Ex-situ focus in Kikuyu

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1. Introduction[1]

Kikuyu[2] has in-situ and ex-situ focus constructions and wh-constructions. Both the focus and the wh-constructions exhibit the same syntactic patterns. This chapter is primarily concerned with the syntactic analysis of the ex-situ focus constructions.

A crucial player in the ex-situ focus constructions is the particle *ne*. It appears in a number of places, namely before the focused phrase (or the fronted wh-phrase), in simple copula constructions, and in immediately preverbal position in certain declarative sentences. Accounting for its distribution and function is a central task for any analysis of the ex-situ focus and wh-constructions. Much of this chapter is therefore concerned with the syntactic analysis of the *ne*-constructions. The two analyses that have been proposed to account for the distribution of *ne* are the *focus phrase analysis* (Clements 1984; Schwarz 2003) and the *cleft analysis* (Bergvall 1987). In comparing the two analyses, I argue that the focus phrase analysis, though not without its problems, is by far more promising than the cleft analysis, which faces a number of serious problems.

The chapter is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a brief overview of the crucial properties of *ne*. Section 3 presents the focus phrase analysis and further data supporting it, concerning focus projection and the relation between in-situ and ex-situ focus. The cleft analysis and the problems it faces are discussed in Section 4. Section 5 concludes.

2. Properties of *ne*

The particle *ne* appears in three environments: in ex-situ focus and wh-constructions, in simple copula constructions, and preverbally in regular declarative sentences. Examples of these are presented in section 2.1. *Ne* is also subject to some crucial distributional restrictions, which are discussed in section 2.2.

2.1. Environments in which *ne* appears

An example of the first environment in which ne appears, namely ex-situ focus and wh-constructions, is given in (1):[3]

(1) a. **ne- kee** *abdul a - ra -nyu - ir - ε* ?
         FM- what A.   SM -T - drink- ASP- FV
         'What did Abdul drink?'
     b. **ne mae**   *abdul a - ra -nyu - ir - ε*
         FM 6.water A.   SM -T - drink- ASP- FV
         'Abdul drank WATER.'

In the ex-situ question in (1a), the focus marker *ne* combines with the question word *kee* in the sentence initial position. The sentence in (1b) is a possible answer to this question, and here the object *mae* 'water', which is focused due to the preceding question,[4] appears in the same position as the question word in (1a), adjacent to *ne*.
    With the exception of subject questions, all questions also have an in-situ version, which does not contain *ne*, as shown in (2):

(2) a. *abdul a - ra -nyu - ir - ε* **kee** ?
         A.   SM -T - drink- ASP- FV what
         'What did Abdul drink?'
     b. *abdul a - ra -nyu - ir - ε* **mae**
         A.   SM -T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water
         'Abdul drank WATER.'

The discussion in this paper will mostly concern the ex-situ cases, but the relationship between in-situ and ex-situ constructions will be relevant in the discussion of focus projection in section 3.3.
    One important point about the ex-situ constructions is that *ne* can be preceded by other material (both in focus and wh-constructions), as was first noted in Schwarz (2003). Examples of this are given in (3), where a topicalized subject (3a) and a topicalized adverbial clause (3b) appear before the fronted object with *ne*:[5]

(3) a. *abdul ne mae   a - ra- nyu - ir - ε*
         A.   FM 6.water SM- T-   drink- ASP- FV
         'Abdul drank WATER.'

b. *mbɛrɛ ya nyomba ne mae abdul   a-   ra- nyu -ir - ɛ*
    in-front 9.A 9.house   FM 6.water A.   SM-T- drink-ASP-FV
    'In front of the house, Abdul drank WATER.'

These examples will play a crucial role in the argument for the focus phrase analysis developed in the following section.

The second construction involving *ne* is that of a simple copula clause. An example is given in (4a):

(4) a. *abdul *(**ne**) Ø   mo- rutani*
         A.   FM   COP 1 -   teacher
         'Abdul is a teacher.'
     b. *abdul (**ne**) a -   a -re mo -rutani*
         A.   FM   SM -T -be 1 -   teacher
         'Abdul was a teacher.'

The obligatory presence of *ne* in (4a) might suggest that *ne* itself can function as the copula. However, once we consider cases that are not in the third person present tense form, *ne* is no longer obligatorily present (although it still *can* precede the copula verb), as can be seen in (4b). Instead, the copula verb stem *re* appears with the usual inflectional morphology.[6] The analysis commonly adopted for this pattern is that the underlying form of (4a) contains a phonologically null form of the copula verb, as indicated in (4a) (cf. Bergvall 1987; Clements 1984; Schwarz 2003). A central question in this respect is why *ne* is obligatory when the verb is phonologically null. I propose a tentative answer to this at the end of section 3.3.

