Topic and Focus in Swahili

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Abstract:

Lambrecht (1994), as summarized in Van Valin and La Polla (1997), describes information structure as the pragmatic relations between referents of a sentence. His description shows how different languages variously use syntax, morphology, and intonation to encode the three focus structures (predicate focus, sentence focus, and narrow focus). The present paper is a description of the information structure of Swahili following Lambrecht's approach, using question constructions and clefts to identify topic and focus elements. Marked topics may be identified with fronting, higher pitch and volume, pauses, stressed pronouns, and with the emphatic copula *ndi-*. Marked focus constructions include clefts, special intonation, the emphatic copula *ndi-* and other focus words. This work also applies the theory developed by Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) in which a subject or object affix on the verb is analyzed as a grammatical agreement marker when the associated NP is an argument (subject or object), and as an incorporated pronoun when the associated NP is a non-argument (topic or focus). As Bresnan and Mchombo suggest, it appears that the object marker in Swahili is in the process of evolving from an incorporated pronoun to a grammatical marker.

1 Introduction

Although there are many studies of Swahili, there are relatively few that deal extensively with syntax, and even fewer that address Topic and Focus. Vitale (1981) mentions some special word orders that signal focus or emphasis. Ashton (1947) addresses intonation of different types of sentences, giving insights into some prosodic features that may mark topic and focus. Maw and Kelly (1975) transcribed natural dialogue, making note of intonation without considering the questions of topic and focus. Their data constitute an excellent source of Swahili in use. Bearth (1995) deals exclusively with word order, topic and focus in Swahili. Unfortunately, the work is in German so I have gained few insights from it.

The current paper is an attempt to identify how topic and focus are encoded in Swahili. The importance of this is neatly illustrated by the experience of a language surveyor in Tanzania (Heidi Anderson, p.c.[1]). When individuals were asked questions in Swahili, they tended to respond only to the last element in the sentence even though grammatically the sentence does question the last two elements.

(1)　　Wa-toto Wapangwa wa-na-o-kulia　　　mji-ni　siku hizi, wa-na-jifunza ku-sema
　　　　C2-child Pangwa　3P-PRES-REL-grow_up[2] town-in days these 3P-PRES-learn　INF-speak

　　　　Kipangwa pamoja　na　Kiswahili?
　　　　Pangwa　　together with Swahili

　　　　Are the Pangwa children growing up in town these days learning to speak Kipangwa together with Kiswahili?

The answer usually given was, 'Yes, they're learning Swahili'. This represents a non-informative answer because in the context, it is already known that children growing up in cities will learn Swahili. What the surveyors really wanted to know about was the use of the local language, Pangwa. When the question was re-worded for a later survey where the same background assumption held (that children in the city will learn Swahili), 'Swahili' was *not* placed at the very end of the question:

(2)　　Watoto Wamalila wa-na-o-kulia　　　mji-ni　siku hizi, wa-na-jifunza ku-sema
　　　　children Malila　3P-PRES-REL-grow_up town-in days these 3P-PRES-learn　INF-speak

　　　　Kiswahili pamoja　na　Kimalila?

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[1] (1) was used on a survey in the Pangwa area in 2002. Because of the non-informative responses received, the question was revised as (2) for use in the Malila area in 2003.

[2] The underline character _ is used to indicate lexical items (in both English and Swahili) which consist or more than one word.

| | Swahili | together | with | Malila |

Are the Malila children growing up in town these days learning to speak Swahili together with Malila?

To this question people usually responded, 'No, they don't learn Malila'.

This corroborates my own experience in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo (speaking English and French, respectively), finding that when I asked either-or questions, I only received a response related to the final element in the question. Although this anecdotal evidence specifically concerns complex questions, it is directly related to the deeper issue of how speakers indicate which part of the utterance is topic and which part is focus.

