Predicate-Centered Focus Types in Khoekhoegowab:

A Morphosyntactic Analysis

Sylvanus Job

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Project for M.A. thesis

1.   Introduction

Khoekhoegowab (ISO 639-3 NAQ)

Other names: Nama, Namaqua, Bergdama, Bergdamara; Hottenttot *(pejorative)* (Lewis et al. 2014)

a) Classification ("Khoisan")

1. Non-Khoe   (Ju, ǂHôa, Tuu)
2. **Khoe-Kwadi ("Central Khoisan")**
   2.1. Khoekhoe
      2.1.1. North: Nama/Damara, Hai‖'om, ǂAakhoe(DC) (= KHOEKHOEGOWAB)
      2.1.2. South: !Ora; Cape Khoekhoe varieties (DC)
   2.2. Kalahari Khoe
3. Sandawe (not illustrated on the map)
4. Hadza (not illustrated on the map)

(**Figure 1:** Classification of 'Khoisan' languages based on Güldemann & Vossen 2000: 102)
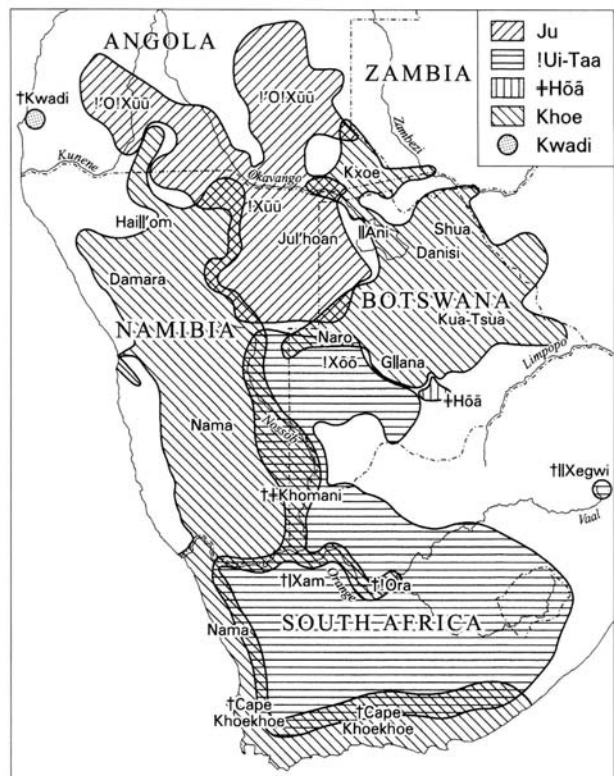
(**Map 1:** Distribution of 'Khoisan' languages based on Güldemann & Vossen 2000: 102)

b) Socio-linguistic Data

- Total of 251 100 speakers throughout southern Africa (Namibia, South Africa and Botswana).
    - 200 000 of them live in Namibia, where has a national language status (Lewis et al. 2014).
- National radio broadcasters in South Africa and Namibia broadcast programmes in Khoekhoegowab (Lewis et al. 2014).
- Second most widely used language per household in Namibia (Namibia Statistics Agency, Census 2011).
- Taught in primary schools and secondary schools in Namibia (Lewis et al. 2014).
- Can be studied up to doctoral level at the university of Namibia (Lewis et al. 2014).
- Use latin script with additional characters.

c) Grammatical and Phonological Information

- Canonical sentence structure: SOV
- Isolating/agglutinating language
- Phonological inventory:
    - 20 click consonants (combination of 4 influxes and 5 effluxes - accompaniment)
    - 12 non-click consonants; 5 oral and 3 nasal vowels
- 6 lexical tones in citation form (i.e. SL; L; SL-L (low-rising); SH; H; H-SH (high-rising)) and 4 lexical tones in sandhi form (cf. Haacke 1999c: 72[1] and Brugman 2009: 120).
- Nouns and nominal phrases take person, gender and number (PGN) suffixes.

2.   Theoretical and Methodological Framework

a) Focus

+Focus is "that information [in an utterance] which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by S [Speaker] to be most essential for A [Addressee] to integrate into his pragmatic information." (Dik 1997:326).

