Towards a non-cartographic approach to Avar focus movement

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New Approaches to the Syntax/Semantics Interface

Outline

Aim: an analysis of the focus construction

(1) a. Declarative statement

aminati- ca rasul aɬ- ana
Aminat.OBL-ERG Rasul.ABS invite-AOR
'Aminat invited Rasul.'

b. Focus *in situ*

aminati- ca rasul= in aɬ- a- ra– w
Aminat.OBL-ERG Rasul.ABS=FOC invite-PST-PTCP–M

c. Focus *ex situ*

rasul= in aminati- ca aɬ- a- ra– w
Rasul.ABS=FOC Aminat.OBL-ERG invite-PST-PTCP–M
'Aminat invited [Rasul]$_F$.'

Main claims

1. Avar focus sentences involve two crucial ingredients—a focus particle and a free relative clause.
2. Merge, both external and internal, is unrestricted (Chomsky 2007, 2013), there is no feature-driven focus movement to SpecFocP, nor are there pairs of dedicated focus features that require checking/valuation. Focus particle movement is free in the same sense as *wh*-movement is free (Šimík 2012).
3. It is the focus particle that undergoes free focus movement rather than focused constituents $\overline{\text{A}}$-moving to the left periphery.
4. Neither *in situ* focus nor *ex situ* focus is derived from the other.

Avar

- Avar-Andic
- about 800,000 speakers

Morphosyntactic properties

- morphological ergativity
- head-finality
- free word order (SOV and SVO the most frequent)
- extensive subject and object *pro*-drop
- relativisation with a gap

Particles and participles

=(j)in/=χa, guro, =(j)iš:

(2) a. aminati-ca rasul aɬ- ana
Aminat- ERG Rasul.ABS invite-AOR
'Aminat invited Rasul.'

b. rasul= in aminati-ca aɬ- a- ra– w
Rasul.ABS=FOC Aminat- ERG call-PST-PTCP–M

c. * rasul= in aminati- ca aɬ- ana
Rasul.ABS=FOC Aminat.OBL-ERG invite-AOR

d. * rasul aminati- ca aɬ- a- ra– w
Rasul.ABS Aminat.OBL-ERG invite-PST-PTCP–M
('Aminat invited [Rasul]$_F$.')

Syntactic properties

The particle must follow its scope:

(3) a. *jin ču aɬmadi-ca b–os- a- ra– b
FOC horse.ABS Ahmed- ERG N–buy-PST-PTCP–N
('Ahmed bought a [horse]$_F$.')

b. *jiš: ču aɬmadi-ca b–os- a- ra– b
Q horse.ABS Ahmed- ERG N–buy-PST-PTCP–N
('Did Ahmed buy a horse?')

c. *guro ču aɬmadi-ca b–os- a- ra– b
not horse.ABS Ahmed- ERG N–buy-PST-PTCP–N
('It wasn't a horse that Ahmed bought.')

Focus marking is sensitive to islands

(4) Coördinate Structure Constraint

a. aɦmadi-ca ču= gi ɦama= gi b–os- ana
Ahmed- ERG horse=CNJ donkey=CNJ N–buy-AOR

b. čuː gi ɦama= gi= jišː aɦmadi-ca b–os- a- ra– b
horse=CNJ donkey=CNJ=Q Ahmed- ERG N–buy-PST-PTCP–N
'Was it a horse and a donkey that Ahmed bought?'

c. * čuː gi= jišː aɦmadi-ca ɦama= gi b–os- a- ra– b
horse=CNJ=Q Ahmed- ERG donkey=CNJ N–buy-PST-PTCP–N

Focus marking is sensitive to islands

(5) Complex NP Constraint

a. di-qe b–il- ana [insu- ca di-e sajiɣat ha– b-un
I- APL N–lose-AOR father-ERG I- DAT gift.ABS make–N-CVB
b–uk'-a- ra– b t'ex]
N–be- PST-PTCP–N book.ABS
'I have lost the book that my father gave me.'

b. *di-qe [insu- ca guro di-e sajiɣat ha– b-un b–uk'-a- ra– b
I- APL father-ERG NEG I- DAT gift.ABS make–N-CVB N–be- PST-PTCP–N
t'ex] b–il- a- ra– b
book.ABS N–lose-PST-PTCP–N

c. di-qe [insu- ca di-e sajiɣat ha– b-un b–uk'-a- ra– b
I- APL father-ERG I- DAT gift.ABS make–N-CVB N–be- PST-PTCP–N
t'ex] guro b–il- a- ra– b
book.ABS NEG N–lose-PST-PTCP–N
'I didn't lose the book that [my father]$_F$ gave me.'

Syn/Sem properties

No reconstruction effects for *ex situ* focus

No SCO effects for *ex situ* focus

(6) a. rasuli-ca žiw= go= jiš: č'w-a- ra– w
Rasul- ERG self.M:ABS=EMPH=Q kill- PST-PRT–M
'Did Rasul kill himself?'

b. žin-ca= go= jiš: rasul č'w-a- ra– w
self-ERG=EMPH=Q Rasul.ABS kill- PST-PRT–M
'Did Rasul kill himself?'

Summary

Properties of Avar focus

- Coöccurrence of FP and participial morphology
- Island-sensitivity of focus marking
- Absence of SCO effects for *ex situ* focus

Questions

- Why does the verb have to participialise?
- Are the two variants of the focus construction derived by the same mechanism?

Focus fronting is not A-movement

Why could it be?

A-movement is often taken to be able to alter binding relations (Büring 2005):

(7) a. John$_1$ seems to himself$_1$ to be a genius.

b. * He$_1$ seems to John$_1$ to be a genius.

