In this chapter I examine the Avar focus construction, restricting my attention to situations where focus marking brings with it a change in the morphosyntactic appearance of the verb. I argue against the popular cartographic approach to focus whereby non-syntactic, interpretative information is instantiated as a head in the functional structure of the clause, and pursue an alternative, free-merge based approach to focus movement.

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I take a detailed look at the morphosyntactic realisation of focus in Avar, and at its semantic interpretation. The core facts are illustrated in (1) and (2) below.

(1) Declarative statement

aminati- ca rasul ah- ana
Aminat.OBL-ERG Rasul.ABS invite-PST
‘Aminat invited Rasul.’
5.1. Introduction

(2) Corresponding statement involving a focus particle and
  a. the focused material in situ
     aminati- ca rasul= in ah- a- ra- w
     Aminat.OBL-ERG Rasul.ABS=FOC invite-PST-PTCP=M
  b. the focused material ex situ
     rasul= in aminati- ca ah- a- ra- w
     Rasul.ABS=FOC Aminat.OBL-ERG invite-PST-PTCP=M
     ‘Aminat invited [ Rasul ]F.’

The main difference between a simple declarative sentence like (1) and its analogues containing a contrastive focus particle (2a–b) concerns the morphosyntactic form of the verb: in (1) the verb carries the finite, past tense morphology, whereas in (2) it must appear as a participle. The cooccurrence of a focus particle and the finite morphology on the verb results in unacceptability:

(3) a. *aminati- ca rasul= in ah- ana
     Aminat.OBL-ERG Rasul.ABS=FOC invite-PST
  b. *rasul= in aminati- ca ah- ana
     Rasul.ABS=FOC Aminat.OBL-ERG invite-PST
     (‘Aminat invited [ Rasul ]F.’)

The converse also holds: whenever the focus particle is absent, the verb may not take on the participial morphology:

(4) a. *aminati- ca rasul ah- a- ra- w
     Aminat.OBL-ERG Rasul.ABS invite-PST-PTCP=M
  b. *rasul aminati- ca ah- a- ra- w
     Rasul.ABS Aminat.OBL-ERG invite-PST-PTCP=M
     (‘Aminat invited [ Rasul ]F.’)

The only context where the verb may not take on the participial morphology in the presence of one of these particles involves situations where the particle attaches to the verb itself, in which case the verb must preserve its finite form:

(5) a. aminati-ca rasul ah- an= iš:
     Aminat-ERG Rasul.ABS invite-PST=Q
  b. *aminati-ca rasul ah- a- ra- w=iš:
     Aminat-ERG Rasul.ABS invite-PST-PTCP=M=Q
     ‘Did Aminat invite Rasul?’

1. This statement only holds of the question and contrastive focus particles =iš and =iš in respectively but not of the constituent negation marker gur, which is expected since negation at sentential level is automatically sentential.
In this chapter I develop an analysis of this construction, which will minimally require an answer to the following questions:

1. Which particles cause the observed morphosyntactic change in the appearance of the verb, and why?

2. Is the participial morphology the spellout of a dedicated Focus head in the functional structure of the clause?

3. Are the *in-* and *ex-situ* variants of the focus construction derived by the same mechanism?

4. What is the semantic contribution of focus particles?

5. What is the relation between the focus particle and the constituent that it attaches to?

My claims with regard to these questions can be summarised as below:

1. The reason that the verb must appear in the non-finite participial form is that the focus construction is built around a relative clause, which in Avar are always participial. As to the participating particles, these are the contrastive focus particles (=) in and =xə, the question particle =)išə, and the constituent negation marker guro.2

2. The participial morphology is not an exponent of the Focus head; in fact, I analyse the constructions at hand without having to postulate any dedicated information-structural heads in the syntax at all.

3. The *in-* and *ex-situ* variants of the focus construction are irreducible to one another, therefore being derived by distinct mechanisms.

4. Focus particles contribute exhaustivity to the interpretation of a clause.

5. Syntactically, the focus particle functions as an adjunct to its sister, there being no semantic relation between them since the particle is a sentence-level operator that must raise to the left periphery to combine with a proposition.

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2. The parentheses represent glide formation whenever the stem to which the particles attach ends in a vowel.
Before proceeding further, let us review the structure of the chapter. In §5.2 I present a detailed overview of the syntactic and semantic properties of the Avar focus construction, as well as contrast the behaviour of focus particles with that of another focus-sensitive expression, the exclusive coho ‘only’. I then review, in §5.3, a possible analysis of the focus construction as couched within the cartographic approach to syntax, which I eventually dismiss for a number of reasons, before presenting an alternative solution in §5.4. Section 5.5 concludes.

5.2 Syntactic and semantic properties of Avar focus

5.2.1 Syntax

The first order of business is to find out which focus-sensitive particles trigger a morphosyntactic change in the form of the verb resulting in it taking the participial morphology. These are restricted to the contrastive focus particles =-(j)in and =-χa, the question particle =-(j)jiš: and the constituent negation marker guro. The examples below illustrate the ex-situ version of the focus construction.

(6) a. ahmadi-ca ču b–os- ana Ahmed-ERG horse.ABS N-buy-PST 'Ahmed bought a horse.'


c. ču= jiš: ahmadi-ca b–os- a– ra– b horse.ABS=Q Ahmed-ERG N-buy-PST-PTCP–N 'Did Ahmed buy a horse?'

d. ču guro ahmadi-ca b–os- a– ra– b horse.ABS not Ahmed-ERG N–buy-PST-PTCP–N 'It wasn’t a horse that Ahmed bought.'

The particles in (6) contrast with a number of other focus-sensitive elements like the exclusive coho ‘only’ and epistemic particle =daj expressing speaker uncertainty, neither of which can cooccur with the participial morphology in the absence of one of the four particles above.
Having established the subset of particles triggering the participialisation of the verb in focus-sensitive contexts, we proceed to examine their syntactic and semantic properties from the viewpoint of linear and structural distance between the particle and the focused constituent.

### 5.2.1.1 Linear placement of particles

We have seen evidence in the preceding subsection that focus particles triggering participialisation differ from the exclusive *coħo* 'only' in their linear position with respect to their scope: whilst (*j)i=χ, (*j)iš: and *guro occur to the right of their scope, *coħo must precede it. The unacceptability of (9) illustrates that the pre-scopal placement of (*j)in and (*j)iš: is impossible.

(9) a. *jin ču ahmadi-ca b-os- a- ra- b 
    FOC horse.ABS Ahmed-ERG N-buy-PST-PTCP-N
    ('Ahmed bought a [ horse ].')

b. *jiš: ču ahmadi-ca b-os- a- ra- b 
    Q horse.ABS Ahmed-ERG N-buy-PST-PTCP-N
    ('Did Ahmed buy a horse?')

c. *guro ču ahmadi-ca b-os- a- ra- b 
    not horse.ABS Ahmed-ERG N-buy-PST-PTCP-N
    ('It wasn’t a horse that Ahmed bought.')

Just as the three focus particles in (9) cannot precede the constituent they take scope over, *coħo cannot follow a constituent and take scope over it:

(10) *ahmadi-ca ču coħo b-os- ana 
    Ahmed-ERG horse.ABS only N-buy-PST
    ('Ahmed only bought [ a horse ].')
In (10) coho appears to the immediate right of the constituent it is supposed to establish a relation with, instead of linearly preceding it in the usual manner, and while the sentence is unacceptable on the indicated reading, it is perfectly fine on a different one, namely with the focus on the buying:

(11) aḥmad-i ca ḋu coho b- ḍa- ana
    Ahmek-ERG horse.ABS only N-buy-PST
    ‘Ahmed only [bought] a horse.’

The availability of this alternative reading once again supports the generalisation that the exclusive particle must precede the constituent with which it focus-associates.

All of the examples considered so far involved a simplex noun phrase as the focused constituent, which made the association with focus quite unambiguous. This does not mean that the focused constituent must not be syntactically complex:

(12) Q. ʕa‘lil ḡu= jišː b- ḍa- ra- b
    Ali. GEN horse.ABS= Q N-find-PST-PTCP-N
    ‘Was Ali’s horse found?’

   A1. guro. ʕa‘lil hama b- ḍa- ana
       no Ali. GEN donkey.ABS N-find-PST
       ‘No. They found Ali’s [donkey].’

   A2. guro. rasu‘l il  ḡu b- ḍa- ana
       no Rasul. GEN horse.ABS N-find-PST
       ‘No. They found [Rasul’s] horse.’

The question particle = (j)išː in (12Q) scopes over a DP containing a possessor, ʕa‘lil ‘Ali’s horse’. Although ḡu ‘horse’ appears to the immediate left of the particle = (j)išː, the particle can focus-associate with the possessor as well, as evidenced by the second possible answer to the question. Put differently, = (j)išː displays the pied-piping property characterising a number of focus-sensitive expressions in more familiar languages. Let us consider (13) from English.

(13) He only invited ex-convicts with [red] shirts. (Drubig 1994)

The scope of focus-sensitive only in (13) above is everything to its right, yet the association with focus relation obtains between only and red.

In Avar this pied-piping property is shared by the other focus particles, = (j)i/i= ʕa and guro.

A similar claim can be made regarding coho, whose behaviour seems to be similar to that of only in English: besides constituents immediately following
it, coho can 'probe' into their internal structure and focus-associate with one of the subconstituents.3 In (14) below the focus-sensitive particle coho linearly precedes all of the material internal to the VP, which can give rise to a whole host of potential readings, depending on the VP's subconstituent targeted by coho for association with focus. The accompanying sentences in (14a–d) serve to make some of these different readings more salient.