The data for this paper was elicited from a 19-year old native of Nairobi, Kenya. She grew up speaking Swahili with her family, and some of her parents' language, Kikamba. The major weakness of the research method employed is its reliance on elicited data, mostly translated from English. A context sentence or two was generally employed as well, and the total (context plus target data) was recorded by the one speaker[3].

It is well known that the Swahili of Kenya is not the *sanifu*, 'pure', dialect. At times my language consultant was aware of the difference between Nairobi Swahili and that of Tanzania; at other times, data from Tanzanians (presented in the works cited above) just sounded wrong to her. The Swahili of Kenya is being strongly influenced by English.

2 Definitions

'Topic' in this paper will follow the 'pragmatic aboutness' principle, as Reinhart (1982) described it, "a referent evoked by an NP is the topic because, at the conceptual level, the rest of the proposition is taken to be 'about' that entity and is retrieved/stored 'under' that entity in the mental model." Further, the question of presupposition helps define a 'topic'. Van Valin and LaPolla (1997:203), describing the work of Lambrecht (1994) explain:

> In much of the literature on information structure, topic is taken to be synonymous with the 'given' or 'presupposed' part of an utterance, but for Lambrecht what is presupposed 'is not the topic itself, nor its referent, but the fact that the topic referent is expected to play a role in a given proposition, due to its status as a center of interest… one therefore ought not to say that a topic "is presupposed", but that, given its discourse status, it is presupposed to play a role in a given proposition'.

While Lambrecht maintains a strict distinction between a topic expression (the visible constituent) and the topic itself (the referent), I sometimes use 'topic' as shorthand for either of them.

'Focus' in this work will follow the description of Kroeger (2004), 'the essential piece of new information that is carried by a sentence', a definition which is based on Lambrecht (1994), 'the semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition. The focus component is by definition an unpredictable part of the proposition.'

Special types of topic and focus will be described in sections 3 and 4, respectively.

It will be taken as a given that every sentence has a focus, a piece of unpredictable information, because speakers presumably speak in order to convey information. A sentence may or may not have a topic.

It is also assumed that all languages will have both unmarked and marked topic and focus. The unmarked constructions will be associated with the topic-comment structure (Lambrecht's Predicate Focus), where a topic has already been established and the comment represents the focus. 'The topic of a sentence, when it is the same as the topic of the preceding sentence needs no special

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[3] Some of the glosses used in examples are based on the Shoebox dictionary complied by SIL member Ron Moe, whom I thank for sharing this valuable resource.

marking.' (Kroeger 2004) In the case of Swahili, a pro-drop language, this means that these unmarked, continuing, topics are encoded as subject markers on the verb.[4]

(3)   Q: Je,   John a-li-nunua   chochote? A: **A**-li-nunua   kitabu duka-ni jana.
         QUEST J.   3S-PAST-buy all_of_it   **3S**-PAST-buy book shop-at yesterday
     Q: Did John buy anything?   *A: He bought a book at the shop yesterday.*

The second sentence in (3) displays the topic-comment structure. The topic is encoded in the subject marking *a*-, 3S. The comment conveys the (unmarked) focus, the unpredictable information, in this case encoded in the rest of the sentence. Thus the natural position for unmarked topic is sentence-initial, while unmarked focus is post-verbal. The answer in (3) shows that the focus position is not sentence-final but I don't have data to show if the focus is always immediately after the verb.

3 How is topic marked in Swahili
Although topic-comment sentences are frequent in all languages, there are situations in which a topic needs to be highlighted (e.g., when changing topic or choosing among several possible topics). The following sections describe some of the ways that marked topics are encoded in Swahili syntax, prosody, and morphology.

3.1   Syntax
While unmarked topics are usually unstressed pronouns in Swahili, at least two types of marked topics involve special syntax. The case of <u>contrastive topic</u>, the structure typically meant by 'topicalization', is marked with a fronted position. In (4), the contrast is contained in a single sentence, appropriate in a context where a category of drinks has been evoked. As in English, listing and contrasting elements of the category sanctions the construction where the direct object appears before the verb.

