Chapter 1
Identificational operation as a focus strategy in Byali

1. Introduction

This paper sheds light on the focus system of Byali and tries to show that the essential feature of the focus strategy in this language is an identificational operation clearly retrievable from the ex-situ constructions. The latter are envisioned to contain two interrelated predications, a constituent which obligatorily precedes an identifying 'to be'-verb – as such representing a nominal predication – and a pre-established verbal process or state. The operation of interrelating the two predications results in a focus construction. As Caron (2000: 28) puts it : "l'imbrication, la présentation simultanée, dans un seul énoncé, d'un élément identifié (avec ou sans contraste) avec une place non-instanciée d'une relation prédicative." The identifying 'to be'-verb that has been grammaticalized as a focus marker but palpably still bears verbal features establishes the relation between the focused constituent and the predicative statement. In-situ focus constructions are considered to be more grammaticalized as thought of before.

The Byali language, along with Ditammari, Nateni, Waama, and Mbεlimε, belongs to the eastern subgroup of the Oti-Volta-languages of the Gur family. It is spoken in the Atakora mountains in the north-western part of Benin. All languages of this sub-group, except for Ditammari, display a full-fledged noun class system characterised essentially by suffixation of the class marker to the noun stem. Ditammari has prefixes in addition to suffixes, which distinguishes it from most Gur languages which are mainly characterised by suffixes. They have a fully intact agreement system, as shown by the existence of anaphoric pronouns and of nominal class markers linked to the modifiers of the noun which indicate their syntactic dependencies. In addition, the verbal system exhibits a grammaticalised aspectual system characterised by the binary opposition of perfective and imperfective aspect. Also, these languages display a verbal derivation having semantic as well as syntactic functions. On the prosodic level, tone

plays an important part in the grammar and the lexicon. The basic word order in a canonical sentence is SVO; only in case of pronominal objects, the order is SOV.

This paper is structured as follows: part 2. illustrates the essential characteristics of the Byali focus system. As concerns the concrete focus phenomena the distinction between non-verbal focus (3.) and verbal focus (4.) is made, where the asymmetry between non-subject focus (3.1) and subject focus (3.2) inherent in non-verbal focus is put special attention to. In (5.) an interpretation of the presented facts is given. The paper ends with a summary in (6.).

2.   Overview on the essential characteristics of the focus system

To express focus grammatically the language employs morphologic, syntactic as well as phonologic means. On the level of morphology grammatically marked focus is realized by a focus marker immediately following the constituent in focus. This holds true of the labelling of term focus in the same way as for verbal focus. Concerning the polarity, a single specific focus marker exists for each, affirmative *((l)è)*[1] and negative focus (*nwā*). Different syntactic focus constructions manifest in the ex-situ and in the in-situ structures. In the ex-situ constructions the focused constituent is located at sentence initial position. Although it shares such a position with the topic constituent the focused term is integrated into the structure of the predicate and fulfills a grammatical function whereas the topic constituent always stands outside the predication and from a semantic and structural perspective can be seen to be optional.[2] In ex-situ constructions the focus constituent represents the in-focus part of the sentence that is followed by the out-of-focus part after a break. In addition to this multiple marking of the focused term – i.e. syntactically by the sentence-initial position, morphologically by the focus marker and (in case of the ex-situ constructions) phonologically by phrasing – the non-focal part of the focus construction exhibits relative structure, an isomorphism frequently encountered across languages. Also, the out-of-focus part is characterised by a specific verbal morphology which is restricted to the perfective aspect only. The examples show that neither in ex-situ nor in in-situ focus constructions the perfective verb is joined by assertive suffix-*sə* , cf. (1) and (2) vs. (3).[3] The latter example (3) is unmarked with regard to focus.

Pragmatically marked in focus constructions

(1)   bíígā̱   **nōndá̱   bànānā   è.**
      child   buy.PFV banana   FM
      The child has bought BANANAS.

as answer to the question :

(2)   bíígā̱   **nōndá̱**   bāārā̱?
      child   buy.PFV what
      What did the child buy ?

non-marked for focus :

(3)   bíígā̱   **nōndá̱́- sā̱**   bànānā.
      child   buy.PFV ASS   banana
      The child has bought bananas.

