



Syntactic Features of Focus in Old Uyghur Narrative Text: A Case Study of Jātaka of the Good and Bad Prince

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Abstract

Focus is realized through different linguistic devices in different languages. These linguistic devices include accenting, syntactic reordering, and other morphological marking devices. This article investigates different focus structures and their syntactic reflexes in the “Jātaka of the Good and Bad Prince” as a case study for the Old Uyghur narrative texts. In the paper, we argue that the location of the focused constituent within the narrative text, as well as the definition of all the constituents that might be interpreted as focused, is predictable on the basis of the syntax of the text language. The basic idea tested on basis of data taken from Jātaka of the Good and Bad Prince is that the preverbal position is the default position to host the focus. Except for the subject constituents, other constituents are realized in-situ focus, the subject constituents are moved to the default position to be marked as focus.

Keywords: *Old Uyghur; Focus; Narrative Text; Syntax*

Introduction

The Jātaka story concerns two brothers, the Good Prince named Kalyānaṃkara (*ädgü ögli tegin*) and the Bad Prince (*ayiy ögli tegin*) named Pāpaṃkara¹. A Uyghur version survives in three texts from three different manuscripts, two from Dunhuang (in the The Bibliothèque nationale de France and British Library collections) and a third from Yarkhoto (in the Turfansammlung). The Paris text is 80 pages long and written in Uyghur cursive script. Hamilton (1971) published the full edition of Paris text. This would be the base for our corpus. He suggested that it was an early translation from the Chinese text, *Da fang bian fo bao en jing* 大方便报佛恩经. However, von Gabain argued that it was a later translation from Tibetan. Professor Geng (2003) denied the Hamilton’s suggestion and suggested it was translated from *Shuang en ji* 双恩记. This disagreement can also prove the adaptation of the text during the translation process. None of the existing parallel texts is the same as the Uyghur text, hence we assume the probability of adaptation of the text.

¹ The name of this Jātaka story has few variants in English translation. *The Story of Prince Kalyanamkara and Papamkara* (E.Temel 2019); *Story of the Good and the Bad Prince (Kalyanamkara and Papamkara)* (Simone C. Raschman 2010)

Syntactic marking of focus refers to the assignment of a certain sentence position that hosts focused element of the sentence. This kind of default focus position can be observed in many languages of the world. In some languages, sentence-initial positions are designated for focused constituents, e.g., Georgian (Primus 1993, citing Harris 1982), Standard Arabic (Drubig & Schaffar 2001, citing Ouhalla 1993: 277), Greek (Morimoto 2000, citing Tsimpli 1995). Some show preverbal focus position, such as Hungarian (E. Kiss 1998), Turkish (Erguvanli 1984), and Korean (Morimoto 2000, citing Choe 1995). Among the syntactic means that realize focus in the sentence, clefting is another common syntactic strategy. The cleft structure is characterized by a matrix clause containing a copula as well as the focused element being followed by a relative clause that states the presupposition. The following part of the article investigates possible syntactic focus markings deployed in our text. The main purpose of the investigation is to give an empirical account of the syntactic feature of the focused element in the Old Uyghur narrative texts.

Syntactic Features of Predicate Focus

Predicate focus is a grammatically defined sub-class of focus, in which focus will be on verbal predicates and on functional elements in the extended verbal projection. Predicate focus refers to all instances of focus on lexical verbal predicates, such as V and VP (Zimmermann 2016:322). Throughout, we control for predicate focus by excluding focus on adverbial VP. We subsume the adverbial VP focus under the phrase focus. As containing the finite verb in the predicate, predicate focus could display distinct linguistic features compared to narrow (term focus) focus and phrase focus. Narrow focus usually contains only nominal arguments. Phrase focus could be more dynamic in regards to the constituent's nature. This distinction can lead to different marking strategies being deployed in languages to mark the different kinds of focus types.

In our text, predicate focus structure prevails through the entire text. In the predicate focus structure, the speaker introduces a referent, then gives information about this referent in the comment part of the sentence. Focus domains the comment. This is most pragmatic neutral sentence in the language, especially in the languages which have SOV canonical word order. Simplicity of Old Uyghur narrative language resulted the dominant presence of Topic – Comment structure, while focus is within the comment, usually falling on predicate verb or on verbal phrase. For example:

(1) a. *amraq ögük-üm. yer täñri törümiş-tä bärü bay*
Beloved darling-1POS. earth god born-LOC the rich

yemä bar yoq çiyay yemä bar.
also there be the poor also there be

My beloved one, there are the reach and the poor since the creation of the universe.

b. *qayu-si-ña ämgäk tä ozyur-yay sen.*
Which-3-DAT [suffering-LOC rescue-OPT-2]FOC

Which one you can (manage to) free from suffering?