(4)   Chai na-penda, lakini kahawa si-pendi[5].
      tea TNS-like but   coffee PRS.NEG-like
     Tea I like but coffee I don't like.

Other elements that can be fronted similarly include 'indirect objects' as in (5). (My data doesn't show if PPs containing recipients can be fronted.) There is some constraint which prevents a topicalization in the first clause of (5).

(5)   John a-li-m-pa   kifungua_mimba gari, lakini wa-toto   wake wengine
     John 3S-PAST-3SObj-give eldest_child   car but   C2-child his   other

     a-li-wa-pa   vitu   vidogo vidogo.
     3S-PAST-3PObj-give things small small

     John gave his firstborn son a car, but to his other children he gave little things.

A second type of marked topic is called a <u>left-dislocation</u>, "a construction characterized by the occurrence, to the immediate left of an already syntactically complete sentence, of a full lexical NP, PP, or pronoun, which is doubled or copied by a co-referential pronoun in the sentence." (Barnes 1985) Since Swahili is a pro-drop language, however, when both SM and OM are present on the verb, the subject or object NP may be extracted leaving a grammatical utterance without inserting a resumptive pronoun:

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[4] Abbreviations used in glossing: C1, C2, C3, etc - noun class markers, 1S, 2S, 3S, 1P, 2P, 3P - subject markers; 1SObj, 2SObj, etc - object markers, LocO - Locative Object, COND - Conditional, HAB - Habitual, TNS - tense, PASTPRF - Past Perfective, PRS.NEG - Present Negative, Q - Question particle REL - Relative Pronoun
[5] The final vowel is usually glossed separately but for simplicity it is left unglossed in this work, as are several other morphemes.

(6a)   Unmarked:
        Ni-li-**mw**-ona   m-toto   huyo jana.
        1S-PAST-3SObj-see C1-child that   yesterday
        I saw that boy yesterday.

(6b)   Contrastive Topic (object fronted)
        Mtoto huyo nili**mw**ona jana.
        That boy I saw yesterday.

(6c)   Left-dislocation (object fronted + pause)
        Mtoto huyo, nili**mw**ona jana.
        *That boy, I saw **him** yesterday.*

Thus the main clause following a contrastive topic may look the same in Swahili as a clause following a left-dislocation. In these cases, the latter is distinguished by the use of a pause, indicated by a comma.

There are situations, however, where the resumptive pronoun is used in Swahili: when the verb cannot be marked with agreement, such as when the habitual tense is used (6d); for left-dislocated possessors (7); and possibly, for obliques and secondary objects.

(6d)   Peter a-na-fanya   nini sasa?
        P   3S-PRES-do   what now
        What's Peter doing now?

        - Peter, yeye   hu-somea   chuo   ki-kuu.
        P   he/she   HAB-study_at   school CL7-great
        Peter, he studies at university.

Aside from cases like this, the left-dislocation is only distinguished from a contrastive topic by the use of a pause, discussed in section 3.2.

The left-dislocation is used naturally in speaking but not in writing. A person begins the sentence with the thing on his mind, the topic. It is a construction that can introduce new topics into the discourse, a function usually performed by the focus. Crucially, the speaker is assuming that the referent is accessible to the hearer by virtue of previous discourse or the physical context. An utterance like (6) would only be acceptable in a context where both speaker and listener would consider eggs to be related to the immediate situation, for instance, when standing in a kitchen, or when talking about groceries. (7) would probably be natural in a context where both speaker and hearer can see the boy referred to. This construction is natural with at least direct objects (6), possessors (7), and subjects (see (13), below).

(6)   Ma-yai, kaka   yako a-li-nunua   ma-ngapi?
        CL6-egg brother your 3S-PAST-buy CL6-how_many
        Eggs, how many did your brother buy?

(7)   Kijana huyo, nguo   zake ni   chafu.
        boy   dem clothes his COP dirty
        That boy, his clothes are very dirty.

