

FOCUSING VERSUS TOPICALISATION IN GHÒTÙÒ

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Abstract

Language is not static; it changes continually through the ways speakers form, use, and restructure words. This work investigates the syntactic operation of focusing versus topicalisation in Ghòtùò

Focusing is a syntactic process that places communicative prominence on different constituents of the sentence. Like many other African languages, the Edoid group of language is distinguished by the prevalence of focusing as strategy for determining information structure.

The work employs Chomsky's Minimalist Program as framework. Ethnographic design was used. Data collected were subjected to inter-linear glossing, syntactic and qualitative analysis. Ghòtùò has only one optional focus marker 'ónhi', whose overt realisation contrasts the focused item from other constituent in the construction. Focusable and non-focusable constituents are identified with binary values [+ or -] emphasis and focus features. Constituents with [+emphasis] and [+focus] can be processed and preposed from non-focus to focus-licensing positions. Focus derivation involves two probes: emphasis and focus. A focused constituent is preposed clause initially to the specifier of Emphasis Phrase to check [+emphasis] licensing ForceP domain, and further moves to the specifier of Focus Phrase to check focus. Topic constructions involve 'given information' and 'comment'. In Topic-Focus interaction, topic's comment changes to focus 'background information'; topic is projected higher than focus. In Ghòtùò, focusing plays a significant role in the understanding of speaker's coding of constituents as new or given information in the ForceP. Decoding discourse information hinges more on the constituents' information structural properties.

Keywords: Ghòtùò, Constituent, Focus construction in Edoid language, Topic phrase, Information structure in Ghòtùò

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Introduction

Language is peculiar to man and it is the one of the unique characteristics of human beings. Apart from performing communicative functions, it also serves to distinguish a group of people from others who may share similar characteristics. Therefore, every speech community has ways of arranging words to form sentences which may differ from those of other speech communities. Speakers do not often structure sentence arbitrarily; rather, they follow the set rules of the language, which is usually innate as native speaker competence. This implies that they have the knowledge of the sounds, morphemes and words of the language that enables them to build clauses that are adjudged grammatically and meaningfully. Clauses form the largest unit in linguistic analysis and tend to be parameterised across languages.

Different languages of the world employ various methods to formally express focus. Some languages express focus morphologically by using distinct morphemes or particles while the others employ prosodic means. The English language is an example of the latter, while most African languages including Ghòtùò illustrate the former. Focusing, a syntactic process, places communicative prominence on different constituents of the sentence. The Edoid group of language is distinguished by the prevalence of focusing as strategy for determining information structure. According to Givon (1991), it is not often the case that a language or languages would only use one means, say, morphology, to signal focus information. Therefore, word order variation and special syntactic constructions such as cleft sentences are also used to indicate focus. The discussion in the following sections will briefly look at the projections of different constituent that can be focused but more in detail predicate/verb phrase fronting/focusing as well as the relationship that exists between focusing and topicalisation.

Focus Phrase

The focus phrase like complementiser phrase and Inflectional phrase, is a functional projection and is headed by a functional head, the focus marker, which could be optional in some languages. The focus phrase is the root node that houses the fronted constituent and the focus marker. The focused constituent is housed in the specifier of focus phrase position.

The units that can be focused or undergo focusing is the constituent of focus. It is the unit where the new information lies. It is the constituent that is emphasised and brought to focus. It is the unit that is moved to the Spec of FP position. Only maximal projections, that is, phrases can be focused. All the constituents in a sentence can be focused in Ghòtùò except the adjective. The language does not allow this, for it to be so, the NP will be relativised, then the whole of the relative clause can then be focused. When the verb phrase is moved to be focused, it leaves an exact copy of itself at the extraction site and moves to the Spec FocP position without being topicalised.

