

Searching high and low for focus in Ibibio¹

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1. Introduction

In this paper, we discuss morphosyntactic properties of two types of focus involving verbs in Ibibio: contrastive verb focus (1b) and exhaustive verb focus (1c).²

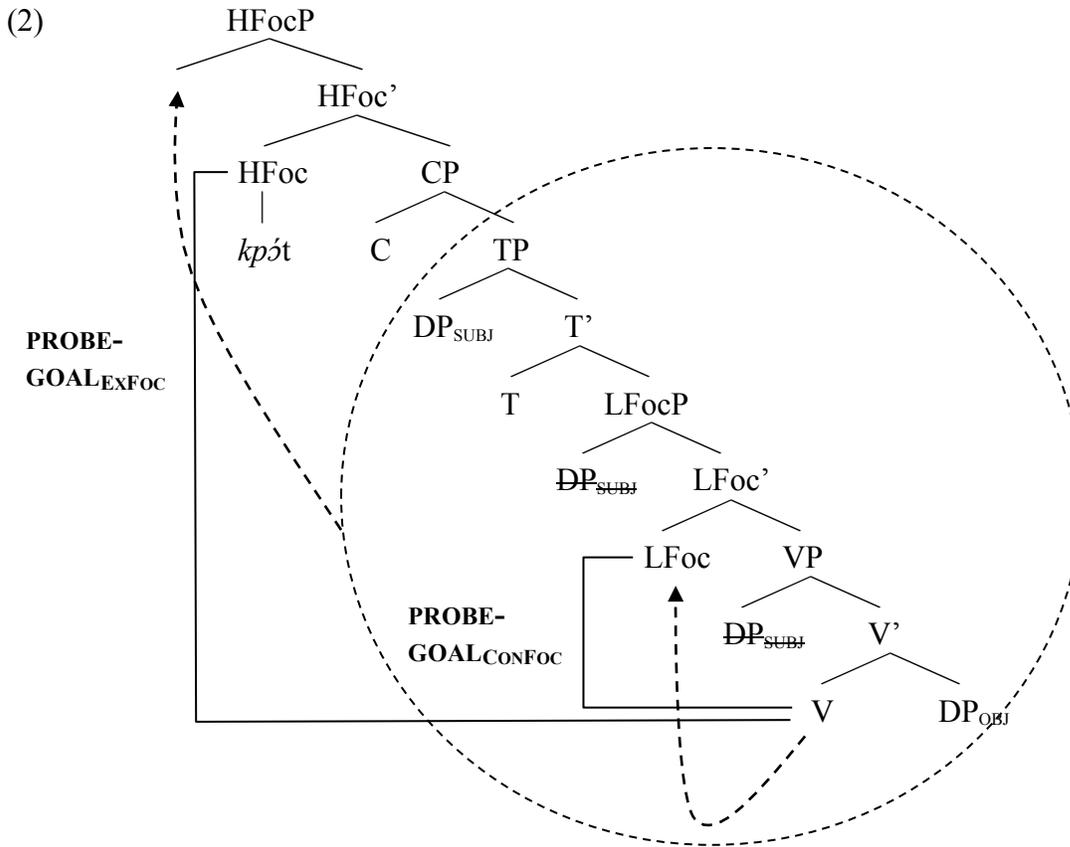
- (1) a. *ékpé á-mà á-kót ñ-wèt* (input to [1b, c])
ekpe 3SG-PST 3SG-read NMLZ-write
'Ekpe read a book.'
- b. *ékpé á-ké á-kòó-kót ñ-wèt* Contrastive Verb Focus
ekpe 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-CON.FOC-read NMLZ-write
'Ekpe READ the book (not, say, take it away).'
- c. *ékpé á-ké á-kót ñ-wèt kpót* Exhaustive Verb Focus
ekpe 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-read NMLZ-write only
'Ekpe only read the book.'

We motivate and explore two distinct focus positions corresponding to each construction, a high focus phrase (HFocP) in the C domain, and a low focus phrase (LFocP) in the inflectional domain. We also show that Ibibio has both syntactically and semantically distinct loci of verb focus. Exhaustive verb focus recruits structure high in the left periphery, and is derived by phrasal movement where the TP is pied-piped. On the other hand, contrastively focused verbs are situated much closer to VP and are generated by head movement, where V^0 is attracted to the lower focus head. Moreover, we discuss how these distinct structural configurations allow for double verb focus constructions. The structural superiority of the phrasal projection that houses exhaustively focused verb triggers scope effects such that exhaustive focus takes wide scope over contrastive focus obligatorily.