It may be that (8) illustrates a third type of marked topic, an <u>external topic</u>. It was elicited when discussing several different cities. It contains a word marking contrast, *lakini*, 'but', and a pause, discussed in the next section.

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(8)   Lakini Tokyo, i-na   watu   wengi.
        but   Tokyo, C4.COP-with people   many
        As for Tokyo, it's just too crowded.

This sentence-initial position, separated by a pause, cannot contain a question word (9a) or the answer to a question word (9b). Since question words and their answers represent focus elements, it is reasonable to conclude that the sentence-initial position, separated by a pause, is exclusively a topic position.

(9a)   Kaka   yako a-li-nunua   nini?
        brother your 3S-past-buy   what
        What did your brother buy?

        *Nini, kaka   yako a-li-nunua?
        what   brother your 3S-past-buy

(9b)   Nani hu-somea   chuo_kikuu?
        Who   HAB-study_at   university
        Who's studying at university?

        * Peter, yeye husomea chuo_kikuu.
          Peter he   HAB-study_at university

3.2   Prosody

Two features are considered here - intonation and rhythm. The first, widely considered to be a universal feature of encoding topic and focus, plays a lesser role in Swahili than it does in English, but it is still significant.

Maw and Kelly (1975) carefully compared the patterns of intonation in natural speech and identified certain default and marked intonation patterns. Their analysis mostly concerns focus constructions but I present here some of their general observations.

First, they identified the rules for default (neutral) intonation within a 'tone group', which is usually coterminous with a clause. All words in Swahili greater than one syllable may bear stress (higher pitch) on the penultimate syllable. Neutral intonation in a tone group consists of one required stressed syllable, the tonic, optionally preceded by a pre-tonic which contains one or two key points (the pre-salient, usually accentless, and the salient, a stressed syllable). Neutral intonation in a tone-group places the salient on the first lexical item and the tonic on the final lexical item. (10) illustrates a sentence manifesting just one intonation peak, a tonic (underlined). (11) contains both a salient and a tonic.

(10)   Nini i-li-fanyika?
        what C4-PAST-be_done
        What happened?

(11)   Gari   yangu[6] i-li-haribika.
        C4.car C9.mine   C9-PAST-be_destroyed
        My car broke down.

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[6] The apparent mismatch between *gari* (Class 4) and the accords in the rest of the sentence seems to be a feature of Nairobi Swahili. A search on the internet provided abundant examples of both the standard Swahili *gari langu* and the Nairobi-version *gari yangu.*

Deviations from neutral intonation are sometimes the result of changes in word order, as seen in (12), but at other times the intonation varies without changing word order. This marked intonation, as in English, may be used to form Yes-No questions. Of more interest to us, marked intonation can also be used to convey differing information content. Many of these cases concern focus, so they will be described in section 5.2.

One case in which marked intonation is used with topics can be seen in (12) below, comparing a topic-comment statement (12a) with the related contrastive-topic sentence in (4), repeated as (12b). Two features distinguish the prosody of the two utterances - pitch and volume. When *chai* is the contrastive topic (12b), it is uttered more loudly and with slightly higher pitch than when it is the (unmarked) focus constituent in (12a). Second, the verb *napenda*, which has a neutral Mid-Hi-Mid intonation in (12a), is uttered in (12b) is with a greater difference in pitch between the first syllable and second syllable.
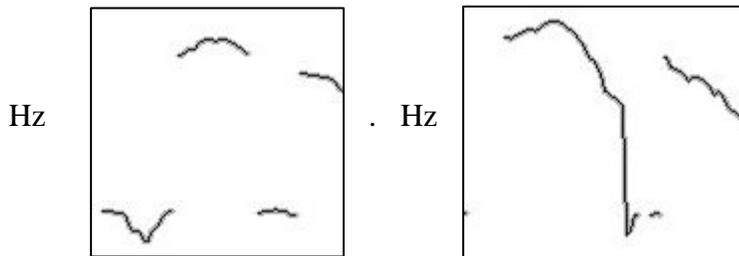
(12a) N a - p e nd a ch a i.   (12b) Ch a i   n a - p e nd a , lakini kahawa si-pendi.
      TNS-like   tea   tea   TNS-like   but   coffee   PRS.NEG-like
      I like tea.   *Tea I like but coffee I don't like.*