+Different focus types (communicative point) and other focus parameters:

- Communicative point:	1.	information gap *(information focus)*	> assertive focus
	2.	contrastive information	> contrastive focus
- Scope of focus:	a.	term	> term focus
	b.	verb lexeme and predicate operators	> predication focus

(**Figure 2:** Güldemann 2003: 332)

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[1] According to Haacke (1999c), Khoekhoegowab tones result from a combination of four surface *tonal features* of which each is assigned a syllable – i.e. double low, low, high, and double high. Therefore, in all bisyllabic roots, they constitute "tonal melodies".

b) Predicate-Centered Focus (PCF)

+ Significance of the study

- "The formal semantic analysis of predicate focus is by and large clear. The questions as to how different kinds of predicate focus are realized, compared to each other and compared to term focus is still an open issue." (Zimmermann 2008: 9)

- "In der mittlerweile umfangreichen Literatur zu Fokus wurde die Fokussierung von prädikatszentrierten Fokuskategorien bisher oft stiefmütterlich behandelt." (Güldemann 2009: 2)

+ The predicate is the host of two major functions:

    (a) instantiates illocutionary act

    (b) identifies/selects a state-of-affairs

- The terminological precision should disambiguate between:

    (a) verb/predicate operator focus – includes most important truth-value ~ "verum" focus.

    (b) state-of-affairs focus – verb (lexeme), (Fiedler et al. 2010: 2).

+ Below is an illustration of the predicate-centered focus types based on Güldemann (2009).

Predicate-centered focus

State-of-affairs (SoA)
{What did the princess
do with the frog?}
She KISSED him.

Operator

T(ense)A(aspect)M(ood)
{Is the princess kissing
the frog (right now)?}
She HAS kissed him.

Truth-value (= polarity)
{I cannot imagine the princess
kissed the slippery frog.}
Yes, she DID kiss him.
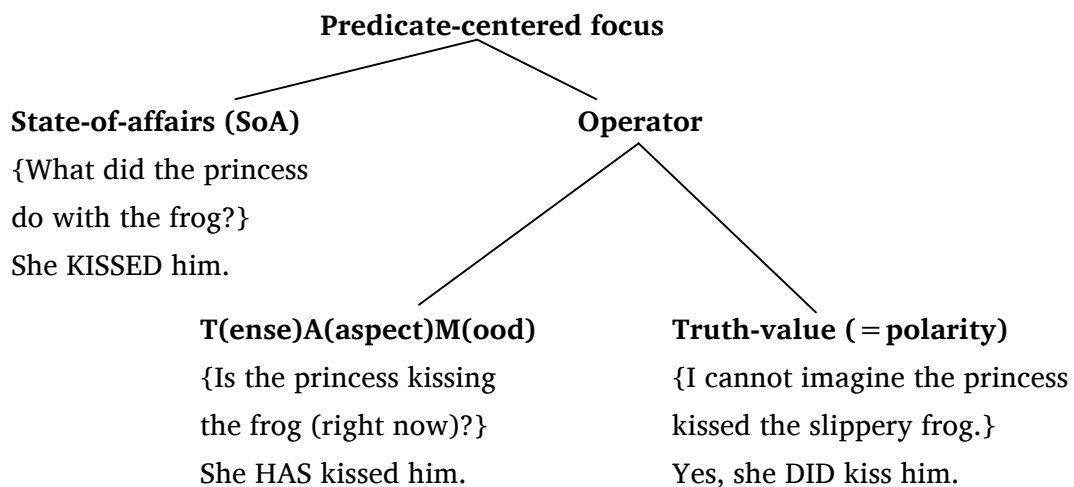
c) Research questions

    i)   Is there a difference at all between the expression(s) of predicate-centered focus types and term focus in Khoekhoegowab?

    ii)   How are predicate-centered focus types primarily realised in Khoekhoegowab?

    iii) What is the formal relation (if any) among the predicate-centered focus types?

d) Methodology and Data Collection

+ The "Focus Translation" questionnaire (FT) (Fiedler & Schwarz 2006) has been translated from English to Khoekhoegowab by Sylvanus Job in February 2014 at the Center of general linguistics (ZAS) in Berlin. The translated text was analysed for structures related to the predicate-centered focus types for the purpose of a master's thesis.

e) Orthographical Conventions:

*   "Long vowels" are written with a macron over a single vowel in official Khoekhoegowab orthography (in Namibia), but here double vowels are used, eg. $\bar{a} > aa$)
*   Tone is marked only later in the presentation where prosodic prominence is considered to influence the placement of focus.