On this analysis, *ne* appears in the immediately preverbal position in copula constructions. These are then a special case of the last environment in which *ne* appears, namely preverbally in regular declarative and interrogative sentences (which only differ in intonation), as is illustrated in (5):

(5) a. *abdul (**ne**) - a -ra - nyu - ir - ɛ   mae*
         A.   FM- SM -T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water
         'Abdul drank water.'
     b. *abdul (**ne**) - a -ra - nyu - ir - ɛ   mae ?*
         A.   FM- SM -T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water
         'Did Abdul drink water?'

While *ne* is not obligatory in these sentences as far as the syntax is concerned, leaving it out changes the interpretation with respect to what is in focus. I will discuss this in more detail in section 3.3.

2.2. Distributional restrictions of *ne*

There are several restrictions on the distribution of *ne*: it can only appear once per clause, its distribution is limited in embedded clauses, and it cannot co-occur with the regular verbal negation marker *ti*. The first point is illustrated in (6):

(6) a. * ***ne*** *mae   abdul* ***ne -*** *a - ra -nyu - ir -   ε*
          FM 6.water A.   FM -SM -T - drink- ASP- FV
          'Abdul drank water.'

This sentence is fine when *ne* only appears in one of the two positions, but ungrammatical as soon as it appears in both.

The second restriction is that *ne* cannot appear in certain embedded clauses. For example, the sentence in (7a) becomes ungrammatical when *ne* is added in the relative clause (see (7b)):

(7) a. *mo- rutani o-   ðom- ir-   ε   i- ßuku*
          1-   teacher SM- read- ASP- FV 5- book
          ne- a - ra- nyu- ir-   ε   mae
          FM- SM- T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water
          'The teacher who read a book drank water.'
     b. * *mo- rutani* ***ne- o-   ðom- ir-   ε   i- ßuku***
          1-   teacher FM- SM- read- ASP- FV 5- book
          ne- a - ra- nyu- ir-   ε   mae
          FM- SM- T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water

Clauses that are embedded by a bridge verb (i.e. *think*, *know*, *say*, etc.), on the other hand, do allow *ne*. This is not surprising, since such clauses behave in many ways like matrix clauses.
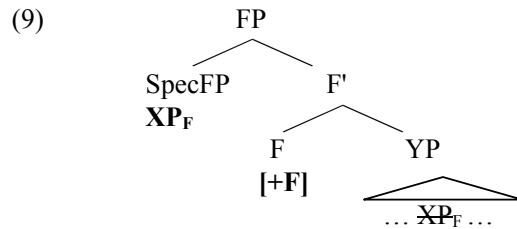
The last restriction concerns co-occurrence with verbal negation. The regular negation marker *ti* appears in the verbal complex between the subject marker and the tense marker. When *ti* is present there, inserting *ne* into the sentence leads to ungrammaticality:

(8) a. *abdul a - **ti**- ra -nyu - ir - ε mae*
       A.   SM -NEG-T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water
       'Abdul didn't drink water.'
   b. * *abdul **ne-** a- **ti** - ra- nyu - ir - ε mae*
       A.   FM- SM- NEG-T- drink- ASP- FV 6.water
       Intended meaning: 'Abdul didn't drink water.'
   c. * ***ne** mae abdul a - **ti** - ra -nyu - ir - ε*
       FM 6.water A.   SM- NEG-T- drink- ASP- FV
       Intended meaning: 'Abdul didn't drink water.'

Note, however, that there is an alternative negation marker *ta*, which can occur on the main verb with ex-situ focus constructions. I will come back to this when discussing the problems of the focus phrase analysis.

3. The focus phrase analysis

The main challenge posed by the data presented in the preceding section is to account for the different types of occurrences of *ne* in a unified manner, while also making the correct predictions about its distributional restrictions. The focus phrase analysis deals with this challenge by assuming that *ne* appears in a syntactic focus phrase within an extended CP-projection (Brody 1990; Kiss 1998; Rizzi 1997). The position that *ne* appears in is then always the same, and the different constructions involving *ne* are derived by having different elements move to the focus phrase. The general structure that this account is based on is the following:

(9)

```
                    FP
                  /    \
            SpecFP      F'
            XP_F       /  \
                      F    YP
                    [+F]   /\
                        … XP_F …
```