(14) ahmad-i- ca coho żaq’a ebel-al-e ruq’ b-a- ze Ahmed-OBL-ERG only today mother-OBL-DAT house.ABS N-build-INF
kumek ha-b-ul-e- b b-ugo help do-N-PRES-PTCP-N N-be.PRS
'Ahmed is only helping mother build the house today…'
a. šːaigurul meter maḫačqala- jal- de in- e- w w-uk’-in because tomorrow Makhachkala-OBL-LAT go.PRS-PTCP-N M-be- MSD
‘...because tomorrow he is going to Makhachkala.’
b. hes t’ok’a-b lieniği kumek ha-b-ul-e- b heč’o he.ERG other-N nobody.DAT help.ABS do-N-PRES-PTCP-N COP:NEG
‘He is not helping anyone else.’
c. amma hes hel- ie bol’ b-a- ze kumek but he.ERG she.OBL-DAT barn.ABS N-build-INF help.ABS
ha-b-ul-e- b heč’o do-N-PRES-PTCP-N COP:NEG
‘...but he isn’t helping her build the barn.’
d. amma hes hel- ie c’ija-b roq’oj-e žani- b raqi- ne but he.ERG she.OBL-DAT new-N house-LAT inside-N move-INF
kumek ha-b-ul-e- b heč’o help.ABS do-N-PRES-PTCP-N COP:NEG
‘...but he isn’t going to help her to move in.’

3. There are certain difficulties regarding the exact position of coho in the sentence which result from Avar being an OV language, since it is not entirely clear whether in those cases where it precedes one of the preverbal constituents it forms a constituent with the whole phrase marker including the verb or just the constituent immediately following it.

(i) coho ebel-al-e ahmad-i- ca żaq’a ruq’ b-a- ze kumek only mother-OBL-DAT Ahmed-OBL-ERG today house.ABS N-build-INF help.ABS
ha-b-ul-e- b b-ugo do-N-PRES-PTCP-N N-be.PRS
The word order in (i) is compatible with a number of distinct syntactic structures. One possibility is that coho ebel al ‘only mother.DAT’ is a constituent; alternatively, coho could be viewed as attaching to VP or perhaps even higher.
Taking into account the data presented so far, as well as the general head-final nature of Avar, the behaviour of \(=\text{j}i\text{n}, =\chi\alpha, =\text{j}ii:\) and \text{guro} with respect to linear placement resembles that of syntactic heads, whereas \text{coho} behaves like an adjunct in preceding the constituent it takes as its scope. This creates an additional problem for the account I have briefly outlined in the introduction, whereby the former focus particles are syntactic adjuncts as well.\(^4\)

### 5.2.1.2 Structural distance: Sensitivity to islands

As far as the hierarchical structure is concerned, Avar focus with \textit{in-situ} and \textit{ex-situ} focused phrases is sensitive to locality constraints. Just as in the preceding chapters, I take Ross’s (1967) islands to be the relevant opacity domains. Island sensitivity of focus particle placement is illustrated below for the Coordinate Structure Constraint and Complex Noun Phrase Constraint, instantiating two of the so-called \textit{strong islands}.

#### Coordinate Structure Constraint

We have seen in §4.3.1.2 of the previous chapter that coordination in Avar can be expressed in two different ways: either via affixing \(=\text{gi}\) to the right of every conjunct \((15a)\) or using the coordinator \textit{wa} as in \((15b)\):\(^5,6\)

\[(i) \; \text{was}=\text{gi} \; \text{jas}=\text{gi} \; \text{r– ač’– ana} / \text{boy.abs}=\text{CNJ} \; \text{girl.abs}=\text{CNJ} \; \text{p– come–pst} \; \text{f– come–pst} \]

‘A boy and a girl came.’

This is equally true of the \textit{wa} coordination strategy, with the plural agreement being judged unacceptable.

\[(i) \; \text{keto}=\text{gi} \; \text{wa} \; \text{hwe}=\text{gi} \; \text{cat}=\text{CNJ} \; \text{and dog}=\text{CNJ} \]

‘cat and dog’ \quad \text{(Mitrović & Sauerland 2014: 45)}

I have been able to replicate this pattern with my consultants but more work is required to establish what, if any, the syntactic and semantic restrictions are on this particular strategy.
The Avar focus construction

(15) a. ahmadi-ca ċu= gi hama= gi b–os- ana
    Ahmed-ERG horse.ABS=CNJ donkey.ABS=CNJ N–buy-PST
b. ahmadi-ca ċu wa hama b–os- ana
    Ahmed-ERG horse.ABS and donkey.ABS N–buy-PST
    ‘Ahmed bought a horse and a donkey.’

In order to focus one of the conjuncts using one of the focus particles the particle must adjoint to the entire island, which I am bracketing for the sake of legibility,

    horse.ABS=CNJ donkey.ABS=CNJ =Q Ahmed-ERG N–buy-PST-PTCP–N
    ‘Was it a horse and a donkey that Ahmed bought?’
A. guro, ahmadi-ca čaqu= gi ʕaka= gi b–os- ana
    no Ahmed-ERG sheep.ABS=CNJ cow.ABS=CNJ N–buy-PST
    ‘No, Ahmed bought a sheep and a cow.’

whereas isolating one of the conjuncts is impossible with both in- and ex-situ focus on either coordination strategy, in full compliance with the CSC:

(17) XP=gi ... YP=gi
    horse.ABS=CNJ=Q Ahmed-ERG donkey.ABS=CNJ N–buy-PST-PTCP–N
    Ahmed-ERG horse.ABS=CNJ=Q donkey.ABS=CNJ N–buy-PST-PTCP–N
    (‘Was it a [ horse ]F and a donkey that Ahmed bought?’)

The difference between the two island violations in (17) concerns the fact that with ex-situ focus one of the conjuncts is separated from the island creating a gap in its island-internal base position (17a); in (17b), on the other hand, the focus particle occurs inside the island.

The other coordination strategy, the wa strategy, creates an island as well, which can be seen from the unacceptability of (18):

(18) XP wa YP
    horse.ABS=Q Ahmed-ERG and donkey.ABS N–buy-PST-PTCP–N

7. There is an alternative structure allowing one of the conjuncts to be split away from the other(s), provided all conjuncts appear with a focus particle. In the case of =jiš, this is the preferred way of phrasing an alternative question, with a range of word orders possible:

(‘Was it a [ horse ] F and a donkey that Ahmed bought?’)

Avar focusing, therefore, is sensitive to the CSC irrespective of the particular coordination strategy involved.

**Complex NP Constraint**

In the CNPC examples below I use complex noun phrases modified by a relative clause, (19) serving as the base sentence.

(19) di- qe b-il ana [insu- ca di- e sajiyat I.oobl-apl N-disappear-pst father.oobl-erg I.oobl-dat gift.abs ha- b-un b-uk’-a- ra- b t’ex ]

make-N-cvb N-be- pst-ptcp-N book.abs

‘I have lost the book that my father gave me.’

Just as we have seen above for the CSC examples, neither in- nor ex-situ focus is permissible as long as the focus particle attaches to one of the island’s subconstituents.


Contrary to what it might seem, these structures do not pose a challenge for the already formulated generalisation concerning the island status of coordinated XPs in Avar. I am inclined to think that they are formed by either syntactically coordinating two full clauses or juxtaposing them at the discourse level, followed by an ellipsis operation in one of them, along the lines of (ii), where the elided piece is greyed out.

(ii) Was it a horse that Ahmed bought? Was it a donkey that Ahmed bought?

This analysis receives support from the fact that the question in (i) above contains no conjunction or disjunction markers and yet is interpreted as a disjunction.

The various attested word orders result, then, from the interaction of the ellipsis site and the in- vs. ex-situ focus strategy.
The Avar focus construction

(21) "di-qe [insu- ca guro di-e sajiyat ha- b-un b-uk’-a- ra- b
I- APL father-ERG NEG I- DAT gift.ABS make-N-CVB N-be- PST-PTCP-N
t’ex ] b-il- a- ra- b
book.ABS N-disappear-PST-PTCP-N
(‘I have lost the book that my father gave me.’)

The desired interpretation, along with a number of others, can be achieved, as before, by attaching the focus particle to the right edge of the island:

(22) "di-qe [insu- ca di-e sajiyat ha- b-un b-uk’-a- ra- b
I- APL father-ERG I- DAT gift.ABS make-N-CVB N-be- PST-PTCP-N
t’ex ] guro b-il-a- ra-b
book.ABS NEG N-disappear-PST-PTCP-N
‘I didn’t lose the book that [ my father ]F gave me.’
‘I didn’t lose the [ book ]F that my father gave me.’
‘I didn’t lose the book that my father [ gave ]F me.’
‘I didn’t lose the book that my father [ gave me ]F.’

The island sensitivity displayed by Avar focus supports the conclusion that either a syntactic dependency (encoded via features) or syntactic movement is implicated in their formation. In the following section I explore both options before concluding that the analysis must deal with these facts by having the focus particle itself move to the left periphery.

5.2.2 Semantics

Before developing an analysis of Avar focus a closer look must be taken at the effects the focus particles contribute to the semantic interpretation of their host clauses. Below is a brief, and very informal, description of these effects, to which we return in §5.4.3.2.

It would appear that =i(i)i in and =\chi a impart contrastivity and exhaustivity to the prejacent proposition. Constituent negation marker guro shares the contrastivity and exhaustivity properties, too, in addition to expressing the negation itself.

Unlike =i(i)i in and guro, the question particle =i(i)š is not associated with exhaustivity, possibly because it serves to raise a question rather than give a complete answer to it. The existence presupposition accompanying some of the polar questions, I suggest, must be analysed as having a different source — the relative clause.
5.3 Against a cartographic approach to Avar focus

5.2.3 Summary

Let us recapitulate what we have learnt so far as regards the syntactic and semantic properties of \( =\text{j}i\text{s};, =\text{j}\text{in}, =\chi\alpha \) and \text{guro} in Avar.

On the syntactic side, we have considered the category of the phrase that the aforementioned particles can combine with, and examined both linear and hierarchical constraints on their placement. We have discovered that those focus particles do not subcategorise for a particular phrase marker and combine instead with objects of various categories. In addition, they display the pied-piping property, which in this instance corresponds to the ability to ‘look’ into larger constituents, including strong islands, and target a subconstituent for association with focus.

On the semantic side, we have only made preliminary statements ascribing the exhaustivity and contrastivitiy properties to \( =\text{j}i\text{s};, =\text{j}\text{in}, =\chi\alpha \) and \text{guro}. A more detailed discussion of these properties will have to be postponed until §5.4.3.2.

Finally, we have compared \( =\text{j}i\text{s};, =\text{j}\text{in}, =\chi\alpha \) and \text{guro} with another focus-sensitive expression, the exclusive \text{coho} ‘only’.

