially in terms of focus projection (Kitharaka data from Peter Muriungi (p.c.) and Muriungi (in preparation)):

	Kikuyu	Kitharaka
S V O (no <i>ne</i>)	object or VP focus	only object focus
ne S V O	only narrow subject focus	subject or sentence focus
S neV O	sentence or truth-value / verum-focus	focus on verb or sentence focus

Any inquiry into the rules that govern focus projection will have to deal with this variation!

5 Semantic Issues

5.1 Identification focus vs. Information focus and the issue of Exhaustivity

The existence of two different focusing strategies in Kikuyu (in-situ and ex-situ) raises the question of whether there is a difference in meaning between the two. In particular, it is tempting to speculate that one of them might correspond to a strongly contrastive focus (or Identificational focus, in Kiss's (1998) terminology), whereas the other expresses information or presentational focus.

Unfortunately, it is completely unclear at this point what the difference might be. But the evidence available from my informant suggests that the clear cut differences observed in Hungarian are not present in Kikuyu:

Exhaustivity test from Kiss (2002: 78):

- (22) a. János PÉTERT ÉS ZOLTÁNT mutatta be Marinak.
John Peter-ACC and Zoltan-ACC introduced VM Mary-to
As for John, it was Peter and Zoltan that he introduced to Mary.
- b. János PÉTERT mutatta be Marinak.
John Peter-ACC introduced VM Mary-to
As for John, it was Peter that he introduced to Mary.
- (23) a. János PÉTERT mutatta be Marinak.
John Peter-ACC introduced VM Mary-to
As for John, it was Peter that he introduced to Mary.
- b. Nem, Zoltánt is bemutatta neki.
no Zoltan-ACC also introduced to.her
No, he also introduced Zoltan to her.

The equivalent Kikuyu examples didn't produce clear results with my informant, but it certainly was clear that the relevant effect was not as obvious as in Hungarian.

Muriungi (in preparation) also discusses the various tests for exhaustivity in detail, and finds no clear contrasts between in-situ and ex-situ focus. Interestingly, however, at least some of the tests do indicate an exhaustive interpretation for BOTH constructions.

Kitharaka Data from Peter Muriungi:

„The test on coordination predicts that a sentence with focused coordinate NPs can be followed by another sentence where one of the coordinates is dropped without any contradiction only when there is an information focus. This test does not produce as clear results as Kiss' analysis predicts. In both the *ex situ* and *in situ* focus strategies, a contradiction results when one of the coordinates is dropped. % refers to discourse inappropriateness.

Coordination and Implication:

(24) A: N-ibuku na karamu Ruth a-gur-ir-e
 F-book and pen Ruth SP-buy-PM-FV
 ‘Ruth bought **a book and a pen.**’

B: % **N-ibuku** Ruth a-gur-ir-e
 F-book Ruth SP-buy-PM-FV
 ‘Ruth bought **a book.**’ (*Ex situ* focus)

(25) A: Ruth a-gur-ir-e **ibuku na karamu**
 Ruth SP-buy-PM-FV book and pen
 ‘Ruth bought **a book and a pen.**’

B: % Ruth a-gur-ir-e **ibuku.**
 Ruth SP-buy-PM-FV book
 ‘Ruth bought **a book.**’ (*In situ* focus)“

Universal Quantifiers:

(26) a. ***I-okira muntu** a-ring-ir-e mubiira
 F-every person SP-kick-PM-FV ball
 ‘**Every person** kicked the ball.’

b. John (a)-on-ir-e ***okira muntu** √antu bonthe
 John SP-see-PM-FV every person people all
 ‘John saw everybody.’

Kiss predicts that when you have a sentence containing negated coordinated focused phrases, you can follow this with an affirmative statement which has one of the focused XPs if the sentence involves an instance of identification focus, not information focus.

