Chapter 9

Post-verbal focus by *wəli* in Kenyan Maay

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This paper provides an overview of the construction involving the function word *wəli* in Kenyan Maay. To our knowledge, there is yet to be discussion of this construction in the literature on the language. Our goal is to provide an initial account of its use and function in order to better understand its role in the language. Its characteristics and distribution will also be compared to its apparent analog *wáxa(a)* in Somali. We argue that *wəli*, like *wáxa(a)*, is implicated in cataphoric focus, requiring displacement of a focused element to a position to the right of the language's Verb Complex.

1 Introduction

The topic of this paper is a specific construction used in Kenyan Maay that is introduced by the function word *wəli*. Our goal is to provide an initial account of its use and function. In order to better understand its role in the language, its characteristics and distribution will be compared to its apparent analog *wáxa(a)*[1] in Somali. In Somali, *wáxa(a)*, according to Svolacchia et al. (1995), is a cataphoric focus marker that appears before the Verb Complex and focuses an element following it. In other words, the focus marker *wáxa(a)* is a cataphor co-referent

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[1]The length of the final vowel varies by dialect.

with a later expression which is in focus. The configuration of the *wəli* construction and its syntactic effects, as will be demonstrated below, are very similar to *wáxa(a)*, and we illustrate that the word *wəli*, like *wáxa(a)*, places a post-verbal constituent into narrow focus. However, from the data we have collected, we find some nuanced differences in the form and function of *wəli* as compared to *wáxa(a)*. In this paper, we will first give a concise overview of Kenyan Maay in §2. Following this in §3 we will demonstrate that the function of the *wəli* construction is to place elements in narrow focus. Then, in §4, we will explain the configuration of the *wəli* construction, the various elements which it can place in focus, and the contexts in which it tends to appear. In §5, we will compare *wəli*'s usage with another focus marker in Kenyan Maay with different properties. In §6, we will briefly describe sentences where two focus markers occur in Kenyan Maay. Finally, in §7, we will discuss avenues of future research by examining studied phenomena of Somali focus markers and drawing some comparisons with what we have established for the *wəli* construction in Kenyan Maay. We will also elaborate on the possibility of *wəli*'s involvement in broad focus and provide some concluding remarks.

2 Kenyan Maay

Kenyan Maay (ISO: ymm) is a Lowland East Cushitic language spoken in southern Somalia, parts of Kenya, and by speakers in the diaspora in the U.S., Europe, and elsewhere. Kenyan Maay and Somali are members of the Omo-Tana subgroup (see Figure 1).

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                    Lowland East Cushitic
                   /                     \
            Southern                    Saho ˈAfar
           /        \
      Nuclear      Transversal
      /     \        /      \
Omo-Tana  Oromoid  Dullay  Yaaku
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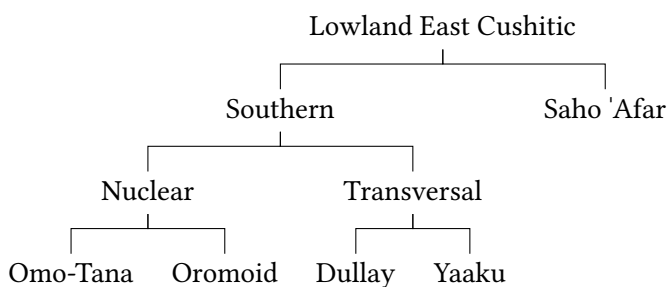
Figure 1: Lowland East Cushitic tree adapted from Tosco (2000: 108)

The data included in this paper were collected from two female speakers from Dadaab, Kenya (see Figure 2). Data from the first speaker, Habiba Noor, was collected primarily during a field methods course at Syracuse University, as well

as through additional elicitation sessions conducted after the completion of the course. The first speaker's parents are from Bu'ale, Somalia, and she grew up in Dadaab until age 15, after which she came to the US. The second speaker, Wilo Matan, also moved to the U.S. when she was 15, but her parents are from Baidoa, Somalia. Maay remains the primary language of the household for both speakers. We will refer to them as Speaker 1 and Speaker 2, respectively, where a distinction between the two is needed. We refer to their dialect as Kenyan Maay to distinguish it from other Maay varieties discussed in the small literature on the language (Biber 1982; Comfort & Paster 2009; Paster 2006, Paster 2010, Paster 2018; Saeed 1982a). Kenyan Maay is also the subject of a recent master's thesis by Smith (2022). Locations of dialects covered in these works are shown in Figure 2.
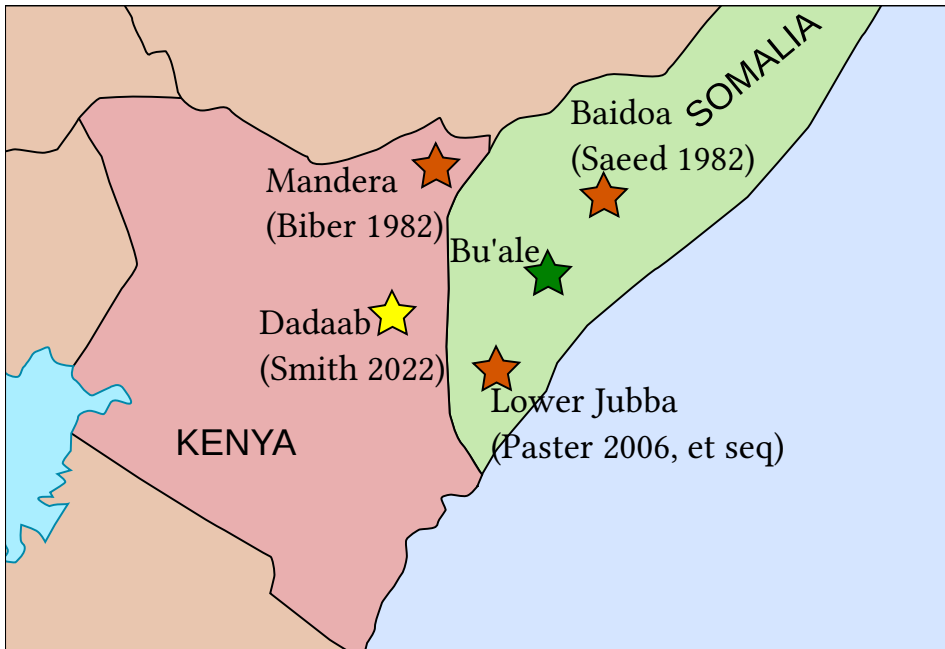