Ibibio thus provides independent evidence for multiple foci occurring in a single clause (Krifka 1992; É. Kiss 1998; Rizzi 1997) and further support for the existence of a low focus position (Belletti 2004). Our proposed analysis is given in (2), which shows the derivation for both exhaustive verb focus and contrastive verb focus:

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² The abbreviations used in this handout are as follows: 1 = 1st person, 2 = 2nd person, 3 = 3rd person, COMP = complementizer, CON = contrastive, COND = conditional, FOC = focus, IMPF = imperfective, INDF = indefinite, NEG = negation, NMLZ = nominalizer, OBJ = object, PERF = perfective, PL = plural, PST = past, SG = singular, S/SUBJ = subject. Ibibio is tonal, and tones are marked in the following manner: \acute{V} = high tone, \grave{V} = low tone, \check{V} = falling tone (note that tones are marked on either vowels or syllabic nasals in the data).



This derivation illustrates our analyses for contrastive and exhaustive verb focus, and it also demonstrates how both of these structurally distinct foci can be activated to generate double focus. In contrastive verb focus, LFoc⁰ probes V⁰ and triggers head raising. In exhaustive focus, HFoc⁰ forms a probe-goal relation with V⁰; instead of generating head movement, though, the TP is pied-piped to Spec, HFocP. When both foci are activated, ordering is critical: contrastive verb focus must be embedded under exhaustive focus for the derivation to be sustained.

This paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a basic background of Ibibio, focusing on word order and agreement, and motivating the existence of verb raising in the language. Following this, in Section 3 we turn to argument focus and *wh*-questions to provide a backdrop for understanding verb focus constructions. Sections 4–6 provide our analyses of contrastive verb focus, exhaustive verb focus, and double verb focus, respectively. Section 7 concludes.

2. Background

2.1. Word order & agreement

Ibibio is a Lower Cross Niger-Congo language spoken in Akwa Ibom state in southeastern Nigeria. It is an SVO language with both subject agreement and object agreement (Essien 1990a; Baker & Willie 2010):

(3) a. *èkà á-mà á-fát áyìn*
 mother 3SG-PST 3SG-hug child
 ‘The mother hugged the child.’

b. *èkà á-mà á-ń-fát (mièn)*
 mother 3SG-PST 3SG-1SG-hug 1SG
 ‘The mother hugged me.’

As seen in (3), subject agreement surfaces on both T^0 and V^0 , leading to multiple subject agreement. Object agreement occurs on V^0 only, and is not always visible in the surface form.³

Ibibio matrix clauses project not only TP, but also a series of functional layers such as AspP and MoodP. Subject agreement has “no firm upper limit” and is present on “every verbal functional head” (Baker & Willie 2010: 110):

- (4) *ú-kpá ú-ké ú-sé ú-màná-ké ú-nám*
 2SGS-COND 2SGS-PERF 2SGS-IMPF 2SGS-do.again-NEG 2SGS-do
 ‘You should not have been doing it again.’ (Baker & Willie 2010: 110)

These facts yield the following word order in a standard declarative clause:

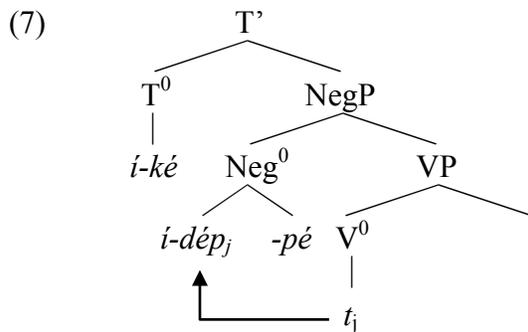
- (5) $DP_{SUBJ} Agr_{SUBJ-T} [...] Agr_{SUBJ}/Agr_{OBJ}-V DP_{OBJ}$

2.2. Verb raising

Verb movement occurs in several contexts in Ibibio. One of these is negation, illustrated below:

- (6) a. *òkón á-mà á-tóγγó*
 okon 3SG-PST 3SG-start
 ‘Okon had started.’
- b. *òkón í-ké í-tóγγó-ké*
 okon 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-start-NEG
 ‘Okon had not started.’
- c. *ímá á-mà á-dép*
 ima 3SG-PST 3SG-buy
 ‘Ima bought it.’
- d. *ímá í-ké í-dép-pé*
 ima 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-buy-NEG
 ‘Ima didn’t buy it.’

Note in these examples that negation surfaces as a CV suffix, which in these cases is either *-ké* (6b) or an assimilated suffix (6d).⁴ These forms provide evidence for the order of Tense and Negation, as well as morphosyntactic consequences of V raising (Baker & Willie 2010).^{5,6} The abbreviated tree in (7) shows the formation of the complex head in (6d):



³ Oftentimes because of phonological reasons (e.g., vowel hiatus resolution) object agreement is difficult to discern. All person markers in Ibibio are vowels except 1SG, which is a nasal that assimilates to the onset of the verb root. Thus, object marking always survives in cases involving 1SG objects because the nasal does not delete.

