

Second Occurrence Focus in Wolof: Patterns and Consequences

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This paper presents the first study of Second Occurrence Focus in a language with non-prosodic focus marking, Wolof. As would be expected, such a broadening of the empirical basis has various consequences for the general theory of (SO) focus, two of which we highlight in this paper. We first show how the Domain Theory of Second Occurrence Focus —according to which SOF is merely a ‘regular’ focus whose domain (i.e. focus plus its background) happens to be smaller than the sentence [7,2]— can account for the Wolof data, despite initial appearances. We then zoom in on a second, subtle but striking finding: being *interpreted* as focal (having non-trivial alternatives) is not contingent on being *marked* as focal; rather it is contingent on *not* being marked as non-focal. This latter point could not have been made on a basis of a language like English, as will be shown momentarily.

The data were elicited during two months of fieldwork in in Senegal.

In Wolof the form of the clausal Person Aspect Mood (PAM) marker indicates whether the subject or the complement is fronted and thus focused, or the predicate or whole sentence is focused —e.g. as an answer or a correction [6,5].¹ Foci associated with *only* are typically marked in this way, too, e.g. the object *garab* in (1-a). However, in typical SOF contexts, such as corrections, the associate of *rekk*, ‘only’ remains unmarked, both by movement and PAM marker morphology (1-b).

- (1) a. Bul tiit, max yi garab rekk **la-ñu-y** lekk.
IMP.SG.NEG be.afraid termite DET tree only CFOC-3PL-IPFV eat
‘Don’t worry, termites only eat PLANTS.’
- b. Déédéét, melantaan yi **ñoo-y** lekk garab rekk.
no ant DET SFOC.3PL-IPFV eat tree only
‘No, ANTS only eat PLANTS.’

It seems that the clausal corrective focus on *melantaan yi*, ‘ants’, hijacks, as it were, the clausal focus marking in (1-b), as would be expected in the Domain Theory of Focus, since the clausal domain contains VP, the domain of *rekk*, ‘only’; since there can be only one focus marker per clause, no marking is left for *rekk*’s associate *garab*.

That means either that there is no formal association of *rekk* with focus (and hence no focus on *garab*) in (1-b), or that *garab* is focused and does introduce non-trivial focus alternatives, despite being not marked. Can we distinguish between these options?

We argue for the latter position on two grounds. First, object clitics such as *ko* in (2-b) are illicit as SOF. This shows that *rekk* is still affected by (non-)focus marking on its associate.

¹The term PAM is [6]’s, [5] analyzes the subject and complement PAMs as complementizers. Nothing in our analysis hinges on this difference, however.

- (2) a. Jean moom rekk **la** bëgg
 J. 3SG.EMPH only CFOC.3SG love
 ‘John loves only HER.’
 b. #Déédéét, Baboucar **moo** ko bëgg rekk.
 no B. 3SG.SFOC 3SG.O love only
 ‘No, only BABOUCAR loves her.’ NOT: ‘BAB. only loves HER.’

In parallel to the argument using ‘leaners’ (weak clitic object pronouns, see [8, 4]) in English SOF, we argue that object clitics in Wolof are inherently non-focal, whereas full NP objects like *garab* in (1-b) are neutral in that regard (emphatic pronouns are impossible in this context, too, as they require movement and concomitant marking by the PAM).

Second, if the domain of the second occurrence focus is itself clausal, focus marking, e.g. *la* in (3-b), must appear.

- (3) a. Jean ne na moom rekk **la** bëgg.
 Jean say 3SG.PFV 3SG.EMPH only 3SG.CFOC love
 ‘John said that he only loves HER.’
 b. Déédéét, Baboucar **moo** wax ne moom rekk **la** bëgg.
 no B. 3SG.SFOC say COMP 3SG.EMPH only 3SG.CFOC love.
 ‘No, BABOUCAR said that he only loves HER.’

Not only does this strongly suggest that the associate of *rekk*, even as a SOF, is a proper semantic focus, it is also expected given the Domain Theory of SOF: The domain of *rekk* in (3-b) is the embedded clause, and within that domain, an independent clausal focus marking is possible, all entirely within the background of the domain of primary focus, *Baboucar*.

Note that we now appear to have three entirely different strategies of marking SOF: Not marking them at all, as in (1-b), marking them just like primary foci, as in (3-b), or marking them a bit, but not quite like primary foci (Germanic SOF marking by stress, not accent, cf. [1, 3]) Yet all three follow the same principle: Within the background of the primary focus, a SOF interpretation is available, as long as the SOF is not independently marked as non-focal within that domain. Weak pronouns in English and Wolof, (2-b), are inherently non-focal as are the backgrounds of morphologically marked foci in embedded clauses in Wolof, as in (3-b). DP (and V) in the background of a clausal focus as in (1-b) is neither marked as focal nor as non-focal (the VP as a whole is the background of the subject focus, and hence non-focal, but neither element *within* it is so marked w.r.t. the other), and hence may be interpreted as a SOF.

Since in English and similar languages, the primary marking of focality is metrical weight, which is expressed at every branching node, SOF always appears to be marked in some way (e.g. by a stress). Only by looking at a language like Wolof, in which a complex constituent as a whole may be marked as (non-)focal without any asymmetries (such as weak-strong) *between its parts*, can we see that the potential to introduce alternatives (‘be focal’) is not contingent on marking *per se*.

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