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Volume 91

The Expression of Information Structure.
A documentation of its diversity across Africa
Edited by Ines Fiedler and Anne Schwarz

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Why contrast matters

Information structure in Gawwada (East Cushitic)

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The article discusses the information structure of Gawwada, an East Cushitic language of Southwest Ethiopia, along the lines of the Prague School and Lambrecht's (1994) theory.

Gawwada does not have any dedicated focus-marking device – contrary to previous preliminary statements and in stark contrast with many Cushitic languages of the Horn of Africa. Moreover, it is argued that the category of focus itself is only scarcely grammaticalized in this language. It is rather “Contrast”, marked through a clitic element =*kka*, which is central to the information structure of the language. It is also argued that possibly other purported Focus Markers of other Cushitic languages (most notably Somali) may be interpreted, at least partially, as markers of contrast.

Other pragmatic-marking strategies discussed in the article include the presence vs. absence of Subject-Verb agreement, the presence vs. absence of Subject Clitics, and, to a lesser degree, word order change and object-incorporation.

Gawwada (/kawwada/, [gawwada])² is a language of southwestern Ethiopia, an area well-known for its ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity: Cushitic and Omotic language of the Afroasiatic phylum are spoken, alongside (generally to the West and along the Sudanese border) a good number of Nilotic and Surmic languages of the Nilo-Saharan phylum, and at least one language (Ongota) of uncertain classification. Gawwada itself is a dialect of the Dullay cluster, which according to current classification is a direct offspring of East Cushitic. Administratively, the region is located in the "Southern Peoples, Nations, and Nationalities Region" (until 1991 it was part of the much smaller Gamu-Gofa province, a name often still encountered). According to the 1994 Ethiopian Census there were approximately 42,000 speakers of Dullay varieties.

The Dullay-speaking people have no common ethnonym for themselves and their language. The denomination "Dullay" (introduced by Amborn, Minker and Sasse 1980) – actually the local name of the river known in Amharic as Weytò – has largely replaced in scientific literature other terms, such as "Werizoid" (Bender 1971; Black 1976) and "Qawko" (Hayward 1978). "Gawwada" has recently been introduced in Ethiopia as a cover term for all the Dullay-speaking groups except the Tš'amakko; here "Gawwada" will be used for the dialect spoken in and around the village of Gawwada (approximately at 5°25' N, 37°14' E), about 40 km.s (one hour drive) westwards of Konso and to the north of the road leading to Jinka and the Omo valley.

1. Data have been collected in Arba Minch and in Gawwada town in various periods of fieldwork from 2000. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support of my former institution, the Università di Napoli "L'Orientale" for funding my research, and the help of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa University for the permission to carry on fieldwork in Ethiopia. The final version of this article was written in August 2006 during a stay at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, whose assistance I gratefully acknowledge. Thanks are also due to an anonymous referee for many insightful comments and criticisms.

The transcription is phonological and follows I. P. A. conventions, except for <š> = IPA /ʃ/, <c> = IPA /tʃ/, and <y> = IPA /j/. </> and <//> mark the boundary of a non-terminal and a terminal intonation unit, respectively.

All errors and omissions are, of course, my exclusive intellectual property.

2. Voice opposition is not phonological for plain stops, and voiceless /p, t, k/ are used throughout in the transcription. This is an areal feature encompassing Dullay, Konsoid, and possibly other varieties, as shown by Sasse (1986).

Sentential word order in Gawwada is SOV; phrasal word order is generally Head-Modifier.

As is generally the case in Cushitic, the verb is inflected (at least in the positive paradigms) for the person and number of the subject, as well as, with limitation to a third singular subject, for its gender (Masculine vs. Feminine). In the basic syntactic configuration (whose pragmatic value will be detailed further below) the verb is preceded by a subject clitic, which inflects for person but not for number nor for gender; all in all, four different subject clitics are found: 1.SBJ ²am= vs. 2.SBJ ²aC= (where C is a copy of the following consonant) vs. two clitics for a third person: a Specific ("SPEC") ²i= vs. Generic subject ("GEN") ²a=.³ The subject clitics will be considered as fulfilling the syntactic role of subjects, and any NP coreferential with the subject clitic will be treated as syntactically dislocated. As predicted by the Preferred Argument Structure (Du Bois 1987), sentences with both subject and object expressed by full nominals are quite rare in spontaneous discourse. The following sentence exemplifies the canonical sentential word order:

- (1) [puta]_S [ʔuruur-e]_O [ʔi=²erak-i]_V⁴
 hyena-man wind-P SPEC=send-PFV.3M
 'the hyena man sent onwards the wind'
 (from the folktale "The Hyena Man")

More often, the NP coreferential with the subject clitic is missing:

- (2) kaar-k-o saap-p-e=ma ʔi=hhadd-i=pa
 tree-SING-M aboveness-INT-PL=DIFF SPEC=climb-PFV.3M=LINK
 'he climbed upon the tree and...'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

Following the usage in other Cushitic languages (especially in Somali; cf. Saeed 1999), one may refer to the syntactic string made up by the subject clitic, the object clitic, various adpositional and adverbial element and the verbal form, as the "Verbal Group". The internal structure of the Verbal Group reproduces the sentential SOV basic word order. Thus, a pronominal object of 1st or 2nd person follows the subject clitic before the verb:

3. For the subject clitics in Gawwada and Cushitic, cf. Tosco (2005); for a feature-geometric account and a comparison with the subject clitics of various Romance varieties, cf. Tosco (2007).

4. Phonological stress induces the gemination of a following consonant across a clitic boundary.

- (3) *ʔan=ho=haaʃ-a=pa*
 1.SBJ=2SG.M.OBJ=tell-IPFV.1SG=LINK
 'I tell you...' (opening line of riddles)

There is no object clitic of 3rd person; adpositional phrases with a 3rd person pronominal object are represented before the verbal form by the Mover affix *n-* (MOV) followed by Centrifugal *-a* (OUT) or Centripetal *-u* (IN). In (4) and (5) *n-u=* is cliticized to the following verbal form, and its referent is contextually determined; the same applies to *=n-a* in (6):

- (4) *n-u=ʔall-ʔ=ppa*
 MOV-IN=speak-CONS.3M=LINK
 'and he told them to...' (from the folktale "The Lost Hunter")
- (5) *ʔalaw h-o ʔi=nn-u=mal-i=pa*
 elder_brother-SING-M SPEC=MOV-IN=cheat-IPFV.3M=LINK
 'The elder brother cheated him...' (from the folktale "The Hyena Man")
- (6) *n-a=ye=padaw*
 MOV-OUT=1SG.OBJ=add.IMP.1SG
 'give me more of it!' (from the folktale "The Hyena Man")

A MOV-IN or MOV-OUT sequence may be further followed by the Diffusive post-position *=ma* (DIFF), building with it a phonological word:

- (7) *karr-att-akk-o kaww-att-o ʔi=nn-a=ma*
 squirrel-SING-SING-M stone_wall-SING-M SPEC=MOV-OUT=DIFF
doʃ-os-i=pa
 fall-CAUS-IPFV.3M=LINK
 'the Squirrel made a stone wall fall upon him (: the Dove)
 (from the folktale "The Francolin and the Squirrel")

The SOV and HMod word orders are followed quite strictly; apart from occasional afterthoughts, an exception is made for the rare positioning of antitopic material after the verb (on which see Section 3.3 below).

3. Theoretical background

Following a tradition going back at least to the Prague School, I assume that propositions are universally structured into a presupposed and a non-presupposed portion, or Topic and Focus, respectively. Broadly speaking, "topic" is a linguistic counterpart of the pre-systemic notion of 'known' or 'given' information and 'focus'

is that part of the sentence structure that conveys 'new information' in the prototypical case" (Hapčová, Paries and Sgell 1998: 3). Topic will therefore be defined here in terms of aboutness and reference, i.e. as, roughly speaking, as the part of the proposition which is talked about and is the centre of current interest. As regards Focus, the notion of "new information" needs elucidation. As is well known, the focal part of a proposition is not necessarily new in the discourse: it is rather informationally new, i.e. it fills a gap in the previous state of knowledge. This applies in innumerable cases but is most patently evident in identificational questions and answers (of the type "Who did X?" – "Y did"); the speaker who makes the question is often familiar with the referent which is provided (and which is coded as the Focus) in the answer. Still, s/he cannot associate it with the missing element in her/his state of knowledge. This element is "new" not because of its status in the discourse, but in relation to the asserted proposition.⁵ Cf. Lambrecht (1994: 257) and the following for an ample discussion of "newness" and focus.