⁴ There is also a third allomorph, *-yV*, which surfaces on monosyllabic verb roots. See Akinlabi & Urua (2002), who also treat the various allomorphs of the negative suffix to be “underlyingly /ké/” (Akinlabi & Urua 2002: 127).

⁵ In agreement with Baker & Willie (2010), we believe that V raising is supported by the fact that negation surfaces preverbally as a separate word, *ké*, in small clause constructions (e.g. causatives) and subjunctives, which may lack the TP layer. We remain agnostic at present with respect to the possibility of V raising through Neg to T, though we feel this is a viable option (see Baker 2008).

⁶ We discuss below our account for the change in tense markers.

Thus, if RecP intervenes between NegP and VP, V raising ensures that the reciprocal suffix surfaces closest to the verb, since the verb head raises first to Rec⁰. This forms a complex head that provides the input to Neg⁰. As we argue below, verb raising and the architecture in (10) are significant for understanding contrastive verb focus, which also involves head movement.

3. Argument focus & *wh*-questions

When arguments are focused, the past tense marker *-mà* is replaced with *-ké*:¹⁰

- (11) a. *àniyè (ówó) ké èkà á-ké/*mà á-fát* Object *wh*-question
 who person COMP mother 3SG-PST.FOC/*PST 3SG-hug
 ‘Who did the mother hug?’
- b. *(á-dò) áyìn ké èkà á-ké/*mà á-fát* Object focus
 3SG-be child COMP mother 3SG-PST.FOC/*PST 3SG-hug
 ‘It was the child that the mother hugged.’

Thus, in past tense, *-mà* is incompatible with argument focus (Essien 1990a; 1990b; Willie & Udoinyang 2012: 244). “Focus” *-ké* surfaces obligatorily in argument focus contexts (for past tense), as well as *wh*-questions (Note that the 1st *ké* in (11a-b) is the complementizer; the inflected *á-ké* [relevant for our discussion] is obligatory). Following Rizzi (1997), we take it that the landing site of focused constituents and *wh*-expressions is a focus phrase located in the C domain. In this paper, we call this projection HFocP to distinguish it from a second focus phrase that we argue projects rather low in the clausal spine. HFoc⁰ bears a focus feature that draws a phrasal element to its specifier, presumably because such movement is induced by the need to satisfy a focus-criterion (Rizzi 1997).

In contrast to object *wh*-questions and object focus, an overt C is illicit in subject *wh*-questions and subject focus. Moreover, past tense *-mà* cannot occur in these constructions, and the fact that *-mà* and “focus” *-ké* are in complementary distribution suggests that the *-ké* in (12a, c) is “focus” *-ké*, not the complementizer.

- (12) a. *àniyé i-ké/*mà í-fát áyìn* Subject *wh*-question
 who 3SG-PST.FOC/*PST 3SG-hug child
 ‘Who hugged the child?’
- b. **àniyé ké i-ké í-fát áyìn*
 who COMP 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-hug child
 (Intended: ‘Who hugged the child?’ or ‘Who is it that hugged the child?’)
- c. *(á-dò) èkà á-ké/*mà á-fát áyìn* Subject focus
 3SG-be mother 3SG-PST.FOC/*PST 3SG-hug child
 ‘It was the mother that hugged the child (not the father).’
- d. **èkà ké á-ké á-fát áyìn*
 mother COMP 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-hug child
 (Intended: ‘It was the mother that hugged the child [not the father].’)

¹⁰ We here only present data in the past tense, though present and future tenses pattern similarly in this regard.

This subject-object asymmetry in argument focus suggests a “that-trace effect” (Perlmutter 1971; Chomsky & Lasnik 1977) disallowing subject extraction over overt complementizers.

In summary, argument focus in Ibibio requires a special tense marker (“focus” *-ké* in past tense), and the neutral tense marker is illicit in such constructions. Focused arguments and *wh*-items undergo movement to HFocP in the complementizer domain, and land higher than the C head. As we discuss below, these properties of focus constructions are significant for differentiating between the two types of verb focus under consideration here: exhaustively focused verbs pattern much like argument focus constructions and involve phrasal movement to the left periphery, whereas contrastively focused verbs do not activate structure in the C system, and instead are derived in the inflectional domain via head movement.

4. Contrastive verb focus

4.1. Morphophonological properties

When verbs are contrastively focused, verb morphology expresses focus (Essien 1990a: 103-106; Akinlabi & Urua 2000; 2002; see Cook 2002, for verb focus in the closely related Efik).

