

FOCUS MARKING IN MAUWAKE

Liisa Järvinen
Summer Institute of Linguistics

1. INTRODUCTION

When we speak, we do not just produce isolated neutral sentences in a vacuum: the topic we choose and the emphasis we give to various parts of our utterance are related to the speech situation as well as to the linguistic and extra-linguistic knowledge of the speaker and the addressee(s).

My aim in this paper is to describe the special devices that the speakers of Mauwake¹, a Papuan language, have at their disposal for focusing on various elements of the utterances. The main discussion concentrates on the morphological devices, namely two focus clitics, but the syntactic and phonological focusing devices are also touched upon, and their use in relation to the use of the clitics.

Focus is here defined following Dik (1978:149): as “that pragmatic function which characterises constituents with focus function which present the relatively most important or salient information with respect to the pragmatic information of the speaker and the addressee.” The traditional definition of focus as the essentially new information would not do, as in Mauwake either old or new information can be in focus. Similarly topic, although often old information, cannot be defined in those terms in Mauwake, because that would exclude the possibility of having topics that are new information. The topic is defined as the starting point, or domain, of a sentence (Allerton 1978). I consider focus to be separate from the topic-comment structure of a sentence, so that it is possible to have topics that are in focus too (Hannay 1983). My approach also allows the possibility of having more than one focus per predication (Dik et al. 1980). For details of topicalization in Mauwake, see Kwan (1980).

2. FOCUSING DEVICES IN MAUWAKE

In a ‘low-prominence’ sentence in Mauwake, as in (1) the most prominent elements are the verb, occurring finally, and topic (often coinciding with the subject), occurring

initially. These sentences are called low-prominence sentences, since this is the expected norm and the prominence is thereby diminished (Naylor 1975).

- (1) *Auwa uurika owowa maneka ikiw-inon.*
 father tomorrow village big go FU:3sg
 'Father will go to town tomorrow.'

When some other, 'unexpected' element is moved to either initial or final position, i.e. left-dislocated to become Topic or right-dislocated to become Tail (Dik 1978), the prominence becomes marked (cf. Litteral 1980). The dislocated element receives more emphasis than it would in its normal position; thus *uurika* 'tomorrow' is more prominent both in the Topic position (2) and in the Tail position (3) than in (1).

- (2) *Auwa owowa maneka ikiw-inon, uurika.*
 father village big go FU:3sg tomorrow
 'Father will go to town tomorrow.'

- (3) *Uurika auwa owowa maneka ikiw-inon.*
 tomorrow father village big go FU:3sg
 'Tomorrow father will go to town.'

Stress placement is also used by Mauwake speakers to give added emphasis to parts of an utterance. For the interrelationship between focusing by means of stress and the focus clitics, see Sect.5.

Dik et al. (1980) mention various parameters for the study of focus phenomena. Some of those are relevant in the discussion of focus in Mauwake. The scope of focus is most commonly one constituent, but it can occasionally be the whole predication too. The difference between contrastive and non-contrastive focus is an important one; and the question of exhaustiveness is tied to the contrastiveness in Mauwake. Whereas these parameters apply to the focus marking in Mauwake, the question of new versus old information does not.

3. CONTRASTIVE FOCUS

Chafe (1976) lists the following factors as necessary for focus of contrast: background knowledge that somebody did something, a set of possible candidates in the addressee's

mind, and the assertion about which candidate is the correct one. Thus there can be no contrast if the number of candidates is either unlimited or one.

The term contrast need not be understood narrowly as the contradiction of addressee's expectation as is sometimes done. In many contrastive sentences the speaker does indeed contradict a belief of the addressee's, but that is not essential (*ibid.*). What is crucial is that there should be a limited number of candidates in the addressee's mind. Also, contrast is never an obligatory category (Linde 1979:348): it is the speaker's pragmatic choice whether he contrasts different things or not.

In Mauwake, the marker for contrastive focus is *-ke*, normally attached as a clitic to the end of a noun phrase. It can also follow a time or location word (examples (10), (11)). The domain of the contrastive focus is one constituent.

(4) *Os-ke ikiw-o -k.*
 he CF go PA 3sg
 'It was he who went.'

