

1. Turkish

a) Based on the data, Turkish is a verb-final language that has an immediately preverbal focus position, as well as a clause-initial topic position. There also seems to be some flexibility with respect to the 'subject' and 'object,' as demonstrated by 1c, 1d, and especially 4a, 4a', in which the ACC marked "marnayi" and the NOM pronoun ('ben') "switch places" without any change in meaning (of the loose translation).

However, the flexibility seems to be based on whether the NP is definite or indefinite: In all the examples, it's only the definite NPs (some of which are ACC-marked) that can occupy the initial position of the sentence. In 1a, the definite referent "Murat" is clause initial (topic), with indefinite "kitab" immediately preverbal (focus), for a reading of "Murat is reading a book." The indefiniteness introduces 'a book' as a new assertion about Murat (who would be the presupposition), so "kitab" needs to be in the focus position of this sentence.

In 1b through 1h, we see the same pattern, that is, only definite NPs, clause-initial. From 1e through 1h, we see the same pattern in which an indefinite NP is acceptable only immediately before the verb "okuyor" ("is reading") which confirms that this is the focus position in the clause. 1c, 1d, 1g, and 1h all allow either "kitabı" ("the book") or the adverb "aceleyle" ("hurriedly") in the immediately preverbal position, while 1f doesn't allow "kitab" ("a book") in the non-focus position. At this point, it seems focus position is restricted to the immediately preverbal position.

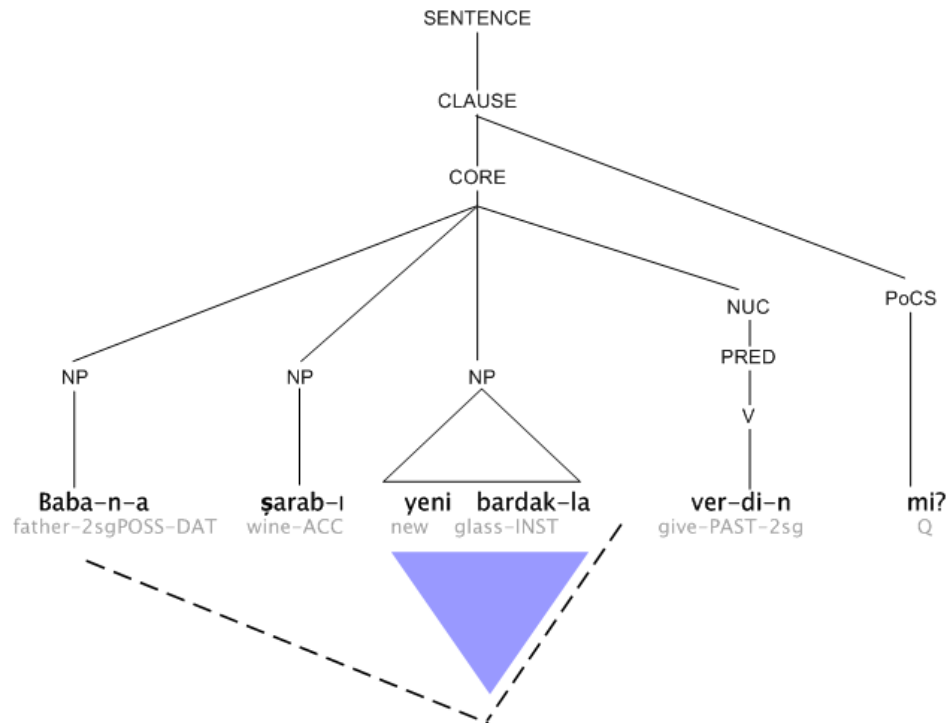
The examples in 2 demonstrate the same pattern, although 2d calls into question the "immediately" preverbal idea. If we are to assume that WH-words are always in the focus position in the clause, how do we justify having what seem to be two focus positions? Perhaps it's just that the focus position is not as narrow as thought?

Example 2d seems to demonstrate that the potential focus domain is actually not limited to the immediately preverbal position, since if we're to assume that WH-words are always in focus, we have to accommodate the fact that 2d shows "kim" in what would be the topic position, with "para" in the focus position. In 2d, the topic is "bankadan" ("from the bank"), parenthesis indicating possibly that the topic is understood in the discourse?, even if not explicitly expressed, and the focus in this question move to the left to accommodate "kim," (WH-word).

3a and b confirm that topic position is clause-initial, with focus preverbal. In 3a Q, "sarabı" ("the wine") is the topic, with the focus on "yeni bardakla" ("the new glass") to which 3a A responds with the contrasting focus, "eski bardakla" ("the old glass.") The hashed response focuses on "amcana," ("uncle"), which would be an odd answer, given the focus on "bardakla," as is 3bA' in response to 3b. Q. The syntax may be correct, but the focus structure of the clause makes the hashed responses a mismatch in terms of the question's focus.