As concerns the functional differentiation between the two syntactic fo-
cus constructions that has been shown by the literature on many languages
of the world[4] as far as the current research goes it does not seem to apply to
Byali. It is often claimed that the ex-situ constructions represent the so-
called identificational focus where an element is chosen out of the possible
alternatives in the context. This constituent would be marked as the one
which the predication would hold for to the exclusion of all other alterna-
tives. At the same time the focused element would stand in contrast to the
other options so that the features of exhaustivity and contrast would be
highlighted as typical for the ex-situ constructions. The in-situ type as in-
formation structure refers to the part of predication which represents the
new information, i.e. the focused constituents fill a gap within the prag-
matic information of the listener. While in Byali new information focus is
realised primarily in-situ and identificational focus is very frequently asso-
ciated with exhaustivity and contrast neither of the two types of structures
seem to be bound unequivocally to one of the semantic-pragmatic mean-
ings. According to the judgment of the informants both syntactic focus
constructions allow for either of the interpretations.

3. Non-verbal focus

The differentiation between non-subject and subject focus applies to non-verbal focus, may the term focused on be the argument of a verb or an adverbial phrase not governed by the valency of the verb. Such differentiation appears to be necessary insofar as this asymmetry known from many other languages is typical for Byali as well although from a structural point of view there is no difference regarding non-subject focus in sentence initial position. While non-subject focus can be realised either ex-situ or in-situ subject focus obligatorily is expressed by an ex-situ construction.

For the better understanding of the following data that is contained in ex-situ as well as in in-situ constructions some preliminary remarks shall be given before an interpretation is carried out in section 5.

1. The relative structure that marks the non-focused part of the ex-situ construction and which represents the background is characterised by a high toned nasal placed in front of the verb, as well as by the class marker of the reference noun following the verb. In (5), the relative nasal precedes the verb *yāmbɔ́* 'see.PFV' that is followed by the class marker of the noun in focus, *bíí-gɔ̄* 'child', here in the allomorphic variant *kɔ̄*. From this example it is evident that the syntactic postverbal base-position of the argument marked for focus by the focus marker, i.e. here the position of the object, is empty, i.e. the position in the presupposed predication is not filled in with an anaphoric pronoun.

2. The interrogative clauses show that in Byali, in contrast to many other languages, the question words are never followed by the focus marker. Contrary to answers, where the focus marker obligatorily marks the focused constituents in in-situ as well as in ex-situ constructions. This fact points out that in Byali the question words are inherently marked with focus.

3. In sentences where a focus marker is following the object in in-situ constructions, (cp for example (7) und (11)), narrow focus on the object as well as focus on the verb together with its succeeding object can occur so that in such a case the scope of the focus stretches over the whole of the verbal phrase. Sentences where the object is marked with focus in-situ are therefore ambiguous because they may as well represent an asserting reply to the question "What did she do?" Their meaning can only be determined by context.

4. The combination of negated verb forms with marked focus that is acceptable in many languages does not apply to Byali.

3.1. Non-Subject focus

For the presentation of the relevant data question/answer-pairs are used as reliable method for elicitation. Questions point towards the interest of the hearer for information. The answers focus on the entities representing the desired information. In examples (4) to (12) where the object is focused the WH-question together with the corresponding answer is given in each case as ex-situ and as in-situ construction as well.

3.1.1. Object

ex-situ

		in-focus	*out-of-focus*		

(4)   QU.   wéētɔ́   Coffi **ń**   yā̄mb   **ú** ?
        who   Coffi REL see.PFV CL.REL
        WHO is it that Coffi has seen?

(5)   A.   **bíí- g- è**   ù   **ń**   yā̄mbɔ́ **kɔ̄**.
        child CL FM   CL.SUBJ. REL   see.PFV CL.REL
        It is the CHILD that (s)he that (s)he has seen.

in-situ

(6)   QU.   Coffi   yā̄mbɔ́   wéētɔ́ ?
        Coffi   see.PFV who
        WHOM has Coffi seen?