3.   Previous Studies on Focus Placement in Khoekhoegowab[2]

Contributions by, *i.a.*:

*   Dempwolff (1927, 1934)
*   Hagman (1977)
*   Haacke (2006)
*   Witzlack-Makarevich (2006)

+ Dempwolf (1927) cited by Witzlack-Makarevich (2006: 49) notes:
- "What is placed into the sentence-initial position is translated as stress [focus?]."

(Witzlack-Makarevich (2006: 49)

+ In his PhD thesis Hagman expands on Dempwolf, but with different wording:

> - "In the normal sentence order, the subject is in the initial position – **the position of highest emphasis** [focus?][3]**.** In a declarative sentence, **it is followed by the declarative particle (indicative)** *ge.*

> - When another sentence element is brought into the initial position, it must be placed in the position of the noun phrase stem (NPS) [i.e. 'the subject'] = *initialization* [...] and the subject is deleted or is alternatively reintroduced (in an oblique form, as *NP-a*) after *ge.* The deposed subject *(NP-a)* is optional, and therefore may be deleted.[4]*"* (Hagman 1977: 108).

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[2] The works mentioned here are not meant to be exhaustive at the moment.

[3] It is not clear from this example what Hagman means with emphasis, i.e. whether he refers to accent placement or to focus, but what is of importance here is his special reference to the syntactic position.

[4] This type of phenomena is also echoed by Lambrecht (1994: 223): "Concerning the predicate-focus [...], it is clear that in the minimal context [...] the sentences would be most natural with pronominal or null subjects."

+Example (1) illustrates the canonical sentence. Later examples illustrate the case of a 'deposed' or deleted subject. The X in the canonical word order below indicates the default position occupied by peripheral arguments (e.g. adverbs, adverbial-phrases, post-positional phrases, etc.) within a (transitive) clause.

Canonical (S (ge) **O X V) sentence structure**

(1) [Nee   ao-**b**]   [**ge**]   [[!aa-s   !oa]   [ra   !gû]].

this   man-**3M.S**   IND   town-2:3F.S   toward   PRS.PROG   go

This man is going to the town.   (Hagman 1977: 109)

+ Haacke notes that "the primary focus position normally – but not always – is in the initial slot, immediately in front of the subject-PGN"   (Haacke 2006: 114)

+ Witzlack-Makarevich takes a slightly elaborate view:

> - "The two possible linear positions for narrow focus are the *prefield* [immediately in front of the subject PGN] and a *preverbal position in the middlefield* after the [deposed] subject.
> - Though being a possible focus position, *the prefield is not the primary focus position*."
> (Witzlack-Makarevich 2006: 87&91) [emphasis added]

+A canonical sentence may be illustrated as follows according to Witzlack-Makarevich:

S	PGN	IND	O	TAM	V	
ti	**-ta**	**ge**	**!ā -s -a**	**go**	**mû**	
I	-1S	IND	settlement -3F.S-OBL	REC.PST	see	
Prefield	Clause second		Middlefield		Verb	Post-verbal position
			(deposed subject - *NPa*)			(deposed subject, *NP-a*)
'I saw a settlement.'						

(**Figure 4:** Sentence constituent order adapted from Witzlack-Makarevich 2006: 25)

+Note that Witzlack-Makarevich's *prefield* is Haacke's *initial slot.*

+In this talk, I will use the term **'(sentence-)initial focus position'** to refer to the same position within the sentence. This is in-line with the current research done by Güldemann (and others) on predicate-centered focus types on a sample of African languages of which Khoekhoegowab is also part.

4.   Term Focus

+ Term-focus is realised in two ways, namely syntactically by placing a focused element in a *sentence-intial focus position,* and secondly, by means of *ellipsis.* Example (2) gives an unmarked canonical sentence.

(2) [Nee   ao-**b**]   [**ge**]   [[!aa-s   !oa]   [ra   !gû]].
    this   man-**3M.S**   IND   town-2:3F.S   toward   PRS.PROG   go
    This man is going to the town.   (Hagman 1977: 109)

Focus on postpositional adverbial phrase (sentence-initial focus position)
    - The postpositional adverbial phrase is placed in the sentence-initial focus position and the (nominal) subject is deposed. The subject pronoun, however, still remains in the position of a canonical subject and is attached to the focused postpositional phrase.