5.3 Against a cartographic approach to Avar focus

One analytic option can be described as belonging to the family of approaches usually termed cartographic, a subset of which dealing with the left-peripheral phenomena take as their starting point the so-called Split CP Hypothesis (Rizzi 1997, Poletto 2000, Benincà 2001, Aboh 2004, Benincà & Poletto 2004, Hiraiwa & Ishihara 2012, among many others). In this section I review the original arguments for it, as well as a specific implementation, and conclude that such an approach cannot be extended to our language data.

5.3.1 Cartographic approaches to information structure

The postulation of a set of features encoding information-structural information which are often distributed over a number of heads, most of those heads replacing the “older” C-node (Chomsky 1986), has become a de facto standard in the work on the left periphery. The original split C as first proposed in Rizzi (1997), is represented in (23) below.
As can be seen from the tree above, each of the postulated heads comes with a dedicated specifier position hosting dislocated elements that are interpreted as focused, topicalised etc. whilst the heads themselves contribute various aspects of relevant information regarding the status of the clause. The heads come in a particular hierarchical order and appear in the functional structure of the clause only once, with the exception of the Topic head, which can recur. The heads and their contribution to the interpretation are as follows: Force introduces illocutionary force which effectively “types” the clause as declarative, interrogative etc. At the opposite end we see the Finiteness node, which assigns to its complement IP information regarding finiteness. In between these two heads are two Topic heads and a Focus head.

Most of Rizzi’s original arguments in favour of such an approach to the left periphery were based on the order of a number of heterogeneous elements (mostly complementisers and dislocated XPs) in the left periphery of the clause in certain Romance varieties. I discuss a couple of those arguments and how Rizzi argues they motivate the exact decomposition of the C-layer given in (23).
5.3. Against a cartographic approach to Avar focus

(24) **Foci can be surrounded by topics**

Credo che a Gianni, QUESTO, domani, gli dovremmo dire
I believe that to Gianni this tomorrow him we should tell
‘I believe that to Gianni, THIS, tomorrow, we should say.’

[Italian, Rizzi (1997: 295)]

Information-structurally speaking, (24) contains a focused constituent, *questo* ‘this’, and two topic-like elements, *a Gianni* ‘to Gianni’ and *domani* ‘tomorrow’, surrounding it. Rizzi claims that this ordering can only be explained by the hierarchy in (23): the two topics occupy the specifiers of the lower and higher Topic heads, the focused constituent sitting in the specifier of FocP. The portion of the sentence to the right of *domani* corresponds to FinP/IP, whilst the complementiser *che* ‘that’ occurs in the specifier of ForceP.

To rule out structures in which one of the information-structurally relevant heads c-commands the Force head — the head that is claimed to be the highest one in the hierarchy — it should suffice, Rizzi argues, to consider the contrasts between relative and interrogative clauses given in (25) and (26).

(25) a. Un uomo a cui, il premio Nobel, lo daranno senz’altro
    a man to whom the prize Nobel it they.will.give undoubtedly

    b. *Un uomo, il premio Nobel, a cui lo daranno senz’altro
    a man the prize Nobel to whom it they.will.give undoubtedly ‘a man to whom they will undoubtedly give the Nobel prize’

[Italian, Rizzi (1997: 298)]

(26) a. *A chi, il premio Nobel, lo daranno?
    to whom the prize Nobel it they.will.give

    b. Il premio Nobel, a chi lo daranno?
    the prize Nobel to whom it they.will.give
    ‘The Nobel prize, who will they give it to?’

[Italian, ibid.]

For Rizzi, the relative complementiser occupies the specifier of ForceP, just like the embedding complementiser *che*, which, by hypothesis, is the highest element in the hierarchy, preventing the topicalised DP *il premio Nobel* from preceding it (25b). As far as wh-questions are concerned, interrogative expressions are analysed on a par with focused constituents, viz. as occurring in the specifier of FocP, which is situated lower than the upper Top*P and can thus be preceded by a topicalised element.
5.3.2 Problems with the Split CP Hypothesis

Whilst it is true that Rizzi's (1997) system and its subsequent refinements have been claimed to account for the ordering of elements in the left periphery in a considerable number of languages, the programme itself raises serious concerns, both conceptual and empirical.

The first theoretical problem stems from the assumption, taken for granted, that elements appearing in the left periphery of a clause must be syntactically integrated into that clause. This theoretical issue becomes empirical once one looks at the simplest cases of left dislocation in Germanic, which involve routine exceptions to the well-established $V2$-generalisation.

(27) Jan, ik heb hem ontmoet
    Jan I have him met
    ‘Jan, I have met him.’

As can be seen in (27), the finite verb *heb* 'have' occupies the third position from the left instead of appearing in its customary, second-place, position.

The second theoretical issue involves the abundance of postulated heads, and has its roots in the explicit stipulation that heads can only have one specifier. From a strictly minimalist perspective, whereby the narrow syntactic component consists of little more than Merge (Chomsky 2007, Boeckx 2014, Ott 2014, Zwart 2009, Trotzke & Zwart 2014), this stipulation seems to have an especially *ad hoc* flavour.

Perhaps the gravest problem facing those cartographic theories that take the cartographic hierarchies to be a theoretical tool rather than a useful way of notating descriptive generalisations is the fact that these hierarchies amount to mere restatements of the ordering patterns they were initially devised to explain. This is especially obvious when one compares cartographic decompositions of the $C$ layer with those of lower portions of the clause: whilst the order of functional heads encoding event-related, aspectual and temporal information can be derived from the properties of events, argument structure, tense and aspect (see Ramchand & Svenonius 2014 for an attempt at deriving the order of heads in the $VP$ and $TP$ zone as well as a discussion of accompanying challenges), there can hardly be any principled reason for there being, say, two Topic heads flanking one Focus head in (23) rather than the other way round, or why the Topic heads on either side of the Focus head can recur an infinite number of times but the Focus head is invariably one and only.

Finally, two more problems for the cartographic approaches. One is empirical, and it concerns transitivity failures as documented in Venetian (van
5.3. Against a cartographic approach to Avar focus

Craenenbroeck (2006). The other point is methodological: as is well known, no language lexicalises every single element of a postulated functional hierarchy, which is why the data upon which most cartographic structures are built have to be generalised from partial orders in distinct languages.

In addition to these general points there is evidence that the Split-CP account as outlined above cannot account for our data in question, but in order to formulate the empirical counterarguments one needs a fairly explicit analysis of what a cartographer might think might be going on in the Avar focus construction. Given the lack of a formal account of Northeast Caucasian focus in the literature, I discuss, instead, a recent proposal regarding a very similar set of facts from an Indo-Aryan language Sinhala put forth in Slade (2011).

5.3.3 Slade (2011) on focus in Sinhala

Focusing mainly on Sinhala, Slade (2011) develops a theory of focus particles within the framework of Alternative Semantics, and syntactises it by proposing that the special morphology that appears on the verb in the presence of such particles, not unlike what we have seen above for Avar, is the pronunciation of the Focus head. In this subsection I review the syntactic side of this analysis and the arguments supporting it, and conclude that at least with respect to our Avar data, such an approach cannot be extended to account for it.

One aspect of Sinhala focus that makes it very similar to Avar, at least on the surface, is that whenever focus is involved, the verb cannot appear in its “normal” finite form but must take on the -e ending, which Slade (2011) analyses as spelling out the Focus head.

(28) a. mamə gamaṭə yann- a
   I.NOM village.DAT go.PRS-AE
   ‘I go to the village.’

b. "mamə [ gamaṭə ] F yann- a
   I.NOM village.DAT go.PRS-AE

c. mamə [ gamaṭə ] F yann- e
   I.NOM village.DAT go.PRS-E
   ‘It is to the village I go.’ [Sinhala, Slade (2011: §4.1, exx. (1a,2a))]

(28a) illustrates the regular, non-narrow-focus, context, where the verb must end in -a, (28b) shows the unacceptability caused by a cooccurrence of narrow focus on gamaṭə ‘village.DAT’ and the -a ending on the verb, whereas (28c) demonstrates the -e form, which is the only acceptable one in the given context.
To analyse the contrast in (28) Slade assumes a broadly minimalist syntax involving Probe–Goal relations mediated by feature valuation. Syntactic movement is triggered by EPP features on attracting heads. Contrary to most existing proposals regarding the structure of Sinhala focus sentences he argues that these constructions should be viewed as monoclausal, rather than biclausal “cleft” constructions as argued in previous work.

The two diagrams in (29) above illustrate the proposed derivations of in-situ focus and ex-situ focus respectively. What is of interest is the morphological form of the verb, which must end in -e whenever there is a clausemate focused constituent present. The focused constituent itself can either appear in situ (29a) or be dislocated to the right edge of the clause (29b).

The corresponding focus-related features are distributed in the following fashion: the focused constituent enters the derivation with a valued interpretable [Focus] feature and an unvalued feature [Exist], which is the syntactic correlate of the existence presupposition associated with Sinhala focus. The focus suffix -e, on the other hand, carries an unvalued [Focus] feature and a valued [Exist] feature, plus an EPP feature to trigger focus movement in those cases where this movement obtains.
The similarity between the focus constructions in Sinhala and Avar is, however, not full, since in Sinhala no focus particle is required for the verb to appear in its -e form, which was a clear impossibility in Avar, as we have seen in § 5.2. In Slade's (2011) system the $\tilde{A}$-dependency involves two elements, the Focus head and the focused constituent, whereas in Avar there are three: the Focus head, the focused constituent and the focus particle.

If one were to extend Slade's (2011) analysis of focus to Avar, one could postulate that, just like in Sinhala, the participial morphology on the verb is the spellout of the Focus head in the articulated C-layer of the clause. This Focus would be endowed with $[uFocus:_,iExist:+]$, both of which will enter into Probe–Goal relations with matching $[iFocus:+,uExist:]$ features on the focused constituent. There would also be an optional $[\text{EPP}]/\text{Edge}$ feature triggering overt focus movement to the specifier of Foc. The focus particle could, on this view, be the spellout of the $[iFocus:+]$ feature. The derivation of (2), repeated here as (30), would then be as schematised in (31).

(30) rasul- in aminati- ca ah- a- ra- w
Rasul.ABS=FOC Aminat.OBL-ERG invi-te-PST-PTCP–M
‘Aminat invited [Rasul]F.’