(5) *Mua bug maaya nain-ke eliw mera inowa isak -inon.*
 man wind long that CF well fish many spear FU:3sg
 'A man with big lungs will easily spear many fish
 (implying: whereas people with short breath will not).'

Sometimes the use or non-use of the contrastive focus marker causes a difference in the semantic interpretation of a word. In (6), 'big' refers to the size of the man in question, in (7) his big size is either contrasted with smallness, or he is set apart as one of a limited set of big men, i.e. headmen:

(6) *Mua nain maneka.*
 Man that big
 'That man is big.'

(7) *Mua nain maneka-ke.*
 man that big CF
 'That man is a big man/headman (or: That man is big).'

The CF marker is used when the NP is in focus and is contrasted against something else, another NP belonging to 'a set of possible candidates' (Chafe 1976:34). The term

'contrast' is here used in a rather wide sense, also covering those cases where the contrast is implied and there is no other overt marking besides *-ke*.

The main placement for the contrastive focus marker is on the subject (87% of all the occurrences), next most common is the non-verbal predicate of an equative clause (12%, example (8)). There are also a few cases where the CF marker marks a topic other than subject, namely a dislocated object (9), or a topicalized temporal (10) or locative (11).

- (8) *Koora fain sesa koora-ke.*
house this price house CF
'This house is a store.'
- (9) *Ne erepam nain-ke wienna skol stua on-a -mik.*
and four that CF 3pl:GEN school store do PA 3pl
'And the fourth one they made into a school store.'
- (10) *Amirika-ke eliw ik-ai -yem, uura -ke napumar-i -yem.*
noon CF well be PR 1sg night CF sick PR 1sg
'At noon I am well, at night I am sick.'
- (11) *Amiten -ke ikiw-i -yem, Susure -ke me ikiw-i -yem.*
Amiten CF go PR 1sg Susure CF not go PR 1sg
'I go to Amiten but not to Susure.'

In the whole text data, only about one third of the clauses have a nominal or pronominal subject; approximately two thirds of the clauses have a verbal affix as the sole indicator of the subject. Of those clauses with an overt subject, ca. 25 per cent are marked with the CF marker.

The fact that the CF marking is most commonly used with the subject points at the possibility that the clitic was originally an ergative marker but has changed its function. Many of the Finisterre-Huon languages have ergative marking, often in the form *-ne* or something similar. At the moment Mauwake clearly is not an ergative language, and if the focus clitic is related to the ergative marker in other languages, it is also possible that the marker was borrowed but not the function. Siroi, a Southern Madang language, has a 'specific clitic' *-nge* (Wells 1979) and Waskia a 'subject marker' *-ke* (Ross and Paol

1978), both of which function very similarly to the contrastive focus marker in Mauwake. In the closely related Kaukombaran languages this same marker occurs in the following forms: Mala *-no*, Miani *-ini* and Maiani *-ni* (Loeweke and May 1982).

The ergative origin of the contrastive focus marker would also explain those cases where the CF marking has to be used even though no contrast may be implied. This happens when an object of a clause is left-dislocated for topicalization and the word order changes from SOV to OSV. The CF marker is used with the subject if there is any ambiguity as to the subject, like in (12), where both S and O are in third person. The CF marker is needed to distinguish the subject from the object since there is no case marking on the nouns. The CF marking is optional in cases like (13) and (14), where the person marking on the verb distinguishes the subject from the object.

- (12) *Episowa ifa nain atua -ke ene -e -k.*
 tobacco leaf that worm CF eat PA 3sg
 'The tobacco leaves were eaten by worms.'

- (13) *Fofa -pa maa mauwa on-i -mik nain yos-ke ma -i -yem*
 market LOC thing what do PR 3pl that I CF till PR 1sg
 'I am telling what they do at the market.'

- (14) *Mua nain yo uruf-a -m.*
 man that I see PA 1sg
 'That man I saw.'

Also in other cases where there might be any ambiguity as to which of the clause constituent is the subject, the CF marker is used. If (15) did not have CF marking, 'Muandilam' could be taken as the possessor of the betelnuts and the meaning would be 'when he stole Muandilam's betelnuts from me.' In (16) the CF marking is necessary, because otherwise 'this other one' would be interpreted as an object, whereas now the object, a non-human noun, is marked by zero.

