The Syntax of Focus and Interrogation in Awing: a Descriptive Approach

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According to Aikhenvald (2007:5), descriptive linguistics or linguistic fieldwork "*ideally involves observing the language as it is used, becoming a member of the community, and often being adopted into the kinship system*". Descriptive linguistics therefore differs from theoretical linguistics in that while the former seeks to describe natural languages as they are used, the latter, other than describing, attempts to give explanations on how or why language phenomena behave in certain ways. Thus, I will abstract away from any preconceived ideas on how sentences ought to be in Awing and take the linguist/reader through focus and interrogative constructions to get a feeling of how the Awing people interact verbally.

Keywords: Awing, focus realization, question formation, descriptive grammar

1   Introduction

This paper describes the various ways to realize focus and interrogative constructions in Awing[1], a Grassfield Bantu language spoken in the North West Region of Cameroon. The first section deals with the different methods that Awing native speakers have recourse to in order to emphasize a given constituent (information structuring). The second part of the paper tackles interrogative constructions. I begin with a detailed presentation of content

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[1]   The Awing language numbers about 20.000 speakers according to the Awing Civil Status Registrar (2006). The language cannot boast of any substantial scientific work. The data presented here is from the authors own native intuition, in corroboration with other native speakers.

question words and end with a cursory description of other interrogative constructions such as: yes-no questions, questioning by truncation, tag questions, echo questions, alternative questions and modal inversion in question formation.

The Awing empirical data presented in this paper demonstrate some obvious similarities between Awing and other Bantu languages, including the phenomena of morphological focus marking, obligatory focus marking in *ex-situ* contexts, verb doubling in predicate focusing and wh-expressions optionally realized in their base generated positions or in sentence-initial positions. However, the Awing data also show some properties not common in the literature. This will include, among others, the realization of a so-called focus marker (FM)[2] in post-verbal positions. In this vein, we will see that wh-expressions can occur either with or without the FM *in-situ*, but that the FM is obligatory in *ex-situ* contexts—in parallel with focusing. Awing also displays what might be considered multiple realization of post-verbal foci with the overt realization of the FM. However, the FM cannot be realized successively with multiple wh-expressions, although focusing and wh-expressions exhibit the same structural patterns in this language. In polar question formation, the Awing language interlocks phonology and syntax by lengthening the final phoneme of a sentence-final morpheme to type the clause as interrogative. Moreover, while going through the Awing data, one will notice that (almost) all content words (i.e. nouns, verbs and adjectives/adverbs) in this language have long and short forms. This will introduce us to a morpho-syntactic structure in which the verb and the direct object are truncated in order to type the clause as interrogative.

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[2]   Abbreviations: ASP: Aspect marker; COP: Copular verb; F1: Future one; F2: Future two; F3: Future three; FM: Focus marker; INF: Infinitive; LINK: Linking morpheme; LP: Lengthened phoneme; NEG: Negation marker; NP: Noun phrase; PLU: Plural marker; PP: Prepositional phrase; P1: Past one; P2: Past two; P3: Past three; QM: Question marker; SM: Subject marker; TM: Tense marker; TOP: Topic marker; TQ: Tag question marker; ?: Contextually/pragmatically not fit; *?: Mild ungrammaticality; *: Ungrammaticality.

The paper is organised as follows. Section **2** discusses focus realization. But first, Section **2.1** presents the various functions the *lə́* morpheme (i.e. the alleged FM) can assume apart from associating with focus. In section **2.2,** I concentrate on how focus is realized with the *lə́* morpheme. Section **2.3** describes the morpho-syntactic marking of focus, which will be seen as the rearrangement of the sentence by displacing the focused phrase to sentence-initial position. Note that I will leave aside the question here of whether it is theoretically warranted to consider the *lə́* morpheme to be a FM. I will gloss the morpheme as the FM whenever it occurs with a focused phrase and it clearly does not fulfil any of the other functions the morpheme has. Section **2.4** will tackle predicate focus constructions while section **2.5** will be dealing with predicate focus and wh-expressions. Then section **3** discusses interrogative clauses. In section **3.1**, the overall organisation of matrix wh-expressions is presented. Section **3.2** will continue with wh-expressions in embedded clauses while section **3.3** will have to do with multiple wh-expressions. In this section, we will see that unlikeEnglish, Awing demonstrates no superiority effects. The rest of the work will be dedicated to other question types and section **4** presents the conclusive remarks.

2   Focus-marking in Awing

Focusing can be considered as the structuring of sentences via a wide range of techniques: prosodic, morphological and syntactic means, in order to introduce information assumed to be unfamiliar to the addressee. The Awing language appears to use each of these three methods to achieve focusing. However, prosody in focusing will not be discussed here, since it is not clear how this functions in Awing in particular and tonal languages in general, or if the grammars of tonal languages truly make use of prosody in focusing.

Nevertheless, it is important to mention from the onset that morphological focus-marking is only used in this language when the intention is to contrast, correct or indicate an exhaustive nature of the focused phrase. In other words, a focused phrase does not necessarily need to be realized with the particular morpheme that is considered to be the focus marker in Fominyam (2012). For example, in both subject and object focus, as those below, the assumed focus marker may not be used with the focus.

(1) a.   Alombah à   pí náŋnə̀ kə́   b.   Alombah à   pí náŋnə̀ ndzǒ
          Alombah SM P1 cook what   Alombah SM P1 cook beans
          'What did Alombah cook?'   'Alombah cooked **beans.**'

     c.   #Alombah à   pí náŋnə̀ lə́ ndzo
          Alombah SM P1 cook FM beans
          'Alombah SM P1 cook beans.'

(2) a.   Wə́ pí náŋnə̀ ndzǒ   b.   Alombah à   pí náŋnə̀ ndzǒ
          who P1 cook beans   Alombah SM P1 cook beans
          'Who cooked beans?'   'Alombah cooked beans.'

     c.   *Lə́ Alombah à   pí náŋnə̀ ndzǒ
          FM Alomnah SM P1 cook beans
          'Alombah cooked beans.'

Example (1c) is not a felicitous reply to (1a). This is due to a contrastive and/or corrective interpretation attributed to the focused phrase when associated with the *lə́* morpheme. (2c) is ungrammatical not only because of the *lə́* morpheme but also due to the syntactic position of the focused subject; we return to this in section **2.3**. However, I will label this *lə́* morpheme as the F(ocus) M(arker) (FM in order not to get into any theoretical arguments.

2.1 *lə́* as a multifunctional morpheme

The *lə́* morpheme can be interpreted as the verb 'be' in copular clauses, as shown in the examples in (3) through (6).

Specification:

(3) a. əlɛ́n nə́ lə́ Alombah   Or   b. Alombah lə́ əlɛ́n yə́
         Name his ?   Alombah   Alombah ? name his
         'His name is Alombah.'   'Alombah is his name.'

