PhD Thesis: Information Structure in Gamo

0   Dissertation: contents

1.   General Information on the Language

1.1.   Classification

Afro-Asiatic

Omotic

Ometo

Northern Ometo

Gamo

Northern Gamo

Dhaach'e

Ditta

Zala
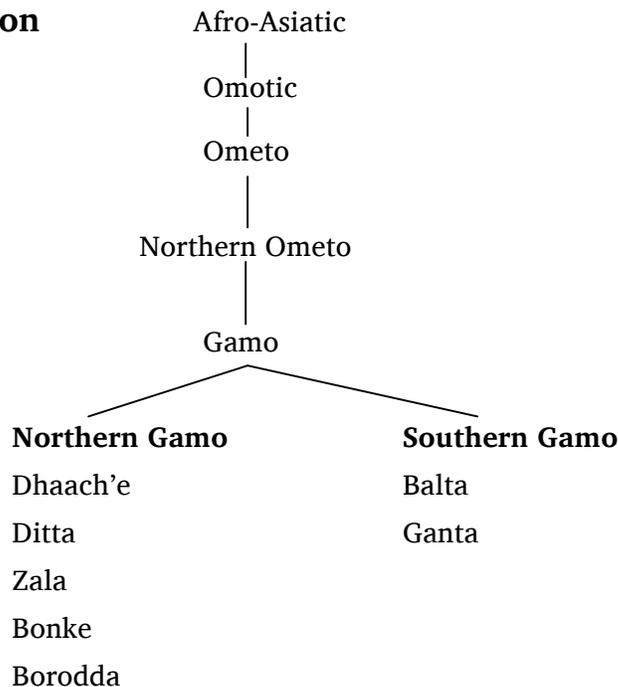
Bonke

Borodda

Southern Gamo

Balta

Ganta

Figure 1: Ometo group (adapted from Hirut 2004: 76)

1.2.   Sociolinguistics

• Number of speakers: more than one million

• Around 7 dialects

Map 1: Zayse-Zergulla and South Gamo language areas (adopted from Jordan 2009: 13)

One of the major differences between the Northern and Southern dialects is the status of the focus marker. In northern dialects the focus marker (-kko) is optional and is attached at the end of a verb, whereas in the southern dialects the marker is obligatory and is attached to the stem of a verb.

1. a. ʔiz-i   b-ee-s-(**kko**).

    he-NOM   go-3MS:PROG-DECL:AFF-FOC

    'He is going.'   (Northern Gamo: Ditta)

    b. ʔes-i   ham-**kko**-si-n-e.

    he-NOM   go-FOC-3MS-PROG-DECL:AFF

    'He is going.'   (Southern Gamo: Garbansatstso)

                                    (Wondimu 2010: 174-175)

1.3. Phonology

- Gamo is a tonal language but a detailed description of the tone system does not exist (Hompó 1990).

1.4. Morphology

1.4.1. Nouns

- Gamo nouns inflect for definiteness, number, gender and case (see example 2).

    root – definite – gender – number - case

2. para-z-a-t-a

    horse-DEF-M-PL-NOM

    'the horses'

	Masculine	Feminine	Plural
Absolutive	-a	-o	-a
Nominative	-i	-a	-i
Oblique	-a	-i	-a
(Vocative)	-o(o)	-e(e)	-o(o)

Table1: Case system in Gamo

Nominative case is used for subjects, absolutive for citation form of nouns, direct objects, and complements of the clitic copula, and oblique is used for possessives and complements of postpositions.

1.4.2.   Verbs

- Every verb has a long and a short form (converb form).
- The long form inflects for subject agreement, aspect and sentence type, whereas the short form inflects only for aspect.

    Stem-subject agreement-aspect marker-(subject agreement)-(sentence type marker)

- The short form occurs in subordinate clauses (as in example 3), while the long form is used in main clauses (example 4):

    3. **y-i-da**   ʔadde-z-i
        come-3MS-PERF man-DEF-NOM
        'the man that came …'

    4.   ʔade-z-i   afila **šam-i-d-e-s**.
        man-DEF-NOM cloth buy-3MS-PERF-DECL
        'The man bought a cloth.'