(3) **!Aa-s**   **!oa**-b   ge   nee   ao-b-a   ra   !gû.[5]
    town-2:3F.S toward-3M.S IND   this   man-3M.S-OBL PRS.PROG go
    {'Where is this man going to?'} This man is going TO THE TOWN. (Hagman 1977: 109)

+ In example (4), focus is still on the postpositional adverbial phrase.
    - the (nominal) subject is deleted this time, but the subject pronoun (*-b*) remains in the canonical subject position, attached to the focused postpositional phrase followed by the indicative *ge.*

(4) **!Aa-s**   **!oa**-b   ge   ra   !gû.
    town-2:3F.S toward-3M.S IND   PRS.PROG go
    {'Where is this man/he going to?'} He is going TO THE TOWN.   (Hagman 1977: 109)

+ The pronoun represents the actual subject of the sentence and takes any lexical stock attached to it (see Haacke 2006 for an in-depth discussion on this phenomenon). Whereas example (5), below, gives yet another canonical (SOXV) sentence for the sake of exemplification, example (6) gives an instance of focus on a core argument, namely, the object.

(5) Ao-b   ge   tara-s-a   ra   mû.
    man-3M.S   IND   woman-3F.S-OBL PRS.PROG see
    The man is seeing the woman.   (Haacke 2006:116)

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[5] This type of sentence permutation is also refered to as *fronting* in literature (e.g. Haacke 2006). "With *fronting* I refer to the preposing of a constituent other than the LS [lexical specification] of the subject into the (underlying) initial slot." (Haacke 2006: 117). Single quotation marks indicate the context I have added to the examples from literature.

Object focus – (OSV word order)

+ The object is placed in the sentence-initial focus position and the (nominal) subject deposed. The rest of the constituents remain in the canonical position.

(6) **Tara-s-a-**b   ge   ao-b-a   ra   mû.
     woman-3FS-OBL-3M.S   IND   man-3M.S-OBL   PRS.PROG   see
     {'Who/What does the man see?'} The man is seeing THE WOMAN. (Haacke 2006: 116)

Whereas the example above (taken from literature) is seldomly found (in such a full form) in a conversations, the examples below represent typical utterances in a conversation. Example (7) shows ellipsis, whilst focus placement in example (8) is again based on the initial focus position.

Term focus – object (ellipsis)

(7) Buiŋki-n
     bean-3C.P
     {What did the woman eat?} BEANS.   (FT 048)

With slightly more detail (object-focus)

(8)   Buiŋki-n-a   go   ǂû.
     bean-3C.P-OBL   REC.PST   eat
     {What did the woman eat?} (She) ate BEANS.   (FT 048)

5. Wide-focus (VP-focus/predicate-focus) *(OV(S) word order)*

+ Focus has scope over the entire predicate.
+ The entire predicate is placed in the sentence-initial focus position, whilst the canonical word order is still maintained within the predicate itself. The subject also remains in its canonical position (behind the sentence type marker *ge*). The object in the transitive clause preceeds the verb (= OVS structure). The subject is out of focus.

(9) **Bol-s-a**   **gam‖kham**   tsi   mâ   khoe-s   ge.
     ball-3F.S-OBL   carry.under.armpit   and   stand   person-3F.S   IND
     {What (action) is the woman doing (performing) (in the picture)?} The woman IS STANDING WITH THE BALL HELD UNDER THE ARMPIT.   (f.n.)

+ In example (10) the subject is dropped, but the word order of the predicate remains intact (OV). This structure creates ambiguity with Object-focus (compare example (8) above). Such ambiguity is resolved by the pragmatic context.

(10) **Buiŋki-n-a**   **go**   **ǂû.**
     bean-3C.P-OBL   REC.PST   eat
     {What did the woman do?} (She) ATE BEANS.   (FT 071)

+ To summarize, wide VP-focus/predicate focus has scope over the entire predicate. The predicate is placed sentence-initially with all its arguments and the verb is kept intact in terms of word order. No argument of the predicate is placed after the verb. The subject placed after the verb is outside focus and may even be dropped.