(7)   A.   ù   yā̄mbɔ́ **bíí- g- è**.
        CL.SUBJ see.PFV child CL FM
        He has seen the CHILD. (*bíí-gɔ̄* 'child')

ex-situ

(8)   QU.   bāārɔ́ ù   **ń**   nūndɔ́   **ī** ?
        what   CL. SUBJ REL   buy.PFV CL.REL
        WHAT is it that (s)he has bought?

(9)   A.   **bànā̄nā è** ù   **ń**   nūndɔ́   **hɔ̌.**
        banana   FM CL.SUBJ REL   buy.PFV CL.REL
        It is BANANAS that (s)he has bought.

in-situ

(10) QU.   ù   nūndə́   bāārə̄?
             CL.SUBJ buy.PFV what
             WHAT has (s)he bought?

(11) A.   ù   nūndə́   **bànānā è.**
             CL.SUBJ buy.PFV banana FM
          (S)he has bought BANANAS.

Negation of an object focused in-situ is realised by combination of the preverbal negation morpheme *pə̀* and the focus marker succeeding the object.[5]

(12)   ù   **pə̀**   nūndə́   **bànānā nwā.**
       CL.SUBJ NEG buy.PFV   banana   FM.NEG
       (S)he has not bought BANANAS.

3.1.2. Adjuncts

When adjuncts are focused, the same regularities apply as in the case of focused objects, i.e. they can occur in ex-situ and in in-situ constructions and they are always followed by the focus marker. In ex-situ constructions, the out-of-focus part of the utterance also exhibits the features of a relative clause. The class marker that is referring to adjuncts and which is postponed to the verb as a discontinuous part of the relative construction is always *-m* in relation to the *m*-noun class.

In (13) to (16) examples with a local adjunct are given:

ex-situ

(13) QU. mántə́ ù   **ń**   yā̄mbə́ **ḿ**   sáb- ī ?
         where CL.SUBJ REL see.PFV CL.REL book CL
         WHERE is it that (s)he has seen the book?

(14) A. **kār- ì yā̰hɔ̄ è** ù **ń** yā̰mbɔ́ **m̄́**
market CL inside FM CL.SUBJ REL see.PFV CL.REL

sáb- ī.
book CL
It is ON THE MARKET that (s)he has seen the book.

in-situ
(15) QU. ù yā̰mbɔ́ sáb- ī mántə?
CL.SUBJ see.PFV book CL where
WHERE has (s)he seen the book?

(16) A. ù yā̰mbɔ́ sáb- ī **kār- ì yā̰hɔ̄ è.**
CL.SUBJ see.PFV book CL market CL inside FM
(S)he has seen the book ON THE MARKET.

3.2. Subject focus

As already mentioned, the focusing of subjects is restricted to the ex-situ strategy. In Byali the asymmetry between non-subject focus and subject focus is expressed solely by this restriction of subject focus to ex-situ constructions. A hint at the ex-situ realisation of subject focus is constituted by the fact that the predication is categorically taking a relative-like structure as is exactly the case with ex-situ focused non-subjects cf. the sentences given in (17) to (20). Therefore the subject constituent marked for focus is directly followed by the relativising nasal. Also in this context attention has to be paid to the fact that because of focus being inherent to it the question pronoun asking for the subject is not followed by any focus marker.

(17) QU. wéētɔ́ **ń** sīn yā̰mb **ú** bíí- gɔ̄?
who REL yesterday see.PFV CL.REL child CL
WHO is it that saw the child yesterday?

(18) A. Coffí **è ń** sīn kɔ̄ yā̰mb **ú.**
Coffi FM REL yesterday CL.OBJ. see.PFV CL.REL
It is COFFI that saw it yesterday.

(19) QU. bāārɔ́ **ń** dēē ī?

what   REL   fall.PFV   CL.REL
WHAT has fallen?

(20) A. **sáb- ī   è   ń**   dēē   **ī.**
book CL FM REL fall.PFV CL.REL
It is a BOOK that has fallen.

