

**WAYS OF EMPHATIC SCOPE-TAKING:  
FROM EMPHATIC ASSERTION IN NUPE TO THE GRAMMAR OF EMPHASIS**

Jason Kandybowicz  
University of Kansas  
[kandybowicz@ku.edu](mailto:kandybowicz@ku.edu)

ABSTRACT

This article investigates emphatic assertion in Nupe, a Benue-Congo language of central Nigeria. Two distinct varieties are attested in the language: a syntactically restricted type that employs a clause-final discourse particle to achieve veridical interpretations and a syntactically unrestricted and interpretationally weaker form that employs verb doubling. I argue that the core distributional and interpretive properties of the two varieties are derivable entirely on syntactic grounds. To account for Nupe's two emphatic marking strategies, I propose that Universal Grammar makes available at least two emphatic domains: a high left peripheral domain from which the emphatic operator takes scope over polarity and a low TP-internal site in which the operator is outscoped by polarity. Consequently, emphasis is syntactically restricted and semantically strongest when activating the peripheral domain and unrestricted/weakened when invoking the lower clause-internal domain. This analysis parallels the high (outer) vs. low (inner) focus domain duality and casts independent support for the existence of low (TP-internal) assertion domains.

KEYWORDS

- emphatic assertion • polarity emphasis • verum focus
- high (restricted) vs. low (unrestricted) emphasis • speaker commitment
- main clause phenomenon • Nupe

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The grammatical expression of emphatic assertion is cross-linguistically varied. In many languages it is highly restricted (Danckaert & Haegeman 2012) and available only in main clauses (plus perhaps a limited set of subordinate contexts known to pattern with root clauses), while in others it has a much freer distribution (Breitbarth & Haegeman 2010) and as a result, finds expression in a number of main and embedded domains. Hyman & Watters (1984) propose that in languages in which it is restricted, that is, languages in which emphatic assertion<sup>1</sup> is a Main Clause Phenomenon (cf. Emonds 1970, 1976; Hooper & Thompson 1973.), emphasis is “syntactically controlled”. In contrast, they propose that unrestricted varieties are controlled not by syntactic means, but rather by pragmatic forces. Work on the unrestricted variety of emphatic assertion in Flemish (Breitbarth & Haegeman 2010; Guéron & Haegeman (2012)), for example, suggests that there is some credence to the latter (pragmatic) approach, while a growing body of recent work (see the articles in this issue) has converged on a syntactic analysis of emphatic assertion that invokes the specialized structure of an articulated clausal left periphery. This raises a fundamental question. Is emphatic assertion a grammatically heterogeneous class (i.e. syntactically *or* interpretationally controlled)? Or can the two varieties be grammatically unified?

One way to gain a foothold on the issue is to investigate languages with multiple mechanisms for expressing emphatic assertion and determine the extent to which their inner workings can be analytically unified. This way, the likelihood of confound is lowered given that direct comparisons within a single grammar can be made, making use of independently motivated analyses. Nupe, a Benue-Congo language of central Nigeria, makes use of two distinct emphatic marking strategies. As we’ll see, there are good reasons to distinguish the two types, as they

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<sup>1</sup> In their terminology/analysis, emphatic assertion is expressed by “auxiliary focus”.

exhibit different distributional and interpretive patterns as well as enter into different scope relations with polarity. In this way, Nupe is a strategic language for probing this issue. The data shown below illustrate that emphatic assertion in the language<sup>2</sup> can be expressed either by way of the clause-final particle *ni*:<sup>3</sup> or by repetition of the verb (Smith 1970), with subtle interpretive nuances differentiating the two.

- (1) a. *Musa gí kinkere ni:*.  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) Musa DID eat the scorpion.’
- b. *Musa gí kinkere à ni:*.  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion NEG *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) Musa DID NOT eat the scorpion.’
- c. *Musa gí kinkere gí.*  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘(Apparently) Musa DID eat the scorpion.’

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<sup>2</sup> The expression of emphasis in Nupe is not restricted to clauses in the simple past, but may occur in any tense regardless of the marking strategy. The data below illustrate both varieties freely occurring in non-past clauses. For ease of presentation and uniformity of discussion, though, all Nupe emphatic data in this article will appear in simple past sentences.

- (i) a. *Musa è/à gí kinkere ni:*.  
 ‘Musa PRS/FUT eat scorpion *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) Musa IS eating/WILL eat the scorpion.’
- b. *Musa è/à gí kinkere gí.*  
 ‘Musa PRS/FUT eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘(Apparently) Musa IS eating/WILL eat the scorpion.’

<sup>3</sup> This particle may not surface on its own without an accompanying clause. Thus, *ni*: in isolation (whether the residue of ellipsis or not) is ill-formed. Given the geographical proximity and influence of Hausa on Nupe, the emphasis marker *ni*: might conceivably be related to the clause-final emphasis marker *nee/cee* in Hausa, as discussed in Green 1997. A fruitful project for future research might involve the comparison of the syntactic and interpretive properties of Nupe *ni*: cataloged in this article with those of Hausa *nee/cee*.

- d. *Musa gí kinkere gí à.*  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion eat NEG’  
 ‘It is not true that (apparently) Musa DID eat the scorpion.’

I argue in this article that the core properties of emphatic assertion are syntactically grounded and that the interpretational behavior of emphasis is largely the consequence/reflection of independently and internally motivated hierarchical relationships (in the spirit of Beghelli 1995, for example). Evidence for this position comes from emphatic assertion in Nupe, whose complex suite of properties ultimately derive from scope-taking asymmetries encoded in the syntax. The key to understanding the grammar of emphasis, I claim, lies in the scope relations between polarity and emphatic operators that emerge as a consequence of syntactic flexibility in the cartographic region exploited by emphatic operators. I show that *ni*:-mediated emphasis in Nupe is best captured by way of a high left peripheral emphatic domain, while the locus of emphasis via verbal repetition is TP-internal (i.e. low). Assuming a fixed position for the expression of polarity, the grammatical differences between the two forms of emphasis in the language are then derivable from these operator height asymmetries. As such, the distinction between “syntactically controlled” and “semantically/pragmatically controlled” emphatic assertion does not seem salient for languages like Nupe that employ multiple emphatic marking strategies. I claim, therefore, that this distinction is ultimately illusory and that at its core, the grammar of emphasis is syntactically mediated.

The remainder of this article is structured in the following way. Sections two through four (though peppered with some analytical discussion) present the basic descriptive facts. Section two briefly lays out the core interpretive properties of Nupe’s two varieties of emphatic assertion. In section three, I establish two crucial facts about emphatic assertion in the language: first, that emphasis is grammatically distinct from (and therefore not reducible to) focus and second, that the

two varieties of emphatic assertion in the language have non-overlapping distributions. Section four demonstrates that at first blush, a number of these basic distributional asymmetries can profitably be derived on interpretational grounds. However, I show in section five that the interpretive behavior of Nupe's varieties of emphatic assertion are ultimately a reflection of differences in their syntax. There I develop the proposal that the emphatic domain is minimally split into a left peripheral sub-domain and a TP-internal sub-domain, each domain yielding different scope possibilities with respect to the interaction of polarity and emphasis. The article concludes in section six with a brief summary and some final remarks that connect this work to other proposals in the literature on emphasis.

## 2. INTERPRETIVE PRELIMINARIES

Emphatic assertion in Nupe is deployed in discourse situations where the truth of a proposition is debated and unresolved. When two or more parties are in disagreement about the truth of a proposition, speakers may resort to emphatic assertion as a means to leverage their assertion. However, not all forms of emphatic assertion in the language serve the purpose of conflict resolution. That is, some forms of emphasis effectively resolve disputes, whereas others merely advocate for a position in a more forceful manner than typically expressed by a declarative. The principal interpretive difference between Nupe's two emphatic vehicles relates to the strength of the assertion, as measured by the speaker's subjective commitment to the truth of the expressed proposition.

*Ni*: emphasis expresses an insistence on the ultimate or absolute truth of a proposition and therefore, conveys the highest level of speaker commitment. The basis of this commitment may be evidential (as is most commonly the case), but it needn't be. For example, speakers may invoke non-evidential *ni*: assertions purely on the basis of direct appeals to higher authorities or

otherwise reputable information sources. This strong form of emphasis/commitment is captured by the parenthetical ‘I assure you’ in the translations of *ni*: utterances, as suggested by native speakers. As such, we might analyze *ni*: as a veridical operator since a *ni*: utterance entails the truth of a proposition relative to the speaker’s epistemic model. *Ni*: readings can thus also be classified as ‘verum’ interpretations (cf. Höhle 1992). But does the existence of an assertion marker with verum properties necessarily commit one to an emphatic analysis? Henri & Abeille (2008) discuss the existence of a verum discourse particle in Mauritian Creole that they claim is best analyzed not in terms of emphatic marking, but rather in terms of propositional “denial marking”. It is thus worth briefly pausing to consider whether it would be more appropriate to speak of *ni*: as a marker of strong denial rather than as an emphatic marker expressing strong speaker commitment. Here, it would seem reasonable to compare Nupe with English. In English, verum is not restricted to preceding contexts with opposing truth-values, but happily occurs in positive contexts such as (new information) answers to indirect *yes/no* questions (2a) and confirmations of expected paths of events (2b).

- (2) a. Speaker A: I asked whether John ate the scorpion.  
       Speaker B: He DID eat the scorpion.
- b. He promised to eat the scorpion and he DID eat it.

*Ni*: assertion in Nupe behaves in much the same way. Its use is not restricted to contexts of denial, as illustrated by the data below, suggesting that “(strong) emphasis” is a more accurate description of the interpretive nature of *ni*: assertion than “(strong) denial marking”.