Focus will therefore be defined here as

"the element of information whereby the presupposition and the assertion differ from each other. The focus is that portion of a proposition which cannot be taken for granted at the time of speech. It is the *unpredictable* or pragmatically *non-recoverable* element in an utterance."

(Lambrecht 1994: 207; emphasis in the original)

Contrastive focus and focalization as a marker of theticity (two major domains of focalization in African languages) will cover only a subset of the overall focus configurations of a language and will be dealt with in separate sections.⁶ Following again Lambrecht (1994), I will further assume three major focus categories: predicate focus (PF), sentence focus (SF), and argument focus (AF). These in turn correspond, respectively, to Topic-Comment, Event-reporting (or Presentational), and Identificational structures.

Before turning to the expression of Focus, the next section will expound the structure of Topic in Gawwada. It will be shown that, not unexpectedly, Topic will not be marked as such, that its position within the predication will be (a few exceptions pending) initial, and that its role will be generally (but not always) expressed syntactically by a subject.

5. Cf. Lambrecht (1994: 257 foll.) for an ample discussion of "newness" and focus.

6. Cf. Caron (2000) for an analysis of focalization in African languages following a much stricter definition of focus, and to the exclusion of Topic-Comment structures.

4. Topics

The SOV sentence word-order of Gawwada mirrors the pragmatic structure Topic-Comment. Sentence (1) above, repeated here below, is taken from a folktale whose actors are: the hyena man; his victim, a girl; and her elder brother, who at last succeeds in killing the hyena man and literally rescues his sister from the grave. In the sentences preceding (1), the brother had set up to kill the hyena man, who is now re-introduced as the topic:

- (1) [puta]_{TOP} [ʔuruur-e ʔi=ʔerak-i]_{FOC}
 hyena_man wind-F SPEC=send-PFV.3M
 'the hyena man, he sent onwards the wind'
 (from the folktale "The Hyena Man")

This example also shows that nouns in Gawwada need no determination in order to be grounded in a sentence: *puta* is "the" hyena man of the story, and it does not need articles (not existent in Gawwada) nor other deictic material.

A deictic can nevertheless be present; in the same folktale, the hyena man is referred to as *puta=s-i*: *=s-i* is made up of the Deictic *=s-* (DEICT) followed by Specific *-i* (SPEC), here (as usually in texts) with an anaphoric meaning. Although present previously in the text, the hyena man had been superseded in the preceding sentences by the other major actor (the girl's brother). The use of the deictic material reactivates it:

- (8) t-a-i-n-u ʔa=y-i / [puta=s-i]_{TOP}
 F-OUT-SPEC=MOV-IN GEN=tell-PFV.3M hyena_man=DEICT-SPEC
 [haarr-e saap-p-e-ma ʔi=hhad-i=pa]_{FOC}
 donkey-F above-INT-PL=DIFF SPEC=climb-PFV.3M=LINK
 'Then, they say, that hyena man mounted upon his donkey and...'
 (from the folktale "The Hyena Man")

On the other hand, a full nominal may obviously be absent and its place be taken by an independent personal pronoun:

- (9) [ʔiso]_{TOP} [ʔi-kkell-am-act-i=pa]_{FOC}
 3M.IDP SPEC=WAIT-PASS-MID-PFV.3M=LINK
 'he had been warned, but... (from the folktale "The Two Mice")

The presence in topic position of a full NP and of a pronoun is a relatively rare strategy; more commonly, the topic is represented only by the relevant subject clitic and the verbal inflexion. In the following excerpt the subject of the first clause only (which was introduced earlier as (7)) is overtly mentioned ("the Squirrel"), while in the second clause the referent of the subject is understood

by default (lack of an overt subject implying continuity of subjects), and in the third sentence through agreement (third plural) and textual inference (the two protagonists of the story are the Squirrel and the Francolin):

- (10) [karr-att-akk-o]_{TOP} [kaww-att-o
 squirrel-SING-SING-M stone_wall-SING-M
 ʔi=mm-a=ma do^s-os-i=pa]_{FOC}
 SPEC=MOV-OUT-DIFF fall-CAUS-PFV.3M=LINK
 [pog-ú=ppa]_{FOC} / [paš-o hulul-itt-atte=s-i
 kill-CONS.3M=LINK field-M dove-SING-ASSOC.F=DEICT-SPEC
 gim-act-onki]_{FOC}
 harvest-MID-CONS.3PL
 'the Squirrel made a stone wall fall upon him (: the Dove), so that he (: the Squirrel) killed him (: the Dove), and therefore they (: the Squirrel and the Francolin) could harvest the Dove's field'
 (from the folktale "The Francolin and the Squirrel")

In the following sentence the first NP (*piy-e* 'the ground') can be understood as known (it is the area under the Monkey's tree and where the Lion presently is); it is therefore topical. Topicality is expressed here through the Deictic+Specific combination *=s-i* (cf. (8) above):

- (11) [piy-e=s-i]_{TOP} [harg-o=tta-i bów
 land-F=DEICT-SPEC hand-M=INSTR-SPEC IDROPH
 pay-as-ú=ppa]_{FOC} [šoq-ú]_{FOC}
 say-CAUS-CONS.3M=LINK hit-CONS.3M
 'and [the Lion] struck the ground with his paw: BOOM!
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

Although the pragmatic role of Topic is commonly played by the syntactic subject, it can also be filled by a previously introduced, and therefore known and topical, object. In the following sentence the indirect object *ʔiso* 'he' is in sentence-initial position, followed by the direct object *ʔaak-it-akk-o* 'an animal':

- (12) [ʔiso kal-e=ma]_{TOP} [ʔaak-it-akk-o
 3M.IDP downhill-F=DIFF animal-SING-SING-M
 ʔan=ʔerak-n-i]_{FOC}
 I.SBJ=send-OUT-PFV.1SG
 'I'll send behind him an animal'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

Occasionally and very rarely, a topic may appear in postverbal position, as an antitopic. Prosodically, an antitopic often forms its own intonational unit, and as such it is separated from the preceding verbal form:

- (13) [weyt-o-kka ʔan=ʔaak-i]_{FOC} / [ʔano]_{TOP}
 W-M=CONTR 1.SBJ-go_home-PFV.1SG 1SG.IDP
 'I went home to Weyto, me' (from a conversation)

5. Topic-comment structures and the formal unmarkedness of focus in Gawwada

In Gawwada, the basic word order SXV (where X may be null) is used for categorical sentences (as opposed tothetic sentences, on which see below Section 6) and reflects a pragmatic order Topic-Focus. Any shared (by the speaker and the audience) knowledge which is necessary in order to understand the sentence is presented first, followed by any "new" (in the sense outlined in Section 3) material – which is in focus. In Lambrecht's (1994) terms, it is a predicate focus (PF) structure.

The focal part of the sentence can include an object NP (as in (1) above), or an adpositional phrase, as in (14):

- (14) [kels-akk-o]_{TOP} [kaar-k-ito saap~p-ete
 monkey-SING-M tree-SING-ASSOC.M aboveness~INT-ASSOC.PL
 ʔi=ʔakk-ad-i]_{FOC}
 SPEC=sit-MID-PFV.3M
 'the Monkey was sitting on a tree'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

The new information may on the contrary also be represented by a bare verbal form preceded by the relevant subject clitic:

- (15) [puta]_{TOP} [ʔi-ppuʔ-ʔ-i-n a]_{FOC}
 hyena_man SPEC=fall-SEM-PFV.3M=MOV-OUT
 'the hyena man fell down, and...' (from the folktale "The Hyena Man")

Given the absence of an object pronoun of third person, this is especially common whenever the verb is transitive and the object is known. The Topic is represented by the Subject Clitic and can be inferred from the preceding context:

- (16) [ʔi-llaq-as-i-n a]_{FOC}
 SPEC=swallow-CAUS-PFV.3M=MOV-OUT
 'He made him swallow it, and...'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

In verbless sentences the focal part of the sentence is represented by a nominal:

- (17) [saamb-o h-aayu]_{TOP} [setten]_{FOC}
 boy-M M-1SG.POSS eight
 'I have eight sons' (lit.: "My boys are eight")
 (from "Makurra Garmane's story")

In a very few cases neither a verbal form nor a nominal are necessary in order to have new information; in (18) an ideophone is used in order to predicate something about a nominal:

- (18) ʔan=ho=haaš-a=pa / [xatt-e]_{TOP} [lipp]_{FOC} /
 1.SBJ=2SG.M.OBJ=tell-IPFV.1SG=LINK fire-F IDEOPH
 [ʔarg-o]_{TOP} [hiss]_{FOC}
 arm-M IDEOPH
 'I tell you: "The fire (makes) *lipp*, and the arm (makes) *hiss*"
 (from the riddle "The Night")

This structure is stylistically marked for riddles; much as other riddles are built upon a second clause which is counterexpectational in respect to a first clause (cf. (39), (40), (41), (49)), here we have a parallel structure built upon two elements, each of which is predicated with an ideophone not followed, as usual ideophones are (cf. (11), (43)), by the verb *pay* 'to say', thus creating a mild contrastive effect.