- (13) a. *ákùn á-mà á-dép ñ-wèt* (input to [13b])
 akun 3SG-PST 3SG-buy NMLZ-write
 ‘Akun bought the book.’
- b. *ákùn á-ké á-dèé-dép ñ-wèt í-ké*
 akun 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-CON.FOC-buy NMLZ-write 3SG-PST.FOC
- í-yìp-pé-yìp*
 3SG.CON.FOC-NEG-steal
 ‘Akun BOUGHT the book, she didn’t STEAL it.’

Forms of focused verbs demonstrate interactions between phonology, morphology, & syntax. In affirmative forms, the focus component “takes the shape of a heavy (bimoraic) syllable” (Akinlabi & Urua 2002: 156), which appears on the surface to be some type of prefixal “reduplicant.” Vowel lengthening occurs on the “reduplicant,” and the initial CV sequence of the verb root becomes a “reduplicative prefix” of the form CVV-√. This prefix bears a tone pattern (LH or HH) that is sensitive to the tone melody on the root. The -ATR vowels /i, u, ɔ/ cannot be lengthened in Ibibio, and these change to [e, u, ɔ] in order to be lengthened. Finally, verb roots with underlyingly low tones become HL falling tones in contrastive reduplication. These properties can be seen in the examples of affirmative contrastively focused verbs in Table 1, which are given for each of the vowels and simple tones in Ibibio.

Table 1: Contrastive verb focus forms

<i>Vowel (w/ tone)</i>	<i>Permissible syllable type</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>English gloss</i>	<i>Focused stem (affirmative)</i>
[í]	CV(C)	dí	‘come’	dìídí
[ì]	CV(C)	kpi	‘cut’	kpiìkpì
[í]	CVC	tím	‘pound’	tèétím
[ì]	CVC	nìm	‘keep’	nèénìm
[é]	CV(C)	sé	‘look’	sèésé
[è]	CV(C)	wèt	‘write’	wèèwèt
[ú]	CV(C)	túúk	‘touch’	tùútúúk
[ù]	CV(C)	fù	‘be lazy’	fùúfù
[á]	CVC	bún	‘keep many things’	bùúbún
[à]	CVC	bùm	‘break’	bùúbùm
[ó]	CV(C)	bót	‘mold’	bòóbót
[ò]	CV(C)	bòn	‘begat’	bòóbòn
[ó]	CVC	tók	‘urinate’	tòótók
[ò]	CVC	tòk	‘verbally abuse’	tòótòk
[á]	CVC	fák	‘cover’	fòófák
[à]	CVC	ták	‘grate’	tòóták
[á]	CV(C)	má	‘love’	màámá
[à]	CV(C)	mà	‘complete’	màámà

4.2. Morphosyntactic structure

Unlike argument focus, which recruits structure in the C domain, we claim that the derivation for verb focus is more local, that is, TP-internal:

- (14) *ákùn* [TP *á-ké* *á-yèé-yîp* *îj-wèt*] *í-ké*
 akun 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-CON.FOC-steal NMLZ-write 3SG -PST.FOC

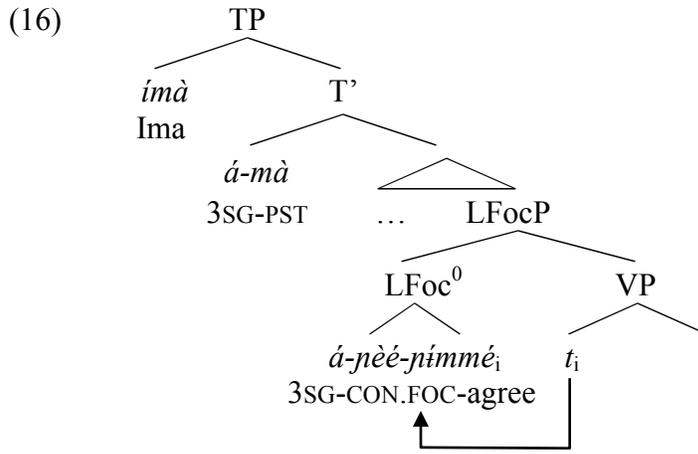
í-dép-pé-dép
 3SG-buy-NEG-buy
 ‘Akun STOLE the book, she didn’t BUY it.’

Evidence for our claim comes from the position of contrastively focused verbs with respect to T⁰. We take it that the presence or absence of “focus” *-ké* is a diagnostic of activation (or not) of the left periphery. Unlike argument focus, where “focus” *-ké* tense marker appears obligatorily, contrastively focused verbs can occur with the standard past tense *-mà* and without “focus” *-ké*:

- (15) *ímà á-mà á-nèé-nímmé*
 ima 3SG-PST 3SG-CON.FOC-agree
 ‘Ima AGREED (she didn’t disagree).’