Figure 2: Locations of Maay studies

From what is reported in the published literature, "Central Somali", as discussed in Saeed (1982a), appears to be quite similar to Kenyan Maay. Central Somali, however, is understood to be a variety of Maay spoken around Baidoa (where Speaker 2's parents are from). Smith (2022) refers to this variety as Baydhabo (Baidoa) Maay. The two varieties share the same marker of pre-verbal focus, *jaa* (see Section 5), but Central Somali as described by Saeed employs a different marker of post-verbal focus, *wey ba*. Based on the data provided by Saeed

on *wey ba*, it appears to operate in much the same manner as *wəli* by focusing a post-verbal element. Speaker 1 recognizes *wey ba* but does not use it. Beyond providing a few examples, Saeed (1982a)'s sketch does not delve into much detail about focus in Central Somali.

Maay is closely related to Somali (ISO: som), but the languages are not mutually intelligible (Paster 2018). In §7.1, the post-verbal focus construction of Kenyan Maay will be compared to its Somali analog, with which it shares many similarities. Cushitic languages generally present a basic word order of SOV (Gebert 1986: 45), and this also appears to be the case in Kenyan Maay in pragmatically neutral sentences. Svolacchia & Puglielli (1999) note that Somali has fairly free word order with regard to its arguments, and as we shall see, Kenyan Maay shows evidence of this as well. Both languages make use of a constituent known as the Verb Complex (see Gebert 1986; Green 2021: 255; Puglielli 1981a; Saeed 1999: 163). According to Puglielli (1981a), the Verb Complex includes all the elements that express grammatical relations, namely verbs and adpositions (referred to by Puglielli as prepositions). Furthermore, it can be considered a micro-structure of the entire sentence since it also includes pronominal referents of NPs, which occur outside of the Verb Complex (Puglielli 1981a). In (1) and (2) below, examples in Somali and Kenyan Maay are provided with the Verb Complex in brackets.[2]

(1) unə́ ʊntə́-ð-ə [səŋ sii-an-ə́ŋ] isíŋ.[3]   Kenyan Maay
     1PL food-F-DEF 2PL.OCL give-1PL-PRES 2PL

     'We give food to you.'

(2) adí-gu   w[-áad   rab-t-aa].   Somali
     2SG-M.DEF.SUBJ[4] DECL-2SG want-2SG-PRES

     'You want it.' (Green 2021: 310)

Kenyan Maay makes use of an inflectional system to mark person, number, gender, and tense. Auxiliary verbs are also used to indicate aspect and mood. Negation is achieved by the addition of the negator *mə* before the predicate, as well as through inflection of the verb in certain instances.

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[2]We will continue to bracket the verb complex in subsequent examples so that the location of nominal constituents relative to the verb complex is clear.

[3]As there is not yet a standard orthography for Maay, in this paper the IPA is used to provide a broad phonetic transcription for our examples. Morpheme boundaries are indicated by hyphens. It should be noted that an orthography was developed for Mukhtar & Ahmed's 2007 English-Maay dictionary, however that system was unacceptable to our speakers.

[4]Note that we use masculine (M) and feminine (F) agreement in our glosses, which generally equates to what is called K and T series agreement in Green (2021).

