The syntax of predicate focus doubling in Dschang

Colin Brown & Harold Torrence – UCLA
colinjbrown@ucla.edu
htorrence@humnet.ucla.edu

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1 Introduction

- PREDICATE FOCUS DOUBLING (PFD) in Dschang (and related Grassfields Bantu languages):[1,2]

  (1)   a.   a   le   l!á-a
            3SG PST4 cry-SM
            'S/he cried.'

        b.   a   le   **l!á**-a   **la-á**
            3SG PST4 cry-SM cry-FOC
            'S/he CRIED (as opposed to doing something else)'[3]

- PFD: the main predicate is copied, with the copied verb appearing (typically) at the right edge of the clause, marked by a tone bearing moraic suffix.

- Compare to PREDICATE CLEFT constructions found in Niger-Congo, West African languages, Atlantic creoles (and beyond) where the copied verb appears at the *left* edge:

  (2)   Avatime (Kwa, Ghana-Togo Mountain; Ghana)
        a.   a-kla   ke-plekpa
            3SG.PFV CL-book
            'She read the book.'

        b.   **ki-kla**   a-**kla**   ke-plekpa
            NMLZ-read 3SG.PFV-read CL-book
            'She READ the book (in fact; as opposed to doing something else).'

- Today: we provide a basic description of PFD in Dschang, outlining where PFD occurs (w.r.t. word categories and clause types), its meaning contribution, as well as the linearization of the verb (V_1), the verb copy (V_2), and a variety of possible verbal arguments and adjuncts.

- What we find: (i) PFD marks *verbs* for contrastive (not verum) focus, (ii) occurs freely in a number of different clause types, and (iii) V_2, though often obligatorily appearing at the right-edge of a clause, may be followed by certain adverbials and clausal arguments of the verb.

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[2] 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, CL = Noun class prefix, COMP = complementizer, CONS = Consecutive verbal prefix, FOC = focus, FUT = future, INF = infinitive, NEG = negative, NMLZ = nominalizer, OM = Object concord suffix, PFV = perfective, PL = plural, PROG = progressive, PROH = prohibitive, PST = past, Q = question particle, REL = relative, SG = singular, SM = Subject concord suffix.

[3] Throughout this handout we adopt the convention of using capital letters to indicate focus intonation.

- Towards an analysis: the verb copy occupies a low focus position near the vP edge (as proposed in Jayaseelan (2001), Belletti (2004)).

- Roadmap:

2   Language background

- Dschang (ISO 639-3 `ybb`; also called Yemba and Bamileke-Dschang) is a Grassfields (Bantu) language of Western Cameroon, in the Bamileke language cluster (with Fe'fe', Ghomálá', Kwa', Mengaka, Nda'nda', Ngyemboon, Ngomba, Ngombale, and Ngwe)

    – Approximately 300,000 speakers

- Four surface level tones (Hyman 1985) — lexical and grammatical tone

- Unmarked STVO word order:

    (3) Shufo le   lá-á   fufu.
         Shufo PST4 cook-OM fufu
         'Shufo cooked fufu.'

- Like other Bamileke languages, multiple past and future tenses, approximately 5 pasts and 5 futures (Hyman 1980, Czuba 2021). Most of our examples are restricted to the "distant past" PST4 in this talk.

- We refer to the zone between the subject and lexical verb as the "preverbal field".

- A number of particles, auxiliaries, and adverbs surface in the preverbal field. In the distant past, when one (or more) of these occurs in the preverbal field, the verb occurs in the "consecutive" form, characterized by the presence of a nasal prefix, which may trigger a change to the initial consonant of a verb:

    (4) M!ɛ́ri le   zɛ́   n-z!a'a k!ɛ́ndɔŋ.
         Mary PST4 again CONS-cut plantain
         'Mary cut plantains again'

- Negation, in the distant past is bipartite, with *te* occurring in the preverbal field and a high/rising tone mora on the right edge of the clause, which is realized in different ways depending on the rightmost segmental material:

    (5) M!éri le   te   z!á'a k!ɛ́ndɔŋ-ɔ́
         mary PST4 NEG cut   plantain-NEG
         'Mary did not cut plantains.'