(31) CP
    \hline
    FocusP
    \hline
    DP  FocusP
        \hline
        rasul= in $[iFoc:+,uExist:]$
        \hline
        IP
            \hline
            vP
                \hline
                v
                    \hline
                    t_i
                    \hline
                    aħ-a_i-ra–w
                    \hline
            \hline
            DP
                \hline
                aminatic
                    \hline
                    VP
                        \hline
                        v
                            \hline
                            t_i
                            \hline
                            \hline
                            t_i
                            \hline
                            \hline
                            t_i
                            \hline

8. See §2.1.1.1 for a brief discussion.
In the modification of Slade’s (2011) analysis depicted in (31) two kinds of movement that are relevant for our purposes here take place (like Slade, I am ignoring all other possible movements and features to keep the trees legible): the focus movement of the focused constituent rasul= in and a series of steps of head movement involving the verb. The base position along with the intermediate landing sites are notated as traces (t_i).

It could also be argued that such an analysis accounts for the observed island-sensitivity of focus marking: if the focus particle is the spellout of the [iFocus] feature on the focused constituent that must enter into a syntactic dependency with a matching feature on the Focus head and one of them occurs inside an island, it will be invisible for the other, on the assumption that islands are phases and phases constrain Agree. If the feature is on the edge of an island, however, it will be able to establish the dependency with a matching feature. This is illustrated for the CSC example (17) involving a focus particle internal to the island, which on Slade’s (2011) approach will be identical to focus fronting examples except for the actual fronting.

(32)

In the tree above the greyed-out portion corresponds to the strong island, with the relevant Agree operations being represented as dashed lines. Because the coordinated noun phrase čugi hamagi is syntactically opaque, the [uExist:_] feature on the first conjunct cannot be valued, just like the [uFoc:_] feature on the c-commanding Focus head cannot be valued.\footnote{We are ignoring here the phasal status of v that may require further modifications to the cartographic line of reasoning sketched above, such as pairs of matching features on v as well.}
5.3. Against a cartographic approach to Avar focus

The structures proposed for Sinhala raise a number of questions, some of those questions concerning the setting of the headedness parameter as well as the linearisation of specifiers, most of which appear to the left of their corresponding heads whilst others obligatorily follow them. These issues notwithstanding, further arguments can be made against extending Slade’s (2011) analysis to our Avar cases.

The first argument pertains to the reservations with respect to pursuing a cartographic programme when it comes to the formalisation of essentially pragmatic notions of givenness/topichood and focus as syntactic heads and features, stemming from the assumption that syntactic movement must be triggered by those features. Whilst this latter assumption is a stipulation of its own, as acknowledged in Chomsky (2007, 2013), in a modular system the null hypothesis is that topic and focus are represented in a distinct interpretative component that is crucially non-syntactic, and having it be represented in narrow syntax as well would result in the duplication of the information in question. On this view, word-order based arguments are essentially vacuous since they present interesting explananda but are by no means explanations. Besides, once the stipulation regarding the feature-driven nature of Internal Merge is removed, it becomes much less obvious how these notions are relevant to the pure concerns of the narrow syntax.10

Furthermore, it has already been mentioned in passing (§ 5.2.3) that Avar focus particles impart exhaustivity to the interpretation of the sentence in which they appear. Although it is hard to be certain since the denotations of [iFocus:+] and [iExist:+] are not made explicit, this exhaustivity does not seem to follow from them, unless one were to insist that focus is always exhaustive or that there is an additional [+Exh] feature, or the [i/uFocus:_] feature can take an exh value.

One of the puzzles that the cartographic approach described above was designed to explain concerned the participial morphology on the verb; the explanation consisted in identifying the participle affix with the Focus head — that way the observation is indeed accounted for but at the expense of missing another, arguably broader, generalisation: we have seen in preceding chapters since I end up abandoning the FocusP view altogether, I refrain from discussing these issues any further.

10. If one were to voice an objection to this line of reasoning, it would probably concern the issue of what should be done with the empirical arguments for the Split CP Hypothesis. Some of those arguments, in particular Left- and Right-dislocation, are already being readdressed and reevaluated — see Abels (2012), Ott (2014), Ott & de Vries (in press) for alternative proposals that are arguably superior to the more traditional cartographic analyses.
The Avar focus construction

Affirmative                      Negative
Finite   Participle   Finite   Participle
Past     aħ-ana        aħ-ara-w   ah-i-č’o  ah-i-č’-e-w
Present  ah-ula        ah-ule-w   ah-ula-ro  ah-ula-r-e-w
Future   ah-ila        ah-ile-w   ah-ila-ro  ah-ila-r-e-w

Table 5.1: Finite and participial forms of aħize ‘shout’ (repeated)

that the participial affixes were also obligatorily present on verbs in relative clauses. The cartographer would, seemingly, have to either postulate accidental homonymy between verbs in relative clauses and sentences with focus or be forced to reduce either type of context to the other.

In addition to all of the aforementioned shortcomings, any analysis of the participial morphology on the verb as spelling out $\text{Foc}^0$ does actually not deliver on one of the fronts, viz. it fails to account for the obligatory participialisation after all. To see this, let us consider the (truncated) inflectional paradigm of the verb aħize ‘shout’, illustrated in Table 5.1. The paradigm illustrated in the table shows that the participial morphology varies depending on tense rather than being invariant, as would be expected if it were spelling out $\text{Foc}^0$. Several tense-dependent allomorphs of the $\text{Foc}^0$ head are therefore required, which has no motivation other than attempting to capture the facts.

Moreover, the pattern extends to the negated forms as well, which involve more complex morphology, especially in the past tense, than the affirmative forms. Even though this is not entirely incompatible with Split-CP analyses, the accidental homonymy story becomes far less plausible and the across-the-board identity of form between participles in relative clauses and sentences with focus still remains unaccounted for.

Let us take stock: the cartographic approach outlined in this subsection had the attractive property of being able to derive the island-sensitive nature of Avar focus marking by appealing to locality constraints on the syntactic operation of Agree. It also seemed, at first, to be able to account for the participial form that the verb obligatorily takes when in a focus-marking environment. I have argued that it did, in fact, fail to deliver on its promises, just as it was unable to explain the identity of form between verbs in focus sentences and relative clauses. I have also listed a number of conceptual considerations that, in combination with these empirical inadequacies, warrant rejecting the cartographic account of the Avar focus construction.
5.4 Towards a proposal

In the discussion so far I have argued that the syntactic and semantic properties of the Avar focus construction should not be approached with a cartographic mindset. Building on the insight from Chapter 3 and especially Chapter 4, this section outlines my alternative, which is an extension of the biclausal analysis developed for wh-questions.

More specifically, I treat Avar focus particles as creating a pseudocleft, where they separate the pivot from the presupposition. The analysis is rooted in existing work on focus in Northeast Caucasian languages (Testelec 1998a,b, Kazenin 2002) arguing for a biclausal cleft-like structure of Northeast Caucasian focus. The resulting syntactic structures, I argue, are fully compatible with the general approach to focus advocated in Beaver & Clark (2008), and its specific application to English it-clefts proposed by Velleman et al. (2012), which I also adopt.

5.4.1 Q-particles and focus particles

For Cable, a key ingredient of many an A-dependency is the so-called question particle, or Q-particle, which although silent in English, can be overtly realised in a number of languages by either heading a projection of its own or adjoining to another constituent. According to Cable (2010b, a), the postulation of a dedicated Q-particle, whether overt or covert, leads to rather an elegant solution to the so-called pied-piping problem.

This Q-particle enters into syntactic dependencies with a head in the left periphery carrying a matching feature (Cable follows Rizzi 1997 in assuming the Split CP Hypothesis) and moves to it either overtly or covertly. Because the particle attaches to a certain constituent, the attracting head need not see beyond the features of the particle, and the constituent in question plus the particle can undergo a displacement operation.

To see more concretely how the system works, consider (33) from Tlingit, a Na-Dené language followed by its derivation in (34).

(33) a. [Aadóo yaagú] sá ysíteen?
   who  boat  Q  you.saw

b. *[Aadóo sá yaagú] ysíteen?
   who  Q  boat  you.saw
   ‘Whose boat did you see?’

   [Tlingit, Cable (2010a: 575)]
The pied-piping problem formulated by Cable (2010b,a) is as follows: If the interrogative complementiser is “interested” in wh-features of the wh-phrase *aadó ‘who’* that it attracts to its specifier, the pied-piping structure in (33a) is problematic, since there is no possible reason for the remainder of the moved constituent to leave its base position. What is even more puzzling is the ungrammaticality of the structure resulting from C attracting only the constituent it is meant to see, i.e. the interrogative possessor (33b).

(Cable 2010a: 576)

The solution to the pied-piping problem, Cable (2010b,a) maintains, is to assume that the interrogative C probes for a Q-feature on the Q-particle, rather than the [wh] feature on the wh-word, disregarding all the other features of the particle’s sister node (i.e. it is not concerned with whether the interrogative element is a DP, a PP or a CP). The ungrammaticality of (33b) follows from the island status of the DP in question, which would stop C probing for Q due to a locality constraint on Agree (see §2.1.1.1), yielding an uninterpretable output.

In what follows I take the question particle =*(j)iš: to be Cable’s (2010b) Q-particle which is, together with the other focus particles, one of the two crucial ingredients of the focus construction, the other one being a free relative clause. Like Cable (2010b,a), I take the focus particle to undergo movement to the left periphery but I depart from him when it comes to motivating that movement. A further modification is that the focus particle moves alone without bringing its sister constituent with it to the left periphery. It is this last property of focused phrases in Avar that I now proceed to discuss.
5.4. Towards a proposal

5.4.2 The focused constituent does not A-move

We have seen in §4.3 of the preceding chapter that Avar wh- phrases could not be viewed as undergoing A-movement to the left periphery because, unlike their English counterparts, they did not display most of the properties that A-moved phrases often have: they could not be reconstructed to the base position of the A-chain, nor did they trigger any crossover effects in the relevant configurations. I show in this subsection that this pattern extends to focused constituents more generally.