3 Focus

3.1 Storyboard

The *wəli* construction in Kenyan Maay consistently entails constituent movement to the right of the Verb Complex. In order to further examine the construction and its function, and on comparison to its analog *wáxa(a)* in Somali, we used a storyboard (from www.totemfieldstoryboards.org by Littell 2010) which was expressly designed to elicit narrow subject and object focus (narrow focus being the focusing of a single constituent, as opposed to broad focus, in which an entire utterance is in focus). The storyboard was used with both speakers, but individually. Speaker 1 used both markers of pre-verbal and post-verbal focus, while Speaker 2 used the marker of pre-verbal focus for the storyboard, but used the marker of post-verbal focus elsewhere. Therefore, we will mostly discuss Speaker 1's responses below. The story involves two animals (a squirrel and a crab) discussing the party they are currently attending. We acted as the squirrel, and would ask our speakers, who played the crab, various questions about who brought what item to the party. For example, we would ask the speakers "What did the snake bring?" and they would respond "The snake brought the drinks". The story was told once for object focus, asking what was brought by each animal, and then again for subject focus, asking who brought each item.

For the first elicited sentence, we provided a potential response in English to demonstrate the task, following which Speaker 1 provided the declarative sentence in (3). In subsequent items, for which we did not provide any prompt, Speaker 1 produced sentences using the *wəli* construction for almost every response – as in (4) – except for one response for which the marker of pre-verbal focus (described in §5) was used.[5]

(3) éj-k-ə   ʊntə́-ð-ə   [hagað-Ø-í].   Kenyan Maay
    dog-M-DEF food-F-DEF bring-3SG.M-PST
    'The dog brought the food.'

(4) éj-k-ə   wəli [hagað-Ø-í]   ʊntə́-ð-ii.   Kenyan Maay
    dog-M-DEF FOC bring-3SG.M-PST food-F-RDEF
    'The dog brought THE FOOD.'

The question which elicited (4) above was *éjkii máj hagaðí?* 'What did the dog bring?'. The element that is expected to be in narrow focus is the object *ʊntə́ðii*

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[5]In (4) and the remainder of the paper, small caps is used in the translation to indicate which constituent is focused.

'the food'. When the *wəli* construction is used in (4), this element appears after the Verb Complex, whereas in (3) it occurs pre-verbally.

Sentence (5) was elicited in response to the question *áj ʊntə́ðii hagaðí?* 'Who brought the food?'. This sentence differs in that the subject is targeted for narrow focus. As expected, the element targeted for focus appears post-verbally. Therefore, whether intended focus is on the subject or object, the element focused by *wəli* appears in post-verbal position.

(5) ʊntə́-ð-ii wəli [hagað-Ø-í] éj-k-ə.   Kenyan Maay
    food-F-RDEF FOC bring-3SG.M-PST dog-M-DEF
    'THE DOG brought the food.'

We also tested subject focus with plural subjects and different persons, in order to determine whether the use of the *wəli* construction affected subject-verb agreement, since in Somali, verbal agreement can be affected when a subject is in focus (Banti 2011; Green 2021: 308–311; Puglielli 1981b: 13; Saeed 1999: 192; Svolacchia et al. 1995). In (6), verbal agreement in number was maintained despite the post-verbal movement of the subject.

(6) hés-t-ii wəli [ʃeen-Ø-é-ŋ] məlai-jaál-k-ə.   Kenyan Maay
    music-F-RDEF FOC bring-3-PST-PL fish-PL-M-DEF
    'THE FISH brought the music.'

However, when testing for different persons, there was some variation between our two speakers. Speaker 1 generally maintains person-marking under subject focus, except for 2SG. Whereas this would normally be realized as *-t-* in the absence of post-verbal subject focus, under subject focus it is realized as *-Ø-* (7), making it identical to 1SG and 3SG masculine. A sentence with a verb that maintains the regular 2SG agreement marking is ungrammatical (8). Note that this reduced agreement occurs in the past tense, but not the present tense.

(7) wəli ʊntə́-ð-ə [ʃéen-Ø-ej] aðə́.   Kenyan Maay
    FOC food-F-DEF bring-2SG-PST 2SG
    'YOU brought the food.'

(8) *wəli ʊntə́-ð-ə [ʃéen-t-ej] aðə́.   Kenyan Maay
    FOC food-F-DEF bring-2SG-PST 2SG
    'YOU brought the food.'

In contrast, when a subject is in focus, Speaker 2 neutralizes all person markers with the exception of 3sg in the feminine form. The paradigms of both speakers for verbal inflection under the subject focus condition in the past tense can be seen in Appendix B (§B).

The storyboard questions required answers in which a single constituent was both new to the discourse and of communicative interest, making it the focus of the sentence. The fact that the *wəli* construction was consistently employed by Speaker 1 while performing the storyboard suggests that it does function as a means of narrow focus. Furthermore, the data indicate that the element which receives this focus is placed in the post-verbal position. With the construction's basic form and function outlined, we turn in the next section to exploring in more detail the types of constituents that can be compelled to move post-verbally under *wəli* focus.

4 *Wəli* constructions

4.1 Basic Configuration

As introduced above, when the function word *wəli* appears pre-verbally, there is an obligatory shift or displacement of an element to post-verbal position. In the absence of *wəli*, the shifted element would be expected to appear pre-verbally in pragmatically neutral contexts. Sentence (9), which has basic SOV word order, has its object *buúggə hoostiísa* 'the book's underside' before the verb *jaalé* 'be located above, be at here'.

(9) qaláŋ-k-ə buúg-g-ə hoos-tiísa [jaal-Ø-é].   Kenyan Maay
     pen-m-def book-m-def under-poss be.at-3sg.m-prs
     'The pen is under the book.'