A strong feature in the head of the focus phrase triggers the movement of an XP bearing a focus feature to the specifier of the focus phrase. There are two slightly different possible theoretical implementations with respect to *ne*. First, *ne* might be the head of the focus phrase (a common assumption
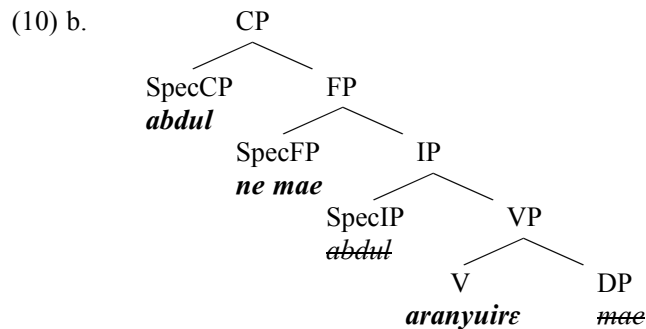
for focus markers). We then have to say that it cliticizes onto the material in its specifier to get the right word order, namely *ne* XP (cf. Muriungi 2004 for a proposal along these lines for the closely related language Kitharaka). Alternatively, we could say that the focus feature on the XP gets spelled out as *ne* when it appears in the specifier of the focus phrase. Most of the following is compatible with either one of these accounts, and I will simplify the representations by putting *ne* XP in the specifier of the focus phrase.

3.1. Accounting for the different occurrences of *ne*

Based on the idea that *ne* appears in a syntactic focus phrase, how can we account for the different constructions involving *ne* in detail? Let us first turn to the ex-situ focus construction. Take the example of (3b) above, repeated here as (10a).

(10) a. *abdul ne mae   a - ra- nyu - ir -   ε*
        A.   FM 6.water SM- T-   drink- ASP- FV
   'Abdul drank WATER.'

The fronting of the object *mae* 'water' can be captured by moving it to the specifier of the focus phrase. Furthermore, the subject *abdul* is topicalized, so that it occurs in the sentence initial position. We can then represent the derivation (with many simplifications) as follows:[7]

(10) b.

```
                    CP
              ┌──────┴──────┐
          SpecCP           FP
          abdul       ┌─────┴─────┐
                   SpecFP         IP
                   ne mae    ┌─────┴─────┐
                          SpecIP        VP
                          a̶b̶d̶u̶l̶    ┌─────┴─────┐
                                   V           DP
                               aranyuirɛ      m̶a̶e̶
```

When the subject remains in its base position, we get the *ne*-initial order found in (1b). The case of preverbal *ne* is derived in a similar fashion. In this case the entire IP moves to the focus phrase, and the subject moves on

to the same topic position as in (10b). Moving the entire IP into the focus phrase is motivated by the fact that immediately preverbal *ne* expresses focus on the entire sentence (as will be discussed in more detail below). The sentence in (5a), repeated below, can then be analyzed as in (11b):[8]

(11) a. *abdul* **ne-** *a - ra -nyu - ir -   ɛ   mae*
       A.   FM- SM -T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water
      'Abdul drank water.'

b.
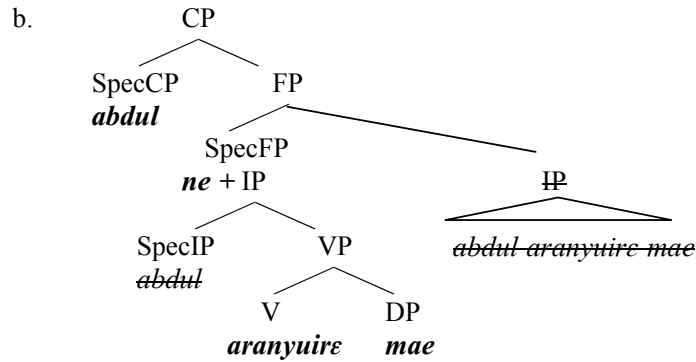
One difference between this case and the ex-situ focus case in (10) is that the topicalization of the subject is obligatory here. This does not fall out of the theory at this point. The only explanatory speculation that I can offer in this respect at the moment is that if the subject was not topicalized, the structure would be string identical to the ex-situ focus construction in (1b), and hence the formal marking of different foci would be less perspicuous.[9]

    Assuming that copula constructions are a special case of preverbal *ne*, their analysis will be as in (11b), the only difference being that the head of the verb phrase is phonologically null in the third person singular case.

3.2. Accounting for the distributional restrictions

The preceding section has shown how the focus phrase analysis can account for the different occurrences of *ne*. Now we need to make sure that we can also account for the distributional restrictions.

First, why is it that *ne* only appears once per clause? According to the focus phrase analysis, this is simply because *ne* is tied to a particular syntactic phrase, which only appears once per clause.

The second question is why *ne* cannot appear in relative clauses. The focus phrase assumed in the above analysis is part of the extended C-system. There seems to be good evidence indicating that the fully extended C-system is not present in relative clauses. For example, topicalization is not possible in relative clauses either, which is just what we expect if the topic position is also part of the extended C-system. The absence of *ne* in relative clauses is then simply a reflection of the absence of the extended C-system.

