

The Focus in Cleft Constructions in Gbaya: A Cartographic Approach

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Abstract

Gbaya is a language featuring specific particles that warrant meticulous analysis. To analyze them, the linguistic data must undergo transformations that strengthen the morphological material. This is achievable through information transmission, in so far as the notion of the cleft is intrinsically linked to focus via its canonical ‘né... a’ structure, which conveys new information and exhibits a cleft operator co-indexed with the focalized element. This cleft structure may undergo elision of the introductory element, unlike the exclusive marker of the cleft. Within this framework, Bago Kaptel (2022) distinguishes between relativization and clefting. The cleft formation process is based on the element marking the illocutionary force upon which the cleft rests, establishing a Cleft Phrase. Meanwhile, the introductory element ‘né’ identifies the focalized constituent among others, invoking a projection suggested here as the Designation Phrase (DesignP). These specificities of Gbaya clefting contribute to the refinement and enrichment of the theory while laying the groundwork for future research.

Keywords

Gbaya, Cleft, Focus, Relativization, Designation Phrase

1. Introduction

The cleft is informally described as an operation of extracting a constituent associated with a semantic particularity conveying an emphatic value through a presentative to a relative. It is linked to the transmission of new information. Overall, Lambrecht (2001: p. 457) defines the cleft as: “A cleft construction is a complex sentence structure consisting of a matrix clause headed by a copula and a relative-like clause whose relativized argument of the copula. Taken together, the matrix and the relative express a logically simple proposition, which can also be expressed

in the form of a single clause without a change in truth conditions”.

The cleft is constructed from the movement of a constituent. This constituent moves from a low position to a high position and allows the displaced element to be distinguished from other elements of the sentence. It is in this vein that **Otto Jespersen (1937: p. 86)** explains the notion of “cleft sentence” to account for an SVO sentence in the form. “it is X that verb” allows focusing on a constituent. It is thus the fact of designating a constituent to which the speaker’s intention should be attached that probably motivated **Robert (2000: p. 06)** to define the cleft as being able to establish a focus. As a result, focus plays an important role in syntax while assigning an informational value to the structure. The cleft is therefore a common means of expressing focus. This expression of focus presented by **Lambrecht (2001)** is based on a verbal construction articulated in two segments «C’est X Qu + Verbe». Clefts thus express focus through bi-clausal constructions. It is, moreover, this dual nature of focus constructions that highlights the predominance of cleft structures that require new syntactic analyses and theories, given the flexibility of natural languages. In this regard, it is not surprising that work on clefts is remarkably vast. The works of **Drubig (2003)** and **Schachter (1989)** are fundamentally oriented towards the study of information structure. However, studies on cleft constructions remain an unexplored area for less known languages. The Gbaya language is a striking example insofar as it is a syntactic underdog. Yet its structure requires a particular construction through specific markers that affect the linear order of the cartographic structure proposed by some scholars. This language is characterized by the interpretation of the cleft introducer as a focus marker followed by the cleft operator which occupies the relativizer’s position, which is obsolete in cleft structures.

Our study based on the idea formulated by **Rouquier (2018)** that the cleft is dependent on focus, whose primary function is to focalize a constituent, will examine how the cleft contributes to the designation of focus. The analysis will be conducted within the framework of the cartographic approach of generative grammar, aiming to describe the specifics of the language and account for both variations and the underlying principles that allow these variations. Sentence constituents are segmented into phrases with a degree of independence and are represented at the surface level through the X-bar module, which accounts for the different movements operated by constituents according to the activation principle of the syntactic category studied. Elements can move overtly (Phonological Form) or covertly (Logical Form) depending on the requirements of feature categories and the respect of syntactic properties. To this end, two questions will guide our analysis throughout this study:

- How is the cleft structure realized in Gbaya?
- Does it require focal designation?

Throughout this study, we will meticulously analyze Gbaya data; a Niger-Congo phylum language and Adamawa-Ubangi family language spoken in the East region (dòòka, laï, mbodomo, bangando, etc.) and Adamaoua region (yaayuwee) in Cameroon.

2. Data and Methods

This paper is based on data from Gbaya, a language of the Adamawa-Ubangui family, group 7, Niger-Congo phylum, and Adamawa branch. Gbaya is spoken in the Adamawa region and the Eastern region of Cameroon, with significant geographical expansion in both regions. Gbaya is one of the vehicular languages in the Eastern part, with the Gbaya-dooká dialect variety. Gbaya-yaayuwée, on the other hand, is in a diglossic situation with Fulfulde in the Adamawa region, with over 80,000 native speakers and 1200 non-native speakers.

