Contrastive Focus Constructions in Muher

Workie Musa Arega[1] and Baye Yimam Mekonnen[2]

[1]Department of Linguistics and Philology College of Humanities, Language Studies and Journalism and Communication, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Email: workieme@yahoo.com

[2]Department of Linguistics and Philology College of Humanities, Language Studies and Journalism and Communication Addis Ababa University Addis Ababa, Ethiopia Email: bayemekonnen@gmail.com

Abstract

The main objective of this study was to describe qualitatively the nature of focus phenomena and focus constructions in Muher following the theoretical framework of Lambrecht (1994) in which information structure is considered as sentence grammar. More specifically, this paper addresses contrastive focus marking strategies, and focus structure (domain) in Muher. Data were mainly gathered through elicitation followed by free speech recordings. Besides, data have been extracted from Muher corpus. For elicitation, 2 male and 2 female Muher native speakers were consulted purposively. These informants were purposively selected because random selection may lead to wrong data in cases where participants may have limited information on the issues raised. In this article, IPA symbols were consistently employed. The linguistic data was glossed based on the Leipzig glossing rules by using three-line glossing. The result of the study showed that focus domain, in Muher, can be the subject of the clause (argument focus), the subject and the predicate (sentence focus) or only the predicate (predicate focus). In Muher, focus is marked prosodically, morphologically and syntactically. However, this paper treats only morphonological focus marking strategies focusing on the morpheme -m that is used as a contrastive focus marker which subsumes completive, additive, expanding, replacing, parallel, restricting, and selective focus types.

Keywords: focus, focus domain, focus marking strategies, contrastive focus, assertive focus

1. Introduction

Muher is a Semitic language spoken in central Ethiopia and belongs to the Gunnən Gurage language cluster within Outer South Ethio-Semitic (Hetzron, 1972: 119; Goldenberg, 2005: 924). However, its genetic classification is still a matter of discussion and controversy. According to Hetzron (1977), Muher is a Northern Gurage language along with Kistane, and Dobbi. However, Leslau (1992) and Rose (1996) classified Muher as a western Gurage

variety. Like Amharic, Muher is a Subject-Object-Verb language.

The term Muher refers to the people, their language and the area they live in. Muher has two varieties: *anə bet* and *ədi bet* (Meyer, 2005꞉ 41; Hetzron, 1977꞉ 5) based on the form of the respective first singular independent personal pronoun where *bet* literally means 'house, family'.

The main objective of this paper, therefore, was to describe focus phenomena in the *anə bet* variety of Muher following Lambrecht's (1994) theoretical framework of information structure notions such as focus and topic. Information structure (IS, hereafter) is "that component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs are paired with lexico-grammatical structures in accordance with mental states of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts" (Lambrecht, 1994:5).

This paper, therefore, is devoted to focus and focus-related issues in Muher. More specifically, contrastive focus-marking strategies are identified and discussed. Although the term focus can be defined very differently, in the present paper, focus refers to the part of the sentence that contains the main information update, that is not presupposed (Lambrecht, 1994: 226-244).

2. Literature Review

One of the means that people use to convey messages to others is using language in context and such use is called discourse. Discourse is structured in certain ways to be meaningful so that people understand each other. Speakers create expressions based on linguistic rules and as a result, interlocutors comprehend the expressions and give relevant responses. On one hand, the structure of discourse is related to syntactic rules in which discourse is categorized as being grammatical or ungrammatical (Gee, 1999:29). On the other hand, discourse is pragmatically structured based on the information it carries implying that discourse cannot be judged from the formal features that it has. For example, the object can be preposed to the initial position of a sentence for a particular pragmatic effect (Winkler, 2012:73; Lambrecht, 1994:339). Such word order restructuring is discussed in the scope of information structure (Halliday, 1967:200). Information structure concerns how information in discourse is packaged and how a particular syntactic structure is used in a particular context while another structure is avoided (Ward & Birner, 2006:153).

All sentences and utterances have an information structure (Lambrecht, 1994:338). Because different information structure roles such as 'topic' and 'focus' are expressed with different formal devices, the analysis of information is centered on the comparison of semantically equivalent but formally and pragmatically divergent sentence pairs called allosentences, such as active vs passive, canonical vs topicalized, and canonical vs preposed or dislocated (Lambrecht, 1994:6).

