Focus Asymmetries in Bura[*]

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This article presents the central aspects of the focus system of Bura (Chadic), which exhibits a number of asymmetries: Grammatical focus marking is obligatory only with focused subjects, where focus is marked by the particle *án* following the subject. Focused subjects remain in situ and the complement of *án* is a regular VP. With non-subject foci, *án* appears in a cleft-structure between the fronted focus constituent and a relative clause. We present a semantically unified analysis of focus marking in Bura that treats the particle as a *focus-marking copula* in T that takes a property-denoting expression (the background) and an individual-denoting expression (the focus) as arguments. The article also investigates the realization of predicate and polarity focus, which are almost never marked. The upshot of the discussion is that Bura shares many characteristic traits of focus marking with other Chadic languages, but it crucially differs in exhibiting a structural difference in the marking of focus on subjects and non-subject constituents.

Keywords: Afro-Asiatic, focus asymmetries, argument/adjunct focus, predicate focus, polarity focus, cleft, focus copula

1 Introduction

The present article provides an in depth description of focus and focus marking in Bura, an Afro-Asiatic language belonging to the Biu-Mandara branch of the Chadic languages. Bura does not mark focus consistently on all constituents, nor

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does it mark focus in a uniform way. The Bura focus system exhibits two kinds of asymmetries with respect to focus marking. The first concerns focus marking on verbal and non-verbal categories, respectively: Focus on non-verbal categories is marked syntactically, whereas focus on verbs and VPs goes typically unmarked. There are two exceptions to this generalization. First, there are semantically motivated instances of verbal reduplication, which express an iteration or intensification of the event denoted by the verb, and which often makes the verb meaning more prominent as a side-effect. Second, polarity focus can be marked by a special particle in the perfective aspect. The second asymmetry concerns a difference between focused subjects, which are obligatorily marked for focus, and focused objects and adjuncts, for which focus marking is optional. Moreover, we argue that grammatical focus marking on subjects and non-subjects, if present, involves two different syntactic structures. The objective of the present article is mainly to give an adequate descriptive account of the focus system of Bura. We hope to provide a deeper theoretical analysis of the observed facts in future work.

Bura is spoken by approximately 250.000 speakers in the Nigerian states of Borno and Adamawa (estimation by Ethnologue in 1987). It is a tone language with two level tones, high and low.[1] Syntactically, Bura is an isolating language with the basic word order SVO. The only systematic description of Bura is Carl Hoffmann's grammar from 1955. In addition, there is an online dictionary on Bura by Roger Blench (1999), which is based on a missionary dictionary from 1950. The work presented in the present article is based on

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[1] The restriction to two level tones is at odds with claims in Blench (1999) to the effect that Bura distinguishes three level tones, High, Mid, and Low. Unfortunately, Blench (1999) does not provide evidence for this claim, for instance, in form of minimal triplets. In an acoustic investigation of our recorded corpus samples, we were unable to find evidence for such a three-way distinction. See also Keating & Esposito (2006), who concentrate only on High and Low tones in a phonetic study of Bura tones.

elicitations from Mr Chris Mtaku, a native Bura speaker from Garkida, the capital of Adamawa State.

The article is structured as follows. In Section 1.1, we provide a definition of focus as an information-structural category. Section 2 provides an overview of focus-marking of non-verbal categories in Bura, i.e. on subjects, objects, and adjuncts. Section 2.1 shows that focused subjects are obligatorily followed by the focus-marking particle *án*. Section 2.2 shows that focus marking on objects and adjuncts is optional. If marked for focus, these constituents appear in the left periphery of the clause in a cleft-like structure that involves the particle *án* and a relative clause. Section 2.3 discusses the (semantic) nature of the particle *án* in more detail. The particle is analysed as a special instantiation of a copula in T, which comes with its own set of presuppositions. Building on the analysis of *án*, we argue in section 2.4 that subject focus and (non-verbal) non-subject focus involve different syntactic structures. Subjects are focus-marked in their canonical position in Spec,TP. Non-subjects that are focus-marked are realized ex-situ in a cleft-like structure. Section 3 turns to the grammatical expression of verbal and polarity focus. We show that focus on verbs and VPs is unmarked in most cases. Polarity focus can be marked by the particle *ku*, which is classified as a marker of perfectivity in Hoffmann (1955). Section 4 shows that the formal strategies of focus marking in Bura show up with various pragmatic uses of focus, such as e.g. with new-information focus, selective and contrastive focus. This finding argues for a unified category of focus. Section 5 concludes.

1.1 Focus and Focus-Marking

We adopt the following semantic definition of focus for tone and intonation languages, which is independent of grammatical focus marking: Focus on a constituent α ($[\alpha]_F$) invokes a set A of alternatives to α, indicating that members of A are under consideration (Rooth 1985). Depending on the interaction of α

with other alternatives, a semantic focus can serve various pragmatic functions: For instance, a focus is *corrective* if α replaces an element of A that was previously introduced into the common ground (CG), see (1a). With CG we refer to the set of assumptions accessible to all interlocutors, where the content of the CG is typically determined by the linguistic context preceding α. A focus is *selective* if α introduces an element of A into the CG and some elements of A are made explicit, see (1b). A focus expresses *new-information* if α introduces an element of A into the CG and the members of A are left implicit, see (1c).

(1)   a.   (Peter painted his bicycle red.) No, he painted it [blue]$_F$.

      b.   (Did Peter paint his bicycle red or blue?) He painted it [blue]$_F$.

      c.   (Which color did Peter paint his bicycle?) He painted it [blue]$_F$.

      d.   α = blue, A = {blue, red, green, pink,…}

The alternative sets for (1a–c) are identical as shown in (1d). This shows that the foci in question do not differ semantically, but only pragmatically in the sense illustrated above (cf. e.g. Rooth 1992). The information-structural category of focus defined above is a universal category, which may or may not be grammatically encoded in a language. The grammatical devices for marking focus, however, vary considerably across the world's languages. One particular system of grammatical focus marking is discussed in the present article.

2   Focus on Arguments and Adjuncts

This section discusses the realization of focus on non-verbal constituents (or: terms) in Bura. We concentrate on the realization of focus on subjects, objects, and adjuncts, which have the categorial status of NP or XP. We look at the

realization of subject focus in 2.1, and at the realization of non-subject focus in 2.2, discussing differences and similarities. Section 2.3 investigates the syntactic distribution and meaning contribution of the particle *án*, which is obligatory with subject focus and almost obligatory with grammatically marked focus on non-subjects.

2.1   Subject Focus

The canonical Bura sentence has SVO word order. The verb is not inflected. In all but the perfective aspect, the verb is preceded by an aspectual marker in AspP: *akwá* expresses an ongoing action (progressive), the morphemes *a*, *ta* or *áta* express a future action, and *aná* a habitual action. The perfective aspect is unmarked. [2] Bura neither shows overt morphological agreement nor case marking. Bura is a tone language with 2 level tones, a high (marked as *v́*), and a low tone (unmarked). The example in (2) illustrates a canonical Bura sentence in the progressive:[3]

(2)   Tsá akwá tá   díva mhyi.
         3SG PROG cook mush sorghum
         'He is cooking sorghum mush.'

If a subject is focused, it must be followed by the particle *án* across all aspects. This is shown in the question-answer pairs in (3) and (4) for the (unmarked) perfective and in (5) and (6) for the progressive aspect. The focused constituents

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[2]   The unmarkedness of the perfective may be a recent development. According to Hoffmann (1955:317), perfective aspect was regularly marked by the aspectual marker *ku*. We will return to the nature of *ku* in present-day Bura in section 3.2.

[3]   The following abbreviations are used: DEF = definite, FUT = future, PRT = particle, PROG = progressive, REL = relative marker, COP = (focus) copula, Q = question marker, SG = singular, PL = plural, 1,2,3 = person marker, POSS = possessive, COND = conditional, POL = polarity, TOT = totality, EXIST = existential marker.

are reproduced in bold face in the Bura original sentences and in their English translations.

(3) Q: **Wa** án tá díva rí?   A: **Ládi** án tá díva ní.
who PRT cook mush Q   L.   PRT cook mush DEF
'**Who** cooked mush?'   '**Ladi** cooked mush.'