Thus, contrastive verb focus does not activate the left edge. Instead, the focused verb *néénímmé* ‘AGREED’ in (15) surfaces below the T⁰ *-mà*.

To account for this, we posit a low focus projection that dominates VP, and propose that verbs undergo movement to LFoc⁰ in contrastive verb focus. This is shown in the abbreviated tree in (16), which shows the derivation of (15):



We argue that the contrastive verb focus “morpheme” is the product of the verb headmoving to LFoc⁰ (see (2) above), and that the syntax provides input to phonology, which results in this special verb morphology. In (16), LFoc⁰ probes for V⁰ (Chomsky 2000; 2001) and attracts it to itself. We take it that this probing and attraction is driven by an interpretable focus feature on LFoc⁰, which V⁰ values following head adjunction. Focus “reduplication” is a post-syntactic consequence that results from head raising. Interestingly, in Ibibio this low focus position is uniquely associated with contrastive semantics for verbs, which is sort of an unexpected restriction.¹¹ We stipulate—but leave for future investigation—that Ibibio LFoc⁰ has a property such that it probes for features exclusive to verbs, and this disallows attracting phrasal units.

Negated verbs may offer insight into the syntactic structure of verb focus. As noted above, V raising produces a CV negative suffix, as seen in (17b).

- (17) a. *á-mà á-fǒp*
 2SG-PST 3SG-burn
 ‘You burned it.’
- b. *ú-ké ú-fǒp-pǒ*
 2SG-PST.FOC 2SG-burn-NEG
 ‘You didn’t burn it.’

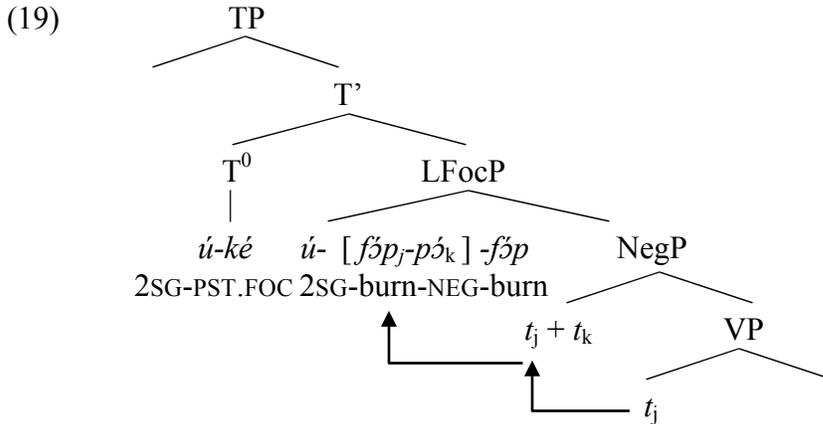
Instead of a phonologically reduced copy of the verb that appears in affirmative contrastive verb focus forms, negative focused verbs exhibit two full copies of the verb (irrespective of syllable type) with Neg intervening:

- (18) a. *ú-ké ú-fǒp-pǒ-fǒp* Neg + Contrastive Verb Focus
 2SG-PST.FOC 2SG-burn-NEG-burn
 ‘You didn’t BURN it.’
- b. *í-ké í-dép-pé-dép ò-wèt á-ké*
 3SG -PST.FOC 3SG-buy-NEG-buy NMLZ-write 3SG-PST.FOC
- á-yèé-yíp*
 3SG-CON.FOC-steal
 ‘She didn’t BUY the book, she STOLE it.’

¹¹ Belletti (2004) shows that, in Italian, low focus involving postverbal subjects is associated with new information.

Similar to our analysis of negated reciprocals above, we take it that the suffix closest to the verb attaches first as a result of verb raising. In (18), this is the negative suffix, either *-pó* (18a) or *-pé* (18b). Negation thus precedes contrastive focus, and the negated verb forms the input to the low focus position.

We propose (19) as the derivation of (18a):



In the derivation of negative contrastive verb focus, LFoc⁰ probes for V⁰ (as in (16) above), but it attracts the morphologically complex verb that has first raised to Neg⁰. The negative suffix is a consequence of V-to-Neg (similar to patterning of reciprocals), and the negative suffix + a full verb copy are a consequence of V-to-Neg-to-Foc.