The role of rhythm is also significant. A pause is a necessary component of the left-dislocation construction. It is consistently indicated in writing with a comma. Without the pause, the first element is simply the subject.

(13)   Mwanamke huyo, a-na-m-jua   dada yangu.
        woman   that 3S-TNS-3SObj-know sister my
        That woman, she knows my sister.
        Without a pause: *That woman knows my sister.*

This construction is interesting in light of the fact that in Kifuliiru, another Bantu language, 'Except in rare cases, the clause Topic is always followed by a pause. This is typically the longest pause in the clause, and separates established information on the left from the new information on the right.' (Van Otterloo chapter16, sec 1.2.2.1)

Kifuliiru
 (14) *Ù-lyá   mú-tàbánà;*   à-ná-yàmà,   á-gá-shààg-à   yà-h-ô.
       1-that.R   1.young.man   1-SQ-IMMED   1-F2-leave-Fa   there.N-16-P.R[7]
       That young man; immediately, left there.

Maw and Kelly do not discuss the use of a pause after a left-dislocated topic, but the following sentence from their data shows that the left-dislocated deictic *huyu*, 'this one', is orthographically set off by a comma. Also, they identified it as being in a separate tone-group from the clause which follows, in which the salient falls on the first lexical item m̲tu, man. The penultimate syllable of ku*la*la is the tonic.

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[7] The orthographic representation and glossing notation are from Van Otterloo; I don't have his glossing key.

(15) Huyu,   ni   m̲tu   a-na-ye-penda   ku-l̲ala
      CL1.that_one COP C1.man 3S-PRES-REL-love INF-sleep
      That one, he's a man who likes to sleep.

3.3 Morphology

Swahili clearly uses independent words to indicate marked topic and focus. One such word is the bound root *ndi-*, always joined to a class marker. It is usually translated as '-self' (i.e., *ndiye*, 'himself/herself', *ndicho*, 'it(C4)self', etc.) The same item also functions as an emphatic copula, when there is a presupposition that the item named in the predicate exists[8]. This is illustrated in (16), where roles are being assigned to a group of actors:

(16) John ndi-ye   mwalimu, Peter ndi-ye   daktari, Mary ndi-ye   mwanafunzi.
      J   COP-C1 teacher   P   COP-C1 doctor   M   COP-C1 student
      John is the teacher, Peter is the doctor, Mary is the student.

ndi- is often used in what looks like a contrastive topic construction. (17) was elicited as the final sentence in a list of various teachers and their qualities.

(17) Lakini mwalimu wangu wa hesabu ndi-ye mzuri kati_ya   wote.
      but   teacher my   of math ndi-C1 good between all
      As for my maths professor, she's the best of all.

While unstressed pronouns (subject marker, object marker) often encode unmarked topics, contrastive topics can be marked with independent personal pronouns:

(18) Alice: Je,   m-nge-penda   kw-enda ku-tembea?
              quest 2P-COND-love   INF-go   INF-stroll
              Would you_pl like to take a walk?

      Peter: La, ni-nge-penda ku-tazama   runinga.
              no 1S-COND-love INF-look_at television
              No, I'd rather watch television.