(4) Q: **Wa** án kwasá tsír ní rí?
who PRT chew beans DEF Q
'**Who** ate the beans?'

A: **Mwala laga** án kwasá tsír ní.
woman some PRT chew beans DEF
'**A woman** ate the beans.'

(5) Q: **Wa** án akwá masa táku ní rí?
who PRT PROG buy horse DEF Q
'**Who** is buying the horse?'

A: **Ládi** án akwá masa táku ní.
L.   PRT PROG buy horse DEF
'**Ladi** is buying the horse.'

(6) Q: **Wa** án akwá kumshi ní rí?
who PRT PROG laugh DEF Q
'**Who** is laughing?'

A: **Mwala** ní án akwá kumshi ní.
woman DEF PRT PROG laugh DEF
'The woman is laughing.'

Notice that the particle *án* occurs both in the *wh*-questions providing the focus context, where it follows the interrogative expression *wa* 'who', as well as in the corresponding answers.[4] Notice that the sentence-final question particle *rí* is obligatory. This suggests that it is this element, and not the interrogative

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[4]   The *wh*-expression *wa* 'who' and *án* are sometimes amalgamated, see e.g. (16Q) below.

expression itself, which gives a *wh*-question its interrogative force. The following data show that the particle *án* is obligatory with focused (*wh-*) subjects: its absence in the question results in ungrammaticality, and its absence in the corresponding answer leads to infelicity in the question-context.

(7)   Q: **Wa** *(án) dlábwa kíla ní   rí?
           who PRT beat   dog DEF Q
           '**Who** beat the dog?'

      A: **Ládi** #(án) dlábwa ní.
           L.   PRT beat   3SG
           'Ladi beat it.'

(8)   Q: **Wa** *(án) kwasá tsír   ní   rí?
           who PRT chew   beans DEF Q
           '**Who** ate the beans?'

      A: **Mwala laga** #(án) kwasá tsír   ní.
           woman some   PRT chew   beans DEF
           '**A woman** ate the beans.'

To summarize, a focused subject must appear in the canonical sentence-initial position and is followed by the particle *án*. This particle obligatorily marks the focus status of the subjects in (3) to (8). As there is no indication of (possibly vacuous) syntactic displacement whatsoever, with the subject remaining in the canonical sentence-initial position, it is correct to conceive of *án* as a focus-marking particle. The morpho-syntactic realization of subject focus is given schematically in (9):

(9)   [$_{XP}$ Ladi [$_Y$ án] [$_{ZP}$ akwá masa táku ní]]

Three interrelated questions for the analysis of subject focus in Bura arise: (i.) What is the structural position of the FM *án* in (9)? In particular, is *án* the

functional head of a focus projection FocP, or is it a (special) copula in T? (ii.) What is the syntactic position of the focused subject in (9)? In particular, is the subject located in the canonical subject position Spec,TP, or has it moved vacuously to the specifier of a focus projection FocP? (iii.) What is the syntactic status of the constituent ZP to the right of *án*? In particular, is it just a VP, or is it a TP selected by the focus projection? In section 2.4, we argue that focused subjects are located in their canonical position, Spec,TP. The focus-marking element *án* is not the syntactic Foc-head of a functional projection FocP. Rather, it is analysed as a focus copula in T, which triggers typical focus presuppositions. As a result, *án* selects for a plain VP in the case of subject focus, the minimal assumption from a syntactic point of view (see e.g. Grimshaw 1997).

In the next section, we investigate focus on non-subjects. As will emerge, focus on non-subjects need not be grammatically marked. If focus on objects and adjuncts is marked, though, the focus constituent occurs in a cleft-structure involving a relative clause. Focused non-subjects are thus marked differently from focused subjects, at least on the face of it.

2.2   Focus on Objects and Adjuncts: Ex Situ and In Situ Realizations

Focused objects and adjuncts can be realized in two ways. The focused constituent can appear either in its canonical position (in situ), or it can appear sentence-initially (ex situ). We first illustrate for in situ focus. As shown in (10A) and (11A), focused direct objects may stay in their basic post-verbal position, same as the corresponding *wh*-expressions. [5] The same holds for indirect and benefactive objects as in (12).

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[5]   The existence of unmarked in situ focus with non-subjects is attested from a variety of West-Chadic languages. In Hausa, for instance, focus can be marked syntactically by

(10) Q: Magirá akwá tá **mi** rí?
M.   PROG prepare what Q
'**What** is Magira preparing?'

A: Magirá akwá tá **díva mhyi**.
M.   PROG prepare mush sorghum
'Magira is preparing **sorghum mush**.'

(11) Q: Ga bara kəl **wa** rí?
2SG wanttake who Q
'**Who** do you want to marry?'

A: Íyá bara kəl **Kúbíli**.
1SG wanttake K.
'I want to marry **Kubili**.'

(12) Q: Ga akwá kica mwata aká **wa** rí?
2SG PROG wash car   for who Q
'**Who** are you washing the car for?'

A: Íyá akwá kic-ari[6]   aká **baba ná**.
1SG PROG wash-3SG for father POSS.1SG
'I am washing it for **my father**.'

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means of fronting (cf. Newman 2000). But focused constituents may also remain in situ, as first noticed by Jaggar (2001) and illustrated in (i).

(i)   **Mèe** su-kà   kaamàa?   Sun   kaamà [DP **dawaakii**] (nè).
what 3PL-REL.PERF catch   3PL.PERF catch   horses   PRT
'What did they catch?'   'They caught HORSES.'

It appears that in situ focus in Hausa is not only syntactically unmarked, but unmarked in general (cf. Jaggar 2001, 2006, Green & Jaggar 2003, Hartmann & Zimmermann 2007a).
[6] The linear translation of *kic-ari* "wash-3SG" follows Hoffmann (1955:268) who claims that *-ari* is a verbal suffix that signals that the unexpressed complement NP is anaphorically linked to a discourse antecedent.

Notice that in situ focus cannot be marked by the focus copula *án*, and probably not by prosodic strategies either.[7] (13A2) with *án* following the focused object NP in situ is ungrammatical.

(13) Q: Ga   akwá sá   **mi**   rí?
         2SG PROG drink what Q
         '**What** are you drinking?'

   A1: Íyá   akwá sá   **yímí**.
        1SG PROG drink water
        'I am drinking **water**.'

   A2: * Íyá akwá sá **yímí án**.

Focused adjuncts can also occur in situ. In (14A), the focused locative adverb is found in its canonical clause-final position even though the *wh*-pronoun in (14Q) appears sentence-initially, in an ex situ position. (Note that *wh*-adjuncts can also appear in situ, cf. Hoffmann 1955:177f). (15A) illustrates in situ focus of temporal adverbs, where the alternatives are explicitly given in the preceding question.

(14) Q: **Ama** án   tí   íyá   á   mjá masta tomáto rí?
         where PRT REL 1SG FUT able buy   tomato Q
         '**Where** can I buy tomatoes?'

   A: Ga   á   mjá mast-ari **akwá kwásuku**.
       2SG FUT able buy-3SG at   market'
       'You can buy them **at the market**.'

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[7] Whether or not in situ focus is prosodically marked in Bura has to await a detailed phonetic analysis. At the moment, we tentatively assume — based on accoustic impressions alone — that in situ focus is not made prominent by prosodic features, such as e.g. pitch accent, phrasing, or intonational breaks.

(15) Q: **Nawá** án tí   tsá masta tsír ní   rí,
         when PRT REL 3SG buy   beans DEF Q
         Litinúwa núwa Talakúwa rí?
         Monday   or   Tuesday   Q
         '**When** did she buy the beans, on Monday or on Tuesday?'

    A: Tsá masta **vir Litinúwa**.
         3SG buy   day Monday
         'She bought (them) **on Monday**.'

Next to the unmarked in situ-strategy, focused objects and adjuncts can also be realized *ex situ*, in which case they are explicitly marked for focus: The focused constituent is located in the sentence-initial position, where it is followed by the particle *án* and what appears to be a relative clause introduced by the non-subject relative marker *tí*. The data in (16) and (17) illustrate the ex situ strategy for focused direct objects.

(16) Q: **Mi** án [tí   Magirá akwá tá   ní] rí?
         what PRT REL M.   PROG prepare DEF Q
         '**What** is Magira preparing?'