(4) a. Àlàŋə́ Santa lə́ chígə́ ndú yí   shí'nə̀
         Road Santa ? really way LINK good
         'The Santa road is the best way.'

                Or

     b. Chígə̀ ndú yí   shí'nə̀ lə́ àláŋə̀ Santa
         Really way LINK good   ? road Santa
         'The best way is the Santa road.'

Equative:

(5)   Ngáŋ mbə́wíŋə̀ lə́ pó
         People Awing   ? them
         'The Awing people are them.' (i.e. the exact type of people you need)

Identification:

(6) a. Líə̀ (lə́)ndzímə̀ mə̀   b. Mɔ́-mbyáŋnə̀ yíə́ *(lə́)ndzímə̀ mə̀
         That ? brother my   Child-man   that ? brother my
         'That's my brother.'   'That boy is my brother.'

Unlike in English, the copula is optional (cf. 6a) when the demonstrative determiner is not used with a specific noun, but when there is a nominal (cf. 6b),

the copula must be used.[3] As for copular clauses, it appears that the copula *lɔ́* can only be used with nominal arguments (i.e. NP *be* NP). Thus, we cannot use a copula with a bare adjective, like 'The house is big' or 'The Santa road is faster', — as shown in (7) below.

(7)   *Àláŋɔ̀ Santa lɔ́ záŋkɔ̀-ngénɔ̀
           Road   Santa ? quick-go
           Intended: 'The Santa road is faster.'

Instead, it should be:

(8)   Àláŋɔ̀ Santa ɔ̀ záŋkɔ̀-ngénɔ̀
           Road   Santa ? quick-go
           'The Santa road is faster.'

The *ɔ̀* morpheme in (8) is the same morpheme that shows up in this language as a non-animate subject marker (SM). I will not make any speculations as to whether this word functions in (8) as a copula, a subject marker or a pronoun. Moreover, it is argued by some researchers that the copula used in sentences as those above might involve different lexical items from a semantic point of view, with a specification, identification, or equative meanings, (see Mikkelsen

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[3]   The morpheme considered to be the copula here is questionable. When sentences are constructed in the past tense, there is another morpheme that shows up and is read as the copula. See examples below:

(i)   Mɔ́-mbyáŋnɔ̀ yíɔ́ nɔ́ mbɔ̀ lɔ́ ndzímɔ̀ mɔ̀
           Child-man   that P2 be   ? brother my
           'That boy was my brother.'

(ii)   Aghetse nɔ́ mbɔ̀ lɔ́ ndzé'kɔ̀-ŋwárɔ̀
           Aghetse P2 be   ? teach-book
           'Aghetse was a teacher.'

When sentences are constructed in the past tense as those above, neither the *mbɔ̀* 'be' nor the *lɔ́* morpheme can be omitted. However, since I am concerned with a descriptive presentation here, the question of whether *lɔ́* or *mbɔ̀* is the correct copula is postponed for future research.

(2005)). For the purpose of this overview, I consider it sufficient to conclude that *lə́* in the above examples functions as a copula.

The *lə́* morpheme is also used in sentences having a tense marker (TM) and a verb to render passivation possible, as shown in (9b).

(9)   a.   Alota à   pí ntsíə̀ mbə́ndé
           Alota SM P1 push   wall
           'Alota pushed the wall' (active /neutral sentence)

      b.   Mbə̀ndé lə́ pí ntsíə̀ Alota
           Wall   ? P1 push   Alota
           'The wall was pushed by Alota' (passive sentence)

In the examples below, *lə́* is considered to be the FM. It precedes the focused phrase which can be realized post-verbally or in sentence-initial position.

(10) a.   Ngwe à   pí nghὲnə̀ lə́ fú
           Ngwe SM P1 go   FM where
           'Where has Ngwe gone to?'

      b.   (Ngwe) à   pí nghὲnə̀ lə́   mə̀téènə̀
           Ngwe   SM P1 go   FM market
           'Ngwe/he went to the MARKET.' (not to the hospital or the farm)

      c.   *(Lə́) mə̀téènə̀ pá'à (Ngwe) à   pí nghὲnə̀
           FM   market   that Ngwe   SM P1 go
           'Ngwe/he went to the MARKET.' (not to the hospital or the farm)

With the example in (11b), the *lə́* morpheme functions as an additive topic marker. The sentence in (11a) creates an appropriate context for (11b).

(11) a.   Fominyam à   nə́ nfé àŋwárè àmbó pó   píè
          Fominyam SM P2 give book to   children his
          'Fominyam gave books to his children.'

b.   Azise *(lə́), Fominyam a   nə̀ kə́   nfé àŋwárè àmbó *(yí)
      Azise TOP Fominyam SM P2 also give book   to   her
      'How about Azise, did Fominyam give her a book, too?'

The asterisks on the parentheses in example (11b) indicate that this morpheme cannot be optional when the intended interpretation is required. Notice that the resumptive pronoun in (11b) cannot be omitted either.

   Lastly, the *lə́* morpheme can be used as an adversative conjunction (cf. 12).

(12)   ə̀lɛ́n nə̀ lə́ Alombah **lə́** zó   lə́ Alota
          Name his is Alombah but yours is Alota
          'His name is Alombah but yours is Alota.'

The above data show that the *lə́* morpheme in this language functions as: (i) the verb 'be' in copular clauses, (ii) an element rendering passivation possible, (iii) a focus marker (must precede the focalized item), (iv) a topic marker (must follow the topicalized item), and (v) a conjunction (opposing the predication of two clauses). In what follows, I use this morpheme as in example (10) and simply gloss it as the FM.

2.2 Morphological marking of focus

The morphological means of focus-marking introduces a morphological element to the focused phrase. In the case of Awing, the FM always precedes the focused phrase. When the morpheme precedes a constituent, the latter may be unfamiliar but necessarily construed as contrastive and/or corrective depending on the context. The first part of this section will deal with focused elements within the lower domain (i.e., the area below the complementizer layer). We will call this *in-situ* focus since focused phrases in this domain do not display any syntactic movement. In *in-situ* focusing, the *lə́* morpheme targets constituents that follow the verb. The verb and the subject in Awing can only be focused by means of syntactic displacement. Consider the examples below which show for each

constituent that it is interpreted as contrastive when directly preceded by the *lə́* morpheme in post-verbal positions.