The Focus Marker

The morpho-syntactic manifestation of focus in Kwa languages usually involves the fronting of the focused constituent in a clause. This fronted element is usually marked by a morpheme which is described as a focus marker. Naturally, the details of the syntactic operation, the conditions of use, the scope as well as the meanings of the markers vary from language to language. The Focus Marker is that element that heads the focus phrase. The focus marker is optional in some languages. The status of the focus marker has been a case of so much controversy. According to Awobuluyi (1992:71), focus marker is sometimes regarded as a copula verb, a mere expletive or a focus marker. He further says that the standard Yoruba ‘ní’ does not function as a copula verb but as focus maker; he however disagrees with Awoyale that focus marker is a case assigner. He sees the whole structure of focus as a Noun Phrase. According to him, Focus Constructions pattern with Noun Phrases rather than sentences, so the issue of it assigning Case does not arise.

Awoyale (1990:69) however treats focus as a Case feature because there is a distinct marker for it. He says the Focus Marker assigns Focus Case to the Specifier of FP position and that this conditions alpha movement either in the syntax or at the Logical Form Component of Focus Constructions. The focus marker primarily foregrounds information. Languages have different particle as focus markers; Yoruba uses “ní”, while Igbo uses “ka”. In Ghòtùò “**ónhi**” is the focus marker and it is optional that is may or may not be used for emphatic or focus construction. Any time it is use, it is to make contrast between the focused constituent and other constituents in the structure or to contrast new information. Like Yorùbá, the focus constituent occupies the Spec of FP and is immediately (optionally) followed by the focus marker. In a nutshell, Ghòtùò operates both overt and non-overt marker in the realisation of its focus construction.

Scholarly Views on Focusing

Several scholars have at some points in time proposed some theoretical and descriptive analysis for focusing though mainly in Yoruba. Awobuluyi is one of the pioneering scholars on focusing. His view seems to be contentious as presented in Awobuluyi (1976, 1978, 1987) among others. He views focus construction as noun phrase. His arguments on this are briefly presented below;

- i. Focus constructions function as complement of the verb *Şe* ‘to be’. He argues that *Şe* does not take sentential complements but takes focus phrase as complement. Thus, focus constructions are noun phrases.
- ii. Obligatory nominalization of focused predicate i. e. whenever predicate is to be focused, it must be partially reduplicated and attached just like every other nouns sentence initially.

- iii. The “ni-phrase” in focus constructions acts semantically like qualifier by narrowing down the range of possible head nouns one has in mind.
- iv. Short pronouns do not undergo focusing. They are unspecified. Therefore cannot collocate with qualifiers. This further shows that the “ni-phrase” is actually nothing but qualifier.

Owolabi (1987) and many others assume that focus constructions are sentences.

His own arguments are stated below;

- i. The fact that focus constructions can be modified by sentential adverbs like “*h jé* – is it the fact”, “*àsé* – I didn’t realized that”, and sentence adverbials like “*síbèsíbè* – nevertheless”, “*ní tòótó* – truly”, show that focus constructions are sentences.
- ii. “*Sùgbón* –and, *àmó* – but, and *sì* – and” are used only to conjoin sentences in Yoruba. They also; conjoin focus constructions, this shows that focus constructions are sentences.
- iii. “*Àti* – and, *pèlú* – and” connect NPs and nominals only. It goes then that if focus constructions are NPs, they should be connected as such.
- iv. There is similarity between the simple sentence structure of Nominal – Verb – Nominal and focus constructions.

Taiwo (2008) is one of the adherents of Owolabi’s school of thought. Theoretically, his view defers in respects of the antecedent relation and trace of the focused NP. Traces of the preposed NP can either be overt or covert. Ilori (2010) assumes that short pronouns are focused in situ, hence, his treatment of focus constructions shows that he belongs to Owolabi’s school of thought. He is of the opinion that the High Tone Syllable (HTS) which has provoked much scholarly debates in literature and previously assumed to be the trace of focused NP (subject) is a tense marker that marks past/present tense in Yorùbá. Awoyale (1990, 1995) establishes the fact that “ni” the focus marker is a case assigner in contrast to Awobuluyi’s claim that focus marker cannot assign case in the language. He says the focus marker assigns Emphatic Case to the Spec of FocP and this conditions alpha movement either in syntax or at the Logical Form Component of focus constructions. The researcher is going to go along with Awoyale’s view on this focus marker as I shall establish this in the course of my analysis in this research work. More so, going by Owolabi, Focus construction is a sentence and not a phrase as proposed by Awobuluyi.

