1. Conjecture: the transitivity of focus

(1a) **syntactic prosody** (Chomsky & Halle 1968; Bresnan 1971; Cinque 1993; Arregi 2002; Kahnemuyipour 2005).

Nuclear stress, e.g. the pitch pattern of English neutral focus, is compositionally derived from cyclic phrase structure "as a function of the independently needed operation Merge" (Zwart 2003, 397).

b. **prosodic focus** (Bolinger 1958; Jackendoff 1972; Selkirk 1995; Reinhart 1997; Roberts 2005).

In English and other languages, the main phonetic cue of marked/narrow focus is pitch accent.

c. **focus transitivity** (Vallduví 1990; Zubizarreta 1998; Wagner 2005; Rooth 2006).

The distribution of the acoustic cue referred to in (1b) is defined at a syntactic level accessible to phonology (S-structure/Spellout), consistent with (1a).

• (1c) is excluded in principle by Ladef, who labels (1a) vs. (1b) resp. "structural" vs. "highlighting-based" accentuation assuming that "intonation… has a phonological organization" (1996, 163, 1, original emphasis, cf. Pierrehumbert 1980). But this assumption is independently doubtful (Liberman 1975; Giegerich 1985; Dilley & al. 2006).

• (1c) could be accidentally true in Romance and West Germanic but fail in general. The fallback is to express any alignment of focus pitch to syntactic phrasing in a parallel architecture or "interface economy" fed by a smorgasbord of "prominence" strategies (Reinhart 1997, 2006, cf. Truckenbrodt 1995). But such pessimism is premature, because…

• (1a-b) are claimed to hold in Chinese (Duamu 2005; Xu & Xu 2005), a so-called lexical tone language, contra standard assumptions of prosodic relativity (Pike 1948; Odden 1999, cf. Szendröi 2001, 12f.). Similarly…

• In Benue-Kwa (BK, the majority subgroup of the Niger-Congo language family), a traditional presumption against (1a) in literature of phrasal tone rules and grammatical tone Gestalten (Sharman & Meeussen 1955; Welmers 1959; Voorhoeve 1967; Williams 1971; Hyman & Schuh 1974; Goldsmith 1975) has not led to descriptively adequate analyses, and metrical alternatives exist (Pulleyblank 1982; Liberman 1999—nonBK; Manfredi 1995, 2003; Idsardi & Purnell 1997; Harrison 2005) which are friendly to (1a).

• (1b) conflicts with direct manipulation of tones by focus diacritics (Hyman 1999, 153), however an alternative of indirect prosodic phrasing was suggested for eastern BK (so-called 'Bantu') by Francesco Antinucci based on similarities to Italian (Byarushengo & al. 1976, 197, cf. Manfredi 2006a). What of western BK?

• Left-peripheral/ex situ focused material is asymmetrically distributed across BK (§2). Claim: BK2’s parametric choice of early derivational spellout of VP (Manfredi 2006b) forces internal merge of assertion (Σ) to achieve narrow focus, an instance of movement ‘pushed’ by scope (Postma 1995; Barbiers 1995; Manfredi 1997; Drubig 2003; Craenenbroeck 2006) not ‘pulled’ by feature-checking (§3). Apparent leftward focus in BK1 is a biclausal/relative cleft (Robinson 1974; Boadi 1974; Fiedler & al. 2006) i.e. an external merge of Σ (§4). The alternative to (1c) is stipulation (§5).

2. The height of focus

(2)

Niger-Congo

[Atlantic, Mande, Ízón, Gur, Adamawa, **Benue-Kwa**, Kordofanian]

narrow argument focus

narrow predicate focus

ex ex ex ex ex/(low) ex ex in in in

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(5)a. A finite eventive predicate with minimal inflection allows a present perfect reading in addition to a past (preterite).

b. Aspectually unrelated events are excluded from a single clause.

c. Minimal finite inflection is an aux/proclitic particle as opposed to a suffix or root-borne tone pattern.

d. At least three surface tones contrast on roots of the same category (as opposed to two tones plus downstep).
3. ‘Foot-driven’ focus movement

three alternative formal accounts of (5)

(10)a. Ó rí-ri ðata.
    3S come-CL pasta
    ‘S/he arrived (here)’

b. Ó rí-ri ðata e-ri. […]HL
    3S come-CL pasta NOM-eat
    ‘S/he did indeed arrive (the) pasta, as expected’

c. Ó rí-ri e-ri. […]HL
    3S come-CL NOM-eat
    ‘S/he ate something, as expected’

d. ‘Ó rí-ri.
    3S come-CL

e. Ó byá-ra.
    3S come-CL
    ‘S/he arrived [here]’

f. Ó byá-ra a-byá. […]HL
    3S come-CL NOM-eat
    ‘S/he did indeed arrive [here], as expected’

(11)a. Ó fú-nú a-fú. […]LL
    3S out-CL NOM-out
    ‘S/he exited’

b. Ó dá-ra a-da. […]LL
    3S down-CL NOM-down
    ‘S/he fell down/S/he failed an exam’

c. Ó zuí-nú e-zú. […]LL
    3S complete-CL NOM-complete
    ‘It’s complete’

d. ‘Ó fú-nú a-fú. […]HL
    3S out-CL NOM-out
    ‘S/he actually did exit, don’t deny it’

3. ‘Foot-driven’ focus movement

three alternative formal accounts of (5)


b. DM-style affix linearization in the PF branch: no semantic or tonal consequences, cf. (1c).

c. Parametric spellout: [BK1 = late i.e. TP or Σπ, BK2 = early i.e. VP] (Manfredi 2006b).

supplementary hypotheses to (13c)


b. Focus is the overt scope of Σ, read as prosodic scope-marking, as in Hungarian (Kornai & Kálmán 1988; Piñón 1992; Surányi 2004). consequences of (13c) for BK

(15)a. In BK1, the last-resort, high focus morpheme is external merge of Σ: a true copula introducing presuppositional cleft.

b. In BK2, the high focus head is internal merge of Σ creating focus C: a “compula” (Manfredi 1987, 110; cf. Nash & Rouveret 1997).
Yorùbá

Aṣọ funfun.

It is white cloth(ing)

(16) a.
cloth white

b. Aṣọ kò funfun.
cloth NEG white

(17) a.

(18) aṣọ funfun

cloth white

'm[The cloth(ing)] isn't white'

4. Apparent ex-situ focus in BK1 (contra Manfredi 1993)

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(19) a. Ìgbò (cf. Robinson 1974)

U. chew.L-CL animal

'I chewed (the) meat' [Ùchè = HL]

b. Ŭ (bù) kwa Ìgbò tì-ra ámù?

3S.NOM.L COP U. chew.L-CL animal

'Did U. chew (the) meat?' [Ùchè = HL]

c. (Ô bù) ámù kò [Ìgbò tà-ra].

3S.NOM COP meat COMP.U.H chew.L-CL

'It's meat that U. chewed' [Ùchè = H!H]

relative plus copula also possible in BK2 e.g. Yorùbá

(21) a. Lékan ni [enì tí o pa].

L. NI personOP REL 2S.NOM hit.

'L. is who you hit'

b. [Enì tí o pa] ni Lékan.

personOP REL 2S hit NI L.

'Who you hit is L.'

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