

Focus in the Force-Fin System Information Structure in Cushitic Languages*

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1. Introduction

This paper investigates Information Structure and the Force-Fin system (cf. Rizzi 1997) in two Cushitic languages, Somali and Afar. In particular, the activation of the Focus field will be analysed in different clausal types, showing the existence of a crucial connection between Focus-related categories and the illocutionary force of the sentence.

1.1 The fine architecture of the C-domain

In a cartographic approach (cf. Rizzi ed. 2004), the original CP-node (a recursive phrase, targeted by different functional categories) has been reanalysed as an array of functional projections, each dedicated to a specific function related to Information Structure. The C-domain thus provides an interface between the propositional content (the IP-node) and specific discourse roles.¹ In particular, Rizzi (1997) proposes that the left periphery of the sentence is included between *force* and *finiteness*:

“Complementizers express the fact that a sentence is a question, a declarative, an exclamative, a relative, a comparative, an adverbial of a certain kind, etc., and can be selected as such by a higher selector. This information is called the specification of Force [...] the C-system expresses a specification of finiteness, which in turns selects an IP system with the

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¹ Investigation on the left periphery of the sentence has gained significant impulse in the Minimalist framework, given the centrality of *Interfaces* (the only “conceptually necessary” levels, cf. Chomsky 1995) and the specification that *Internal Merge* is connected with scopal features and discourse requirements (cf. Chomsky 2002, 2004).

characteristics of finiteness: mood distinctions, subject agreement licensing nominative case, overt tense distinctions.” (Rizzi 1997: 283, 284)

Force and finiteness can be expressed on a single head “in simple cases”, but are forced to split in marked constructions, namely, with “the activation of the Topic-Focus field” (Rizzi 1997: 314). The Force-Fin system thus includes (at least) the FocP projection, that is the syntactic locus for [+foc] interpretation (cf., among others, Kiss ed. 1995; Rizzi 1997; Frascarelli 2000), and different TopPs, in which Topic constituents are located according to their specific discourse properties² (Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl to appear). The C-domain also includes a functional projection connected with the interrogative force of the selected clause, called IntP, located in a position that is higher than FocP (cf. Rizzi 2001). The Force-Fin system can be thus represented as follows (the asterisk indicates recursion):

(1) [ForceP [AboutTopP [IntP [FocP [FamTopP* [FinP [IP

Languages like Somali and Afar, in which Information Structure is morphosyntactically marked, support a cartographic approach and provide evidence for some refinement. In particular, data show that the activation of [+foc] plays a crucial role in the interpretation of other discourse categories, so that an interaction must be posited between functional heads in the C-domain.

1.2 Somali and Afar: basic properties³

Somali is a polysynthetic language (in the sense of Baker 1996). This condition entails that θ -roles are only assigned through incorporation onto the verbal head (the so-called “Morphological Visibility Condition”,

² *Contra* a “free recursion” analysis of topicalization (cf. Rizzi 1997), Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl (to appear) provide substantial evidence that different TopP projections must be posited to realize different “types of Topics”. In particular, the [aboutness] feature is realized in the highest TopP node, while low Topics are connected with [familiarity] and used for continuity in the discourse. On this point, see also Section 6.

³ When not otherwise indicated, examples are taken from original data. In this respect, we thank Axmed Cabdullaahi Axmed, Cabdalla Omar Mansur (Somali) and Mohammed Ali Mahmoud (Afar) for their help and patience in testing and discussing our data.

MVC). Hence, argument structure is realized by means of *clitic pronouns* that are disposed in the Verbal Complex (VC) in a rigid SOV order (Puglielli 1981; Svolacchia and Puglielli 1999), while *full DPs are merged in non-argument position* and connected to the sentence by means of resumptive pronouns, which bind constituents to their thematic roles. Somali is also a *Focus-prominent* language, so that one constituent must be overtly identified as the Focus of the sentence. In particular, focused DPs occur in preverbal position, followed by the Focus Marker (FM) *baa*:⁴

(2) *Axmed gurigii SHALAY buu (baa+uu) pro*⁵
 Axmed house.ANAPH yesterday FM.SCL3SGM OCL3
nooga (= na+u+ka) qaaday.
 OCL1PL-for-from take.PAST.3SGM
 ‘YESTERDAY Axmed took it from the house for us.’
 [lit.: Axmed, the house, YESTERDAY he took it from it for us]

The pronominal argument analysis is supported in Somali by a number of standard diagnostics, e.g., obligatoriness of clitic pronouns in the VC ((2) is ungrammatical if the SCL *uu* or the OCL *na* are omitted), absence of non-finite clauses and of DP anaphors (cf. Svolacchia and Puglielli 1999). In particular, the non-argument position of full DPs (independently of Focus) is shown below, by means of ‘disjoint reference effects’:

⁴ The list of the abbreviations used in the glosses is the following:
 ABS = absolutive case ANAPH = anaphoric article
 ART = definite article DECL = declarative (marker)
 F = feminine FM = Focus Marker
 M = masculine NOM = nominative case
 OCL = object clitic PAST = past tense
 PL = plural PROG = present progressive
 QM = Question Marker RED = reduced paradigm
 SCL = subject clitic SG = singular

⁵ The 3rd person object clitic (both genders and numbers) has no phonetic realization and must be interpreted as an object *pro*. Evidence for this analysis is provided by the interpretation of sentences like (i) below. As is shown in the English translation, this empty category always obtains a referential reading, so that a pseudointransitive use is excluded in this language (for details, cf. Puglielli 1981; Svolacchia and Puglielli 1999):
 (i) *CALI baa pro arkay.*
 Cali FM see.PAST.RED
 ‘CALI saw it/him/her/them.’

- (3) *SHALAY bay_k jabisay Maryan_k mindideed_k.*
 yesterday FM.SCL3SGF break.PAST.3SGF Maryan knife-her
 ‘*She_k broke Maryan_k’s knife YESTERDAY.’

As we can see, a coreferential reading is possible in (3) between the subject clitic *ay* and the R-expression *Maryan* (while this interpretation is excluded in English). This shows that full DPs in Somali do not sit in A-position and must be considered as adjuncts.

Afar is also an SOV language. However, its morphosyntactic properties are quite different from Somali, so that a comparison of the two languages is extremely effective for the issues of the present study. Afar is, in fact, an inflectional pro-drop language, in which DPs carry argument role and pronouns are “strong” elements, realized as objects of verbs and postpositions (cf. (4b))⁶:

- (4) a. *Ali mootar-at bilu-k yemeete*
 Ali car.ABS-by Bilu.ABS-from come.PAST.3SGM
 ‘Ali came by car from Bilu.’
- b. *anu kaa ko-h ruube*
 I him you-to send.PAST.1SG
 ‘I sent him to you.’
- c. *xaa’b-e ’koo ka’l-e*
 leave.COMP you stop.PAST.1SG
 ‘I prevented you from leaving.’

As is shown, the grammar of Afar allows non-finite subordinate clauses (4c) and pronominal DPs are not obligatory for morphological visibility (4a). In section 6, we will see that clitic resumption is not present in Topic constructions as well – an additional, major difference with respect to Somali.

2. Focus as predicate

In recent works Frascarelli and Puglielli (henceforth, F&P 2005a, 2005b, to appear) have argued for a *Small Clause (SC) analysis* of Focus constructions in Focus marking languages. Drawing from diachronic and

⁶ The ABS label is used to indicate *non-nominative* Case, as in use among scholars of African languages.

comparative studies (cf. Hetzron 1980; Lamberti 1983) and on the basis of synchronic evidence, F&P show that Focus Markers (FM) are original copular forms, which may include a 3rd person (clitic) pronoun. Focus constructions therefore imply the presence of a SC, in which the focused DP is the (specificational) *predicate*, while presupposed information is carried by a *relative clause* (sitting in Subject position). To provide an illustration, consider the following Focus construction in Somali:⁷

- (5) *CALI baa* [Op *soomaali ah*]_{REL}.
 Cali FM (=COP) Somali be.RED
 ‘CALI is (that is) Somali.’

A sentence like (5) takes as a presupposition the existence of “(some) person who is Somali”, which is expressed through a free relative⁸ (defining a set). Since it is a *headless* relative, an “external” specification is needed for the relative Operator: this is provided by the DP that moves from predicate position (in the SC) to Spec,FocP (to check the [+foc] feature). The Focus thus assumes scope over the SC and specifies a value for the Operator-variable chain in the relative clause:

- (6) a. [_{FocP} [_{Foc} *baa* [_{SC} [_{DP} [_{CP} OP [_{IP} *t_{OP}* *soomaali ah*]]]] [_{DP} *Cali*]]] →
 b. [_{FocP} CALI [_{Foc} *baa* [_{SC} [_{DP} [_{CP} OP [_{IP} *t_{OP}* *soomaali ah*]]]] *t_{Cali}*]]]

Hence, Focus is not merged as a part of the vP-phase containing the verb in the relative clause. It is simply “reinterpreted” as a part of it after identification of the Operator therein contained. In other words, Focus provides a value for a variable that is *not* its own copy.⁹

This analysis accounts for the *connection* between Focus and Relativization that was pointed out by many scholars (since Schachter

⁷ The traditional arguments for positing a relative clause analysis are discussed in F&P (2005a). A comparative analysis of the syntactic properties of relative clauses in Somali and Afar is provided in F&P (2005b).