5.4.2.1 Idiom interpretation

The first piece of evidence against focus fronting being derived by A-movement regards the interpretation of idiomatic expressions, which we have already addressed in the context of relativisation (§3.2.3.1) and wh-interrogatives (§4.3.1.3). The intuition behind this test is that in order for the idiomatic reading to be available, various components of an idiom must be adjacent at the moment that the semantic interpretation takes place. The absence of the idiomatic reading is therefore often taken to be an argument against the discontinuous phrase ever forming a constituent at any level of representation.

Polar questions in (36) are based on a declarative sentence (35) that contains the idiom destroy someone's heart with the meaning of scare to death.

(35) wac- as dir rak’ b-ek- iza- b-una
brother-erg my heart.abs n-break-caus-n-pst

‘Brother scared me to death. (lit.: ‘Brother destroyed my heart.’)’

As can be seen from the free translation in (36) below, only the compositional reading is available.

(36) a. dur rak’= iš: wac- as b-ek- iza- b-u- ra- b
your heart=Q brother-erg N-break-caus-N-pst-ptcp-N
b. wac- as dur rak’= iš: b-ek- iza- b-u- ra- b
brother-erg your heart=Q N-break-caus-N-pst-ptcp-N

Was it your heart that brother destroyed?

The unavailability of the idiomatic reading with both ex- and in-situ focused phrases can be viewed as signalling the lack of focus movement.

It is fairly obvious that in order for this argument to go through, the idiom in question should be transparent enough to allow a certain number of transformations (i.e. it should be like make progress in English rather and not like
kick the bucket, which loses the idiomatic reading if the bucket is clefted). Since very little is known about the syntactic and semantic properties of Avar idioms, I only take this argument to be indicative of the absence of reconstruction effects instead of asserting that it shows, conclusively, the lack of these effects.\textsuperscript{11}

5.4.2.2 Crossover effects

With a hint of doubt as to the involvement of $\bar{A}$-movement in the derivation of Avar focus sentences from the preceding subsection in hand, we can now look at more robust piece of evidence, this time one involving the interaction of anaphoric dependencies with purported $\bar{A}$-movement.

Just as in the case of wh-questions discussed previously, Avar focus sentences display a lack of strong crossover effects.

(37) a. rasuli-ca žiw= go= jiš: č’w-a- ra- w
Rasul-ERG self.M:ABS=EMPH=Q kill-PST-PRT=M
‘Did Rasul kill himself?’

b. žin-ca= go= jiš: rasul č’w-a- ra- w
self-ERG=EMPH=Q Rasul.ABS kill-PST-PRT=M
(‘Was it he himself that killed Rasul?’)

The (a) sentence above is a default way of inquiring whether Rasul was involved in a self-killing event, whereas (b) corresponds to the Strong Crossover configuration on the assumption that focus movement is taking place, and its acceptability is therefore surprising. As before, I assume that crossover effects are inseparable from movement and not a mere subset of Principle C effects. If, however, we take the movement out of the equation altogether, the structure giving rise to crossover effects does not obtain and we are left with a case of a Principle C obviation, which should be easier to account for than the absence of crossover effects predicted on the movement analysis.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{11} The issue of idiom interpretation being applied as a test for syntactic reconstruction of $\bar{A}$-moved items has recently been raised by Heycock (2012), who, based on examples like (i), argues that idiom interpretation does not conclusively signal syntactic reconstruction.

\textsuperscript{12} This represents the only headway on Lucy’s problems that she thinks they have made so far.

The example in (i) is problematic for the view that takes $\bar{A}$-moved terms to reconstruct to their base position at LF for the following reason: it presents a reconstruction environment, as evidenced by the presence of the idiomatic reading of make headway, which would put the complex DP the only headway on Lucy’s problems containing the R-expression Lucy in the c-command domain of a coindexed pronoun she, predicting the sentence to be unacceptable, contrary to fact.
In the remainder of this section I consider an analysis that does precisely this, and holds that instead of involving an $\overline{A}$-dependency between fronted focus and the gap in the base position, like focus movement in English or Italian, Avar focus is in fact similar to cleft constructions.

5.4.3 **Avar focus involves clefting**

So far we have seen that a cartographic focus-movement analysis of Avar focus should hardly be entertained as such analyses failed to account for the absence of SCO effects and the obligatory participialisation accompanying the focus particles. In this subsection I suggest that at least some instances of the focus construction should be analysed as pseudocLEFTs, i.e. essentially non-monoclausal structures. I do so primarily on the basis of a number of similarities between Avar focus and English *it*-cLEFTs pertaining to their semantic interpretation. I begin, however, with morphosyntax by repeating two points from the preceding chapter that fit with the cleft analysis much better than any monoclausal focus-movement approach. One of them concerns the participial morphology, and the other the rigidity of word order in relative clauses.

5.4.3.1 **Biclausality**

There are two sets of facts suggesting that the Avar focus construction involves a relative clause as its structural core. Both of these have already been presented in the chapter on wh-dependencies, but for the sake of cohesion I reproduce them below as well.

TED here involve a reflexive/intensifier corresponding to the variable purportedly crossed over by the antecedent. Even if this has any bearing on the argument, it seems that a corresponding English sentence involving *he himself* as the subject is unacceptable on the intended interpretation:

(i) Did he$_1$ himself kill Rasul$_1$?

If, on the other hand, Avar focusing involves clefting, we expect its English analogue to be at least marginally better than the non-cLEFTed version, although the judgement is admittedly very subtle:

(ii) a. (?) It was he himself that killed Rasul.
    b. (?) Who killed Rasul was he himself.
    c. (?) The person that killed Rasul was he himself.
Participial morphology signals relativisation

Unlike the cartographic approaches discussed above that failed to give a satisfactory account of the participial morphology on the verb whenever a focus particle was present, we can capitalise on the very same morphology appearing on relativised verbs. Recall that Avar relative clauses are participial clausal structures. On this view the relative-like morphology on the verb is, in fact, relativisation morphology, eliminating any need to postulate a separate Focus head and capturing the across-the-board accidental homonymy between verbal morphology in focus and relative clauses that the cartographic analyses would be forced to postulate.

\[(38)\]
\[\text{a. ahmadi-ca= jin} [\_ narkotikal r- ič- ul- e- l ]
Ahmed-erg=FOC drugs.abs pl-sellPRS-PTCP-PL
'It is Ahmed that is selling drugs.'
\[\text{b. [\_ narkotikal r- ič- ul- e- w] či w-č'ana}
\text{drugs.abs pl-sellPRS-PTCP-M man m-come-PST}
'The drugs dealer has arrived.'

The main difference between the two relative clauses above concerns the absence of a head noun in the focus sentence (38a), and its presence in (38b). Crucially, the present-tense affix -ul- on ničuaret is identical in both sentences, as is the participle affix -e- (the distinct concord affix need not concern us here). The same can be said of the past and future tense forms of the participle:

\[(39)\]
\[\text{a. ahmadi-ca= jiš: [\_ narkotikal r- ič- a- ra- l ]}
Ahmed-erg=q drugs.abs pl-sell-PST-PTCP-PL
'Was it Ahmed that sold (the) drugs?'
\[\text{b. [\_ narkotikal r- ič- a- ra- w] či w-č'ana}
\text{drugs.abs pl-sell-PST-PTCP-M man.abs m-come-PST}
'The man that sold drugs has come.'

\[(40)\]
\[\text{a. ahmadi-ca guro [\_ narkotikal r- ič- il- e- l ]}
Ahmed-erg NEG drugs.abs pl-sell-FUT-PTCP-PL
'It is not Ahmed that will sell the drugs.'
\[\text{b. [\_ narkotikal r- ič- il- e- w] či w-č'ana}
\text{drugs.abs pl-sell-FUT-PTCP-M man.abs m-come-PST}
'The man that will sell the drugs has arrived.'

Presumably, the simplest explanation behind participialisation in the focus construction is that the focus construction is built on the basis of a relative clause.
5.4. Towards a proposal

Fixed word order signals relativisation

The second phenomenon concerns the observation that, just like in relative clauses and unlike declarative root clauses, verb-initial orders are disallowed in the focus construction.

Example (41), repeated from (17) and (60), confirms the availability of verb-initial orders in declarative sentences.

(41) $w$–$ecc$- $ul$- $e$- $w$–$uk$'-$ana$ rasul $insu$- $ca$.  
$M$–$praise$-$pst$-$ptcp$–$M$ $M$–$be$-$pst$ $Rasul$.$abs$ $father$-$erg$  
‘Father was praising Rasul.’

In the presence of a focus particle, on the other hand, verb-initial orders result in unacceptability:

(42) $^*$ $w$–$ecc$- $ul$- $e$- $w$–$uk$'$a$- $ra$- $w$ rasul$=$ $insu$- $ca$.  
$M$–$praise$-$pst$-$ptcp$–$M$ $M$–$be$-$ptcp$–$M$ $Rasul$.$abs$=$foc$ $father$-$erg$  
(‘Father was praising [Rasul]$_F$’)

(43) a. $insu$ca $w$–$ecc$- $ul$- $e$- $w$ $či$  
$father$.$erg$ $M$–$praise$-$prs$-$ptcp$–$M$ $man$  
(b. $^*$ $w$–$ecc$- $ul$- $e$- $w$ $insu$ca $či$  
$M$–$praise$-$prs$-$ptcp$–$M$ $father$.$erg$ $man$  
(‘the man praised by (his) father’)

The above facts suggest a parallelism, related to word order, between the focus constructions and relative clauses in Avar that can hardly be ignored. Given this parallelism I hypothesise that the Avar focus construction is a pseudocleft, which entails that it is built around a relative clause. My analysis is thus similar to Testelec (1998b), which I briefly summarise below.