Why is affirmative contrastive focus a heavy CVV “prefix” while negative contrastive focus retains a full copy? We tentatively propose (but leave for future analysis) the possibility that the grammar disprefers adjacent copies in contrastive focus constructions and instead prefers to dissimilate and maintain distinction. Support for this comes from other instances of contrastive focus in the language. Full reduplication exists elsewhere in Ibibio (20), but when items are contrastively focused some strategy for differentiation is employed (21):

- | | |
|---|---|
| (20) a. <i>itók</i>
‘(a) race’ | b. <i>itók itók</i>
‘hurriedly’ |
| (21) a. <i>éwá ámi</i>
‘this dog’ | a'. <i>éwá ámi-ñímmí</i>
‘THIS dog (not that one)’ |
| b. <i>éwá ókò</i>
‘that (visible) dog’ | b'. <i>éwá ókò-ñóñkó</i>
‘THAT (visible) dog (not this one)’ |
| c. <i>éwá ódò</i>
‘that (not visible) dog’ | c'. <i>éwá ódò-ñòndó</i>
‘THAT (not visible) dog (not this one)’ |

Thus, (phonologically) maintaining a distinction seems to be specific to contrastively focused items – either verbs or demonstratives – in Ibibio; identical adjacent items in non-contrastive constructions are permitted (20). The patterning of contrastively focused demonstratives in (21) could be explained in a way that is analogous to the narrative of contrastive verb focus we develop here; that is, if the syntax generates adjacent items that are phonologically identical then the phonological system resorts to a post-syntactic strategy to differentiate them.

In our analysis, then, verb focus morphology is a syntactic consequence of focused verbs undergoing V-to-LFoc movement. This enables us to provide a more unified account of both affirmative and negative contrastive verb forms, since the same derivation underlies both, despite their superficial dissimilarity. However, more work is needed in this area to determine what additional morphophonological processes generate the affirmative forms (such as those proposed by Akinlabi & Urua 2000; 2002). What we see as critically important is that the presence of intervening material (e.g., the negative suffix) blocks phonological reduction, though full copies of the verbs are present in the syntactic derivation of both affirmative and negative forms.

5. Exhaustive focus

A second type of focus construction in Ibibio corresponds to exhaustive focus, which is illustrated below in (22). As with argument focus – and unlike contrastive verb focus – “Focus” *ké* surfaces obligatorily in exhaustive focus constructions.

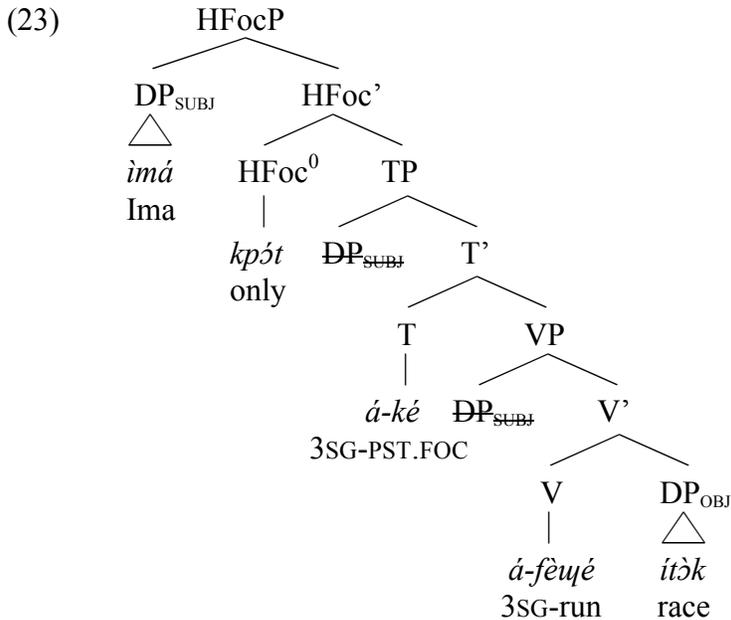
- (22) a. *ì má á-mà á-fèuyé ítòk* (input to [22b, c])
 ima 3SG-PST 3SG-run race
 ‘Ima ran the race.’
- b. *ì má kpót á-ké á-fèuyé ítòk* Subject exhaustive focus
 ima only 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-run race
 ‘Only Ima ran the race (not Ekpe or Akun).’/*‘Ima only ran the race (she didn’t go to the party).’
- c. *ítòk kpót ké ì má á-ké á-fèuyé* Object exhaustive focus
 race only COMP ima 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-run
 ‘It was only the race that Ima ran.’
- d. *èté â-ké-dép-pé àkàrà á-mà á-kót ò-wèt* (input to [22e])
 man 3SG-PST.FOC-buy-REL bean.cake 3SG-PST 3SG-read NMLZ-write
 ‘The man who bought the bean cake read the book.’
- e. *èté â-ké-dép-pé àkàrà kpót á-ké á-kót ò-wèt*
 man 3SG-PST.FOC-buy-REL bean.cake only 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-read NMLZ-write
 ‘Only the man who bought the bean cake read the book (not Ima or Akun).’/*‘The man who bought the bean cake only read the book (he didn’t read the magazine/he didn’t sell the book).’¹²

The focus particle *kpót* ‘only’ acts as an exhaustive focus operator, and it appears to the right of the focused element. We posit that *kpót* heads its own phrasal projection, which is a high focus phrase in the complementizer domain.^{13, 14} Exhaustively focused XPs that are attracted by HFoc⁰

¹² An anonymous reviewer points out that this structure is ambiguous, and that it has the additional meaning ‘The man who bought only the bean cake read the book.’ We assume here that relative clauses of the form in (22d-e) involve raising-to-C, which accounts for the appearance of the relative suffix. We take it that this additional meaning is still compatible with movement to a high focus position, since the subject and relativized verb are also undergo movement to the C domain. However, we leave a more precise account of relative clause structures for future investigation.