The way information is structured varies from language to language. Information can be expressed by using different linguistic means such as phonology, morphology, syntax, or a combination of them (Zimmermann & Onea, 2011: 1658; Hadian, et al. 2013: 24; Dik, et al. 1981: 42; Foley & van Valin, 1985: 284). For example, Payne (1997: 262) states that languages usually mark diverse pragmatic roles via special morpho-syntactic operators and these elements are often called "focus" or "emphatic devices". Payne (1997) went on to say that clauses can be "focused" or "focus neutral", and the "focused" clauses or elements are marked pragmatically. Similarly, Erteschik-Shir (2007:1) points out that the interaction between intonation and morpho-lexical elements with word order determines the information structure of a given sentence.

Information structure has three different but related categories: propositional content (presupposition and assertion), pragmatics categories (topic and focus) and grammar structure (topic and focus domains) (Lambrecht, 1994:334). Of these, focus is one of the clause-internal pragmatic functions in any natural language text. These constituents are concerned with the informational status of constituents in a given communicative setting.

There are several definitions of focus by different scholars. For example, Krifka (2008: 247) states, "Focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expressions." He asserts that the general definition does not indicate the way focus can be marked. However, it can be shown by different means. Early definitions of focus were based on the concept of "new information" that the speaker does not share with the addressee (in contrast to "old information" that both share).

Lambrecht (1994: 213) defines focus as "the semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition". Presupposition is something that the speaker

assumes to be the circumstance before the utterance. And, therefore, it is related to the speaker since the utterance is articulated by him/her but not with the properties which are 'newly' given constituents of a sentence.

Different languages have different types of focus systems and strategies. Depending on their typological variations, languages show different forms of focalizing devices to mark focus in different sentential structures. Dik (1981: 42) formulates the following as the major devices for signaling focus in actual forms of linguistic expressions.

1. Intonational prominence: stress, high tone, emphatic accent.

2. Special focus markers: Particles that mark off the focus constituents from the rest of a clause.

3. Special constituent orders: Special positions for focus constituents in the linear order of the

   clause.

4**.** Special focus constructions intrinsically define a certain distribution of focus over the

   structure of a clause, such as cleft in pseudo-cleft constructions.

Regarding Muher, there are some descriptive studies (Leslau 1981; Rose 1996; Meyer 2005, 2007, 2012; Awlachew 2010,

and Meyer 2019). For instance, Leslau (1981) provided a sketch grammar of Muher with no details analysis of information structure notions such as focus and topic. Rose (1996) explored the object and present tense markers and *a*-final verb stems complex the grammatically-conditioned allomorphs of Muher. Meyer (2005: 41-59) presented the different functions of the morpheme *jə-* in Muher syntax underscoring that the accusative marking in Muher depends mainly on pragmatics, not on syntax. Awlachew (2010) did on the documentation and grammatical sketch of Muher. In his study on the typology of motion verbs in Muher, Meyer (2007) identified two types of destinations: stationary and moveable. While the moveable destination is marked by the locative *-ət* 'place', the stationary one is morphologically unmarked.

The most recent work is Meyer's (2019) study on the sketch grammar of the *edi-bet* variety of Muher in which the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language are very generally described. However, Meyer has not treated the notion of information structure in detail except in a section in which he simply states the focus marker of Muher are contrastive *-m* and assertive *-ʃ* (Meyer 2019: 250).

Although we agree with Meyer that *-m* is a contrastive focus marker in Muher, he did not treat the different contrastive focus types marked by the morpheme *-m* in detail. Besides, except mentioning shortly bypass that the scope of the contrastive focus marker *-m* is to mark individual constituents, he did not support his claim with adequate evidence. The other gap in Meyer's (2019) work is that he mentions the morpheme *-ʃ* as an assertive focus marker. However, we think that -ʃ is not an assertive focus marker at all. We would argue that *-ʃ* is a topic marker rendering the meaning "how/what about?" Thus, we do not consider *-ʃ* as a focus marker in Muher.

The above studies show some areas that require further description. One area is describing the way information is structured in Muher, especially how focus is constructed in Muher. Therefore, this article is an attempt to fill in these and related gaps in the study of information structure by studying contrastive focus constructions in the *anə-bet* variety of Muher following the theoretical framework of Lambrecht (1994) in which information structure is considered as sentence grammar.