      Sarah: **Mimi** ni-nge-penda   ku-lala.
              I/me   1S-COND-love INF-sleep
              ***I'D** rather take a nap. (or, As for me, I'd rather take a nap.)*

4 The status of the object marker

Bresnan and Mchombo (1987) made the case that the object marker in Chichewa does not show grammatical agreement with the NP it refers to, but anaphoric agreement. In this case, the NP is a topic, not an argument of the verb. (As a topic, such an NP cannot be questioned *in situ*, since the question word always bears focus, and topic and focus are held to be mutually exclusive.) They go on to say that Swahili is one of the languages "now undergoing grammaticization of the pronominal OM into an object agreement marker." This is illustrated by the fact that the OM sometimes behaves like an anaphoric pronoun, as seen in (19), and sometimes like a grammatical marker. My data in (20) and that of Ashton in (21) demonstrate that the OM is grammatical agreement because the object NP can be a Wh- question word.[9]

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[8] It seems that these contexts involve definite reference and exhaustive reading as well.

[9] It is recognized that the OM is obligatory for animate objects and optional otherwise (Bokamba 1981, cited by Bresnan and Mchombo 1986), and that it is more likely to be used for inanimate objects when the referent is definite (Ashton), but that doesn't explain why the following propositionally-identical sentences differ in that the first (object fronted in a cleft) does not allow the OM, while the second (object in normal post-verbal position) requires it. The data is Nairobi Swahili.
  Ni kitabu kigana John alinunua?, 'It's which book John bought?'
  John ali̲kinunua kitabu kigani?, 'John bought which book?'

(19)   John a-li-pata   **ki**-tabu   ch-angu.
       John 3S-PAST-got **C7**-book C7-my

            A-li-enda   nyumba-ni na   a-ka-anza   ku-**ki**-soma.
            3S-PAST-go house-to   and   3S-TNS-start INF-**C7Obj**-read
       *John found my book. He went home and started to read **it**.*

(20)   Samuel a-li-**m**-gonga **nani**?
       S   3S-PAST-3SO-strike
       Who did Samuel hit?

(21)   U-me-**mw**-ona   **nani**?
       2S-PASTPRF-3SO-see who
       Who did you see?

5 How is focus marked

There appears to be considerable homophony of focus constructions in Swahili. (23) is a statement which can answer - with identical intonation - the general question (10), 'What happened?', (22), 'What did John do?', or (26a), 'Who hit you?'

(22)   John a-li-fanya   nini
       J   3S-PAST-do   what
       What did John do?

(23)   John a-li-ni-gonga.
       J   3S-PAST-1SO-strike
       John hit me.

Thus there are times where Swahili allows identical constructions for focusing on the whole sentence, the predicate, or an argument. [10] While it's more likely to answer (22) and (26a) with abbreviated responses ('He hit me,' and 'John', respectively), the grammaticality and possibility of homophony in (23) remains.

5.1   Syntax

The clearest case of syntactically marked focus in Swahili is the cleft construction, when a single clause is broken into two parts, each with a separate verb. The copula *ni* (negative *si* or *sio*) marks the cleft in Swahili.

(24)   Ni   chai na-penda, sio   kahawa.   Neutral:
       COP tea TNS-like COP coffee   Na-penda chai, si-pendi kahawa.
       It's tea I like, it's not coffee.   *I like tea, I don't like coffee.*

(25)   Sio Kitale tu-li-ku-safiri   kw-enda.   Neutral:
       COP Kitale 1P-PAST-LocO-travel   INF-go   Hatuku-safiri kwenda Kitale.
       It wasn't to Kitale we traveled.   *We didn't go to Kitale.*

The types of answers that are acceptable to Wh-questions help determine which words represent focused elements of a proposition. Subjects (26), objects (27), and adjuncts (29) can all be

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This is, in fact, the exact opposite of what is usually expected: "Non-animate objects are (optionally) marked on the verb in emphatic contexts, in derived structures with non-canonical word order, in certain types of locatives… and in a few other cases." (Vitale p. 17).
[10]Of course, English also has homophony between Sentence Focus and Predicate Focus:
   a) What happened? - John hit me. (presupposition = none; focus domain = clause), possibly homophonous with,
   b) What did John do? - John hit me. (presupposition = John did something, domain = predicate). In contrast:
   c) Who hit you? - **John** hit me. (presupposition = someone hit you, focus domain = NP)

questioned *in situ* or with a cleft. This supports the position that subjects and objects in Swahili are not required to be topics.[11]

(26a) **Nani** a-li-ku-gonga?   (26b) Ni   nani a-li-ku-gonga?
      who 3S-PAST-1SObj-knock   COP who 3S-PAST-1SObj-knock
      Who hit you?   *It's who that hit you?*

Answer: (23), above, focused element: **John**.