- (3) a. Speaker A: *Mi: gbìngàn ko Musa gí kinkere.*  
 ‘1<sup>ST</sup>.SG ask COMP Musa eat scorpion’  
 ‘I asked whether Musa ate the scorpion.’
- Speaker B: *Wu:n gí kinkere ni:.* (Answer to indirect *yes/no* question)  
 ‘3<sup>RD</sup>.SG eat scorpion *ni:*’  
 ‘(I assure you) he DID eat the scorpion.’
- b. *Musa dzin àlikawàli gánán wu:n à gí kinkere wu:n má u-gí ni:.*  
 ‘Musa do promise COMP 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG FUT eat scorpion 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG and 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG-eat *ni:*’  
 ‘Musa promised to eat the scorpion and (I assure you) he DID eat it.’  
 (Confirmation of expected path of events)

Nupe contrasts the assertive strength of *ni:* utterances with verbal repetition, a device used to emphatically assert a proposition while withholding full commitment to that proposition’s objective truth<sup>4</sup>. Verbal repetition is thus a weaker and more humble form of emphasis in which the speaker affirms a proposition but leaves room for the possibility that the emphasized proposition may in fact turn out to be false. To reflect this non-verum interpretation, I have glossed verbal repetition sentences with English emphatic ‘do’ and the hedging expression ‘apparently’ to explicitly indicate weak speaker commitment. This characterization of verbal repetition as “emphasis” may strike some readers as odd given that a common intuition about the effect of emphasis in emphatic assertions is to highlight the truth of the proposition emphasized (p) against the falsity of its polar counterpart (NOT-p). In that case, it might seem unclear as to how the notion of emphasis could be cashed out with respect to Nupe verbal repetition if it does not contrast the emphasized proposition with its logical complement. It is thus worth taking a moment to clarify my use of the term “emphasis” as it relates to the grammar of Nupe. First, I

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<sup>4</sup> As pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, German can express similar meaning nuances (strong denial of a proposition vs. weak assertion) with the stressed and unstressed form of the discourse particle *wohl*. See Zimmerman 2008 for further details.

show in section 3.1 that whatever “emphasis” is in Nupe, it is not focus or focus-related. This warrants a conceptualization of emphatic verbal repetition as an assertion type that does not necessarily involve polarity/verum contrast. Further evidence for this position comes from the fact that verbal repetition in the language can be used in non-denial contexts such as the weak confirmation of a proposition, as illustrated by Speaker B in the dialog below. Together with the facts reported in the previous paragraph, these facts speak against characterizing Nupe emphasis in terms of markers of strong and weak denial.

(4) Speaker A: *Musa gí kinkere.*  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion’  
 ‘Musa ate the scorpion.’

Speaker B: *Ebà, wun gí kinkere gí.* (Confirmation of a non-contrasting proposition.)  
 ‘yes 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘Yes, (apparently) he DID eat the scorpion.’

Inspired by the various interpretive and distributional asymmetries discussed in sections 3 and 4, I take emphasis to be (at minimum) a function over proposition-denoting expressions that yields enriched assertions encoding the level of speaker commitment to those propositions. Thus, I take emphasis to be a vehicle for graded forceful assertions. In Nupe, those assertions are coarse-grained: either the speaker fully stands by her proposition or she does not. It is, of course, conceivable that more fine-grained systems exist in the grammars of the world’s languages. In this way, it might be tempting to speculate that the course-grained Nupe emphatic system represents an impoverished/proto evidentiality system, with full systems of evidentiality evolving in grammars as the encoding of speaker commitment becomes more fine-grained.

A pragmatic consequence of this interpretive distinction is that although both emphatic constructions can be used to take sides in a dispute when the truth of a proposition is in doubt, only

*ni*: emphasis can effectively end/resolve a debate. Thus, *ni*: can be viewed as a discourse particle that contributes a meaning/effect approximating ‘end of discussion’. In this regard, it is similar to the particle *ya* in Liberian Pidgin English which, as pointed out by John Singler (personal communication), contrasts with the other emphatic discourse particle in the language (namely, *o*) in having the ability to effectively resolve a dispute concerning the truth of a proposition.

To exemplify this interpretive distinction, consider a scenario in which two individuals A and B are debating whether or not it is raining. Speaker A maintains that it is. B maintains that it is not. Neither speaker has direct experience to leverage her argument, so neither speaker is fully committed to her claim. The argument is therefore being made purely on the basis of indirect evidence/hearsay. Suppose, however, that A walks over to the window and observes that it is in fact raining. As a consequence, A can now emphatically assert her original claim with complete commitment to its truth. In this context, it is perfectly natural for A to use the *ni*: construction to emphasize her original utterance, but it is infelicitous to make the assertion via verbal repetition.

Consider another example, one in which the force of assertion is not evidentially grounded. Speakers A and B are debating the distance between the Nigerian towns Bida and Lafiagi, which are in fact separated by 256km. Neither individual has access to a map and neither has traveled from one of these towns to the other. Thus, neither can base their assertion on direct evidence. In this debate, speaker A correctly asserts that the distance between the towns is approximately 250km, while B incorrectly maintains that it is only 150km. As it turns out, speaker A’s brother is a truck driver who regularly drives the route from Bida to Lafiagi. Speaker A’s brother thus represents a reputable information source on this matter, that is, a higher authority that can be appealed to in the current debate. Consequently, speaker A can reassert his position by means of

*ni*: emphasis (effectively resolving the dispute), whereas the best speaker B can do is wield the weaker verbal repetition construction (ultimately stalemating the argument).

### 3. TWO VARIETIES OF EMPHATIC ASSERTION IN NUPE

Emphatic assertion and (contrastive) focus are often conflated in the literature<sup>5</sup> (cf. Höhle 1992; Hsu 2008: 637; Ishikawa 2002: 113; Zimmermann 2007: 148). In previous work on Nupe (Kandybowicz 2008), the two were also conflated, with structures like those in (1) analyzed as focus constructions driven by different realizations of a singular left peripheral focus head (*ni*: in the case of (1a-b) and  $\emptyset$  in the case of (1c-d)). In this section, I show that this analysis incorrectly predicts that the two emphatic constructions pattern together. In actuality, they have non-overlapping distributions. I also demonstrate in this section that emphasis and focus are not syntactically reducible – in Nupe, at least, emphasis and focus exploit cartographically distinct regions of clause structure. I'll begin section three by establishing this latter claim.

#### 3.1. *Emphasis* $\neq$ *Focus*

Constituent focus in Nupe is exclusively contrastive and signaled syntactically by way of left peripheral displacement and clause-final *o* marking, regardless of the category of the focused expression. (Intonational/non-syntactic focus is not attested in the language.) Most (lexical) constituents may be focused and when they are, the marker *o* is obligatory<sup>6</sup>, though a number of functional items including TAM markers, negation and complementizers may not be focused. Only one constituent may be focus marked per clause and in-situ focus marking is unavailable.

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<sup>5</sup> Though see Fanselow & Lenertová 2011 for a treatment of focus that differentiates the two.

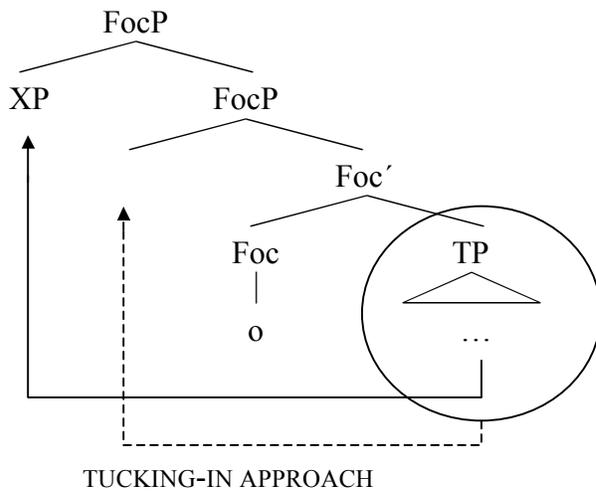
<sup>6</sup> Put another way, all instances of focus in the language are expressed by means of the morpheme *o* (Kandybowicz 2008). There are no types of focus on syntactic heads that are not marked by this particle.

Exceptionally, focused predicates are spelled out both peripherally in morphologically derived forms (nominalized/reduplicated) and in their base positions/launching sites. These facts are illustrated in the data set below.

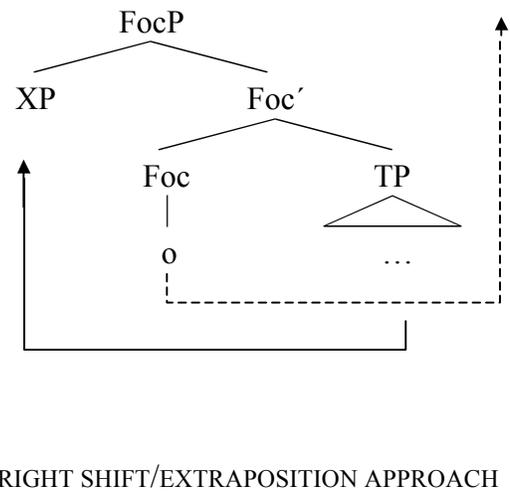
- (5) a. *Musa gí kinkere \*(o).* (Subject focus/\*in-situ focus)  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion FOC’  
 ‘MUSA (as opposed to say, *Gana*) ate the scorpion.’  
 Cannot mean: ‘Musa at the SCORPION (as opposed to say, *the hen*).’
- b. *Kinkere Musa gí \*(o).* (Object focus)  
 ‘scorpion Musa eat FOC’  
 ‘Musa ate the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*).’
- c. *\*Kinkere o Musa gí.* (\*Direct focus marking on constituent)  
 ‘scorpion FOC Musa eat’
- d. *Gi-gí Musa gí kinkere \*(o).* (Predicate focus)  
 ‘RED-eat Musa eat scorpion FOC’  
 ‘Musa ATE (as opposed to, say, *killed*) the scorpion.’
- e. *\*Gi-gí kinkere Musa gí o (o).* (\*Multiple focus)  
 ‘RED-eat scorpion Musa eat FOC FOC’  
 ‘Musa ATE (as opposed to, say, *killed*) the SCORPION (as opposed to say, *the hen*).’

Following previous work on focus in the language (Kandybowicz 2008), I assume that focus fronted constituents occupy Spec, FocusP in the left periphery and that although clause-final, *o* realizes the head of that phrase. This entails that either the focus marker is right-extrapolated, rightwards shifted at PF or that the remnant TP containing the trace of the focused constituent is “tucked in” to an inner specifier of FocusP (following Richards 1997). Endorsing/adopting one of these three analytical options will not be crucial for the purposes of this article, so I will remain agnostic as to the precise mechanism deriving the linear order of the focus particle. However, since it will be helpful for following the upcoming discussion, I illustrate these options below schematically.

(6)



TUCKING-IN APPROACH



RIGHT SHIFT/EXTRAPOSITION APPROACH

Space limitations preclude a more thorough discussion of Nupe focus, but interested readers are invited to consult Kandybowicz 2008 for more details.