Data collection was made possible through the Gbaya population, divided into two age groups: adolescents with an average age of 35 - 40 years and elders with an average age of 50 - 80 years. In this perspective, syntax according to [Ondoua Engon \(2011\)](#), is a science based on empirical data, with an essentially empirico-deductive approach. According to [Bija'a \(2005\)](#), empiricism is a philosophical doctrine that all knowledge is based on experience and recognizes no value in a priori ideas.

The deductive approach, on the other hand, is a thought process that involves going from the general to the particular. Deduction assumes that the statement is true in certain observed cases. The approach adopted here starts from the observation and analysis of data collected in the Adamawa region, namely Meiganga, Djohong, Kalaldi, Dir and Ngaoundal. Corpus consultation is subject to analysis which has been adapted to the object of study, namely speech. Additionally, our examples are drawn from our own knowledge. As a native speaker, we have intuition regarding the grammaticality and ungrammaticality of sentences. Certain sentences are submitted to elders to confirm or refute our data.

3. The Cleft Structure

Consider the following sentences:

- (1) a. **C'est** la fille **que** je cherche
 b. **It is** my teacher **that** is the best

Examples (1a-b) display a sequence in French and English, respectively, where the elements *ce* and *it* are actually presentatives devoid of any referential mark that would lead us to believe they anaphorically express a previously introduced element. In French, as in English, the presentative is linked to the relative pronoun to form the cleft building. They combine with a copula verb (*être* for French and *to be* for English) to select a noun phrase as specified by [Lambrecht \(2001\)](#). This phrase is followed by a relativizer.

[De Stefani \(2008\)](#) criticizes [Muller \(2002\)](#) for being restrictive. She argues that such a definition fails to account for the diversity of cleft constructions. She points out that the NP is not the only constituent that can undergo clefting. In this vein, [Prince \(1981\)](#) and [Jespersen \(1937\)](#) note that time and space adverbials can also be clefted. According to [Jespersen \(1937\)](#), the cleft pronoun *it* or *ce* is considered referential and serves as the subject of the matrix sentence. This pronoun has a

semantic function. He also suggests that the clefted element constitutes the predicate, and the restrictive relative, which is discontinuously associated with the pronoun *it*, forms a syntactic constituent with it via the copula. Jespersen's analysis allows him to explain why this type of relative appears after a highly determined element. Sandfeld (1980) analyzes the constituent preceding the restrictive as an 'extraposition'.

The use of the relative pronoun is conceived by De Stefani (2008) as a self-repair strategy that prevents the displacement of the NP from creating an ungrammatical effect. The use of relative pronoun before an NP is a consequence of Muller's (Muller, 2002: p. 101) definition of clefts in French, which states that: «Les clivées sont des constructions comportant une proposition principale formé par le démonstratif *ce, c'*, avec le verbe *être* suivi d'un groupe nominal et une subordonnée introduite par un relatif comportant elle-même un verbe conjugué».

Moreover, cleft structures select any major constituent of the sentence. However, Muller's conception implies that the presupposition contained in the cleft is not a relative pronoun that links the term in the pivot and the rest of the predication. The sequences below allow us to endorse the analysis of clefts, with demonstrates that it differs from relatives:

- (2) a. *né* **Rosaline** **a** *yak-á* *skûlu*
 It's Rosaline Op go.Acc school
 'It's Rosaline who went to school'
- b. *né* **bêm** **a** *ba-á* *døk* *korona*
 It's child Op catch.Acc virus corona
 'It's the child who caught the corona virus'
- c. *né* **mbòkte** **a** *Sodea* *hunya-á* *nu-tua*
 It's gently OP Sodea open.Acc door
 'It's gently that Sodea opened the door'