A verbal form may be likewise omitted in answers if the verbal form can be inferred from the question, as in the following exchange in a spontaneous conversation:

- (19) Q: *pirr-e meʔe ʔa=las-i?*
 Birr-PL how_many GEN=sell-PFV.3M
 'How much they sell it?'
 A.: [hudanko ʔizzah=pa *pirr-e setten*]_{FOC}
 ten three=LINK Birr-PL eight
 'Thirty-eight Birrs [Ethiopian Dollars]'
 (from a conversation)

The structure of the focal part of the sentence can be quite complex: in the following sentence the order of the two NPs, both of them focal, follows iconically the direction and goal of the movement (first the direction, then the final destination). The Subject (and Topic) is represented only by the verbal agreement on the verbal form (*ʔi*, marking a Third Masculine of the First Class of the Dependent paradigm), while all the sentence is in focus:

- (20) *kal-a* *piy-atte* *karm-ito*
 downhill-OUT ground-ASSOC.F lion-ASSOC.M
pak-o=ma *pu^S=^S-û*
 mouth-M=DIFF fall-SEM-CONS.3M
 'and [the Monkey] fell down to the ground into the Lion's mouth'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

Topic-Comment sentences may be taken as the default pragmatic structure of the language. Whatever the complexity of these sentences, their pragmatic implication is all borne out negatively: no special marking (either lexical markers or special morphosyntactic devices) is used, nor any word order change from SOV. As a consequence of the fact that Topic-Comment structures are unmarked for focal articulation (cf. Lambrecht 1994: 296), they are often open to alternative focus readings: while most sentences presented in this section are instances of Predicate Focus, (19) above, which is an answer to a WH question, is patently a case of Argument Focus, which will be dealt with in detail further below. Gawwada is essentially not different from English in this respect: English sentences in which the predicate (the default domain for focus) is accented often permit two or more focus readings. As Lambrecht puts it, different focus construals 'are not uniquely determined by the prosodic structure of the various sentences. Rather they are, in part at least, determined by the expectations created with the context questions' (Lambrecht 1994: 298). This is captured in the following "Principle of Predicate-Focus Interpretation":

"Sentences whose verb phrases carry an accent have predicate-focus structure. The predicate-focus structure is the unmarked focus structure and allows for alternative focus readings. Such alternative readings are contextually determined."
 (Lambrecht 1994: 304)

Similar are the Topic-Comment structures of Gawwada: they are the default structure and they too allow for alternative readings – most notably, as Argument Focus structures. The latter are contextually determined.

But pragmatically marked structures do obviously exist in Gawwada. It is to them, against the backdrop of the default Topic-Comment sentences, that we turn in the next sections.

6. Thetic sentences and the focalization of new subjects

In thetic sentences the bipartite organization of the sentence into a presupposed and a non-presupposed portion is by definition absent: "[T]he thetic statement forms a unit with respect to what it contributes to the discourse at a given point. It expresses a pragmatically unanalyzed state of affairs and presents it as a piece of complex information" (Sasse 1987: 558, emphasis in the original); it is a *monomial predication* (Sasse 1995: 4; emphasis in the original).⁷ Therefore, in thetic sentences no element is predictable or presupposed; rather, "both the subject and the predicate are in focus. The focus domain is the sentence, minus any topical non-subject arguments" (Lambrecht 2000: 617).

Thetic sentences are the only place in Gawwada where an unmistakable focus configuration is used – although without a specific focus marker.

In order to express theticity, languages have recourse to a wide array of structures, whose common denominator is the fact that subjects lose, partially or totally, their subject properties, either in terms of case-marking, control of agreement, position in the sentence, and the like. They can also be introduced through a presentative particle or verb, or have special intonational features. In Cushitic languages, neither presentative elements nor intonation are available to mark pragmatic functions.⁸ Rather, the usual strategy to introduce a new participant in the semantic role of subject is to have recourse to what is normally called subject focalization. Basically, this involves the suspension of subject-verb agreement. Second, in languages with a morphologically-marked subject case (such as Somali and 'Afar), this will likewise be absent, and the subject NP will appear in the so-called absolute case-form.⁹ Finally, if Subject Clitics precede the verbal form in the basic syntactic configuration, no Subject Clitics will appear in thetic sentences.

7. On her part, Rosengren stresses that "[T]he distinction thetic/categorical is an extralinguistic, conceptual distinction between two ways to prespectivize an event. *Thetic* stands for a perspective where an event is looked upon as a *stage*, that is, an event in the flow of other (potential) events; *categorical* stands for a perspective where an event is divided into two parts, one of which in turn is viewed as an entity to which something happens or which is doing something" (Rosengren 1997: 472; emphasis in the original).

8. An exception is made for polar questions, which are marked by high pitch on the final syllable. The rare use in East Cushitic of intonation in order to mark pragmatic functions is possibly linked to the pitch-accent nature of accent in these languages. Cf. Dik (1997: 328, fn. 16.) on the tendency of tone languages not to use accentuation (or accentuation alone) in order to mark focus.

9. The absence of subject marking and of subject-verb agreement suggests that the origin of this construction lies in a cleft sentence. Cf. Heine and Reh (1983) for an early African overview, as well as Simeone-Senelle, Vanhove and Houmedgaba (2000) for an analysis of the 'Afar focus along similar lines'.

In certain East Cushitic languages all three structural properties are found – with the possible added complication (e.g. in Somali; Saeed 1984) of a reduction of subject-verb agreement, rather than its total suspension. In languages in which no Subject Clitics exist, such as 'Afar (cf. Simeone-Senelle, Vanhove and Houmedgaba 2000), one will only find the suspension of subject-verb agreement (with the verb appearing in the form of the third singular feminine in 'Afar) and the absence of subjectal markings on the subject. In Gawwada, where the category of case is not realized on nouns, only the absence of the Subject Clitics and the suspension of the subject-verb agreement – with the verb appearing in the form found with a 3M subject whatever the gender, person, and number of its logical subject – are relevant. A further, by no means obligatory correlate of Sentence Focus is word-order change, whereby the subject comes to occupy the position immediately before the verbal form, with all the other nominals preceding it.

All this can be summarized in the following scheme:

Expression of Sentence Focus in Thetic sentences in Gawwada:

Rule # 1: verb in the 3M form;

Rule #2: no Subject Clitic

Rule #3 (optional): SXV → XSV

In the first sentence of the following excerpt (which is also the first sentence of a folktale), the subject is plural but the verb (*ʕuk-a*) is in the third singular masculine form; by way of comparison, the second sentence, in which the same subject nouns are topical, contains an inflected third plural form, preceded by Specific *ʕi=* (*ʕi=ʕuk-anki*):

- (21) *kuyaʕ k-o toʔ-ɔkk-o xaʕarr-itt-e=pa=n-a*
 day-SING-M one-SING-M francolin-SING-F=LINK=MOV-OUT
karr-att-ɔkk-o ʕille=tt-a=i ʕand-e
 squirrel-SING-SING-M REC=INSTR=SPEC water-PL
ʕuk-a / ʕi=ʕuk-anki=mma
 drink-IPFV.3M SPEC=drink-IPFV.3PL=MOV-OUT
 'one day the Francolin and the Squirrel were drinking water together.
 As they were drinking...'
 (opening lines of the folktale "The Francolin and the Squirrel")

This structure is the normal choice whenever new participants, who will later become topical, are introduced; it is therefore particularly common at the onset of a story. Other examples include (22) and (23). In both cases the subject is Masculine; Rule #1 (absence of subject-verb agreement) is therefore "invisible", but Sentence Focus is still marked by the absence of the Specific *ʕi=* in front of the verb (Rule #2):

- (22) *kān-e¹⁰ toʔ-ott-e karm-e ʕaak-e mulo=n-u mal-i=pa*
 day-F one-SING-F lion-M animal-PL all=MOV-IN cheat-PFV.3M=LINK
 'One day the lion cheated all the animals, and...'
 (opening line of the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