The Phenomenon of Topicalisation

Topicalisation is a phenomenon involving an unbounded movement by which a wh-phrase moves indefinitely far to the left periphery across an unbounded number of clause boundaries into an initial position. According to Matthews (2007), topicalisation is a process of forming a derived

construction in which one element is a topic. Nwachukwu (1995) also describes topicalisation as a term used to describe the movement of a constituent from its position in the predicate to a sentence – initial position for purposes of focus. Topicalisation is then a syntactic strategy for achieving focus. More so, Nwachukwu (1995) made a distinction between topic and focus. He analyzed both topic and focus as discourse features which have definite syntactic coding, that is, new or given information. Topic centers on given or old information that is, that piece of information/knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the listener at the time of utterance. Topic-comment are two terms that are closely associated with this discourse function. When a constituent is made topic, it is set apart from the rest of the sentence which acts as a comment to it. Dik 1979:19 states that focus represents what is relatively the most salient information in a given setting which means that it contains a piece of information in a sentence which the speaker assumes to be unknown to the listener. Amaechi (2019) states that focus fronting leaves gaps and do not only hold for direct objects but also for subjects, indirect objects and adjuncts. Anyanwu (2007) explains that both topicalisation and clefting are used to focus or give some communicative prominence to a constituent over and above other constituents within a construction. Topicalisation is “the phenomenon in which some element of a sentence is singled out as the ‘topic’ by the use of a marked construction”, (Trask 1993:280). Clefting, on the other hand, is “the syntactic device by which a focused constituent is extracted from its logical position and often set off with some additional material, including an extra verb (Trask 1993:46). These definitions show that both topicalisation and clefting involve giving communicative prominence to some constituent within a construction. This study argues that topicalisation leaves a gap behind with an empty trace. The topicalised element allows the linking of the element with its trace like in wh-movement. In Ghòtùò, topic constructions involve ‘given information’ and ‘comment’. In Topic-Focus interaction, topic’s comment changes to focus ‘background information’; topic is projected higher than focus. Moreover, focusing plays a significant role in the understanding of speaker’s coding of constituents as new or given information in the ForceP. Topicalisation transformation is a kind of focusing because it involves the preposing of the item to be topicalised as a leftward movement rule. The topicalised item is the object of the most deeply embedded clause and that the sentence so generated is grammatical as Nwachukwu, (1995:182) posits that topicalisation transformation has no difference in meaning, but with a difference of syntactic structure.

The Constituents of Focusing in Ghòtùò

The units that can be focused or undergo focusing is the constituent of focus. It is the unit where the new information lies. It is the constituent that is emphasized and brought to focus. It is the unit that is moved to the Spec of FP position. Only maximal projections that is, phrases can be focused. DPs are the most easily focused constituent, which could be subject DP, object DP or object of preposition. When the object DP of preposition is focused the preposition which is the head of the phrase remains at the extraction site (preposition stranding) if the phrase is functioning as a complement but if it is an adjunct, the preposition is fronted with its object DP (pied piping). The

prepositional phrase and verb phrase can also be focused. Unlike Yoruba and some other African languages, in Ghòtùò, when the verb phrase is moved to be focused, it leaves an exact copy of itself at the extraction site and moves to the Spec FocP position without being topicalised. Adjectival phrase cannot be focused, for Ghòtùò does not allow adjective as a complement of NP rather the N will be relativised which will bring about relative clause. Both the noun and its relativised clause can be focused. Consider the following examples;

