On the realization, representation, and prosodic function of Somali topic-marking
Christopher R. Green and Michelle E. Morrison - University of Maryland-CASL

There is little mention of topic-marking in the descriptive literature on Somali. This is due, in part, to the fact that some instances of topic-marking have heretofore been cited under the heading of "subject-marking" given earlier assumptions that Somali has a grammatical case system (e.g., Le Gac 2003; Saeed 1993, 1999). Regardless of the term used to refer to it, both the structure and functions of topic-marking in Somali remain poorly understood. From a phonological perspective, topic-marking is interesting because at first glance it does not appear to be manifested in an overtly consistent way. As we illustrate below, this is because one way that Somali indicates topical material is with a clitic, and the various surface realizations of this clitic are largely dependent on the prosodic and segmental structure of its host, as well as the presence of other clitics. By taking a closer look at the characteristics of Somali prosodic structure, however, we illustrate that the various surface realizations of topic-marking emerge in principled and predictable ways. Our goals are two-fold.
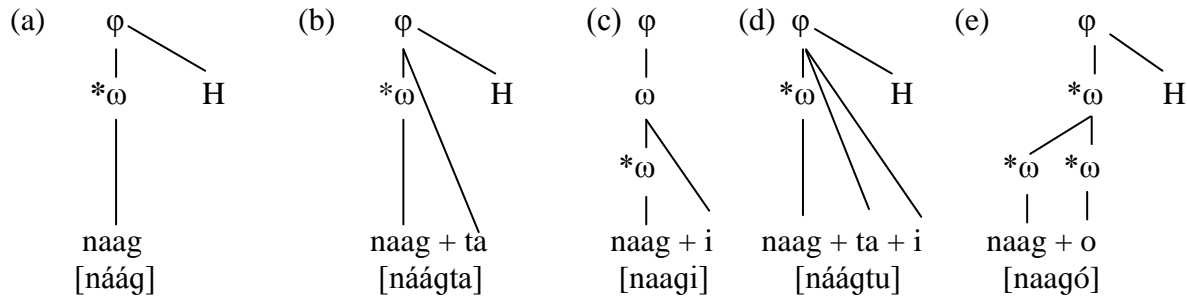
First, we aim to provide a more thorough description of the segmental and prosodic realizations of topic-marking via cliticization in Somali, focusing on the process from both phenomenological and representational points of view. Somali topic-marking is a phrase-level phenomenon with a range of surface realizations. Any phrase-final word in a noun phrase can host a topic marker clitic (TMC); this includes a verb in instances where a noun is modified by a relative clause. Describing Somali topic-marking is challenging because the TMC affects what we refer to as the citation form of a word, and its overt effects can be i) prosodic; ii) segmental; or iii) both prosodic and segmental. In the simplest cases, topic-marked words lose their high (H) tone; every Somali prosodic word (PWd) has one and only one surface H tonal accent. For example, the noun **nín** 'man' is **nin** when topic-marked. We can illustrate segmental topic-marking by adding the definite determiner clitic **–ka** to this noun; the phrase **nínka** 'the man' is **nínku** when topic-marked. Here, the tonal accent of the noun is not affected by topic-marking. Finally, a noun like **náág** 'woman' is topic-marked both segmentally and by the removal of its tonal accent, i.e., **naagi**. These are among the simplest illustrations of topic-marking; the examples that follow in (1) show several more complex realizations that will be dealt with in this presentation.

(1)	Non-topic-marked	Topic-marked	Gloss
a.	madaxweyníhíí	madaxweyníhii	'the president'
b.	tuuládóó	tuuládooyi	'that (distant) village
c.	qálinkâyga	qálinkâygu	'my pen'
d.	wíílkíí wanaagsán	wíílkíí wanaagsani	'the good boy'
e.	wíílka dhêer ee wêyn	wíílka dhêer ee weyni	'the big tall boy'
f.	nínka imáneyá	nínka imáneyaa	'the man who is coming'

We will propose that the Somali topic marker is an affixal clitic that preferentially binds to the PWd domain. It also binds directly to the phonological phrase (PPh) domain in some instances, as a last resort; several representations are given in (2). We illustrate that the TMC has different segmental realizations when it binds to the PWd vs. PPh domain. In addition, we show that the TMC has an overt tonal effect by default, but this is realized only when it adjoins directly to the PWd domain. A typical Somali noun has a H tonal accent (2a) and its tone is unaffected by the addition of a definite determiner, which is a free clitic, bound directly to the PPh domain (2b). We show that, as an affixal clitic, the TMC introduces a recursive PWd domain, which effectively blocks access and association of phrasal H tones to accents assigned in the lower PWd (2c). Because topic-marking must occur phrase-finally, other clitics may intervene, thereby affecting the realization of the TMC. When a free clitic intervenes, the TMC must adjoin to the PPh; there is no tonal effect on the noun (2d). In these

and other examples it becomes clear that resyllabification to add the TMC occurs only at the PWd level; coalescence occurs instead at the PPh level. Importantly, the outcomes of cliticization are notably different from those resulting from adjunction in derivation (2e).

(2) Representation of cliticization vs. adjunction

(a) φ   (b) φ   (c) φ   (d) φ   (e) φ

    *ω   H   *ω   H   ω   *ω   H   *ω   H

                      *ω   *ω *ω

naag   naag + tà   naag + i   naag + ta + i   naag + o

[náág]   [náágta]   [naagi]   [náágtu]   [naagó]

Our second goal is to explore the correlation between these phonological realizations of topic-marking alongside the current state of the science on Somali information structure. We assume that a focus-marked subject is the 'default' state. We show that while topical (given, discourse-old) information in a sentence is indicated at a broader level by movement of a noun phrase away from a focus marker, topic-marking via the TMC, as described above, is another degree of topicalization used only to indicate a topical subject. Secondary topic-marking via the TMC is primarily deaccentuating, and its segmental reflexes are predictable from the shape of the host. The overall relationship is schematized as follows:

	+Topic	-Topic
- Subject	$[cv́cv́]_\varphi$ … focus + OP	$[cv́cv́]_\varphi$ focus + OP
+ Subject	$[cvcv]_\varphi$ (-i)$]_\varphi$ ... focus +/- OP	$[cv́cv́]_\varphi$ focus

Topicalization via deaccentuation aligns with leading perspectives on the relationship between givenness and prosodic marking (e.g., Baumann 2006; Büring 2011; Ladd 1996). The literature shows a cross-linguistic tendency for discourse-new or focused information to be prosodically-marked or accented, while given, topicalized information is deaccentuated. We suggest that this is in line with the prosodic function of topic-marking in Somali, where the most topicalized material (a topical subject) is deaccentuated, unless another clitic intervenes.

      With these data and observations explained, we argue that an analysis centered on two degrees of topicalization is superior to earlier analyses referring to the morphophonological phenomenon described above as subject-marking. Primary topic-marking is consistently in relation to movement, and prosodic topic-marking is reserved for topicalized subjects. Previous analyses centered on subject-marking fail to explain why only a specific type of subject can, in fact, be marked as such.

Selected References

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