6.   Predicate-Centered Focus Types (PCF) in Khoekhoegowab

a)   State-of-affairs (SoA) focus

+ Focus on the lexical content of the verb

+ State-of-affairs focus (SoA-focus) is realized in three ways:

- change in word order (initial focus position)
- ellipsis (frequent)
- do-support (dummy verb) construction (with a focus sensitive particle – *only*, or *also*)

Initial focus position (VSO structure)

Example (11) indicates word order change (VSO) in which the verb (with TAM) is in the sentence-initial focus position. When the verb is sentence or clause-initial, the TAM marker has to appear after it. The TAM marker cannot precede the verb, as it does in a canonical sentence. This is because non-lexical (grammatical) elements may not occupy a sentence-initial position in Khoekhoegowab.

(11)   Hî-î, ǂ**gai go**   kai-khoe-s   ge   petru-b-a
       no   call   REC.PST   big-person-3F.S   IND   PN-3M.S-OBL
       {The woman saw Peter.} No, the woman CALLED Peter.   (FT 196)

+ Note that in example (11) both the subject and the object (both contextually *given* arguments) are in their respective canonical positions, i.e. the position behind the indicative marker *ge* (for the subject) and after the indicative marker (for the object). However, both are out of focus in these respective post-verbal positions.

Ellipsis

+ Example (12b) shows ellipsis where only the lexical verb followed by TAM is uttered, whilst (12a) indicates SoA-focus with the post-verbal object which falls outside the scope of focus. The verb is clause initial.

(12) a. **Kuru-khâi   go**   audo-s-a
        create-up   REC.PST   car-2:3F.S-OBL
        {What exactly did he do with the car?} (He) FIXED the car.   (FT 197)

   b. **Kuru-khâi   go**
        create-up   REC.PST
        {What exactly did he do with the car?} (He) FIXED it.   (FT 197)

Do-support (dummy verb) constructions with focus-sensitive particles

+ The verb is nominalised and placed clause-initially in focus. A dummy verb (*hî* 'do') is used in the canonical position of the main verb. The dummy verb is the finite verb of the utterance. In example (13), the focus sensitive particle *only* is used for restrictive focus, whilst *also* is used in example (14) for expanding.

Restrictive (the appositive numeral *'one'* placed after the verb has a reading *'only'*)

(13) Hî-î, ǂnau-s |gui-s-a   go   hî.
      No   beat/hit-3F.S one-3F.S.OBL REC.PST do
      {The woman hit Peter and chased him away.} No, (she) ONLY HIT (him). (lit. No,
      HITTING is the only thing she did; or, all she did was HIT (him)).   (FT 173)

Expansion (the appositive conjunction *and* placed after the verb has a reading *also*)

(14) Î,   tsî-s   ge   ‖î-b-a   **sauru-bee-s**
      yes and-3F.S IND DISC.-3M.S-OBL   chase-away-3F.S
      tsî-n-a   go   hî.
      and-3C.P-OBL   REC.PST   do
      {The woman hit Peter.} Yes, and she ALSO CHASED him AWAY.   (FT 173)

+ Summary: when the lexical content of the verb is in focus (i.e. state-of-affairs focus), the verb will either be sentence-initial, or clause intial in the case of ellipsis (cf. examples (11) & (12)). In the case of ellipsis, only the verb and the TAM marker will be used (cf. example (12b)). When both the subject and the object are present, while being part of the given information, they will be placed post-verbally – out of focus (cf. example (11)). Do-support (dummy verb) constructions combined with the nominalisation of the main verb and focus-sensitive particles sum up the strategies used for SoA-focus.

b) TAM Focus

+ Due to a syntactic constraint that non-lexical (grammatical) particles may not be sentence-initial, TAM marker in themselves rely mainly on the verb for focus in a sentence-initial focus position. The structure is identical to that of the state-of-affairs focus. However, the pragmatic context will disambiguate. TAM-focus reading is therefore attained even though the TAM marker is post-verbal.

(15) ǂÛ   ra.
      eat   PRS.PROG
      {Is she still eating the beans or has she eaten them already?} (She is) EATING
      (them).   (FT 192)

+TAM-focus is also expressed by means of adverbs. In example (16) below, the adverb is placed clause-initially and sentence-initially in example (17).