Returning now to our investigation into the relationship (if any) between focus and emphasis in the language, we note that an analysis that treats *ni:* clauses as focus structures incorrectly predicts that constituent focus is incompatible with *ni:* emphasis, as both *ni:* and the focus marker *o* would compete for Foc<sup>0</sup>. As shown below, the two are in fact compatible in the language<sup>7</sup>.

- (7) a. *Musa gí kinkere ni:*.  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion *ni:*’  
 ‘(I assure you) Musa DID eat the scorpion.’

<sup>7</sup> The examples in (7b-d) arise naturally in contexts when two or more parties are in disagreement over a particular discourse referent, for example, the identity of the subject or object, and a third party weighs in on the debate using *ni:* emphasis to throw support toward a previously uttered focus utterance. The following dialog provides an example of how such constructions would arise in a discourse.

- (i) Speaker A: *Musa gí kinkere*. ‘Musa ate the scorpion.’  
 Speaker B: *Hahà, Gana gí kinkere o*. ‘No, GANA (as opposed to *Musa*) ate the scorpion.’  
 Speaker C: *Hahà, Musa gí kinkere o ni:*. ‘No, (I assure you) MUSA (as opposed to *Gana*) DID eat the scorpion.’

- b. ***Musa gí kinkere o ni:*** (Subject focus + *ni:* emphasis)  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion FOC *ni:*’  
 ‘(I assure you) MUSA (as opposed to, say, *Gana*) DID eat the scorpion.’
- c. ***Kinkere Musa gí o ni:*** (Object focus + *ni:* emphasis)  
 ‘scorpion Musa eat FOC *ni:*’  
 ‘(I assure you) Musa DID eat the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*).’
- d. ***Gi-gí Musa gí kinkere o ni:*** (Predicate focus + *ni:* emphasis)  
 ‘RED-eat Musa eat scorpion FOC *ni:*’  
 ‘(I assure you) It was EATING that Musa did to the scorpion (as opposed to, say, *killing*).’

Therefore, because the focus marker *o* and the emphatic particle *ni:* are not in complementary distribution, we can conclude that *ni:* is not the exponent of a focus head – the two items are hierarchically distinct.<sup>8</sup> Below, we return to the issue of focus-emphasis compatibility in the case of emphatic verbal repetition. It turns out that unlike the case of *ni:* emphasis, verbal repetition is indeed incompatible with constituent focus. However, as we’ll discuss, this incompatibility is purely semantic and as such, verbal repetition and constituent focus are not actually constrained syntactically. There is thus no evidence that emphasis and focus operators compete for the same syntactic position.

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<sup>8</sup> Anders Holmberg points out the possibility that the constructions in (7b-d) may involve emphasis and *contrastive topic*, as opposed to focus, and that therefore the argument that emphasis and focus are distinct in Nupe may have no real force. However, the presence of the morpheme *o* and the fact that the preposed constituent is interpreted as new information that contrasts with given information from the common ground indicates that we are in fact dealing with true focus and not contrastive topicalization. In Nupe, topic and focus are grammatically distinct phenomena. The latter is marked by the particle *o*, as in the data in (5), while topic is unmarked. Furthermore, of the two constructions, only focus seems to have a contrastive interpretation in the language. No instances of contrastive topic have been documented in the language thus far. See Kandybowicz 2008 for more on the distinction between topic and focus in Nupe.

Further evidence that *ni*: emphasis and focus are distinct operations in Nupe concerns an asymmetry with respect to root clause sensitivity. Unlike constituent focus, which is possible in a variety of embedded contexts (cf. (8b,d,f)), *ni*: emphasis is limited exclusively to matrix clauses, as illustrated below. Although *ni*: may appear following non-factive and factive sentential complements of verbs as well as clausal complements of nouns, careful attention to semantic interpretation reveals that *ni*: exclusively takes wide scope in these cases. Native speakers systematically reject narrow scope readings in which *ni*: emphasizes the propositional content of the embedded clause alone.

- (8) a. *Etsu gò gánán Musa gí kinkere ni:*. (Non-factive complement)  
 ‘chief accept COMP Musa eat scorpion *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) The chief DOES believe that Musa ate the scorpion.’  
 Not: ‘(I assure you) The chief believes that Musa DID eat the scorpion.’
- b. *Etsu gò gánán kinkere Musa gí o.* (Non-factive complement)  
 ‘chief accept COMP scorpion Musa eat FOC’  
 ‘The chief believes that Musa ate the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*).’
- c. *Etsu kpe ke Musa gí kinkere na ni:*. (Factive complement)  
 ‘chief know COMP Musa eat scorpion PRT *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) The chief DOES know that Musa ate the scorpion.’  
 Not: ‘(I assure you) The chief knows that Musa DID eat the scorpion.’
- d. *Etsu kpe ke kinkere Musa gí o na.* (Factive complement)  
 ‘chief know COMP scorpion Musa eat FOC PRT’  
 ‘The chief knows that Musa ate the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*).’
- e. *A: wo labari gánán Musa gí kinkere ni:*. (Complement of N)  
 ‘3<sup>RD</sup>.PL hear news/story COMP Musa eat scorpion *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) They DID hear the news that Musa ate the scorpion.’  
 Not: ‘(I assure you) They heard the news that Musa DID eat the scorpion.’
- f. *A: wo labari gánán kinkere Musa gí o.* (Complement of N)  
 ‘3<sup>RD</sup>.PL hear news/story COMP scorpion Musa eat FOC’  
 ‘They heard the news that Musa ate the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*).’

Within other embedded contexts as well, for instance, sentential subjects and peripheral adverbial clauses, we observe similar patterns – constituent focus is possible (8h,j), but *ni:* emphasis is not. The data below illustrate.

- (8) g. \**Gàrán Musa gí kinkere ni: ka Gana yé.* (Clausal subject)  
 ‘COMP Musa eat scorpion *ni:* surprise Gana -surprise’  
 ‘(I assure you) That Musa DID eat the scorpion surprised Gana.’
- h. *Gàrán kinkere Musa gí o, ka Gana yé.* (Clausal subject)  
 ‘COMP scorpion Musa eat FOC surprise Gana -surprise’  
 ‘That Musa ate the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*) surprised Gana.’
- i. \**Ebó na Musa gí kinkere na ni:, Gana á zè ewùn bè wu:n yin.*  
 ‘because COMP Musa eat scorpion PRT *ni:* Gana PRF turn anger with 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG PRT’  
 ‘(I assure you) Because Musa DID eat the scorpion, Gana was mad at him.’  
 (Peripheral adverbial clause)
- j. *Ebó na kinkere Musa gí o na, Gana á zè ewùn bè wu:n yin.*  
 ‘because COMP scorpion Musa eat FOC PRT Gana PRF turn anger with 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG PRT’  
 ‘Because Musa ate the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*), Gana was mad at him.’  
 (Peripheral adverbial clause)

Turning our attention now to verbal repetition, readers familiar with the Africanist literature might expect verb doubling to be employed for expressing focus on either the main verb or verb phrase, as in languages like Kabiye (Collins & Essizewa 2007). It is readily demonstrable, however, that Nupe verbal repetition does not express verb focus. Evidence for this position comes from the observation that verbal repetition is illicit in typical verb focus contexts, such as answers to predicate-oriented *wh-* questions (9a) and contrastive predicate corrections (9b). Instead, speakers must resort to predicate cleft/contrastive V focus in these contexts.

- (9) a. Speaker A: *Ke Musa dzin bè kinkere yin o?*  
 ‘what Musa do with scorpion PRT FOC’  
 ‘What did Musa do with the scorpion?’
- Speaker B: #*Musa gí kinkere gí.* (# Verbal repetition)  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘(Apparently) Musa DID eat the scorpion.’

Speaker B: *Gi-gí Musa gí kinkere o.* (✓ Verb focus/predicate cleft)  
 ‘RED-eat Musa eat scorpion FOC’  
 ‘Musa ATE the scorpion (as opposed to say, *capturing* it).’

b. Speaker A: *Musa wan kinkere.*  
 ‘Musa catch scorpion’  
 ‘Musa caught the scorpion.’

Speaker B: *#Hahà, wu:n gí kinkere gí.* (# Verbal repetition)  
 ‘no 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘No, (apparently) he DID eat the scorpion.’

Speaker B: *Hahà, gi-gí wu:n gí kinkere o.* (✓ Verb focus/predicate cleft)  
 ‘no RED-eat 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG eat scorpion FOC’  
 ‘No, Musa ATE the scorpion (as opposed to say, *capturing* it).’

As such, we have converging distributional evidence that neither form of emphatic assertion in the language can be equated with focus. One final difference between Nupe emphasis and focus worth noting is that focus operates on sub-propositional<sup>9</sup> constituents (cf. (7b-d)), while emphasis is exclusively propositional. There is thus ample evidence that in Nupe, at least, emphasis and focus are grammatically distinct operations. The following two subsections build on this observation, establishing that within the category of emphatic assertion, Nupe’s two varieties pattern differently on distributional grounds.

### 3.2. *A Focus Asymmetry*

The two strategies of emphatic marking in Nupe can be distinguished by way of their interaction with focus. As illustrated in (7), *ni*: emphasis is compatible with constituent focus. However, as alluded to in section 3.1, emphatic verbal repetition is incompatible with focus.

(10) a. *#Musa gí kinkere gí o.* (Subject focus + verbal repetition)  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion eat FOC’  
 ‘(Apparently) MUSA (as opposed to, say, *Gana*) DID eat the scorpion.’

<sup>9</sup> Neither verb phrase focus nor TP/CP focus/fronting are possible in Nupe.

- b. *#Kinkere Musa gí gí o.* (Object focus + verbal repetition)  
 ‘scorpion Musa eat eat FOC’  
 ‘(Apparently) Musa DID eat the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*).’
- c. *#Gi-gí Musa gí kinkere gí o.* (Predicate focus + verbal repetition)  
 ‘RED-EAT Musa eat scorpion eat FOC’  
 ‘(Apparently) Musa DID EAT (as opposed to, say, *kill*) the scorpion.’

Recall from the previous section that Nupe verb doubling does not express narrow focus on the verb. Therefore, the incompatibility of verbal repetition and focus can not be attributable to the constraint on multiple clause-mate focus in the language (cf. (5e)). It is important to note, however, that native speakers judge these constructions to be pragmatically infelicitous, not grammatically ill-formed. (We’ll return to discuss this point in section 4.2.) Nonetheless, the fact remains that the two forms of emphasis part company when it comes to compatibility with focus.