    A: **Díva mhyi**   án [tí   tsá akwá tá].
         mush sorghum PRT REL 3SG PROG   prepare
         'It is **sorghum mush** that she is preparing.'

(17) Q: **Wa.n**   [tí   ga   bara kəla] rí?
         who.PRT   REL 2SG want take   Q
         '**Who** do you want to marry?'

    A: **Kúbíli** án [tí   íyá bara kəl-ari].
         K.   PRT REL 1SG want take-3SG
         'It is **Kubili** that I want to marry.'

In (16) and (17), the focus constituent is realized initially, while the backgrounded portion, or out-of-focus part, of the clause is realized in form of a

relative clause. Thus, the linear order of *wh*-questions and sentences with ex situ focus is *focus/wh > án > RelC*.

As for the focus-indicating element *án*, it is strongly preferred, but not 100% obligatory in *wh*-questions, see the discussion of (20) and (21) below. Given that the marked information-structural status of the initial *wh*-constituent can be identified on the basis of lexical and structural considerations alone, the occasional absence of *án* in *wh*-question is not surprising. In the corresponding answers, however, the focus marker *án* appears to be close to obligatory. The omission of *án* in (16A) and (17A) leads to infelicity in the contexts provided by the preceding *wh*-questions.[8] Note that (16A') and (17A') are grammatical on a different interpretation, namely that of complex NPs containing a relative clause. However, they are infelicitous as answers to (16Q) and (17Q).

(16A') Díva mhyi tí tsá akwá tá.
      ONLY READING: '(the) mush that she is preparing'
      NOT: 'It is mush that she is preparing.'

(17A') Kúbíli tí íyá bara kəl-ari.
      ONLY READING: '(the) Kúbíli that I want to marry'
      NOT: 'It is Kúbíli that I want to marry.'

Based on the optional absence of *án* in ex situ *wh*-questions (see below), and given the existence of an additional relative reading for the *án*-less variant, we tentatively conclude that the presence of *án* is not so much governed by a strict grammatical constraint. Instead, its presence is motivated by a principle of parsing economy along the lines of Bornkessel-Schlesewsky & Schlesewsky (2007). The presence of *án* in (16A) and (17A) blocks the undesired relative interpretation early on in the parse.

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[8] According to Hoffmann (1955:165), the occurrence of *án* was optional in these constructions in earlier days.

Focused adjuncts can occur ex situ as well. (18A) is the ex situ variant of (14A), in which an entire PP is realized in sentence-internal position. (19) gives an example of a focused temporal adverbial in the ex situ position.

(18) Q: **Ama** án tí íyá á mjá masta tomáto rí?
where PRT REL 1SG FUT able buy tomato Q
'**Where** can I buy tomatoes?'

A: **Akwá kwásúku** án tí ga á mjá mast-ari.
at market PRT REL 2SG FUT able buy-3SG
'It is **at the market** where you can buy them.'

(19) Q: **Nawá** án tí mwala ní sím sú.r símá ná tsi kira rí?
when PRT REL woman DEF eat thing.of eating of endtop Q
'When did the woman eat the last time?'

A: **Náha** án tí tsá sím sú.r símá ná tsi kir-ari.
yesterday PRT REL 3SG eat thing.of eating of end top-3SG
'It is **yesterday** that she ate the last time.'

Under certain conditions, ex situ focus is also possible across sentence boundaries. This is illustrated for *wh*-questions in (20a) and (21a). In each case, the ex situ *wh*-expression functions as the object of an embedded clause. The b-examples show the in situ variants of the long extractions. Notice that the ex situ variants are formed without the focus marker *án*. In our view, this further supports the view that there is no absolute structural requirement for ex situ foci to co-occur with *án*.

(20) a. **Mi** tí gíri líbíla akwá mtaku [ka gíri wuta] rí?
what REL 2PL go.out to bush COND 2PL see Q
'**What** did you go to the bush to see?'

b. Gíri líbíla akwá mtaku ka gíri wuta **mi** rí?

(21) a.   **Mi**   tí   gíri   átá   bara [ki   hárá aká   Magirá] rí?
          what REL 2PL FUT wish COND.1SG do   to   M.   Q
          '**What** do you want that I do to Magira?

     b.   Gíri átá bara ki hárá **mi** aká Magirá rí?

The observant reader will notice that in both cases, the embedded sentence is introduced by the conditional complementizer *ka/ki* used with subjunctive or non-finite clauses in Bura. Viewed from a cross-linguistic perspective, this possibility of long extraction from within subjunctive clauses is not surprising: It is well-known that such clauses are less restrictive than their indicative (finite) counterparts when it comes to extraction, cf. Pesetsky (1982).

     Summing up, focus on non-subjects need not be grammatically marked in Bura. If focus marking applies, this happens in form of a cleft-like structure involving a relative clause. In section 2.4, we present an analysis of such ex situ focus constructions as reverse pseudoclefts.

2.3   Distribution and Meaning of the Particle *án*

In the preceding sections, it was shown that *án* can occur in two syntactic environments. With subject focus, *án* occurs between the subject and the predicative part of the clause. This predicative part contains the verb and its arguments plus adjuncts, and can plausibly be analysed as a plain VP. With *ex situ* non-subject focus, *án* occurs between the sentence-initial focus constituent and a relative clause. Most relevant for the analysis to come, the particle *án* is found in a third environment: *Án* can optionally occur in non-verbal predicative constructions. This is shown in (22ab), where *án* occurs between the subject and the predicate and has a specific semantic effect: It singles out the subject from among a group of alternatives.

(22) a. Mda nghínda ní **án** mdír hyípa.
       man DEM   DEF PRT man teach
       '**that** man over **there** is a teacher.' (when picking a man from a group
       of people)

    b. Mbwá   nghíní **án** mbwar   aduá.
       building DEM   PRT building   prayer
       '**this** building is a church.'

The predicative sentences in (22) are the marked counterparts of the canonical predicative constructions without *án*, such as (23) and (24), with nominal and adjectival predicates, respectively:

(23) a. Mda nghínda ní   mdír hyípa.   b. Tsá líkítá.
       man DEM   DEF man teach   3SG doctor
       'That man over there is a **teacher**.'   'He is a **doctor**.'

(24) a. Ki   ní   wálá.   b. Sálvía wálá.
       house DEF big   Sálvía big/important
       'The house is **big**.'   'Sálvía is **big/important**.'

The sentences in (23) and (24) illustrate the default way of predicating a non-verbal property of a subject in Bura. There is no particle *án* and focus is on the predicate by default.

    Coming back to the syntactic distribution of *án*, its three licensing environments are summed up schematically in (25a–c):

(25) a. [SUBJ [án [VP]]]   [*subject focus*]

    b. [OBJ/ADJ [án [CPREL tí …]]]   [*non-subject focus, ex situ*]

    c. [SUBJ [án [AP, NP]]]   [*predicative construction*]

From a syntactic point of view, the three constructions do not seem to have much in common, seeing that *án* combines with a VP, a relative clause, and a non-verbal predicate, respectively. Semantically, however, all three complements share an important property: The denotations of all of them are of semantic type <e,t>, which is the semantic type of predicates denoting individual properties. Notice that the ability to combine with an expression of type <e,t> is a characteristic semantic property of copular elements such as English *be*, see Williams (1983), Partee (1986).

Type-considerations aside, the presence of *án* makes a twofold contribution to the semantic interpretation. First, a comparison of the minimal pair in (22a) and (23a) suggests that *án* introduces focus semantics in form of a presupposition invoking alternatives. This shows clearly from the additional comment on (22a), which was volunteered by our consultant. If the presence of *án* invokes alternatives, its presence with subject foci and non-subject foci that are grammatically marked follows directly. In addition to introducing focus alternatives, the presence of *án* frequently gives rise to a uniqueness implicature to the effect that the denotation of the focus constituent is the only individual satisfying the background predicate. Not surprisingly, then, *án* is obligatory in the superlative construction (26a), in which only one individual can instantiate the property in question to a maximal degree. Likewise, *án* must co-occur with the exhaustive focus element *daci* 'only' in (26b):

(26) a.   Sálvía *(**án**) ka   wálkur ta   sháng akwá di   ní.
          S.   PRT with bigness than all   among town DEF
          'Salvia is the biggest/most important in town.'

     b.   Audu *(**án**) mdír hyípa akwá dini *daci*.
          A.   PRT man   teach in   town only
          'Only Audu is teacher in town.'