- We note that the non-Future tenses precede the *te* negation, while the future tenses follow this marker:

    (6) S T/PAST **neg1** T/FUTURE V O **neg2**

3 Basic description of PFD

- Two occurrences of the verb — the 'copy', an unprefixed form of the verb followed by a moraic tone-bearing suffix, appears at a right edge position:

  (7) a. məŋ le kɔ́-'ə   y!ìm
      1SG PST4 climb-OM baobab
      'I climbed the baobab.'

  b. məŋ le **kɔ́-'ə**   y!ìm **kɔ́'-ɔ́**
     1SG PST4 climb-OM baobab climb-FOC
     'I CLIMBED the baobab (instead).'

  (8) a. məŋ le nɔ́ŋ-ɔ́   nɛ k!ò
      1SG PST4 lay.down-SM in hammock
      'I laid down in the hammock.'

  b. məŋ le **nɔ́ŋ-ɔ́**   nɛ k!ò **nɔ́ŋ**
     1SG PST4 lay.down-SM in hammock lay.down+FOC
     'I LAID DOWN in the hammock (instead).'

- This doubling is restricted to *verbal* elements:

  (9) a. M!ɛ́ri le zɛ́   n-**z!a'-a**   k!ɛ́ndɔŋ **zá'-á**.
      Mary PST4 again CONS-cut-OM plantain cut-FOC
      'Mary CUT plantains again'

  b. * Mɛri le **zɛ**   n-za'-a   kendɔŋ **zɛ**
       Mary PST4 again CONS-cut-OM plantain again
       Intended: 'Mary cut plantains AGAIN'

- It is, however, possible to copy verbs that are used functionally, such as those used in serial verb constructions:[4]

  (10) a. məŋ le zʉk nzɛt mɔ́ n-djɛ   Shufo
       1SG PST4 wipe feces child CONS-give Shufo
       'I cleaned the baby poop for Shufo.'

  b. məŋ le **zʉk** nzɛt mɔ́ **{zʉg-ú}** n-djɛ   Shufo **{zʉg-ú}**
     1SG PST4 wipe feces child wipe-FOC CONS-give Shufo wipe-FOC
     'I CLEANED the baby poop for Shufo.'

  c. məŋ le zʉk nzɛt mɔ́ n-**djɛ**   Shufo **{yé-ɛ́}**
     1SG PST4 wipe feces child CONS-give shufo give-FOC
     'I cleaned the baby poop FOR Shufo.'

- It is **not** possible to PFD both of the verbs at the same time in the benefactive serial construction:

  (11) a. * məŋ le **zʉk** nzɛt mɔ **zʉg-ʉ** n-**dje**   Shufo **yɛ-ɛ**
       1SG PST4 wipe feces child wipe-FOC CONS-give shufo give-FOC
       Intended 'I instead cleaned the baby poop for Shufo instead.'

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[4]Curly brackets indicate optional linearization: the elements within the curly brackets may occur in either (but not both) of the positions they appear in.

b. * məŋ le **zʉk** nzɛt mɔ n-**dje** Shufo **yee** **zʉg-ʉ**
 1SG PST4 wipe feces child CONS-give shufo give-FOC wipe-FOC

 Intended 'I instead cleaned the baby poop for Shufo instead.'

- This doubling can occur in a variety of clause types (in addition to matrix declaratives) — embedded clauses, imperatives, questions:

(12) Embedded clause:
 məŋ kwaŋ xhe mɔ si ŋ-**gwii** **wii**.
 1SG think COMP child PROG CONS-laugh laugh-FOC

 'I think the child is LAUGHING.'