1a) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwèni

Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘Igó killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

b) Igó (ónhi) o gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwèni

Igó FOC 3sg kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘It is IGÓ who killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

c) Ofè (ónhi) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwèni

Rat FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘It is a RAT that Igó killed inside the room yesterday’

d) Gbé (ónhi) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwèni

Kill FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘Killing is what Igó did to a rat inside the room yesterday’

e) Udo óvbàghi ó (ónhi) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwèni

Inside room the FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘It is INSIDE THE ROOM that Igó yesterday’

f) Óvbàghi ó (ónhi) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwèni

Room the FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘It is in THE ROOM that Igó killed a rat yesterday’

g) Ọwèni (ónhi) Igó gbe ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwèni

Yesterday FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘It was YESTERDAY that Igó killed a rat inside the room’

h) Igó nhi mhi mhe (ónhi) Igó nhi mhi mhe o nhéghe òhò ó

Igó who I see FOC Igó who I see 3sg cook soup the

‘It is IGÓ WHO I SAW that cooked the soup’

i) Vbévbé_i (ónhi) u_i gbé ofè

You(Emph) FOC you kill rat

‘It is YOU who killed a rat’

From the examples above, it is seen that subject can be focused as seen in (1b) where **Igó**, the subject of the sentence (1a) is focused which contrast it from other possible constituents. In (1c) the object of the sentence **ofè** ‘rat’ is focused while the verb **gbé** ‘kill’ is focused (1d). Here, the moved verb leaves its exact copy at the extraction site, the moved verb is not nominalised. The prepositional phrase **udo óvbàghi ó** ‘inside the room’ is focused in (1e) while only the DP **óvbàghi ó** ‘the room’ from the prepositional phrase is focused in (1f) and the **ọwèni** ‘yesterday’ which an adverbis focused in (1g). Relative clause with the DP it qualifies is focused in (1h). It should be noted here that in Ghòtùò, DP cannot have adjective as its qualifier, such DP will only be relativised

such that, the DP will have relative clause as its qualifier as seen in (1h) where the whole of **Igó nhi mhi mhe** ‘Igó that I saw’ is focused. This will be further discussed later.

In examples (1b&h), there is introduction of **ò** ‘3sg’ after the focus marker, whenever subject of a sentence is focused, this ‘**ò**’ which is a copy of the focused subject occupies the original position of the focused subject. Also in Ghòtùò, pronouns can be focused, although not all pronouns only the emphatic ones can be focused non-emphatic cannot be focused.

Characteristics of Focus in Ghòtùò

Focused expressions have a number of syntactic, semantic and phonological characteristics that differentiate them from other neutral sentences in Ghòtùò. Consider the sentences below;

2a. Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì

Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘Igó killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

b) Igó ọ̀nhi o gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì

Igó FOC 3sg kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘It is IGÓ who killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

c) Ofè ọ̀nhi Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì

Rat FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘It is A RAT that Igó killed inside the room yesterday’

Example (2b&c) are derived from example (2a) where the focused element immediately precedes the focus marker ‘**Ọ̀nhi**’. (2a) is a neutral/ordinary sentence and it exhibits the subject-verb-object word order and contains no focus marker, sentences (2b&c) are examples of focus sentences in Ghòtùò. The following pieces of evidences can be deduced from this;

- a. The subject **Igó** has moved leftward to the position immediately to the left of **ónhi** leaving a copy of itself ‘**o**’ at the extraction site.
- b. The word order has changed from SVO to S **ónhi** VO
- c. The direct object **ofè** is raised to the left of **ónhi** also changing the word order to O- **ónhi** – SV

So, in both (2b&c) the expressions received a focus reading and the moved elements are seen as salient.