(13) a.   Ayafor à yó yí   lə́ ndé zónə̀   nɨ́ ŋkáp zíə̀
            Ayafor SM F1 come FM house tomorrow with money his
            'Ayafor will come to THE HOUSE tomorrow with his money' (not the market or on campus)

      b.   Ayafor à yó yí   ndé lə́ zónə̀   nɨ́ ŋkáp zíə̀
            Ayafor SM F1 come house FM tomorrow with money his
            'Ayafor will come to the house TOMORROW with his money' (not today or the day after tomorrow)

      c.   Ayafor à yó yí   ndé zónə̀   lə́ nɨ́ ŋkáp zíə̀
            Ayafor SM F1 come house tomorrow FM with money his
            'Ayafor will come to the house tomorrow WITH HIS MONEY' (not with any other item)

Caps are used throughout this paper to represent the focused phrases. In (13a) the direct object *ndé* 'THE HOUSE' is the focused element. Semantically, the speaker supposes that 'Ayafor' will bring his money to the house, not to the market place or to the school campus, but specifically to the house (contrastive focus). Likewise (13b) and (13c) will be interpreted on the same basis: 'Ayafor' will come tomorrow and no other day for (b), and 'Ayafor' will come with his money and nothing else for (13c). The *lə́* morpheme or FM obligatorily attributes a contrastive feature to the constituents it precedes *in-situ*. However, this morpheme cannot be merged with the verb and the subject *in-situ*, as the ungrammaticality of the examples below indicate.

(14) a. *Lə́ Ayafor à yó yíə̀ ndé   zónə̀   nɨ́ ŋkáp zíə̀
             FM Ayafor SM F1 come house   tomorrow with money his
             Intended: 'AYAFOR will come to the house tomorrow with his money'

b. *Ayafor à   yó   lə́   yíə̀   ndé   zónə̀   nɨ́   ŋkáp   zíə̀
    Ayafor SM F1 FM come house tomorrow with money his
    Intended: 'Ayafor will COME to the house tomorrow with his money'

The grammatical subject and the verb cannot be morphologically focus-marked *in-situ*. In order to focalize the verb, the structure will have to double the verb in sentence-final position (to be made obvious as we proceed). On the other hand, when subjects are focalized, they cannot remain in their canonical positions, as seen in example (15), where the subject is obligatorily followed by the relative marker pá'á[4] 'that' and the subject marker, respectively.

(15)   Lə́ Ayafor *(pá'à) *(à) yó yíə̀   ndé   zónə̀   nɨ́   ŋkáp   zíə̀
        FM Ayafor   that   SM F1 come house tomorrow with money his
        'It is Ayafor that will come to the house tomorrow with his money'

The main difference between (14a) and (15) is the absence of the relative marker 'that'. The reasoning is that the subject in (14a) has been displaced from within the IP domain to the complementizer domain and as such, an overt linker is needed (as shown by the relative marker *pá'à* 'that' in (15)) to link the focused expression to the IP.

One striking phenomenon in Awing is that more than one constituent can be focalized post-verbally. In such cases, the FM will precede any constituent which the speaker intends to make salient. Note, however, that in such a situation the speaker is trying to contradict/correct what s/he believes the listener(s) knows about the targeted constituents. An example like (16) can most naturally occur in an argumentative context in which one of the speakers decides to show some degree of knowledge or pragmatically foregone conclusion—by

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[4]   The status of the *pá'à* morpheme has been altered here. In Fominyam (2012), I consider this morpheme a complementizer, in complementary distribution with *ngə́*, and glossed both morphemes as 'that'. However, this morpheme cannot be seen as such since it can only occur in the left periphery preceded by focalized or relativized nominals, or wh-expressions.

using the *lə́* morpheme to indicate the exact status of the constituents following it.

(16) a.   Ayafor à   yó yí   lə́ ndé, lə́ zónə̀   nɨ́ ŋkáp zíə̀
          Ayafor SM F1 come FM house FM tomorrow with money his
          'Ayafor will come to THE HOUSE, TOMORROW with his money'

    b.   Ayafor à   yó yí   lə́ ndé, lə́ zónə̀,   lə́ nɨ́ ŋkáp zíə̀
          Ayafor SM F1 come FM house FM tomorrow FM with money his
          'Ayafor will come to THE HOUSE, TOMORROW, WITH HIS
           MONEY'

Example (16a) presents two foci while (16b) has three. However, these examples may not constitute a single phonological sequence. There is a phonological pause after each constituent preceded by the *lə́* morpheme (indicated with a comma). The discussion so far reveals that there is a lower focus domain in Awing, a post-verbal position which can accommodate focused phrases. Unlike in most languages where the alleged FM shows up only within the left peripheral domain (see Reineke 2007 for Byali; Aboh 2007 for Gungbe; Biloa 2014 for Tuki; Bassong 2014 for Basa'a, among others), Awing has such a morpheme in sentence-internal position. We now turn to displaced focused phrases.

2.3 Morpho-syntactic marking of focus

Morpho-syntactic marking of focus constitutes the displacement of constituents (i.e., phrasal movements) with the obligatory use of the FM in Awing. The displaced constituents move to sentence-initial position. Such phrasal movements, just as what we have been discussing concerning focusing in general, are motivated by either the speaker's assessment of the hearer's degree of ignorance, or most importantly, the speaker's intention to correct the hearer's strength of contrary belief. A further pragmatic investigation (Fominyam in

progress) reveals that speakers of this language often move constituents to sentence-initial position when they intend to portray paralinguistic[5] attitudes such as surprise or annoyance, indicating that this movement is not imposed by any grammatical condition, but rather a free choice of the speaker.

However, the assertion that moved foci are not imposed by the grammar may not apply to subject focusing[6]. It is conceivable that the morpho-syntactic focus-marking strategy in Awing involves a cleft structure. These cleft-like sentences are structures in which a constituent is extracted from its base-generated position and set off (moved to the C-domain) with additional elements. In English, the additional elements consist of the expletive subject 'it' with the verb 'is', —the existential verb 'to be'. These two combine to form the copula construction 'it is'.

In Awing, the cleft-like sentence is introduced with what I have so far considered the focus marker (FM). Zerbian (2006) also notes that for some Bantu languages, it has been argued that the copula underwent grammaticalization towards a focus marker. As we have already seen, this is supported by the fact that the FM can be interpreted as 'is' (3rd person singular present of 'be'). The pattern is as follows. The FM introduces the focus-marked constituent in sentence-initial position, that is, the constituent that is focalized follows the FM and a relative marker immediately follows the latter. The relative marker *pá'à* 'that' is mandatory and as such, the focus sentence will be ungrammatical without it. Consider the following examples where any

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[5]   I will not discuss this further here. I refer the reader to the manuscript 'On some aspects of *in-situ* and *ex-situ* foci in Awing—why move to the C-domain'? (Fominyam in progress).

[6]   This is a theoretical issue which needs further investigation. Moreover, subjects can be focalized *in-situ* under the label of prosodic focus marking, which is completely ignored in this paper. In such cases, the focused subject remains *in-situ* with no overt focus marking clue.

constituent within the lower domain can be preposed (except the predicate). (17a) is the input sentence.