This can be compared to (10), where the object *buúggə biðiðís* 'the book's left' appears post-verbally. The use of *wəli* always results in some element appearing in post-verbal position.

(10) qaláŋ-k-ə wəli [jaal-Ø-é]   buúg-g-ə biði-ðís.   Kenyan Maay
      pen-m-def foc be.at-3sg.m-prs book-m-def left-poss
      'The pen is to the left of the book.'

However, the focused element does not have to immediately follow the Verb Complex and can be preceded by another NP, as in (11).

(11) wəli [hir-Ø-éj]   elbép-k-ə   dərə́s-k-ə.   Kenyan Maay
      FOC close-3SG.M-PST door-M-DEF neighbor-M-DEF
      'The neighbor closed the door.'

4.2 Elements focused by *wəli*

The function of the *wəli* construction is to place into focus a variety of different
constituents, which includes nominals of many types, and even those modified
by a relative clause (which is how Kenyan Maay performs most attribution). Also
included are adverbials (which are nominal themselves) and even larger adverbial
clauses and complement clauses. The construction does not appear to be able to
focus verbs, nor a full Verb Complex, and also cannot focus adjectival participles.

4.2.1 Nominal Constituents and Complement Clauses

Nominals of any argument type can be placed in focus by *wəli*, including subjects
and objects of various types. For example, oblique objects in pragmatically neu-
tral sentences typically appear pre-verbally, as in (12). However, when focused
by *wəli*, as in (13), they appear after the verb. Note, however, that because the
adpositions governing these nominals reside in the Verb Complex, they remain
in situ even under the focus condition, rather than moving with their nominal
object. So, while in (12) the adposition *ən* follows the element it locates, in (13),
the nominal moves to post-verbal position while the adposition does not.

(12) usə́   məðərəsə́-ð-ii [ən loɣa-j-é].[6]   Kenyan Maay
      3SG.M school-M-RDEF ADP walk-3SG.M-PST
      'He walks to the school.'

(13) anə́ jé   wəli [ɪn hogaami-j-é] gurú-ge.   Kenyan Maay
      1SG 3SG.F FOC ADP lead-1SG-PST house-POSS
      'I lead her to my house.'

Complement clauses can also be focused by the *wəli* construction. Speaker
1 used the *wəli* construction almost invariably for sentences containing com-

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[6]The glide here is a phonologically-conditioned allomorph of the 1SG and 3SG masculine suffix,
which is otherwise Ø. According to Saeed (1982a: 8), VV sequences are not allowed and are
repaired by [j] epenthesis.

plement clauses.[7] Sentences containing multiple clauses have *wəli* in the main clause, as in (14).

(14) anə́ wəli [éxr-Ø-ej]   ɪnti   fərás-ɪn-Ø-ə.   Kenyan Maay
      1SG FOC say-1SG-PST COMP be.happy-VBZ-1SG-PRS

      'I said THAT I AM HAPPY.'

As in previous sentences, *wəli* follows the subject and precedes the Verb Complex. In (14), *wəli* is placing into focus the embedded clause *ɪnti fərásɪɪnə* 'that I am happy', which occurs post-verbally.

4.2.2 Adverbials

Most adverbials in Maay are nouns governed by adpositions, which is also true for Somali (Saeed 1999: 124). The distribution of the adverbial nouns, like adverbials in many other languages, is fairly free. However, as nouns, these elements also have the ability to be placed into focus by *wəli*, and when this occurs, their position post-verbally becomes obligatory. This can be seen in (15) where *wəli* places into focus the adverbial *tartiíp* 'quietness', which accordingly follows the verb.

(15) láŋ-k-ii   wəli [ɪn axri-j-é]   tartiíp.   Kenyan Maay
      man-M-RDEF FOC ADP read-3SG.M-PST quietness

      'The man read QUIETLY'. (Lit. with quietness)

4.2.3 Adjectival Participles and Relative Clauses

Like in Somali (Green 2021: 158), Kenyan Maay derives adjectival participles through verbalizing suffixes, e.g., (-*ən* in (17). Unlike adverbs, adjectival participles are unable to be focused on their own via this construction, as attempted in (16). This likely stems from the fact that they appear in relative clauses and are bound by the nominal that governs them. As seen in (17), focusing on the "redness" of the plate formally requires focus on the entire noun phrase.

(16) *aðə wəli səháŋ [o   kaðə-t-í]   gʊðʊʊð-ən.   Kenyan Maay
      2SG FOC plate from.1SG take-2SG-PST red-VBZ

      'You take a RED plate from me.'

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[7]At this point, only one sentence has been elicited in which a complement clause was used but the *wəli* construction was not used. The complement clause in that sentence still appeared in post-verbal position despite the absence of *wəli*.

(17) ɑðɔ́ wəli [o   kaðə-t-í]   səháŋ gʊðʊʊðɔ́-ən.   Kenyan Maay
     2sg foc from.1sg take-2sg-pst plate red-vbz
     'You take A RED PLATE from me.'