(27a) John a-li-nunua **nini**?   (27b) Ni   nini John a-li-nunua?
      John 3S-PAST-buy what   COP what 3S-PAST-buy
      What did John buy?   *It's what that John bought?*

(28)   Answer: John a-li-nunua   **kitabu**.
                     John 3S-PAST-buy book
                     John bought a book.

(29a) Peter a-li-rudi **lini**?   (29b) Ni   lini   Peter a-li-rudi?
      P   3S-PAST-return when   COP when P   3S-PAST-return
      When did Peter return?   *It's when that Peter returned?*

(30)   Answer: A-li-rudi   **leo   asubuhi**.
                     3S-PAST-return today morning
                     He returned this morning.

Bearth (1999) observed that 'By shifting the object - which is normally in final position - to the front of the sentence, the verb complex comes to stand in the natural focus position,' but I did not pursue this construction.

5.2   Prosody

The universal nature of using intonation to mark stress is agreed on by Gundel (1988) ('primary sentence stress always falls within the focus'), Kroeger (2004) ('Focus is marked in all languages by intonational prominence (Focal Stress)'), and Maw and Kelly ('One can view the function of the tonic and salient as being the bringing into prominence of certain items of the utterance, the highlighting of items for emphasis, contrast, deixis, etc.)

Ashton illustrates how the intonation can distinguish between Predicate Focus and Argument Focus (the falls indicated by the '\' mark tonic stress, that is, greater volume on a syllable starting higher than usual and falling quickly).

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        ‾                              ‾
   --     \_    _ _              -- --     --   \_
(31a)  Hawa-taki    kitu.       (31b)  Hawa-taki    kitu.
       3P.NEG-want  thing              3P.NEG-want  thing
       They don't want anything.       They don't want anything.
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My own data is inconclusive in this area, since I couldn't find examples where intonation alone marked focus. Changes in word order of course affected sentence intonation, as shown in (12), and true elsewhere.

My language consultant sometimes paused before focused elements, as in (32), where the comma after *Pat* marks a pause. When discussing this later she wasn't sure what sounded natural to her.

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[11] This is in contrast to Sesotho, where subjects are always topics, and accordingly, cannot be questioned *in situ* (Demuth 1990)

But a pre-focal pause would not be surprising. Van Otterloo found, 'In Kifuliiru the DFE[12] is isolated in two ways: a) by being right at the end of the clause, and b) by being preceded by a pause.'

Swahili
(32)   Chris a-li-m-pa   Pat, **kitabu** jana,   sio   kiti.
       C   3S-PAST-3SObj-give   P   book   yesterday   NEG.COP   chair
       *Chris gave the **book** to Pat yesterday, not a chair.*

Kifuliiru
(33)   Ù-tá-kìzì   zìmb-á,   **á=bá-námúfwìrì.**
       2S-NG-REP   steal-Fa   AU=2-widows
       *Don't steal from **widows**. (implying, 'but you can steal from anyone else'.)*

This may be related to 'boundary narrowing' (Hyman 1999, cited in Downing 2004):
        - phonological phrase boundary must follow the focused element,
        - remaining elements of the sentence are parsed into separate phonological phrases
        - resulting in more, smaller phonological phrases under narrow focus.
        - No prosodic equivalent of accent is reported on the focus phrase.