3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research method. The Muher data have mainly been accessed through elicitation by consulting Muher native speakers. In this case, both elicitation and free speech recording have been employed as major data-gathering tools. For the elicitation, 2 male and 2 female Muher native speakers who are from Hawariat have been consulted purposively. These informants were purposively selected because random selection may lead to wrong data in cases where participants may have limited information on the issues raised. Besides, some examples are extracted from Muher corpus compiled by the NORHED project at AAU. For the transcription of the Muher data, IPA symbols were consistently used. The linguistic data were glossed based on the Leipzig Glossing Rules using three-line interlinear morpheme-by-morpheme glossing. Although there are many morphophonemic processes undergone in the phonemic level of Muher data, this paper does not present the phonetic level to show the actual speech of the native speakers of Muher. The first line is the phonemic transcription; the second is the linear morphological analysis; the third line is the English free translation. The analysis is informed by consulting the assumption of focus as stipulated by Lambrecht (1994). Lambrecht (1994: 213) defines focus as,

"The semantic component of a pragmatically structured proposition whereby the assertion differs from the presupposition."

4. Results and Discussion

Focus marking is often described as a process operating only on the pragmatic level of grammar although it may possess morphosyntactic properties (cf. Lambrecht, 1994: 213). Different languages have different types of focus systems and use different strategies for differentiating them. Focus domain can be assigned prosodically, morphologically, syntactically and by providing answers to WH-words or content questions (cf. Lambrecht, 1994: 224; Hyman & Waters, 1984: 238; Dik, et. al. 1981:52). Muher uses all of the above focalizing strategies or devices in different forms. In Muher, intonational prominence signals focus, and contrastive focus with its

subtypes and assertive focus types are attested. Besides, cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions are used as focus construction strategies in Muher.In what follows, I present and discuss each of them.

4.1 Focus Marking Strategies in Muher

4.1.1 Answers to Wh-Word Questions (Completive Focus)

One of the common ways of finding out how focus is linguistically marked, in Muher, is to look at answers to the content questions which contain Wh-words such as *miʔe* 'what' and *ma* 'who'. This kind of focus system is used when the focus information is meant to fill in a gap. This is observed in Wh-word questions; questions involving interrogative pronouns (words) show peculiarities and restrictions concerning focus marking. Consider the following examples

(1) a. Awulachew: *zəbərga   miʔe   bənna-m?*

Zeberga   what   eat.PFV-DCM

'What did Zeberga eat?'

Seifu: *zəbərga   kitfʷə   bənna-m*

Zeberga   kitfo   eat.PFV-DCM

'Zeberga ate KITFO'

b. Question: *jə-zi   bet   baləbet   ma-n-i*

GEN-this   house   owner   who-COP.PRES-3SGM

'Who is the owner of this house?'

Answer: *jə-zi   bet   baləbet   ambəzatʃtʃ-ja*

GEN-this house owner Ambezach-COP.PRES.3SGF

'The owner of this house is AMBEZACH'

In (1a), the element KITFO in Seifu's answer that replaces the question word *miʔe* 'what' is in focus since KITFO (grind meat with butter) is the part of the sentence that provides the information update. This means in the answer (response) clause, the focus is given to KITFO which shows that this information is meant to fill in the information gap in the above contextual situations. Seifu's answer involves completion and hence it is called the completive focus. In Muher, the focused element, as in KITFO, is usually marked by the main accent of the sentence in (1a). This can be seen in Siefu's answer, where KITFO is in focus. Kitfo, therefore, represents the information needed to fill in the gaps in (1a). The intonational prominence on KITFO shows that it is salient.

The question clause (Q) presupposes the answer clause (A) in (1b). The subject of the response clause is the focal noun

AMBEZACH; the phrase *jəzi bet baləbet* 'the owner of this house' conveys only background information. In (1b), the proper name AMBEZACH carries information that is triggered by the question word *ma* 'who'. Such kinds of focus are termed information focus. It indicates that the part of the response clause analogous to the question word is given emphasis, and hence carries focus but the rest parts of the response clause are used as background information. In the answer clause, the focus on AMBEZACH is to signal that this particular information is meant to fill in the gap required by the question word.