- (23) *kān-e toʔ-ott-e qaw-h-o qooʕ-i=pa*
 day-F one-SING-F man-SING-M hunt-PFV.3M=LINK
dap-ad-ú
 lose-MID-CONS.3M
 'One day a man went hunting and got lost' ("there was a man who went hunting and got lost"; opening line of the folktale "The Lost Hunter")¹¹

Examples (21) and (22) further show that monoargumentality of the verb (intransitive, medio-passives, etc.) does not apply as a criterion for theticity in Gawwada (cf. Sasse 1995: 20 ff. for a discussion of monoargumentality in thetic constructions in European languages): it is true that in (21) *ʕand-e ʕuk-a* 'were drinking water' could in principle be interpreted as an instance of an incorporated-object construction ("they were water-drinking"; cf. below, Section 9), and therefore be ruled out as an instance of a transitive verb in a thetic sentence; but this analysis is certainly excluded for *ʕaak-e mulo=n-u mal-i=pa* 'cheated all the animals' in (22). The same applies to the riddle in (24), which is a text composed of a single clause:

- (24) *cikkir-e t-ayyu takk-ay-a*
 shaving_knife-F F-1SG.POSS little-INT-M
piy-e mulo ʕun-i
 land-F all shave-PFV.3M
 'my little shaving-knife shaved the whole country'
 (from the riddle "The Fire"; *cikkir-e* is Feminine; the non-Sentence-Focus 3F form of the verb would be *ʕi=ʕʕun-ti*)

(25) is instead a proverb made up of two clauses; as the verb of the second clause is in the Imperative mood the two clauses are linked by the enclitic element =ye. The subject of the first clause is Masculine, and again Rule #2 only (absence of the Subject Clitic) is in evidence:

10. *kān-e* 'day' is a loan from Amharic *kān*. It is common in the opening line of folktales instead of native *kuyaʕ k-o*.

11. The absence of Subject Clitic on the verb of the second clause (*dap-ad-ú* 'he got lost') has nothing to do with Sentence Focus. It is rather determined by the following conditions: the verb is in the Consecutive paradigm (which is used under specific conditions on any non-final member of a chain of clauses); moreover, the two clauses share the same subject.

- (25) *ʔorhan-k-a xaf-i=ye / toʔad-e leef-a*
 spear-SING-M arrive-PPV,3M=LINK.IMP cutting-stick-F sharpen-IMP.3
 'The spear arrives - sharpen your cutting-stick!' [the spear is here a meta-
 phor for the rain, whose arrival marks the beginning of work in agriculture]
 (a proverb)

As it has been mentioned, a possible correlate of Sentence Focus is the position of the subject directly before the verb, preceded by temporal or locative adverbials and complements:

- (26) *ʔull-ito warʔ-e ʔak-a*
 calabash-ASSOC.M beer-F be_there-IPFV,3M
 'There is beer in the calabash' (elicited sentence; *warʔ-e* 'beer' is feminine)

vs. the corresponding categorical, topic-comment sentence, with Subject-Verb agreement and SXV word order:

- (26') *warʔ-e ʔull-ito ʔi=ʔak-ta*
 beer-F calabash-ASSOC.M SPEC=be_there-IPFV,3F
 'The beer is in the calabash' (elicited sentence)

The same word order is found in the following two textual examples: in (27), which is the onset of a folktale, the subject (*ʔeet-t-e* 'girl') is preceded by the same adverbial of time seen in (22) and (23) (*kʔan-e toʔ-ott-e*; 'one day') as well as a complement of space (*koll-atte* 'at the river'); similarly in (28) the subject (*puffaʔ-e* 'hunger') is preceded by a topical pronoun (*ye=s-i* 'me') and a deictic expression (*h-a-i=s-a hoorr-ito* 'here in the forest');

- (27) *kʔan-e toʔ-ott-e koll-atte ʔeet-t-e*
 day-F one-SING-F river-ASSOC.F girl-SING-F
ʔand-e meeʔ-ad-a
 water-PL fetch-MID-IPFV,3M
 'There was one day a girl who was fetching water at the river'
 (from the folktale 'The Hyena Man')

As well as:

- (28) *ye=s-i h-a-i=s-a*
 1SG.OBJ=DEICT-SPEC M-OUT-SPEC=DEICT-GEN
hoorr-ito kill-atte puffaʔ-e ye=poʔ-a-n-a
 FOREST-ASSOC.M within-ASSOC.F hunger-F 1SG.OBJ=kill-IPFV,3M=MOV-OUT
 'here in the forest hunger is killing me...' (from the folktale 'The Two Mice')
 (*puffaʔ-e* 'hunger' is Feminine)

It must nevertheless be mentioned that, independently of pragmatic considerations, adverbials of time and place tend to occur at the left-edge of the clause (cf. also (54) and (55) below). Moreover, the rightwards shift of a subject after an object is very rare in our corpus – cf. again the SOV word order in (21) (*xaʔarr-itt-e=pa=n-a* [...] *ʔand-e ʔuk-a*), (22) (*karm-o ʔaak-e mulo=n-u mal-i=pa*), and (24) (*cikkir-e* [...] *piy-e mulo ʔun-i*), and is best considered a tendency in Gawwada. It is nevertheless very salient and can be interpreted as a strong clue in order to recover the Sentence Focus in a language where other clues are often absent.

7. Marking contrast: =kka

Apart from the presence or absence of the Subject Clitics in front of the verb and the presence vs. absence of Subject-Verb agreement – which we have seen to be the strategies used in Gawwada to express Sentence Focus – Sasse (in Amborn, Minker and Sasse 1980) lists as pragmatic-marking devices for the Dullay cluster (and in particular the Eastern dialects Harso and Dobaze) object-incorporation (formally identified as the presence of a nominal object immediately before the verb and after the Subject Clitic, i.e.: Subj. Cl. O V) and the use of the "focus markers" =kka and =tta. On the negative side, one can add as a peculiarity of Gawwada (and of Dullay in general) the absence of clefts – an unexpected fact, clefts being widespread in Ethiopian languages (cf. Appleyard 1989).

We shall deal with object incorporation in Section 9; as to the putative focus markers, =tta has no focus-marking role in Gawwada nor has it anything to do with the marking of pragmatic relations; it is rather an instrumental (and occasionally comitative) postposition. It will not further concern us here. =kka is instead prominent; it occurs in two allomorphs: enclitic =kka and proclitic k=. The former is the basic allomorph, with k= being used in clause-initial position following another clause, or if the preceding element ends in a consonant.¹² As the usual final element of a clause is generally a verbal form, k= is mainly found in postverbal position.

12. Gawwada words normally end in one and only one vowel. Exceptions are most numerals (cf. (17), (39)), the ideophones (cf. (18), (43)), and most imperative singular verbal forms.

When asked about the meaning of =kka, native speakers often point out that it means "also, too". The following are two examples from a much wider corpus:

- (29) *kawwar-k-o* *ʔi=ʔall-i=pa=na*
 G.-SING-M SPEC=GO-IPFV.3M=LINK=MOV-OUT
minn-add-e=kka *ʔil-l-ɔ-ppa*
 house-PLUR-PL=CONTR burn-SEM-CONS.3M=LINK
 'the Gawwadas marched on and they further set fire to the houses (of the enemy)' (from the text "The War between Gawwada and Gollango")

- (30) *minn-add-etc* *ʔol h-o* *h-o*
 house-PLUR-ASSOC.PL thing-SING-M M-M
ʔa=ʔiʔ-n-i *hoq-q-aʔ-e=ma/*
 GEN=eat-PUT-IPFV.3M full-INT-CAUS-VN=DIFF
ʔol-akk-o *h-o* *kor-o* *poq-q-a=kka*
 thing-SING-M M-M people-M kill-SEM-IMPE.3M=CONTR
ʔi=ʔak-a=pa
 SPEC=be_there-IPFV.3M=LINK
 'in the houses there is plenty of things one can eat; there is also something which kills people' (from the folktale "The Two Mice")

Of course, =kka in (29) may also be rendered with "even; too" (e.g., 'they even set fire to the houses'), and some degree of contrast is evident in (30) ("but there is..."); the "additive" meaning of =kka, which is the most evident to speakers, is probably the starting point of a grammaticalization process leading eventually to the (textually far more common) use of =kka as a full marker of contrast, to which we turn now.¹³

7.2 Contrasting topic: =kka as a topic-switching device

=kka occurs in a number of pragmatic functions, but it seems possible to assume "contrast" as the common denominator of them all (=kka will therefore be glossed "CONTR"). The constituent under contrast may itself be the topic (or a part of it)

13. In Somali one finds a postclitic particle *ba* with the meanings: (a) distributive ('each, whoever, etc.); (b) 'at all, even', and (c) 'also' (cf. Muse and Andrzejewski 1956: 67–68 for a good summary with many examples). The origin of the Somali focus markers *baa* and *ayaa* is unknown, although Lambert (1984) proposes a development from a former copula verb, a connection between *ba* and *baa* is at least a possibility.

or the focus (or, again, a part of it). This alone suffices to bar a characterization of =kka in terms of a focus marker *tout court*.