(16) |**Nai**   koo   hâ.

already   look   PFV

{(at a vetenary) Have they already looked at the dog or are they still looking at it?}

(They) have ALREADY looked (at it)   (FT 190)

(17) **Noxopa**   ta   nî   ⧺û-se   ii.

still   1S   FUT   eat-ADV.MANNER look/appear

{Have you already eaten or are you going to eat?} I am (still) GOING TO/YET TO eat.

                                                        (FT 195)

c) Truth-value (polarity) Focus

+Beside the focus strategies used by the previous focus types, truth-value (polarity) focus shows an emergence (?) of a totally new focus strategy, namely morphological marking. The morpheme used for this marking is not fully grammaticalized yet (i.e. it still has lexical content) (illustrated later).

Initial focus position (VSO structure)

+ Similarly to TAM focus, truth-value focus reading is achieved by placing the verb in the sentence or clause initial position. However, the focus is not on the lexical content of the verb, but on the truth-condition of the proposition. The pragmatic context again disambiguates the truth-value focus from the state-of-affairs focus reading.

(18) **Mû** **ra**   tara-s-a   ao-b   ge.

see   PRS.PROG   woman-2:3FS-OBL   man-3M.S   IND

The man DOES SEE THE WOMAN (can also be: He is the man who DOES SEE THE WOMAN)[6]   (Haacke 2006: 116)

Affirmation and negation of assertions.

+Example (19a) shows that truth-value focus reading is also possible only from the verb and TAM, similar again to TAM focus. In example (19b) it is shown that to negate a proposition, the negation particle *tama* is placed immediately after the verb, replacing the TAM, except in sentences with the stative aspect marker *i*.[7]

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[6] Copulative vs. predicative reading, cf. Haacke, 2006

[7] ‖*Î-b*   ge   ‖*goe*   ***tama go***   *i*

DISC-3M.S IND lie(down) NEG REC.PST STAT

(19) a. Î,   ǂû   **go.**
      yes eat   REC.PST
      {The woman ate the beans, didn't she)?} Yes, (she) DID eat (them).   (FT 123)

   b. Hî-î,   ǂû   **tama.**
      no   eat   NEG
      {The woman ate the beans, didn't she)?} No, (she) DIDN'T EAT (them). ~ No, (she)
      DIDN'T eat (them).   (FT 123)

Morphological marking – ama 'true'

In examples (20) and (21), an adverb (/adjective) *ama* 'true' is frequently used in an
adverbial function preceding the verb. With this, it seems the speaker puts explicit emphasis
on the truth-value of the proposition. The morpheme affirms both positive and negative
propositions respectively. It still retains its lexical content, but lacks full inflection of
adverbs.[8]

(20)   Î,   **ama** |ii   go.
       yes   true   limp   REC.PST
       {He limped, didn't he)?} Yes, (he) DID limp.   (FT. 119)

(21)   Î,   **ama**   !nari   tama-n   ge   hâ.
       yes, true   steal   NEG-3C.P   IND   PFV
       {They didn't steal it.} Yes, (they) DIDN'T STEAL (it).   (FT. 184)

   He didn't lie (down). (Hagman 1977: 90)

[8]   Adverbs take suffixes like –*se* (adverb of manner), -*ga* (purpose), etc.

7. Conclusion

(**Figure 5:** Realization of the Predicate-centered focus (PCF) and their relation to term focus

- As far as focus marking is concerned, syntactic focus strategies applicable for term focus is operational for the predicate-centered focus types as well. Exceptions are however noticed with regard to the position of the sentential operators (like TAM), which may not occupy the sentence-initial position.

- Whereas focus marking of term-focus is limited to syntax (word order) only, narrow focus on the predicate (i.e. (at least for one of) the predicate-centered focus types) seems to innovate new strategies.

- Wide focus seems to be structurally similar to term (object) focus, but different from narrow focus on the predicate (i.e. from the predicate-centered focus types)

- *Within the predicate-centered focus types*
  - SoA focus is realised by placing the lexical verb in the sentence-initial position – and leaving other arguments, eg. object and adverbials in their canonical sentence positions.
  - TAM focus and truth-value focus get their reading while being in a position immediately after the verb (IAV). For such a reading, as is the case with focus in general, the appropriate context is needed.
  - Alternatively TAM focus and truth-value focus are marked (the latter even explicitly with a morpheme) by means of "adverbs".
  - Propositions are negated by means of a negation particle which is placed IAV.
  - The focus reading of TAM indicates an interesting pecularity that does not seem to occur in term focus. In term focus, post-verbal arguments are part of the out-of-focus information.