The examples in (2) exhibit the nouns 'Rosaline', 'bêm' and adverb 'mbòkte' respectively. These constituents positioned in the pivot are linked through the particle 'a'. This particle is the element on which the action exerted by the NP on the VP is highlighted; it is the element from which the designated constituent is attached to the elements that assign it a value. In these examples (2), the designated constituents, namely 'Rosaline, bêm and mbòkte', are C-commanded by 'a'. As a result, the particle 'a' exerts a force on the designation element and the designated constituents. It is this value assigned to the morpheme 'a' that we call Operator (Op). In Gbaya, the cleft construction exhibits the designation element 'né', which identifies a constituent among many others, and the value of precision and circumscription is ensured by the operator 'a'. Therefore, this operator is indispensable in cleft constructions, which leads us to call it Cleft Operator. Unlike Fulfulde where the clefted constituent is not linked to the operator 'on' (Olowa, 2014). The sequences below clearly justify this relationship between the clefted constituent and its operator:

- (3) a. o a nyóŋ-á zoro o?
 who Foc eat.Acc fish Q
 ‘Who ate the fish?’
 b. né Gbane
 it’s Gbane Op eat.Acc fish
 ‘It’s Gbane (who ate the fish)’

The juxtaposition of the two sequences in (3) allows for the identification of the presupposition ‘nyóŋ-á zoro’. It is perceived as old information, i.e., information anchored in the speaker’s knowledge store. This information undergoes a selectional restriction in (3d). However, [Olowa \(2014\)](#) demonstrates that the antecedent, which represents old information, can be deleted without rendering the sequence ungrammatical. There exists, to this regard, an agreement relation between the clefted element and its operator. We also note that in the Gbaya language, the operator ‘a’ is the marker of the cleft construction, as it appears in a position linked to the verb. Its absence in Logical Form disrupts the antecedent-cleft operator relation.

Based on this observation, we realize that Gbaya conforms to the definitions of cleft constructions as a pivot element associated with the presupposition via an operator. This is indeed what [Roulon \(2000: p. 07\)](#) notes and asserts that there exists in Gbaya in a direct relation between the focalized constituent and the informative presupposition, conveying new information, unlike the so-called “Stress-Focus” clefts, whose emergence is not permitted. The sentences below illustrate this state of affairs:

- (4)
 a. **C’est** la fille **que** j’aime
 b. **Ce sont** des enfants **que** j’ai enseigné
 c. **It is** my best friend **that** I love
 d. **It is** your daughter **that** I saw past week
 e. né ngoyá a mi gbɛ-á
 It is pig Op me kill.Acc
 ‘It’s the pig that I killed’
 f. né o ngoyá a mi gbɛ-á
 It is PL pig Op me kill.Acc
 ‘It’s the pigs that I killed’

The data in (4) demonstrate that the introducer of a cleft construction can variably be a verb phrase or a particle. The French example in (4a) presents the VP ‘c’est’ which introduces a constituent in the pivot of the cleft. This verb phrase agrees with the feature of the clefted element. In the case of English, in (4c-d), the verb phrase ‘it is’ selects both [-plural] and [+plural] constituents. This is also the case in Gbaya, even though ‘it is’ in English is a verb phrase as opposed the particle ‘né’ in Gbaya. These two introducers have the possibility of selecting various constituents. [Akmadjian \(1970\)](#) analyzes the structure of the cleft construction and notes that there is extraposition of a constituent by clefting, allowing the selection of a subject

in English. This is indeed what leads Kiss (1998) to propose example (5)

- (5) a. [who is sick] is me (Kiss, 1998)
 b. It is me [who is sick]_i

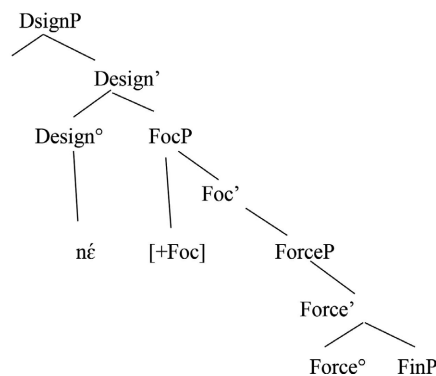
Chomsky (1977) develops an approach that differs from Akmadjian's (Akmadjian, 1970). According to him, clefting exhibits properties of A-bar movement, and, as such, it is reliant on Wh-movement. The example in (5a) below will undergo the following derivation:

- (6) It is [CP me [CP who_i \emptyset [t_i is sick]]]

Kiss (1998) refutes Chomsky's (Chomsky, 1977) approach, where we can observe the overt movement of the Wh-element as if it were a genuine relativization. The overt movement of the clefted constituent should not involve the movement of the Wh-operator nor admit a complementizer before movement. Drawing on the split CP hypothesis, Meinunger (1996) conducts a study on cleft constructions, positing the clefted element in the Spec-Foc position dominating the CP. The same analysis is adapted by Kiss (1998), proceeding from the idea that the left-peripheral movement of a focus consecrates a focus with its own projection.