(27) a. **Ti-giciko na thaani** Colomba a-gur-ir-e
 NEG- spoon and plate Colomba SP-buy-PM-FV
i-giciko a-gur-ir-e
 F-spoon SP-buy-ASP-FV

‘It is not a spoon and a plate that Colomba bought, it is a spoon that she bought

(28) a. Colomba a-ti-ra-gur-a **giciko na thaani**
 Colomba SP-NEG-RP-buy-FV spoon and plate
 a-gur-ir-e **giciko**

SP-buy-ASP-FV spoon

‘Colomba didn’t buy a spoon and a plate, she bought a spoon.’“

(from Muriungi (in preparation))

In comparing the in-situ and ex-situ constructions, it is also interesting to note that in question and answer sequences it generally seems to be required that the question and the answer follow the same pattern in Kikuyu:

- (29) a. ne kee Abdul ε(n)d-iri-ε yetonga?
FM what A. (SM)-sell-ASP-FV 7-rich(man)
 What did Abdul sell the rich man?
- b. √ ne nyomba
FM 9.house
- c. √ ne nyomba Abdul ε(n)d-iri-ε yetonga
FM 9.house A. (SM)-sell-ASP-FV 7-Reicher
- b. √ Abdul ne nyomba ε(n)dirie yetonga
- e. * nyomba
- f. * Abdul ε(n)dirie yetonga nyomba
- (30) a. Abdul ε(n)dirie yetonga kee?
Abdul (3Sg)-sell-TMP 7-rich-man what
- b. * ne nyomba
- b. ? ne nyomba Abdul ε(n)dirie yetonga
- c. ? Abdul ne nyomba ε(n)dirie yetonga
- e. √ nyomba
- f. √ Abdul ε(n)dirie yetonga nyomba

5.2 What about Givenness?

Peter Muriungi has tested some Kitharaka examples similar to the ones proposed by Schwarzschild to demonstrate Givenness effects. The example in (24) might suggest that Givenness at least plays some role:

- (31) a. A: N-ata Mary a-ruth-ir-e na Bible
F-what Mary SP-do-PM-FV with Bible
 'What did Mary do with the Bible?'
- b. B1: √N-a-mi-thom-ir-e
F-SP-OP-read-PM-FV
 'She read it.'
- c. B2: ??N-a-thom-ir-e Bible
F-SP-read-PM-FV Bible
 'She read the bible.'
- d. B3: * I-Bible a-thom-ir-e
F-Bible SP-read-PM-FV
 'She read the bible.'

Note that (d) is normally a perfectly fine answer to a question like ‘What did she do?’. But in this case, it seems like the form with the preverbal FM is preferred, potentially because it involves less F-marking. But (25) does not confirm this hypothesis, since both the form with a preverbal FM and the form with the the preposed object (which is given) are possible.

- (32) a. A: N-ata ngina wa Victor_i a-ruth-ir-e
F-what Mother of Victor SP-do-PM-FV
 ‘What did Victor’s mother do?’
- b. B1: $\sqrt{\text{N-a-kum-ir-i-e}}$ Victor_i
F-SP-praise-PM-VS-FV Victor
 ‘She praised Victor.’
- c. B2: * N-a-mu_i-kum-ir-i-e
F-SP-OP-praise-PM-VS-FV
 ‘She praised him.’
- d. B3: $\sqrt{\text{I-Victor}_i}$ a-kum-ir-i-e
F-Victor SP-praise-PM-VS-FV
 ‘She praised Victor.’

Focus on Modifiers and on elements in Syntactic Islands

- (33) A: [$\sqrt{\text{I-nkari}}$ i-ntune]_{NP} Mucee a-gur-ir-e
F-car AC-red Mucee SP-buy-PM-FV
 ‘Mucee bought a **red car**.’
- a B: Ari, [$\sqrt{\text{i-nkari}}$ **i-njiru**]_{NP} Mucee a-gur-ir-e
No, F-car AC-black Mucee SP-buy-PM-FV
 ‘No, Mucee bought a **black car**.’
- (34) A: [$\sqrt{\text{I-mwari}}$ u-ra a-ri na matu ma kithiururi]_{NP} Kathere a-keth-ir-i-e
F-girl DC-that SP-be with ears of round Kathere SP-greet-PM-VS-FV
 ‘Kathere greeted the woman with the round ears.’
- B2: Ari, i-mwari u-ra a-ri na [**metho mathongi**]_F Kathere a-keth-ir-i-e
No, F-girl DC-that SP-be with eyes nice Kathere SP-greet-PM-VS-FV
 ‘No, Kathere greeted the woman with **nice eyes**.’

Needless to say, more elaborate investigations into potential effects of givenness are necessary.

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