In sentence (1) above, clause (a) plays a role in establishing common ground for the sentence (b). In (a), “the rich” and “the poor” are introduced to the discourse. In (b) these two referents are picked up by pronominal expression as an indication that its denotation is already in common ground. In (b) what is uttered as new information, or as the focus of the sentence is VP, acting as the predicate of the verb. The VP is expressing information about the constituent that has been established through the previous sentence. This kind of structure is typical topic-comment structure.

In predicate VP focus structure, different kinds of arguments can take the preverbal position when they are in focus.

Focus within the Predicate Verb Phrase

Throughout the text, all predicate verbs take the final position regardless of the verbal argument. As a result, when different predicate verbal arguments should be in focus, they move to the adjacent position of the predicate verb. When the verbal argument is the object of the sentence, OV structure is easily licensed with the canonical SOV word order. For example:

- (2) a. *taşyaru ilinçük-ä atlan-tur-di erti.*
outside pleasure-DAT. Set off-CAU-3PAST. COP
(The price) went out for sightseeing.
- b. *baliq taş-tin tariyçi-lar-ay. kör-ür erti(01-02)*
city outside-ABL. [Peasant-PL-ACC. See-AOR COP]FOC
(He) saw farmers outside of the city.

In example (2), (a) sentence uttered a scene paving the common ground. In (b), the initial constituent signalling its status as old by identical lexical means *baliq taş* (outside of the city) as in the previous sentence (a). The focused part, which is the whole VP as predicate inputs new information to the common ground. Verbal argument *tariyçilaray* (peasants) is also focused as part of the predicate. Since SOV word order is the canonical word order for the Old Uyghur (), objects being focused right before the verb position can be considered as an unmarked focus structure.

As SOV is the canonical word order in Old Uyghur, construction of the Object + Predicate verb is easy to occur, and it is difficult to judge pragmatically. Hence, we mark Object + Predicate verb construction as the default focus structure. However, when we are analyzing other constituents in the preverbal position, we need to check the instances these constituents appear other than the preverbal position. Then we will have the base to make a pragmatic comparison when these constituents are located at different position in the sentence.

- (3) *suv-da suv öñlük tay-lar bar. (17-05)*
water-LOC water appearance mountain-PL there be

There are mountains in the water that looks like water.

In the example above (3), word order is locative constituent+ S+V. From this example, we can see that in the corpus, the locative phrase can be in the initial position of the sentence.

- (4) a. *amraq ögük-üm. yer täñri törümiş-tä bärü bay*
Beloved darling-1POS. earth god born-LOC the rich
yemä bar yoq çiyay yemä bar.

also there be the poor also there b
My beloved one, there are the reach and the poor since the creation of the universe.

- b. *qayu-si-ña ümgäk tä ozyur-yay sen.*
Which-3-DAT [suffering-LOC rescue-OPT-2]FOC

Which one you can (manage to) free from the suffering?

In the same example in (4), verbal complement is taken up by locative constituent “*ämgak tä*”. This deviation of the locative constituent compared to example (3) can be explained by the focusing strategy. The object argument “*qayusiña*” (which one) of the predicate verb takes the initial position of the sentence as it is already given. Identification of the given part allows us to determine the focused part of the sentence. Based on the given constituent and common ground, we can infer that the predicate verb phrase is in focus. If the predicate verb is in focus, every part of the phrase will be in focus. Therefore, it can be confirmed in this sentence the locative constituent is in focus. The preverbal position is taken up by this locative constituent as it needs to be in focus. This can be contrasted with the situation in (3) where the locative constituent is given information and appears at the sentence-initial.

Another example of locative argument in preverbal position is as follows:

- (5) a. *köñül-čä ber-di.*(07-01)
heart-EQU give-3PAST

(They gave the Prince the treasure) as much as he wishes.

- b. *ädgü kü at tort buluñ-da yadil-ti.*
Good name [four corner-LOC. spread-3PAST]FOC

The good fame (of the Prince) is spread to four corners of the (world).

In the example above, sentence (a) introduces the common ground. Subject “*good fame (ädgü kü at)*” in the sentence (b) is marked for givenness because its owner, *the Prince* is clear from the context, therefore, “*ädgü kü at*” (*good fame*) is “*the good fame*” that belongs to “*the Prince*”. Since “*the Prince*” is given, something that belongs to him also can be considered as given. Thus, in the sentence (b), VP is not given part, and it is the part that gives information about the subject or topic of the sentence. Therefore, the predicate VP is in the focus position. Predicate verb and the locative constituent both are focused elements on their own turn.

We can see that in Old Uyghur text, locative elements’ position in the sentence could be flexible. Its change in the sentence position is subject to focusing strategy. When the locative phrase needs to be in focus, it could take the preverbal position.