### 3.3. *A Distributional Asymmetry*

The two varieties of emphasis can also be differentiated on the basis of a distributional asymmetry concerning embedded clauses. The data below (some of which is repeated from section 3.1) establish that *ni*: emphasis is a Main Clause Phenomenon (MCP). Its distribution is restricted in *all* embedded clausal domains, including those that have independently been shown to resist MCP in other languages (Emonds 1970, 1976, 2004; Heycock 2006; Hooper & Thompson 1973), making it a stronger form of MCP than Hooper & Thompson’s original formulation.

- (11) a. *Etsu gán gánán Musa gí kinkere ni:*. (Non-factive complement clause)  
 ‘chief say COMP Musa eat scorpion *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) The chief DID say that Musa ate the scorpion.’  
 Not: ‘(I assure you) The chief said that Musa DID eat the scorpion.’  
 (✓wide scope *ni*:/\* narrow scope *ni*:)
- b. *Etsu kpe ke Musa gí kinkere na ni:*. (Factive complement clause)  
 ‘chief know COMP Musa eat scorpion PRT *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) The chief DOES know that Musa ate the scorpion.’  
 Not: ‘(I assure you) The chief knows that Musa DID eat the scorpion.’  
 (✓wide scope *ni*:/\* narrow scope *ni*:)

- c. *A: wo labari gánán Musa gí kinkere ni.* (Clausal complement of N)  
 ‘3<sup>RD</sup>.PL hear news COMP Musa eat scorpion *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) They DID hear the news that Musa ate the scorpion.’  
 Not: ‘(I assure you) They heard the news that Musa DID eat the scorpion.’  
 (✓ wide scope *ni*:/\* narrow scope *ni*:)
- d. *Gánán Musa gí kinkere, eza ndondo kpa yè ni.* (Moved clause)  
 ‘COMP Musa eat scorpion person every think *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) That Musa ate the scorpion, everyone DOES think.’  
 Not: ‘(I assure you) That Musa DID eat the scorpion, everyone thinks.’  
 (✓ wide scope *ni*:/\* narrow scope *ni*:)
- e. \**Gánán Musa gí kinkere ni, eza ndondo kpa yè.* (Moved clause)  
 ‘COMP Musa eat scorpion *ni*: person every think’  
 ‘(I assure you) That Musa DID eat the scorpion, everyone thinks.’
- f. \**Gánán Musa gí kinkere ni: ka Gana yé.* (Clausal subject)  
 ‘COMP Musa eat scorpion *ni*: surprise Gana -surprise’  
 ‘(I assure you) That Musa DID eat the scorpion surprised Gana.’
- g. \**Musa gá gí kinkere ni, Gana à gí gulu.* (Conditional clause)  
 ‘Musa COND eat scorpion *ni*: Gana FUT eat vulture’  
 ‘(I assure you) If Musa DID eat the scorpion, then Gana will eat the vulture.’
- h. \**Kámi na wu:n gí kinkere na ni, enya ndondo á dzin dédé.*  
 ‘when COMP 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG eat scorpion PRT *ni*: thing every PRF do alright’  
 ‘(I assure you) When he DID eat the scorpion, everything was alright.’  
 (Temporal clause)
- i. \**Ebó na Musa gí kinkere na ni, Gana á zè ewùn bè wu:n yin.*  
 ‘because COMP Musa eat scorpion PRT *ni*: Gana PRF turn anger with 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG PRT’  
 ‘(I assure you) Because Musa DID eat the scorpion, Gana was mad at him.’  
 (Peripheral adjunct clause)
- j. *Musa si bise na gí kinkere (\*ni:) na ni.* (Relative clause)  
 ‘Musa buy hen COMP eat scorpion *ni*: PRT *ni*:’  
 ‘(I assure you) Musa DID buy the hen that ate the scorpion.’  
 Not: ‘(I assure you) Musa bought the hen that DID eat the scorpion.’  
 (✓ wide scope *ni*:/\* narrow scope *ni*:)

By contrast, verbal repetition is not limited to root clauses. Its distribution with respect to embedded domains is syntactically unrestricted, as the data in (12) demonstrate<sup>10</sup>.

- (12) a. *Etsu gàn gánán Musa gí kinkere gí.* (Non-factive complement clause)  
 ‘chief say COMP Musa eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘The chief said that (apparently) Musa DID eat the scorpion.’ (Compare with (11a))
- b. *A: wo labari gánán Musa gí kinkere gí.* (Clausal complement of N)  
 ‘3<sup>RD</sup>.PL hear news COMP Musa eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘They heard the news that (apparently) Musa DID eat the scorpion.’ (Compare with (11c))
- c. *Gánán Musa gí kinkere gí, eza ndondo kpa yè.* (Moved clause)  
 ‘COMP Musa eat scorpion eat person every think’  
 ‘That (apparently) Musa DID eat the scorpion, everyone thinks.’ (Compare with (11e))

These findings challenge the conclusion drawn in Kandybowicz 2008 that verbal repetition and *ni*: emphasis are analytically unifiable and that both target the same region of clause structure. Instead, they suggest the existence of two distinct varieties of emphasis in the language and in virtue of their differing MCP statuses, two distinct domains of emphasis. We’ll return to a fuller discussion of these issues in section 5.

#### 4. DERIVING BASIC DISTRIBUTIONAL ASYMMETRIES INTERPRETIVELY

Recall that Nupe’s two varieties of emphatic assertion are distinguished interpretively by way of strength of assertion, as measured by the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the expressed proposition – *ni*: emphasis conveys total speaker commitment, while verbal repetition expresses a weaker form of assertion in which the speaker withholds full commitment. This section shows

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<sup>10</sup> These data indicate that it is perhaps more accurate to describe the level of commitment encoded in emphasis as being indexed to the *attitude holder* rather than the speaker. For the sake of maintaining a homogeneous presentation, though, I will continue describing emphatic commitment as an index of the speaker throughout the remainder of this article.

how reference to this dimension can be pressed into service to derive important distributional asymmetries with respect to emphatic assertion in the language. The following section (section 5) shows how these interpretive (and their attendant distributional) asymmetries can in turn be made to follow on purely syntactic grounds. As such, this section develops a line of analysis that functions as a stepping-stone to the syntactic proposals of the subsequent one.

#### 4.1. *Speaker Orientation*

New and interesting distributional asymmetries between the two varieties of emphasis emerge when speaker-oriented phenomena are taken into account. This subsection considers two such cases, namely, compatibility with speaker-oriented adverbs and person asymmetries with respect to subject pronouns in emphatic constructions.

*Ni*: emphasis and verbal repetition interact with speaker-oriented adverbs<sup>11</sup> in opposite ways. Weak epistemic/modal speaker-oriented adverbs like *wótákilà* ‘perhaps’ encode low levels of speaker commitment to truth<sup>12</sup> and sometimes represent the beliefs of individuals other than the

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<sup>11</sup> Nupe, like most West African languages, has a highly limited inventory of adverbial lexical items. Thus unsurprisingly, there are few speaker-oriented adverbs in the language. The meanings expressed by most English speaker-oriented adverbs can be expressed in Nupe, but only by means of syntactic constructions like clausal embedding and verb serialization. However, since some varieties of emphatic assertion in the language resist embedded domains as we’ve seen (e.g. *ni*: emphasis), these constructions will not effectively diagnose the semantic asymmetry mentioned above because *ni*: emphasis will always be excluded from these domains for independent reasons. Therefore, when appealing to semantic considerations related to speaker-oriented modification, we must limit ourselves to the highly limited set of (non-phrasal) lexical modifiers. I know of only two such expressions in the language, namely, the items illustrated in (13) and (14).

<sup>12</sup> Note, however, that ‘perhaps’ is not incompatible with emphatic assertion in English. In fact, emphatic ‘perhaps’ sentences in English can have verum readings, for example: ‘John DID perhaps eat the scorpion (we simply have no

speaker (Ernst 2009). Veridical *ni*: emphasis is thus predicted to be pragmatically incompatible with weak speaker-oriented adverbs. Verbal repetition on the other hand, owing to its weaker commitment to truth, would not be predicted to be constrained in this way. The data in (13) illustrate that these predictions are in fact borne out in the language.

- (13) a. *Wótákílà Musa gí kinkere.*  
 ‘perhaps Musa eat scorpion’  
 ‘Perhaps Musa ate the scorpion.’
- b. *#Wótákílà Musa gí kinkere ni:.*  
 ‘perhaps Musa eat scorpion *ni:*’  
 ‘(I assure you) Perhaps Musa DID eat the scorpion.’
- c. *Wótákílà Musa gí kinkere gí.*  
 ‘perhaps Musa eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘Perhaps Musa DID (apparently) eat the scorpion.’

When we consider the effects of stronger speaker-oriented adverbs such as evaluative expressions, we find the opposite pattern, as predicted. Adverbs like *kpàděnyi* ‘unexpectedly’ subjectively commit the speaker to the truth of her utterance (Ernst 2009). Consequently, evaluatives are compatible with *ni*: emphasis (14b), but not with verbal repetition (14c).

- (14) a. *Musa gí kinkere kpàděnyi.*  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion unexpectedly’  
 ‘Unexpectedly, Musa ate the scorpion.’
- b. *Musa gí kinkere kpàděnyi ni:.*  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion unexpectedly *ni:*’  
 ‘Unexpectedly, Musa DID eat the scorpion (I assure you).’

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means of knowing whether he actually did so).’ An anonymous reviewer suggests that the anomaly of (13b) may follow if *wótákílà* ‘perhaps’ must take scope over *ni*: (for whatever reason). It is not clear at this time, however, that this explanation is more principled than the one offered in this section.

- c. #*Musa gí kinkere gí kpàdžnyi.*  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion eat unexpectedly’  
 ‘Unexpectedly, Musa DID (apparently) eat the scorpion.’

Another distributional asymmetry relating to speaker-orientation concerns the interaction between the personhood of the subject and the strength of emphatic assertion. Barring amnesia/intoxication-like contexts, emphasized speaker reports that do not fully commit to propositional truth are pragmatically infelicitous. As such, emphasis via verbal repetition is incompatible with first person subjects<sup>13</sup>, unlike *ni:* emphasis.