In Muher, questions are usually used to make a distinction between focus-background information. The part of the response clause that answers the question word carries the focus information, whereas the rest part of the clause conveys background information as in (2) below

(2) a. *wəlk'it'e jə-fəka-we ma-n-i*

     Welk'it'e REL-go.PFV-DEF who-COP.PRES-3SGM

     'Who is the one that/who went to Welk'it'e?'

   b. wəlde wəlk'it'e feka-m

     Welde Welk'it'e go.PFV.3SGM-DCM

     'Welde went to Welk'it'e'

c. *wəlde   banno   wəlk'it'e   jə-feka-we*

   Welde   COP.PST   Welk'it'e   REL-go.PFV-DEF

   'It was Welde who went to Welk'it'e'

The response clause in (2b) and (2c) presuppose the interrogative clause presented in (2a). The answers to a wh-word question show focused constituents. The subject of both (2b) and (2c) is *Welde* who is the focal element (noun). The clause in (2b) maintains the Muher basic word order (i.e. SOV). However, clause (2c) is a cleft construction in which there is a word order change due to the cleft construction to focalize the noun '*Welde'* that was introduced by the information in (2a). The relative clause in (2c) is just to provide background information. The part of the response clause (i.e. *Welde*) that answers the question word (i.e. *ma* 'who') carries the focus information. Thus, *Welde* is the focal noun and the topic[1] of the clause in both (2b) and (2c) in which topic and focus overlap.

4.1.2   Morphological Focus Marking

The most widely used focus markers in Muher are the contrastive morpheme *-m* which can be used to select, expand, restrict,

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[1] topic of a sentence is the thing which the proposition expressed by the sentence is ABOUT.

replace and parallel focus elements, and the assertive focus marker *-ʃ*. The Identificational focus marker *-tt* is also attested in Muher. Let us discuss these morphological focus markers in detail.

4.1.2.1 The Contrastive Focus Markers *-m*

Contrastive focus 'represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold' (Kiss, 1998: 246). Contrastive focus usually emphasizes a given constituent that is considered to be part of the common knowledge between interlocutors (Payne, 1997: 269). Contrastive focus is involved when the speaker wants to correct the presupposed background knowledge or the common knowledge of the hearer (addressee). In Muher, the contrastive focus marker *-m* can be used to mark focal elements in different ways. Hyman and Watters (1984:242) use the label contrastive focus as a general term that subsumes several subcategories, like additive, selective, expanding, restricting, replacing and parallel focus. These different types and levels of contrastive relations are discussed below.

a. Additive Focus

Additive focus markers convey meanings that show the addition of something. The Muher additive focus marker conveys the

(3) a. *bətəsəb   nənən-   bet-m   mekina-at-tt   m*

family   has-   house-   car-
3SGF-   FOC   FOC
MVM

'She has a family; she has also a house and a car.'

b. *timərga-   bərutʃʾtʃʾa   ef-ə-m²   m*

Timerga-   quickly   go.PFV-
FOC   3SGM-
DCM

'AlsoTimerga   walked   (went) quickly.'

The additive focus marker suffix *-m* in (3a) gives focus only to the individual constituents *bet* 'house' and *məkina* 'car'. This means the scope of *-m* is on the individual constituent. The *-m* in *betɨm* 'also house' and *məkinam* 'also car' carry new information and also stand in contrastive relation with *bətəsəb* 'family' at the time of the discourse. As shown in (3b), the focus marker *-m* is attached to the noun *Timerga* to make it a focal element and to strengthen

meaning *too* and *also*. For example, *-m* can be used to mark an individual constituent as in (3).

the restriction imposed on the subject of the clause to perform the action. Theoretically, one constituent ought to be focused on every structure. However, without the focus marker *-m*, the clause *timərga bərutʃʾtʃʾa efəm* 'Timerga walked/went quickly' will be just a simple clause that does not have any particular focal element or constituent unless a wh-word question such as 'who walked quickly?' may be constructed. The clause *tɨmərga bərutʃʾtʃa efəm* would be a good response to the question 'who walked quickly?'.

When numerals modify a head noun, the focus morpheme is suffixed to the modifying numeral but not to the noun. Besides, indefinite in Muher can also be derived (formed) by using the contrastive focus marker *-m* as in (4) below

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² *-m* is a declarative clause marker in the perfective aspect. Unlike the contrastive focus marker morpheme *-m* which is suffixed to nominals, the DCM *-m* is attached to perfective verbs.

(4) *att-m*   *səb*   *an-bəssa-m*

  one-FOC   man   NEG-come.PFV-DCM

  'Nobody came' [Even a single person did not come]

As can be seen in (4), *-m* is attached to *att* 'one' rendering the indefinite nobody. The focus morpheme *-m* is attached to the numeral *att* 'one' which is a modifier of the noun *səb* 'man'; the focus marking morpheme *-m* cannot be attached to the noun *səb*.