Structurally, subject focus constructions serve to express sentence focus and are therefore ambiguous. This isomorphism holds valid for many Gur languages. Apparently non-existence of topic in case of sentence focus which constitutes a thetic construction determines subject focus structure.[6]

The following sentence containing subject focus is a reply to the question 'What happened?'.

(21)   ń̄   **sān-hṹ lè ń**   swānɔ́   **hṹ.**
1POSS   car CL FM REL break.PFV   CL.REL
MY CAR BROKE DOWN.

4.   Verbal focus

To mark focus in the verbal domain grammatically in Byali the same focus markers are used as with focusing on terms[7], i.e. *(l)è* for affirmative and *nwā* for negative focus. The focus marker immediately follows the verb

(22) ù   **sōūm   nè.**
CL.SUBJ   smoke.IPFV   FM
(S)he SMOKES.

(23) ù   **sìndɔ́ è**   mànsínī.
CL.SUBJ turn on FM Computer
(S)he HAS TURNED ON the computer.

If the verb in focus is negated the combination of the preverbal negation morpheme *pɔ̀* and the negative post-verbal focus marker turns out to be obligatory:

(24) m̄ **pɔ̀ sìndɔ́   nwā   mánsinī.**
1SG NEG turn on.PFV FM.NEG Computer

I haven't TURN ON the computer.[8]

With the focused sentence-initial position being restricted to nominal constituents the essential feature of verb focus is that it exclusively occurs in in-situ constructions. But the Byali language makes use of a nominal periphrasis strategy for marking focus on the verbal phrase by nominalising the verb that forms an associative construction together with its original object. (Note that verbs are nominalised by integrating them into the *m*-class.) Thus the nominalisation of the verb-object phrase is a pre-condition for it to be marked for focus and at the same time for it to occurr in ex-situ-constructions. But the nominalising strategy for marking predicate focus only occurs when the verbal phrase is represented by a progressive construction consisting of the dummy verb *bə́-púɣí* 'to hold' + a nominalised verb.

ex-situ

(25) **cō- ū sàhá̄- ń nè** ù **ḿ** púɣə́ **ḿ**.
    porridgeCL preparationCL FM CL.SUBJ RELhold.IPFV CLREL
    It is the PREPARING PORRIDGE that she does.

in-situ

(26) ù púɣí **cō- ū sàhá̄- ń nè.**
    CL.SUBJ hold.IPFV porridge CL preparation CL FM
    She IS PREPARING PORRIDGE.

It would lead to ungrammaticality, if the nominalised verb is copied and used as a finite verb instead of *púɣí*, s. (27):

(27) *****cōū sàhá̄-n nè** ù **ḿ** sàhá̄ **ḿ.**

5. Interpretation

In order to understand how focus phenomena in Byali can be interpreted, attention shall be centred on the ex-situ constructions. The following data will show why the identificational strategy is considered decisive for marking focus in the Byali language.

The ex-situ focus constructions contain two interrelated predications, a constituent followed obligatorily by a 'to be'- verb with identifying meaning

and placed at the left periphery and a verbal presupposed process or state. The sentence-initial term is identified as a referent and at the same time as the focused term by the 'to be'- verb functioning as focus marker; it is brought into an equational relation with the verbal predication in which the syntactic base position of an argument is empty. The operation interrelating these two predications results in a focus construction having a biclausal character. As concerns the interpretation of the in-focus part of the overall structure especially the possible connection of a 'to be'- verb functioning as a focus marker and tense markers indicates at its evaluation as nominal predication; cf. 5.1. Encoding of identity statements. In verbal predication it is characteristic for the out-of-focus part of an utterance to be realised by means of relative-like structures, an operation observed very frequently across languages.

5.1. Encoding of identity statements

The encoding of identity statements in Byali makes it quite obvious that the focus marker *lè*, in specific cases reduced to *è*, and its negative form *nwā* have to be traced back to a verb 'to be' or 'not to be' respectively which has an identifying meaning and that is used in both types of identifying structures.