Furthermore, Kiss (1998) and Jespersen (1937) argue that the head of the Foc is borne by the verb 'is'. This analysis does not apply to Gbaya data, which lacks a verbal predicate-based presentative. In certain languages like Mbøligi and Musgum, the cleft introducer is not a verb phrase. The same holds true for Gbaya. Rather, we realize that the cleft structure in Gbaya requires an emphatic particle that designates a constituent. This particle is independent and designates an element an element consecrates a focus. This analysis had already been proposed by Bago Kaptel (2022: p. 185), where he demonstrates that the designation particle 'né' consecrates a Designation Phrase (DesignP), which is functionalcategory hosting the element identified by the lexical identificationitem item. To this end, the designation marker will occupy the Design^o head of the Designation Phrase (DesignP), and since the marker 'né' has an emphatic value, it will host a focalized constituent called focus which it is co-indexed. We propose, following these statements, the following representation.

(7)



The phrase marker that we propose for the structure of the cleft in Gbaya in (7) places the cleft operator in a Force position.

3.1. The Classic Structure of Cleft *né...a* and Force Phrase

Bago Kaptel (2022: p. 185) analysis clearly specifies the structure of the cleft construction in Gbaya. The element ‘né’ in Gbaya designates one constituent among many other, as the designator identifies the constituent which will occupy the focus position. To this end, the constituent undergoing clefting will be attracted by the [+focus] feature and will subsequently be focalized and designated in LF by ‘né’.

According to Biloa’s (Biloa, 1995) analysis, clefts in Mbəligi are formed through the use of the element ‘ligə’, which precedes the focus, itself followed by the particle ‘ma’. The author argues that such a construction corresponds to a cleft. Nothing that ‘ligə’ is not a nominal phrase, he proposes that it occupies the head of CleftP. ‘ligə’ may not indicate a cleft and instead mark a declarative structure, as in (8a):

- (8) a. Mbunkah a- ki- **ligə** cə aboo
 Mbunkah SM P2 decl. Eat fufu
 ‘Mbunkah ate fufu’
- b. **ligə** Mbunkah **ma** a- ki- cə aboo
 cleft Mbunkah Foc SM P2 eat fufu
 ‘It is Mbunkah who ate fufu’

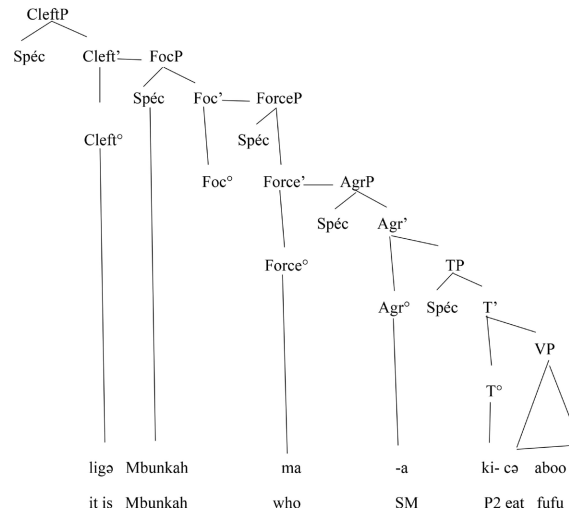
We may be tempted to apply Biloa’s approach, noting that the element ‘ligə’ is an introducer in the cleft construction in (8b), as is the case with ‘né’ in Gbaya. Let us observe following:

- (9) a. **né** kóò a mi kɔ́-á
 It’s woman Op me love .Acc
 ‘It’s woman that I love’
- b. kóò a mi kɔ́-á
 woman Op me love.Acc
 ‘It’s woman that I love’