(13) *Wh*-question (in-situ):
 a. m!ɛ́ri le w!útɛ w!ʉ?
 mary PST4 praise who

 'Who did Mary praise?'

 b. m!ɛ́ri le **w!ú'tɛ** wʉ **wùti-í**?
 mary PST4 praise who praise-FOC

 'Who did Mary praise instead?'

(14) *Wh*-question (extracted):
 a. a-w!ʉ́ y-ì m!ɛ́ri le w!ú'ti i
 FOC-WHO CL-REL1 mary PST4 praise REL2

 'Who is it that Mary praised?'

 b. a-w!ʉ́ y-ì m!ɛ́ri le w!ú'tɛ saa
 FOC-WHO CL-REL1 mary PST4 praise market+REL2

 'Who is it that Mary praised at the market?'

 c. a-w!ʉ́ y-ì m!ɛ́ri le **w!ú'tɛ** sa!á **wu'ti-!í**
 FOC-WHO CL-REL1 mary PST4 praise market praise+REL2+FOC

 'Who is it that Mary praised at the market? instead'

(15) *Wh*-question (adjunct):
 a. Shufo le w!ú'tɛ waŋkʉ g!ʉ̀
 shufo PST4 praise children where

 'Where did Shufo praise the children?'

 b. Shufo lé gʉ́ ŋ-gw!ú'tɛ waŋk!ʉ
 shufo PST4 where praise children

 'Where did Shufo praise the children?'

 c. Shufo le **w!ú'tɛ** waŋkʉ {g!ʉ̀} **wu'ti-í** {g!ʉ̀}
 shufo PST4 praise where children praise-FOC where

 'Where did Shufo praise the children instead?'

 d. Shufo lé gʉ́ ŋ-**gw!ú'tɛ** waŋk!ʉ **wù'ti-í**
 shufo PST4 where praise children praise-FOC

 'Where did Shufo praise the children instead?'

(16) Imperative:
 tɔ́ŋ-ɔ́ s!ɔ́ŋ **tɔ́ŋ**!
 call-OM bird call+FOC

'CALL the bird!'

(17) Prohibitive:

ndó' **t!ɔ́ŋ-!ɔ́** sɔ́ŋ **t!ɔ́ŋ**!
PROH call-OM bird call+FOC

'Don't CALL the bird!'

(18) Subjunctive:

a. məŋ si ŋ-kɔ́ŋɔ́ xʉ Shufo **káŋ** mbap **káŋ**
1SG PROG CONS-WANT COMP shufo fry meat fry.FOC

'I want Shufo to fry meat instead.'

b. məŋ si ŋ-kɔ́ŋɔ́ xʉ ndo Shufo **kàŋ** mbap **káŋ**
1SG PROG CONS-WANT COMP PROH shufo fry meat fry.FOC

'I want Shufo not to fry meat instead.'

- Contrastively focus mark the verb:

(19) A: (te) u le l!áa k!ɛ́ndɔŋɔ
Q 2SG PST4 cook plantain+Q
'Did you cook the plantains?'

B: məŋ le **tʉ́ə** k!ɛ́ndɔŋɔ **tú-ɔ́**!
1SG PST4 cut plantain cut-FOC
'I CUT the plantains.'

- **Not** VERUM — not used to emphasize the truth of the propositional content of a sentence:

(20) A: Mɛri le te sɔ́k si ndje-!è!
Mary PST4 NEG clean ground house-NEG
'Mary didn't clean the floor!'

B1: ŋgaŋ, Mɛri le sɔ́k si ndje!
no Mary PST4 clean ground house
'No, Mary DID clean the floor!'

B2: # ŋgaŋ, Mɛri le **sɔ́k** si ndje **sɔg-ɔ́**!
no Mary PST4 clean ground house clean-FOC
Intended: 'No, Mary DID clean the floor!'