1. the presentational type
2. the identifying nominal predication

5.1.1. The presentational type

The presentational construction makes the identity of a referent known to the hearer, i.e. "presentation statements provide an object or a class of objects with a 'name', which may from now on be used by the hearer in referring to it" (Stassen 1997). In following Lambrecht's (2001) approach, Tröbs (2002) emphasises that one-argument identificational clauses exhibit a marked information structure where the scope of assertion stretches over the entire proposition (in the sense of Sasse's thetic utterances), i.e. the construction is to a large extent discourse-pragmatically motivated.

In Byali, this one-argument identificational statement consists of a nominal or pronominal constituent + the 'to be'-verb; the form *lè* occurring after pronouns is very often reduced to *è* in connection with a noun. In case

of negation, the affirmative *(l)è* is substituted by *nwā*. The presupposition of such identificational statements is not explicitly expressed, only situationally implied. In this way, the following statements are understood.

(28) ā lè   It is you.   tә̄ lè   It is us.
      ù lè   It is him/her.   bә̀ lè   It is them.
      sáb-á è   It is the books. bíí-gè (< bíí-gә̄ è)   It is
                                              the child.
      à lè   It is them.   kә̀ lè   It is it (= the
                   (=the books < *sáb-á*)   child < *bíí-gә̄*)

Negation:

(29) ń nwā   It is not me.   ù nwā   It is not him/her.
      bégá nwā   It is not the chief.   bíí-sí nwā   It is not the
                                                        the children.

5.1.2. The identifying nominal predication

Identifying nominal predications can be classified as equational; two entities refer to one and the same object. According to Stassen, both noun phrases have the same semantic status and both can function as subject or predicate, but their position evidently depends on discourse conditions. So, the following sentences differ pragmatically:

(30) Coffi è   syēl- ī mȳàt- ī.
      Coffi be.ID village CL teacher CL
      Coffi is the teacher of the village.

(31) syēl- ī   mȳàt- ī è   Coffi.
      village CL teacher CL be.ID Coffi
      The teacher of the village is Coffi.

The fact that in both types of identity statements, the affirmative *(l)è* and the negative *nwā* can be linked to the subject personal pronoun and can be preceded by tense markers hints at the verbal features of these morphemes. The emphatic pronominal forms cannot occur as subjects neither in one-argument identificational clauses nor in identifying nominal predications.

with past marker (*yī*):

(32a)   ā   *yī*   lè.
           2SG PAST be.ID
           It was you.
           *āwē *yī* lè. (*āwē* = 2.P.SG. emphat.)

but cp. the construction:

           āwē, ā *yī* lè.   You, it was you.

where *āwē* represents the topic of the sentence.

(32b)   ù *yī* nwā.   It was not him.
(32c)   Coffi *yī* lè syēlī mȳàtī.   Coffi was the teacher of the
                                             village.
(32d)   Coffi *yī* nwā syēlī mȳàtī. Coffi was not the teacher
                                             of the village.

Following subject pronouns or tense markers the phonetically non-reduced form of the affirmative identifying 'to be'-verb is obligatorily used, as (28), (32a,b), and (33a) show.

with future marker *(yí)*:
With verbs of stative meaning, the future tense marker *yí* is always followed by a nasal.

(33a)   ù *yí* ń dè (< lè).   It will be him.
(33b)   ù *yí* ń dè syélī mȳàtī.   He will be the teacher of the
                                           village.
(33c)   Coffi *yí* ń nwā syélī mȳàtī. Coffi won't be the teacher of
                                           the village.

In this context, it shall be hinted at the fact that in predicational relations characterised by a subject and predicate structure, i.e. in predications in which the subject is not identical to the entity specified in the predicate nominal the classifying copula *nwām* occurs. It is also linked to personal and anaphoric subject pronouns, not to emphatic ones, and can co-occur with tense markers. In these sentences, the predicate nominal is marked for focus.

(34a)   ù nwām mȳàtī è.   He is a TEACHER.