1.5.   Word order

1.5.1   Word Order in Noun Phrase

- The word order in the noun phrase is: *modifier + noun + postposition*
- Relative clauses are formed using the short verb form (see eg.3 and 5).
- When relative clauses occur to the right of the noun they modify, they take the nominalizer morpheme *-iss* which inflects for person, number and gender (see eg. 5).

5. ʔade-z-i   yi-da-iss-i

    man-DEF-NOM come-PERF-NOMIN-?

    'the man who came'

1.5.2 Word Order in Main Clauses

- Gamo is strict verb final (**SOV**) language.
- The object occurs immediately before the verb (Taylor 1994: 81).
- The order between direct object and indirect object is free when the verb is ditranstive.
- The direct object is always realized in absolutive case and the indirect one is realized in oblique case.

6. ʔadde-z-i   mas'aafe-z-a   naʔa-z-a-s   ʔimm-i-d-e-s.

    man-DEF-NOM   book-DEF-ABS   boy-DEF-OBL-to give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

    'The man gave the book to the boy yesterday.'   (Taylor 1994: 82)

- The subject can be dropped:

7. a.   ʔi-z-i   ʔi-z-a   woɗɗ-i-d-e-s.

                  he-DEF-NOM he-DEF-ABS kill-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

                  'He killed him.'

    b.   ʔi-z-a   woɗɗ-i-d-e-s.

                  he-DEF3-ABS   kill-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

                  'He killed him.'

1.6   Wh-words and question forms in Gamo

- There are two types of *wh*-questions: normal *wh*-questions and cleft *wh*-questions.
- Normal *wh*-questions use the long form of the verb and the clefts use the short form.
- Gamo *wh*-words are given in table 2 below.

Gamo	English
ʔay	what
ʔooni	who
ʔoona	whom
ʔawa	where
ʔaybaa	what

Table 2: *Wh*-words in Gamo

2 Focus

2.1 Definition of focus

Focus in this presentation is conceived as "that information which is relatively the most important or salient in the given communicative setting, considered by S [speaker] to be most essential for A [addressee] to integrate into his pragmatic information" (Dik 1997: 326).

2.2 Focus classifications and encoding strategies

2.2.1 Scope

     I.   Term focus

    II.   Predicate centered focus

2.2.2 Communicative value

     I.   Assertive/completive

    II.   Contrastive/identification focus

2.2.3 Strategies

      I.   Prosodic prominence

     II.   Special constituent order

    III.   Special focus marker

    IV.   Special focus construction   (Dik 1997: 327)

2.3 Focus, *wh*-questions and Word order in Gamo

2.3.1 Term focus: Subject focus

- The unmarked position for subjects is sentence initial position.
- Normal subject *wh*-questions are formed by placing the *wh*-word in a preverbal position as in example (8a).

    8.   **OQV**

       para **ʔoon-i**   beʔ-i-d-ee?

       horse who-NOM   see-3MS-PERF-Q

       'Who saw a horse?'

- The answer for such a question is given as example (9a). Example (9b) shows that subjects cannot be focused *in-situ.*

  9. a. **OSV**

  Para **Alemu-i** beʔ-i-d-e-s.

  horse Alemu-NOM see-3MS-PERF-3MS-DCL

  '**Alemu** saw a horse.'

  b. ***SOV**

  *Alemu-i para beʔ-i-d-e-s .

   Alemu-NOM horse see-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

  'Alemu saw a horse.'

- Example (10) shows contrastive subject focus.

  10. a. **OSV**

  Para **Arega-i** beʔ-i-d-e-s.

  horse Arega-NOM see-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

  '**Arega** saw a horse.'

  b. **OSV**

  Akkay, para **Cuba-i** beʔ-i-d-e-s.

  no, horse Cuba-NOM see-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

  'No, C**uba** saw a horse.'

  c. **SOV**

  Akkay, Cuba-i para beʔ-i-d-e-s.

  no, Cuba-NOM horse see-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

  'No, C**uba** saw a horse.'

  d. **SOV**

  Akkay, cuba-kko para beʔ-i-da-y.

  no, Cuba-COP horse see-3MS-PERF-RCL

  'No, it is Cuba who saw a horse.'