- In summary, figure 5. below illustrates a mapping of how the predicate-centered focus types are realised in Khoekhoegowab (synchronically) and the relation to term focus (based on construction types). The dotted-line shows the potential direction of development of truth-value focus, whereas the dashed-lines indicate the uniformity of focus marking within PCF-types and the state-of-affairs focus with term focus. VP-focus is intermediate to the PCF types and term focus.

Predicate-centered focus

State-of-affairs (SoA)   **Operator**

T(ense)A(aspect)M(ood)   **Truth-value (=polarity)**
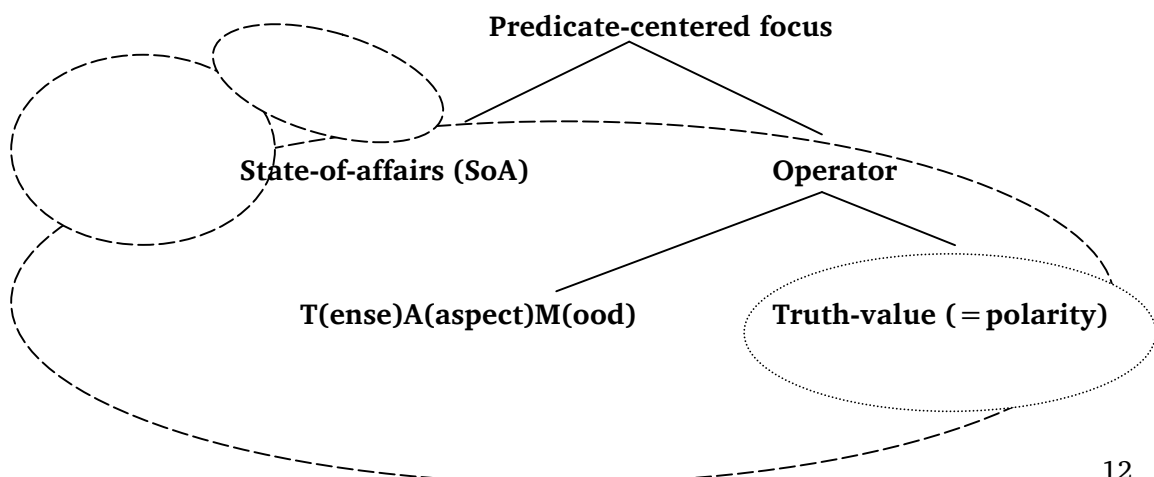
8.   Outlook

- The, thus far, not yet apparent role of prosody in focus marking, needs to be observed with care.
  - o   No evidence is found in the data that lexical tones influence focus placement.
  - o   However, grammatical tones/pitch, particularly the intonation in yes/no interrogatives seems to influence focus assignment (see the example below).

(22)   a. !Nari-ao-b-**à** Petru-b-**á**?

steal-man-3M.S-OBL   PN-3M.S-OBL

{'The name of the thief is unknown. So, WHO is the thief?'} Is the thief PETER?

(Haacke 2006: 123)

b. !Nari-ao-b-**á** Petru-b-**à**?

steal-man-3M.S-OBL   PN-3M.S-OBL

{The character of Peter. But there is some stealing happening?} Is Peter THE THIEF?

(Haacke 2006: 123)

9.   References

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10. Abbreviations

1	first person	N	neuter
2	second person	OBJ	object
3	third person	OBL	oblique
ADV	adverb	PFV	perfective aspect marker
C	common gender	P	plural
CONJ	conjunction	PP	postposition
D	dual	PGN	person-gender-number marker
DEM	demonstrative	PRS	present
DIM	diminutive	PROG	progressive
DISC	(the one just being) discussed	PRON	pronoun/pronominal
E	exclusive (of addressee)	REC.	recent
F	feminine	S	single
FUT	future tense particle	STAT	stative
IND	indicative sentence type marker	TAM	tense and aspect marker
		V	verb
IAV	immediately after the verb	V.EXT	verbal extension
M	masculine		