(17) a.   Ayafor à yó yíə ndé zónə   nɨ ŋkáp zíə ghá-kwánə
                Ayafor SM F1 come house tomorrow with money his   time-back
                'Ayafor will come to the house tomorrow evening with his money.'

     b.   subject displacement:
           Lə Ayafor pá'à à   yó yíə   ndé zónə nɨ ŋkáp zíə ghá-kwánə
           FM Ayafor that SM F1 come house tom. with money his time-back
         'It is Ayafor that will come to the house with his money tomorrow
          evening'

     c.   direct object displacement:
          Lə ndé   pá'à Ayafor à yó yíə zónə nɨ ŋkáp zíə ghá-kwánə
          FM house that Ayafor SM F1 come tom. with money his time-back
         'It is in the house that Ayafor will come with his money tomorrow
         evening'

     d.   time adverbial displacement:
          Lə ghá-kwánə pá'à Ayafor à yó yíə   ndé zónə nɨ ŋkáp zíə
          FM time-back that Ayafor SM F1 come house tom. with money his
         'It is in the evening that Ayafor will come to the house tomorrow with
          his money'

     e. Prepositional phrase displacement:
          Lə nɨ   ŋkáp yíə pá'à Ayafor à   yó yíə   ndé zónə
          FM with money his that Ayafor SM F1 come house tomorrow
          ghá-kwánə (nɨ   zə́rə)
          time-back with it
         'It is with his money that Ayafor will come to the house tomorrow
         evening'

From (17a–e), one notices that every constituent within the lower domain except the predicate can be preposed. When these constituents are in sentence-initial position, they are not resumed within the lower clause. However, the prepositional phrase (PP) is an exception to this generalization as there can be an optional preposition with a pronoun in the lower domain. We have seen that any

constituent but the verb can move to sentence-initial position. So how is verb-focus achieved in this language?

2.4 Predicate focus constructions

In Awing, as in most Bantu languages (see, e.g., Nkemnji 1995; Mutaka & Tamanji 2000), the overall sentence ends up having two verbs when there is verb focus. Specifically in Awing, a conjugated form of the verb appears in the canonical position and an infinitive form shows up in sentence-final position. It is the second or final copy that is morphologically focus-marked. Example (18) below illustrates this for a non-transitive verb.

(18) a. Seh à   pí   ŋkíŋə̀   b.   Seh à   pí   ŋkíŋ lə́   kíŋ-nə̀
         Seh SM   P1   cry   Seh SM   P1   cry   FM   cry-INF.
         'Seh cried'   'Seh (actually) CRIED'

     c. *Seh à   lə́   kíŋ kíŋ-nə̀   d. ? Seh à   pí   kíŋ kíŋ-nə̀
          Seh SM FM   cry cry- INF   Seh SM   F1   cry cry-INF
          Intended: Seh (actually) CRIED'   Intended: 'Seh (actually) CRIED'

The example in (18c) is ungrammatical because the focus marker precedes the first verb rather than the second one. The ungrammaticality of (18d) is a mild one because there is no FM. Some speakers may even use sentences like (18d) in predicate focusing. But then, the sentence in (18d) will not have the same contrastive verb-focus interpretation like that in (18a). (18d) will be interpreted as a sort of verbal intensification—increasing the degree of the action (adverbial). The suffix –*nə̀* that appears in the second verb is one of the infinitive markers of this language (cf. Fominyam 2012: Chapter 2). Example (19) shows another verb focus example, this time with a transitive verb.

(19) a. Seh lá'à pó'ə̀ mɔ́   yíə̀   b.   Seh lá'à pó'ə̀ mɔ́   yíə̀ *(lə́) pó'-nə̀
         Seh F3   beat child her   Seh F3   beat child her FM   beat-INF
         'Seh shall beat her child.'   'Seh shall BEAT her child.'

Notice that the FM comes after the direct object 'her child' and immediately precedes the duplicate or second verb. In such a position, the focus marker cannot be optional, as the asterisk on the parentheses indicates. Unlike in the cleft-like constructions where a focused item is in sentence-initial position, focused verbs show up in 'sentence-final position' in descriptive terms.

2.5 Predicate focusing and wh-expressions

It is possible to have a predicate-focused construction in Awing where the subject is questioned with the use of a wh-expression. Consider (20) where different ways of forming such questions are presented. (20a) is the input sentence.

(20) a.   Montoh à yó pó'ə mɔ́   yíə̀
        Montoh SM F1 beat child her
      'Montoh will beat her child' (declarative)

     b.   Montoh à yó pó'ə mɔ́ yíə̀ lə́ pó'-nə̀
           Montoh SM F1 beat childhis FM beat-INF
         'Montoh will BEAT her child' (declarative with verb focus)

Interrogatives:

     c.   Wə́ yó pó'ə mɔ́   yíə̀?
          WhoF1 beat child her
         'Who will beat her child?' (Interrogative with the wh-expression in-situ)

     d.   Lə́ wə́ pá'à à   yó pó'ə mɔ́   yíə̀?
          FM who that SM F1 beat child her
         'WHO will beat her child?' (Interrogative with subject displacement)

     e.   Wə́ yó pó'ə mɔ́   yíə̀ lé pó'-nə̀?
          who F1 beat child her FM beat-INF
         'Who will BEAT her child?' (Interrogative with verb doubling)

f.   Lə́ wə́ pá'a à   yó pó'ə mə́ yíə̀ lə́ pó'-nə̀?
FM who that SM F1 beat childher FM beat-INF
'WHO will BEAT her child?'(Interrogative with verb doubling and
 wh-subject displacement)

g.   Lə́ yó pó'ə wə́ pó'ə mə́   yíə̀?
FM F1 beat who beat child her
'WHO will BEAT her child?' (Interrogative with emphasis on in-situ
wh-subject and verb doubling)

(20a–g) show various ways that can be used to form the question(s) 'who/WHO will BEAT her child?' (20a) is the neutral declarative sentence. (20b) presents a simple predicate focus where the focused verb ends up in sentence-final position. Here the intention is to contrast the focused verb 'BEAT' with its implicit alternatives, say to pamper or indulge. (20c) questions 'who will beat her child?'. In (20d) the wh-expression is in sentence-initial position and, as such, emphasis is laid on the 'WHO'. Notice that in both (20c) and (20d), the verb is not focalized. The difference between (20e) and (20f) is that in the former, the speaker just wants to know who will beat the child (instead of pampering him/her), in the latter s/he wants to know what type of an individual (focusing/emphasis) will beat the child, instead of pampering him/her. The movement of constituents in (20f) and (20g) seems more intriguing.

Note that in (20f), the wh-word has been moved to sentence-initial position. In addition, the second copy of the verb is focalized in sentence-final position. This results in the overall sentence having two FMs. The (20g) sentence involves only one focus marking, yet there are two copies of the verb. The movement in (20g) seems to be more complex than that of (20f). Notice that in (20g), the tense marker (F1) and one copy of the verb precede the wh-word. However, it is worth mentioning that although (20e–g) are all understood as wh-questions with predicate focusing, there are subtle semantic/pragmatic differences between them. The semantic interpretation of the focused verb

'BEAT' in (20e) and (20f) is different from that of (20g). This may be due to the fact that the FM immediately precedes the verbs in (20e) and (20f), which is not the case in (20g). Actually, (20g) is interpreted rather as an intensified verbal situation—that is, the second copy of the verb acts as an adverbial. Thus, (20e) and (20f) have contrastive verb-focus which seems not to be the case with (20g), and similar examples given below in (21). Also observe that in what I am terming 'intensification verb-doubling contexts', the second copy of the verb does not bear the infinitive marker (cf. 21), and thus the two copies are not realized the same way.