⁸ The literature on free relatives is very rich. The present approach is in line with an analysis of the free relative as a DP that takes a complement CP (cf. among many others, Groos and van Riemsdijk 1981; Grosu 1994). In a sentence like (5) the DP-head is the generic (null) noun ‘PERSON’.

⁹ In Frascarelli (2005) this analysis is discussed in detail and proposed for a unified theory of Focus structure and interpretation, in which identification and spell-out conditions depend on core grammar rules (the Phase Impenetrability Condition) and interface requirements.

1973), derives Focus strategies and discourse-semantic properties (Frascarelli 2005) and explains a number of Focus-related phenomena, such as the so-called *Antiagreement effect* (cf. Ouhalla 1993; Frascarelli 1999, F&P 2005a, 2005b). This is illustrated below (from Somali):

(7) *Hilibka NIMANKÁAS baa cunayá.*
 meat.ART men-those.ABS FM eat.PROG.RED
 ‘THOSE MEN are eating the meat.’

(8) a. **Hilibka NIMANKÁASU baa cunayá.*
 meat.ART men-those.NOM FM eat.PROG.RED
 b. **Hilibka NIMANKÁAS baa cunayaan.*
 meat.ART men-those.ABS FM eat.PROG.3PL
 c. **Hilibka NIMANKÁAS bay cunayá.*
 meat.ART men-those.ABS FM.3PL eat.PROG.RED

As we can see, when the subject is focused, it cannot show NOM Case but the “default” ABS Case (i.e., the Case used for citation and predicative DPs), it triggers the presence of the so-called “reduced paradigm” (RED)¹⁰ and, finally, the (focused) subject cannot be resumed by a pronoun.

In a theory in which the Focus DP is not an argument, but a predicate, Antiagreement effects can be accounted for without stipulations: what we understand as the “subject” is only *reinterpreted* as such after the identification of the relative Operator. Antiagreement can be thus attributed to the presence of an *empty* subject (i.e., the variable) in the relative clause. Since Somali is not a pro-drop language, this obtains a reduced (i.e., kind of participial) form of agreement:¹¹

¹⁰ The reduced paradigm has three forms in Somali: one for 3SGF, one for 1PL and one for all other persons (cf. Puglielli 1981).

¹¹ It is important to underline that reduced agreement is not a specific property of Focus constructions, but a morphosyntactic effect arising whenever the subject is the head of an Operator-chain. Consider, for instance, the following sentence in which *nimankaas* is the head of a relative clause (for the analysis of *waa*, cf. section 3.1 below):

(i) *nimankaas hilibka cunayá waa saaxiiboday*
 men-those meat.ART eat.PROG.RED friends-POSS1SG
 ‘Those men that are eating meat are friends of mine.’

The present analysis thus provides a unified account for antiagreement and related effects.

(7') [_{TopP} *hilibka* [_{FocP} *NIMANKÁAS* [_{Foc} *baa* [_{SC} [_{DP} [_{CP} OP [_{IP} _{top} *cunayá*] _{t_{nimankáas}}]]]]]]]

The morphosyntactic properties of Focus constructions in Afar (a non Focus-prominent language) provide important support to the present analysis. Indeed, the Focus shows ABS Case independent of its role and the verb shows a “nominalizer suffix” whose nature is not clear in the literature (cf. Bliese 1981). According to the present analysis these properties obtain a comprehensive explanation: the verb is embedded in a relative clause and the “verb suffix” *-m* is therefore a COMP (in final position, consistent with the head-final quality of the language).¹² Consider the following:

(9) [_{FocP} *ÁWKA* [_{Foc} (*y*) [_{SC} [_{DP} [_{CP} OP [_{IP} _{top} *huurí-h* *adda-l* *kullumta*
 boy.ABS 3SG boat-of inside-in fish
habte-m]]] _{t_{áwka}}]]]
 leave.PAST.3SGF-COMP.NOM
 ‘THE BOY left the fish inside the boat.’
 [lit.: THE BOY (he is) that left the fish in the boat]

The relative DP is the *subject* of the SC that we posit (hence, marked for NOM Case), while Focus is the *predicative* DP (showing ABS Case) that moves to FocP. The COMP head originates from the feminine noun *im* (‘part/thing’) and is connected with a null Operator that triggers a default 3SGF agreement. Finally, the optional *y* (following the Focus) is the remnant of an old copula (cf. Parker and Hayward 1985). Hence, like a FM, it is a lexicalization of Foc^o, attracting the predicative DP in its Spec (for checking requirements).

Let us now investigate the interaction of Focus with other discourse categories in the Force-Fin system, starting with the functional projection that “looks downstairs” into the propositional content, namely FinP.