Bearth (1999) has rightly stressed the importance of studying the pragmatic markers from their textual, spontaneous use. It is a fact that as soon as one leaves the question-and-answer framework upon which much syntactic work has traditionally been based and delves into actual texts and spontaneous conversations, it becomes apparent that many purported "focus markers" are actually something else, or they are not only, nor essentially, focus markers at all.

Cushitic languages are no exception to this. The most obvious example is Somali, whose grammar of focus is without a doubt the single most studied syntactic feature of the language. Following a tradition going back at least to Andrzejewski (e.g., 1964, 1975) and further pursued by Saeed (e.g., 1984, 1999), Lecarme (e.g., 1994), Puglielli (e.g., 1981) and her associates in Rome (e.g., Svolacchia, Mereu and Puglielli 1995), and many others, we have obtained a fairly fine-grained knowledge (often couched within a generative framework) of the syntactic conditionings of "focus marking" in Somali. In contrast, the pragmatic and discourse conditioning of focus have received much less attention; among the very few studies dealing with the pragmatics of Somali sentences, one can mention Hetzron (1965), El-Solami-Mewis (1980, 1981), and, in particular, Gebert (1986). As a consequence, attention has been brought upon the conditions for the placement of "narrow" focus and the order of topical NPs within the sentence, while texts (be them written or oral) have hardly been studied at all (a notable exception being Ajello 1995). Still, an analysis of textual material reveals a starkly different picture: on the basis of an analysis of Somali written texts, Tosco (2003) has argued that focus is only one, nor even the most prominent, function of the Somali focus markers *baa* and *ayaa*. In fact, their use as topic-switching and action-enhancing devices is central in text-building.

Much the same is true of Gawwada =kka: while from the elicitation of isolated sentences one could well get the impression of =kka as a *bona fide* focus marker, as soon as one is confronted with texts and spontaneous conversations one realizes that the picture is much more complicated. And just as in Somali, from an analysis of oral, generally unplanned texts and spontaneous conversations it emerges that one of the textually most prominent functions of =kka is its use as a topic-switching and topic-resumptive device: by marking contrast against the active topic, =kka therefore re-activates an old one.

The following sentence is a very easy example of the topic-switching value of =kka: the family of a missing man has consulted a sorcerer; after he has explained what to do, the family once again assumes the role of topical subject, and is marked by =kka:

- (31) *n-u=ʷallū=ppa / [ʷusunde=kka]_{TOP} ʷi=ʷʷaʃʃ-e*
 MOV-IN=Speak-CONS.3M=LINK 3PL.IDP=CONTR SPEC=go-PFV.3PL
 '... he spoke to them; and they went away'
 (from the folktale "The Lost Hunter")

In a similar vein, in the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey" the Lion summons all the animals, with the secret intention to choose among them his next meal. The Monkey only does not attend. After that, the Lion is reintroduced as the protagonist of the story. It comes as no surprise that it is marked by =*kka*:

- (32) *ye=okaay-ū=ppa / [karm-o=kka]_{TOP}*
 NEG.3=COME-PFV.NEG.3=LINK LION-M=CONTR
saʷa-k-o kat-a ʷi=ʷʷaʃʃap-ad-i
 heart-SING-M down-OUT SPEC=think-MID-PFV.3M
 '(the Monkey only) did not come; therefore, the Lion thought in his heart...'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

Still, Gawwada is very different from Somali: Somali *baa*, *ayaa* and their allomorphs are indeed used in order to mark a newly introduced constituent – and this is probably their most common function in transitive clauses, especially in isolation. Gawwada =*kka* is never employed in this way. As a result of his cogitations in (32) above, the Lion decides to send after the Monkey another animal; and in (33) the Hyena is introduced, becoming the new topic (and, syntactically, the subject) immediately afterwards:

- (33) [*ʷoraap-att-e ʷerak-ū*]_{roc} // [*ʷoraap-att-e*]_{TOP}
 hyena-SING-F send-CONS.3M hyena-SING-F
 [*ʷi=ʷʷaʃʃi-ti=pa*]_{roc}
 SPEC=go-PFV.3F=LINK
 '... and he [the Lion] sent the Hyena; the Hyena went and...'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

A similar sentence in Somali would require the presence of a focus marker in order to be grammatical:

- (33') *waraaba-ha b-uu dir-ay*
 hyena-MLART FOC-3M send-PST.3M
 'he sent the Hyena' (Somali)

Forcing instead the presence of =*kka* in Gawwada would yield a grammatical sentence, but with a completely different reading:

- (33'') [*ʷoraap-att-e=kka ʷerak-ū*]
 hyena-SING-F=CONTR send-CONS.3M
 '... and he [the Lion] sent the Hyena too'

From (33) one further sees that, as anticipated in Section 4 above on Topics, a recently introduced element is frequently not pronominalized in its second occurrence as a topic, and it is frequently repeated as full noun in the following intonation unit. This "pronoun avoidance" is evident in many similar examples, such as (34):

- (34) *ʷaak-e ʷi=ʷʷaʃʃ-e ʷarap-k-o=n-u*
 animal-PL SPEC=go-PFV.3PL elephant-SING-M=MOV-IN
ʷall-onki=nn-a /
 speak-CONS.3PL=MOV-OUT
 [*ʷarap-k-o=kka*]_{TOP} ʷi=kkiiʷaaʷ-a=pa
 elephant-SING-M=CONTR SPEC=laugh-1PFV.3M=LINK
 'The animals went and told the Elephant. So the Elephant laughed and...'
 (from the folktale "The Elephant and the Frog")

Contrary to the second clause in (33), in (34) the subject of the second clause is also followed by =*kka*, although the Elephant (*ʷarap-k-o*) is certainly topical in this context (being present in the clause immediately preceding). Why is it so? A further difference may explain this: in (34) the verb of the first clause (*ʷall-onki*; for the absence of the Subject Clitic cf. fn. 10) is followed by the MOV-OUT postpositional clitic =*n(n)-a*¹⁴, while neither =*n(n)a* nor other clitics are found after the verb of the first clause in (33) (*ʷerak-ū* 'he sent'). The presence vs. absence of =*kka* is here linked to the presence vs. absence of a postposition on the preceding verb: in (33) the two actions (sending the Hyena after the Monkey on the part of the Lion and the Hyena leaving) are seen as separate and independent actions (and a rather long pause intervenes between them). In (34), on the contrary, the two clauses are linked, but the topic is switched: the animals in the first clause speak to the Elephant and tell him of the Frog's plan to kill him; as a consequence, the Elephant bursts into laughter.¹⁵ Here =*kka* acts therefore as a topic-switching device.

Similarly, in (35) the Lion, who had been the addressee of the animals' speech in the preceding clauses, is reintroduced once again as the topic and the main actor, and is marked by =*kka*:

14. =*n-* and other clitics (such as =*pa* LINK, and =*ma* DIFF) have their consonant geminated (resulting in =*nn-*, =*ppa*, =*mma*) when the preceding syllable bears a phonological stress (cf. fn. 5) and also as a result of the assimilation of the last consonant of the preceding word.