Finally, we have to explain why *ne* cannot co-occur with the regular negation marker. The answer to this question is not so obvious. One tempting possibility might be to say that *ne* and the negation *ti* appear in the same syntactic position. However, this is hard to reconcile with their surface distribution (see (8a)). Another possibility is to say that negation is somehow inherently linked to focus (cf. Hyman 1999), but it is unclear how to spell this out in detail in the present framework. Perhaps one option would be to say that the negative head is capable of checking the focus feature on the fronted element, hence making the focus phrase unnecessary. Unfortunately, I cannot explore this option in more detail here, so for present purposes, it must suffice to say that while a more detailed answer has to be developed by further research, there is no reason to believe that this issue poses a problem that is particular to the focus phrase analysis.

3.3. Focus projection: in-situ vs. ex-situ focus

Up to this point, I have only discussed simple focus constructions where the focused object appears ex-situ. However, looking at a larger variety of focus constructions, including in-situ focus and cases of focus projection, lends further support to the analysis developed here. Furthermore, these cases distinguish it from the cleft analysis, which cannot account for the facts presented here, as will be discussed in the next section.

According to the focus phrase analysis, *ne* marks focus, and we expect to find complex patterns with respect to what exactly is semantically in focus given a particular formal marking of focus, just as we find such cases of so-called focus projection in pitch accent languages.

Let us start out with cases where the entire verb phrase is focused. Assuming, as above, that we can force a particular focus structure on a de-

clarative sentence by putting it in the context of a question, the following question answer pair illustrates a case of VP-focus:

(12) a.   *ne-* *atea*   *abdul* *ek-*   *ir-*   *ε*?
          FM- what/how   A.   (SM).do- ASP- FV
          'What did Abdul do?'
     b.   *ne*   *mae*   *abdul* *a-*   *nyu*   *ir-*   *ε.*
          FM   6.water A.   SM- drink- ASP- FV
          'Abdul [drank WATER]_F.'

Formally marking the object for focus is apparently sufficient for focusing the entire verb phrase semantically. This is exactly the type of focus projection we find for pitch-accent languages like English. The same is true for in-situ focus, i.e. the sentence in (2b), where the object is focused in-situ, could also express focus on the verb phrase, e.g. as an answer to an in-situ version of the question in (12a).[10]

Next let us turn to sentence focus, which is what we find in so called *out of the blue*-contexts or as answers to questions like *What happened?*

(13)   [Context: Abdul drank non-purified water and got sick. A just got back and wants to know from B what happened]
     A: *ne-*   *kee* *ke-* *oru*?
         FM-   what CL- bad
         'What's wrong?' or 'What happened?'
         [literally: 'What is bad?']
     B: *abdul* **ne-** *a -* *ra -nyu -* *ir -* *ε*   *mae*
         A.   FM- SM -T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water
         'Abdul drank water.'

In this context, we find *ne* in the immediately preverbal position marking sentence focus. The fact that the entire IP is in focus here motivated the analysis in (11b), where the IP moves to the focus phrase. Note that neither in-situ nor ex-situ focus marking of the object (as in (1b) and (2b)) can express sentence focus. This is different from English, where focus projects from the stressed object all the way up to the sentence level.

Apart from marking sentence focus, preverbal *ne* can also express a particular emphasis on the truth of a statement (i.e. *verum focus*), as is frequently discussed in traditional grammars of Kikuyu. The following exam-

ple (adopted with a few changes from Armstrong (1940:297)) illustrates this use of preverbal *ne*:

(14) A: 'Where did you put it?'
     B: 'I put it in the granary.'
     A: 'I didn't see it there - are you sure?'
     B: *ne- n- da- iɣ- a i- koombe*
         FM- SM- put- ASP- FV CL-granary
         'I DID put it in the granary.'

Sentence focus and verum focus are the only two functions that preverbal *ne* has, contrary to claims made in the literature that it could express focus on the predicate, i.e. verb or verb phrase focus (Güldemann 1996).[11] In order to express narrow focus on the verb, the verb has to appear in its infinitival form in the ex-situ position with *ne*, as well as in its base position in the inflected form:

(15) A: *abdul ne- a- ðek- ir- ɛ?*
        A.   FM- SM- laugh- ASP- FV
        'Did Abdul laugh?'
     B: *aʃa. abdul **ne- ko-**   **rer- a** a- rer- ir- ɛ?*
        no A.   FM- SM(INF)-cry- FV SM- cry- ASP- FV
        'No. Abdul CRIED.'

Although a full analysis of this has to await another occasion, one might be able to account for the two occurrences of the verb within the copy-theory of movement.[12] The sentence in (15) would then be an example of a situation where both copies are pronounced, presumably because after morphological reanalysis, the higher copy of the verb becomes invisible to Kayne's LCA and, therefore, to deletion (Nunes 2004).[13]

    In summary, focus marking on the object (either in sentences without *ne* and with the object in-situ or in sentences with ex-situ focus and *ne*) can express focus on the object or on the verb phrase, and *ne* in preverbal position can express sentence focus or verum focus. While the technical details of focus projection have to be worked out in future work, the fact that there *is* focus projection in constructions with *ne* fits in very naturally with the focus phrase analysis.