☞ PREDICATE FOCUS DOUBLING: a construction in which two copies of the same verb occur in a single clause, marking the verb for contrastive (but not verum/polarity) focus.

4 Observations about the position of focus

4.1 The position of focus

- We argue that PFD involves a low focus position (*Cf.* Jayaseelan 2001; Belletti 2004)

- The **first** piece of evidence for this comes from the fact that PFD seems to occur lower than T. That is, both copies of the verb occur to the right of the tense marker and negation:

(21) Shufo te luú **tɔ́ŋɔ́** k!ɛ́ti **tɔŋ-ɔ́**
    Shufo NEG1 FUT read book read-FOC.NEG2
    'Shufo will not READ the book.'

- Note that in Dschang, the distant past precedes NEG1 (as in (5)), while the distant future follows it (c.f. Nkemnji (1995) for Nweh). Thus, PFD seems to involve a domain lower than the lowest tenses.

- **Second**, Dschang also has left peripheral foci, which surface preceding the subject (and tense and negation):

(22) aáa **kuna** i-yi mɛŋ le tsw!ɛ-ɛ ____
    FOC pig CL-REL 1SG PST4 kill
    'It's a pig that I killed.'

- **Third**, both the left peripheral focus and the PFD focus can co-occur:

(23) aáa **mé-lɨ** ə-mhi mɛŋ le **zootɨ** ____ **zooti-i**
    FOC PL-vampire CL-REL 1SG PST4 insult insult-FOC
    'It's vampires that I insulted instead.'

- The fact that two distinct foci can co-occur can be made sense of if they do not compete for the same syntactic position.

☞ Conclusion — There is a focus position lower than T, which is the locus of PFD:

(24) $<$Left peripheral Focus$>_{FOC1}$ ... S T_{PST} (NEG) T_{FUT} V1 O **V2**$_{FOC2}$

4.2   Relative ordering of V1 and V2 and other elements

- Here we outline the order of the verb (V_1), the verb copy (V_2), and other elements in the clause

- Generalization: whatever occurs before V_1 in a regular clause will occur before V_1 in a PFD construction

- Issues addressed below:

  – What occurs between V_1 and V_2
  – What occurs after V_2

4.2.1   Internal arguments

- Transitives — **VOV**:

(25) a. Mɛri le **zá'-á** kɛ́ndɔŋ **zá'-á**.
      Mary PST4 cut-OM plantain cut-FOC
      'Mary CUT plantains.'
    b. *Mɛri le **zá'-a zá'-á** kɛ́ndɔŋ

- Double object constructions — **V** IO DO **V**:

(26) a. Shufo le tw!í-!í Mafo kɛt!í.
      Shufo PST4 show-OM Mafo book
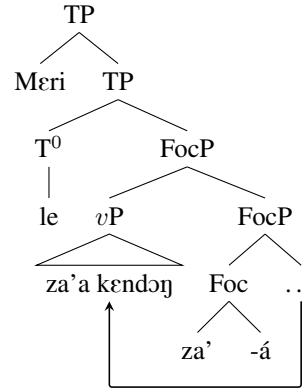   'Shufo showed Mafo the book.'

   b. Shufo le   **tw!í-!í**   Mafo kɛt!í **twi-í**.
      Shufo PST4 show-OM Mafo book show-FOC
      'Shufo SHOWED Mafo the book.'
   c. *Shufo le **twi-i** Mafo **twi-i** kɛti

- We propose the following two step derivation of PFD:

  - Step one: a verb bearing a focus feature undergoes head movement to Foc^0
  - Step two: vP undergoes movement to [Spec,FocP]