- As shown in the above examples (9 and 10), both –contrastive and + contrastive subject focus is marked by moving the subject into a preverbal position.
- In cleft *wh*-questions the *wh*-word can freely occur after the verb (11a-c).

11. a. **OVQ**

   Para beʔ-i-da-y   **ʔon-ee**?

   horse see-3MS-PERF-RCL who-Q

   'Who is the one who saw a/the horse?'

   b. **QOV**

   ʔon-ee para be**ʔ**-i-da-y?

   who-Q horse see-3MS-PERF-RCL

   'Who is the one who saw a/the horse?'

   c. **OQV**

   Para ʔon-ee be**ʔ**-i-da-y?

   horse who-Q see-3MS-PERF-RCL

   'Who is the one who saw a/the horse?'

In cleft constructions the constituent in focus shows the same kind of distribution as the *wh-*word (12a-c); however, this is possible as long as the copula is attached to the subject. The subject can occur in a sentence final position without the copula (12c), but not in other positions (12d) and (12e).

12. a. **SOV**

   Alemu-kko para be**ʔ**-i-da-y.

   Alemu-COP horse see-3MS-PERF-RCL

   'The one who saw a horse is Alemu.'

   b. **OSV**

   Para **Alemu-kko** be**ʔ**-i-da-y.

   horse Alemu-COP see-3MS-PERF-RCL

   'Alemu is a one who saw the horse.'

   c. **OVS**

   Para be**ʔ**-i-da-y   **Alemu(kko)**.

   horse see-3MS-PERF-RCL Alemu-(COP)

   'The one who saw a horse is Alemu.'

   d. ***SOV**

   *Alemu-i   para be**ʔ**-i-da-y.

   Alemu-NOM horse see-3MS-PERF-RCL

   Alemu saw horse.

e. ***OSV**

*Para **Alemu-i** be**ʔ**-i-da-y.

horse alemu-nom see-3MS-PERF-RCL

The horse that Alemu saw…

The answers listed under (12) are contextually infelicitous, if they are given as an answer to the normal *wh*-question (8a), but they are felicitous, if they are given as an answer to the cleft subject *wh-questions* (9a). In contrastive contexts the cleft answer is also felicitous (10d).

Summary of Subject Focus

- Subject *wh*-questions are formed by moving the *wh*-word to the preverbal position.
- The subject moves to the preverbal position when it is in focus.
- The subject can occur to the right of the finite verb as a right dislocated subject, but the focus is either on the VP or on the object.
- In cleft constructions the focused subject has a freedom to occur in different positions.

2.3.2 Term Focus: Object Focus

2.3.2.1 Transitive verbs

- As shown in example (13), object *wh*-questions are possible only in preverbal position.

13. a. **SQV**

Alemu-i hači wonta **ʔay** qant-i-d-ee?

Alemu-NOM this morning what cut-3MS-PERF-Q

'What did Alemu cut this morning?'

b. ***QSV**

*ʔ**ay** Alemu-i hači wonta qant-i-d-ee?

what alemu-nom this morning cut-3MS-PERF-Q

What did Alemu cut this morning?

- Like object *wh*-question (eg. 13), object focus is possible only in a preverbal position (14a). Examples from (14b-d) are not acceptable.

14. a. **SOV**

Alemu-i hači wonta **mitsi** qant-i-d-e-s.

Alemu-NOM this morning tree cut-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu cut a tree this morning.'

b.   ***OSV**

***mitsi** Alemu-i   hači wonta   qant-i-d-e-s.

tree   Alemu-NOM this morning cut-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu cut a tree this morning.'

c.   ***SOAdvV**

*Alemu-i   **mitsi** hači wonta   qant-i-d-e-s.

 Alemu-NOM tree   this morning cut-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu cut a tree this morning.'

d.   ***SVO**

*Alemu-i   hači wonta   qant-i-d-e-s   **mitsi**.

Alemu-NOM this morning cut-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL tree

'Alemu cut a tree this morning.'