¹² Though *-m* plausibly derives from an original lexical form (roughly meaning ‘thing’), it cannot be considered the NP-head of the relative clause. Evidence for its COMP status is provided by the focalization (and relativization) of PPs. In this case the preposition cannot be postponed to *-m*, forcing a pronominal resumption strategy within the relative clause. This is illustrated below:

(i) *MOHAMMADA* *Ilyas* *maruw* *ka-h* *ye'em*
 Mohammed.ABS Ilyas ram him-to give.PAST.3SG.COMP.NOM
 ‘Ilyas gave a ram to MOHAMED’

3. Focus and the specification of finiteness

3.1 Force in “verb Focus” constructions

When the Focus field is not activated in Somali, the VC is interpreted as new information and sentences are characterized by the presence of a specific marker, *waa*, traditionally considered as a “verb FM” (Puglielli 1981). The syntactic properties of *waa* sentences, however, show that *waa* cannot be considered as a Foc head.¹³ Consider subject resumption in the following sentences:

(10) *Cali_k MARYAM buu_k / *baa arkay.*
Cali Maryam FM.3SGM FM see.PAST.3SGM
'(As for Cali), he saw MARYAM.'

(11) *Cali_k Maryam wuu_k / waa arkay.*
Cali Maryam WAA.3SGM WAA see.PAST.3SGM
'(As for Cali), he saw her, Maryam.'

In both (10) and (11) *Cali* – that is understood as the subject of the following sentence – is realized as a left-hand Topic. Consistent with the MVC (cf. Section 1.2), clitic resumption (*uu*) is obligatory in the Focus construction (10), while it is only optional in the presence of *waa* (cf. (11)). This asymmetry is explained if we assume that *waa* is connected with subject agreement features, which are not available to a FM like *baa*. In other words, *baa* and *waa* do not sit in the same functional projection. Indeed, *waa* is strictly connected with overt tense distinctions and NOM Case marking (cf. (12)-(13)), while *baa* excludes the latter and requires a reduced form of verb inflection (cf. (8a-b) above). Moreover, no TopP projection is available between *waa* and the VC (cf. (14)), while Topics are allowed between *baa* and the rest of the sentence (cf. (17) below):

¹³ For space limitations, the syntax of *waa* sentences cannot be addressed in detail. For the sake of discussion, we simply point out that *waa* does not trigger a contrastive reading of the verb, nor does it lead to antiagreement effects. Indeed, this property is fully expected in the present analysis. As is discussed in F&P (2005a), *waa* constructions do not involve a functional relation between an Operator and a variable in a relative clause. Quantifying implies, in fact, partitioning of the universe and this operation only pertains to nominal elements. Antiagreement effects with focused verbs are therefore not expected cross-linguistically; possible counterexamples would be ascribed to a nominalization strategy for verb focusing (which is attested in a number of languages).

- (12) *Waa sheegaa/ sheegay/ sheegayaa/ sheegayay*
 say.PRES.3SGM say.PAST.3SG say.PRES.PROG.3SGM say.PAST.PROG.3SGM
 ‘He says / said / is saying / was saying.’
- (13) *Wiilku / *wiilka waa soomaali.*
 boy.ART.NOM boy.ART.ABS Somali
 ‘The boy is Somali.’
- (14) *(soomaali) Cali (soomaali) waa (*soomaali) ahaa (soomaali).*
 Somali Cali be.PAST.3SGM
 ‘Cali was Somali.’

Finally, *waa* is in complementary distribution with other sentential markers, such as *ma* in questions (cf. Section 4.1) and *ha* in imperative clauses (e.g., *ha i labin*, ‘don’t bother me’). We thus conclude that *waa* is not a FM but a *modality marker* (cf. also Saeed 1984). It is therefore a lexicalization of Fin° that activates [+decl] sentential force¹⁴ in the selected IP. As a Fin head, it is connected with subject agreement and tense specifications through AGREE (Chomsky 2001, 2002) with AgrS° . Subject omission is thus permitted (cf. (11), (12)). The “Focus interpretation” on the VC must be therefore considered as a “by-product” of [+decl] force in the absence of [+foc] constituents. In other words, when the Focus field is *not* activated, sentential and illocutionary Force coincide: the relevant declarative sentence has no other “intention” than expressing a statement.

3.2 Force in narrow Focus constructions

When the Focus field is activated, the illocutionary Force of the sentence is crucially modified. The relevant sentence is merged as a SC construction, in which new information is only carried by the predicative DP and the verb is embedded in a relative clause (as presupposed information). This means that in Focus constructions Fin does *not select an IP-node* and a DECL marker like *waa* is therefore excluded.

¹⁴ As is discussed in Chierchia and McConnel-Ginet (1990), the *sentential* force refers to the conventional pragmatic force associated with a sentence type. The *illocutionary* force, on the other hand, is connected with speaker’s intentions.