This could account for the lack of SCO effects in the same way as binding has been argued to be reversed in languages like Hungarian (Kiss 2008).

But...

- it cannot account for the participialisation

Avar scrambling does *not* alter binding relations

(8) a. š:ibaw insu- ca žindir= go was w–ecc- ul- e– w w–uk'-ana.
every father-ERG self.GEN=EMPH son.ABS M–praise-PST-PTCP–M M–be- AOR

b. žindir= go was š:ibaw insu- ca w–ecc- ul- e– w w–uk'-ana.
self.GEN=EMPH son.ABS every father-ERG M–praise-PST-PTCP–M M–be- AOR

c. w–ecc- ul- e– w w–uk'-ana žindir= go was š:ibaw insu- ca.
M–praise-PST-PTCP–M M–be- AOR self.GEN=EMPH son.ABS every father-ERG
'[Every father]$_1$ was praising his$_1$ son.'

Focus fronting is not $\overline{\text{A}}$-movement

It would explain

- sensitivity to islands

It would not explain

- participialisation
- absence of SCO effects

A cartographic non-solution

How it would work

Assume the Split CP Hypothesis (Rizzi 1997) supplemented by the Probe–Goal mechanism:

- participial morphology spells out the Foc head
- the focus particle spells out a [+Focus] feature on the focused constituent

What it would buy us

- sensitivity to islands
- participialisation
- presence of FP

A cartographic non-solution

Avar-specific problems

- Asymmetries w.r.t. SCO effects
- Participialisation!

	Finite	Participle
Past	*aħ-**a**na*	*aħ-**a**ra–w*
Present	*aħ-**ul**a*	*aħ-**ul**e–w*
Future	*aħ-**il**a*	*aħ-**il**e–w*

General problems

- The Split CP Hypothesis has descriptive power at best
- Empirical arguments for cartography are being reëvaluated (e.g. Ott in press; Ott & de Vries in press)
- Narrow syntax doesn't need to know about IS matters

An additional complication: verb-initial orders

Allowed in general

(9) w–ecc- ul- e– w w–uk'-ana rasul insu- ca.
M–praise-PST-PTCP–M M–be- AOR Rasul.ABS father-ERG
'Father was praising Rasul.'

But never in relative clauses or in the presence of FP

(10) *w–ecc- ul- e– w w–uk'-a- ra– w rasul= in insu- ca.
M–praise-PST-PTCP–M M–be- PST-PTCP–M Rasul.ABS=FOC father-ERG

(11) a. narkotikal r– ič- ul- e– w či
drugs PL–sell-PRS-PTCP–M man

b. *r– ič- ul- e– w narkotikal či
PL–sell-PRS-PTCP–M drugs man
('drugs dealer')

Analysis

Focus *ex situ*: biclausal structure

(12) a. rasul= in aminati- ca aħ- a- ra– w
Rasul.ABS=FOC Aminat.OBL-ERG invite-PST-PTCP–M

b. ⟨FP⟩ [[Rasul ⟨FP⟩] [$_{Rel}$ who Aminat invited]]

Focus *in situ*: gapless free relative clause

(13) a. aminati- ca rasul= in aħ- a- ra– w
Aminat.OBL-ERG Rasul.ABS=FOC invite-PST-PTCP–M

b. ⟨FP⟩ [$_{Rel}$ Aminat invited Rasul ⟨FP⟩]

Details

Focus particle movement

- FPs are proposition-level operators, meaning they must raise
- FP movement, like any instance of Merge, is not feature-driven (Chomsky 2007; Šimík 2012)
- No [i/uFocus] feature pairs are required; the only motivation for the FP movement is semantic

Relative clauses

- Rigid word order
- Participial morphology

Parallels to *it*-clefts in English: Exhaustivity

(14) a. muradi-da ła- la- an pat'imati-ca aħmad aħ- un
Murad- LOC know-PST-IPF Patimat- ERG Ahmed.ABS call-CVB
w–uk'- in...
M–be.PST-MSD

b. #amma aħmad= in muradi-da ła- l- e– w w–uk'- in- č'- e–
but Ahmed.ABS=FOC Murad- LOC know-PRS-PTCP–M M–be.PST-MSD-NEG-PTC
heł aħ- un w–uk'- in
she.ERG call-CVB M–be.PST-MSD
'Murad knew Patimat invited Ahmed # but Murad didn't know it was Ahmed she invited.'

c. #aħmad guro pat'imati-ca aħ- a- ra– w. heł hedingo
Ahmed.ABS NEG Patimat- ERG call-PST-PTCP–M she.ERG too
rasul= gi aħ- ana
Rasul.ABS=CNJ call-AOR
'It wasn't Ahmed that Patimat invited. She invited Rasul too.'

Parallels to *it*-clefts in English: Pied-piping

A bigger constituent serves as the cleft's pivot when a subconstituent cannot be clefted for some reason:

(15) a. It was [John's eldest daughter]$_F$ who liked the movie.
→ No other people liked the movie.

b. It was John's [eldest]$_F$ daughter who liked the movie.
→ None of John's other daughters liked the movie.

c. It was [John's]$_F$ eldest daughter who liked the movie.
→ Nobody else's eldest daughter liked the movie.

(Velleman et al. 2012: 442)

Outlook

We have captured

- sensitivity to islands ($\overline{\text{A}}$-movement of FP)
- participialisation (relative-like morphology *is* relativisation morphology)
- *verb-initial
- absence of SCO effects
- cleft-like exhaustive interpretation of focus

But there are problems

- Case connectivity
- *it*-clefts $\longrightarrow$ specificational pseudoclefts $\longrightarrow$ connectivity...
- ... which we do not see

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