The examples in (9) display the classic cleft format. Although they assign the same semantic value, they actually exhibit a surface difference. In (9a), have the cleft introducer ‘né’ which serves to designate the focus ‘kóò’. However, the introducer is absent in (9b), yet the sentence remains a grammatically correct cleftstructure. Yet in Mbeligi, it is impossible to delete the introducer element ‘ligə’ because it is an exclude marker of the cleft. In Gbaya, the presence or absence of ‘né’ does not affect the sequence (9b). It is therefore possible to postulate that CleftP exists in Gbaya. If ‘né’ can be deleted, the operator ‘a’ cannot be elided because it represents the trace of the element that allows the identification of the cleft. Regardless of the presence or absence of ‘né’, it is this constituent that exclu-

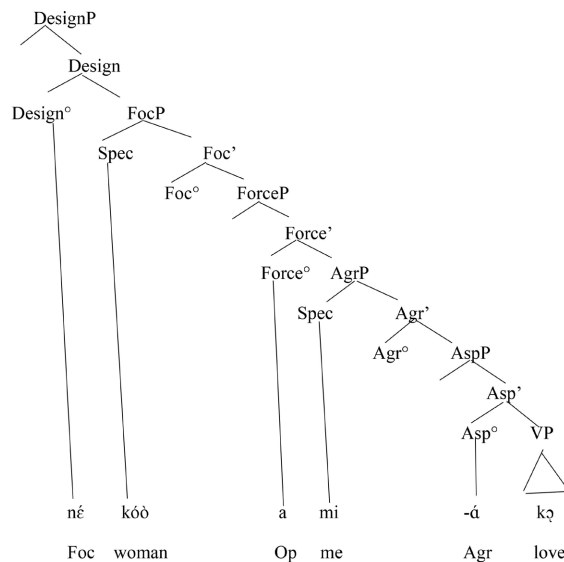
sively marks the cleft. If the focus is not selected on the surface by ‘né’, it is in LF (Logic Form). The unavoidable presence of operator ‘a’ marks the illocutory force of the structure. Thus [Bilola \(1995\)](#) assigns the position of Force° in the following structure.

(10)



According to Bago Kaptel’s ([Bago Kaptel, 2022](#)) hypothesis, the constituent “né” occupies the head of the Designation Phrase (DesignP) which may not be realized. The operator ‘a’ represents the key element on which the cleft relies, unlike the Mbeligi operator ‘ma’. But we argue that the introducer ‘né’ identifies and then designates the focalized constituent, which gives it the opportunity to occupy the Design° head of the DesignP (Designation Phrase), and since the operator ‘a’ is the main element on which the clefting relies, it will therefore occupy the Force° head of the Force Phrase (ForceP). Let us observe the derivation of sentence (11).

(11)



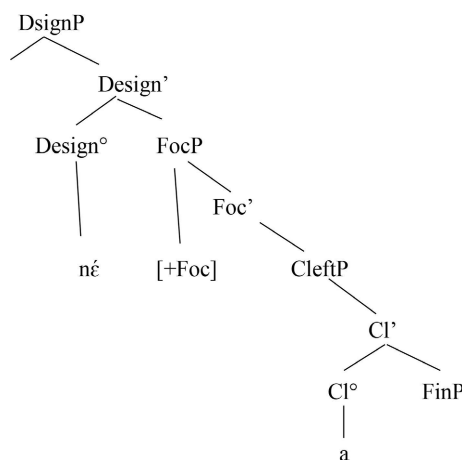
There are cleft structures where the designator of clefted constituent ‘né’ is either visible or not in surface structure. This is reminiscent of Búlù, examples of which are taken from Ndoula (2001: pp. 83-84).

- (12) a. [a-nə] môtúa éhə Ndongo a ɲá kùs
 Cop car Foc Ndongo MS - P3- buy
 ‘It’s a car that Ndongo bought’
 b. [∅] môtúa éhə Ndongo a ɲá kùs
 car Foc Ndongo MS- P3- buy
 ‘It’s a car that Ndongo bought’

The copula ‘a-nə’ is the cleft element and can be deleted without causing ungrammaticality of the structure. As we observe, this constituent is present in (12a) whereas it is absent in (12b). Following studies the same language and notes that the cleft introducer that has been deleted is actually called a “reduced cleft” which is recoverable in LF. As result Ondoua Engon’s (Ondoua Engon, 2011) analysis applies to Gbaya data.