(5) a. *almaz-m*   *məlkamma-ja*

      Almaz-FOC   beautiful-COP.PRES.3SGF

      'Also Almaz is beautiful'

   b. *anə-m* *zənga-we*   *lik'k'e* *e-asəbe-m*

      I-FOC   issue/matter-DEF   big   CAUS-worry.PFV-DCM

      'I am also worried by the issue/Even I am worried by the issue.'

In all the examples in (5), the additive focus marking morpheme *-m* is attached to the noun *Almaz* (5a) and the pronoun *anə* 'I' (5b) to emphasize the entity selected out of the possible alternative entities. *-m* is used to mark additional information as in (5a), and to expand the information mentioned by the first speaker on the ongoing discourse as in (5b).

b. Expanding Focus

In this type of focus, the speaker assumes that the addressee has the correct piece of

(6) *an-xənə* *bet*   *mekina-m* *nənə-n-at*

   NEG-be   house   car-FOC   has-ACC-3SGF

   'Not only a house, she has even/also a car.'

The contrastive focus marker *-m* can be used to mark additional information or to expand information, and has the meaning 'also/even'. Consider the following examples:

information, but that information is not complete. The speaker knows that there is at least a piece of information that is also old to the addressee. The focus marking morpheme *-m* in Muher has an equivalent meaning with the English focus particle 'even/also' (it seems with additive focus, but here the information is extended, not added) based on the ongoing discourse in a given situation it suffixed to the focused element as in (6)

The focus marking particle *-m* in (6) is used to mark *məkina* 'car' and *məkina* receive focus. The morpheme *-m* is expanding information, and hence it is an expanding focus marker. For instance, (6) can be interpreted as both the speaker and the listener know that she has the house which is old/given information. What the addressee does not know is whether she has a car or not. Now, the speaker is telling the addressee new information which is "she has also a car". Thus, the focus element in (6) is

(7) Speaker 1: *tɨmərga   bet   sr-ə-m*

           Timerga   house   buy.PFV-3SGM-DCM

          'Timerga bought a house'

    Speaker 2: *anxənə,   məkina-n   jə-sr-ə*

           not   car-COP.3SGM   REL-buy.PFV-3SGM

        'No [he did not buy a house], he bought a car'

The presence of a distinct prosodic feature on *məkina* 'car' focalizes it. In this kind of information structuring, two distinct steps are involved. The first step is rejecting the incorrect information *bet* 'house', and presenting the correct information *məkina* 'car'. The speaker in (7) assumes that the addressee has wrongly referred to the entities as *bet* 'house' and the speaker in (7) is telling the addressee that he/she possesses wrong information and providing him/her with the correct information by stating the correct information 'he bought a car'.

the noun *məkina* 'car' since it is the new information introduced during the conversation.

c. Replacing (Corrective) Focus

In this kind of focus, the speaker presumes that the addressee possesses some wrong information that needs to be replaced or substituted by the correct information. In so doing, two steps are involved: rejection followed by correction. In Muher, such kinds of focus phenomena are attested as in (8).

The above structures show that replacing focus involves distinctive steps of removing the constituent carrying the incorrect information. In (7), *bet* 'house' is substituted by the correct information *məkina* 'car'. Rejection is realized by *anxənə* 'it is not' and the correction is made by the stress on the replaced NPs. Again, "car" in (7) is contrastively focused because it explicitly disagrees with the filler of the same slot (i.e. house) in X's utterance.

d. Parallel Focus

We speak of parallel focus when two pieces of information are contrasted within one

(8) <u>ləmma</u> <u>bəsər</u> bənna-m <u>timərga</u> tʃʼin <u>dabbo</u> bənna-m
Lemma meat eat.PFV-DCM Timerga but bread eat.PFV-DCM
'Lemma ate meat, but Timerga ate bread'

In such cases, the underlined items have a focus function. Each of the underlined NPs has focus assigned to it by the internal relation of the contrasted pairs: *ləmma bəsər* 'Lemma meat', but *timərga dabbo* 'Timerga bread', whose function is parallel. The focused NPs do not necessarily reject or