- (15) *Muandilam-ke owora efar ikum aaw-era...*
 Muandilam CF betelnut 1sg:DAT by:stealth get DS:SEQ
 'When Muandilam stole my betelnut...'

- (16) *Ikoka masin kaanin-ke samorar-era oko fain-ke asip-inon.*
 later machine which CF break DS:SEQ other this CF help fu:3sg
 'Later when one of the machines breaks this other one will help it.'

A clause can only have one constituent with contrastive focus. In an equative clause either the subject or the non-verbal predicate can be marked with it, but not both. As a reply to (17) either (18a) or (18b) can be given, if the second speaker wants to focus on himself as the headman. (18a) needs to have a heavy stress on the word *yo* in order to qualify as a proper answer to (17).

- (17) *Yo owowa saria-ke.*
 I village chief CF
 'I am the village chief.'

- (18a) *Wia, yo owowa saria-ke.*
 no, I village chief CF
 'No, I am the village chief.'

- (18b) *Wia, yos-ke owowa saria ik-ai -yem.*
 no, I CF village chief be PR 1sg
 'No, I am the village chief.'

Contrastive focus can occur regardless of whether an element is given or new, definite or indefinite². Non-verbal predicates with CF are mostly new information (19), whereas subjects can be either new (20) or given (21), indefinite (20) or definite (21).

- (19) *Iperuma nain me enim-eka, inasina mua-ke.*
 Ecl that not eat IMP:2pl spirit man CF
 'Do not eat the eel, it is a spirit man.'

- (20) *Mua amisarowa nain-ke baurar-ikuan.*
 man knowing that CF flee FU:3pl
 'Those who know will flee.'

- (21) *Aaya nain-ke ifa puuk-a -k.*
 Sugarcane that CF snake cut PA 3sg
 'The sugarcane changed into a snake.'

The most common clause type where contrastive focus occurs is an affirmative statement, but it can also occur in questions (22), commands (23) and negative statements (24). In questions the CF marker merges together with the question marker *-i* and becomes *-ki*. The CF marker is never found in a negative equative clause except when this is overtly contrasted with an affirmative one (25).

- (22) *Emeria fain Eema-ki?*
 woman this Eema CF:QM
 'Is this woman Eema?'

- (23) *Takira nain-ke ikiw-inok.*
 boy that CF go IMP:3sg
 'Let that boy go.'

- (24) *Is -ke me kuum-e -mik.*
 we CF not burn PA 1pl
 'We didn't burn it.'

- (25) *Maa nain me eliwa-ke, samora-ke.*
 thing that not good CF bad CF
 'The thing is not good but bad.'

Some more needs to be said about questions and statements with alternatives. If only one alternative is given in the question and either affirmation or negation is expected, *-ki* is used (22). When mutually exclusive alternatives are given (26), all but the last one of them have *-ki*, the last one *-ke*. Dik et al. (1980) call this type of focus exhaustive listing focus. When alternatives not mutually exclusive are listed, each one of them has *-ki* as the CF marker (27). This latter could be represented by 'and/or' in English.

- (26) *Emeria fain Eema-ki e emeria oko -ke?*
 woman this Eema CF:QM or woman other CF
 'Is this woman Eema or somebody else?'

- (27) *Iwera eka -ki e mauwa-ki, owora -ki,*
 coconut water CF:QM or what CF:QM betelnut CF:QM
episowa-ki (ika-inon)...
 tobacco CF:QM (be FU:3sg)
 'If there is coconut juice or something else, betelnut, or tobacco...'

Inclusives like *ikos* 'with' and *pun* 'also' are never used with the CF marker, because of their semantic incompatibility with contrast (28). The same is true of a non-verbal predicate following *unuma* 'name', since the choice of a name is practically unlimited (29). Also, a sentence like (30) by itself is unacceptable, because it implies contrast in a context that is essentially non-contrastive: boys are *expected* to grow. (The sentence would naturally be acceptable with a suitable contrastive context.)

- (28) *Baurar-ep urupem-ik -era siowa wiawi ikos or -o -mik.*
 flee SS:SEQ go:up be DS:SEQ dog father with go:down PA 3pl
 'When it fled, the dog went down with its master.'