Since AGREE is a “local relation between two adjacent heads” (cf. Chomsky 2001), Fin° cannot be related with AgrS° and subject omission is therefore not permitted.¹⁵ This explains the asymmetry shown in (10)-(11), the structures of which are given, respectively, in (15) and (16) below:

(15) [_{TopP} *Cali*_k [_{FocP} *MARYAM* [_{Foc'} *baa+uu*_k [_{FinP} [_{Fin'} \emptyset [_{SC} [_{DP} [_{CP} OP [_{AgrSP} *t_{uu}* *t_{OP arkay}*] *t_{Maryam}*]]]]]]]]]

(16) [_{TopP} *Cali*_k [_{TopP} *M.z* [_{FocP} [_{FinP} [_{Fin'} *waa*_[+decl] [_{AgrSP} (*uu*)_k [_{AgrS'} \emptyset_z *arkay*]]]]]]]
└----- [+FIN, +AGR]-----┘

Sentence like (15), however, show that Fin° (though empty) is not completely “inert” in narrow Focus constructions, because it serves as a *licensing head* for the subject trace in Spec,AgrSP . This is in line with Rizzi’s (1997) explanation of “anti-adjacency effects”: in Somali (like in French), Fin° can be *endowed* with AgrS features in virtue of its selecting properties. This allows subject extraction. In this respect, also consider the following sentence:

(17) *Shalay CALI baan anigu ku arkay, jaamacadda.*
 yesterday Cali FM-SCL1SG I.NOM¹⁶at see.PAST.1SG university.ART
 ‘Yesterday, I saw CALI, at the university.’

In (17) subject extraction occurs across a Topic (*anigu*), which evidently does not create Minimality effects.¹⁷ In this respect, Somali patterns like French and is different from English (examples from Rizzi 1997):

(18) a. *Je ne sais pas qui [ton livre [t pourrait l’acheter]]*
 b. **A man who [liberty [t should never grant t to us]]*

We suggest that the relevant asymmetry is connected with clitic resumption and argue for a structural distinction between Topic constructions, which

¹⁵ Indeed, the FM *baa* does not show any type of number/gender agreement with the Focus phrase in Spec,FocP .

¹⁶ Case is transmitted to Topic DPs through binding chains (cf. Baker 1996).

¹⁷ Note that subjects can be extracted independent of the syntactic role (argument vs. adjunct) of the constituent in Topic position, as is shown by the following sentence:

(i) *anigu CALI baan shalay ku arkay, jaamacadda.*
 ‘I saw CALI, yesterday, at the university.’

- (20) a. *Cali ma HADIYAD *baa / buu keenáy?*
 Cali QM present FM FM.3SGM bring.PAST.3SGM
 ‘Is it a PRESENT that Cali brought?’
 b. *ma HADIYAD *baa / buu Cali keenáy?*
 c. **Cali HADIYAD buu ma keenáy?*

As we can see, yes-no questions require the presence of a question marker (QM), namely *ma*, which must assume scope over the constituent that is questioned. Hence, it precedes the VC in (19) and is located in a position higher than the FocP in (20). Note in particular that *ma* in (19) shows the same syntactic properties discussed for *waa* in [+decl] sentences (cf. Section 3.1): the subject pronoun can be dropped (19a) and no Topic is allowed between *ma* and the VC (19b). When *ma* is used in combination with *baa*, on the other hand, the properties of a narrow Focus construction are found (compare (20) with (10)).

It is thus feasible to conclude that *ma* is a [+int] marker that is merged in *different* functional projections according to the specific illocutionary force of the sentence. In particular, when the Focus field is activated, the interrogative force must assume scope over it. This forces the activation of a higher projection in the C-domain that is connected with questioning, namely IntP (Rizzi 2001). After Operator movement of the predicate-Focus, *ma* is merged in Int°:

- (21) [_{TopP} Cali_k [_{IntP} [_{Int'} **ma** [_{FocP} HADIYAD [_{Foc'} baa+uu [_{FinP} Ø [_{SC} [_{DP} [_{CP} OP [_{AgrSP} t_{uu} t_{OP} keenáy] t_{hadiyad}]]]]]]]]]]]]

When the Focus field is not activated, on the other hand, *ma* is merged in Fin° and activates the [+int] feature over the embedded IP, through the (more economical) relation AGREE with the Int° head:

- (22) [_{TopP} Cali_k [_{TopP} hadiyad_z [_{IntP} [_{Int'} [_{FocP} [_{FinP} [_{Fin'} **ma** [_{AgrSP} (uu)_k [_{Agr'} Ø_z keenay]]]]]]]]]]]]]]?