3 a. ***ónhi** Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì
 FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘IGÓ killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

b. Igó Ø o gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì
 Igó FOC 3sg kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘IGÓ killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

c. Igó **ónhi** o gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì
 Igó FOC 3sg kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘IGÓ killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

d. *Ofè **ónhi** Igó **ónhi** o gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì
 rat FOC Igó FOC 3sg kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘Igó killed A RAT inside the room yesterday’

The left adjacent position to **ónhi** must be reached at PF, the violation of this principle brings about the ungrammaticality of example (3a). The grammatical sentence in (3b) demonstrates that there could be leftward movement in the absence of focus marker **ónhi** as long as there is the **O** the 3sg

pronoun which is an indicator that something has been moved, is present. The language also does not allow multiple foci as can be seen from the ungrammaticality of sentence (3d). The language as well does not allow a focus in-situ strategy as exemplified in sentence (4) below

4. Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwèni
 Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘IGÓ killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

Lastly, there is no focal stress focus strategy in Ghòtùò as is the case in English. For example

- 5a. THE POET intoned the sonnet.
 b. The poet intoned THE SONNET.

Both the poet and the sonnet (the subject and the object) bear the focal stress. This kind of focus strategy is absent in Ghòtùò. In nutshell, focusing is ultimately realised in the language by movement of the focused element to the left adjacent position to **ónhi** as shown in the examples above.

Topicalisation in Ghòtùò

Topicalisation is a syntactic device that moves constituents (noun phrases in particular) from within a convergent IP derivation to the clause initial position for emphasis. The topicalised item in its new position is immediately followed, not by any free morpheme as in focusing but, by a brief pause usually represented by a comma before the remaining part of the IP from which the topicalised item is extracted (Crystal 1985:311 and Radford 1988:530). Awoyale (1995:121) claims that the brief pause which immediately follows topicalised nominals is the functional head of the topic projection. Every topicalised constituent leaves a gap or trace in the IP from which it is raised to the clause-initial position for emphasis.

Ghòtùò has no phonetically visible, free or bound, morpheme that marks or localizes emphasis within its CP. Emphasised constituents, mostly noun phrases, are simply extracted from a convergent IP derivation and moved to the clause initial position as a topic. When a verb is to be topicalised, as it is the case with focusing, such a verb is copied without being nominalised then moved to spec-TopP for emphasis. Below are examples of Ghòtùò topic expressions where the topicalised constituents are highlighted.

- 6a) **Ọmọhí** ọ Ọmọhí ọ dẹ ovbàghi nhi ọdžémi
 Man the man the buy house that good
 ‘The man bought a good house’

b) **Ovbàghì nhi ọdžémi** ọmọhí ọ dẹ Ovbàghì nhi ọdžémi
 House that good man the buy house that good
 ‘A good house, the man bought’

c) **Ovbàghì** nhi ọmọhí ọ dẹ Ovbàghì ọdžémi
 House that man the buy house good
 ‘The house, the man bought is good’

d) **fúè** mhi fúè òìl hà
 cook 1sg cook yam
 ‘Cooking is what I actually did to the yam’.

e) **Lé** Ọmùà lé ọdžémi
 go Ọmua go good
 ‘The fact that Ọmùà went is good’

f) Mhi nhệhệ u ibiá
 I know you children
 ‘I know you children’

g) **Vbavba ibiá** mhi nhệhệ Vbavba ibiá
 2pl-emph children I know 2pl-emph children
 ‘You the children, I know’