- (29) *Mua nain unuma Moresen.*
 man that name Moresen
 'That man's name is Moresen.'

- (30)**Takira-ke arim-o -k.*
 boy CF grow PA 3sg

In a discourse, contrastive focus marker cannot be used with the participant introduced first, since there is no contrast with other participants. The first participant is introduced with a NP and normally referred to only by pronoun or verb affixation until other participants are introduced. The major participant receives CF less frequently than other participants. This may be because he/she already is a prominent figure in the text and does not need the additional prominence through contrast marking.

4. IRREALIS FOCUS

The second focus clitic, *-ko*, is harder to label than the contrastive focus marker. It might be negatively called non-contrastive focus, or neutral focus, because its use does not imply contrast. However, the term irrealis focus (IF) is used here, for it describes where the clitic usually occurs. The irrealis focus marker almost always occurs in irrealis

clauses, i.e. questions (31), commands (32), negative clauses (33) or those with future tense (34).

- (31) *Aaya -ko niar ik -ua -i?*
 sugar IF 2pl:DAT be PR:3sg QM
 'Have you got sugar?'
- (32) *Owora -ko enak -e.*
 betelnut IF give me to eat IMP:2sg
 'Give me betelnut (to eat).'
- (33) *Owowa oko -ko me uf -e -mik.*
 village other IF not dance PA 3pl
 'Other villages didn't dance.'
- (34) *Uurika miiwaasa-ko nop -iyan.*
 tomorrow car IF search FU:1pl
 'Tomorrow we'll look for a car.'

In Papuan languages the verb is often the only obligatory constituent in a clause. In a 'low prominence' clause, the verb is the most prominent element (Litteral 1980). In an irrealis clause in Mauwake, the emphasis may be shifted to some other element by means of the IF marker.

Unlike the contrastive focus marker, which is almost exclusively attached to the subject or non-verbal predicate, IF can mark the subject (33), direct object (32), indirect object (35), time, location (36) or instrument (37).

- (35) *Mua nain-ko onak -e.*
 man that IF give him to eat IMP:2sg
 'Give it to that man (to eat).'
- (36) *Miiwaasa era -pa -ko me yiar samorar-e -k.*
 car road LOC FI not 1pl:DAT break PA 3sg
 'Our car didn't break on the road.'

- (37) *Fura -iw -ko me puuk-a -mik.*
 knife INST IF not cut PA 3pl
 'They didn't cut it with a knife.'

In a sentence the final, fully inflected verbs are more prominent than the medial verbs. But if the medial verb is placed in focus, *-ko* is added to it (38). Even the verbal negation particle *me* can be marked with the FI marker: in that case the focus is on negating the whole proposition (39).

- (38) *Akim-ap -ko uruf-e.*
 try SS:SEQ IF see IMP:2sg
 'Try it and see.'

- (39) *Takira me -ko wia aruf-a -mik.*
 boy not IF 3pl:ACC hit PA 1pl
 'We didn't hit the boys.'

It is possible to have more than one IF per clause: a polite request may contain as many as three elements marked by *-ko* (40).

- (40) *No -ko era -ko imen-ap -ko i yia asip -e.*
 You IF way IF find SS:SEQ IF we 1pl:DAT help IMP:2sg
 'Please find a way to help us'

The cases where IF occurs in realis clauses are very few. Only twice in the whole data it is used when introducing a new participant in a discourse (41). Normally, however, the word *oko* 'other' is used for this purpose. The similarity between the two forms suggests that the IF marker may actually have developed from *oko* and then acquired a more specific function.

- (41) *Emera enowa mua-ko emeria fan aaw-o -k.*
 sago eating man IF woman here get PA 3sg
 'A Sepik man got a wife here.'

The only other case where irrealis focus has been observed in realis clauses is with the adverbial *samor* 'badly', when it is used quantitatively, something like colloquial English 'an awful lot':

(42) *Ne samor akena-ko aruf-a -mik.*
and badly very IF beat PA 3pl
'And they beat him very much.'

(43) *Samor-ko niir -e -mik.*
badly IF laugh PA 3pl
'They laughed an awful lot.'

5. INTERRELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE FOCUS MARKERS AND OTHER PROMINENCE DEVICES

Although the irrealis focus marker almost exclusively occurs in irrealis clauses, the distinction between the two focus markers is not that of realis vs. irrealis. Both of them can occur in irrealis clauses as follows: in low prominence clauses neither is used (44), neutral focus is marked with *-ko* (45) and contrastive focus with *-ke* (46). Similar examples could be quoted for questions, commands and future statements.

(44) *Yo me uruf-a -m.*
I not see PA 1sg
'I didn't see (it).'

(45) *Yo -ko me uruf-a -m.*
I IF not see PA 1sg
'I didn't see it (regardless of whether others did or not).'

(46) *Yos-ke me uruf-a -m.*
I CF not see PA 1sg
'It wasn't I who saw it (but someone else).'

Since the two different focus markers are not mutually exclusive they can also co-occur in one clause:

- (47) *Yos-ke maa nain-ko me aaw-e -m.*
 I CF thing that IF not get PA 1sg
 'It wasn't I who took that thing.'

It has been suggested that the main difference between the focus markers is that of +Control vs. -Control (personal communication with Litteral). This does not seem to be the case, however. Naturally most of the time the CF marker is attached to a constituent with control, because it mainly occurs with the subject and one of the common characteristics of subjects is +Control. Likewise the IF marker is quite often attached to an object, which is essentially -Control. But I would claim that the question of control is not essential in determining the use of the markers. Sentences like (45) and (46) show this, since either marker can be used in the otherwise identical sentence. Also, there are clear cases where the constituent with CF marking is not in control (9) and others where the one with IF marking is in control (41).

It was mentioned earlier that left- and right-dislocation as well as stress can also be used to mark prominence in Mauwake. Right- dislocation can be combined with either *-ke* or *-ko*, but it is very rare.

- (48) *Ne maa nain aaw -ep omem-ik-ua, sawur emeria nain-ke.*
 and thing that take SS:SEQ cry be PR:3sg spirit woman that CF
 'And she took that thing and was crying, the spirit woman(was).'

- (49) *Yo opora gelemuta-ko ma -inen na -ep, nanar gelemuta-ko.*
 I talk small IF say FU:1sg say SS:SEQ story small IF
 'I will talk a little, (tell) a little story.'

Since the emphasized object in irrealis clauses has the IF marker, which is not used with objects in the realis clauses, one would expect to find some other device for the latter. Right- dislocation is used for this purpose relatively often. And although time, location and manner adverbials may be emphasized with contrastive focus and irrealis focus markers, right-dislocation is used more frequently for that purpose.

Left-dislocation and focus markers are not used for the same constituents. Contrastive focus mainly occurs with the subject, which normally occupies initial

position in the clause and so cannot be fronted for more emphasis. Non-verbal predicate, the second candidate for CF marking, can never occur initially.

Constituents with IF marker occur in the same position as they would in a low prominence clause. Very often with a focused object, the subject is only indicated by the verbal affix, but when there is an overt subject it precedes the object (50). Thus a sentence like (51) is unacceptable. Even a sentence like (52) does not really constitute a counter-example because the accusative pronoun itself is not left-dislocated but rather topicalized by the means of a basic free pronoun.

(50) *Mua nain i -ko me yia far -e -k.*
 man that we IF not 1pl:ACC call PA 3sg
 'The man didn't call us.'

(51)**Kumin -ko yo nop -i -yem.*
 Hermit:crab IF I search PR 1sg

(52) *I -ko mua nain(-ke) me yia far -e -k.*
 we IF man that (CF) not 1pl:ACC call PA 3sg
 'The man didn't call us.'

The constituents with either of the focus markers normally receive the same stress and intonation as they would without the marker. They can also be stressed more strongly and thus receive a particularly heavy emphasis. Basically, however, stress as a prominence device is used for those constituents that do not have a focus marker.

6. SUMMARY

In Mauwake, prominence within a clause can be marked by phonetic, morphological or syntactic devices. The morphological devices are the contrastive focus and irrealis focus clitics attached to the end of the focused constituent.

Contrastive focus is mainly used with the subject, or non-verbal predicate, when contrasted with something else that would be a possible candidate for the subject or non-verbal predicate position. The contrast need not contradict the expectation that the addressee may have, it can just single out the correct referent among a number of possibilities.