Direct and Indirect Objects in the Predicate Verb Phrase

In sentences containing both direct and indirect objects, indirect objects can take the preverbal position. We consider this construction as marked focus strategy. In an unmarked focus structure, direct objects take the preverbal position. When the indirect objects take the preverbal position, they are marked for the focus. For example:

- (6) a. *täñri-m nä muntaq bol-ti kim*
Lord-1POSS how such. COP-PAST CNJ

- b. *antay täñri täg ärdin-i täg ögükü-ñüz-ni*
such lord like purl-3POSS like darling-2POSS-ACC

ölüm yer-i-ñä id-ur siz. (26-03)
[death place-3-DAT. send-2-AOR]FOC

How can you send your lord-like, purl-like, beloved darling (son) to the place of death?

In sentence (b) above, direct object “*ögüküñüz*” (darling) is the established topic throughout the text. “*The old guide*” is questioning “*the King*” why he sends his son to the place of death. As the direct object “*ögüküñüz*” (darling) has been established from the context as given, the comment part of the sentence is in focus. Indirect object “*ölüm yeriñä*” (*place of death*) is also focused as part of the focused predicate. Thus, direct object which is not in the focus moved to the left periphery, leaving the preverbal position to the indirect object. This strategy makes the indirect object as part of the focus. The same strategy is deployed in another sentence containing both direct and indirect objects.

(7) *bir ginä amraq oylum-in siz-iñä tutuzur men. (25-04/05)*
one DIM beloved son-ACC [you-DAT catch-CAU 1]FOC

I am giving you the my beloved son.

In the sentence above, *the Prince* is still the direct object of the sentence. This direct object “*the Prince*” is given part of the sentence and it is no longer in the focus. The verbal phrase in the predicate is in focus. Hence, indirect object as a part of the verbal phrase is in focus as well. The indirect object “*siziñä*” (*to you*) takes the preverbal position to be marked as focus.

Verb Focus

In the text, except referential constituents, single verbs also can be in focus. Verb focus in the texts is realized in-situ. For example:

(8) a. *qañ qazyan-sar oyl-i üčün temäz mu. (08-03)*
King achieve-COND son-3POSS for AUX PRT

If the king achieves (something), isn't that for his son?

b. *köñlüg ber-zün koñl-i-n bert-mä-ñ-lär. (08-05)*
heart give-2IMP. Heart-3ACC [hurt-NEG2-PL]FOC

Give as he wishes. Don't break his heart.

In sentence (b), the object “*köñlin*” (*heart*) is the topic of the sentence. The main topic is “*the Prince*”, to whom the “*köñli*” (*heart*) belongs. “*The Prince*” and “*köñli*” are in a whole-partial semantic relationship, this relationship allows the “*köñli*” to be subtopic of the sentence. If we exclude the topic of the sentence, what is left is in focus. In our case, the focal constituent is the verb alone.

(9) *bu munča qorqinčiy ada-qa kir-ip öl-gäy siz.*
This much terrifying danger-DAT enter-CONV [die-OPT 2]FOC

You will die by going into such dangers.

The above sentence was uttered by the King when he heard the Prince wanted to go to find the Chintamani jewel. The king illustrated five kinds of dangers the Prince will face. According to this common ground, we can infer that the part before the verb is already introduced in previous text. The prince's intention of “entering” (*kirip*) such dangers is also established. It was the result that missing from the previous text, and this result “*ölgäysiz*” (you will die) is uttered in this sentence as the focus of the sentence. Therefore, this sentence is well-established verb focus sentence.

Through the whole text, we encountered number of cases in which the verb is in the focus. In all the cases, verb focused realized in-situ. While other elements can move their position slightly flexible to be in focus position.

Adverbial Non-Finite Constructions in Focus

Adverbial non-finite constructions can be in focus.

(10) *a. qajī qan inčä tep ayit-ti:*
Father king. this saying say-3PAST

The king said:

b. näkä iyla-yu bušušluy käl-tiη?
Why. cry-CONV sad come-2PAST
Why did you come so sad?

c. tegin inčä tep ötün-ti.
Prince this saying say-3PAST
The price answered such:

d. taš-tin ilinčük-ä önmiš erd-im.
Outside-ABL pleasure-DAT present AUX1
I went outside for sightseeing.

e. üküš yoq čiyay ämgäklig tñliγ-lar-ay
[very the poor suffered living-PL-ACC
kör-üp iyla-dī-m.
see-CONV]FOC cry-PAST1

I cried with seeing so many poor beggars.

In the example above, sentences (a), (b), (c) are the background for the sentence (d). In sentence (d), the part except from the predicate verb is in the focus. The predicate verb is given information from the question sentence in (b). In (d), the adverbial phrase gives the answer to the question in the sentence (b). Focus is the answer that corresponds to the Wh-word in the question sentence. Therefore, in sentence (e), we can easily confirm the focus status of the adverbial phrase. We can interpret the adverbial phrase as causal phrase expressed by the converb form of the verb.