15. For the syntax and semantics of clause linking in Gawwada cf. Tosco (2008).

- (35) *ʔato ʔaʃʃ-a=pa teem-m-ay*
 2SG.IDP go-IMP:SG=LINK try-SEM-CONS.2SG
t-a-i=n-u ʔa=y-i/
 F-OUT-SPEC=MOV-IN GEN=SBY-PFV.3M
[karm-o-kka]_{TOP} ʔi-lhaʃ-i=pa ʔaʃʃ-ū=ppa
 lion-M=CONTR SPEC=get_up-PFV.3M=LINK go-CONS.3M=LINK
 '...you go and try yourself!' – they [: the animals] said. And so the Lion got up and left...'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

Further examples of =*kka* in its role of a topic-switching element are (36) and (37): here the Francolin, who has been spoken to by the Squirrel, becomes the topical subject and is re-introduced with the independent pronoun *ʔise* 'she' followed by =*kka*:

- (36) *ʔan-tard-i=ye ye=ʃah/*
 I.SBJ-be_tired-PFV.ISG=LINK.IMP I.SG.OBJ=wash-IMP:SG
[ʔise=kka]_{TOP} ʔi=ʃʃah-ti=pa
 3F.IDP=CONTR SPEC=wash-PFV.3F=LINK
 "I am tired – so wash me!". And she washed him...'
 (from the folktale "The Francolin and the Squirrel")

- (37) *ʔaʃʃ-a=pa qeeʃ-d=ppa/ paʃ-o*
 go-IMP:SG=LINK look_for-CONS.2SG=LINK field-M
kaar k-o toʔ-okk-o n-a-ʔak-i
 tree-SING-M one-SING-M MOV-OUT-be_there-PFV.3M
h-aani=ye qim-oy//
 M-1PL.POSS=LINK.IMP hit-CONS.2SG
[ʔise=kka]_{TOP} ʃaran-k-o qars-at-ti=pa
 3F.IDP=CONTR goatskin-SING-M collect-MID-PFV.3F=LINK
ʔaʃʃ-ō=ppa
 go-CONS.3F=LINK
 '(The Squirrel told her:) "Go and look: that field which has only one tree in it is ours; so harvest it!" And so she [: the Francolin] took up a goatskin and went...' (from the folktale "The Francolin and the Squirrel")

In the following excerpt from a first-person account of a hunting party the use of =*kka* after the personal pronoun restarts the narration and resets it in motion after the description of what the hunters found hidden in the forest:

- (38) *ʔan=ʔeem-m-ad-ine=ni-a mirʃ-itt-e*
 I.SBJ=look-SEM-MID-PF.1PL=MOV-OUT bushbuck-SING-F

- lakki miʔay-e=pa yaay-e ʔille haurʃ-ad-a/*
 two child-PL=LINK mother-F REC suck-MID-IPFV.3M
[ʔano=kka]_{TOP} xathay k'uw-e
 I.SG.IDP=CONTR quickly gun-F
ʔan=n-a-laak-i=pa
 I.SBJ=MOV-OUT=turn-PFV.ISG=LINK
 'we looked around: and there were two bushbucks, a mother and her cub, suckling. So I quickly pointed my gun at them and...'
 (from the text "A Hunting Party")

7.3 Contrasting focus: =*kka* as a counterexpectation marker

Similar to its use as a topic-switching device but closer to the traditional concept of a focus element in Cushitic is the use of =*kka* as a counterexpectational marker. In this use, =*kka* follows a new element and operates as a focus marker. At the same time, the newly-introduced element sets the scene for the next clause, which runs against the expectations created by the first. By this operation of scene-setting, the first clause becomes topical at the discourse level: still, =*kka* marks it *qua* new and focal.

In (39), a riddle, =*kka* appears in its variant *k=* because the preceding word, the numeral *salah* 'four,' is consonant-ending. The presence of =*kka* on the object of the first clause makes sense only at the light of what follows, and the whole could be rendered as: "look here: I got four legs, *and still* I cannot walk":

- (39) *[luk~k-e salah]_{FOC} k=an=ʃeek-i=pa/*
 leg~PLUR-PL four CONTR=I.SBJ=get-PFV.ISG=LINK
ʔaʃʃ-anko ʔano ʔalkas-i
 go-VN I.SG.IDP can-IPFV.NEG.ISG
 'I got four legs, but I cannot walk' (from the riddle "The Stool")

The same in (40), another riddle, which can be roughly rendered as: "although I got a mouth and two ears, I still don't talk":

- (40) *[pak-o toʔ-okk-o=pa qaam-e lakki=kka]_{FOC}*
 mouth-M one-SING-M=LINK ear-PL two=CONTR
ʔan=ʃeek-i=pa ʔano ʃall-ad-i
 I.SBJ=get-PFV.ISG=LINK I.SG.IDP speak-MID-IPFV.NEG.ISG
 'I got a mouth and two ears, but I cannot speak' (from the riddle "The Pot")

In a similar vein, in (41) =*kka* brings attention to a clause (containing in its turn a relative), about which something unexpected is predicated ("although the headrest my father and mother gave me fell, it did not break"):

- (41) [*ker-e* *ʔappa=pa* *yaay-e* *ye=teeh-eni*
 headrest-PL father=LINK mother-F me=give-PFV.3PL
ʔi=ppuʔ-e=kka]_{FOC} *ye=kond-am-é*
 SPEC=fall-PFV.3PL=CONTR 3.NEG=break-PASS-IPFV.NEG.3PL
 'The headrest my father and mother gave me fell without breaking' (from the riddle "The Name"; *ker-e* 'headrest' is morphologically plural)

The use of =*kka* in the following sentence can be understood as generally highlighting and emphasizing the subject *ʔaak-it-akk-o toʔ-okk-o* 'one animal':

- (42) *ʔinnu* [*ʔaak-it-akk-o* *toʔ-okk-o=kka*]_{FOC}
 3.JUSS.NEG animal-SING-SING-M ONE-SING-M=CONTR
ʔapar=s-a=ma *haq-u*
 place=DEICT-GEN=DIFF be_absent-JUSS.NEG.3M
 'let not even one animal be missing!'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

Sentence (43) shows two occurrences of =*kka* within one and the same sentence: the first =*kka* marks a contrastive topic ("as for me..."); the second one introduces a new referent. As the word expressing this new referent (the ideophone *xapáp*) is consonant-ending, the allomorph *k=* is used, proclitic to the following word (the verbal phrase *ʔan=payni* 'I'll say'). The Francolin is here answering the Squirrel, who has explained his strategy in case of danger and asked about the Francolin's, and (43) is the Francolin's answer. =*kka* can therefore mark a new, focal element, but only when a contrast is evident or implicit against another possible argument ("as for me, I'll *instead* flap my wings..."):

- (43) [*ʔano=kka*]_{TOP} [*xapáp*]_{FOC} *k=an=pay-n-i=pa*
 1SG.IDP=CONTR IDEOPH CONTR=1.SBJ=say-FUT-PE.IS=LINK
haʔ-a
 get_up-CONS.1SG
 'as for me, I'll flap my wings and get off' (from the folktale "The Francolin and the Squirrel"; "to say *xapáp*" is an idiom for 'to flap the wings')

Although textually secondary in respect to its use as a topic-switching device, the role of =*kka* as a contrastive-focus marker is not at all uncommon. In the following the Elephant, informed by the other animals that the Frog is planning to kill

him the next time he will approach the river, tells he is going to take a nap, and that tomorrow only – *not today* – he will go to the river:

- (44) [*qayná=kka*]_{FOC} *ʔun=ʔaʃʃi-n-a* *ʃand-e* *ʃuk-á*
 tomorrow=CONTR 1.SBJ=go-FUT-IPFV.1SG water-PL drink-CONS.1S
 'TOMORROW I'll go and drink water' (from the folktale "The Elephant and the Frog")

These and similar sentences show how =*kka* can misleadingly be interpreted as a focus marker: it does act as a focus marker, but only in the same sense in which certain English operators (determiners, quantifiers, etc.) do mark focus in focus-sensitive constructions (cf. Hajičová, Partee and Sgall 1998: 24 and the following). These sentences also indicate that =*kka*, in its use as a focus marker, may only mark a narrow focus: e.g., in (43) =*kka* marks the preceding word *xapáp* as an Argument Focus, but obviously it is the whole sentence *xapáp k=an=pay-n-i=pa haʔ-a* 'I'll flap my wings and get off' to be focal, insofar as it predicates something new and unpredictable about the topic.