Of course, this speaks of a boundary *after* a focused element, whereas Kifuliiru demonstrates a pause *before*. More generally, though, Downing cites other works which found that 'prosodic rephrasing is also a primary cue to focus' in Korean, Bengali, Japanese, and French, without specifying if the pause is before or after the focus.

5.3   Morphology
The word *ndi-*, already described for contrastive topic, is also used for focus:

(34)   Ni-li-sikia   pikipiki   yako i-li-haribika.
       1S-PAST-hear   motorcycle   your C9-PAST-be_destroyed
       I heard that your motorcycle broke.

(35)   Hapana, gar**i yangu ndi-yo**   i-li-haribika.[13]
       no   car my   FOC-C9 C9-PAST-be_destroyed
       *No, **my car** broke down.*

Interestingly, when there are two focii in a sentence, for example, two presuppositions that are being replaced with new assertions, only one *ndi-* is allowed:

(36)   Michael haku-m-pa   Pat kitabu, **Pat ndi-ye**   a-li-ye-m-pa
       M   NEG.PAST-3SObj-give P   book   P   FOC-C1   3S-PAST-REL-3SObj-give

       Michael   kitabu.
       M   book

       *Michael didn't give Pat a book, **Pat** gave **Michael** a book.*

Another focus word, *peke(e)*[14], 'alone', is also routinely used to place focus on a nominal element.

(37)   Mary hu-patia   wa-toto   chakula.

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[12] Dominant Focal Element
[13] Ashton makes it clear that the focus construction using the focus marker emphatic copula *ndi-* also requires the use of a bound relative pronoun in the verb, so it would be appropriate to translate (35) as, 'it's my car that broke down'. But (35) does not appear to contain a relative pronoun, nor does (42), later in the paper, even though all the other verbs following *ndi-* in my corpus do contain the relative. Perhaps *ndi-* is losing its verbal content, the difference being between 'my car FOC broke_down' and 'my car it_is what_broke_down'.
[14] *pekee* when standing alone, *peke* when followed by a pronoun

M   HAB-get_for C2-child   food
Mary gives food to the children.

(38)   **Mary** hu-patia   wa-toto   chakula   **peke yake**.
       M   HAB-get_for C2-child   food   alone her
       ***Only Mary** gives food to the children.*

(39)   Mary hu-patia   wa-toto   **chakula   pekee**.
       M   HAB-get_for C2-child   food   alone
       *Mary gives **only food** to the children.*

(40)   Mary hupatia   wa-toto   **chakula peke   yao**.
       M   HAB-get_for C2-child   food   alone their
       *Mary gives food **only to the children**.*

While the use of *peke* is similar to that of 'alone' in English, it may be noteworthy that this focal marker always stands at the end of the sentence. The pronoun which accompanies *peke* indicates the identity of the focused element. The intonation pattern of the basic sentence does not place stress on the focused noun phrase.

Peke cannot apparently be used to focus the verb, however. For that, the adverbial *tu*, 'only, just' must be used:

(41)   Mary, hupatia   wa-toto   chakula **tu**.
       M   HAB-get_for C2-child   food   only
       *Mary **only** gives food to the children.*

Some of the previous sections have already mentioned how syntax and intonation work together to communicate markedness. Syntax and morphology can also combine, as in (42) where the object *Elizabeth* is fronted and marked with *ndiye*:

(42)   Michael a-li-sema   a-li-taka   kw-enda karamu-ni na   Dorcas
       M   3S-PAST-speak 3S-PAST-want INF-go   party-to   with D

       lakini **Elizabeth ndi-ye**   ni-li-mw-ona   a-ki-ingia   gari-ni.
       but   E   FOC-C1 1S-PAST-3SObj-see 3S-COND-enter car-in

       *Michael said he wanted to go to the party with Dorcas but it was **Elizabeth** I saw getting into his car.*

Conclusion
This is an incomplete overview of the structures used to mark topic and focus in Swahili. But it does illustrate that information structure is encoded in multiple, interlocking systems within the grammar.

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