In (17), *gʊðʊʊðɔ́n* is a subject relative clause (lit. 'a plate that is red'). As Saeed (1999: 214) reports, this also occurs in Somali, where nominal modification frequently involves restrictive relative clauses that are not preceded by a relative pronoun.

4.3 Common environments

Our elicitations showed a variety of syntactic environments in which *wəli* can occur. Environments in which a focus construction is likely to occur are sentences which contain new information. This tendency to focus new information is illustrated in (18) and (19). In the first sentence, Speaker 1 was asked to translate the English sentence 'I ate the bread'. In this sentence, the information was all known to the speaker, and there was no morphological focus marking. However, when the second sentence was elicited, Speaker 1 used the *wəli* construction to focus the new information (the amount of bread eaten).

(18) anɔ́ rootʰɔ́-g-ii   [ʕaam-Ø-í].   Kenyan Maay
     1sg bread-M-RDEF eat-1sg-pst
     'I ate the bread.'

(19) anɔ́ wəli [ʕaam-Ø-é] lɔ́mə ʒəp   rootʰɔ́.   Kenyan Maay
     1sg foc eat-1sg-pst two   piece bread
     'I ate TWO PIECES OF BREAD.'

It is also the case that *wəli* almost invariably occurs in sentences with complement clauses, as mentioned above in Section 4.2.1. The construction is also frequently employed in sentences with ditransitive verbs (20) and in sentences which include adjuncts (21). The correlation between these more complex sentences and the use of the *wəli* construction is related to the fact that these more complex sentences carry more new information.

(20) maláŋ-k-ə   wəli [sii-j-í]   buúg-g-ə   ɲaɲur-t-ɔ́. Kenyan Maay
     teacher-M-DEF foc give-3sg.M-prs book-M-DEF cat-F-DEF
     'The teacher gives a book to THE CAT.'

(21) məlái-k-ə hés-t-ii wəli [ʃeen-Ø-í] halfə́-t-ə. Kenyan Maay
fish-M-DEF music-F-RDEF FOC bring-3SG-PST party-F-DEF
'The fish brought the music at THE PARTY.'

Apart from elicitations, this construction also frequently occurred when the first speaker was asked to translate the story 'The North Wind and the Sun' (see Appendix A [A]).

5 Pre-verbal focus

In addition to *wəli*, Kenyan Maay also makes use of the marker of pre-verbal focus *jaa*. Very seldom in the course of elicitations, Speaker 1 offered an utterance employing *jaa*, which prompted further inquiry into its use and the ways in which it can be distinguished from *wəli*. It was often the case that *jaa* was provided as an alternative to *wəli*.

(22) e-jaál-k-ii jaa [ʃeen-Ø-é-ŋ] ʊntə́-ð-ii.[8] Kenyan Maay
dog-PL-M-RDEF FOC bring-3-PST-PL food-F-RDEF
'THE DOGS brought the food.'

(23) ʊntə́-ð-ii wəli [ʃeen-Ø-é-ŋ] e-jaál-k-ii. Kenyan Maay
food-F-RDEF FOC bring-3-PST-PL dog-PL-M-RDEF
'THE DOGS brought the food.'

As seen in (22) and (23), both of which were elicited during the storyboard enactment, the focus markers *jaa* and *wəli* both appear before the Verb Complex, but while *wəli* focuses a constituent following the Verb Complex, *jaa* focus whatever constituent immediately precedes it.

Similar to *wəli*, the word order of sentences with *jaa* is more constrained. In sentences with *jaa*, both the focused constituent and the focus marker must precede the Verb Complex, or the sentence will be ungrammatical, as (24) is below.

(24) *[ən duruk-t-í] tartiíp ɲaɲur-t-ə́ jaa. Kenyan Maay
ADP move-3SG-PST quietness cat-F-DEF FOC
'THE CAT moved quietly.' (Lit. with quietness)

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[8]The reader may note that word order in this sentence is not the unmarked SOV word order. As mentioned above, word order in Kenyan Maay is relatively free. It is unclear as of yet what discourse factors result in various word orders.

6 Sentences with more than one focus marker

In the course of our elicitations with Speaker 1, we also encountered, but did not explore in detail, instances where both the focus markers *wəli* and *jaa* occur in the same sentence. Such examples can be seen in (25) and (26).

(25) éj-k-ii   bəluúgə jaa wəli [ən roor-ø-é]   sɛ'ið.   Kenyan Maay
     dog-M-RDEF blue   FOC FOC ADP run-3SG.M-PRS speed

'The blue dog runs fast. (Lit. with speed)'

(26) láŋ-k-ii   jaa wəli [ɛxr-Ø-é]   ɪnti fərás-ɪn-Ø-ə.
     man-M-RDEF FOC FOC say-3SG-PRS COMP be.happy-VBZ-3SG.M-PRS

Kenyan Maay

'The man says that he is happy.'

Both of the sentences above can be considered complex, as the first sentence contains a relative clause and the second, a complement clause. In (25), *jaa* highlights the blueness of the dog. We asked the speaker questions about both a blue dog and a red dog, which were present as paper models. Therefore, *jaa* appears to be involved in contrastive focus, as the speaker used it to be clear about which of the two dogs she was describing. In this particular instance, *wəli* is involved in corrective focus of the adverbial *sɛ'ið* 'speed'. This sentence was given in response to the question, 'Did the blue dog run slow?' Therefore, Speaker 1 was both contrasting the color of the dog and correcting us on the speed of the dog.