(21) a.   Lə́ nə́ŋkíŋ wə́ ŋkíŋə̀?   b.   Lə́ nə́ mbén wə́ mbénə̀ ə̀pènnə́?
       FM P2 cry who cry   FM P2 dance who dance music
       'Who CRIED?'   'Who DANCED?' or 'who DANCED
                              the dance/music?'

    c.   Lə́ pí ntú wə́ ntú'ə̀ ŋkíə̀?   d.   Lə́ yó tú wə́ tú'ə̀ ŋkíə̀?
       FM P1 carry who carry water   FM F1 carry who carry water
       'Who CARRIED the water?'   'Who will CARRY the water?'

An important systematic observation in Awing that is worth mentioning is how tense influences the phonology of the verb. When the tense is in the past, the verb is prefixed with a homorganic nasal which is not present when the clause is realized with a future tense marker (see (21c) and (21d)). However, I cannot currently provide a complete account of why one of the verbal copies in examples (20g) and (21) must not appear with the final schwa (ə̀). It may well be that the schwa is a residue of the infinitive particle or the entire verbal complex. Nonetheless, what is clear is that the form of the verb without the schwa is a truncated form, and it is common in Awing to truncate verbs when certain syntactic interpretations are activated (section **3.4.3** will have more to say on this). The above discussion shows the possibility of having a wh-expression and a focalized verb in the same sentence. We have seen a good number of examples

with the subject. It is also possible to have both subject and object questioned with verb doubling as in (22). However, recall that this is another example of 'intensification context', and not actually contrastive verb-focus.

(22)   Lə́ pén   wə́ mbénə̀ kə́?
         FM dance who dance   what
         'Who is DANCING what?'

We can therefore conclude our discussion on focusing by asserting that the Awing language uses mainly two ways to focalize items (ignoring prosody). Categories within the IP domain receive a contrastive-focus interpretation when preceded by the FM. This has been termed morphological marking of focus, and we have seen that more than two constituents can be focalized with this method. The second method we have come across is the morpho-syntactic means of focusing. The Awing language may use cleft-like sentences to focus any item in sentence-initial position. This section then ends with verbal focusing: when a verb is focused, the sentence ends up having two copies of the same verb. Structurally, we have seen that the second copy occurs in sentence-final position. The next section tackles interrogatives and begins with wh-expressions.

3   Interrogation in Awing

In this section, we will discuss the overall organisation of wh-questions in Awing. The section will begin with words that express wh-expressions such as *who, what, where, when, why* and *how*. Unlike in English where these words obligatorily move to sentence-initial position or Mandarin Chinese where wh-words must remain in their canonical positions (*in-situ*), Awing exhibits a mixed structure—wh-words can remain *in-situ* or move to sentence-initial position. When the wh-expressions move to sentence-initial positions, they behave exactly like cleft-like constructions. That is, the focus marker must precede the

wh-word and the latter is obligatorily followed by the invariable relative marker *pá'à* 'that'. It is also possible to have a question morpheme in sentence-final position. The question morpheme is optional and when present, the interrogative force of the entire sentence changes. Below are the wh-expressions used in Awing.

(23) Arguments: Referential adjuncts: Non-Referential adjuncts:
     (ə)wə́ 'who'   (ə)fú   'where'   (ə)lé   'how'
     (à)kə́ 'what'   (ə)ghá-kə̀ 'when'   (ə)té-kə̀ 'why'
                  time-what   ?-what

The initial vowels are in parentheses because they are seldom perceived in actual speech. The referential adjunct 'when' is a combination of the noun 'time' and the argument 'what'. Also notice that the non-referential adjunct 'how' is a combination, though the first part is not evident[7].

3.1 Matrix wh-expressions

It is possible to have wh-expressions both in sentence-final and sentence-initial positions. Let us begin our description with the *in-situ* wh-expressions. In such cases, the realization of the FM is optional. As already mentioned, a question morpheme can also show up in sentence-final position. Consider (24) below.

(24) a. Neh yó yí   ní   mə́zíə̀ ndé   màŋ
      Neh F1 come with food   house my
      'Neh will bring food to my house' (declarative)

---

[7] But it can be argued to have been derived from the morpheme 'because', as shown below:

(i) m̀ ghénə̀ té   (ngə́) m̀ kɔ́ŋə̀
    I go   because that I love
    'I am leaving because I wish to.'

If this is correct, then the non-referential adjunct 'why' might be literally understood as 'because what?'

    b.   Neh yó yí   nɨ   məzíə (lə́) fú   (ló)?
        Neh F1   come with food   FM   whereQM
        'Where will Neh bring the food?'

The sentence in (24b) has two optional elements: the FM and a sentence-final question morpheme (QM). When the question is uttered without any of these elements, it simply questions the direct object in (24a). When the FM is used, the questioner creates a possibility where the answer or person that answers has to choose from an implicit set of locations. The additional question morpheme changes the status of the sentence to either a soliloquy or an echo question (whether the FM is present or not). It is also possible to question more than two constituents in their base generated positions. However, when the FM precedes one of the wh-expressions, it would be infelicitous to have it precede any other wh-word. See (25) for illustration.

(25) a.   Neh yó yí   nɨ   kə́   fú?
          Neh F1   come with what where
          'What will Neh bring, and where?'

      b.   Neh yó yí   lə́ nɨ   kə́   fú?
          Neh F1   come FM with what where
          'What will Neh bring, and where?'

      c.   Neh yó yí   nɨ   kə́   lə́ fú?
          Neh F1   come with what FM where
          'What will Neh bring, and where?'

      d. *?Neh yó yí   lə́ nɨ   kə́   lə́ fú?
           Neh F1   come FM with whatFM where
           Intended: 'What will Neh bring, and where?'

Using the FM twice is somehow redundant when constituents are questioned using wh-expressions. This is the main descriptive difference between wh-expressions and focused constituents. In the first section of this paper, we saw

that it was possible, morphologically, to focalize more than one constituent with the FM post-verbally. When it comes to wh-expressions, inserting the FM twice is not possible. Let us then see how wh-expressions behave when occurring sentence-initially.

One striking similarity between focused phrases and wh-expressions is seen when wh-expressions moves to sentence-initial position. When these expressions are preposed, they behave precisely like foci—the FM must precede the wh-expression and the *pá'à* 'that' morpheme obligatorily follows it. See examples below.