Testelec (1998b) proposes a tripartite, “flat”, structure of Avar (the Andalal dialect) focus sentences like (44) below involving ex-situ focus sketched in (45) with glossing conventions being adapted to the ones used here:

(44) $was$–$as$= $χa$ $ʒunder$= $go$ $ma$šina $tunk$- $a$- $ra$- $b$  
$boy$-$erg$=$foc$ $self$.$gen$=$emph$ $car$.$abs$ $break$-$pst$-$ptcp$–$N$  
‘It was the boy that broke his car.’  
(Testelec 1998b: ex. (37))
It can be seen from the structure above that Testelec (1998b) views the focus marker as a head, placing it under the I(nflection) node. The remaining elements flanking the focus marker are the focused phrase itself and a headless relative clause, the latter corresponding to the non-focused, or presuppositional, part of the clause. For my analysis I will keep the relative clause portion of the structure but modify it in such a way as for the focus marker to be functioning as an adjunct and not a head. 13

Because the similarity between Avar focus sentences and clefts is not only morphosyntactic, I now proceed to discuss the semantic import of the focus

13. This move can arguably solve the problem of focus in situ that will invariably arise on the focus-marker-as-head analyses: if the focus particle is a head, how can it occur, in the case of in-situ focused elements, inside one of its own dependents? As already outlined in §§ 4.5.2.3, Testelec (1998b) and Kazenin (2002) speculate that in order to derive the in-situ order a subsequent lowering operation must be taking place, whereby both the focused constituent and the focus particle undergo downward movement into the presuppositional clause. This account differs from the cartographic one discussed in §§ 5.3.3 in analysing the ex-situ version of the focus construction as the basis for the in-situ order. Regrettably, the authors do not discuss in any great detail what exactly this lowering operation is or at what level of representation it takes place, nor can such an analysis explain the asymmetries with respect to connectivity and crossover effects described in §5.4.4.

To be more precise, if the focus particle is adjoined to the focused constituent rather than take it and the headless relative clause as its dependents, the problem simply does not arise, nor do any lowering operations for in-situ focus have to be postulated.
5.4. Towards a proposal

particles, as well as the whole construction, which, as will become obvious, further strengthen the claim that we are in fact dealing with a cleft-like structure.

5.4.3.2 Parallels with English clefts

One cannot help but notice that the inference patterns associated with Avar focus particles in question, including the possibility of pied-piping (which is sometimes the only option to mark a constituent as focused), bear a striking resemblance to the behaviour of it-cleft pivots in English in at least two ways, both of which I discuss immediately below.

Exhaustivity of it-clefts

The first similarity between Avar focus and English it-clefts, as well as clefts in a number of other languages, concerns the exhaustive nature of inferences arising from their use. This exhaustivity of it-clefts is very well known but it is distinct from the exhaustivity of another focus-sensitive expression, only.\(^{14}\)

(46)  
- a. Patimat only invited Ahmed.
- b. It was Ahmed that Patimat invited.

Both sentences in (46) have at least two distinct components to their meaning—the lower bound and the upper bound, or, alternatively, the minimal and maximal components. The lower bound can be paraphrased with at least: in both (46a and b) there is a sense that Patimat invited at least Ahmed. The upper bound, analogously, is most easily expressed with at most: once again, both sentences contain a component of meaning saying that Patimat invited at most Ahmed.

This exhaustivity can be seen from (47), where the use of a continuation expressing a stronger at-issue statement than the upper bound arising from only and the cleft leads to a contradiction.

(47)  
- a. Patimat only invited Ahmed. #She invited Rasul, too.
- b. It was Ahmed that Patimat invited. #She invited Rasul, too.

It appears that Avar utterances with coho and =/(j)in respectively trigger effects identical to those of their English counterparts from (47):\(^{15}\)

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\(^{14}\) But see Destruel (2013) for data from French demonstrating that clefts in that language are not necessarily exhaustive, and an OT-analysis of c’est-clefts.

\(^{15}\) Because the particular morphosyntax of focus is not a primary concern of this subsection, I make the exception here of condensing the glosses as much as possible.
The Avar focus construction

(48) a. pat'imatica coħo ahmad ahana. # hel hedingo rasul= gi ahana Patimat only Ahmed invited she too Rasul=CNJ invited ‘Patimat only invited Ahmed. #She invited Rasul, too.’

b. Focus ex situ
ahmad= in pat'imatica aħaraw. # hel hedingo rasul= gi ahana Ahmed=FOC Patimat invited she too Rasul=CNJ invited

c. Focus in situ
pat'imatica ahmad= in aħaraw. # hel hedingo rasul= gi ahana Patimat Ahmed=FOC invited she too Rasul=CNJ invited ‘It was Ahmed that Patimat invited. #She invited Rasul, too.’

Although both exhaustive, only and it-clefts in English are very different in how the lower and upper bounds interact in certain contexts, primarily those involving embedding under either a propositional attitude predicate or negation. As is documented in the literature on clefts (e.g. Velleman et al. 2012, Büring & Križ 2013 among many others), the exhaustive component in these contexts survives in only-sentences but not in their cleft counterparts:

(49) a. Bob knew she invited Fred, but he didn’t know she only invited Fred.

b. # Bob knew she invited Fred, but he didn’t know it was Fred she invited. (Büring & Križ 2013: 2)

(50) a. She didn’t only invite Fred. She also invited Gord.

b. # It wasn’t Fred she invited. She also invited Gord. (ibid.)

This asymmetry between embedded clefts and only-sentences of English finds a correspondence in Avar. Indeed, if coħo behaved like only whereas one of the focus particles were interpreted as it-clefts, we would expect the exhaustivity component to remain in embedded contexts, unlike in the case of one of =χa, guro, =(j)įš: or =(j)in. It can be seen from (51) that this expectation is borne out for the contrastive focus particles.

(51) muradida lalaan pat'imatica ahmad ahun wuk’in...
Murad.loc knew Patimat.erg Ahmed.abs invited being ‘Murad knew Patimat invited Ahmed…’

a. # amma ahmad= in muradida lalew wuk’inč’ew hel ahun but Ahmed=FOC Murad.loc knowing being.not she.erg invited wuk’in being ‘…# but Murad didn’t know it was Ahmed she invited.’
b. amma muradida laleb buk’în’o hel coho ahmad ahun but Murad.loc knowing being.not she.erg only Ahmed invited wuk’în being ‘... but Murad didn’t know she only invited Ahmed.’

We can therefore conclude that whatever its syntactic structure, the Avar focus construction must receive the same (or similar) semantic treatment as the semantics of it-clefts. The proposed mechanism should be able to capture the observed asymmetries described immediately above. But before we can provide our focus particles with a denotation, a closer look at the upper and lower bound of exhaustive utterances is in order.

The most elegant analysis of exhaustivity of it-clefts known to me is Velleman et al. (2012), which proposes to formalise the upper and lower bound via two distinct operators, \( \text{MIN} \) for the lower bound and \( \text{MAX} \) for the upper bound. Both of these operators are parts of the denotations of \( \text{only} \) and \( \text{CLEFT}_S \), Velleman et al.’s (2012) operator responsible for interpreting it-clefts. The difference between \( \text{only} \) and \( \text{CLEFT}_S \) boils down to which of \( \text{MIN} \) and \( \text{MAX} \) is asserted and which is presupposed.\(^{16}\)

\[(52)\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{a. Patimat only invited Ahmed.} \\
&\text{Presupposed: Patimat invited at least Ahmed.} \\
&\text{Asserted: There is no answer strictly stronger than “Patinmat invited Ahmed.”}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{b. It was Ahmed that Patimat invited.} \\
&\text{Presupposed: There is no answer strictly stronger than “Patinmat invited Ahmed.”} \\
&\text{Asserted: Patimat invited at least Ahmed.}
\end{align*}\]

Indeed, Velleman et al. (2012) claim that if the upper bound is part of the assertion of \((52a)\) but not \((52b)\), the contrast between it-clefts and only-sentences can be easily accounted for with a minimum of assumptions.

The formal system of Velleman et al. (2012) includes \( S \), the current context, which includes a Current Question Under Discussion, notated as \( CQ_S \). It also contains \( \succeq_S \) and \( \succ_S \), notating the salient partial orderings over the alternative answers to \( CQ_S \). The \( \text{MIN} \) and \( \text{MAX} \) operators themselves receive the following definitions:

\[\text{16. For the purposes of this chapter I choose not to discuss other analyses of exhaustivity associated with it-clefts and refer the interested reader to Velleman et al.’s (2012) original arguments, which I assume to be correct.}\]
The Avar focus construction

(53) a. \( \text{MIN}_S(p) = \lambda w. \exists q \in CQ_S \left[ q(w) \land (q \geq_S p) \right] \)
    "There is a true answer at least as strong as \( p \)."

b. \( \text{MAX}_S(p) = \lambda w. \forall q \in CQ_S \left[ (q >_S p) \rightarrow \neg q(w) \right] \)
    "No true answer is strictly stronger than \( p \)."

To reiterate, both of these operators are claimed to be present in the denotations of only and clefťs, with one asserted and the other presupposed:

(54) a. \( \llbracket \text{only} \rrbracket = \lambda w. \lambda p : \text{MIN}_S(p)(w) . \text{MAX}_S(p)(w) \)

b. \( \llbracket \text{clefť}_S \rrbracket = \lambda w. \lambda p : \text{MAX}_S(p)(w) . \text{MIN}_S(p)(w) \)

Given the similarity between the semantics of coħo and only, I believe we are justified in attributing that similarity to the sameness of the denotation and defining coħo as in (55), where I also redefine propositions as sets of possible situations rather than possible worlds:

(55) \( \llbracket \text{coħo} \rrbracket = \lambda s. \lambda p : \text{MIN}_S(p)(s) . \text{MAX}_S(p)(s) \)

As far as the focus particles are concerned, Velleman et al.’s (2012) clefťs operator is defined in terms not making reference to the exact syntactic structure of the cleft (which is understandable given the lack of a single morpheme adjoining to the cleft’s pivot). But since in Avar the corresponding focus particles \( =(j) \text{in} \) and \( =x \text{a} \) are always overt, there is no need to postulate a covert operator, which leads me to propose that \( =(j) \text{in} \) and \( =x \text{a} \) are overt counterparts of clefťs.

(56) \( \llbracket %(j) \text{in} \rrbracket = \lambda s. \lambda p : \text{MAX}_S(p)(s) . \text{MIN}_S(p)(s) \)

The function corresponding to the denotation of \( =(j) \text{in} \), then, takes two arguments – a situation and a proposition – and returns true if the proposition expressed in the prejacent holds at that situation; it is also presupposed that no answer to \( CQ_S \) is stronger than the prejacent.