¹³ Note, too, that the complementizer *ké* is required when an object is exhaustively focused (22c), and that this complementizer appears after *kpót*. An overt C⁰ is illicit when subjects are exhaustively focused, which is reminiscent of the subject-object asymmetry observed in argument focus constructions due to the “that-trace effect”

thus land in Spec, HFocP (Rizzi 1997; Kayne 1998; É. Kiss 1998), which guarantees that *kpót* always follows its focused constituent, as the examples in (22) show. The structure in (23) shows the derivation of (22b) along these lines.



When verbs are exhaustively focused in Ibibio, the entire TP is targeted for movement. Consequently, the exhaustive focus operator *kpót* always appears to the right edge of the TP, as seen in (24).¹⁵

- (24) a. [_{HFocP} [_{TP} *imá á-ké á-fèuyè ítòk*] *kpót*]
 ima 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-run race only
 ‘Ima only ran the race.’/*‘Only Ima ran the race.’
- b. [_{HFocP} [_{TP} *ékpè á-ké á-kòt ñ-wèt*] *kpót*]
 ekpe 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-read NMLZ-write only
 ‘Ekpe only read the book.’/*‘Only Ekpe read the book.’

(see Section 3). It may be the case that *kpót* constructions do not require the type of Spec-Head configuration that we propose. However, what is most important for our analysis is that exhaustive focus in Ibibio recruits structure high in the left periphery.

¹⁴ An alternative analysis could treat *kpót* as a focus-sensitive adjunct much like ‘only’ in English (this point was raised by an audience member of LSA 2015 and an anonymous reviewer). In such an account, *kpót* would not head a projection in the C domain; instead, it would adjoin to an XP that bears a focus feature. We take it that this is indeed a viable option, but at present it is difficult to distinguish with much certainty. Importantly, data suggest that *kpót*-focused constituents (including exhaustive verb focus) activate a left-peripheral focus projection in a way that parallels argument focus and *wh*-questions in the language. That is, exhaustive focus requires “focus” tense/aspect morphology (just like in cases of \bar{A} -extraction), which is not a requirement of verb focus constructions that recruit the low focus projection.

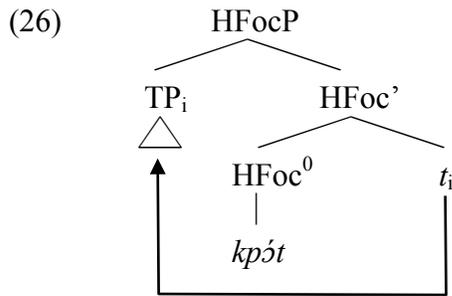
¹⁵ One anonymous reviewer notes that, with a change of tone, the second readings in (24) are possible. Thus, if the final tone of the verb complexes in (24a) and (24b) are high, the grammaticality judgments are reversed. We assume that the different readings have similar underlying structures. The fact that *kpót* can scope over the whole TP or the subject, but not the object, further supports our pied-piping analysis. It could be that the object is too deeply embedded inside TP to be focused in this construction.

Moreover, exhaustive verb focus constructions bear an affinity to subject focus in that an overt complementizer is not permitted:

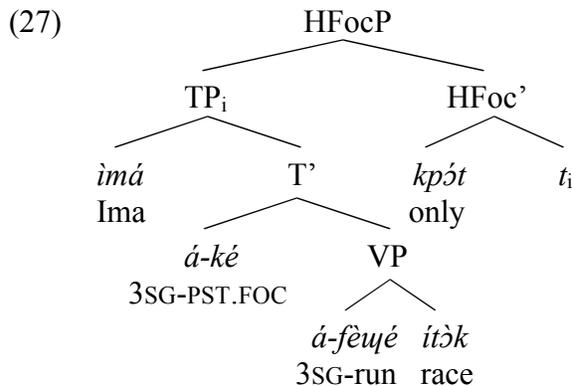
- (25) **ìmá á-ké á-fèuyé ítòk kpót ké*
 ima 3SG-PST.FOC 3SG-run race only COMP
 (Intended: ‘Ima only ran the race.’)