This analysis leads to the important generalization that [+int] is activated on the functional head that takes *scope* over the informative part of the sentence.¹⁸

¹⁸ This is consistent with the *Extension Condition* (Chomsky 1995, 2001) and with the fact that, cross-linguistically, it is not possible to focus a constituent and question another part of the sentence. When a question contains a focused

Yes-no questions in Afar present similar properties, thus supporting the present analysis. Since Afar is not a Focus prominent language, questions can be realized without specific markers, through prosodic means (a falling intonation, cf. (23a)). However, an alternative option is available, in which the QM *ma* is used (23b):

- (23) a. *selte?*
 finish.PAST.2SG
 b. *ma selte?*
 QM finish.PAST.2SG
 ‘Did you finish?’

Like in Somali, Afar *ma* activates [+int] force on the predicate it selects. Hence, it obtains a yes-no question interpretation when an IP follows (cf. (23)), and a wh-question when it precedes a focused DP (as in (24)):

- (24) *awki ma biyaakitta?*
 boy.NOM QM be sick.3SGM
 ‘(as for the boy), is he sick?’
- (25) *ma AWKA (y) biyaakittam?*
 QM boy.ABS 3SG be sick.3SGF-COMP.NOM
 ‘Which BOY is sick?’

The latter interpretation, triggered by the combination of [+foc] and [+int], leads us to explore the correlation between FocP and IntP in more detail.

4.2 Wh-questions

Given the information-structural parallelism between Focus and wh-constituents (they are both syntactic operators connected with new information), FocP has been very often considered as a sort of “multi-functional” projection (cf. Horvath 1986; Rizzi 1997; Frascarelli 2000), targeted by different focus-related categories (new and contrastive Foci, wh-phrases, negative polarity items, etc.). Indeed, wh-constituents and Foci

DP, this is the predicate in the scope of the [+int] force. The rest of the sentence is presupposed information:

- (i) *Is JOHN going out?*
 [= ‘someone is going out (presupposition). Is it JOHN (Focus)?’]

do not co-occur in the same clause, and this can be explained by assuming that they “compete” for the same functional position (cf. Rizzi 1997).

This assumption, however, is only partially correct. Frascarelli (2005) shows that the realization of Focus and wh-constituents presents several asymmetries cross-linguistically and concludes that different projections must be posited for their interpretation in the C-domain. In particular, the interpretation of (genuine) wh-questions depends on the interaction between Foc° and Int°. The internal structure of wh-phrases in Cushitic languages provides immediate support. Consider the following (Somali):

- (26) *Cali muxuu (= ma+wax+baa¹⁹+uu) cunay?*
 Cali QM+thing+FM+3SGM eat.PAST.1SG
 ‘What did Cali eat?’

As is clear, the wh-phrase *maxaa* (‘what’) is obtained through the combination of two functional heads ([+int] *ma* and [+foc] *baa*) with the generic NP *wax*.²⁰ This is also the case in Afar, in which the QM *ma* combines with the relative pronoun *iyya* (cf. (27)) and with the generic noun *waxa* ‘thing’ (cf. (28)):

- (27) *lee MIYYA-y torobem?*
 water who.ABS-3SG drink.PAST.3SGF-COMP.NOM
 ‘Who drank the water?’

¹⁹ The phonological process that obtains the FM *-aa* in clusters is a debated question that cannot be addressed in detail. Lamberti (1983) suggests that *baa* is derived from an original form **awaa* and, indeed, the alternation [w]≈[b] is widely attested in the derivation of Somali verbal nouns (e.g., *duq* ‘old’ → *duqow* ‘to get old’ → *duqoobid* ‘getting old’; for further details, cf. F&P 2005a) It is therefore possible that in clusters with the FM an underlying [w] is present and simplified (a common morpho-phonological operation, as is shown by *ma+wax* in (26).

²⁰ This analysis is very much in the spirit of Cheng’s (1991) proposal of wh-items as free-choice indefinites (with the interrogative interpretation being brought about by dedicated question particles). The non-referential interpretation of the noun *wax* in Somali is supported by independent evidence, as is shown by examples like the following:

- (i) *Wax waan arkay.*
 thing DECL.1SG see.PAST.1SG
 ‘I saw something.’

- (28) *awka lee MAXA-t baahtam?*
 girl water what.ABS-with bring.PAST.3SGF-COMP.NOM
 ‘With what the girl brought water?’

We argue that wh-constituents are not inherently specified for a discourse feature connected with question, even though they are potential candidates for expressing such discourse property. Wh-constituents assume a genuine (i.e., information-seeking) interrogative force only if they *combine* with [+foc]. For this reason, a *chain* is created between Int^o and Foc^o through AGREE. This endows Int^o with the [+foc] feature, inducing interrogative force on the constituent in its scope.²¹ The derivation of (26) is thus the following:

- (29) [_{TopP} *Cali*_k [_{IntP} [_{Int'} *ma*_[+int] [_{FocP} *WAX* [_{Foc'} *baa*_[+foc] + *uu*_k [_{FinP} ∅ [_{SC} [_{DP} [_{CP} OP [_{AggrSP} *t_{uu}* *t_{OP}* *cunáy*] *t_{wax}*]]]]]]]]]]
 [lit.: as for Cali, was there *ANYTHING* that he ate?]