3.2. The Operator ‘a’ and the Cleft Phrase

In the Gbaya language, the cleft construction highlights the classic ‘né...a’ format. This formal structure has a distributional role. The cleft operator ‘a’ has a precision value in the transmission of information. According to Biloa (1995) and Bago Kaptel (2022), the cleft morpheme represents the central element on which the information relies. It carries a strong [+cleft] feature that attracts it to the head of the Cleft Phrase. As a result, the designator, which is the cleft introducer, assigns to the clefted constituent an emphatic value that is the mark of focus placed under the control of the cleft operator ‘a’, which is in a low position. To this end, ‘a’ will occupy the cleft head (Cl°) of the Cleft Phrase (CleftP). As indicated by the tree’s representation below.



3.3. Contrast between the Relativization and Clefting

According to Olowa (2014), relativization is a transformational process that yields

sentential structures known as relative clauses its particularity is that they can restrict the reference of the noun they modify it connects through a relative pronoun called a ‘relativizer’. It is undoubtedly in this perspective that [Wagner and Pichon \(1991: 66\)](#) define the relative clause as the formation of «tout groupe autour d’un verbe à un mode personnel ou parfois à l’infinitif et introduit par un pronom relatif (simple ou composé) ou par un adverbe relatif».

[Bago Kaptel \(2022\)](#) examine some points of relativization in Gbaya-yaayuwée as a process of highlighting whose role is important in the transformation of communicative structures. This transformation does not formally resemble Clefting. Thus, relative and cleft structures evidently have syntactic differences. Let us now observe the following sentences:

(13)

a. mi zòk-á kóò ne mε kɔ
 me see-SM woman Rel you love
 ‘I saw the woman you love’

b. Poro kpa-á ó bêm ne ba-á tua kɔmε
 Poro meet-SM Det-PL children Rel shelter-SM house your
 ‘Poro met the children who sheltered your house’

In (13), the matrix clauses ‘mi zòk-á kóò’ and ‘Poro kpa-á ó bêm’ and the relative clauses ‘ne mε kɔ’ and ‘ne ba-á tua kɔmε’ which embed ‘kóò’ and ‘bêm’ respectively, and express the fact that the matrix clause is obligatorily interpreted relative to the constituent found in the said clause. The relative clause rests on the property according to which the thematic role assigned to the matrix clause is not identical to the elements that are deduced from its relation with the relative clause. Thus, the matrix clauses are respectively subjects and assume the nominative theta role.

Unlike Clefting, which is a transformation operation of a constituent associated with a semantic particularity that is emphasis, associating a Designation element and a Cleft Operator having the structure “nε...a” in Gbaya, unlike Relativization which is not an extraposition operation and plays no role of emphasis but rather a nominative theta role. The Gbaya data refutes Otto Jespersen’s analysis ([Jespersen, 1937](#)) which thinks that Clefting is a transformation of Relativization and thus for him, the relative is cleft. Let us observe in this regard the examples of Clefting and relativization in Gbaya:

<p>(14) a. nε' mbarawara a mi nyɔŋ-á Désign monitor lizard Op me eat-SM ‘It is monitor lizard that I ate’</p> <p>b. nε' Gbane a dɔr mbudí Désign Gbane Op sells sheep ‘It is Gbane who sells the sheep’</p>	<div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin-left: 10px;"></div>	<p>Clefting</p>
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c. Mbarawa	ne	mi	nyɔŋ-á	ɔ	déé	Relativization
NP	Rel	me	eat-SM	be	delicious	
d. Gbane	ne	d̄ɔr-á	mbudí	yak-á	kpef̄ɔ	
SN	Rel	sell-SM	sheep	go-SM	field	
‘Gbane, who sold the sheep, has gone to the field’						

We note in (14a-b) that the construction of the Cleft presents a particular structure which exhibits a Cleft Designation ‘né’ which designates a constituent followed by a Cleft Operator ‘a’ on which the clefting rests. The Cleft implies focus in its construction and thus the Cleft is not the relative, their structure is as follows:

Clefting:	DesignP	FocP	ForceP/CleftP	FinP
Relativization:	NP	RelP	FinP	

3.4. The Cleft as a Focus Information Element

Jespersen (1937) devoted particular attention to the analysis of cleft constructions. He establishes a relationship between syntax and information, thereby defining the cleft on page 86 “As a demonstrative gesture to point at one particular part of the sentence to which the attention of the hearer is to be drawn specially”.