    If we make just one additional assumption, namely that every sentence has to have a focus, several further facts that would otherwise be surprising

(in particular from the viewpoint of the cleft analysis, as will be discussed in the next section) fall out from the theory.

First, one seemingly odd fact about Kikuyu is that "when a sentence consists of an affirmative finite verb only (e.g. *nĩokire*, he came), *nĩ* [= *ne*; FS] is indispensable." (Barlow (1951: 34))[14] On the current analysis, this follows because there is no object that could introduce any in-situ focus marking, and hence the only possibility for introducing a focus into the sentence (apart from having ex-situ subject focus with *ne*) is to have pre-verbal *ne*.

Second, there is an interaction between the availability of in-situ focus and *ne*. The in-situ focus on the object (or the verb phrase) in (2b) is no longer available if preverbal *ne* is introduced. This is, of course, exactly what we expect if we analyze *ne* as a focus marker, which triggers movement of the focused constituent (either the object or the entire IP) to the focus phrase.

Finally, we are able to explain the obligatory presence of *ne* in third person present tense copula constructions, if we make the additional assumption that the focus feature on the focused XP in in-situ focus constructions is in some way licensed by the lexical verbal head. It is commonly assumed that phonologically null heads have limited licensing capacities. Since the third person present tense form of the copula is phonologically null, it cannot license in-situ focus on the object and hence the only way to introduce a focus in such copula sentences is to let *ne* do the job.

3.4. Remaining problems

Although the focus phrase analysis makes promising predictions with respect to both the different environments in which *ne* appears, its distributional restrictions, and the facts connected to focus projection discussed in the preceding subsection, there are two remaining problems. The first concerns the details of the technical implementation of *ne* mentioned at the beginning of this section. I have nothing more to say here about this.

The second problem concerns a number of morphological changes that appear on the verb phrase when it is preceded by an ex-situ focus or wh-construction: negation changes from *ti* to *ta*, the third person subject marker changes from *a* to *o*, and the post-verbal downstep is deleted (for details, see Clements 1984). These changes appear to be identical to the ones we observe in relative clauses. This has been taken as support for the cleft

analysis, since on that analysis we are in fact dealing with relative clauses (see Bergvall 1987, and the discussion in the next section). However, this argument is not as straightforward as it may seem at first sight. As Bergvall herself points out (Bergvall 1987: 114), once we consider more complex constructions involving multiple clauses, with the focused element originating in the lowest clause, these changes affect different domains: the subject marker only changes in the lowest clause, negation only changes in the highest embedded clause, and the tonal changes affect all embedded clauses. These phenomena presumably are general effects of A'-movement, which need an independent account. Therefore, they do not pose a problem that is particular to the focus phrase analysis and the competing cleft analysis has to account for them independently as well.
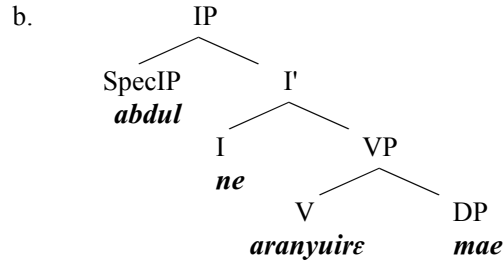
4. The cleft analysis

I now sketch the cleft analysis (Bergvall 1987) and discuss some of the problems that it faces. Its starting point is the occurrence of *ne* in copula constructions, although it does not assume that *ne* is the copula. As above, copula constructions are taken to be a special case of the preverbal occurrence of *ne*. The cleft analysis differs from the focus phrase analysis in the case of the ex-situ focus and wh-constructions. These are taken to be yet another variant of the preverbal occurrence, where the verb is the phonologically null form of the copula, which is part of a cleft.

 Another difference between the two analyses lays in the role that is assigned to *ne*. Since cleft constructions have a well known impact on focus structure, it is unnecessary to assign *ne* the role of a focus marker. What role does *ne* play then? According to Bergvall's cleft analysis, it is an assertion marker that appears in the head of the IP. I will come back to this point below, after introducing the analysis in some more detail.