(34b)   ù *yī* nwām mȳàtī è.   He was a TEACHER.
(34c)   ī nwām byálə̄bè (< byálə̄bə̄ è),   You are BYALEBE,
          ī pə̀ nwām nàtyèmbə̀ nwā.   you are not NATEMBA.

5.2. Focus constructions

The same phenomenon, i.e. the possible combination of *(l)è* with tense markers, happens when *(l)è* functions as focus marker, as the following example (35) containing the past morpheme *yī* shows:

(35) **bíí- gə̄ yī lè̄** ù   ń   yī   yā̃mbə́ kə̄.
      child CLPAST FM CL.SUBJRELPAST   see.PFV CL.REL
      It was the CHILD that (s)he had seen.

   However, the variant without the tense marker in the in-focus part of the construction is the preferred one; the temporal reference of the whole predication is designated by the obligatory occurrence of the tense marker before the verb:

(36) **bíí- g(ə̄)-è** ù   ń   **yī** yā̃mbə́ kə̄.
      child CL FM CL.SUBJ REL PAST see.PFV CL.REL
      It was the CHILD that (s)he had seen.

   What is interesting here is that the combination of the focus marker with tense morphemes is not restricted to the fronted constituent; its occurrence is also possible, even if infrequent and unusual, with constituents focused in-situ:

(37) ù   yī   yā̃mbə́ **bíí- gə̄ yī   lè.**
      CL.SUBJ PAST see.PFV child CL PAST FM
      (S)he had seen the CHILD.

   or ù yī yā̃mbə́ **bíí-g(ə̄)-è.**

This applies also to the verbal focus:

(38) ù   yī   **dīī   yī   lè** cō -   ū.

CL.SUBJ PAST eat.PFV PAST FM porridge CL
(S)he had EATEN the porridge.

or   ù yī **dīī è** cōū.

The possible occurrence of the focus marker with tense morphemes in ex-situ- as well as in in-situ position of the focused constituents indicates very clearly the original verbal feature of *lè* and supports the interpretation of the sequence N - (tense marker) - focus marker as an original nominal predication. Another observation supporting the hypothesis of the verbal origin of the focus marker is the use of personal pronouns and anaphoric pronominal forms in subject function when they are focused. The use of their free or emphatic variants respectively is ungrammatical:

(39) **ā lè** ń dīī   ū   cō-   ū.
2SG FM REL eat.PFV CL.REL porridge CL
It is YOU that has eaten the porridge.

*āwē (l)è ń dīī ū cōū. (*āwē* = 2. SG. emphat.)

It should be remembered that emphatic pronouns are also not allowed to occur neither in one-argument identificational clauses nor in identifying nominal predications.

The examples in (37), (38) and (39) show that the focus marker always appears in its non-reduced form *lè* when immediately following tense markers and subject pronouns.

5.3. In-situ constructions: more grammaticalised?

What about in-situ constructions? How could they be interpreted? Whereas the ex-situ constructions are characterised by an imbrication of two propositions within a single utterance such an imbrication cannot be established for in-situ focus. One might be able to consider sentences in which objects are in-situ focus marked (40) or in which adjuncts take a sentence-final position (41) as well to consist of two predications following each other:

(40) ù   nūndɔ́   **bànānā è.**
CL.SUBJ buy.PFV banana   FM

(S)he has bought BANANAS.
=   ?? (S)he has bought // it is bananas

(41) Coffi yā̃mbɔ́   bíí- gɔ̄ **kār- ì   yā̃hɔ̄ è.**
      Coffi see.PFV   child CL market CLinside FM
      Coffi has seen the child ON THE MARKET.
      = .?? Coffi has seen the child // it is on the market.

Such an interpretation would be somewhat more difficult for sentences with focused verbs taking one or two arguments; there, the verb is separated from its argument(s) by *(l)è*, cp. the following sentence:

(42) Coffi **dīī**   **è** cŏ-   ū
      Coffi eat.PFV FM porridge CL
      Coffi has EATEN theporridge.
      = .?? Coffi has eaten// it is // the porridge.