7.4 From =*kka* to =*kk-i*: the marking of specificity in contrast

The specificity affix *-i* (SPEC), whose most common occurrence is after the Deictic =*s-*, can also be attached to Contrastive =*kka*, yielding =*kk-i*. =*kk-i* therefore combines the contrast inherent in =*kka* with the specific value of *-i*. =*kk-i* acts also as a Contrastive Focus marker, and its value may be seen in (45) and (46), in which *ʔato=kk-i* is best translated as 'YOU are the one' and *ʔano naʔa=kk-i* as 'only ME', respectively:

- (45) *ʔano* *soʔ-akk-o* *ʃant-i=kka=ma /*
 1SG.IDP magic-SING-M be-IPFV.NEG.ISG=CONTR=DIFF
ʔato=kk-i *soʔ-akk-o*
 2SG.IDP=CONTR-SPEC magic-SING-M
 'I am not a sorcerer – YOU are!' (elicited sentence)
- (46) *lakki* *ʔi=ʔar-am-anki=mma /* *toʔ-ott-e=s-i*
 two SPEC=KNOW-PASS-IMPF.3P=SIT one-SING-F=DEICT-SPEC
ʔano *naʔa=kk-i* *ʔille=n-a* *ʔar-a=n-a*
 1SG.IDP only=CONTR-SPEC REC=MOV-OUT know-IPFV.ISG=MOV-OUT
 'two of them are known (by everybody); but one – only ME I know it'
 (from the riddle "The Penis")

Another example is provided by the sentence immediately preceding example (12) above, in which the Lion realizes that the Monkey is missing from the animals' gathering:

- (47) *kels-akk-o=kk-i* *ye=okaay-ú=ppa /*
 monkey SING-M=CONTR-SPEC NEG.3=COME-PE.NEG.3M=LINK
ʔiso kal-e=ma *ʔaak-it-akk-o*
 3M.IDP downhill-F=DIFF animal-SING-SING-M
ʔan=ʔerak-n-i
 1.SBJ=send-FUT-PPV.1SG
 'it was the monkey who did not come – I'll send behind him an animal'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

In the following we even have a textually rare instance of a repeated =*kk-i*:

- (48) *h-aayu=n-a* *tal-t-e*
 M-1SG.POSS=MOV-OUT goat-SING-F
toʔ-ott-e=kk-i=kk-i *ye*
 ONE-SING-F=CONTR-SPEC=CONTR-SPEC NEG.3
h-a-i=ss-a *ʔak-ti=pa*
 M-OUT-SPEC=DEICT-GEN be_there-IPFV.NEG.3F=LINK
 'I did not have even one single goat at home'
 (from the text "A Hunting Party")

The use of =*kk-i* is not textually prominent. It is furthermore often difficult to identify: in rapid, connected speech, =*kka* often assimilates its final vowel to the specific affix *-i* acting as a Subject Clitic of third person; such an assimilation of the phonological string /=*kka ʔi*=/ yields a phonetic string [k:i], blurring any difference with =*kk-i*.

7.5 The end of contrast? =*kka* in negative clauses

A very frequent use of =*kka* is after a negative verbal form: although negative verbal forms not followed by =*kka* have been encountered repeatedly (cf. (39), (40), and (41)), this use is quite common, often without any apparent difference in meaning:

- (49) *ʔs-t-e* *toʔ-ott-e* *ʔan=leek-i=pa* *ʔan-ani*
 EYE-SING-F ONE-SING-F 1.SBJ=see-PPV.1SG=LINK 1SG.IDP=INT
ʔol-o *hʔ-i=kka*
 thing-M see-IPFV.NEG.1SG=CONTR
 'I have an eye but I can't see anything' (from the riddle "The Needle")

- (50) *ʔaak-e* *mulo* *ʔi=ʔokaay-e=ma /*
 animal-PL all SPEC=COME-PPV.3PL=MOV-OUT
kopol-akk-o *ye-n-a=ʔak-t-kka*
 fat-SING-M NEG.3=MOV-OUT=be_there-IMPR.NEG.3M=CONTR
 'all the animals came, but a fat one was not there'
 (from the folktale "The Lion and the Monkey")

From (49) and (50) it becomes apparent that, again, the notion of contrast is crucial: in (49) the use of =*kka* marks counterexpectationality, in (50) opposition (between all the other animals and the Monkey).

The use of =*kka* with a negative verbal form is strongly preferred in dialogues if no object is present:

- (51) *ʔano* *ʔar-i=kka*
 1SG.IDP know-IPFV.NEG.1SG=CONTR
 'I do not know'

vs. the scarcely acceptable:

- (51') *ʔano* *ʔar-i*
 1SG.IDP know-IPFV.NEG.1SG

Once again, contrast often seems to be pivotal, as is evident from (52):

- (52) *ʔano* *paš-o=s-i* *ʔano*
 1SG.IDP field-M=DEICT-SPEC 1SG.IDP
ʔar-i=kka=ye / *ʔášši-ni=pa*
 know-IPFV.NEG.1SG=CONTR=LINK.IMP go-JUSS.1PL=LINK
ye=hiʔ-as-áy
 1SG.OBJ=see-CAUS-CONS.2SG
 'as for me, I don't know that field; let's go and you'll show me!'
 (from the folktale "The Squirrel and the Francolin")

At the same time, it is also possible that =*kka* is currently undergoing further grammaticalization as a negative marker. There are no negative particles in Gawwada, and many negative forms use the same segmental affixes found in positive paradigms, with stress only marking the difference (phonological stress on the last syllable marking the negative; cf. *ʔar-i* 'I knew' vs. *ʔar-i* 'I do not know'). The further grammaticalization of =*kka* into a negative marker, and the bleaching of its semantic contents, is therefore not surprising. It has already happened in Tšamakko, another Dullay variety bordering Gawwada to the West: here all the negative verbal forms in main clauses are obligatorily followed by =*kka*, which has apparently lost any residual pragmatic value (Sava 2005: 162).

7.6 Conclusions on =*kka* and the marking of argument focus

Contrastiveness is not universally of good repute as a pragmatic category: according to Lambrecht, 'contrastiveness, unlike focus, is not a category of grammar but the result of the general cognitive processes referred to as "conversational implicatures" (Lambrecht 1994: 291). This study has nevertheless shown that in Gawwada Contrast is a linguistic category, which finds its specific lexical expression in specific configurations. As expected, it has been seen that in Gawwada Contrast may apply to both Topics and (maybe with less frequency) Foci. As a marker of Contrastive Focus =*kka* is therefore the foremost means for the expression of Argument Focus. The latter, however, does not receive a single, uniform treatment. In the expression of Argument Focus =*kka* is in its turn in competition with at least another strategy, to which we turn now: word-order change.

8. Argument focus, again: Word-order change

The postverbal positioning of an NP was mentioned in Section 4 in connection with antitopics, where it was also stressed how the clause-final position of the verb is quite strictly adhered to in Gawwada. A few examples of postverbal positioning of an NP which cannot be assumed under the rubric of antitopicality have nevertheless been recorded:

- (53) *muku^s-itt-e* *lokk-o* *ʕand-e* *ʔit^s-a*
 frog-SING-F slowly-M water-PL levelly-OUT
n-a=taax-ti=pa/ *sint-e* *ʕil-a=n-a*
 MOV-OUT=swim-PFV.3F=LINK nose-F up-OUT=MOV-OUT
hul-i=ppa/ *ʔaʕʕ-ú* *kut-a* *non-ito*
 enter-CONS.3F=LINK go-CONS.3 uphill-OUT brain-ASSOC.M
 'the Frog slowly swam close to him (: the Elephant), entered up into him, and went up into his brain' (from the folktale "The Elephant and the Frog")

Pending an analysis as an afterthought, and noticing that the Elephant's brain will play a role further on in the text, one may assume here that by means of the postverbal positioning of the NP *kut-a non-ito* 'up the brain' an element which will later become topical is first introduced and given relevance: in other words, it is a focal element.

Within the focal part of a proposition, place and time expressions in particular are amenable to post-verbal position. In (54) the locative word *kat-a* 'down' is specified after the verb; in (55) a temporal adverbial is likewise positioned postverbally:

- (54) [*hantú* *h-a-i* *kat-a* *ʕan-hol-i*]_{FOC} /
 now M-OUT-SPEC down-OUT 1.SUB=go_back-PFV.1SG
 [*kal-a* *minn-axf-e=ma*]_{FOC}
 downhill-OUT house-PLUR-PL=DIFF
 'Now I went back down there - down, to the village' (from a conversation)
- (55) [*qol-e*]_{TOP} [*ʔi=ppu^s-e* *hantú*]_{FOC}
 cattle-PL SPEC=fall-PFV.3PL now
 '(the price of) cattle fell down, nowadays' (from a conversation)

On the contrary, the position of NPs in preverbal position is quite free (once again conforming to a general rule in East Cushitic; cf. Tosco 2003 for Somali). Any nominal may be brought to the left in extrasentential position and be resumed by a postposition or by the Deictic plus Specific marker =*s-i* (DEICT-SPEC, as seen above in (28), (46), and (52)). In particular, apart from the use of =*kka*, word-order change is the second strategy employed in order to express Argument Focus.