4.1. Accounting for the different occurrences of *ne*

With *ne* generated in the head of the IP (see (16b)), the immediately preverbal cases are straightforwardly accounted for. Assuming that the subject appears in the specifier of the IP (or, alternatively, in the specifier of CP), the word order of the preverbal case can be derived without any difficulties:
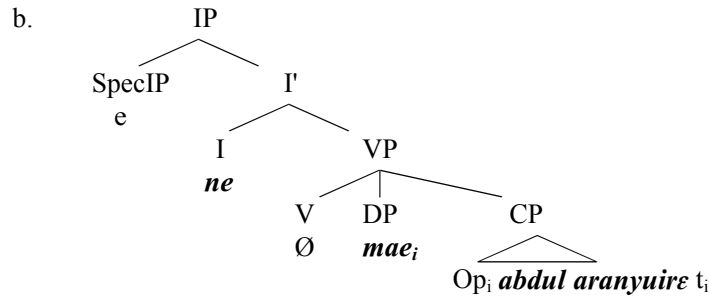
(16) a.　*abdul* **ne-** *a - ra -nyu - ir - ε mae*
　　　　A.　　FM- SM - T - drink- ASP- FV 6.water
　　　　'Abdul drank water.'

　　 b.

```
                    IP
                  /    \
            SpecIP      I'
            abdul     /    \
                     I       VP
                    ne      /   \
                           V      DP
                       aranyuirε  mae
```

As in the focus phrase analysis, copula constructions are accounted for in exactly the same way as the preverbal case by assuming that a phonologically null form of the copula appears as the head of the verb phrase.

Finally, ex-situ focus and wh-constructions are analyzed as bi-clausal, with a phonologically null expletive subject and a phonologically null copula in the first clause. The analysis as proposed by Bergvall, in a slightly simplified form, then is as in (17b) (Bergvall 1987: 123):

(17) a.　**ne mae** *abdul a - ra -nyu - ir - ε*
　　　　FM 6.water A.　SM -T - drink- ASP- FV
　　　　'Abdul drank WATER.'

　　 b.

```
                      IP
                    /    \
              SpecIP       I'
                e        /    \
                        I       VP
                       ne     / |  \
                             V  DP   CP
                             Ø  maei  / \
                                   Opi abdul aranyuirε ti
```

The index and the operator in the lower CP link *mae* to its base position.

On this analysis, all occurrences of *ne* are reduced to the preverbal case, and the focusing effect of the ex-situ construction is attributed to the cleft construction. Crucially, this dissociates *ne* per se from focus.

4.2. Accounting for the distributional restrictions

Given the analysis sketched above, how does the cleft approach account for the distributional restrictions? With respect to the limitation to one *ne* per clause, it says that each independent clause can only make one assertion (and hence can only contain one *ne* , which is taken to be a marker of assertion). The absence of *ne* in embedded clauses, in particular in relative clauses, is explained by the fact that relative clauses (at least restrictive ones) are presupposed, and their content is therefore not part of what is asserted. Finally, the complimentary distribution of *ne* and the negation marker *ti* is explained by saying that *ti* is a marker of assertion as well (with opposite polarity), so that it would not make sense to have both a positive and a negative assertion marker in one clause.

4.3. Problems

Note that all of the points concerning distributional restrictions rest on the assumption that *ne* is a marker of assertion. This characterization of *ne* is problematic, given that *ne* routinely occurs in questions and other types of speech acts that are not assertions.

In addition to this issue concerning the role of *ne*, the cleft analysis faces a number of further problems. First, it cannot account for topics preceding ex-situ focus constructions; second, it is hard to reconcile with the fact that ex-situ wh-constructions can be part of multiple wh-questions; third, it cannot account for certain cases of multiple *ne*'s in complex clauses.

Turning to the first point in more detail, topicalized elements can precede the ex-situ focus constructions with *ne*, as shown in (3) above. The cleft analysis, however, which assumes that ex-situ constructions do involve a relative clause, falsely predicts this to be impossible, given that topicalization out of relative clauses is impossible, as the data in (18) illustrate for the PP topic *in front of the house*:

(18) a. *nyina oorea w- ɔn- ir- ɛ i-ßuku **mbɛrɛ ya nyomba***
         motherDEM SM-see- ASP- FV 5-book infront 9.A 9.house
         'the mother who saw the book in front of the house'

   b.* *nyina oorea **mbɛrɛ ya nyomba** w- ɔn- ir- ɛ i-ßuku*
         mother DEM infront 9.A 9.house   SM-see-ASP-FV 5-book

   c.* ***mbɛrɛ ya nyomba** nyina oorea w- ɔn- ir- ɛ   i-ßuku*
         infront 9.A 9.house mother DEM SM-see-ASP-FV 5-book

Furthermore, topicalization beyond clause boundaries appears to be impossible, as shown in (19), which speaks against any bi-clausal treatment of ex-situ focus constructions.