- (15) a. *Mi:/yi: gí kinkere ni:.*  
 ‘1<sup>st</sup>.SG/1<sup>st</sup>.PL eat scorpion *ni:*’  
 ‘(I assure you) I/we DID eat the scorpion.’

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<sup>13</sup> This infelicity effect also extends to speakers/pronominals in non-subject roles such as experiencer objects, as illustrated below in English.

- (i) #The scorpion apparently DID frighten me. (Acceptable in amnesia-like contexts)

This infelicity is related to the speaker’s knowledge about the truth of the proposition. Since a speaker is highly unlikely to lack knowledge of what she is experiencing directly at the time of her utterance, combining first person experiencers of predicates in the present tense with weak emphasis and hedging expressions like ‘apparently’ creates a particularly strong form of infelicity in non-amnesia contexts, as demonstrated in (ii) below.

- (ii) a. #I apparently DO like this coffee.  
 b. #I apparently AM enjoying this coffee.  
 c. #The cut on my finger apparently IS hurting me.

These observations lead to the prediction that in addition to incompatibility with first person subjects, verbal repetition is also incompatible with non-subject first person experiencers in non-amnesia contexts. Since I lack the crucial data to address this prediction, I leave this issue for future research.

- b. #Mi:/yi:      *gí kinkere gí.*  
 ‘1<sup>st</sup>.SG/1<sup>st</sup>.PL eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘(Apparently) I/we DID eat the scorpion.’

The infelicity of utterances such as (15b) disappears in amnesia-like contexts (whether temporary or long-term), as alluded to above. A similar effect is found in English, where emphatic assertions with full speaker commitment can appear with first person subjects in utterances where the speaker hedges, as illustrated below.

- (16) a. I apparently DID eat a scorpion (though, I don’t remember it).  
 b. I think I DID eat a scorpion (though, I don’t remember it).

The infelicity of weak emphasis in non-amnesia contexts with first person subjects, however, only applies when the reported event is of a type that would normally entail the speaker knowing whether the proposition expressed is true or not. When the reported event is not one whose outcome is prototypically knowable to the speaker, as in the example below, weak emphasis is compatible in the first person. These facts hold for Nupe and English alike.

- (17) I apparently DID pass the exam.

As predicted, this asymmetry is neutralized when non-first person subjects are employed. In this case, both forms of emphasis may co-occur with non-first person pronominal subjects. This is demonstrated below.

- (18) a. *Wo:/ye:/wu:n/a:      gí kinkere ni:.*  
 ‘2<sup>nd</sup>.SG/2<sup>nd</sup>.PL/3<sup>rd</sup>.SG/3<sup>rd</sup>.PL eat scorpion ni:’  
 ‘(I assure you) You/you all/he/she/it/they DID eat the scorpion.’  
 b. *Wo:/ye:/wu:n/a:      gí kinkere gí.*  
 ‘2<sup>nd</sup>.SG/2<sup>nd</sup>.PL/3<sup>rd</sup>.SG/3<sup>rd</sup>.PL eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘(Apparently) You/you all/he/she/it/they DID eat the scorpion.’

#### 4.2. Contexts that Presuppose Truth

Because full commitment to propositional truth is withheld in cases of emphatic verbal repetition, verb doubling is infelicitous in contexts that presuppose the truth of propositions. Examples of such contexts include factive complements, sentential subjects of truth-presupposing predicates, certain adverbial clauses (e.g. ‘because’, ‘when’ and ‘as soon as’ clauses) and certain relative clauses. (Bear in mind that because these are all embedded contexts, *ni*: emphasis will be independently unavailable as well due to the fact that *ni*: emphasis is a Main Clause Phenomenon.)

- (19) a. #*Etsu kpe ke Musa gí kinkere gí na.* (Factive complement clause)  
 ‘chief know COMP Musa eat scorpion eat PRT’  
 ‘The chief knows that (apparently) Musa DID eat the scorpion.’
- b. #*Gàrán Musa gí kinkere gí ka Gana yé.* (Clausal subject)  
 ‘COMP Musa eat scorpion eat surprise Gana -surprise’  
 ‘That Musa DID (apparently) eat the scorpion surprised Gana.’
- c. #*Ebó na Musa gí kinkere gí na, Gana á zè ewùn bè wu:n yin.*  
 ‘because COMP Musa eat scorpion eat PRT Gana PRF turn anger with 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG PRT’  
 ‘Because Musa DID (apparently) eat the scorpion, Gana was mad at him.’  
 (‘Because’ clause)
- d. #*Kámi na wu:n gí kinkere gí na, enya ndondo á dzin dédé.*  
 ‘when COMP 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG eat scorpion eat PRT thing every PRF do alright’  
 ‘When he DID (apparently) eat the scorpion, everything was alright.’  
 (‘When’ clause)
- e. #*Eda na wu:n gí kinkere gí na, enya ndondo á dzin dédé.*  
 ‘as soon as COMP 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG eat scorpion eat PRT thing every PRF do alright’  
 ‘As soon as he DID (apparently) eat the scorpion, everything was alright.’  
 (‘As soon as’ clause)
- f. #*Musa si bise na gí kinkere gí na.* (Relative clause)  
 ‘Musa buy hen COMP eat scorpion eat PRT’  
 ‘Musa bought the hen that DID (apparently) eat the scorpion.’

Furthermore, because (contrastive) focus constructions presuppose the truth of embedded/backgrounded propositions (Geurts & van der Sandt 2004)<sup>14</sup> and emphasis via verbal repetition withholds full commitment to it, focus and verbal repetition are pragmatically incompatible (cf. the focus asymmetry in section 3.2). The data in (20) below illustrates. This contrasts sharply with *ni*’s veridicality, which as shown previously in (7), facilitates focus compatibility.

- (20) a. #*Musa gí kinkere gí o.* (Subject focus + verbal repetition)  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion eat FOC’  
 ‘(Apparently) MUSA (as opposed to, say, *Gana*) DID eat the scorpion.’
- b. #*Kinkere Musa gí gí o.* (Object focus + verbal repetition)  
 ‘scorpion Musa eat eat FOC’  
 ‘(Apparently) Musa DID eat the SCORPION (as opposed to, say, the *chicken*).’
- c. #*Gi-gí Musa gí kinkere gí o.* (Predicate focus + verbal repetition)  
 ‘RED-EAT Musa eat scorpion eat FOC’  
 ‘(Apparently) Musa DID EAT (as opposed to, say, *kill*) the scorpion.’
- d. #*Zě gí kinkere gí o?* (Subject *wh*- extraction + verbal repetition)  
 ‘who eat scorpion eat FOC’  
 ‘Who DID eat the scorpion (apparently)?’
- e. #*Ké Musa gí gí o?* (Object *wh*- extraction + verbal repetition)  
 ‘what Musa eat eat FOC’  
 ‘What DID Musa eat (apparently)?’

<sup>14</sup> The (traditional) view that the truth of a focus’ background is presupposed is, of course, controversial. Wagner (2010), for example, argues against Geurts & van der Sandt’s (2004) position, citing a variety of problematic cases that have been discussed in the literature for some time. For example, sentences like ‘NOBODY ate the scorpion’ and ‘Who (if anybody) ate the scorpion?’ seem to pose problems for the view that focus constructions presuppose the truth of their backgrounded propositions. Be that as it may, the intuitions of native Nupe speakers concerning the semantic incompatibility of verbal repetition and focus is in line with the traditional semantic description of focus as inducing a presupposition of truth. I leave this issue for future research. Thanks to Reiko Vermeulen for helpful discussion on this issue.

- f. #*Kánci Musa gí kinkere gí o?* (Adjunct *wh*- extraction + verbal repetition)  
 ‘when Musa eat scorpion eat FOC’  
 ‘When DID Musa eat the scorpion (apparently)?’

This asymmetrical emphasis-information structure incompatibility breaks down in information structure theoretic contexts other than focus in the language. Most notably, the asymmetry is neutralized in contexts of topicalization. And predictably so, because unlike focus constructions, topicalization is non truth presuppositional.

- (21) a. *Kinkere Musa gí u: ni:.* (Object topicalization + *ni:* emphasis)  
 ‘scorpion Musa eat 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG *ni:*’  
 ‘As for the scorpion, (I assure you) Musa DID eat it.’
- b. *Kinkere Musa gí u: gí.* (Object topicalization + verbal repetition)  
 ‘scorpion Musa eat 3<sup>RD</sup>.SG eat’  
 ‘As for the scorpion, (apparently) Musa DID eat it.’

An additional interesting (albeit predictable) asymmetry emerges with respect to the interaction of emphatic marking and yes/no questions in Nupe, taking the characterizations of emphasis previously described at face value. We predict that *ni:* marking, given that it commits a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, will be incompatible with polar questions since the latter have open/undetermined truth values. Verbal repetition, on the other hand, should not be excluded on interpretive grounds in such a context, owing to the fact that although they are assertions, they are truth-valuationally non-committal. These predictions are indeed borne out in the language as demonstrated below, lending further support to the interpretive distinction between the two varieties of emphatic marking being developed in this article.

- (22) a. #*Ngba Musa gí kinkere ni:?*  
 ‘yes/no Musa eat scorpion *ni:*’

- b. *Ngba Musa gi kinkere gi?*  
 ‘yes/no Musa eat scorpion eat’  
 ‘Did Musa apparently/really eat the scorpion?’

#### 4.3. Interim Summary

The facts presented thus far clearly suggest the existence of two categorically distinct varieties of emphatic assertion in Nupe. These two varieties can be defined largely in terms of their interpretive and distributional differences. The table below summarizes these differences.