Sentence (26) was received during a series of grammaticality checks with Speaker 1, in which we asked about different ways to form the sentence 'The man says that he is happy'. In (26), *jaa* is used to focus the subject, whereas it may be that *wəli* indicates reported speech. One insight from Speaker 1 was that using *wəli* in these specific instances was more appropriate if the reported speaker ('the man') was not present in the speech situation.

It is possible for two focus markers to occur in the same sentence in Somali as well (Ajello 1995; Tosco 2002; Green 2021: 336). In Somali, both markers of pre-verbal and post-verbal focus can occur in the same sentence, as in (27).

(27) waddam-ó kalé   ayáa wáxaa [la-gú sam-ee-y-eý]   baadhitaan-ó
     country-PL other FOC   FOC   ISP-in do-FAC-3SG-PST.RED research-PL
     saliidó ka-lá   duwán.   Somali
     oil   in-with various

'In other countries, various oil tests have been conducted.' (Green 2021: 336)

In Somali, one focus marker focuses an adverbial clause, and the second focus marker highlights a post-verbal element (Green 2021: 336). According to Tosco (2002: 37), the choice to focus an adverbial is a strategy used when attention is on the "development of the action". Tosco (2002: 39) also claims that the *wáxa(a)* construction in Somali is a cleft involving a relative clause, which is what allows the double focus, as it is only in simple sentences that double focus is disallowed. It would appear that the Somali and Kenyan Maay cases presented above differ, as *jaa* in (25) and (26) focuses the subject and not an adverbial.

Multiple focus marking, while uncommon, has been regularly observed to occur (Krifka 1991). For example, van der Wal & Namyalo (2016) discuss the interaction of two separate focus strategies (one pre-verbal and one post-verbal) in Luganda (Bantu). They claim that because the two focus strategies have different functions (identification and exclusion),[9] they can be combined. Comparison with this analogous case might suggest that the appearance of both markers of pre-verbal and post-verbal focus in (25) and (26) above is allowed because they are being used for separate purposes. However, as can be seen from Speaker 1's use of both *jaa* and *wəli* to enact our storyboard (see 22 and 23), the functions of these two focus markers must overlap as they are being used in the same context.

7 Future research and concluding remarks

7.1 Comparisons with Somali focus markers

This initial description of *wəli* offers some insight into focus marking in Kenyan Maay that extends well beyond the only other discussion of the matter in the literature, namely Saeed (1982a). It sets the stage for further exploration into the topic, which in closely related languages like Somali is arguably one of the most extensively described and analyzed aspect of the language's grammar. In this way, research on Somali focus presents a natural way ahead in terms of both description of Kenyan Maay focus but also in building a microtypological profile of how focus is encoded in these languages. Somali, as is well known, exhibits several morphosyntactic particularities under its "subject focus condition" (Green 2021: 308-311; Puglielli 1981b: 13; Saeed 1999: 192; Svolacchia et al. 1995). This includes prohibition on the use of pronoun clitics, reductions in verb agreement, and also the prohibition of subject marking. In addition, there is a known parallel between subject focus and subject relative clauses. Below, we will provide

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[9]According to van der Wal & Namyalo (2016: 356), exclusive focus occurs when there is some referent in a set of alternatives to which the predicate does not apply, whereas identificational focus identifies a referent for which a presupposed proposition is true.

some initial observations of similarities and differences between Kenyan Maay and Somali focus markers, in order to lay the foundation for further comparison through continued research.

The clearest and most direct parallel with the *wəli* focus marker in Kenyan Maay is Somali's focus marker *wáxa(a)*. A typical sentence employing this focus marker in Somali is shown in (28). Both *wəli* and *wáxa(a)* are markers of post-verbal focus that introduce the cataphoric focalization of a constituent that follows the Verb Complex.

(28) wáxa [tag-Ø-ay]   Cáli.   Somali
     FOC go-3SG.M-PST.RED Cali
     'Cali went.' (Green 2021: 304)

The two focus markers are also semantically related, as both *wəl* in Kenyan Maay and *wáx* in Somali mean 'thing'. Synchronically, when used otherwise, *wəli* in Kenyan Maay presumably contains the "remote" definite determiner and *wáxa* contains a "basic" definite determiner, with both meaning 'the thing'. Both words can occur in sentences as nouns, rather than focus markers, as in (29) and (30).

(29) aðɔ́ [kəsaa-s-é] jé wəl-i   ɪntə [ən koj-t-í]? Kenyan Maay
     2SG know-2SG-PST 3SG.F thing-RDEF COMP ADP come-3SG.F-PST
     'Do you know why she came here?'
     (Lit. Do you know the thing that she came here for?)

(30) w-áydin [t-aqaan-n-aa-n]   wáx-[aad doón-ey-s-aa-n].   Somali
     DECL-2PL 2PL-know-2-PRS-PL thing-2PL want-PROG-2-PRS-PL
     'You (PL) know what you want.' (Green 2021: 305)
     (Lit. You know the thing that you want.)

