The focus function(s) of \textit{pura} in Kokama-Kokamilla discourse

Focus subtypes are characterized according to scope and pragmatic information (i.e., [non]-contrastive). While the existence of strategies dedicated to coding scope seems clear, the existence of grammar dedicated to pragmatic contrast is in dispute (Lambrecht 1994; Myhill and Xing 1996). Some models propose that contrast is expressed in sentence grammar (Dik et al. 1981; Watters 1979); others argue that contrast belongs to conversational implicature (Lambrecht 1994). Kokama-Kokamilla (KK), an Amazonian language, has constructions that clearly distinguish focus subtypes according to both parameters. More specifically, this study examines the functional nuances of the clitic \textit{pura} that attaches to a noun phrase (in subject, object, or oblique functions), a verb, a dependent clause, and a particle. The database for this study consists of twenty-two texts including folk stories, personal narratives, and spontaneous conversations taken from nine speakers. The combined texts include approximately 2539 intonation units, among which 351 instances of \textit{pura} (14\%) have been identified.

While \textit{pura} is an important cue to pragmatically marked sentences, by itself it cannot be associated with specific subtypes of focus. It is the interaction of \textit{pura} with constituent order and prosody that formally distinguishes between subtypes of focus. In sentence-focus constructions, \textit{pura} marks the first element of the focus domain, then focal stress occurs towards the end of the focused unit (1). In narrow focus constructions, stress and \textit{pura} co-occur in the focused element. The focused unit is usually the object of the clause (2, 3a), sometimes an oblique (3b), or quite rarely, the subject. Thus, once the hearer knows that i) any non-subject is marked by \textit{pura}; and, ii) it is stressed, this is a narrow-focus construction. In contrast, once the hearer knows that i) the subject is marked by \textit{pura}; and ii) it is unstressed, s/he knows that this is a sentence focus construction. Further, when the stressed \textit{pura}-marked NP is the O in the pragmatically unmarked SVO pattern (2), it correlates strongly with non-contrastive focus. When the stressed \textit{pura}-marked NP is the O in the pragmatically marked OSV pattern (3a), it correlates strongly with contrastive focus. However, Dik et al.’s (1981) finer distinctions within the contrastive category are neutralized in these data. Overall, the facts of KK suggest that contrastive focus constructions deserve a place in the grammar of focus.
(1) Speaker A: *rana yaparachi, rana tsarîwa-ka*
   3plM dance, 3plM be.happy-REI
   ‘They dance, they celebrate’

Speaker B: *era ya=pura=nu tsarîwa-ka*  
   a.lot 3F=FOC=PL be.happy-REI
   ‘(Yes,) they celebrate a lot’
   Presupposition: <They celebrate>; assertion: TRUE <They celebrate>

(2) *îwati-tsui ts=umi [lima ritama=pura]*  
   high-ABL 1SF-see Lima community –FOC
   ‘From above, I see Lima city’ {VL-RA.032}
   Presupposition: <I see X>; assertion: <X= Lima city>

(3) a. *yaepe; [etse=pura] ya=mutsana-ka=tsuri.*  
   there 1LF=FOC 3F=medicine-REI=PST3
   ‘Then, he bewitched me’ {CB-RA.060}
   Presupposition: <he bewitched X>; assertion: <X=me>
   Set of alternatives: <mother, grandmother, me>

   b. *[yamua=pura=muki] hasta aypuka tsa=kakiri*  
   other =FOC=COM until currently 1SF-live
   ‘With the other one (last husband) I live up to now’ {07OCT1-RA.157}
   Presupposition: <I live with X>; assertion: <X=5th husband>
   Set of alternatives: <1st husband, 2nd husband…>

REFERENCES:


1 ABBREVIATIONS: underscore=stress, ABL=ablative, COM=commitative, FOC=focus, PL=plural, PST=past, REI=reiterative, 1LF= first person singular long form female speech, 1SF=first person singular short form female speech, 3F=third person singular female speech, 3plM=third person plural male speech