With these two denotations in place, we can now make our informally formulated exhaustivity claim (p. 199) explicit by going through the semantic interpretation of (57a and b) step by step but ignoring, for the time being, the exact syntactic derivation of the prejacent proposition. Let the set of alternative departees be restricted to three individuals, Ahmed, Rasul and Dibir.

(57) a. coħo ahmad \( \varnothing \)-ana. # hedingo rasulgi ana.
    only Ahmed ABS m-leave.PST also Rasul too left
    ‘Only Ahmed left. # Rasul left too.’

b. ahmad= in \( \varnothing-a- \) \( \varnothing- \) ra- w. # hedingo rasulgi ana.
    Ahmed ABS=FOC m-leave.PST-PTCP=m also Rasul too left
    ‘It was Ahmed that left. # Rasul left too.’
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Now, the presuppositional component of the denotation of *coho* given above makes sure that the region of the entailment scale in figure 5.1 that includes those individuals, atomic or otherwise, that are (or contain) Ahmed contains a true answer to the CQS, which means that either Ahmed left or Ahmed and Rasul did, or Ahmed and Dibir, or all three of them. This is our lower bound. The asserted upper bound then filters out those propositions that are strictly stronger (i.e. entail and are distinct from) the prejacent. Clearly all of left(*a* ⊕ *r* ⊕ *d*), left(*a* ⊕ *d*) and left(*a* ⊕ *r*) fit this description and are therefore marked as false. A subsequent mentioning of left(*a* ⊕ *r*), which has already been asserted to be false, creates a contradicting assertion, hence the infelicity of (57a) is derived.

It is clear that the infelicity of (57b) cannot be accounted in exactly the same way, since the upper bound is no longer asserted. Velleman et al. (2012) suggest that instead of a contradiction to the at-issue content, the also-continuation is simply uninformative when viewed from the perspective of the common ground. Indeed, once left(*a*) is asserted, the common ground automatically contains MINS( left(*a*)). But because the only assertion made by (57b) is MINS( left(*a*)), the rest is redundant.

In order to provide a denotation for the constituent negation marker *guro* along similar lines it is advantageous to look at how the semantics of CLEFTS interacts with negation. For English, we have already seen an example of this interaction in (50), repeated here as (58):

![Figure 5.1: The entailment scale for *Coho Ahmad ana* ‘Only Ahmed left.’ modelled on Velleman et al. (2012)](image-url)
The contrast between the two exhaustive expressions when they are embedded under negation boils down to the precise component of meaning that is being negated, and its interaction with the also-continuation. The case of (58a) is fairly straightforward, since negating the asserted upper bound does not lead to a contradiction when the also-continuation is introduced. To derive the judgement in (58b), the cleft sentence is only true iff there are no answers to the CQ5 (it being 'Who did she invite?') that are either stronger than or equal to She invited Fred. But because uttering the also-continuation claims that a stronger answer is, in fact, true, we get a contradiction. Put differently, It wasn’t Fred she invited presupposes that she did not invite a plural individual containing Fred and asserts that she did not invite Fred at all.

The following denotation, which is identical with the one for =\langle j\rangle in except for the negation, for the constituent negation marker formalises exactly that:

\[(59) \quad \langle \text{guro} \rangle = \lambda s.\lambda p:\text{max}_5(p)(s) \cdot \neg\text{min}_5(p)(s)\]

To sum up, we have seen that the Avar focus construction bears a striking resemblance to it-clefts in English when it comes to the matter of exhaustivity. The resemblance also extends to coho, the Avar counterpart of only.

Pied-piping of association with focus

Another property that the Avar focus construction shares with English it-clefts involves focus proper: Velleman et al. (2012) observe that association with focus in English it-clefts displays pied-piping, as can be seen from the three examples below:

\[(60) \quad \begin{align*}
a. & \quad \text{It was [ John’s eldest daughter ]}_f \text{ who liked the movie.} \\
& \quad \rightarrow \text{No other people liked the movie.} \\
\quad \text{b.} & \quad \text{It was John’s [ eldest ]}_f \text{ daughter who liked the movie.} \\
& \quad \rightarrow \text{None of John’s other daughters liked the movie.} \\
\quad \text{c.} & \quad \text{It was [ John’s ]}_f \text{ eldest daughter who liked the movie.} \\
& \quad \rightarrow \text{Nobody else’s eldest daughter liked the movie.}
\end{align*}\]

(Velleman et al. 2012: 442)

The relevant fact is that the cleft’s pivot does not have to be in focus in its entirety: while this is indeed the case in (60a), both (b) and (c) only involve focusing of the pivot’s subconstituents.
Similarly, we have seen in §5.2.1 that Avar focus particles can attach to constituents larger than their immediate scope and target one of its subconstituents (the question–answer pairs in 61–63 disambiguate the three possible ways of associating with focus from 12 on p. 174):

(61) Q1. [ʕalil ču ]jiš: b–at’- a- ra- b
   Ali.GEN horse.ABS =Q N-find-PST-PTCP–N
   ‘Was [ Ali’s horse ]F found?’
   A1. guro. rasulil hama b–at’- ana
       no Rasul.GEN donkey.ABS N-find-PST
       ‘No. They found [ Rasul’s donkey ]F.’

(62) Q2. ʕalil [ ču ]F= jiš: b–at’- a- ra- b
      Ali.GEN horse.ABS=Q N-find-PST-PTCP–N
      ‘Was Ali’s [ horse ]F found?’
      A2. guro. ʕalil hama b–at’- ana
          no Ali.GEN donkey.ABS N-find-PST
          ‘No. They found Ali’s [ donkey ]F.’

(63) Q3. [ ʕalil ]F= jiš: b–at’- a- ra- b
      Ali.GEN horse.ABS=Q N-find-PST-PTCP–N
      ‘Was [ Ali’s ]F horse found?’
      A3. guro. rasulil ču b–at’- ana
          no Rasul.GEN horse.ABS N-find-PST
          ‘No. They found [ Rasul’s ]F horse.’

Moreover, in certain syntactic environments pied-piping was the only way of getting a grammatical focus-marking sentence, since attaching the focus particle to its immediate scope would result in an island violation.

(64) a. [čugi hamagi ]F=jin ahmadica b-os- a- ra- b
    horse.CNJ donkey.CNJ =FOC Ahmed.ERG N-buy-PST-PTCP–N
    ‘It was a horse and a donkey that Ahmed bought.’
    → Ahmed bought nothing else.

b. [ čugi ]F hamagi= jin ahmadica bosarab
   horse.CNJ donkey.CNJ=FOC Ahmed.ERG N.buy.PST.PTCP.N
   ‘It was [ a horse ]F and a donkey that Ahmed bought.’
   → Besides a donkey, Ahmed bought a horse and nothing else.
c. čugi [hamagi]₁=jiņ ahmadica bosarab
   horse.cnj donkey.cnj=FOC Ahmed.erg n.buy.pst.ptcp.n
   'It was a horse and [ a donkey ]₁ that Ahmed bought.'
   → Besides a horse, Ahmed bought a donkey and nothing else.

Interestingly, English *it*-clefts behave identically under exactly the same circumstances, viz. the whole DP *John’s eldest daughter* in (60) above becomes the cleft’s pivot precisely because it is impossible for either *eldest* or *John’s* to do so alone.

The pied-piping property of association with focus in *it*-clefts and Avar sentences with focus can be derived by Velleman et al.’s (2012) formal system. Recall that in that system, every sentence containing a focus-sensitive expression is evaluated relative to CQS, the current question. It is precisely this component that underlies the differences between the three readings of (60) and analogous interpretations of (61–63). According to Velleman et al. (2012), the three readings of *It was John’s eldest daughter who liked the movie* result from there being three distinct CQₜₛ:

(65) Current questions for *It was John’s eldest daughter who liked the movie.*
   a. ‘Who liked the movie?’
   b. ‘Which of John’s daughters liked the movie?’
   c. ‘Whose eldest daughter liked the movie?’

Similarly, the observed patterns of association with focus between a focused constituent inside a syntactic island and a focus particle at the edge of that island can all be reduced to distinct CQₜₛ:

(66) Current questions for *It was a horse and a donkey that Ahmed bought*
   a. ‘What did Ahmed buy?’
   b. Ahmed bought a donkey and what other animal?
   c. Ahmed bought a horse and what other animal?

All that remains is for the MAXₜₛ and MINₜₛ operators to combine with the proper alternative answers to these CQₜₛ. In a model containing three possible objects for Ahmed to purchase — a horse, a donkey and a cow — these would be the following sets of propositions:
5.4. Towards a proposal

Ahmed bought a horse, a donkey and a cow
Ahmed bought a horse and a donkey
Ahmed bought a donkey and a cow
Ahmed bought a horse
Ahmed bought a donkey
Ahmed bought a cow

Ahmed bought a donkey and a cow
Ahmed bought a horse and a donkey
Ahmed bought a horse
Ahmed bought a donkey
Ahmed bought a cow

Ahmed bought a horse and a donkey
Ahmed bought a horse and a cow

Once MINs and MAXs have applied to these answers, only those alternatives corresponding to the prejacent will be true. In (70–72) these are typeset in black, with the false alternatives greyed out.

This concludes our informal discussion of the semantic properties of Avar sentences with focus particles, deriving both their exhaustivity and pied-piping and capturing their similarity to English it-clefts. The rest of the section provides further details on the syntactic side of the story.

5.4.4 It is the focus particle that moves

In the preceding subsections I argued against an $\bar{A}$-movement approach to Avar focus. Some of the argumentation was based, just as in the case of wh-dependencies discussed earlier, on the inconclusive character of the evidence for movement. I would now like to explore the possibility that we are in fact
dealing with movement, but that movement is distinct from the more conventional focus movement in (i) not targeting a specific specifier of a dedicated Focus head and (ii) involving the focus marker itself rather than the focused constituent.

Recall that one of the most important properties of Avar focusing concerns its sensitivity to syntactic islands, this island-sensitivity being of a very particular kind: the focused element can occur inside an island as long as the focus particle is outside of that island. But before the analysis can be presented, a short remark on syntactic movement is in order.