We can conclude that in the corpus, both nominal phrases and verbal phrases can be focused.

The Infinitives in Focus

The *-mAk* infinitive form denotes action, events, states, or process (Marcel 2004). We consider this kind of construction under the category of narrow focus. Though the constituent in focus is consist of phrase expression, the denotation of the expression is an action or one process.

(11) *biri ay-ur qazyaç nāη tariγ*
one-POSS say-AOR. achievement how [cultivating
tariγmaq-da ädgü yoq. (13-03)
cultivating-LOC]FOC good no

One of them said that there is nothing better than doing cultivation to get rich.

In sentence (11), the infinitive phrase and predicate are focus of the sentence. In the sentence, the infinitive verb refers to the action. However, the construction of this sentence is special in syntactic and semantic aspects. The construction “-*da ädgü yoq*” (there is nothing better than...) lexically has the semantic meaning of contrast. Contrast is one of the striking features of focus. The candidate on focus is always in a contrast with the rest of the alternatives. Hence, this construction can be considered a lexical device to realize contrastive focus. The referent that comes before this construction is in focus, and it has an exclusive interpretation. The candidate on the focus is the only alternative that meets the truth conditions. In the example, the candidate in the focus “*tariy tarimaqda*” (*cultivation*) is the only candidate that meets the “*qazyach*” (*to make money*) among all alternatives, presumably all kinds of activities that make money in this text.

Other Constituents in Focus

In the text, adverbial constituents and some particles also can be in focus.

(12) *taqi adin ayliq qol-ti.*

Then another treasury ask-3PAST

(The Prince) asked for another treasury.

yemä ber-di.(07-04)

[again]FOC give-3PAST

(The King) gave again.

The sentence above uttered in such a circumstance that the Prince had asked the king for the treasury to give it to poor people. The king agreed and gave the treasury. After the prince used up some or an individual treasure supplies, he asked again for treasure. The king gave again the treasure. From the context, we can establish the act of the King giving the treasury to the Prince happened once already. Therefore, in sentence (11), the verb “*giving*” *berdi* is already given, and not in focus. The constituent in the focus is the adverbial particle “*yemä*”. The information here that should be delivered is “The king is kind enough to give another round of treasury to the prince”. The King wanted the prince to stay instead of risking his life in search of Chintamani jewel. Here the adverbial “*yemä(again)*” is essential to highlight the king’s desperate statues to keep the prince from taking the risk. “*yemä*” is also be can focus marking device on its own. We will discuss this feature in the later chapters.

Propositional Phrase

In the text, propositional phrases can be in focus. But they exhibit different features in regards to syntactic position.

(13) *öz qazyanch-im üzä ädgü qilinč*

[own achievement-1POSS PREP]FOC good deed

qil-ayin tep saqin-ti. (12-2/3)

do-1OPT saying think-3PAST

He thought “let me do the good deed with my own effort”.

The sentence above (13) is an indirect quote sentence, which contains an object clause. The quoted part, the object clause, can be seen as an independent clause. Therefore, we segment this compound clause into two parts and analyze the object clause as independent clause. According to the definition of focus, focus indicates the alternative that related to the interpretation. In the sentence above, what is in alternative is the way how the Prince do good deed. In earlier text, the prince did the good deed by giving his fathers' treasury to the poor people. When the treasury is used up, and the prince starts to think to find other ways to do good deed. Hence, we can infer that what is in alternative is the ways how the prince does good deed. "Relying on his father's treasury" and "relying on his own achievement" are the alternatives that important for the interpretation of the sentence. Therefore, the proposition phrase "öz qazyançım üzä" (by my own achievement) is in focus. However, unlike other constituents in focus, the propositional phrase is in sentence initials. The preverbal position is taken up by the topical element. This is contradictory to the situations we analyzed in previous cases. In previous cases, the preverbal position is taken by the focused element. The given elements are moved to the left periphery of the sentence. We consider this deviation in this sentence is probably due to the connection of the object phrase "ädgü qilinc" (good deed) and the verb "qilayın". The deverbal noun "qilinc" has the same stem as the verb itself. With the same stem, it might be difficult to part them far apart.

Conclusion

The conclusions that can be drawn from our analysis based on the text are that the verb focus is realized in situ. Infinite verbal phrases are more flexible in this regard. Argument focus has the default focus position, which is the preverbal position. When a nominal argument is in focus it takes the preverbal position. This phenomenon especially can be good observed in the cases of direct and indirect objects. When special interpretation effects are pursued, e.g., exclusive interpretation, special devices are used, and it presents distinguished syntactic features.

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