This opens up an interpretation of *wəli* and *wáxa(a)* focus constructions as being clefts, which reflects how they have often been translated. For example, the sentence *ʊntɔ́ðii wəli hagaðé éjkə* 'THE DOG brought the food' could potentially be translated as 'the thing that brought the food was THE DOG'. This is the view supported by Saeed (1982b), Tosco (1997: 132) (for Tunni), and Tosco (2002). However, Green (2021: 303) points out that his Somali speakers reject cleft readings.

Another notable feature of the *wáxa(a)* focus construction in Somali is that when the subject is in focus, the subject-verb agreement paradigm marked on the verb is reduced (see Andrzejewski 1968; Andrzejewski 1969). Somali verbs show reduced agreement (2SG, 2PL and 3PL are the same as 3SG.M) in subject relative clauses and with focused subjects in main clauses (see relevant paradigms

in Green 2021: 309 and Saeed 1982b: 79-80). As discussed in §3.1, Kenyan Maay maintains full inflection for agreement in number when the subject is in focus. For person (when using the past tense), Speaker 1 maintains full inflection except for 2SG subjects, while Speaker 2 removes all person markers except for 3SG.F subjects.

Finally, *wáxa(a)* and other Somali focus markers have the ability to coalesce with subject pronoun clitics (SPC) (Green 2021: 304). An example of this coalescence is given in (31), in which *wáxa(a)* combines with the 3SG feminine SPC *-ay*.

(31) wáx-ay   [taha-sh-ay] ín-ay   shaqá-da   [qab-a-t-ó].   Somali
      FOC-3SG.F try-3SG.F-PST COMP-3SG.F work-F.DEF do-MID-3SG.F-IRR

      'She tried TO DO THE WORK.' (Green 2021: 304)

SPCs have not been observed in Kenyan Maay. In lieu of SPCs, Kenyan Maay makes regular use of independent personal pronouns. This contrasts with Somali, for which independent personal pronouns are associated with emphasis (Andrzejewski 1961).

When it comes to Kenyan Maay's *jaa*, a direct comparison can be drawn to the behavior of *báa* and *ayáa* in Somali. The use of the former is shown in (32).

(32) macállin-ka   báa buugg-ág [ná   sii-y-eý].   Somali
      teacher-M.DEF[10] FOC book-PL 1PL.OBJ give-3SG.M-PST.RED

      'THE TEACHER gave books to us.' (Green 2021: 260)

The focus marker *báa* follows the nominal constituent it places into focus, and occurs before the Verb Complex, just as *jaa* does. The focus marker *ayáa* operates in much the same way as *báa*, but its use is limited to a somewhat more formal register, typically absent from spoken Somali and found instead in written forms of the language.

As with *wáxa(a)*, both *báa* and *ayáa* can coalesce with SPCs, with the negative marker *aán* and with the interrogative marker *ma* (Green 2021: 295-303). This has not been observed with *jaa* in Kenyan Maay.

Yet to be explored in Kenyan Maay are the parallels between focus marking and the behavior of subject relative clauses and any evidence of subject marking.

7.2 Broad Focus

While we have mentioned narrow, contrastive, and corrective focus in Kenyan Maay, the reader may wonder about if and how broad focus readings are encoded

in the language. In Somali, broad focus involves the marker of pre-verbal focus *báa* or *ayáa* following the subject and SOV word order (Green 2021: 327). Post-verbal cataphoric focus is not used for broad focus.

To see if this holds true for Kenyan Maay as well, we attempted to elicit the use of *wəli* for broad focus. Various short videos were shown to Speaker 1, the videos having simple content such as a dog chasing a cat. We then asked our speaker *máj də jí?* 'What's up?' or 'What happened?' and recorded her response. This was repeated several times, and each time, she provided a sentence in which the focus marker *jaa* appeared following the subject, as shown in (33). The *wəli* construction was not used.

(33) ɲáɲur-t-ii jaa [kə dʒibi-t-í]   éj-k-ii.   Kenyan Maay
      cat-F-RDEF FOC ADP sleep-3SG.F-PST dog-M-RDEF
      'THE CAT slept on the dog.'

Speaker 1's reluctance to use *wəli* may be due to the fact that broad focus in Kenyan Maay, like Somali, is simply not compatible with cataphoric focus.

7.3 Concluding remarks

In this paper, we have achieved the modest goal of describing and beginning to characterize certain aspects of Kenyan Maay focus, particularly as it pertains to the cataphoric focus marker *wəli*. We have illustrated the basics of its behavior, which has not yet been discussed in the literature, and have also discussed the ways that it can be compared to the marker of pre-verbal focus *jaa*, as well as the marker of post-verbal focus *wáxa(a)* in Somali. We have shown that although there are several parallels between focus marking in Somali and Kenyan Maay, some of the known peculiarities of Somali subject focus appear to be absent in Kenyan Maay. Some limitations of our research are that we have only worked with two speakers, and that most of our data comes from elicitations. We hope that future research will fill in some of these gaps and explore how *wəli* is used with a greater variety of speakers and genres.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this chapter follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules, with the following additions.