Exhaustively focused verbs thus demonstrate a “that-trace effect,” which is the same configuration for subject focus.

We propose the following analysis for exhaustive TP focus (26), where HFoc⁰ probes for V⁰ and pied-pipes (Ross 1967) TP.



Our analysis of (24a) is given in (27):



Exhaustive verb focus constructions thus require a different structural configuration than that of contrastively focused verbs. Exhaustive VP focus targets XPs for movement to the C layer, rather than being derived by head movement more local to VP. Exhaustively focused constituents move to Spec, HFocP and appear to the left of the exhaustive focus operator.

6. Double focus

Given the tree in (1), Ibibio should allow “real multiple focus” (Krifka 1992). That is, if there are truly two distinct focus projections, it should be able to activate both focus heads in a single clause; Ibibio shows that this can indeed happen.

Rizzi (1997: 298) noted for Italian that *wh*-questions are incompatible with focus constructions, since they compete for the same position:

(28) Italian

- a. **A chi IL PREMIO NOBEL dovrebbero dare?*
 ‘To whom THE NOBEL PRIZE should they give?’ (Rizzi 1997: 298)
- b. **IL PREMIO NOBEL a chi dovrebbero dare?*
 ‘THE NOBEL PRIZE to whom should they give?’ (Rizzi 1997: 298)

In Ibibio, *wh*-questions allow movement to the left periphery, while contrastive verb focus is derived in the inflectional domain. As a result, Ibibio contrastive verb focus is compatible with *wh*-questions, as seen in (29) below.

- (29) a. *̀nsõ ké (ãfò) à-díá-díá*
 what COMP 2SG 2SG-CON.FOC-eat
 ‘What the hell are you EATING?’
- b. *̀nsõ ké (ãfò) mmé-ú-ké-ú-díá-uyá-díá*
 what COMP 2SG mmé-2SG-PST.FOC-2SG-CON.FOC-NEG-eat
 ‘What the hell didn’t you EAT?’

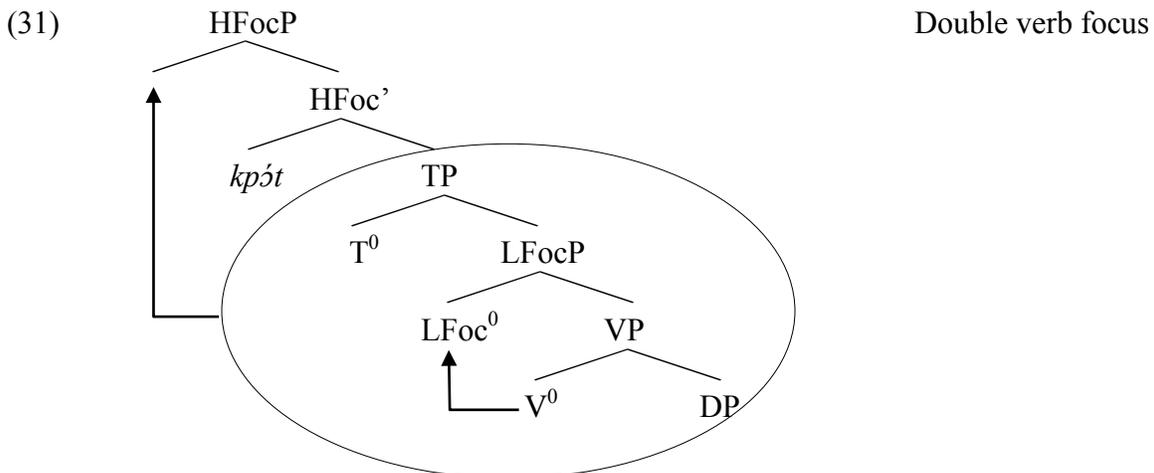
In (29), the left edge HFoc and lower LFoc are both activated, allowing the *wh*-element *̀nsõ* ‘what?’ to move to the C domain and the verb *díá* ‘eat’ to raise to the lower focus position. This type of double focus interestingly produces a *wh*-the-hell (Pesetsky 1987; Dikken & Giannakidou 2002) reading.

Ibibio also permits double focus (contrastive + exhaustive) with verbs probed for by both Foc heads:

- (30) *é-ké é-bɔ́ɔ-bwót ákák kpót*
 3PL-PST.FOC 3PL-CON.FOC-borrow money only
 ‘They only BORROWED money.’ (Response to: ‘Did they steal money?’)

As with (29), our analysis can account for the simultaneity of these focus types since they correspond to distinct structural configurations.

We propose the (truncated) structure in (31) for double verb focus in Ibibio:



Here, the order in the derivation is critical, and the derivation of contrastive verb focus precedes exhaustive verb focus. Accordingly, LFoc⁰ probes for V⁰ and causes it to raise, which ensures the

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