The uniqueness effects observed with *án* also account for those rare cases where *án* is absent in ex situ *wh*-questions, see section 2.2. The generalization seems to be that *án* can be absent in a question if the form of the question element warrants the inference that there is more than one individual satisfying the question predicate. In (27), the complex *wh*-expression *kúgá mi* asks for a plurality of individuals. This is one of the few elicited examples in our corpus where the consultant volunteered a question without *án*. A similar point is made in (28) from Hoffmann (1955:163), which shows that *án* occurs in singular identity questions, but not in plural ones. Notice that (28b) represents one of the very few exceptions from the generalization that focused subjects must always be followed by *án*.

(27) *Kúgá mi*   tí   ga   masta   rí?
      also what REL 2SG buy   Q
      'What all did you buy?' → *plural answer expected*

(28) a. Ga   án   wa   rí?
         2SG PRT who Q
         'Who are you (sg.)'?

     b. Gíri wa   rí?
         2PL   who Q
         'Who are you (pl.)'?

Based on the data in (26) to (28), we conclude that the presence of *án* leads to an implicature of uniqueness, albeit a weak one. We will have to leave it open whether this implicature is a conventional implicature, arising as part of the lexical meaning of *án*, or whether it is the result of a more general pragmatic process of relevance-based inferring, as explicated in van Rooij & Schulz (2006).

Summing up, the particle *án* can occur in three different syntactic environments, It can occur with VPs (or TPs), relative CPs and predicative NPs/APs alike. At the same time, it is possible to give a unified semantic characterization in terms of semantic types: *án* always combines with property-denoting expressions of type <e,t>. Furthermore, its presence has a twofold semantic effect: it overtly introduces the focus presupposition in (21), and it triggers a (weak) implicature of uniqueness.

2.4 An Asymmetric Analysis of Focus Marking on Subjects and Non-Subjects

In this section, we present a tentative analysis of syntactic focus marking on non-verbal categories in Bura. The central claim is that grammatical focus-marking on subject and non-subject terms involves a structural asymmetry: Focused subjects occur in their canonical position in Spec,TP and their focus status is indicated by the presence of a copular element *án* in T. In contrast, focus on non-subject terms is syntactically marked: The focused constituent occurs in a cleft structure, with *án* occupying the T-position of the matrix clause.

In sections 2.1 and 2.2 it was shown that focused subjects *must* and focused non-subjects *can* occur in a marked syntactic configuration. The relevant syntactic structures are given in (29ab) again:

(29) a. **Ládi** án   tá   díva ní.   [*SUBJ focus*]
         L.   COP cook mush DEF
         '**Ladi** cooked mush.'

     b. **Kúbíli** án   tí   íyá   bara kǝl-ari.   [*NON-SUBJ focus*]
         K.   COP REL 1SG   want take-3SG
         'It is **Kubili** that I want to marry.'

A comparison of the structures in (29ab) shows that focused subjects and non-subjects both occur in the left periphery. The focused constituents are followed by the focus-marking particle *án* and the backgrounded part of the clauses. The differences between the two structures concern the syntactic category of the background, viz. a VP-predicate in (29a) and a relative CP in (29b). It is this categorial difference between the predicates that mainly motivates the asymmetric analysis proposed. For focused subjects, we make the minimal assumption that they appear in their canonical position. We thus follow Grimshaw (1997), where the same argument is made for *wh*-subjects in English. The presence of the focus-marking particle *án* in T is the only indication of the focus-status of subjects, cf. (30a). Notice that T remains empty if no constituent is focus-marked, i.e. with subject topics or in situ foci. Focused non-subjects that are grammatically marked for focus differ from focused subjects in that they do not occur in their canonical position. In addition, the predicate that follows the focus-marking particle is not a VP but a relative clause introduced by the relative marker *tí*. This gives rise to an analysis of grammatically marked non-subject focus in terms of a cleft structure, cf. (30b). In (30b), the particle *án* is located in T and connects the focused constituent and the backgrounded relative clause syntactically and semantically. The function of *án* is thus fully parallel to that of copular elements in German or English cleft constructions. Following Sabel & Zeller (2006), we therefore treat *án* as a *focus copula* located in T. By extension, *án* will also be a focus copula in the subject focus case in (30a), even though the clause contains a full lexical verb. From now on, all occurrences of *án* will be glossed as F-COP.

(30) a.   [$_{TP}$ *Ládi*   [$_T$ **án**] [$_{VP}$ tá díva ní]]   [*SUBJ focus*]

   b.   [$_{TP}$ *Kúbíli*   [$_T$ **án**] [$_{CPRel}$ **tí** íyá bara kəlari]]   [*NON-SUBJ focus*]

Notice that our characterization of copular elements is based solely on semantic considerations. Copular elements are functional elements that serve to combine a predicate-denoting expression with an individual-denoting expression. This semantic characterization is at odds with more syntax-based characterizations of copulas as (i.) verb-like elements that occur in predicative constructions in the absence of a full lexical verb, or (ii.) elements that obligatorily occur in predicative constructions.[9] This notwithstanding, it is of course possible to make a weaker claim and conceive of *án* as a focus-marking expression in T.[10]

Instead of assuming a focus copula in T, one could also advance a focus phrase (FocP) analysis (Brody 1990, Rizzi 1997). The particle would be a focus marker in the head position of FocP and focused subject and non-subject constituents would A'-move to Spec,FocP where movement is triggered by the need to check an un-interpretable (contrastive) FOC-feature (Chomsky 1995, É. Kiss 1998). In the remainder of this section, we argue against such a unified syntactic analysis and give two syntactic and a semantic argument in support of an asymmetric analysis of focus-marking on subjects and non-subjects. We show that syntactic focus marking on subjects and non-subjects involves two fundamentally different structures, namely a canonical syntactic structure with

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[9] In this connection, a reviewer suggests that *án* cannot be plausibly analyzed as a copula element because it does not occur in default predicative constructions, such as e.g. (23) and (24). If this line of reasoning were correct, one could not treat the Russian verb *byt'* as a copula either, as this element is replaced by a zero copula in the present tense, cf. (iab):

(i) a.   Ona   v dome.   b.   Ona   byla   v dome.
             3sg.f   in house   3sg.f   was   in house
             'She is in the house.'   'She was in the house.'

The alternation of zero-copula and *án* in Bura resembles the Russian alternation, but unlike in Russian it is not governed by aspect or tense, but by the focus structure of the predicative construction.

[10] As pointed out in Stassen (1997), focus markers and copular elements are diachronically, or even synchronically related in many languages. This fact often hinders the assignment of an unambiguous status as copula or focus marker to focus-marking expressions. We therefore postpone a more detailed analysis of Bura *án* to another occasion.

focused subjects, and a reverse pseudocleft[11] with focused non-subject terms. The analysis hinges to a great extent on the analysis of the focus-marking element *án* as a special focus copula located in T.

The first syntactic argument for an asymmetric treatment of subject and non-subject focus in Bura is that sentences with focused non-subjects contain a relative marker indicating the presence of a relative clause (31b), but sentences with focused subjects do not (31a). As shown in (31a), subject relative clauses in Bura must be introduced by the relative marker *ná.* (31b) shows that all oblique relative clauses, which quantify over grammatical functions other than the subject, are introduced by the relative marker *tí* (which is optionally preceded by *ná*, see Hoffmann (1955:160)).

(31) a. Bzir ní sím mtíka [_CP_ ***(ná)**   msira   ala   ga   náha   ]   ní.
          boy DEF eat chicken   REL_SUBJ escape from 2SG yesterday   DEF
          'The boy eats the chicken that escaped you yesterday.'   [*SUBJ-Rel*]

     b. Tsá á masta mtíka [_CP_ **tí** Chrís akwá   tsiya]   ní.
          3SG FUT buy   chicken   REL Ch.   PROG slaughter DEF
          'He will buy the chicken that Chris is slaughtering.'   [*OBJ-Rel*]

     c. Íya wuta nga saka [_CP_ **tí**   ga   akwá dlar bzir] ní.
          1SG see 2SG time   REL 2SG PROG help boy   DEF
          'I saw you when you were helping the boy.'   [*MOD-Rel*]

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[11] Following Collins (1991) and Lambrecht (2001) a pseudocleft ("reverse WH-cleft" in Lambrecht's terminology) is a cleft where a free relative clause precedes the clefted constituent (i). In a reversed pseudocleft, the linear order of clefted constituent and predicate is reversed such that the free relative follows the clefted constituent (ii).