(27) Step one:
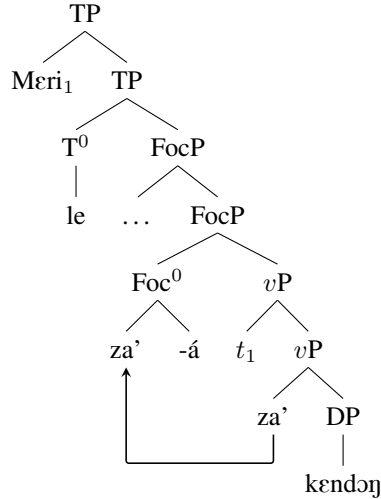
(28) Step two:

- This captures the relative ordering of S T V_1 IO DO V_2-FOC

- This analyis is also compatible with previous accounts of predicate focus in Nweh (Nkemnji 1995), and Shupamem (Nchare 2012).

- This structure also makes predictions about the linearization of other elements, which we address below.

4.2.2 Adjuncts and clausal arguments

- The derivation of PFD proposed in §4.2.1 makes the following predictions:

  1. High, postverbal adjuncts should surface after V_2
  2. Clausal or TP complements of embedding verbs should appear before focused copy of the verb V_2

- Prediction one is borne out — temporal adjuncts such as *zɔ* 'yesterday' obligatorily surface after the second verb:

(29) a. M!ɔ́ŋ ke   n!í   **ŋ-k!áa**   **k!á-á** zɔ.
       1SG PST3 PROG CONS-tired tired   yesterday
       'I was TIRED yesterday.'
    b. *Məŋ ke ni **ŋ-kaa** zɔ **ka-a**.

- This follows if we assume *zɔ* adjoins to T.

- Prediction two is less clear — TP and CP arguments may optionally precede or follow V_2:

  (30)   məŋ le   **kwáŋtʉ** **{kwáŋti-í}**   [le-zhu!ɔ́ kɛndɔŋ] **{kwáŋti-í}**
         1SG PST4 remember remember-FOC INF-buy plantain remember-FOC
         'I REMEMBERED instead to buy plantain.'

  (31)   məŋ le   **kwáŋ {kwáŋ}**   [xhʉ   wu   tɔ́ŋɔ́ n-d!ʉ́]   **{kwáŋ}**
         1SG PST4 think think.FOC COMP 2SG call vampire think.FOC
         'I THOUGHT (instead) that you called the vampire.'

  (32)   Shufo le   **zétɨ́ {zétí-í}** [ŋ-gw!é-yi   M!ɛri le   tɔ́ŋɔ́ nd!ʉ́]   **{zétí-í}**.
         Shufo PST4 ask ask-FOC CONS-have-REL Mary PST4 call vampire ask-FOC
         'Shufo ASKED instead whether Mary called the vampire.'

- This is not straightforwardly predicted by our analysis, which would predict the vP containing the TP/CP complement would move to [Spec,FocP], linearizing to the left of V_2.

- A potential solution: this vP containing the TP/CP complement *does* move to [Spec,FocP], however the TP/CP complement is able to extrapose to a clause final position.

- This would in turn predict that we should see extraposition elsewhere in Dschang, which we do.

- Contra simple DP objects which appear obligatorily to the left of V_2, grammatically complex objects such as relative clauses exhibit the same optionality observed with TP/CP complements; they occur to the left or right of V_2:

  (33)   məŋ le   **tyʉ́ə {tyʉ́-ɔ́}** ŋkɛndíŋa yi   Mɛ́ri le   phyíi **{tyʉ́-ɔ́}**
         1SG PST4 cut cut-FOC banana REL Mary PST4 plant cut-FOC
         'I HARVESTED the bananas Mary planted.'

  (34)   məŋ le   **tyʉ́ə {tyʉ́-ɔ́}** mye paŋá ŋkɛndíŋa **{tyʉ́-ɔ́}**
         1SG PST4 cut cut-FOC big ripe banana cut-FOC
         'I HARVESTED the big ripe banana.'

☞ Certain adverbials which appear to the right of V_2 corroborate our basic structure introduced in §4.2.1 if they are located higher than FocP

☞ The optional linearization of TP/CP complements w.r.t. V_2 can be explained if they are analyzed as shifting postsyntactically.