(26) a. Lə́ fú   pá'à Neh yó yí   nɨ   mə́zíə̀?
         FM where that   Neh F1 come with food
         'Where will Neh bring the food?'

     b. Lə́ wə́ pá'à à   yó yí   nɨ   mə́zíə̀ ndé màŋ?
         FM who that SM F1 come with food house my
         'Who will bring the food to my house?'

     c. Lə́ kə́   pá'à Neh yó yí   nɨ   zérə̀ ndé màŋ?
         FM what that Neh F1 come with it   house my
         'What will Neh bring to my house?'

The examples in (26) show that there is no difference between subject, object and adjunct in the movement of wh-expressions. (27) further illustrates the claim that neither the relativizer *pá'à* 'that' nor the FM can be omitted.

(27) a. *(Lə́) fú   *(pa'à) Neh yó yí   nɨ   mə́zíə̀?
          FM where   that   Neh F1 come with food
          'Where will Neh bring the food?'

If any wh-expression is used in place of the adjunct in (27), the sentence will still be ungrammatical.

3.2 Wh-expressions in embedded clauses

Embedded clauses in Awing can be introduced with predicates like *súŋə̀* 'tell/say', or *kwáŋə̀* 'believe/think'. In such constellations, a wh-expression can remain in sentence-final position or move to sentence-initial position within the embedded clause. Alternatively, the wh-expression can be realized in a matrix-initial position. The examples are given in (28) below where a wh-expression can occur either in its base position (28b), or move to the initial-position of the embedded clause (28c) and even all the way to the initial-position of the matrix clause (28d).

(28) a.   Aghetse à   kwáŋ ŋgə́ Ngwe à   kə́ŋə̀ Wakie
            Aghetse SM think that Ngwe SM love Wakie
            'Aghetse thinks that Ngwe loves Wakie' (Declarative)

     b.   Aghetse à   kwáŋ ŋgə́ Ngwe à   kə́ŋ(ə̀) (lə́) wə́?
            Aghetse SM think that Ngwe SM love   FM who
            'Who does Aghetse think that Ngwe loves?'

     c.   Aghetse à   kwáŋ ŋgə́ lə́ wə́ pá'à Ngwe à   kə́ŋə̀?
            Aghetse SM think that FM who that Ngwe SM love
            'Who does Aghetse think that Ngwe loves?'

     d.   Lə́ wə́ pá'à Aghetse à   kwáŋ ŋgə́ Ngwe à   kə́ŋə̀
            FM who that Aghetse SM think that Ngwe SM love
            'Who does Aghetse think that Ngwe loves?'

Notice that, though the examples in (28a–d) have the same English translation, their internal syntactic structures differ in Awing. It is quite free to have these expressions in any of these positions. However, their semantic/pragmatic interpretations are not quite the same. The main difference arises when the FM in (28b) is used or left out. For the time being, I will just mention that this different is felt as a sort of emphasis. When the FM is used, as in (28b), the emphasis is attributed in a similar manner to (28b–d).

3.3 Multiple wh-expressions

As previously mentioned, it is possible to form questions in the Awing language with more than two wh-expressions. However, it is most natural to have these expressions realized *in-situ*. In addition, multiple wh-expressions are best parsed if they are discourse-linked—that is, they should be made accessible via the immediate discourse context. (29a) gives us grounds to ask such questions.

(29) a.   Mefor à   pí ntúmə̀ ŋgə̀sáàŋə̀ àmbó Ayafor məsáànə̀
           Mefor SM P1 send   corn   to   Ayafor morning
           'Mefor sent corn to Ayafor in the morning'

    b.   Mefor à   pí ntú lə́ kə́   àmbó wə́ ghákə̀?
           Mefor SM P1 send FM what to   who when
           '?What did Mefor send to who, when?'

    c.   Lə́ kə́   pá'à wə́ pí ntúmə̀ àmbó Tsefor məsáànə̀?
           FM what that who P1 send   to   Tsefor morning
           '?What did who send to Tsefor in the morning?'

    d.   Lə́ àmbó wə́   pá'à wə́   pí ntúmə̀ ŋgə̀sáàŋə̀ məsáànə̀?
           FM to   who that who P1 send   corn   morning
           '?To who(m) did who send corn in the morning?'

    e.   Lə́ ghákə̀ pá'à wə́   pí ntúmə̀ ŋgə̀sáàŋə̀ àmbó Tsefor?
           FM when   that who P1 send   corn   to   Tsefor
           '?When did who send a corn to Tsefor?'

In order to formulate these types of questions, the constituents which are being questioned ought to be shared by both the speaker and the listener. In example (29b), all the post-verbal wh-expressions are realised *in-situ*. The examples in (29c–e) show that any wh-expression can cross-over the wh-subject[8]. Once more

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[8]   The notion of cross-over is a technical term used to describe the implausibility of the direct object or other post-verbal wh-expressions to move upward when the subject is also questioned in languages like English. It is a notion of hierarchy in multiple questioning.

I will not dive into any theoretical speculations relating to the phenomenon of cross-over violation, since that will take us beyond the scope and intention of this paper. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that when the wh-subject overtly moves as in (30b), or any wh-expression (cf. 30a), then no other wh-expression can cross-over—as demonstrated by the ungrammaticality of (30c) and (30d).

(30) a.   Aghetse à   kwáŋ ŋgə́ lə́ kə́   pá'à wə́ pí ntúmə̀ àmbó wə́?
           Aghetse SM think that FM what that who P1 send   to   who
           '?What does Aghetse think that who sent to who?'

     b. ?Aghetse à   kwáŋ ŋgə́ lə́ wə́ pá'à à   pí ntúmə̀ kə́   àmbó wə́?
           Aghetse SM think that FM who that SM P1 send   what to   who
           '?Who does Aghetse think that (he) sent what to who when?'

     c. *Lə́ kə́   pá'à Aghetsé à   kwáŋ ŋgə́ lə́ wə́ pá'à à   pí ntúmə̀
           FM what that Aghetse SM think that FM who that SM P1 send
           àmbo wə́?
           to   who

     d. *Lə́ àmbo wə́ pá'à Aghetsé à   kwáŋ ŋgə́ lə́ kə́   pá'à Mefor pí
           FM to   who that Aghetse SM think that FM what that Mefor P1
           ntúmə̀?
           send

Now notice that the sentence in (30b) is not considered to be a perfect sentence in Awing. It appears that in multiple wh-questions, the overall interpretation of these words are easier when the wh-subject is *in-situ*. This is curiously unlike what we find in the literature in the descriptions of languages like English. To make the point obvious, consider example (31b) and (31c).