An adpositional phrase with a non-pronominal object is sometimes left-extrapolated together with the adposition, with the adposition repeated in front of the verbal form:

- (56) *ʔahk-e=n-u* *n-u=ʕall-i=ppa*
 family-F=MOV-IN MOV-IN=speak-CONS.3F=LINK
 '... she told her family:...' (to her family, she spoke to"; from the folktale "The Hyena Man")

More frequently, the NP is extraposed without any adposition:

- (57) *haarr-atte* *konn-att-ito* *tulluf-akk-o*
 donkey-ASSOC.F back-SING-ASSOC.M dust-SING.M
n-a=kuut-am-a
 MOV-OUT=pick_up-PASS-IPFV.3M
 'only dust came out of the Donkey's back'
 (from the folktale "The Donkey and the Oxpecker")

Also a third person direct or indirect object may be followed by the Deictic plus Specific marker =*s-i* (DEICT-SPEC, as seen above in (10), (11), (46), (52)). In (58) this element occurs three times: after a topical indirect object NP (*muku^s-itt-e=s-i* 'the frog'), which is left-dislocated before a direct object NP (*ʕand-e mulo=s-i* 'all the water'), and finally after a personal pronoun (*ʔise* 'she') which fills the syntactic position of the indirect object NP after dislocation. While it was seen above (cf. Section 2) that a third person pronominal object is usually not expressed and is recoverable from context, in this case the use of the personal pronoun, marked by =*s-i*, is necessary in order to focalize it through =*kka*, yielding *ʔise=s-i=kka*:

- (58) *muku^s-itt-e=s-i* *ʕand-e* *mulo=s-i*
 frog-SING-F=DEICT-SPEC water-PL all=DEICT-SPEC
ʔise=s-i=kka *ʔa=teeh-i*
 3F.IDP=DEICT-SPEC=CONTR GEN=give-PFV.3M
 'the frog was given all the water'
 (lit. "as to the frog, it was to her that all the water was given";
 from the folktale "The Elephant and the Frog")

9. Incorporation

Any account of the information structure of Gawwada would be deficient without mentioning incorporation. Incorporation is defined here as the positioning of an object noun after a Subject Clitic and/or the adposition and immediately before the verbal form (similar conditions apply in Somali; cf. Tosco 2004). In the examples below, incorporation is shown by the cliticization of a postposition ((59), (60)) or of an object pronoun (61) in front of the noun, rather than immediately before the verb: the noun and the verb make thus a tight unit, if not a compound, and they cannot be separated.

As the incorporated element is de-contextualized and made non-referential, it comes as no surprise that generic nouns, such as nouns expressing position and movement, are typical targets of incorporations; one example is *kitt-atte* 'within' (from *kitt-e* 'interior'), which in (59) is found in the configuration *kitt-atte ʕak* 'to be found in a place':

- (59) *kaar-k-o* *to²-okk-o* *n-a=kitt-atte*
 tree-SING-M one-SING-M MOV-OUT=interior-ASSOC.F
ʕak-a
 be_there-IPFV.3M
 'in it (: the field), just one tree exists'
 (from the folktale "The Squirrel and the Francolin")

That *kitt-atte* is incorporated to the following verbal form is shown by the positioning of *n-a* (MOV-OUT), which refers to the location expressed in the preceding sentence (*paš-o* 'the field'), and which usually precedes immediately the verb:

- (59') *kaar-k-o* *to²-okk-o* *kitt-atte*
 tree-SING-M one-SING-M interior-ASSOC.F
n-a=ʕak-a
 MOV-OUT=be_there-IPFV.3M
 'there is just one tree in it'

Equally non-referential are *kodde-e* 'bride wealth' in (60) (*kodde-e ʔakk-aa* 'to take one's bride wealth'), and *kaʔ-e* 'provisions for a voyage' in (61) (*kaʔ-e kod* 'to prepare - lit. "make" - provisions for a voyage'):

- (60) *ʔall-inda=pa* *n-a=kodde* *ʔakk-aa anku*
 go-IMP.PL=LINK MOV-OUT=bride-wealth-F take-MID-CONS.2PL
 'go and take from him the bride wealth'
 (from the folktale "The Hyena Man")
- (61) *ye=kaʔ-e* *kod=ma /* *ʔan=ʔašši n-a*
 1SG.OBJ=provisions-PL make-IMP.SG=DIFF 1.SBJ=go-FUT-IPFV.1SG
paš-o *poh-a=yye*
 field-M hit-CONS.1SG=LINK.IMP
 'Prepare me some provisions - I'll go and harvest the field'
 (from the folktale "The Squirrel and the Francolin")

Incorporation is on the whole not very common in Gawwada (much less, e.g., than in Somali). Its pragmatic relevance lies in its backgrounding and detopicalizing role: irrespective of the type of focus structure (Predicate, Sentence, or Argument) in which it occurs, the incorporated noun is not under focus (although it can obviously enter into a focalized predicate).

10. Conclusions

This is the first study on the information structure of Gawwada, still basically an undescribed language, and further, finer-grained research and analysis are needed; nevertheless, this article has shown how Gawwada, as most languages, uses a wide array of strategies in order to express pragmatic functions. Using Lambrecht's (1994) tripartite division of focus structures into Predicate, Argument, and Sentence Focus, it has been seen that Gawwada employs the following focus-marking strategies:

1. Predicate Focus (Topic-Comment sentences): SXV word order, presence of Subject Clitics in front of the verb; full Subject-Verb agreement.
2. Sentence Focus (Thetic sentences):
 - a. absence of Subject Clitics;
 - b. suspension of Subject-Verb agreement (verb in the 3M form);
 - c. (occasionally) XSV word order;
3. Argument Focus: no unitary strategy, but:
 - a. word order (left-extrapolation of NPs);
 - b. =*kka* (if contrast is implied)

The focus-marking devices themselves can therefore be syntactical (involving the use of different word orders), morphological (different agreement patterns), or lexical.

The interest of Gawwada for comparative and typological purposes alike lies in its being very different from Somali and other languages of the Horn, which make extensive use of focus-marking elements (although, as it has been argued above, also the so-called focus markers of Somali are used in a wide array of other pragmatic functions). The conclusions reached in this study fly in the face of many preconceptions and expectations about the marking of pragmatic structures in Cushitic languages: in Gawwada no dedicated focus marker exists, and its expression is parasitic of other categories. Insofar as focus – specifically, Argument Focus – is marked, it is through elements which cover other functions as well.

The expression of Topic does not fare better: while no dedicated topic markers exist (here following what seems a general pattern in Cushitic and in the languages of the area), a contrastive Topic is often marked.

For both Contrastive Topic and (but only as a possible strategy among others) Argument Focus, one and the same element is employed: the clitic =*kka* (and its proclitic allomorph *k=*), and both functions are best considered derivative for this element. While =*kka* could, *prima facie*, be interpreted as a focus marker, it has been shown that its main functions lie instead in the marking of topic-switch and topic-resumption on the Topic side, and the marking of Argument Focus on the Focus side. =*kka* itself – and here lies another interesting feature of Gawwada – finds its only unitary value as a marker of Contrast, either of a textual kind (to a previously mentioned element) or of a presuppositional kind (to any expectation of the addressee).

Gawwada is also interesting in an areal perspective because, different from many languages of the Horn of Africa, it does not have recourse to clefts; instead, presence vs. absence of Subject-Verb agreement, presence vs. absence of Subject Clitics, contrastive particles, and, to a lesser degree, word order change and object-incorporation are all used, either alone or in combination.

As a final word, this study – based almost entirely on oral texts and spontaneous conversations – has shown once again how only through the painstaking analysis of spontaneous textual material one may hope to arrive at disentangling the complexity of pragmatic marking in natural languages.

Abbreviations

ART	article (in Somali)	M	masculine
ASSOC	associative	MID	middle
CAUS	causative	MOV	mover
CONS	consecutive	NEG	negative
CONTR	contrast	OBJ	object
DEICT	deictic	OUT	centrifugal
DIFF	diffusive	PASS	passive
F	feminine	PST	past (in Somali)
FOC	focus marker (in Somali)	PFV	perfective
FUT	future	PL	plural
GEN	generic	PLUR	plurative
IDEOPH	ideophone	POSS	possessive
IDP	independent	REC	reciprocal/reflexive
IMP	imperative	SBJ	subject
IN	centripetal	SEM	semelfactive
INT	intensive	SG	singular
IPFV	imperfective	SING	singulative
INGR	ingressive	SPEC	specific
INSTR	instrumental	VN	verbal noun
JUSS	jussive	1, 2, 3	1st, 2nd, 3rd person
LINK	linker		

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