SYNTACTIC/INTERPRETIVE PROPERTY	<i>ni</i> : EMPHASIS	VERBAL REPETITION
Limited to root contexts	✓	✗
Veridical/speaker committed to truth of proposition	✓	✗
Available in truth-presupposing contexts	✓	✗
Compatible with focus	✓	✗
Compatible with polar question particles	✗	✓
Compatible with strong speaker-oriented adverbs	✓	✗
Compatible with weak speaker-oriented adverbs	✗	✓
Compatible with first person speaker reports	✓	✗

## 5. ANALYSES

In this section, I provide analyses of Nupe’s syntactically restricted (*ni*;) and unrestricted (verbal repetition) varieties of emphatic assertion. I claim that the basic properties of these varieties of emphasis are derivable on purely syntactic/cartographic grounds. My position is thus that the distinction between “syntactically vs. pragmatically controlled” emphasis is illusory – at its core, emphatic assertion is a syntactically governed phenomenon. In a nutshell, I’ll propose that Universal Grammar makes available at least two loci of emphasis: a high left peripheral position from which the emphatic item outscopes polarity operators; and a low TP-internal site from which the emphatic item is outscoped by polarity operators. In this way, the existence of a bilocal/split emphatic domain directly parallels the high vs. low focus domain duality proposed in the literature (Belletti 2001, 2004; Horvath 1986; Laka & Uriagereka 1987;

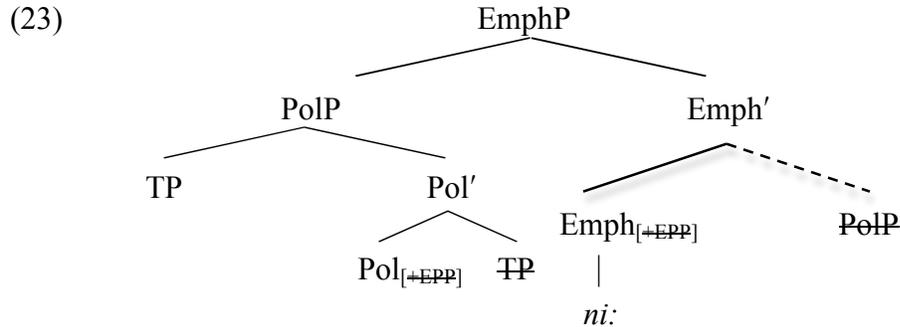
Ndayiragije 1999; Tuller 1992; Watters 1979) and marries well with other analyses of bifurcated functional domains, such as aspect (Travis 1991, 2010) and negation (Laka 1990). Consequently, emphasis is syntactically restricted and semantically strongest when activating the peripheral emphatic domain and unrestricted/weakened when invoking the lower clause-internal domain.

### 5.1. High Emphasis

Although it appears clause-finally in Nupe, *ni:* occupies a demonstrably high position in the clausal left periphery. Supporting evidence comes from the fact that *ni:* follows both negation ( $\text{Pol}^0$ ), which dominates TP in Nupe (Kandybowicz 2008) (cf. (1b)), and focus particles ( $\text{Foc}^0$ ) (cf. (7b-d)). Furthermore, *ni:* must be generated higher than Force/clause-typing because it is systematically unavailable in all embedded clauses (cf. (8), (11)). Therefore, *ni:* outscopes  $\text{Pol}^0$ . *Ni:*'s clause-final status is related to a general property of Nupe functional heads: most projecting functional items in the language<sup>15</sup> trigger complement-to-specifier movement, contra Abels 2003 (Kandybowicz & Baker 2003, cf. the various particles in (1a), (8c,j)). Bearing this consideration in mind, we can account for the word order facts and model the syntactic and interpretational properties cataloged thus far by locating *ni:* in a dedicated left peripheral functional space (EmphP) above Polarity Phrase/Focus Phrase and allowing the derivation to proceed by roll-up movement. As with other functional heads in the language, the complement of  $\text{Emph}^0$ , raises to Spec, EmphP (following TP roll-up to Spec, PolP), rendering *ni:* clause-final. Although pronounced before  $\text{Emph}^0$ , PolP is interpreted in its base position (i.e. under the scope of *ni:*). That is, the higher copy of PolP is interpreted at PF, while the lower copy is interpreted at LF. Presumably, this is due to the fact that *ni:* is a propositional operator and thus must take scope

<sup>15</sup> For example,  $\text{Neg}^0$ ,  $\text{Foc}^0$ ,  $\text{D}^0$ ,  $\text{Loc}^0$  and certain  $\text{C}^0$  particles, among others. See Kandybowicz & Baker 2003 for in depth discussion.

over a proposition-denoting constituent. The tree below illustrates. (The dashed right branch of *Emph'* in the tree is meant to capture the fact that other left peripheral projections may intervene between  $\text{Emph}^0$  and  $\text{Pol}^0$  (e.g. *FocP*) and therefore, that  $\text{Emph}^0$  does not necessarily directly merge with *PolP*.)



On this analysis, *ni:*'s veridical/verum reading follows as a consequence of its structural height (cf. Han & Romero's (2004) analysis of verum focus). From its high left peripheral position,  $\text{Emph}^0$  takes scope over  $\text{Pol}^0$ , which in turn modulates the assertion/denial of the truth of the proposition. The semantic consequence of this scopal relation (i.e. "polarity emphasis" - directly emphasizing the polarity of the clause) is that the speaker expresses a commitment to the truth of the asserted/denied utterance<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Note that  $\text{Emph}^0$  does not take narrow scope over  $\text{Pol}^0$ , but rather wide scope over the entire proposition including  $\text{Pol}^0$ . Assuming a standard semantics for affirmative and negative  $\text{Pol}^0$ , namely, the identity function  $\lambda p.p$  and the complement function  $\lambda p.\neg p$  respectively, one would expect *ni:* to express emphasis on the entire clause (e.g. to mark the entire propositional content as newsworthy or special in some way or another). However, for the specific verum effect to arise, *ni:* should stand in a more local relation to the polarity head. An anonymous reviewer speculates that perhaps *ni:* is the overt spell-out of affirmative  $\text{Pol}^0$ , which is mandatory whenever the propositional content is pre-mentioned and hence, given. I leave the exploration of these issues for future research, as space limitations prevent a more full and systematic discussion.

The high peripheral position of *ni*: also explains its MCP status. A number of existing proposals on the market can be invoked to derive the particle's MCP property, among them Haegeman's (2003, 2006a,b) truncation analysis, which deems embedded/reduced clauses structurally defective and hence lacking ForceP as well as the left peripheral discourse projections dominating it (e.g. EmphP); and Haegeman's (2007, 2009) intervention analysis. Regardless of which analytical direction we take, *ni*:'s restricted root status, like its veridical interpretation, ultimately follows from its structural height.

### 5.2. *Low Emphasis*

Kandybowicz (2008) argues that Nupe verbal repetition structures are incompletely PF-reduced copy constructions derived in the syntax by head movement of the Root morpheme. I propose here that the introduction of a low TP-internal Emph head gives verbal repetition constructions their emphatic flavor and simultaneously triggers the spell-out of an additional copy of the Root morpheme at PF.

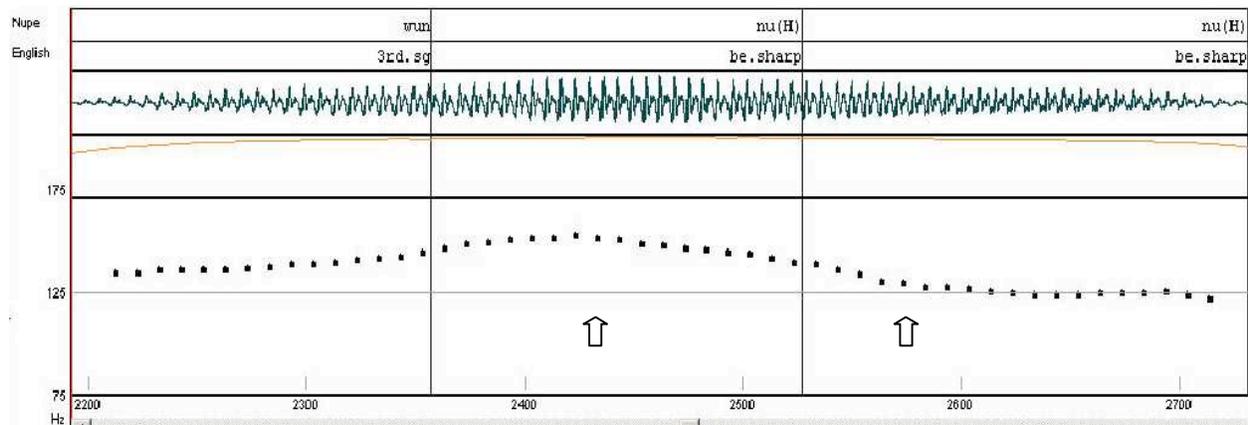
Looking at the instances of unrestricted emphatic assertion presented thus far, there doesn't seem to be much overt motivation for positing the existence of a low emphatic head, apart from interpretational considerations. Though no obvious emphatic particle surfaces in verbal repetition constructions as in *ni*: emphasis, the presence of Emph<sup>0</sup> can be detected phonetically. Experimentally, it can be demonstrated that when pitch declination, downdrift and tonal coarticulation are factored away, the fundamental frequency of V<sub>1</sub> is significantly greater than the fundamental frequency of V<sub>2</sub> (Kandybowicz 2004: 48). In these constructions, V<sub>2</sub> surfaces with a falling contour when underlyingly High or Mid tone-bearing (cf. (24a,b,d))<sup>17</sup>. The pitch

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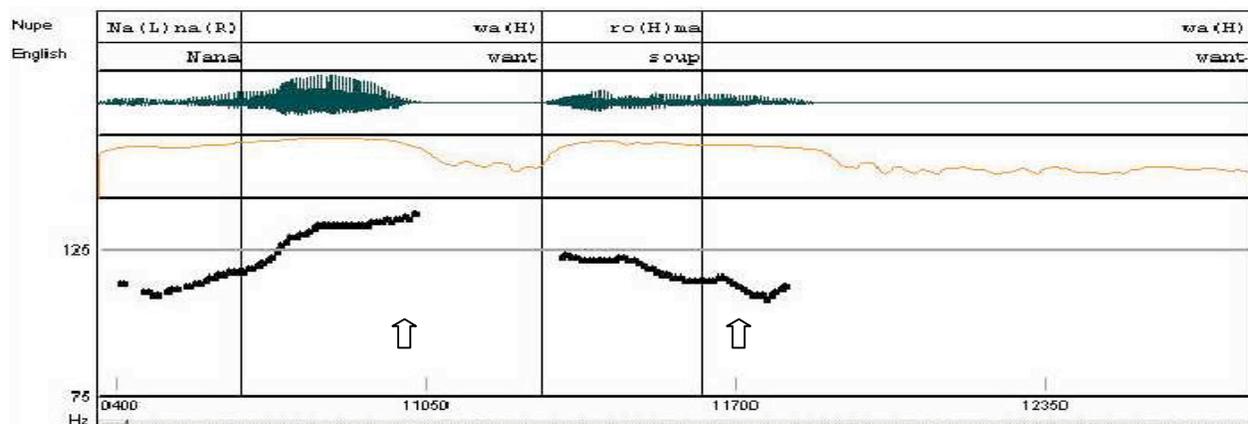
<sup>17</sup> The dots on the lower halves of the pitch tracks represent detected F0 values (increasing along the y-axis) over time (increasing along the x-axis). The vertical lines represent word boundaries.

track in (24c), by contrast, shows that distinct (i.e. non-copied) High tone-bearing V<sub>2</sub>s are not tonally depressed in this way, providing further support for the claim that verbal repetition constructions are tonally distinct from other multi-verb constructions in the language.