Clefts convey selective information, as noted by Lambrecht (2001). Empirical evidence suggests that clefts are typically formed with a copula verb. However, clefting in Gbaya involves a designator ‘né’, with the clefted constituent positioned between ‘né’ and ‘a’ as a pivotal element, can be elided in surface syntax, as illustrated below.

- (15) a. zó nyóŋ-á ge?
 who eat-SM what
 ‘Who ate what?’
- b. **né** Barbou **a** nyóŋ-á gɔya
 it is Barbou Op eat-SM yam
 ‘It’s Barbou who ate yam’
- c. **né** Barbou a
 it is Barbou
 ‘It’s Barbou (who ate yam)’
- d. Barbou **a** nyóŋ-á gɔya
 Barbou Op eat-SM yam
 ‘It’s Barbou who ate yam’

The adjacency of elements in (15b) allows for their deletion in (15c). The sequence in (15d) rather shows a deletion of the introducer ‘né’ which forms the cleft of “Barbou” with the presupposition. We specify that the cleft is not a relative clause because the operator “a” is the quintessential element of the cleft. It establishes a predication relation between the matrix proposition and the displaced el-

ement in the pivot. ‘Né’ is the element that designates the focus and can be deleted without affecting the value of the proposition. However, the operator ‘a’ cannot be deleted because its elision only applies when it constitutes the matrix proposition. It is this sense that [Hedberg \(1999\)](#) explains the possibility for a focus to be repeated, referred to as ‘emphatic focus repetition’

(16). a. né **dáà**focus a yər-á mi skúlu; **dáà**focus a ha-á mboï ha mi **dáà**focus a kpa-á tóm ha mi

It is father Op enroll-SM school (it is) father Op give-SM money to me (it is) father Op find-SM job to me

‘It is father who enrolled me in school; the father gave me money; the father got me a job’

b. né **dáà** focus a yər-á mi skúlu; né **dáà**focus **mbet** a ha-á mboï ha mi; né **dáà**focus **mbet** a kpa-á tóm ha mi

It is father Op enroll-SM me school; it is father also Op gave me money; it is father also Op find-SM job to me

‘It is father who enrolled mi in school; It is also father gave me money; It is also father got me a job’

c. né **dáà**focus a yər-á mi skúlu **dáà**focus **bɛ** a ha-á mboï ha mi **dáà**focus **bɛ** a kpa-á tóm ha mi

It is father Op enroll-SM me school (it is) father alone Op give-SM money to me (it is) father alone find-SM job to me

‘It is father who enrolled me in School; the father alone gave me money; the father alone got me a job’

We wish to clarify that, aside from the presupposition, the others are implicatures. It is thus evident that on the surface, the focus “dáà” (father) is repeated without, however, influencing its exhaustivity. It is in this vein that [Horn \(1969\)](#) specifies that the cleft expresses uniqueness. [Büring and Križ \(2013\)](#) and [Velleman et al. \(2012\)](#) indicates in this case that there is a null exhaustivity operator between the designator and the focus. We realize that only two operators can bind to the focus in the cleft. These are ‘mbet’ (also) and ‘bɛ’ (only). The first expresses an additive value, that is it conveys the additional exhaustive value of the first occurrence via the focus ‘dáà’ (father), which is associated with other occurrences through the polarity marker ‘mbet’ (also). From analysis, we understand that the speaker owes every to his father “dáà” and not anyone else. It is this exhaustive value that is repeated in ‘dáà’ through the use of ‘mbet’ and ‘bɛ’.

4. Conclusion

The transmission of information is linked to the cleft and consecrates a focus. In reality, the Gbaya language, through its informational structure, exhibits several particles that lead to cross-linguistic through its data, which are usually subjected to transformations in order to reinforce not only the morphological material but also to readjust the properties and theories proposed by scholars. It is indeed in

this logic that we were able to demonstrate that the structure of the cleft expresses the focus through an element that marks illocutory force. Following Bago Kaptel (2022) and Biloa (1995), we realize that the cleft introducer element ‘né’ in Gbaya designates the focalized element and consequently consecrates a Designation Phrase (DesignP). The focalized constituent is directly attached to the particle ‘a’ to form the classic cleft structure ‘nε...a’, which incidentally affects the hierarchical order proposed by Rizzi (1997), who thinks that the Force Phrase, which is here the element ‘a’, always occupies the high position in a sequence. However, the Gbaya data seem to refute this claim and propose, to this effect, an adequate approach for future research.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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