(i)   What Peter bought is a dotted tie.

(ii)   A dotted tie is what Peter bought.

Non-subject foci in Bura are in full parallel to the structure in (ii), which motivates their analysis as reverse pseudoclefts.

What is crucial for our purposes is that focused non-subjects feature the relative marker typical of non-subject relative clauses (32b), but there is no sign of relative clause syntax in the case of focused subjects (32a).

(32) a. $[_{TP} \, SUBJ_{FOC} \quad [_T \, \textbf{án}] \, [_{VP} \dots]]$

    b. $[_{TP} \, \neg SUBJ_{FOC} \quad [_T \, \textbf{án}] \, [_{RelCP} \, \textbf{tí} \dots]]$

It follows from the structural asymmetry between subject and non-subject focus that only instances of the latter will involve a cleft structure. Since it is a free relative clause that follows the clefted constituent, (32b) shows the characteristic structure of a reverse pseudocleft, whereas (32a) has the structure of a regular declarative clause with an overt T head.

     The second syntactic argument in support of an asymmetric analysis of term focus in Bura concerns the selectional properties of the focus copula *án*, which seem to be less restricted than those of functional heads, such as e.g. the Foc-head of FocP: If *án* follows a focused subject, it syntactically combines with a VP (32a). On the other hand, if it follows a focused non-subject it combines with a relative CP (32b). Thus, the particle *án* is more flexible in its syntactic behavior than functional heads, which typically select for a specific syntactic category (Chomsky 1986). This suggests that *án* does not head a FocP. Rather it behaves like a copula, which may also select for different syntactic categories as long as they are predicates, cf. the English examples in (33):

(33) a.   Carlos **is** $[_{AP}$ tall].

    b.   Carlos **is** $[_{NP}$ a guerillero].

    c.   Carlos **is** $[_{RelCP}$ what you call a guerillero].

(34) shows again that Bura *án* shows up in the same environments as the English copula *be*: it occurs before adjectival and nominal predicates, cf. (32ab), with an additional semantic restriction to the effect that the subject denotation must be a unique individual, cf. section 2.3. Second, *án* occurs in cleft constructions, cf. (32c). Different from English, the copula also appears before VP-predicates if the subject is focused, cf. (34d):

(34) a.　Ki　　　nghíní **án**　　[_AP wálá tá　shàng] akwá di　　ní.
　　　　house DEM　F-COP　　big　　than all　　among town DEF
　　　　'This is the biggest house in town.'

　　b.　Mda nghínda ní　**án**　[_NP mdi.r　hyípa].
　　　　man　there　　DEF F-COP　　man.of　teach
　　　　'THAT man over THERE is a teacher.'

　　c.　Kúbíli_FOC　**án**　[_RelCP tí　　íyá　bara　kəl-ari].
　　　　K.　　　　　F-COP　　　that 1SG　want take-3SG
　　　　'It is Kubili that I want to marry.'

　　d.　Ládi_FOC　**án**　　[_VP tá　　díva ní].
　　　　L.　　　　　F-COP　　cook　mush DEF
　　　　'**Ladi** cooked mush.'

This syntactic flexibility of the particle *án* makes an analysis as a functional head little plausible. Also recall from above that *án* is not a 100% obligatory with non-subject *wh*-questions. E.g, *án* can be missing if the form of the *wh*-expression makes clear that more than one individual satisfies the question predicate, cf. (35):

(35) Q:　*Kúgá　mi*　tí　ga　　masta rí?
　　　　also　　what REL 2SG　buy　　Q
　　　　'What all did you buy?' → *plural answer expected*

The optional absence of *án* would be unexpected if it were a FOC-head. Assuming that it is the feature specification of the FOC-head that triggers movement of the focus constituent to Spec,FocP, such movement should not take place in the absence of *án*. Nonetheless, the object *wh*-expression occurs in ex situ position in (35). Notice that the occasional omission of *án* is compatible with a cleft analysis on the assumption that Bura has two copula elements, a covert default copula and a special focus copula that presupposes uniqueness.

Finally, observe that despite its syntactic flexibility, *án* shows a great uniformity in its semantics. The semantic type of all of its right-hand complements is the same: The standard semantic analysis of predicative APs or NPs, relative CPs, and plain VPs (without a subject trace) is that of property-denoting expressions of type <e,t>, cf. e.g. Heim & Kratzer (1998). The observed flexibility in the selectional requirements of *án* combined with the semantic restriction that the expression to the right of *án* be a property-denoting expression is the characteristic property of copular elements, see e.g. Williams (1983) and Partee (1986) on English *be*. Based on these syntactic and semantic similarities, then, we propose to treat the focus-marking particle *án* as a copula element located in T for subjects and non-subject terms.

To conclude, the central claim of our analysis of argument and adjunct focus marking in Bura is that there is a structural asymmetry between focus-marking on subjects and non-subjects (cf. Hartmann & Zimmermann 2007a on Hausa, and references therein). The two main findings supporting this claim are (i) the presence of a relative clause after a non-subject focus, which motivated a cleft analysis; (ii) the flexible selectional properties of the particle *án*, which showed its affinity to copula elements and made an analysis as a grammatical focus marker less plausible. This conclusion is backed up by the unified semantic behaviour of the particle which always takes predicates of type <e,t> as its complement. We did not discuss the question of whether Bura pseudoclefts are

base-generated or derived by movement, but we will take this question up in future work, see Hartmann & Zimmermann (in prep.).

3   Focus on Non-Nominal Categories

In this section, we address focus on non-nominal categories in Bura. We consider predicate focus and polarity focus in turn. As it will turn out in section 3.1, predicate focus, e.g. focus on the verb or the VP, cannot be marked by the focus strategies discussed in section 2. Hence, predicate focus is never syntactically marked. Occasionally, a focused verb can be morphologically enhanced by means of verbal reduplication. Given that verbal reduplication is a common means of expressing the iteration or intensification of an event in the languages of the world, we assume that this is the primary function of reduplication in Bura as well. The resulting focus prominence of the verb meaning would thus not follow from a separate focus-marking strategy. It would simply be a side-effect of a process triggered by an independent semantic motivation. In section 3.2 we consider polarity focus. In contrast to predicate focus, there is a way to express focus on the assertion at least in sentences in the null-marked perfective aspect. In such cases, polarity focus may be marked by the grammatical marker *ku*. We will argue that *ku* is not sui generis an aspectual marker of perfectivity (against Hoffmann 1955:317) but a genuine indicator of polarity focus.

3.1   Predicate Focus

Narrow focus on V and focus on VP is always realized in situ. Unlike with term focus, it cannot be marked by a syntactic strategy (ex situ, cleft). This is illustrated in (36) and (37) for verb focus.

(36) Q: **Mi** án   tí   tsá   hárá ka   kum ní   rí?
         what F-COP REL 3SG   do   with meat DEF Q
         '**What** did she do with the meat?'

     A1: Tsá   **súltá** kum   ní.
          3SG   fry   meat DEF
          'She **fried** the meat.'

     A2: * Súltá án (tí) tsá kum ní.

(37)   Tsá **ndluwa** kákádu ní akwá kanti ní   daci ama tsá adí   **nta** wá.
         3SG collect   book   DEF at   shop DEF only but 3SG EXIST pay   NEG
         'He only **collected** the book from the shop, he didn't **pay** for it.'

Focused VPs are also realised in situ, as witnessed in (38). Again, it is impossible that focused VPs appear in the sentence-initial cleft-position.

(38) Q: **Mi** án   tí   mwala ní   hárá rí?
         what F-COP REL woman DEF do   Q
         '**What** did the woman do?'

     A1: Mwala ní   **kwasá tsír**.
          woman DEF   chew   beans
          'The woman **ate beans**.'

     A2: * **Kwasá tsír** án (tí) mwala ní.