(31) a.   Ayafor à   nə́ nkɔ́rə̀ ŋgə̀sáàŋə̀
           Ayafor SM P2 eat   corn
           'Ayafor ate corn'

b. ?Lə́ wə́ pá'à à nə́ nkɔ́rə̀ kə́?
   FM who that SM P2 eat what
   'Who ate what?'

c. Lə́ kə́ pá'à wə́ nə́ nkɔ́rə̀
   FM what that who P2 eat
   '?What did who eat?'—(Instead of who ate what; in English)

Compared toEnglish, the hierarchy is reversed in Awing—(31c) is preferred to (31b). We can therefore conclude that it is possible to have multiple wh-expression in question formation. These expressions can either remain *in-situ* or move to sentence-initial position both in matrix and embedded clauses. The movement of any post-verbal wh-expression to sentence-initial position does not matter as long as the wh-subject remains *in-situ*. However, if one of the wh-words occurs in the embedded-initial position, it creates a restriction for the other wh-expressions to successfully moveto the matrix clause.

3.4 Yes/no questions

In Awing, yes/no questions can be considered neutral questions in the sense that the response can either be negative *ə̀mə̀m* 'no' or positive *ə̀m* 'yes'. Yes/no questions can be marked by a separate question morpheme *éé* or by the lengthening of some final segment. Both forms of question marking— morphological marking and segment lengthening appear in clause-final position in the overt syntax. Let us consider lengthening to be phonological marking and the separate question morpheme morphological marking. We will see that morphological marking is the dominant strategy in the sense that all cases of lengthening can be avoided or replaced with the separate question morpheme but not vice versa.

3.4.1 Lengthening in yes/no questions

Lengthening is seen as phonological marking in the sense that the last phoneme of the last morpheme is repeated or lengthened. This phenomenon affects vowels and some nasals in Awing as the following examples illustrate. I label the lengthened phoneme LP, but bear in mind that it functions as the QM.

(32)   **Statements/Declarative**   **Questions**
   a.   Ngwe à   lá'à kɔ́ŋə̀ fɔ́   Ngwe à   lá'à kɔ́ŋə̀ fɔ́   ó?
       Ngwe SM F3   love Fon   Ngwe SM F3   love Fon LP
       'Ngwe shall love the Fon.'   'Shall Ngwe love the Fon?'

   b.   Ngwe à   tə́ kúnə mə́m ndé   Ngwe à   tə́   kúnə mə́m ndé   é?
       Ngwe SM ASP enter inside house   Ngwe SM ASP   enter inside house LP
       'Ngwe is entering the house.'   'Is Ngwe entering the house?'

   c.   Ngwe à   yó kɔ́rè mbíŋ   Ngwe à   yó kɔ́rè mbíŋ   ŋ́?
       Ngwe SM F1 eat goat   Ngwe SM F1 eat goat LP
       'Ngwe will eat goat.'   'Will Ngwe eat the goat?'

We can see from the above data that in the lengthening process, both vowels and nasals adopt/copy all the features of the preceding sound, a kind of tonal assimilation.

3.4.2 Morphological marking in yes/no questions

Yes/no questions can have a separate morpheme in sentence-final position. Thus, in all examples in (32), the LP can be replaced by a separate final question morpheme. For clarification, the questions in (32a) and (32c) are repeated below as (33a) and (33b).

(33) a.   Ngwe à   lá'à kɔ́ŋə̀ fɔ́   éé?   b.   Ngwe a   yó kɔ́rè mbíŋ   éé?
       Ngwe SM F3   love Fon QM   Ngwe SM F1 eat goat QM
       'Shall Ngwe love the Fon?'   'Will Ngwe eat the goat?'

Now, in order to corroborate the assertion made earlier concerning morphological marking dominating phonological marking, one will notice that words that end with oral stops or glottal stops and some bi-/tri-syllabic words, can be questioned with the morphological marker but not with the lengthening process as examples (34a') and (34b') illustrate.

(34) a. Alombah à kwárə̀ ŋkébə̀ éé? a'. ?Alombah à kwárə̀ ŋkébə̀ ə́
       Alombah SM take money QM   Alombah SM take money LP
       'Did Alombah take the money?'   'Alombah has taken the money'

  b. Alombah à kə́pómə̀ tsá'ə̀ éé?
     Alombah SM P1 mould block QM
     'Did Alombah mould blocks?'

  b'. ?Alombah à kə́ pómə̀ tsá'ə̀ ə́
     Alombah SM P1 mould block LP
     'Alombah mould the blocks.'

  c. Alombah à lá'à pómə̀ ndé məjíŋnè éé?
     Alombah SM F3 mould house grass QM
     'Shall Alombah build a grass house?'

  d. Alombah à píɲá'à ndé nɨ wâgə̀ éé?
     Alombah SM P1 open house with brutality QM
     'Did Alombah open the door brutally?'

In the above examples, the QM in sentence-final position is used to type each clause as interrogative. If the speaker decides not to resort to the *éé* morpheme, and tries to lengthen the final phonemes or sounds of the last morphemes, then the sentence will simply remain declarative (cf. (34a') and (34b'), which can be systematically extended to the other examples). Therefore, any declarative sentence can be transformed into an interrogative via the use of the final question marker but not all sentences can use the lengthening technique.

3.4.3 Yes/no questions formed through short forms of words

In this section, I present another technique used by the speakers of this language to form yes/no questions, namely the shortening/truncation of words within the sentence. It is interesting to note that no question morpheme is realized overtly. The examples in (35) below show this possibility in Awing.

(35)	**Declaratives**	**Questions/interrogatives**

a. Ngwe à kwárə̀ ŋkéèbə̀   Ngwe á kwà ŋkàp?
   Ngwe SM take   money   Ngwe SM take money
   'Ngwe has taken the money'   'Has Ngwe taken the money?'

b. Alombah à twámə̀ pə́ə̀nə̀   Alombah à twá pɨ?
   Alombah SM carry   people   Alombah SM carry people
   'Alombah has carried the people' 'Has Alombah carried the people?'

c. m̀ téèmə̀ ní ə̀séènə̀   m̀ tsí ní ə̀sɔ́?
   I stand with shame   I   stand with shame
   'I am ashamed'   'Am I ashamed?'

d. ?Ngwe à kwà ŋkap éé?
    Ngwe SM take   money QM

e. ?Alombah a twá pɨ   éé?
    Alombah SM carry people QM

Examples (35a–c) show that the Awing grammar uses short forms of both the verbs and the nouns (direct object) to change the force of the clause from declarative to interrogative. However, when these short forms are used, the QM is not needed, as (35d–e) indicate. The sentences in (35d–e) are not actually ungrammatical, the final-question morpheme rather changes such sentences to soliloquies or echo questions in a similar manner to that discussed for wh-expressions with the final-question morpheme (*ló).*

3.5 Tag questions

A tag question is formed by uttering a sentence, pausing, and following up with the tag marker *kə̀lé* : 'or how', 'not so', 'isn't it' or better still 'is it the case' or in French as '*n'est-ce pas*?' In Awing, the response to such constructions can be *ə̀m* 'yes' or *ə̀mə̀m* 'no'. A speakers may decide to add an element within the sentence that affirms the polarity of the response as negative or positive. Thus by inserting a negation morpheme, the speaker indicates a bias towards a negative answer, i.e. that (s)he expects a negative response *ə̀mə̀m* 'no'. However, his/her expectation can be counteracted, resulting in an opposite response. The following examples clarify the discussion.