(19) a. *abdul ne- uɣ- ir- ɛ ate nyina ne- ɔɔn-ir- ɛ i-ßuku*
         A.   FM-say-ASP-FVthat mother FM-see-ASP-FV 5-book
         mbɛrɛ ya nyomba
         in-front 9.A 9.house`
         'Abdul said his mother saw the book in front of the house.'

   b. *abdul ne- uɣ- ir- ɛ   ate **mbɛrɛ ya nyomba** nyina*
         A.   FM-say-ASP-FV that infront 9.A 9.house   mother
         ne- ɔɔn-ir- ɛ i- ßuku
         FM- see-ASP-FV 5-book

   c.# ***mbɛrɛ ya nyomba** abdul ne- uɣ- ir- ɛ ate nyina*
         infront 9.A 9.house A.   FM-say-ASP-FVthat mother
         ne- ɔɔn- ir- ɛ   i- ßuku
         FM-see-ASP-FV 5-book

In (19b), the prepositional phrase is fronted within the embedded clause, and the meaning is the same as in (19a). The sentence in (19c), on the other hand, can only be understood in such a way that 'in front of the house' is the location where the saying took place, and not where the mother saw the book. Given this restriction on topicalization, the cleft analysis makes false predictions about topicalization in ex-situ focus constructions (cf. (3)).

The second problem concerns the fact that ex-situ wh-constructions with *ne* can form part of a multiple wh-question, as illustrated in (20):

(20)   noo   w- ɛnd- iri- ɛ kee?
        FM.who   SM- sell- ASP-FV what
        'Who sold what?'

This is problematic, because cross-linguistically, cleft based questions can normally not form part of multiple wh-questions.[15] Unless we can find good reason to believe that we are dealing with an exception here, this point speaks against the cleft analysis.

Finally, there are constructions involving multiple clauses which can contain multiple *ne*'s. In particular, Kikuyu allows for long-distance wh-extraction out of certain clauses. When the wh-word is extracted from the lowest clause, *ne* can appear both with the fronted wh-word and preverbally in the lowest clause:

(21) a. **ne- ko**   *ŋɣoɣe a-   uɣ- irɛ ate kamau*
         FM- where N.   SM- say- ASP that K.
         ***ne* t ɔ- ɔn- irɛ kanakɛ**
         FM-   SM- see- ASP kanake
         'Where did Ngoge say that Kamau saw Kanake?'
         ['Where, according to Ngoge, did Kamau see Kanake?']
     b.* *ŋɣoɣe a-   uɣ- irɛ ate **ne- ko**   kamau*
         N.   SM- say- ASP that FM- where   K.
         ***ne* t ɔ- ɔn- irɛ kanakɛ**
         FM-   SM- see- ASP kanake

However, this is only possible if the wh-word moves all the way to the highest clause, and not if it remains in the lower clause, as indicated in (21b). This is problematic for the cleft analysis, because it explains the restriction that *ne* can only occur once per clause in semantic terms, by saying that each clause can be marked for assertion just once (however this is to be understood for the question cases; the same point would apply to the corresponding case of focus fronting). But semantically, the wh-word belongs to the lower clause, so that in this respect, both *ne*'s should be counted as belonging to the same clause. Therefore, the cleft analysis falsely predicts (21a) to be ungrammatical.

Note that this construction is not at all problematic for the focus phrase analysis. Assuming successive cyclic movement, we expect the wh-word to move through the specifier of the focus phrase of the lower clause. Apparently, moving the wh-word through this position is compatible with having an overt *ne* in the lower focus phrase.[16] This analysis gains further support from the fact that in the closely related language Kitharaka, the morpheme equivalent to *ne* is present obligatorily in the lower phrase, a fact which has

been taken as an argument for an analysis in terms of successive cyclic movement by Muriungi (Muriungi 2004).

In addition to these major problems, the cleft analysis also cannot account for the facts about focus projection and the related issues in section 3.3. According to the cleft analysis the focusing effect of ex-situ focus constructions is due to the syntactic configuration of the cleft, and *ne* only plays its general role as an assertion marker in these cases. Beyond such special constructions that directly affect focus structure, we thus have no reason to expect interactions between *ne* and focus on this account. But as we saw above, the possibility of in-situ focus depends on the absence of *ne*. I do not see how this can be accounted for if we assume that *ne* is an assertion marker.

Concerning the fact that we find focus projection with the ex-situ focus construction (namely focus on the verb phrase when the object is fronted with *ne*) there also is a problem for the cleft analysis, as clefts typically do not allow focus projection.

Finally, there does not seem to be a way to account for the seemingly odd facts discussed at the end of section 3.3. Why is *ne* obligatory in sentences that only consist of an intransitive verb? Surely not because these always have to be emphatically marked for assertion, but that is all that the cleft analysis could say about this. And why is *ne* obligatory with third person present tense copula constructions? Again, the role that the cleft analysis assigns to *ne*, namely that of a marker of assertion, does not provide any help in explaining this.

Taken together, these problems seem to provide a good case against the cleft analysis.[17] Furthermore, as already mentioned above, it is unclear what the status of *ne* on this analysis could reasonably be, given that the assertion marker analysis is incompatible with its presence in questions and other types of speech acts.