5.4.4.1 Syntactic movement: feature-driven or free?

Roughly a decade of minimalist research took it for granted that displacement operations, or syntactic movement, constituted an imperfection from the point of view of the design of the computational system underlying our linguistic competence (Chomsky 1995). Movement therefore had to have a trigger, usually in the form of an uninterpretable or unvalued formal feature. More recently, however, syntactic movement has been reinterpreted as an instance of a much simpler operation Merge and there has been a tendency of removing the stipulation about the feature-driven nature of Merge (Chomsky 2007, 2013, Ott 2012, Boeckx 2012, Zwart 2009, to appear) as well as looking for alternative ways of motivating movement in terms of interface phenomena. The reasoning behind this tendency is very simple, and can be reduced to the following syllogism:

\[
\begin{align*}
(73) \quad \text{Syntactic movement is Merge} \\
\text{Merge applies freely} \\
\text{Syntactic movement applies freely}
\end{align*}
\]

As far as A-dependencies are concerned, this free-merge reasoning as applied to wh-movement has most explicitly been articulated by Radek Šimík in an unpublished manuscript (Šimík 2012). The essence of his view is this: wh-items in wh-movement languages are free to either move or remain in situ, i.e. there is no narrow-syntactic mechanism to force them either way in that formal [wh] features, by hypothesis, do not exist. If the wh-element does undergo movement, this movement is interpreted as creating a property by abstracting over a variable, more or less in accordance with Heim & Kratzer’s (1998) Predicate Abstraction rule.\(^{17}\) If no movement takes place, the derivation can still proceed

17. The Predicate Abstraction rule creates a predicate (i.e. an open expression) out of a closed expression. Its adapted definition is given in (i):
uninterrupted but will fail to receive a correct semantic interpretation, since
the property resulting from the application of movement, and which is inter-
preted as an argument of the question operator, cannot be created. Syntactic
movement is therefore purely interface-driven but only to the extent that the
interpretative interface cannot “tell” the computational system to generate
that movement, thus allowing it to generate blindly.

At first glance it might seem odd to extend Šimík’s (2012) analysis to wh-depen-
dencies in Avar, not least in light of the previous chapter, where it was
argued that Avar was a strictly wh-in-situ language, as well as given Šimík’s
own explicit statements as to the inapplicability of his system to wh-in-situ
languages. I suggest that instead the phenomenon that should be subjected
to this treatment is relativisation, which is especially appropriate given the
general role of relative clauses in the creation of Avar focus structures.¹⁸

Šimík (2012) proposes that a free relative clause is derived from a proposi-
tion by wh-movement creating a property that would then combine with the
definite determiner. The structure in (74) containing a free relative clause re-
ceives the interpretation in (75), given a number of simplifications.¹⁹

(74)  I ate [DP D {CP what [TP Mary cooked ]}].

(75)  a.  [[CP what [TP Mary cooked ]]] = λx [ cooked(m, x) ]
    b.  [[DP D {CP what [TP Mary cooked ]}]] = ιx [ cooked(m, x) ]
    c.  [[I ate [DP D {CP what [TP Mary cooked ]}]]] = ate( I, ιx [ cooked(m, x) ])

I am inclined to follow Šimík (2012) and propose that the movement opera-
tion leading to the creation of a (free) relative clause is essentially interface-
driven and has no formal syntactic correlate in the form of a dedicated head
or feature. Movement remains nothing more than Merge, an operation with
no constraints of its own, which nevertheless has a semantic contribution,

(i)  **Predicate Abstraction**

   If α is a branching node whose daughters are a moved operator and β, then [[α]] = λx. [[β]]
   [adapted from Heim & Kratzer (1998: 129)]

An example of a closed formula becoming an open expression is the mechanism whereby He
saw Mary becomes who he saw – the relative pronoun who undergoes movement, and the object
position of saw is abstracted upon.

18. The kind of movement in relative clauses in Avar would, of course, not have to be identical
to that involved in English relativisation, primarily as regards the mover — recall that Avar
relative clauses never contain a relative pronoun or a wh-item.

19. Šimík (2012) also makes a typological claim regarding free relative clauses by attributing
to them the property of always being finite. We have seen, however, that Avar relative clauses,
headless or not, are always participial.
this contribution consisting of abstraction over a variable. If the movement obtains, so does \( \lambda \)-abstraction; if it does not obtain, the \( \lambda \)-abstract cannot be created. If the output of a derivation requires such an abstract in order to yield a proper semantic interpretation but the movement fails to take place, further Merge still applies but cannot be properly interpreted by the semantic component, resulting in unacceptability.

5.4.4.2 Focus in situ

We are now ready to see the structure underlying focus in situ, an example of which is repeated in (76) below. I propose that this structure is, in fact, the same juxtaposition structure for left dislocation as we have postulated when looking at the interaction of scrambling and wh-questions in the preceding chapter.\(^{20}\)

(76) \[ \text{pat’imati-ca rasul=} \text{ in ah- a ra- w} \]
\[ \text{Patimat- ERG Rasul.LABS=FOC invite-PST-PTCP-M} \]
\[ ‘\text{It was Rasul that Patimat invited.}’ \]

The focus particle undergoes raising to the propositional level for the purposes of interpretation, since it is uninterpretable in situ due to a type clash: given the discussion of focus particle semantics in §5.4.3.2, focus particles are sentence-level operators that can only combine with a proposition.

(77) \[ [\text{pat’imatica rasul-ahana }] [ \text{rasul= in [pro _ aharaw ]} ] \]

Observe that the kind of movement that the focus particle undergoes does not leave a trace: in that, the focus particle behaves like an operator such as sentential negation rather than a quantifier. Because of this, it does not obey locality constraints: indeed, in every case involving a focus particle (and only, for that matter) associating with the subject, for instance, the particle will have to move out of the subject island, thus routinely violating that constraint.

\(^{20}\) David Erschler (p.c.) informs me that the view which takes focus morphology to be essentially an adjunct, like I am doing here, faces serious issues when confronted with languages where focusing is performed inside a morphological word, as in Nivkh. I do not immediately see why this has to be problematic, however, since on the strictly modular approach to the architecture of the grammar such matters as (morpho)phonological integration fall outside the purview of narrow syntax.
5.4. Towards a proposal

5.4.4.3 Focus \textit{ex situ}

Having seen how our two ingredients — the focus particle and the headless relative clause — conspire to yield the \textit{in-situ} order, we now turn to the derivation of focus fronting, an example of which is repeated in (78).

(78) \texttt{rasul= in pat’imati-ca ah- a ra- w}

\texttt{Rasul.ABS=FOC Patimat- ERG invite-PST-PTCP-\textit{M}}

'It was Rasul that Patimat invited.'

Given this order, two distinct chunks of the sentence can be identified: the focused phrase (together with the focus particle) and the presuppositional clause. I propose that we take this intuition seriously and analyse the sentence as projecting a biclausal cleft-like structure, which seems appropriate in light of the semantics of the construction as well.

On the clefting view, one immediate syntactic difference between the Avar focus construction and \textit{it}-clefts in English concerns the status of the Avar construction: it can clearly not be an \textit{it}-cleft, since it never contains an expletive. The alternative, it seems to me, is to designate it as a kind of pseudocleft, but I will, for the time being, refrain from describing it as either predicational or specificational. I briefly return to this question after I have unfolded the entire structure.

(79) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{CP}_{\text{matrix}} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{in} \downarrow \\
\text{TP} \quad \text{C} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{DP} \quad \text{COP} \quad \text{CP}_{\text{REL}} \\
\text{rasul=} \quad \emptyset \\
\text{pat’imatica t}\_1 \text{aharaw}
\end{array}
\]

The relative clause in the \textit{ex-situ} variant of the focus construction does, unlike its \textit{in-situ} counterpart, contain a gap, which dependency being interpreted as \(\lambda\)-abstraction over an individual variable, in accordance with the standard assumptions about the interpretation of relative clauses. The mover is still the null operator, however, just as was the case with the gapless relative in the \textit{in-situ} case above.

We now need a way of asymmetricising the tripartite TP in the tree in
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(79), which, depending on the element to combine with the copula first, will give us either a specificational or a predicational pseudocleft. I leave further elaboration of this topic to future work.

5.4.5 Summary

In this section I have presented my alternative to the cartographic approach to such an information-structural notion as focus. The main accents were placed on the properties of two key ingredients of the focus construction — the focus particle and the relative clause. On the semantic side, we observed an almost full parallelism between the focus constructions in Avar and embedded and unembedded it-clefts in English and proposed the denotations for the focus particles based on those that Velleman et al. (2012) developed for the covert clefts operator responsible for the exhaustivity of English clefts.

I have argued that the focus particles are best treated as sentence-level operators, endowing them with the syntactic status of regular adjuncts, which would allow them to raise to be able to combine with the proposition encoded by the prejacent. By identifying the participial morphology on the verb in the focus construction with the relativising morphology we have been able to account for the obligatory participialisation that the cartographic analyses were unable to tackle.

We have been able to reduce the island-sensitivity of focus marking to locality constraints on relativisation, thus capturing the pied-piping property of association with focus in clefts.

By claiming the dependency between the fronted focused constituent and the gap inside the presuppositional clause is indirect we get a potential explanation of the absence of reconstruction effects: focus movement being eliminated from the equation, we are left with a Principle C obviation.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the syntax and semantics of the Avar focus construction. I have argued that although involving the same building blocks, the in- and ex-situ orders are generated by distinct mechanisms, neither of them reducible to the other.

I have also considered a number of potential analyses of the observed phenomena and ended up rejecting the cartographic approach on both empirical and conceptual grounds, which allowed me to pursue an alternative, arguably more minimalist, line of analysis in terms of unrestricted merge.
5.5. Conclusion

The outlined analysis aimed to capture a number of similarities between such focus particles in Avar as the question marker =jiš; the contrastive focus particles =(j)iin and =χa and the constituent negation marker guro on the one hand and the exclusive focus-sensitive expression coho ‘only’ on the other. In doing so a connection was established between the Avar focus construction and English it-clefts, and between coho in Avar and its English counterpart only.

I have argued that the reason for the verb appearing in the non-finite participial form is the fact that the focus construction is built around a relative clause, which in Avar are always participial. The participial morphology neither is an exponent of the Focus head nor spells out a [Focus] feature.

Focus particles contribute exhaustivity to the interpretation of a clause, which I have captured by adopting the framework of Velleman et al. (2012) and treating the focus particles as clefting operators acting on Questions Under Discussion.