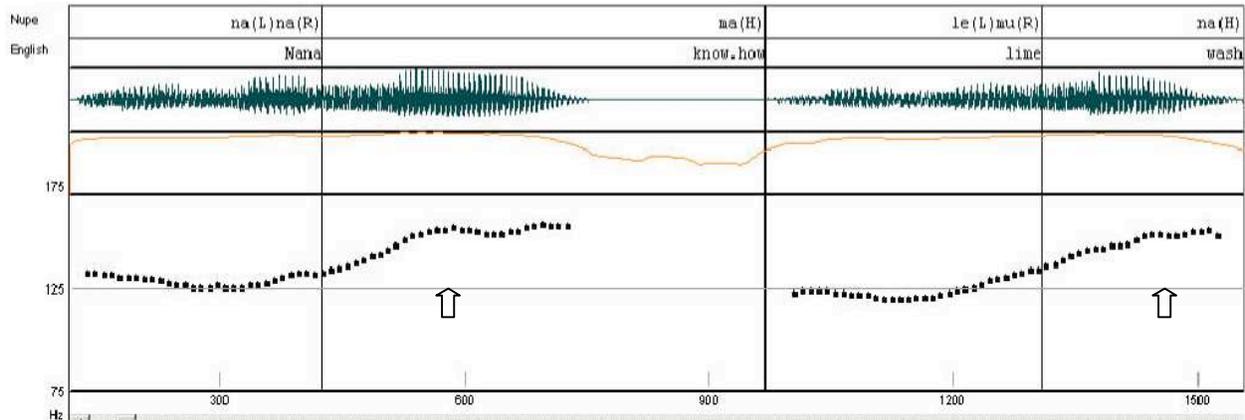
- (24) a. *Wu:n nú nú.* (Underlying tones represented)  
 ‘3<sup>RD</sup>.SG be sharp be sharp’  
 ‘(Apparently) It IS sharp.’  
 (Lexically High-bearing V<sub>2</sub> surfaces with a falling contour.)



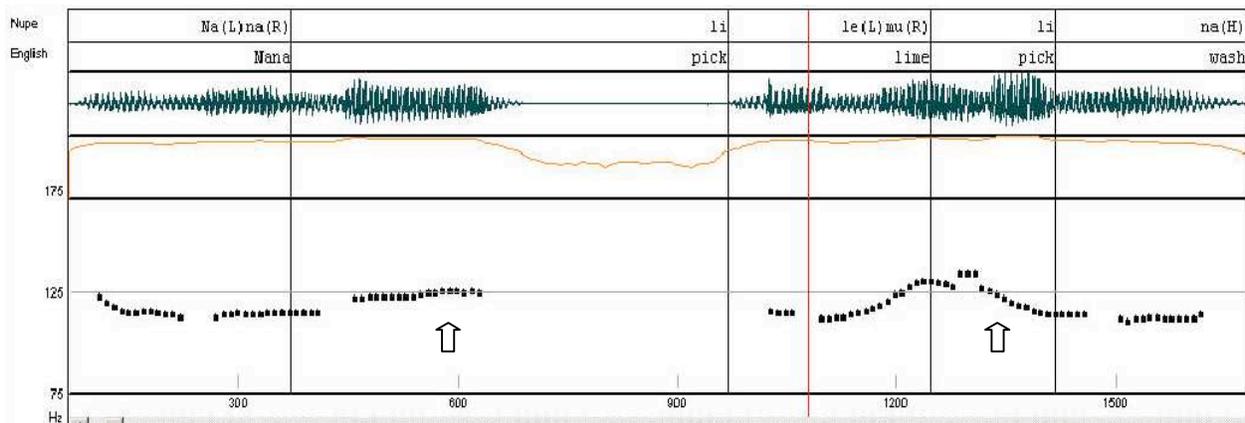
- b. *Nànǎ wá róma wá.* (Underlying tones represented)  
 ‘Nana want soup want’  
 ‘(Apparently) Nana DOES want soup.’  
 (Lexically High-bearing V<sub>2</sub> surfaces with a falling contour.)



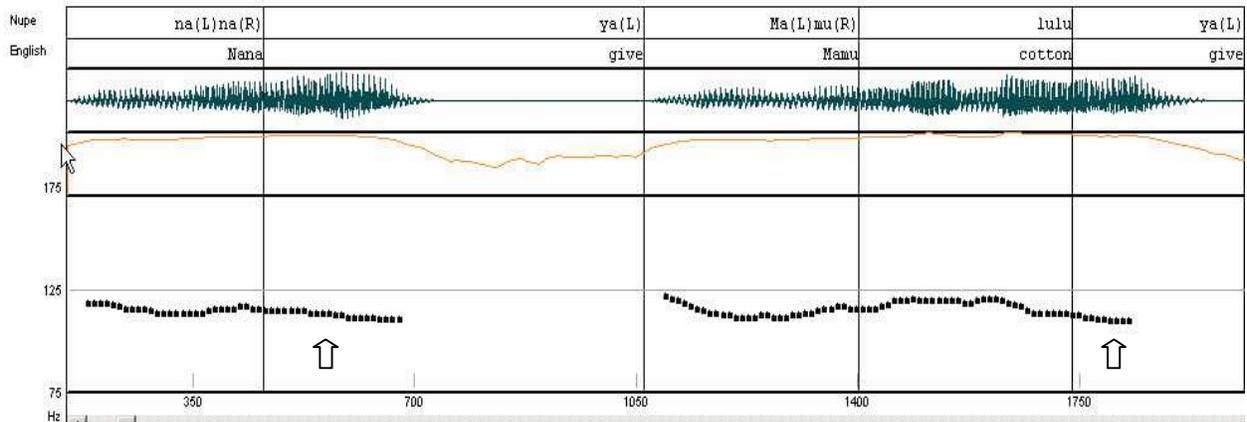
- c. *Nàǎ má lèǎ ná.* (Underlying tones represented)  
 ‘Nana know lime wash’  
 ‘Nana knows how to wash a lime.’  
 (High-bearing  $V_2$  in non-emphatic context surfaces with a high tone – no contour.)



- d. *Nàǎ li lèǎ li na.* (Underlying tones represented)  
 ‘Nana pick lime pick wash’  
 ‘(Apparently) Nana DID pick a lime and (then) wash it.’  
 (Lexically Mid-bearing  $V_2$  surfaces with a falling contour.)



- e. *Nàǎ yà Màmǎ lulu yà.* (Underlying tones represented)  
 ‘Nana give Mamu cotton give’  
 ‘(Apparently) Nana DID give Mamu cotton.’  
 (Lexically Low-bearing  $V_2$  surfaces with a low tone – no contour.)

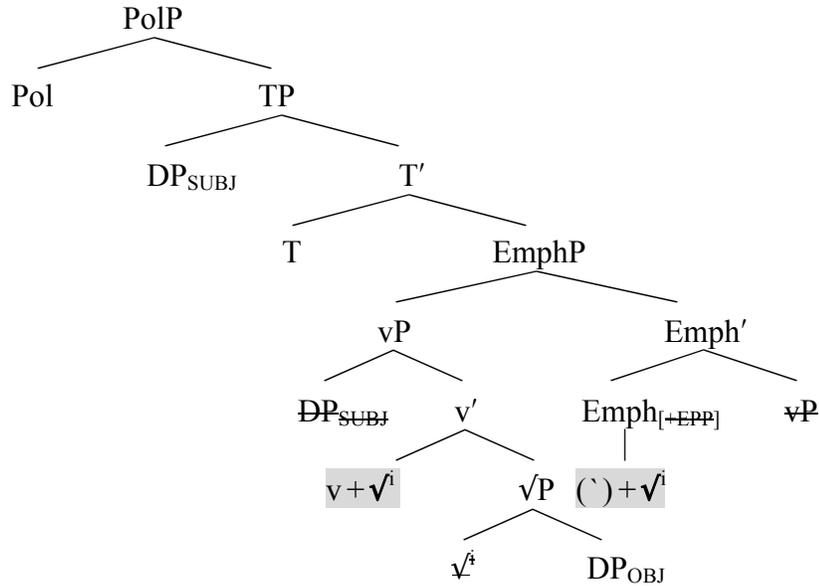


If we assume, following Kandybowicz (2008), that the emphatic head responsible for these phonetic effects is spelled-out as a floating low tone (˘) in Nupe<sup>18</sup> (i.e. a suprasegmental property not lexically linked to a specific timing unit), then the realization of an extra<sup>19</sup> copy of the verb Root can be derived by appealing to a PF constraint banning prosodically unsupported tonal content (Kandybowicz 2008). And if we locate this emphatic head low enough in the clause, yet still grant it access to the clause’s propositional content, the previously adduced syntactic and interpretive properties can be derived. Thus, my proposal is that a low locus of emphasis exists in the region between  $T^0$  and  $v^0$ . Nupe verbal repetition constructions thus exploit this low EmphP domain, giving way to structures like (25) (as before, the complement of  $\text{Emph}^0$  (in this case,  $vP$ ) raises to Spec, EmphP where it is pronounced, despite being interpreted in its base-merged position). In what follows, phonetically realized copies of the Root are indicated in grey.

<sup>18</sup> Other heads that are spelled-out as floating tones exist in the language, among them, possessive morphemes and a pre-verbal marker of negation (see Kandybowicz 2008). Thus, the claim that  $\text{Emph}^0$  is spelled-out as a floating low tone is not ungrounded/without precedent.

<sup>19</sup> I assume that something like the Stray Affix Filter (Lasnik 1981, 1995) forces copy spell-out in  $v^0$  as well, yielding repetition of the Root morpheme.