Examples 4b, 4c, and 4d confirm that the topic position is clause-initial, with the focus position preverbal. The English paraphrases suggest that the entire unit after the initial topic would be in focus, that the clause-initial phrases are LDPs, but the Turkish doesn't include any punctuation

demonstrating this. In these examples, each topic consists of “NP_{DEF} ise” (“as for NP”), with the focus being on “hiç” (4b) and “bir bankadan” (4c, 4d). Given examples 2d and 4b, 4c, and 4d, I think the potential focus domain needs to encompass more than just the immediately preverbal position.



2. Toba Batak

Based on the data, Toba Batak seems to be a verb-initial language in which (as with Turkish) the definiteness (or indefiniteness) of referents plays a role in focus structure of the clause. Examples 2c and 1a could be read as a Q and A pair, providing evidence that the clause-final position is the topic position, with the focus position immediately following the verb:

2. c. Manjaha aha guru i? ‘What did the teacher read?’
 1. a. Manjaha buku guru i. ‘The teacher read a book.’

The morpheme “-i” seems to identify definite NPs, and we can see from examples 1, 2 and 3 that only indefinite NPs appear in the immediately post-verbal position, which suggests this position is the focus position, and that the clause-final position is the topic position (since marking something as definite in the context of the discourse implies it’s a known referent, and therefore, the topic).

I had to organize this data a bit differently to try to see what was going on. This sorting shows like-voiced verbs together and shows that the focus immediately follows the verb (whether the NP is an Undergoer or an Actor), and it is always an indefinite NP (or, a WH-word if the clause has a definite NP topic in the clause final position). In 2c, the WH-word follows the verb (“manjaha”), but in 2b, the indefinite NP (undergoer “buku”) follows the verb, with WH-word “ise” preceding the verb.

1 a.	Manjaha	buku	guru i.	‘The teacher read a book.’
	Verb	U/Indef	A/Def	
1 a’.	Manjaha	buku	guru.	‘A (certain) teacher read a book.’
	Verb	U/Indef	A/Indef (? Certain?)	
2 a.	Manjaha	buku	ise?	‘Who read a book?’
	Verb	U/Indef	A/WH-word	
2 c.	Manjaha	aha	guru i?	‘What did the teacher read?’
	Verb	U/WH-word	A/Def	
2 b.	Ise	manjaha	buku?	‘Who read a book?’
	A/WH-word	Verb	U/Indef	
1 b.	Dijaha	guru	buku i.	‘A teacher read the book.’
	Verb	A/Indef	U/Def	
1 b’.	Dijaha	guru	buku.	A teacher read a (certain) book.’
	Verb	A/Indef	U/Indef (? Certain?)	
3 a.	Dijaha	guru	aha?	‘What did a teacher read?’
	Verb	A/Indef	U/WH-word	
3 b.	Aha	dijaha	guru?	‘What did a teacher read?’
	U/WH-word	Verb	A/Indef	
3 c.	Dijaha	ise	buku i?	‘Who read the book?’
	Verb	A/WH-word	U/Def	

Does this mean the Toba Batak syntax is flexible enough to allow the WH-word to appear before the verb? or that the focus structure is accommodating the syntax? From your class presentations I see that Toba Batak has “rigid syntax, rigid focus,” so that’s probably not correct. I think the only thing I can say with certainty is that in Toba Batak, the focus position is immediately post-verbal, and it must be indefinite NP. It also seems that voice and tense affect the focus structure (or vice versa?).

Given examples 4 and 5, whose arguments are all definite NPs, identifying topic and focus requires thinking about the “markedness” scale (Van Valin, Figure 3.1, p.73). I’m going to assume that bracketed pronouns in examples 4 and 5 would be zero-marked referents, which means they’re the topics of their clauses.

4 a.	Mangida Verb	imana U/Def	do	nasida? A/Def	'Do they see him?'
4 b.	Olo, affirm, ldp	mangida Verb	imana U/Def	do.	'Yes, [they] see him.'
5 a.	Diida Verb	nasida A/Def	do	imana? U/Def	'Did they see him?'
5 b.	Olo, affirm, ldp	diida Verb	nasida A/Def	do.	'Yes, they saw [him].'

The examples with the Undergoer clause final are likely passive voice, while the examples with Actor clause final are likely active voice. So 4a with an NP that's a definite NP Actor makes the Undergoer the focus "imana," so in 4b, the topic is zero ([they]) and the focus is imana (him). 4c is * because the focus on "imana" ("they") doesn't make sense.

(I started doing this many days ago, and now I've lost my train of thought completely on this assignment :(I'm going to have to just wrap it up and submit it.) I'm fairly certain that Toba Batak is verb initial with an immediate post-verbal focus position, and that the topic position follows the focus position—or it's best to say, topic is clause final. There's again a relationship between definite and indefinite NPs. Given all this, I think the potential focus domain is the entire clause (although that makes no sense to me now, since your class notes and elsewhere I keep seeing that Toba Batak has "rigid syntax, rigid focus.")