(9) A: *zebə-rga jɨdʒ-wɨta bet-m məki-na-m sirə-n-o-m*
Zeberga son-POSS.3SGM-FOC house-FOC car-FOC buy.PFV-APPL-3SGM-DCM

'Zeberga bought his son a house and a car'

S: a. *zebərga jɨdʒ-wɨta bet an-sirə-n-o*
Zeberga son-POSS.3SGM house NEG-buy.PFV-APPL-3SGM

linguistic expression. Consider the following example

tʃʼin dabbo bənna-m
but bread eat.PFV-DCM

correct anything in the pragmatic function of the addressee's expression as replacing focus does.

e. Restricting Focus

In this type of focus, an antecedently given or presupposed information is restricted to one or more values among the set as in (9)

jɨdʒ-wɨta jə-sirə-n-o mək k'una-ina n
son-POSS.3SGM REL-buy.PFV-APPL-3SGM car only-COP.PRES.3SGM

'Zeberga did not buy his son a HOUSE. He bought his son a CAR.'

b. *anx jə-ənə sirə mək k'una-n ina*
no REL car only-COP.PRES.3SGM buy.PFV

'No, he bought only a CAR.' The clauses in (9S) contain the restricting focus which corrects the presupposed information of A. In this case,

one of the values[3] of X (where X= house and car) is explicitly rejected as in (9Sa) or implicitly as in (9Sb) rejected as incorrect. The rejecting focus constituent, which is not a house, corrects the presupposed information of A in that at least one value of X is rejected as incorrect. In the response clause (9a), the speaker first rejects the incorrect value explicitly and then he/she restricted the presupposed information to one correct value (i.e, a car). In the response clause (9b), the speaker provides the correct value of the presupposed information by rejecting the incorrect value implicitly.

f.   Selecting Focus

This type of focus is marked when the focus selects an item from a set of possible values. Consider   the   following   example

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[3]is meant any referent, verb action or state, truth value, etc.

(10) Askal: *gʷəbbe-xə*   *ʃɔ-n*   *we* *wəlk'it'e-n*   *ji-nəbɨr*
        brother-2SGM.POSS   shewa-COP.PRES   or   Welk'ite-COP.PRES   3SGM-live.IPFV

    'Does your brother live in Shewa (Addis Ababa) or in Welk'it'e?

   Seifu: *gʷəbbe-əŋŋa*   *ji-nəbɨr*   *wəlk'it'e-n*
        brother-1SG.POSS   3SGM-live.IPFV   Welk'ite-COP.PRES

    'My brother lives in Welk'it'e'

In (10), Seifu selects one item or place (Welk'it'e) among a presupposed set of possible values which are *ʃɔ* or *Welk'it'e* (i.e. the presupposition is your brother lives in *X,* where *X= ʃɔ* 'Addis Ababa'or*Welk'it'e)*. The selective focus in (10) involves a contrast between the information chosen (i.e. *Welk'it'e*) and the information rejected (i.e. *ʃɔ*). The response clause *gʷəbbe-əŋŋa jinəbɨr wəlk'it'en* 'My brother lives in Welk'ite', not in Shewa (Addis Ababa) shows that there is a rejection of "My brother lives in Addis Ababa' in selecting "My brother lives in Welk'ite" (i.e. rejection of Addis Ababa in selecting Welk'ite). The selected NP receives stress and hence it is focused and becomes the value of X.

What makes restricting and selective focus types similar is that both types of focus have a rejection of one of the presupposed information. However, in restricting focus, the speaker knows that the addresses possessed wrong information in which the correct one is going to be accepted and the

incorrect one will be rejected. In selecting focus, the addressee is not sure about which one is correct, X or Y. The speaker gives an answer to alternative questions (X or Y?), and he/she will respond as X or Y. If the speaker selects X, then Y will be rejected; if he/she selects Y, then X will be rejected.

5. **Conclusions**

In this article, we have identified, analyzed and discussed focus constructions in Muher; we focus only on contrastive focus marking strategies. Specifically, Muher encodes focus prosodically, morphologically, syntactically, and by using focus particles and adjuncts. However, this paper treated only morphonological focus marking strategies focusing on the morpheme *-m* that was used as a contrastive focus marker which subsumes completive, additive, expanding, replacing, parallel, restricting, and selective focus types. The result of the study showed that focus domain, in Muher, can be the subject of the clause (argument focus), the subject and the predicate

(sentence focus), or only the predicate (predicate focus).

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