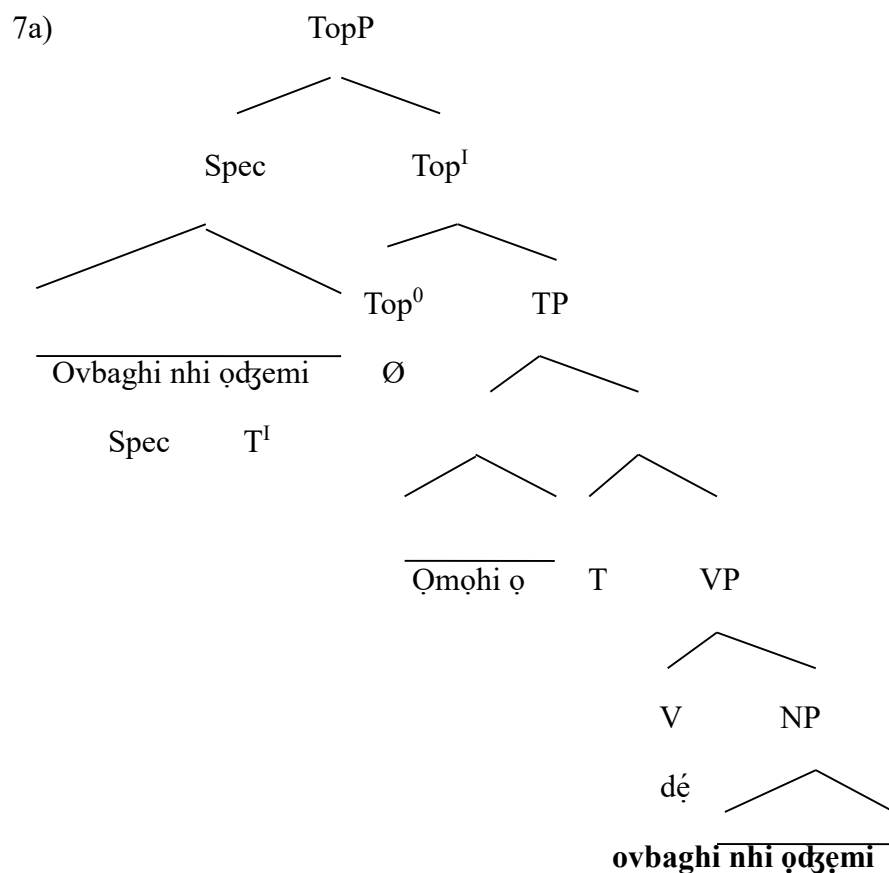
h) **Mhẹmhẹ** Igó

I Igó

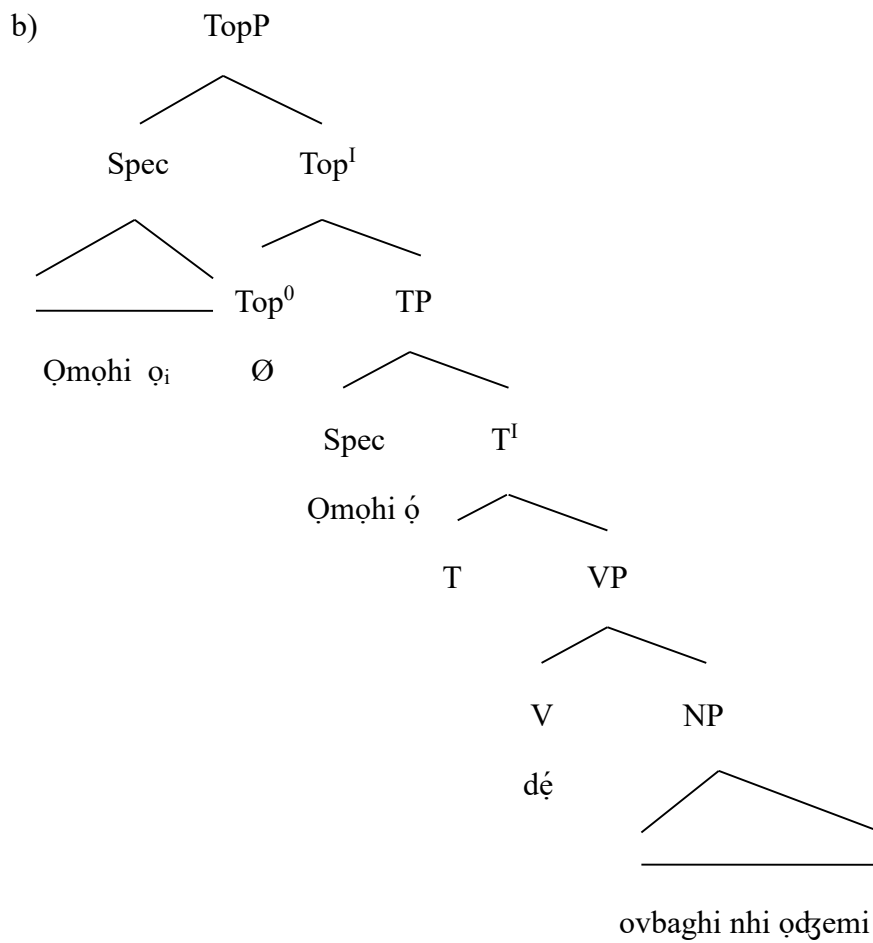
‘I, Igó’