One could assume that, given the absence of syntactic focus marking, focused predicates are prosodically marked, e.g. by prosodic phrasing, a pitch accent, or a more articulated shape of the tonal contours. Prosodic focus marking is attested in other tone languages (cf. Xu 1999 on Chinese, Kanerva 1990 on Chichewa). To our knowledge, however, Bura does not seem to make use of any of these prosodic focus strategies. There is no sign of prosodic prominence on a focused verb, or a focused in situ object, which leads us to conclude that in situ focus on predicates is not grammatically expressed in Bura. As a consequence,

Bura makes intensive use of pragmatic resolution strategies in order to identify in situ foci: Focused predicates and in situ non-subjects can only be identified by the information structure of the context.

Another consequence of the absence of focus marking with in situ focus is a high degree of focus ambiguity. A declarative clause such as (39) can be interpreted in the context of an object question, a question to the verb or the VP. The assignment of focus structure to (39) is only possible via the respective question contexts in (39a–d).

(39)   Ládi nki   shár.
            Ladi catch rabbit
            'Ladi caught a rabbit.'

     a.   What did Ladi catch?

     b.   What did Ladi do with the rabbit?

     c.   What did Ladi do?

     d.   What happened?

The focus ambiguity between VP-focus and focus on the direct object is also known from intonation languages. However, intonation languages do not exhibit a structural identity between narrow verb focus and object focus, since narrow verb focus is marked by focus on the verb itself. As we pointed out in Hartmann & Zimmermann (2007b), standard theories of focus projection, such as e.g. Selkirk (1984, 1995), have problems with accounting for this ambiguity. Seen in this light, it is striking that massive focus ambiguity does not seem to be an idiosyncratic property of a single language but is quite common at least among the Chadic languages.

It is also worth pointing out that — under certain conditions — only the object can be marked by a cleft structure even though it is the whole VP that is focused. This is illustrated in the corrective VP-focus example in (40).

(40) A: Da   kwasá tsír   ní.
          3PL chew   beans DEF
          'They ate the beans.'

   B: Adí **tsír ní** án   tí   da   kwasá wá
        EXIST beans DEF F-COP REL 3PL chew   NEG
        ama **yímí ní** án   tí   da   sá.
        but   water DEF F-COP REL 3PL drink
        'They didn't **eat the beans**, but they **drank the water**.'

In (40B), the preceding VP is corrected, hence it is an instance of corrective VP-focus (cf. section 1). However, the constituents that appear in the cleft positions are the objects — in the negation of the predecessor clause as well as in the following correcting clause. (40B) represents an instance of *underfocus* or *partial focus movement* (see e.g. Krifka 2001, 2004). Hartmann & Zimmermann (2007a) discuss parallel facts in Hausa, a West-Chadic language. In their example (41), the *wh*-question requires a VP-focus in the answer. However, only the object is fronted to the ex situ focus position in Hausa.

(41) Q: **Mèeneenèe** ya   fàaru?
          what   3SG.PERF happen
          '**What** happened?'

   A: **Dabboobi-n jeejìi** nee mutàanee su-kà   kaamàa.
        animals-of   bush   PRT   men   3PL-PERF catch
        '(The) men caught **wild animals**.'

Hartmann & Zimmermann (2007a) and Zimmermann (2007) propose that in (41) only the unexpected, or most relevant or important part of the focus appears

in the ex situ position (for a similar proposal in Chinese, cf. Xu 2004). This seems to indicate that partial focus movement does not depend on information-structural factors alone, but is subject to additional pragmatic factors, such as relevance. The same seems to hold for the Bura example in (40B), where the structural facts (object cleft) do not fully coincide with the information-structural requirements (VP-focus).

Even though verbal focus is syntactically unmarked, a focused verb can be made grammatically prominent by means of morphological reduplication.

(42) Q: **Mi** án   tí   tsá hárá ka   kákádu ní rí?
         what F-COP REL 3SG do   with book   DEF Q
         'What did he do with the book?'

    A1: Tsá **kítá kítá**.
         3SG take take
         'He only **took** (it).'

    A2: Tsá **híl-híltá**   kákádu ní   (akwá kanti ní).
         3SG RDP-steal book   DEF   at   shop DEF
         'He **stole** the book from the store.'

Hoffmann (1955:302) notes that reduplication in Bura expresses intensity or iteration of the event denoted by the clause. More generally, verbal reduplication is a common means of expressing these semantic concepts cross-linguistically and in other Chadic languages, see e.g. Newman (1990) on verbal reduplication in Hausa. Naturally, the expression of iteration or intensification of the event will assign the verb meaning a certain amount of emphasis. We therefore conclude that verbal reduplication is not a genuine focus-marking strategy in Bura. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that both answers to (42Q) are also possible without verbal reduplication:

(42A1')   Tsá **kítá**.

(42A2')   Tsá **híltá** kákádu ní (akwá kanti ní).

To conclude, verbal reduplication assigns prominence to the verb in an indirect way. As a focus marking strategy it is thus not on a par with the cleft strategy or with focus marking by the focus copula *án*. Recall that *án* is obligatory with focused subjects and a crucial ingredient of the cleft-construction that is used to mark non-subject focus in the syntax. The particle *án* is thus an indispensable feature of focus marking, unlike verbal reduplication. Finally notice that a different situation obtains in Malgwa, another Central Chadic language, according to Löhr (2007). In Malgwa, verbal reduplication in Malgwa serves to express predication focus on the verb at least in perfective contexts.[12]

3.2 Polarity Focus

By polarity focus, we understand focus on the truth value of the clause (cf. Gussenhoven 1984). In German, polarity focus is usually expressed by an accent on the finite verb in V2 in matrix clauses and on the subordinating conjunction in embedded clauses (Höhle 1988).

(43) a.   Q: Hat Klaus den Computer repariert?
             has K.   the computer repaired
             'Did Klaus repair the computer?'

        A: Ja, er **hat** ihn repariert.
           yes he did it   repair
           'Yes, he **did** repair it.'

   b.   Q: Hat Klaus gesagt, wann er den Computer reparieren wird?
             has K.   said   when he the computer repair   will
             'Did Klaus say when he will repair the computer?'

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[12] According to Löhr (2007), the use of (some) reduplicated verbs in Malgwa can express either narrow focus on the verb or polarity focus to be discussed on the next section.

A: Nein, aber er hat gesagt, **dass** er ihn reparieren wird.
no but he has said that he it repair will
'No, but he said **that** he will repair it.'

In both examples in (43), it is affirmed that Klaus repaired (a) or will repair (b) the computer. If a statement is negated, i.e. an opposite polarity expressed, the nuclear accent falls on the negation in German.

(44) Q: Hat Klaus den Computer repariert?
has K. the computer repaired
'Did Klaus repair the computer?'

A: Nein, er hat ihn **nicht** repariert.
no he has it not repaired
'No, he **didn't** repair it.'

Turning to Bura, polarity focus is often unmarked. If marked overtly, it is expressed by the particle *ku*, which precedes the verb. This option only exists in perfective clauses. The following data exemplify affirmative polarity. The examples in (45B)/(46B) confirm the preceding statements. The confirmation is (or may be) expressed by the particle *ku*.

(45) A: Náha Pindár sá mbal.
yesterday P. drink beer
'Yesterday Pindar drank beer.'

B: A'á, Pindár (**ku**) sá mbal náha.
yes P. POL drink beer yesterday
'Yes, Pindar **did** drink beer yesterday.'

(46) A. Pindár sím mtíka.
P. eat chicken
'Pindar ate a chicken.'

    B.   Pindár **ku** sím mtíka   ní.
         P.   POL eat   chicken DEF
         'Pindar **did** eat the chicken.'

In the following two examples, the second clauses negate the statements of the first ones. The opposite polarity focus is also marked with the particle *ku*. In (48), the future tense of the *wh*-question presupposes that the car has not been repaired yet. The answer negates this presupposition.

(47) A: Pindár adí   dá[13] sá   mbal akwá ndzí   ní   wá.
          P.   EXIST ??   drink beer in   lifetime DEF NEG
          'Pindar never drank beer in her lifetime.'

     B: Nahá   tsá **ku** sá   mbal.
          yesterday 3SG POL drink beer
          'Yesterday she **did** drink beer.'

(48) Context: The neighbour's car has not been repaired in a long time.

     Q: **Nawá** án   tí   ga   átá namta motá-nga rí?
          when F-COP REL 2SG FUT repair car-2SG   Q
          '**When** will you repair your car?'