2.3.2.2   Ditransitive verbs

- Example (15) shows that IO *wh*-question and IO focus are possible in a preverbal
  position.

15.   a.   **SDOQV**

Alemu-i   bira   **ʔoona-s**   ʔimm-i-d-ee?

Alemu-NOM money whom-to give-3MS-PERF-Q

'To whom did Alemu give money?'

b.   **SDOIOV**

Alemu-i   bira   **Arega-s** ʔimm-i-d-e-s.

Alemu-NOM money Arega-to give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu gave money to Arega.'

c.   ***SQDOV**

*Alemu-i   **ʔoona-s**   bira   ʔimm-i-d-ee?

 Alemu-NOM whom-to   money give-3MS-PERF-Q

'To whom did Alemu give money?'

d.   ***SIODOV**

*Alemu-i   **Arega-s**   bira   ʔimm-i-d-e-s.

Alemu-NOM Arega-to   money give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu gave money to Arega.'

e.   ***QSDOV**

         *ʔoona-s Alemu-i   bira   ʔimm-i-d-ee?

         whom-to   Alemu-NOM   money   give-3MS-PERF-Q

         'To whom did Alemu give money?'

f.   ***IOSDOV**

         *Arega-s Alemu-i   bira   ʔimmides.

         Arega-to   Alemu-NOM money   give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

         'Alemu gave money to Arega.'

- Example (16) shows that DO *wh*-question and DO object focus are possible in a preverbal position.

16.   a.   **SDOQV**

         Alemu-i   Arega-s   **ʔay**   ʔimm-i-d-ee?

         Alemu-NOM   Arega-to   what   give-3MS-PERF-Q

         'What did Alemu give Arega?'

b.   **SIODOV**

         Alemu-i   Arega-s   **bira**   ʔimm-i-d-e-s.

         Alemu-NOM Arega-to   money   give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

         'Alemu gave money to Arega.'

c.   ***SQIOV**

         *Alemu-i   **ʔay**   Aregas   ʔimm-i-d-ee?

         Alemu-NOM   what   Arega-to   give-3MS-PERF-Q

         'What did Alemu give Arega?'

d.   ***SDOIOV**

         *Alemu-i   **bira**   Aregas   ʔimm-i-d-e-s.

         Alemu-NOM   money   Arega-to   give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

         'Alemu gave money to Arega.'

e.   ***QSIOV**

         *ʔay Alemu-i   Aregas   ʔimm-i-d-ee?

         what   Alemu-NOM   Arega-to   give-3MS-PERF-Q

         'What did Alemu give Arega?'

f. ***DOSIOV**

***Bira**   Alemu-i   Aregas   ʔimm-i-d-e-s.

money Alemu-NOM Arega-to give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu gave money to Arega.'

- Contrastive DO (17) and IO (18) focus are also marked in preverbal position.

17. a. **SIODOV**

Alemu-i   Arega-s **bira**   ʔimm-i-d-e-s.

Alemu-NOM Arega-to money give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu gave money to Arega.'

b. **SIODOV**

Akkay, ʔi-z-i   Arega-s **sante** ʔim-i-d-e-s.

no,   he-DEF-NOM Arega-to coins give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'No, he gave coins to Arega.'

18. a. **SDOIOV**

Alemu-i   bira   **Arega-s** ʔimm-i-d-e-s.

Alemu-NOM money Arega-to give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu gave money to Arega.'

b. **SDOIOV**

Akkay,   ʔi-z-i   bira   **Cubas** ʔim-i-d-i-s.

no,   he-DEF-NOM money Cuba-to give-3MS-PERF-3MS-DCL

'No, he gave it to Cuba.'

- Cleft object *wh*-questions (19a-c):

19. a. **SVQ**

Alemu-i   qant-i-da-y   **ʔayb-ee**?

Alemu-NOM cut-3MS-PERF-RCL what-Q

'What is it that Alemu cut?'

b. **SQV**

Alemu-i   **ʔayb-ee** qant-i-da-y?