Irrealis focus is used almost exclusively in irrealis clauses, and it can be attached to various kinds of constituents.

The two types of focus markers can co-occur in the same clause. They can also interact with other prominence devices, namely left-dislocation and stress placement.

ABBREVIATIONS

BEN	Beneficiary
CF	Contrastive focus
DAT	Dative
DS	Different subject in following clause
IF	Irrealis focus
FU	Future
GEN	Genitive
IMP	Imperative
INST	Instrumental
LOC	Locative
NP	Noun phrase
p	Person
PA	Past tense
pl	Plural
PR	Present tense
QM	Question marker
REC	Recipient
SEQ	Sequential action
sg	Singular
SIM	Simultaneous action
SS	Same subject in following clause
TOP	Topic

NOTES

1. Mauwake (also called Ulingan) is a Papuan language spoken by 1800 people in the Madang province of Papua New Guinea. It belongs to the Kumilan family of Adelbert Range super-stock, Madang-Adelbert Range sub-phylum.

This paper is mainly based on data consisting of ca. 50 pages of texts, oral and written, collected between May 1978 and March 1980. Most are narratives, but descriptive, procedural and hortatory texts are also included.

I want to express my thanks to those several people, mainly from Moro village, who gave the texts; to Saror Aduna, Kuduk Magidar and Kait Makiol for their assistance in checking the data; and to Ms. Kwan Poh San and Dr. Ger Reesink for their helpful comments during the writing of this paper.

2. The definite vs. indefinite distinction does not seem to be as important in Mauwake as it is, e.g., in English, and there is no obligatory marking for definiteness. When necessary, the definiteness is marked with a demonstrative.

REFERENCES

- Allerton, J. D. 1978. "The notion of 'givenness' and its relations to presupposition and to 'theme'." Lingua 44:133-168.
- Chafe, Wallace L. 1976. "Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics and point of view". In: Li (ed.) 1976:25-55.
- Clayre, I. 1972. "A preliminary note on focus and emphasis in Melanau - a language of coastal Sarawak". Lingua 31:237-269.
- Dik, Simon D. 1978. Functional grammar. Amsterdam: North-Holland [North-Holland Linguistic Series 37].
- Dik, Simon D. (ed.). 1983. Advances in functional grammar. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- Dik, Simon et al. 1980. "On the typology of focus phenomena". In: Hoekstra et al. (eds.) 1980:41-74.
- Hoekstra, Teun; van der Hulst, H.; and Moortgat, M. (eds.). 1980. Perspectives in functional grammar. Dordrecht: Foris Publications.
- Giv'on, Talmy. 1976. "Topic, pronoun and grammatical agreement". In: Li (ed.) 1976:149-188.
- Giv'on, Talmy (ed.). 1979. Discourse and syntax. New York: Academic Press [Syntax and Semantics 12].
- Grimes, Joseph E. 1972. The thread of discourse. The Hague: Mouton [Janua Linguarum 207].
- Hannay, Mike. 1983. "The focus function in functional grammar". In: Dik (ed.) 1983:207-223.

- Kwan, Poh San. 1980. "Topicalization in Mauwake". ms., S.I.L.
- Li, Charles (ed.). 1976. Subject and topic. New York: Academic Press.
- Linde, Charlotte. 1979. "Focus of attention and the choice of pronouns in discourse". In: Giv'on (ed.) 1979:337-354.
- Litteral, Robert L. 1980. Features of Anggor discourse. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Pennsylvania.
- Loeweke, Eunice and Jean May. 1982. "Grammar of Maiani, Miani and Mala - three languages of the Kaukombaran language family". ms., S.I.L.
- Lyons, John. 1977. Semantics 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Naylor, P. B. 1975. "Topic, comment and emphasis in the Tagalog verbal clause". Oceanic Linguistics 49.
- Ross, Malcolm and John Natu Paol. 1978. Waskia grammar sketch and vocabulary. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University. [Pacific Linguistics B-56].
- Wells, Margaret. 1979. Siroi grammar. Canberra: Department of Linguistics, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University. [Pacific Linguistics B-51].