4.2.3   Further implications for clausal syntax

- Looking deeper into the behavior of adverbials in PFD shows us that not everything is so clear cut.

- Postverbal manner adverbs can appear optionally before and after V_2:

  (35)   a.   Mɔ le   **w!í-!í**   metʉ́ **w!í-í**.
            child PST4 laugh-SM loudly laugh-FOC
            'The child LAUGHED loudly.'

         b.   Mɔ le **w!í-!í w!í-í** metʉ́.

- Locative PPs can precede or follow the focused verb:

(36) a. mɛŋ le   fíŋɔ́ mbap m!ɛ́ nts!e
     1SG PST4 sell meat at   street
     'I sold the meat in the street.'

   b. mɛŋ le   **fíŋɔ́** mbap **{fíŋ}**   m!ɛ ntse   **{fíŋ}**
      1SG PST4 sell meat sell+FOC at   street sell+FOC
      'I instead SOLD the meat in the street.'

- The ADDITIVE particle *se* 'also' must appear before V$_2$:

(37) a. Shufo le   v!ɛ́t   v!ɛ́t-ú
      shufo PST4 tremble tremble-FOC
      'Shufo TREMBLED.'

   b. Shufo le   v!ɛ́t   **{se}** v!ɛd-ú   **{*se}**
      shufo PST4 tremble also tremble-FOC also
      'Shufo also TREMBLED.'

(38)
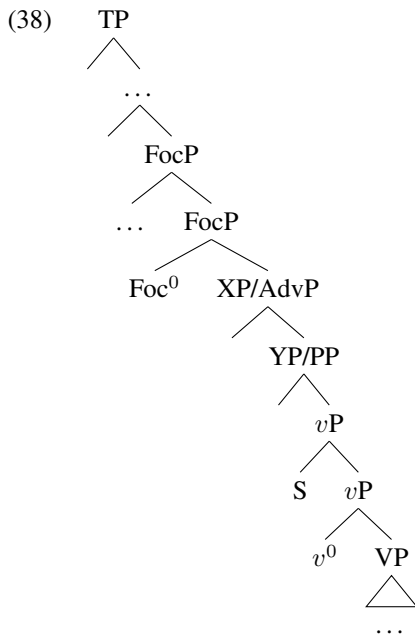
- Adjuncts merged outside of VP (Cinque 1999)

- V head raises/copies to Foc^0, yielding suffixed focused verb

- VP moves to somewhere in the middle field (SpecFocP?).

- Variable: how much material is pied piped by VP? DO is contained in VP (alternatively, VP rasies to a position between FocP and the highest XP and pied pipes).

- Clausal arguments may precede or follow V$_2$

5 Conclusion

- We introduced Predicate Focus Doubling, and provided an analysis in which a verb undergoes copy movement to a low focus head, followed by phrasal movement of vP to [Spec,FocP].

- This analysis provides additional crosslinguistic evidence for a focus projection below TP/IP (Jayaseelan 2001; Belletti 2004), in addition to a higher, left-peripheral focus position which is also active in non-verbal focus in Dschang.

- Why investigate PFD:

  - Predicate clefts involve a verb copying construction that typically involves the *left* edge of the clause. On the other hand, the PFD construction found in Grassfields Bantu languages, seems to involve activity on the *right* edge of the clause (though some elements may appear after the copied verb). A right-edge process in a left-headed language.
  - This construction can lead to insights about the general syntax of Dschang and other Grassfields languages including the relative positioning of functional and lexical heads along the syntactic spine.
  - In the Grassfields literature, this construction has been analyzed, but has overall received surprisingly little attention (Nkemnji 1995; Nchare 2012; for Nweh and Shupamem, respectively), as well as a similar construction in Kabiye (Gur) (Collins and Essizewa 2007)

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