Alemu-NOM what-Q   cut-3MS-PERF-RCL

'What is it that Alemu cut?'

     c.   **QSV**

           ʔayb-ee Alemu-i   qant-i-da-y?

           what-Q   Alemu-NOM cut-3MS-PERF-RCL

           'What is it that Alemu cut?'

- Cleft object focus (20a and b):

20. a.   **OSV**

           Mitsi-kko hači wonta   Alemu-i   qant-i-da-y.

           wood-COP this morning Alemu-NOM cut-3MS-PERF-RCL

           'It is a tree that Alemu cut this morning.'

     b.   **SVO**

           Hači wonta   Alemu-i   qant-i-da-y   **mitshi(kko)**.

           this morning Alemu-NOM cut-3MS-PERF-RCL tree-COP

           'It is a tree that Alemu cut this morning.'

Summary

- Object *wh*-questions and object focus are possible only in a preverbal position.
- When the verb is ditranstive, both the *wh*-word and the focus should come immediately before the verb; otherwise the focus will be re-interpreted as focus on the constituent that comes in the preverbal position.
- The preferred word order for focusing the object is SOV.

2.3.3 Term focus: Adverbial focus

- Example (21) shows the distribution of adverbial *wh*-questions and adverbial focus.

21. a.   **SOQV**

           Alemu-i   mitsi **ʔawude** qant-i-d-ee?

           Alemu-NOM tree   when   cut-3MS-PERF-Q

           'When did Alemu cut a tree?'

     b.   **SOAdvV**

           Alemu-i   mitsi **hači wonta**   qant-i-d-e-s.

           Alemu-NOM tree   this   morning cut-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

           'Alemu cut a tree this **morning**.'

- Adverb *wh*-questions are possible in-situ but not adverb focus (see eg. 22).

22.   a.   **SQOV**

Alemu-i   **ʔawude** mitsi qantidee?

Alemu-NOM when   tree   cut-3MS-PERF-Q

'When did Alemu cut a tree?'

        b.   *SAdvOV**

*Alemu-i   **hači wonta**   mitsi qantides.

Alemu-NOM this   morning tree cut-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu cut a tree this **morning**.'

        c.   *QSOV**

*ʔawude** Alemu-i   mitsi qantidee?

when   Alemu-NOM tree   cut-3MS-PERF-Q

'When did Alemu cut a tree?'

        d.   *AdvSOV**

*Hači wonta**   Alemu-i   mitsi qantides.

this   morning Alemu-NOM tree   cut-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu cut a tree this **morning**.

- Cleft adverbial focus (23):

23.   **Hači wonta-kko**   Alemu-i   mitsi qant-i-da-y

this   morning-COP Alemu-NOM tree   cut-3MS-PERF-RCL

'It was this morning that Alemu cut a tree.'

- Example (24) shows contrastive focus on the adverbial expression.

24.   a.   **SAdvV**

Alemu-i   **wonta**   hayq-i-d-e-s.

Alemu-NOM morning die-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'Alemu died this morning.'

        b.   **SOV**

Akkay, ʔi-z-i   qama   hayq-i-d-e-s.

no,   he-DEF-NOM yesterday die-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL

'No, he died yesterday.'

Summary

- Adverb *wh*-questions are possible both *in-situ* and *ex-situ*. But they are more acceptable when the *wh*-word is placed in a preverbal position.
- Adverbs occur in preverbal position when they are focused.

2.3.4   Predicate centered focus

2.3.4.1   Verb phrase focus

- Examples (25) and (26) show VP focus.

25.   a.   Alemu-i   ?ay   ?ots-i-d-ee?
                Alemu-NOM what do-3MS-PERF-Q
                'What did Alemu do?'

      b.   **SOV**
            Alemu-i   **mitsi   qant-i-d-e-s**.
            Alemu-NOM tree   cut-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL
            'Alemu cut a tree this morning.'

26.   a.   Arega-y   **?ay**   ?ots-i-d-ee?
                Arega-NOM what do-3MS-PERF-Q
                'What did Arega do?'

      b.   **SOV**
            ?i-z-i   **mayo šam-i-d-e-s**.
            he-DEF-NOM cloth   buy-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL
            'He bought a cloth.'