ADP	adposition	OCL	object clitic
FAC	factitive	RDEF	remote definite determiner
ISP	impersonal subject pronoun	RED	reduced
MID	middle	RRP	reflexive reciprocal object pronoun
OBJ	object pronoun	V	verbalizer

Acknowledgements

Appendix A Narrative: The North Wind and the Sun

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger when a traveler came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveler take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other. Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew, the more closely did the traveler fold his cloak around him; and at last, the North Wind gave up the attempt. Then the Sun shone out warmly and immediately the traveler took off his cloak. And so, the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.

dabelə́ komfúr iyo irí-ð-ə
Wind   North   and Sun-F-RDEF
'The North Wind and the Sun

wəli kə   murum-∅-é-ŋ   qof-k-íi   oo hə́gbəð-əŋ
FOC about dispute-3-PST-PL person-M-RDEF REL be.strong-VBZ
were disputing about WHICH WAS THE STRONGER

markií sáfra   hammar-∅-í
when   traveler come.along-3SG.M-PST
when a traveler came along

marə́ kuləl kə dúuduw-əŋ.
cloak warm in be.wrapped-VBZ
wrapped in a warm cloak.

jó **wəli** es   karrəhen-∅-é-ŋ qóf-k-ii
3PL FOC REFL agree-3-PST-PL person-M-RDEF
They agreed that THE PERSON

ən   hor gul-éjs-əð-ə
COMP first succeed-FAC-MID-3SG-IRR
THAT FIRST SUCCEEDED

qokkáð-∅-ə   safrə́-g-ə   marə́-ð-ə
take.off-3SG.M-IRR traveler-M-DEF cloak-F-DEF
IN TAKING OFF THE TRAVELER'S CLOAK

qof-k-ə   kalə ku hə́gbəð-ən.
person-M-DEF other than be.stronger-VBZ
is the person (who) is stronger than the other.

kuðímbə dabelə́ komfúr **wəli** afuf-t-éj   ənti təbərtíi eh
then   Wind North FOC blow-3SG.F-PST COMP strength be
Then the North Wind blew WITH STRENGTH

lakín marwelbə́ səaj-ð-ə   afuf-∅-í
but   whole   time-F-DEF blow-3SG.M-PRS
but the whole time (that) he blew

safrá-g-ə   marə́-ð-ə   kə   dudum-∅-ə́s.
traveler-M-DEF cloak-F-DEF around fold-3SG.M-PRS
the traveler wrapped his cloak around him.

markii-dembə dabelə́ komfúr əs   dip-t-í.
time-last   Wind North REFL give.up-3SG.M-PST
At last, the North Wind gave up.

kudəmbə irí-ð-ə   iftin-t-í   sə kulul
then   Sun-F-RDEF shine-3SG.F-PST DISJ warmth
then the Sun shone out warmly

markíibə   safrá-g-ə   **wəli** əs qokað-∅-éj   mará-ð-iis.
immediately traveler-M-DEF FOC REFL take.off-3SG.M-PST cloak-F-POSS
and immediately, the traveler took off HIS CLOAK.

markii kudembə dabelə́ komfúr **wəli** karrə-t-éj
at   last   Wind North FOC agree-3SG.F-PST
The North Wind agreed

ənti   irí-ð-ə   hə́gbəð-ən-t-ə.
COMP Sun-F-DEF be.stronger-VBZ-3SG.F-PST
THAT THE SUN WAS STRONGER.'

Appendix B Full and reduced verbal agreement under subject focus for the past tense

Table 1: Full and reduced verbal agreement under subject focus for the past tense in Somali (adapted from Saeed 1984: 83)

	Somali full agreement	Somali reduced agreement
1SG	keen-∅-ay	keen-∅-áy
2SG	keen-t-ay	keen-∅-áy
3SG.M	keen-∅-ay	keen-∅-áy
3SG.F	keen-t-ay	keen-t-áy
1PL	keen-n-ay	keen-n-áy
2PL	keen-t-een	keen-∅-áy
3PL	keen-∅-een	keen-∅-áy

keen 'bring'

Table 2: Full and reduced verbal agreement under subject focus for the past tense in Kenyan Maay (Speaker 1 and Speaker 2)

	full agreement	Kenyan Maay S1	Kenyan Maay S2
1SG	ʃeen-∅-í	ʃéen-∅-ej	ʃéen-∅-ej
2SG	ʃeen-t-í	ʃéen-∅-ej	ʃéen-∅-ej
3SG.M	ʃeen-∅-í	ʃéen-∅-ej	ʃéen-∅-ej
3SG.F	ʃeen-t-í	ʃéen-t-ej	ʃéen-t-ej
1PL	ʃeen-n-í	ʃéen-n-ej	ʃéen-∅-ej
2PL	ʃeen-t-é-ŋ	ʃeen-t-é-ŋ	ʃéen-∅-ej
3PL	ʃeen-∅-é-ŋ	ʃeen-∅-é-ŋ	ʃéen-∅-ej

ʃeen 'bring'

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