Given the structural evidence available in above example, we propose that Ghòtùò has a strong but phonetically null Top head $\emptyset$ which projects an independent TopP at the CP layer. As a result, the strong specifier features of the null Top attract nominals to spec-TopP for feature checking, and that explains why topicalised constituents are always found at the clause initial position. This Top projection is illustrated in (7) below.

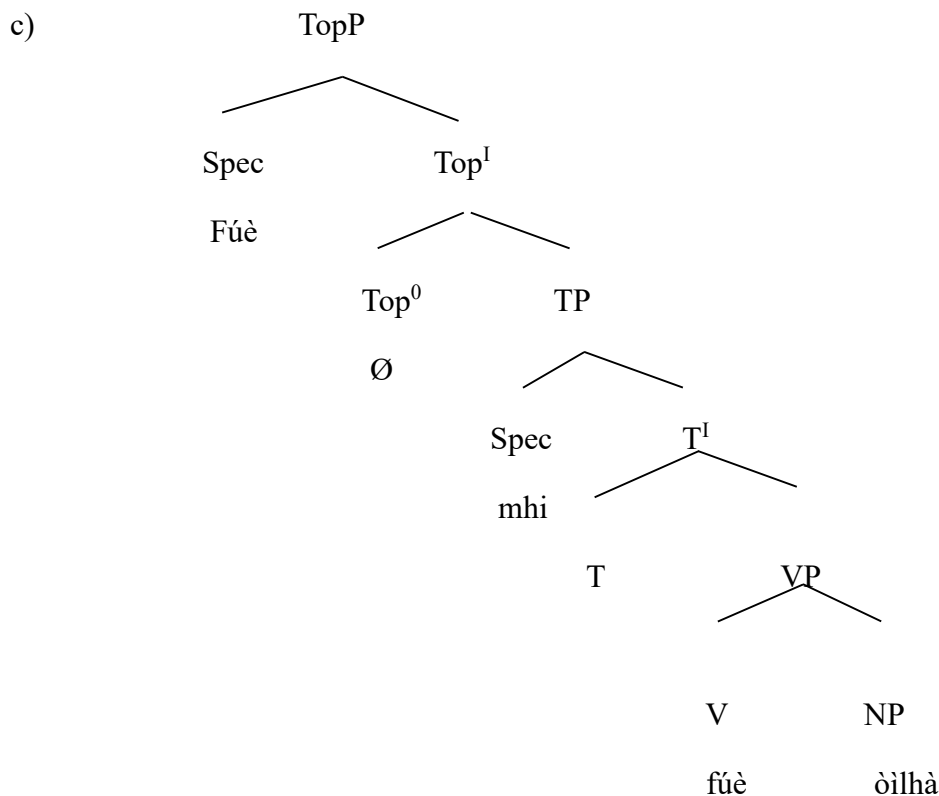
Object Topicalisation



Subject Topicalisation



Verb Topicalisation



Differences Between Focusing and Topicalisation in Ghòtùò

Focusing and topicalisation are very similar in processes. Both of them require a movement to the left peripheral position that is the spec position of their functional heads. Also, as the probe Foc can attract any constituent to its specifier position, so also the top probe can do likewise. But, the main and noticeable difference between focusing and topicalisation is the overt realisation of focus marker (although it is optional) while there is covert realisation of top marker or null top head. See the examples below:

- 8a) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó òwèni
 Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘Igó killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

b) Igó (ónhi) o gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọ̀wèni
 Igó FOC 3sg kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘It is IGÓ who killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

c) Ofè (ónhi) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọ̀wèni
 Rat FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘It is a RAT that Igó killed inside the room yesterday’

d) Gbé (ónhi) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọ̀wèni
 Kill FOC Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday
 ‘Killing is what Igó did to a rat inside the room yesterday’

8a) **Ọ̀mọ́hí ọ Ọ̀mọ́hí ọ dẹ ovbàghì nhi ọ̀džémi**
 Man the man the buy house that good
 ‘The man bought a good house’

b) **Ovbàghì nhi ọ̀džémi ọ̀mọ́hí ọ dẹ Ovbàghì nhi ọ̀džémi**
 House that good man the buy house that good
 ‘A good house, the man bought’

c) **Ovbàghì nhi ọ̀mọ́hí ọ dẹ Ovbàghì ọ̀džémi**
 House that man the buy house good
 ‘The house, the man bought is good’

d) **fúè** mhi fùè òìlhà

cook 1sg cook yam

‘Cooking is what I actually did to the yam’.

From the examples above, we see the optional overt realisation of foc marker in examples (96b-d) while there is non-overt realisation of top marker in examples (8a-d). The topicalised constituents are written in bold print.

Moreso, whenever subject DP or pronoun is focused, it leaves a copy at the extraction site but for topicalisation, there is nothing of such as seen from the examples below;

9a) Igó gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì

Igó kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘Igó killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

b) Igó (ónhi) o gbé ofè udo óvbàghi ó ọwẹ̀nì

Igó FOC 3sg kill rat inside room the yesterday

‘It is IGÓ who killed a rat inside the room yesterday’

10a) U gbé ofè

You kill rat

‘You killed a rat’

b) Vbévbé (ónhi) u gbé ofè

You(Emph) FOC you kill rat

‘It is YOU who killed a rat’

11a) Ọ dẹ èdẹ̀

He buy fish

‘He bought a fish’

b) Nhínhí (ónhì) ọ dẹ èḍzè

He FOC he buy fish

‘It is HIM that bought a fish’

12a) **Ọmọhí ọ** Ọmọhí ọ dẹ ovbàghì nhì ọḍzémì

Man the man the buy house that good

‘The man bought a good house’

13a) Mhi nhệhè u ibiá

I know you children

‘I know you children’

b) **Vbavba ibiá** mhi nhệhè Vbavba ibiá

2pl-emph children I know 2pl-emph children

‘You the children, I know’

c) **Mhẹmhẹ** Igó

I Igó

‘I, Igó’

Examples (12a, 13c&d) are topicalised expressions but there is no copy of the topicalised constituent at the extraction site, unlike examples (9b, 10b, 11b) where a copy of the focus constituents can be seen at the extraction site.

On a final note, both focusing and topicalisation cannot co-occur in a sentence, since both are competing for the same structural position that is the spec position of their various heads.

Conclusion

This work is a pointer to some of the issues discussed in the course of our investigation of Ghòtùò language. It investigated the syntax and scope of focusing as a syntactic process. It also gives a vivid account of the findings this work has established so far in the course of our analysis alongside the requirements of the theoretical provisions with its contribution(s) to knowledge. The focus marker is that element that heads the focus phrase. The status of the focus marker has been a case of so much controversy as it is regarded by the like of Awobuluyi (1992:71) as a copula verb, a mere expletive or a focus marker. In Ghòtùò ‘Ōnhi’ is the focus marker and it is optional. Its overt realisation in a sentence is to make contrast between the focused constituent and other constituents in the structure or to contrast new information. On the other hand, Topic constructions involve ‘given information’ and ‘comment’. In Topic-Focus interaction, topic’s comment changes to focus ‘background information’; topic is projected higher than focus. In Ghòtùò, focusing plays a significant role in the understanding of speaker’s coding of constituents as new or given information in the ForceP. Decoding discourse information hinges more on the constituents’ information structural properties.

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