5. Conclusion

I have discussed Kikuyu focus constructions involving *ne* and compared two analyses, the focus phrase analysis and the cleft analysis. I have argued that the former fares better both with respect to the syntax and the semantics of the construction. Although there are plenty of questions for further research, I hope to have convinced the reader that it is most promising to approach these from the viewpoint of the focus phrase analysis.

Notes

1. Parts of this paper have been presented at SOAS (London), ZAS (Berlin), and at the workshop 'Topic and Focus: Information Structure and Grammar in African Languages' (Amsterdam). I would like to thank all the participants for helpful comments and discussion, and in particular Enoch Aboh, Rajesh Bhatt, Lisa Cheng, Laura Downing, Katharina Hartmann, Angelika Kratzer, Victor Manfredi, Yukiko Morimoto, Brigitte Reineke, Anna Szabolcsi, Sabine Zerbian, and Malte Zimmermann. Special thanks are due to Manfred Krifka for crucial guidance while I was working on my Master's thesis on which this paper is based. Special thanks are also due to my Kikuyu consultant, Sam Kinuthia. I gratefully acknowledge support for this research from the ZAS.

2. Kikuyu is an SVO Bantu language spoken in Kenya. Its label in Guthrie's (1967) classification system is E50.

3. All data has been elicited from my consultant, unless otherwise indicated. The following abbreviations are used in the glosses: FM: focus marker, SM: subject marker, T: tense, ASP: Aspect, FV: final vowel, A: associative, COP: copula, NEG: negation, DEM: demonstrative. Numerals preceding nouns indicate the noun-class. Tones are not marked. Although the more detailed study of tonal effects in relation to focus is an important topic for further research, I believe that the syntactic points made in this chapter hold independently of such possible effects. Details concerning tense and aspect are omitted. See Johnson (1980) for a comprehensive discussion of Kikuyu tense and aspect.

4. I assume throughout that focus can be reliably manipulated by different question contexts. This is independent of the issue of whether a theory of focus ultimately needs to make reference to question-answer correspondence.

5. I use *topicalization* in a syntactic sense here, without making any direct claims about its discourse properties. In syntactic terms, there is evidence for an additional Topic Phrase between the CP and the FP, since the sentence in (11) could be embedded by a bridge verb and would then be preceded by the complementizer *ate*, which presumably occurs in C^0. Therefore, the topicalized element cannot appear in the specifier of CP. This is, of course, perfectly consistent with the standard analysis of the extended left periphery (Rizzi 1997).

6. The stem *re* is actually ambiguous: Apart from the copula meaning, it also has a possessive meaning (i.e. (4b) can also mean 'Abdul has a teacher'). The one place where the possessive and the copula paradigms diverge is in the third person present tense form, where the null form unambiguously has the copula meaning, whereas *re* only has the possessive meaning.

7. Movement is indicated by crossing out elements of a syntactic chain that aren't pronounced. The IP-level is ignored to keep things simple. The topicalized subject is represented in the specifier of CP to keep things simple. See footnote 5 on the need for a distinct topic phrase inside of the CP.

8. One potentially problematic aspect of this analysis, pointed out to me by Rajesh Bhatt, is that the apparent possibility of movement out of the moved IP is somewhat unexpected. A possible alternative analysis would leave the IP in its base position and have *ne* assign focus to it from the head of FP.

9. Interestingly, however, the order FM-S-V-O can express sentence focus in the closely related language Kitharaka (Muriungi 2004).

10. An interesting question that was pointed out to me by Katharina Hartmann is why focus on the verb phrase cannot be expressed by moving the VP to the focus phrase. Perhaps this is blocked by the alternative option of just moving the object, which is more economical.

11. Again, there is an interesting contrast with Kitharaka, where the order S-FM-V-O can express focus on the verb as well as sentence focus (Muriungi 2004).

12. Thanks to Lisa Cheng for bringing this to my attention.

13. As one of the reviewers points out, more needs to be said about this. For example, it is unclear, given this brief description, why the object in ex-situ focus constructions is not pronounced in both positions.

14. I assume that this holds both for intransitive verbs and transitive verbs that only have an object marker and no overt object noun phrase, but my data on this are incomplete.

15. Thanks to Anna Szabolcsi for pointing this out to me.

16. This fact might speak in favor of the second analysis of *ne* above, which assumes it to be generated in the head of the focus phrase and then cliticizes it to the XP in its specifier, since otherwise we would have the feature on the focused XP spelled out twice.

17. Yet another problem that the cleft analysis probably has to face is the absence of tense in the cleft copula. I do not have the relevant data to make this point, but Bergvall's discussion of the interpretation of tense in clefts (Bergvall 1987: 130-132) suggests that there are no clefts with past tense copulas, which is unexpected on her account (thanks to Rajesh Bhatt for pointing out this issue to me).

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