     A: Ama íyá **ku** namta náha   (diya).
          but   1SG POL repair yesterday already
          'But I **did** repair it already yesterday.'

Based on the observation that the particle *ku* is in complementary distribution with the aspectual markers, Hoffmann (1955:317ff) analyses it as a perfectivity marker. We do not share this view and argue instead that *ku* marks polarity focus. Our proposal is supported by the following four arguments: First, recall from section 2 that all aspects but the perfective are obligatorily marked in Bura.

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[13] Possibly, the morpheme *dá* is a loan from Hausa, where *dâ* 'formerly, once upon a time' is a temporal adjunct expressing anteriority.

The particle *ku*, however, is optional and appears only in a small subset of perfective clauses. If *ku* were a perfectivity marker, its optionality would be surprising. It is interesting to note, though, that polarity focus is only marked in the perfective aspect. As example (49) shows *ku* cannot appear in a progressive clause.[14] We will make a tentative proposal to account for this restriction at the end of the present section.

(49) Q: **Mi** án   hárá   tí ga a   tsúhá whada   wá rí?
         what F-COP happen REL 2SG PROG grow groundnut NEG Q
         '**Why** don't you grow groundnuts?'

A1: Íyá akwá tsúh-ári.
    I   PROG grow-3SG
    'I **am** growing it.'

A2: * Íyá ku akwá tsúh-ári.

A3: * Íyá ku áta tsúh-ári.

A4: * Íyá ku aná tsúh-ári.

Second, *ku* is ruled out in a sentence containing a term focus. Thus, in (50c) focus on the subject blocks the presence of *ku*. The same holds for subject *wh*-questions, as shown in (50d).

(50) a. **Pindár** án   sá   mbal.
         P.   F-COP drink beer
         '**Pindar** drank beer.'

     b. Pindár **ku** sá   mbal.
         P.   POL drink beer
         'Pindar **did** drink beer.'

_____

[14] A similar restriction to perfective environments is observed with the particle *gà* in Tar B'arma (Nilo-Saharan), which is likewise analysed as a marker of polarity focus in Jacob (in prep.).

c. * Pindár án ku sá mbal.

d. * Wan ku sá mbal?

The incompatibility of the polarity marker with narrow focus is also observed with non-subject focus, be it clefted (51A1) or in situ (51A2):[15]

(51) Q: **Mi**   án   tí   mwala   ní   kwasá   rí?
        what F-COP REL woman DEF chew   Q
        '**What** did the woman eat?'

    A1: **Tsír**   án   tí   mwala ní   **(* ku)** kwasá.   [*clefted OBJ-focus*]
        beans F-COP REL woman DEF   POL   chew
        'The woman ate **beans**.'

    A2: Mwala ní **(*ku)** kwasá **tsír**.   [*in situ OBJ-focus*]

As discussed in section 2, term focus is generally compatible with any aspect in Bura. As illustrated in (52) for subject focus, it is possible in progressive, future, and habitual clauses. The fact that term focus is not compatible with the particle *ku* shows that *ku* cannot be an aspectual marker.

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[15] The occurrence in the disjunctive *yes/no*-question in (i) appears to contradict this generalization at first sight. The answer (iA) suggests that there is narrow focus on the two disjunctive NPs *Mtaku* and *Sálvía* in (iQ).

(i) Q: Mtaku   núwa   Sálvía   ku   namta motá ní   ya?
         M.   or   S.   POL repair car   DEF Q
         'Did Mtaku or Salvia repair the car?'

    A: Mtaku ku namta (mota ní).

Notice, however, that *yes/no*-questions show an affinity to polarity focus by definition, which might license the occurrence of *ku* in this context.

(52) [TP **Pindár**   án   [AspP akwá / átá   / aná   sá   mbal]].
      P.   F-COP   PROG / FUT / HAB drink beer
      '**Pindar** is drinking   / will drink / usually drinks beer.'

The third argument is a logical consequence of the second: The polarity marker
ku is also incompatible with the focus-sensitive particle *daci* ('only'). This is
shown in (53) where the focus particle *daci* associates with focus on the verb
across the pronominal object (cf. Hartmann & Zimmermann 2007c). Since verb
focus is grammatically unmarked (cf. section 3.1), the presence of *daci* is the
only indication of focus. Its presence blocks the polarity marker *ku*.

(53)   Mwala ní   adí **tsá** ní   wá ama tsá **(* ku) buhá** ní   daci.
       woman DEF EXIST hit 3SG NEG but 3SG POL push 3SG only
       'The woman didn't hit him, but she only pushed him.'

Fourth, the polarity marker is incompatible with negation. If a statement is
negated, such as in (54), the presence of the polarity marker is ungrammatical.
The incompatibility of polarity marker and negation has been observed for other
African languages, too, and is possibly due to the inherent focus status of
negation, see e.g. Güldemann (1996). In contrast, such an incompatibility is not
found with the other aspectual markers in Bura. This shows once more that *ku* is
not a perfectivity marker.

(54) A: Náha   Pindár sá   mbal.
         yesterday P.   drink beer
         'Yesterday Pindar drank beer.'

     B: Áwa, Pindár **adí (* ku)** sá   mbal náha   **wá**.
         no   P.   EXIST POL drink beer yesterday NEG
         'No, Pindar didn't drink beer yesterday.'

Before we give a tentative account of the observed distribution of the particle *ku*, we briefly discuss a related phenomenon in the West-Chadic languages spoken in Yobe State, Nigeria (Bade, Bole, Karekare, Ngamo, Ngizim). Schuh (2005) argues for these languages that the verbal extension traditionally described as the totality marker should rather be conceived of as an auxiliary (= polarity) focus marker. For our discussion of the Bura particle *ku* it is interesting to note that the alleged totality extension of the Yobe State languages is ungrammatical in connection with constituent questions and with negation. The following examples illustrate these incompatibilities for Ngizim. (55c) (from Schuh 2005:16) shows that the verb in *wh*-questions may not be extended by the "totality" marker *naa*. (56c) (from Schuh 2005:13) shows that negation and totality marking are incompatible.[16]

(55) a. Ba / ba-naa təmaakú. (*neutral*)   b. Ka ba tâm?
         get / get-TOT sheep   2SG get what
         'He got a sheep.'   'What did you get?'

                                               c. * Ka ba-naa tâm?

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[16] It could be assumed that it is a genuine property of the totality marker to be incompatible with constituent focus or negation. This seems not to be the case at least in Hausa, which has a proper verb form marking totality (grade 4). The Hausa grade 4 verbs can occur together with question focus and negation as illustrated in (i) (from Newman 2000:490) and (ii) (from Schuh 2005:13), respectively:

(i)   Mèe   ya   fashèe?
         what SG.PERF   break.TOT
         'What broke?'

(ii) a. Na   shanye   giya.   b. Ban   shanye   giya ba.
         1SG   drink.TOT beer   NEG.1SG   drink.TOT beer NEG
         'I drank up the beer.'   'I didn't drink up the beer.'

The compatibility of the totality marking verb forms with constituent focus and negation in Hausa corroborates Schuh's analysis of the alleged totality extension in the Yobe State languages as an auxiliary focus marker.

(56) a. Na   sa-naa   səmà.   b. Na   sa   səmà bai.
         1SG   drink-TOT   beer   1SG drink   beer not
         'I drank up the beer.'   'I didn't drink up the beer.'

         c. * Na sa-naa səmà bai.

Recall from (50) and (54) that the Bura particle *ku* is excluded in exactly the same environments. This strongly suggests that the totality extension in the Yobe State languages and the particle *ku* in Bura serve the same function, which is the expression of polarity focus.

In the remainder of this section, we give a tentative answer to the question of why polarity marking in Bura is restricted to the perfective aspect. Apparently, Bura requires the completion of an event before the truth value of the clause expressing the event can be focused (= polarity focus). It follows that the truth value of a proposition denoting an ongoing, uncompleted or recurring event cannot be focused. Possibly, this requirement is a variation of Hopper's (1979) universal implicational relation between foregrounding and perfectivity, which claims that an event must be bounded or completed in order to be foregrounded. If foregrounding corresponds to being in focus, the restriction of polarity focus to perfective contexts follows directly. To give an example for this implicational relation, Hartmann & Zimmermann (2006) discuss sentence focus marking in Gùrùntùm (West-Chadic), as exemplified in (57a–d). Gùrùntùm has a morphological focus marker *a*, which appears sentence-finally in case of sentential focus.It shows that all-new sentence focus is only marked in the perfective (57a), whereas it remains unmarked in all other aspects (57b–d). We refrain from giving appropriate contexts (Exs. (57cd) are from Haruna 2003:89,91).