The [+int] feature also triggers Operator-movement to Spec,IntP. This distinguishes a question focused on a DP from a (quantified) wh-question. Consider the following contrast:

- (30) a. *ma NIN baa yimid?*
 QM man FM come.PAST.RED
 ‘Is there a MAN who came?’
 b. *NINMAA (nin+ma+baa) yimid?*
 man.QM.FM come.PAST.RED
 ‘WHICH MAN came?’
- (31) a. *Haa (NIN baa yimid).* (ok for (30a); * for (30b))
 ‘Yes (A MAN came).’
 b. *CALI baa yimid.* (* for (30a); ok for (30b))
 ‘CALI came.’

In both (30a-b) the activation of the Focus field defines *yimid* (‘who came’) as *presupposed* information. However, (30a) is a yes-no question, while (30b) is not, as is shown by the possible answers in (31a-b). This shows

²¹ Despite the “Freezing Condition”, Rizzi (2004: note 8) does not exclude the possibility of a “combination of features”. In particular, the author suggests the possibility of a complex Q+Foc head (after movement of Q to Foc).

5. Focus and illocutionary Force

The data discussed so far have shown that FocP is *not* a “multifunctional” position: FocP is only dedicated to the syntax and interpretation of informational Focus. The activation of [+foc], on the other hand, is crucial for the interpretation of Focus-related discourse categories.

In this respect, it is important to point out that (genuine) Focus information is only available in a matrix C-domain. Consider the following data from Somali (for cross-linguistic evidence, cf. Frascarelli 2005):

- (35) **hilibka waan sheegay [in NIMANKÁAS baa cunayá]*
 meat.ART DECL.SCL1SG say.PAST.1SGM that men-those.ABS FM eat.PROG.RED
 ‘I said that THOSE MEN are eating the meat.’
- (36) [*Isaga [oo isbitaalka (*baa) ku jira]] buu dhintay.*
 he CONJ hospital.ART FM in stay.PAST.RED FM.SCL3SGM die.PAST.3SGM
 ‘He died while he was in the hospital.’
- (37) *Wiilka [Maryam (*baa) la hadlayá] waa walaal-kay.*
 boy-ART Maryam FM with speak.PROG.RED DECL brother-my
 ‘The boy that is talking to Maryam is my brother.’

As we can see, no [+foc] feature is available in complement (35), adverbial (36) or relative (37) clauses. Indeed, wh-phrases in embedded domains are realized as generic NPs heading a relative clause:

- (38) *waxaan (wax+baa+aan) weyddiyay [goorta /*goormaa*
 thing.FM.1SG ask.PAST.1SG time-ART / time-QM.FM
Cali imaanayó]
 Cali come.PRES.3SGM.DEP
 ‘I was wondering when Cali is going to come.’
 [lit.: the thing that I was asking (is) the time (that) Cali is coming]

Sentences like (38) show that genuine (i.e., focused) wh-phrases cannot be realized in embedded clauses. This shows that “IntP is inherently endowed with a wh [i.e., quantificational] feature” (Rizzi 2001: 293); *not* with a [+foc] feature, however. This combination is obtained through AGREE with Foc°, which can *only* occur in a *matrix* C-domain. In line with recent

proposals²³, we thus conclude that new information is strictly connected with the *Root* illocutionary Force.

6. Topic constituents and Information Structure in the C-domain

All along this presentation, we have provided evidence for a number of interactions occurring between functional projections when the Focus field is activated. The presence of Topic constituents, on the other hand, has proved a marginal role in this respect: [-foc] extraposed DPs do not interfere with Operator-movement and the specification of Force. Nevertheless, a closer look at the syntax-discourse properties of Topics can help a deeper understanding of Information Structure in the C-domain.

First of all, it is important to note that, though dislocation of [-foc] constituents is a major feature of Cushitic languages, two positions are totally *excluded* for Topics, that is to say, below FinP (cf. (39)) and between IntP and FocP (cf. (40)):

- (39) *Cali Maryam ma (*Maryam) arkay?*
 Cali Maryam QM see.PAST.3SGM
 ‘(as for) Cali, did he saw her, Maryam?’

- (40) *Cali ma (*Cali) HADIYAD buu keenáy?*
 Cali QM present FM.3SGM bring.PAST.3SGM
 ‘(as for) Cali, is it a PRESENT that he brought?’

In a cartographic approach of functional projections, we propose that this is not a language-specific property, but the effect of a *structural condition* for interface interpretation. In Sections 3 and 4, we have shown the crucial role of AGREE relations between Fin° and AgrS° and between Int° and Foc°. We therefore argue that TopP projections are excluded in these positions to avoid Topic interference with UG requirements.