(36) a. Aghetse à pí ghénə̀ tə̀sɔ́ŋə̀   kə̀-lé?
Aghetse SM P1 go   Bamenda TQ
'Aghetse has gone to Bamenda, hasn't she?'

b. Fominyam à   nə́ ŋkɔ́ŋə̀ zè'kə́   ŋwá'rə̀ kə̀-lé?
Fominyam SM P2 love teach   book   TQ
'Fominyam had loved teaching, hadn't he?'

c. Fominyam a   nə́ ké   zé'kə̀ ŋwá'rə̀ kɔ́ŋ pò, kə̀-lé?
Fominyam SM P2 NEG teach book   like NEG TQ
'Fominyam had never liked teaching, has he?'

Example (36a) and (b) can be considered neutral tag questions in the sense that the speaker expects either a positive or a negative response. On the other hand, in (36c) where the speaker uses the discontinuous negation morpheme *ke...pò,* s/he expects a negative response. Nonetheless, in all three cases (36a–c), the question tag morpheme in sentence-final position scopes the entire sentence, which explains why the answer can either be positive or negative, independent of the speaker's expectations.

3.6 Alternative question

Alternative questions are questions whose answers are derived by choosing a word or an entire clause within the question itself. In Awing, these answers can be a fragment or an entire clause. In the responses, observe that one or both of the alternative answers can occur with what we have so far considered to be the focus marker of this language. The alternatives are linked by the connective particle /kénə̀/ literally 'or' and the question ends with a question morpheme /ló/ (QM). Below are some examples.

(37) a.   Fozoh à   nə́ nchíə̀ lə́ tə̀sɔ́ŋə̀   kə̀ə̀nə̀ là'á-kárə̀   ló?
           Fozoh SM P2 live   FM Bemenda or   village-white QM
           'Fozoh lived in Bamenda or overseas?'

      b.   Ò   lá'à kɔ́ŋə̀ mə̀-zə̀'-nə̀   ŋwárə̀ lə́ fɨ̀   kénə̀ ló fɛ́   ló?
           you F3   love INF-learn-INF book FM there or   FM here QM
           'You would love to study here or there?'

      c.   Fó   à   nə́ ndzùtə́ ló mə́-bíŋ   mén tá   kə̀ə̀nə̀ mə̀-ŋgə́p   mén
           Fon SM P2 kill   FM PLU-goat LINK five or   PLU-chicken LINK
           térə̀   ló?
           three QM
           'The Fon killed five goats or three chickens?'

While examples (37a) and (b) show that a single word can be questioned, (37c) illustrates that a larger constituent can equally be questioned. In all of the examples, the morpheme *lə́* introduces the alternative responses. This morpheme highlights the targeted responses somewhat and appears before the first disjunct as in (37a) and (c), or before both of them as in (37b). For simplicity, I will continue to label this morpheme as the focus marker—its function here is to direct the attention of the speaker to the alternatives.

3.7 Echo questions

Echo questions, as the word indicates, are questions which repeat (echo) a preceding statement or an answer. They are formed in the Awing language by the same strategy used in yes/no questions—that is, either by lengthening the final vowel or nasal of the last word or by adding the separate interrogative morpheme *éé*. As we proceed, it is important to know that lengthening is usually accompanied with some kind of prosodic change that affects the entire clause. (32b) is repeated below as (38), this time with an echo interpretation, as the translation indicates.

(38) a. Ngwe á tɔ́ kúnɔ̀ mɔ̀m ndé
        Ngwe SM ASP enter inside house
        'Ngwe is getting inside the house' (declarative)

    b. Ngwe á tɔ́ kúnɔ̀ mɔ̀m ndé é?
        Ngwe SM ASP enter inside house QM
        'Is Ngwe getting inside the house?' (echo question)

    c. Ngwe á tɔ́ kúnɔ̀ mɔ̀m ndé éé?
        Ngwe SM ASP enter inside house QM
        'Is Ngwe getting inside the house?' (echo question)

The repetitive (echo) question (38b) uses the lengthening strategy while (38c) uses the separate morpheme strategy just as the yes/no and other question types, the question morpheme appears syntactically in sentence-final position but scopes over the entire sentence, giving it an interrogative force.

3.8 Question formation via modal inversion

It is possible to form a question by inverting the position of the modal element in Awing, similar to the English I→C strategy—'*Can Zamchang succeed in syntax?*' In modal inversion, the sentence may optionally have a final question morpheme. It is important to note that what is being considered modal inversion

here is very uncommon in this language and Bantu languages in general. Actually, Awing does not display (to the best of my knowledge) any other case than the one illustrated in (39).

(39) a.   Zamchang, tə́mbɔ́'ə̀ à   kɔ́ŋə̀ syntaxə̀
          Zamchang   can   SM love   syntax
          'Zamchang can love syntax'
                         Or
          Actually interpreted as: 'Zamchang, he can love syntax'

     b.   Tə́mbɔ́'ə̀ Zamchang à   kɔ́ŋə̀ syntaxə̀?
          can   Zamchang SM love   syntax
          'Can Zamchang love syntax?'

     c.   Tə́mbɔ́'ə̀ Zamchang à   kɔ́ŋə̀ syntaxə̀ éé?
          can   Zamchang SM love   syntax   QM
          'Can Zamchang love syntax?'

The sentence in (39a) might not actually be a typical situation of modal inversion in parallel to the English I—C strategy. The subject *Zamchang* in this example does not constitute a phonological string with the rest of the sentence, as shown with the comma—suggesting that the subject has been topicalized and as such, the modal element does not actually move in the questions in (39b) and (c) but might be in it base-generated position. However, in order not to mix up things, I leave this argument for future analysis. Finally, notice that the example in (39c) exhibits two properties: the (apparent) movement of the modal element and the final question morpheme. The presence of this question morpheme once more attributes the same interpretation that we discussed for examples (24) with a wh-question, and (35d–e) with the truncation process, namely rendering the sentence as an echo question or a monologue.

4   Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented the various strategies Awing speakers use to emphasize/focalize a given constituent. We have seen that focusing can be achieved morphologically and via morpho-syntactic means. In our discussion on focusing, we saw that predicate focusing is different from other constituents since the verb ends up having two copies. We then turned to a thorough description of wh-words. We saw that these elements could remain in their base-generated positions or move to sentence-initial positions. In sentence-initial positions, wh-expressions behave exactly like focused elements, when preposed. The second section dealt with the various strategies used in question formation. The overall aim of this paper, which is a refinement of (Fominyam 2012: chapter three), has been to present in a purely descriptive manner how these constructions are formed and interpreted in this language. Thus, the data can be used from any angle of linguistic inquiry for comparative or theoretical analyses.

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