(57) a. Tí   vún   lúurìn   nvùrì-**à**.   [*perfective*]
         3SG   wash   clothes yesterday-FOC
         'She washed clothes yesterday.'

   b. Tí   bà   nyóolì   góobílìshí.   [*progressive*]
       3SG   PROG   write   letter
       'He is writing a letter.'

   c. Tá-a   má   íyà   tə́u-gàná   gáb.   [*future*]
       3SG-FUT go   after moment   small
       'She will go after a short while.'

   d. Tá-a   ɗì   wárí.   [*habitual*]
       3SG   HAB   come
       'She usually comes.'

Thus, in Gùrùntùm, the marking of sentence focus requires the event to be complete. Similarly, we would like to argue that the completion of the event expressed by the clause is a prerequisite for the formal marking of polarity focus in Bura. Since the completion of an event is not marked overtly in contemporary Bura, polarity focus is expressed by a formative in the position of aspectual markers.

4   Focus Types and Focus Interpretation

The focus marking strategies for subjects and non-subjects discussed in this article show up with all focus types, i.e. with corrective, selective, as well as with new-information focus (cf. Dik 1997). In other words, a different pragmatic use of a focused constituent does not trigger a difference in the grammatical realization of focus. From a theoretical perspective, this is an interesting result since it is at odds with theories that try to establish a categorical (semantic) difference between new information focus on the one hand and pragmatically marked foci such as contrast, selection or correction on the other. See among

many others Halliday 1967, Chafe 1976, Couper-Kuhlen 1984, Rochemont 1986, É. Kiss 1998, Drubig & Schaffar 2001, Molnár 2001, Umbach 2001, Selkirk 2007). In this section, we restrict ourselves to the discussion of selective focus (4.1) and corrective focus realization (4.2).

4.1 Selective Focus

In section 1, we called a focus *selective* if the focused constituent introduces an element of the alternative set into the common ground (CG) and at least some elements of this set have been made explicit in the preceding context. In the following examples, the explicit elements are given in the questions. In the answers, one of these elements is chosen.

Selective focus on subjects follows the same pattern as new-information focus on subjects. The focused constituent appears in the ex situ position and is followed by the focus marker *án*.

(58) Q: Wa án   jabwumta túhúm ní   rí, ga   núwa bzir   máyár nga rí?
         who F-COP break   pot   DEF Q 2SG or   child mother 2SG Q
         'Who broke the pot, you or your brother?'

A: Bzir máyár   ná   án   jubwumta.[17]
    child mother 1SG F-COP break
    'My brother broke (it).'

In our corpus, selective focus on non-subjects may be realized in situ, as shown in (59) for object focus, in (60) for adverbial focus, and in (61) for verb focus.

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[17] Notice that the verbs in (59A) and (61A) are not extended by the verbal suffix *–ari*, which typically replaces an anaphorically recoverable object-NP, see fn. 6. We lack sufficient knowledge of the Bura verbal system and the precise licensing conditions of *–ari* in Bura for an adequate account of its distribution.

(59) Q: Ga   bara sá   mbal núwa mwadubu rí?
         2SG want drink beer or   porridge Q
         'Do you want to drink beer or porridge?'

     A: Íyá sá mwadubu.

(60) Q: Nawá án   tí   tsá masta tsír ní   rí,
         when COP REL 3SG buy   beans DEF   Q
         Litinúwa núwa Talakúwa rí?
         Monday   or   Tuesday   Q
         'When did she buy the beans, on Monday or on Tuesday?'

     A: Tsá masta vir Litinúwa.
         3SG buy   day Monday
         'She bought (them) on Monday.'

(61) Q: Madár nkyár.yéri ní   akwá kílá gang ní
         boy   small.PL   DEF PROG carry log DEF
         núwa da   akwá buhá rí?
         or   3PL PROG push Q
         'Are the boys carrying or pushing the log?'

     A: Da   akwá kil-ari.
         3PL PROG carry-3SG
         'They are carrying it.'

Selective non-subject focus may also be clefted, cf. the minimal pair in (62), showing that there is no restriction with respect to the position of selective focus. Whether there is a positional preference cannot be decided at the moment.

(62) Q: Ga   átá bara tea núwa coffee rí?
         2SG FUT want tea or   coffee Q
         'Do you want tea or coffee?'

    A1: Íyá bara tea.

    A2: Tea án tí íyá bara.

The next sub-section will lead to a similar conclusion concerning corrective focus.

4.2 Corrective Focus

A focus is *corrective* if the focused constituent replaces an alternative that has been previously introduced into the linguistic context. Again, corrective focus on subjects follows the well-known pattern: it is always marked by the focus copula *án*, cf. (63B) where the subject pronoun is corrected.

(63) A: Tsá kwasímya tsír   ní.   B: Áwa, íyá án   kwasímya.
         3SG chew   beans   DEF   no   1SG F-COP chew
         'She ate the beans.'   'No, I ate (them).'

Focused corrective non-subjects may appear in situ or clefted as shown in (64B1) and (64B2) for object focus. The first correction of A's previous statement in (64B1) has the corrective focus in the cleft construction. The second correction in (64B2) introduces the corrected object in situ.

(64) A: Mwala ní   kwasímya tsír   ní.
         woman DEF chew   beans   DEF
         'The woman ate the beans.'

   B1: Áwa, **shinkafa ní**   án   tí   tsá   kwasímya.
        no   rice   DEF F-COP REL 3SG chew
        'No, it was **the rice** that she ate.'

   B2: Áwa, tsá   kwasímya **shinkafa ní**.
        no   3SG chew   rice   DEF
        'No, she ate **the rice**.'

Example (65) illustrates corrective focus on adjuncts. Again, the corrected constituent may occur in situ (65B) or in the cleft position (65B').

(65) A: Ládi   sí   náha.
           L.   come yesterday
           'Ladi came yesterday.'

    B1:   Áwa, Ládi átá   sí   dípa.
           no   L.   FUT come tomorrow

    B2:   Áwa, dípa   án   tí   Ládi átá   sí.
           no   tomorrow F-COP REL L.   FUT come
           'No, Ladi will come tomorrow.'

Finally, we discuss selective verb focus. Focused verbs can also be used for corrections, but since focused verbs go unmarked in Bura, such verbs must appear in situ:

(66) A: Mwala ní   tsa   Péter.
           woman DEF hit   P.
           'The woman hit Peter.'

    B: Mwala ní   adí   tsa Péter wá   ama tsá   kúgá ní.
           woman DEF EXIST hit   P.   NEG but 3SG call   3SG
           'The woman didn't hit Peter, but she called him.'

5   Conclusion

This article provides a detailed overview of focus and focus marking in Bura. We discussed the two main asymmetries of the focus system. The first asymmetry concerns the different structures of focus marked subject and non-subject terms: The presence of a relative clause in case of focused non-subjects motivated a cleft analysis. The cleft analysis could not be extended to focused subjects, however, due to the absence of relative clause syntax with focused subjects. Focus marked terms are both followed by the particle *án*, which we analysed as a focus copula located in SpecTP. The second asymmetry concerns the optionality of focus marking. While focus marking on subjects is obligatory,

focused non-subjects need not be grammatically marked: Predicate focus is only sporadically marked; focus marking on other non-subjects is optional. We also showed that the absence of focus marking leads to a high degree of focus ambiguity, which can only be pragmatically resolved. Finally, a discussion of different pragmatic focus types showed that Bura does not formally differentiate between these. Our investigation revealed that the Central Chadic language Bura shares many traits of focusing with the West-Chadic languages, such as the obligation to mark focused subjects, or the massive presence of focus ambiguity. However, the Bura focus system also has a striking idiosyncratic property, which is the structural difference in the marking of subject and non-subject term focus. The question of whether or not this is a common property of the Central Chadic languages will be at the centre of future research.

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