Data from Cushitic languages also show that TopP positions are associated with *different discourse properties* (cf. Frascarelli and Hinterhölzl to appear). Consider the following asymmetry in the realization of Topics in Somali yes-no questions:

²³ See Haegeman (2002) on adverbial clauses and Bayer (2001) on emphatic topicalization in Bavarian.

- (41) a. *hadiyadda* (**hadiyad*) *ma CALI baa keenáy ?*
 present.ART QM Cali FM bring.PAST.RED
 ‘(As for the present) did CALI bring it?’
- b. *Ma CALI baa hadiyad* (**hadiyadda*) *keenáy?*
 ‘Did CALI bring a present?’

In (41) the interrogative force is centred on the focused constituent (marked by *baa*), while the rest of the sentence is presupposed information. It is thus interesting to note that the Topic (*hadiyad*) is imposed an opposite [definiteness] requirement depending on its position, which is connected with its role in the discourse (as is made clear by translations). Specifically, the high Topic in (41a) must be *definite* and obtains an “aboutness” role, while the low Topic in (41b) is *indefinite* and is simply part of background information (as a “familiar” element).

Somali data thus support an analysis in terms of “different types of Topics” (cf. note 2): even though [-foc] DPs are merged in extrasentential position, it is *not* the case that just *any kind of Topic* can occupy *any position* in the C-domain. Indeed, there is a systematic correlation between discourse roles and grammatical properties of Topics, which is encoded in a strict hierarchy of functional heads. In particular, the Topic position that is higher than the Focus field defines “what the sentence is about” and cannot be used to express “familiarity” (which is encoded in the structural domain between Foc and Fin). For further support, consider the “broad Focus” question in (42) and its possible answers in (43):

- (42) *Cali muxuu sameeyay?*
 Cali QM.thing.3SGM do.PAST.3SGM
 ‘What did Cali do?’

- (43) a. ***Cali MARYAM buu dilay***
 ‘Cali beat MARYAM.
- b. *MARYAM buu dilay, Cali*
- c. **MARYAM baa Cali dilay*

As we can see, when a DP (*Cali*, in the relevant case) is presented as the Aboutness Topic in the question, it *cannot* be realized as a low Topic in the answer. It can be either maintained in that position, or realized as a right-hand Topic (as an “afterthought”).

To conclude this section, let us briefly consider Topicalization in Afar. As is shown in (44)-(45), what is “given” information in the question must

be realized in a fixed order in the answer, which is exactly the order of arguments in unmarked sentences (namely, S>OI>OD):

- (44) Q: ‘Who gave water to Maryam?’
- a. *OMAR tee'em Maryam-a lee*
 Omar give.PAST.3SGF-COMP.NOM Maryam-to water
 ‘OMAR gave water to Maryam.’
- b. *Maryam-a lee OMAR tee'em.*
- c. **OMAR tee'em lee Maryam-a.*
- d. **lee Maryam-a OMAR tee'em.*
- (45) Q: ‘What did Omar give to Maryam?’
- a. *LEE tee'em Omar Maryam-a.*
 water give.PAST.3SGF-COMP.NOM Omar Maryam-to
 ‘Omar gave WATER to Maryam.’
- b. *Omar Maryam-a LEE tee'em.*
- c. **LEE tee'em Maryam-a Omar.*
- b. **Maryam-a Omar LEE tee'em.*

To provide an explanation, it is important to point out that in Afar clitic-resumption is *not* available. According to our proposal (cf. Section 3.2), this core-grammar property entails the condition that Topics are merged in IP-internal position. It is thus feasible to argue that the rigid ordering imposed on Topics is due to movement constraints (i.e., Minimality). Hence, given information is either left in its basic position (so that right-hand Topicalization ((44a)-(45a)) is in fact *PF marginalization*; cf. Cardinaletti 2002) or, after verb raising, the *remnant VP* is moved to the C-domain (possibly to Spec,GP; cf. Poletto and Pollock 2004) to obtain left-hand Topicalization ((44b)-(45b)).

Further investigation is needed for a deeper understanding of the structure and interpretation of Topic constructions. The connection between discourse roles and formal properties of Topics is the subject of ongoing research.

7. Conclusions

This paper has provided substantial evidence that discourse roles are connected with specific positions in the C-domain and that AGREE relations must be posited between functional heads for interpretative requirements.

We have shown the crucial role of the [+foc] feature for the activation of different kinds of new-related information and its importance for the definition of the illocutionary force of the sentence. Focus and Force are thus strictly connected and, in this respect, a structural distinction must be posited between matrix and embedded clauses that is centred on the presence of a “Focus Field”.

Topic constituents, on the other hand, are independent of the illocutionary force of the sentence and are present in both root and embedded clauses. Their different position in the C-domain is only dependent on their specific discourse role.

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