2.3.4.2   Focus on the lexical verb

- Examples (27) and (28) show focus on the lexical meaning of the verb.

27.   a.   **SOV**
            ?i-z-i   mayo sham-i-d-ee?
            3MS-DEF-NOM cloth   buy-3MS-PERF-Q
            'Did he buy a cloth?'

      b.   **SOV**
            Akkay, mayo **bayz-i-d-ee-s**.
            no,   cloth sell-3MS-PERF-3MS-DECL
            'No, he sold it.'

28. a. **SOV**

    Aynalem-i   mayo **šam-a-d-u-s**.

    Aynalem-NOM   cloth   buy-3FS-PERF-3FS-DECL

    'Aynalem bought a cloth.'

b. **SOV**

    Akkay, ʔi-z-a   **bayz-a-d-uu-s**.

    no,   3FM-DEF-NOM   sell-3FS-PERF-3FS-DECL

    'No, she sold them.'

- The lexical meaning of a verb can also be focused using cleft constructions (30).

29. a. **Mana-kko** ʔi   ko-i-da-y.

    to.eat-COP   3MS   want-3MS-PERF-RCL

    'It is to eat that he wants.'

b. ʔi   **mana-kko**   ko-i-da-y

    3MS   eat-COP   want-3MS-PERF-RCL

    'It is to eat that he wants.'

c. *ʔi   koy-da-y   m-ana-kko

    3MS   want-PERF-RCL   eat-FUT-COP

    'He wants to eat.'

Summary

- VP focus is encoded using the basic word order (SOV).
- In cleft sentences the verb in focus does not have the freedom to occur behind the finite form of the verb.

3   General hypothesis

- In Gamo SOV word order is the preferred word order to mark focus on objects, verbs and VPs.
- Subject focus is expressed by moving the subject to a preverbal position.
- The language does not have syntactic or morphological marker to mark focus on the lexical meaning of the verb. (Maybe prosody)
- Adverbial *wh*-questions can be formed both *in-situ* and *ex-sit*u but object *wh*-questions are possible only *in-situ.*
- The word order is more flexible in cleft sentences than in the canonical SOV sentence.
- Cleft focus constructions trigger an exhaustive reading.

4   To-do-list

- Information structure and prosody in Gamo.
- The interaction of tone and focus, if there is.
- Focus and word order in written texts and spontaneous speech acts.

5   Abbreviations

1S	FIRST PERSON SINGULAR	IMPERF	IMPERFECTIVE
3FS	THIRD PERSON FEMININE	M	MASCULINE
3MS	THIRD PERSON MASCULINE	NOM	NOMINATIVE
ABS	ABSOLUTIVE	NOMIN	NOMINALISER
AFF	AFFIRMATIVE	OBL	OBLIQUE
ASP	ASPECT	PERF	PERFECTIVE
COP	COPULA	PL	PLURAL
DECL	DECLARATIVE	PROG	PROGRESSIVE
DEF	DEFINITENESS	Q	QUESTION
F	FEMININE	RCL	RELATIVE MARKER
FOC	FOCUS	S	SINGULAR
FUT	FUTURE		

6   References

Dik, Simon C. 1997. *The Theory of Functional Grammar, Part 1: The Structure of the Clause,* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hirut Wolde Mariam. 2004. 'Gamo: A dialect variant or a group with its own dialect?'. In: Yochi Tsuge (ed.), *Cushitic Omotic studies,* Kanazawa, Japan: Kanazawa University: 67-78.

Hompó, Éva. 1990. 'Grammatical Relations in Gamo: A Pilot Sketch.' In: R.J. Hayward (ed.), *Omotic Language Studies.* London: School of Oriental and African Studies: 356-4054.

Jordan, Linda. 2009. *A study of Shara and related Ometo speech varities.* Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics, Master's Thesis.

Taylor, Nicholas. 1994. *Gamo syntax.* London: University of London, Doctoral Dissertation.

Wondimu Gaga. 2010. *Sociolinguistic Facts about the Gamo Area – South Ethiopia.* Addis Ababa.