(25)



On this analysis,  $\text{Emph}_{\text{LOW}}^0$  takes scope over propositional  $vP$ , but not  $\text{Pol}^0$ . As a consequence, the force of emphasis is weaker than with *ni*: assertion – a proposition is emphasized without commitment to its truth-value. In this way, I claim, differences in emphatic strength relating to speaker commitment are scopally parametrized. When an emphatic operator takes scope over a polarity operator (as in the case of *ni*: emphasis (cf. (23))), verum or polarity emphasis interpretations arise. Consequently, the speaker expresses total (subjective) commitment to the truth of the uttered proposition. When a polarity operator outscopes an emphatic operator, on the other hand (as in the case of emphatic verbal repetition (cf. (25))), non-veridical interpretations result because the scopal reach of the speaker’s emphatic assertion does not include polarity. As such, the speaker asserts, yet withholds full commitment to the truth of her proposition.

In addition to accounting for the nuanced interpretive differences between *ni*: emphasis and emphatic verbal repetition, the proposal has other notable analytical strengths. For one, the low position of  $\text{EmphP}$  in Nupe verbal repetition constructions directly explains why it is not limited

to root contexts. Because the low emphatic domain exploits the lowest region of the middle field of the clause (i.e. the layer immediately above  $v^0$ ), it will face fewer licensing restrictions than items operating in the clausal periphery. Consequently, it can in principle be activated in both main and subordinate clause contexts alike. Additionally, the low analysis of emphasis in Nupe provides cross-linguistic support for Duffield's (2007, 2011) work on assertion in Vietnamese and English. Much like the proposal here, Duffield argues that the Assertion Phrase in Vietnamese and English activates a low emphatic domain residing below  $T^0$  and above  $v^0$ . The analysis also supports proposals like Batllori & Hernanz (this issue), who argue for the existence of hierarchically distinct high and low positions for emphatic polarity particles in Spanish and Catalan. In addition, the existence of a split emphatic domain directly parallels the high vs. low focus domain duality (Belletti 2001, 2004; Horvath 1986; Laka & Uriagereka 1987; Ndayiragije 1999; Tuller 1992; Watters 1979) and coheres with other analyses of bifurcated functional domains such as aspect (Travis 1991, 2010) and negation (Laka 1990). Thus, the analysis of low emphatic assertion in Nupe parallels that of Vietnamese, marries well to the analysis of related phenomena in unrelated languages and sharpens the cartographic argument for the bipartite<sup>20</sup> expression of certain functional projections in Universal Grammar.

### 5.3. *Activating Both Domains*

The premise of my analysis is that the hierarchical position of an emphatic operator is flexible – at minimum, Universal Grammar specifies two cartographically distinct emphatic domains. Thus, differences in emphatic strength pertaining to speaker commitment are scopally parametrized in the fashion outlined in the previous section – when a polarity operator falls

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<sup>20</sup> Carrilho (2011) also proposes a bipartite domain for emphatic particles in European Portuguese; however, the two proposed positions (which she calls “high” and “low”) are both located in the left periphery.

within the scope of an emphatic operator, veridical speaker-oriented polarity emphasis results; when an emphatic operator falls within the scope of a polarity operator, weaker non-veridical emphatic interpretations arise in which the speaker asserts a proposition but withholds full commitment to its truth. The analysis thus predicts that despite the syntactic availability of two discrete emphatic domains, in most contexts a speaker may not activate both EmphP projections in a single clause because doing so would give rise to an epistemic contradiction. In such a case, a speaker would essentially be asserting full commitment to a proposition she is not fully committed to. This prediction is borne out in the language, as illustrated in (26) below.<sup>21</sup>

Consider the following utterance in a context involving a debate between just two speakers.

Speaker A has asserted that Musa did not eat the scorpion. While speaker B may respond with either affirmative *ni*: emphasis or verbal repetition, she may not respond with both.

- (26) #*Musa gí kinkere gí ni*:  
 ‘Musa eat scorpion eat *ni*:’  
 ‘I am fully committed to the truth of *Musa gí kinkere gí*, which is a proposition I assert, but am not fully committed to.’

An interesting wrinkle appears, however, in contexts involving more than two speakers. Whereas (26) is semantically illicit when uttered by one of two debaters, it can be felicitously uttered by a third party as a means of endorsing a previously uttered emphatic verbal repetition assertion. To take an example, consider a context in which a third party (speaker C) joins a debate in which A maintains that Musa did not eat the scorpion and B asserts that Musa did. As the argument escalates, speaker B emphatically asserts her position, but because she lacks the crucial evidence necessary to be fully committed to its truth, she must limit her mode of

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<sup>21</sup> Kandybowicz (2008:61) mistakenly judges sentences like (26) to be: \*. The more accurate characterization revealed by follow-up fieldwork is: #.

emphasis to verbal repetition. Speaker C, however, has enough information to declare with utter certitude that Musa did indeed eat the scorpion. She can therefore endorse B's emphatic assertion and effectively end the debate at the same time by uttering (26). In this case, C emphatically asserts full commitment to the truth of B's claim (itself a weaker emphatic utterance). Put in other words, speaker C is fully committed to the truth of a proposition that *someone else* (i.e. speaker B) was not fully committed to. In this case, no epistemic contradiction arises because unlike the previous context involving only two interlocutors, it is possible to construe the lower emphatic operator as reporting on Speaker B's level of commitment, while taking the higher Emph head to report on Speaker C's commitment to truth. In other words, *ni:* in this case asserts the speaker's full commitment to the content of *reported* speech. Recall from footnote 3 that *ni:* cannot function apart from the clause it scopes over (i.e. in isolation, whether elliptical or not). Thus, in contexts such as these, speaker C has not issued two separate utterances. She has activated both emphatic domains in a single clause. The following dialog illustrates.

- (27) Speaker A: *Musa gí kinkere à.*  
 'Musa eat scorpion NEG'  
 'Musa did not eat the scorpion.'
- Speaker B: *Musa gí kinkere gí.*  
 'Musa eat scorpion eat'  
 '(Apparently) Musa DID eat the scorpion.'
- Speaker C: *Musa gí kinkere gí ni:.*  
 'Musa eat scorpion eat *ni:*'  
 '(I assure you) the proposition: *Musa gí kinkere gí* IS true.'

These facts are fully consistent with the analyses presented in this section and provide further support for the existence of cartographically distinct emphatic domains.

## 6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have argued in this article that Nupe emphatic assertion motivates a reappraisal of the characterization of emphasis as a heterogeneous class, controlled syntactically in some instances and pragmatically in others (Hyman & Watters 1984). This two-way distinction is often invoked to differentiate forms of emphasis that have highly restricted syntactic distributions from those that do not (cf. Breitbarth & Haegeman 2010, Guéron & Haegeman (2012) and various articles in this issue). In Nupe, both restricted and unrestricted varieties of emphatic assertion exist. And while at first blush interpretive/pragmatic forces appear to play a prominent role in the grammar of emphasis, the facts suggest that the core properties of Nupe emphasis are ultimately syntactically reducible in their entirety. The principle interpretational difference between Nupe's two varieties of emphasis concerns speaker commitment. When a speaker is fully committed to the truth of the expressed proposition (in his or her subjective epistemic model), emphasis is conveyed by the clause-final veridical operator *ni*:. Emphatic assertions that withhold full commitment to propositional truth employ verbal repetition. This distinction, I claim, reflects a difference in the scopal interplay of emphatic and polarity operators. When an emphatic operator takes scope over a polarity operator, verum or polarity emphasis interpretations result, in which full commitment to propositional truth is expressed. When a polarity operator falls outside the scope of an emphatic operator, on the other hand, propositional assertion devoid of complete speaker commitment obtains. These two ways of scope-taking, I propose, are a consequence of a bipartite split in the emphatic domain into a high left peripheral EmphP projection, in which EmphP dominates PolP, and a low clause-internal EmphP projection, in which PolP dominates EmphP. This cartographic split explains a number of core syntactic asymmetries in the language as well. For example, in Nupe the activation of the left peripheral

emphatic domain is a Main Clause Phenomenon. Hence, we find *ni*: emphasis restricted to root clauses in the language, unlike forms of emphasis that activate the lower clause-internal domain (e.g. emphatic verbal repetition). In this way, I argue that the distinction between “syntactically vs. semantically/pragmatically controlled” emphasis is illusory and that at its core, emphatic assertion is syntactically mediated.

I’d like to conclude by reflecting on another broad consequence of my analysis, one that has thus far gone undiscussed. In section 3.1, I argued that emphasis is not reducible to focus in Nupe. That is to say, there is evidence for hierarchically distinct emphasis and focus projections in the language. In this way, Nupe achieves emphatic interpretations by way of dedicated emphatic operators (much like Vietnamese (see Duffield (2011))), as opposed to focusing propositional constituents or merging polarity particles in focus positions. This does not appear to be a universal design feature of the grammar of emphasis, however, as we find many languages that exploit the focus pathway to emphasis instead. For instance, Batllori & Hernanz (this issue) argue that polarity emphasis in Spanish and Catalan involves focusing content from Polarity Phrase (either the entire PolP itself or a polarity marker). Likewise, Martins (this issue) proposes that the expression of emphatic polarity in European Portuguese involves focusing  $\Sigma$ P. In both cases, the focus marker takes scope over a polarity operator, yielding what may be called “polarity focus”. Evidence that polarity emphasis in these three languages truly involves the activation of the focus domain comes from the complementarity of polarity emphasis and constituent focus, which, recall, does not characterize emphatic assertion in Nupe (cf. (7)). In a similar vein, there is evidence that verum interpretations in Hungarian arise when negators/preverbs are moved into Spec,FocP with accompanying verb movement to Foc<sup>0</sup> (Lipták (this issue)). In Italian as well, polarity emphasis is achieved by means of focused

polarity particles, not dedicated emphatic operators (Poletto & Zanuttini (this issue)). It is thus clear that there are multiple pathways to achieving propositionally emphatic interpretations – minimally, a grammar may activate the Focus domain or the Emphatic domain. My proposal is that both domains are split into high (peripheral) and low (clause-internal) sub-domains. The duality of Focus Phrase is familiar from the numerous converging accounts in the literature (i.e. Belletti 2001, 2004; Horvath 1986; Laka & Uriagereka 1987; Ndayiragije 1999; Tuller 1992; Watters 1979), but the existence and duality of EmphP is a fairly novel proposal. What determines whether a given language activates  $\text{Foc}^0$  or  $\text{Emph}^0$  in the expression of emphatic assertion? And to what extent are the properties of other EmphP systems (like Vietnamese and possibly European Portuguese (see footnote 20)) parallel to those of Nupe? I leave more challenging questions like these for future research.

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