A similar problem arises with adjuncts that can also take the position between the verb and its argument in addition to sentence-final position, so that apart from SVOA the sequence SVAO is possible as well. Cp. (43) vs. (41), where the adjunct *kàrī yā̃hɔ̄ è* '(it is) on the market' took the sentence-final position:[9]

(43) Coffi yā̃mbɔ́ **kàr-   ī yā̃hɔ̄ è** bíí-   gɔ̄.
      Coffi see.PFV market CL inside FM child CL
      Coffi has seen the child ON THE MARKET.
     = .?? Coffi has seen // it is on the market // the child.

In none of the cases in-situ constructions can possibly be evaluated as an imbrication of two propositions within a single utterance. In general, one might interpret the current status of these constructions as more grammaticalised.

6. Summary

1. In tracing back the (affirmative) focus marker *(l)è* to a verb 'to be'- with identifying meaning, the identificational strategy is considered decisive for explaining ex-situ focus constructions in Byali.

This identifying 'to be'- verb exhibits by itself discourse-pragmatical features; the constructions in which it occurs are to a large extent pragmatically motivated.

2. The ex-situ-focus constructions contain two interrelated predications, a presupposed verbal process or state representing the background and a constituent followed by the 'to be'- verb with identifying meaning and placed at the left periphery for which the verbal predication holds true. The operation of interrelating these two predications results in a focus construction having a biclausal character. The identifying 'to be'-verb functions in this construction as focus marker while still possessing verbal features made evident by its combination with subject pronouns and tense markers.

The out-of-focus part of ex-situ-constructions is marked as pragmatically dependent in double respect: First, the non-focal part exhibits relative structure; second, there is a clearly pragmatically conditioned verbal morphology, restricted to the perfective aspect.[10]

3. Whereas an imbrication of two propositions within a single utterance could be shown for the ex-situ constructions no such overlap can be established for the in-situ focus. The in-situ constructions are considered as more grammaticalised.

Notes

1. Usually the phonologically reduced variant *è* is employed. If the focused entity ends with a nasal the focus marker *(l)è)* is realized with its allomorph variant *nè*.
2. If both categories, topic and focus, appear in a single sentence the sequence topic – focus corresponds to the universal fact that contrary to focus topic is external to the sentence.
3. This verbal suffix also does not appear in other pragmatically differently marked contexts, as e.g. in subordinate sentences, in narrative constructions or in negations.
4. Cf. E.g. E.Kiss (1998)
5. In ex-situ focus constructions the negative focus marker follows the negated entity placed in sentence initial position as well..
6. Cf. Sasse 1987, 1995
7. This fact conflicts with the situation in the Ditammari language belonging to the same subgroup. In Ditammari, nominal constituents and verbs are focused by different markers.
8. If it is not the negated verb that stands in the scope of focus but the entire utterance meaning something like ‚It's true that they didn't steal it.' then the negation morpheme *pə̀* and the affirmative focus marker *(l)è* can co-occur in a sentence. A combination of [*pə̀* + Verb] [*(l)è*] in a sentence represents the statement of the truth value of a negated proposition whereas the combination [*pə̀* + Verb] [*nwā*] represents the negation of a focused verb or term. E.g. *m̄ pə̀ lə̀ **sìndə́** è̱.* ('It is true), I HAVEN'T TURNED IT ON.' Cf. Reineke 2006
9. A pragmatic difference between the two positional variants was negated by the informant. Still in further research it is to resolve wether or not the immediate post-verbal position is related to stronger emphasis.
10. In the same way, the non-occurrence of the perfective verbal suffix with assertive meaning in relative clauses, temporal and conditional clauses, in sequential clauses as well as in negative sentences is due to their pragmatics. Cp. Frajzyngier (2004) who emphasizes the pragmatical dependency of these clauses in languages of the Niger-Congo as well as the Chadic families.

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Abbreviations

ASS	assertive suffix
CL	class marker
DEP	dependent marker
EMPH	emphatisch
FM	focus marker
IPFV	imperfective
NEG	negation particle
OBJ	object
PFV	perfective
POSS	possessive pronoun
REL	relative marker
SG	singular
SUBJ	subject