

# Contact-induced changes in the expression of information structure in the languages of the Lower Volta Basin

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## 0. Motivation

+ work on this topic is left-over of the project ‘Focus in Gur and Kwa languages’ (2003-2009) – inspired by the observation that in quite a number of the languages spoken in the Volta Basin one IS-sensitive particle is widespread, namely *lá*

- in the Kwa language Ewe, this particle marks different kinds of preposed topics

(1) Ewe (Kwa)

ɖɛví á-wó lá, ɲútsu má φo wó.  
child DEF-P TOP man DEM beat 3P

The children, that man beat them. (Ameka 1991: 145)

Topic marking: - O *lá*, SVO

- topic marker follows the preposed topic

- topic is resumed by pronoun

- in some Gur languages like Konkomba and Dagbani, spoken more in the North of Volta Basin, this particle occurs in focus constructions (Schwarz 2009b: 5: “pseudo-focus markers that mark a comment within a categorical utterance”)

(2) Konkomba (Gur, Gurma)

ù ɲmán !ɲí-tùùn lá.  
CL chew CL-beans ?T.FOC

{What did she eat?} She ate BEANS. (Schwarz 2009a: 184)

Object focus: - SVO/A *lá*

- pseudo focus marker follows the whole predicate

(3) Dagbani (Gur, Oti-Volta)

ò = ɲùbì-lá tuyà.  
CL.S = eat-?T.FOC bean.P

{What did she eat?} She ate BEANS.

Object focus: - S V *lá* O/A

- pseudo focus marker follows the verb

→ Question: Does this similarity of a lexical element with IS function goes back to chance, to contact, or can it be called an areal phenomenon in that area, as other languages also show that particle?

→ in the following, I will not just concentrate on particle *la* but will compare information-structural constructions of different languages of the lower Volta Basin, all belonging to the Kwa subgroup within the Niger-Congo phylum

+ structure of the talk

1. Contact-induced changes and information structure
2. The linguistic area of the Lower Volta Basin: genealogical and typological characteristics, historical facts
3. Presentation and comparison of the information-structural constructions in the languages
4. Conclusion

## 1. Basic theoretical assumptions

### 1.1 Information structure

+ well-known that discourse context has implications for the speech act

Information structure:

- structuring of an utterance according to the communicative requirements of the speaker, also
- taking into account the assumed knowledge of the addressee
- common ground organization, as common ground changes during communication
- the same propositional content might be expressed by different ways

→ information packaging (Chafe 1976)

- deals primarily with how the message is sent and only secondarily with the message itself
- “just as the packaging of toothpaste can affect sales in partial independence of the quality of the toothpaste inside” (1976: 28)

+ information structuring

- depends partly on the grammatical system of a given language that offers different encoding means from all levels of the language system

- but there seem also to be widely spread (or even universal) principles for this structuring

### + Topic

- „what the sentence is about“ (Reinhart 1982)

- file card metaphor: the topic is the head of a file card on which already some information is available, new information is added and then saved in the common ground

(4a) [Nicolas Sarkozy]<sub>Topic</sub> [hat Carla Bruni geheiratet]<sub>Comment</sub>

(4b) [Carla Bruni]<sub>Topic</sub> [hat Nicolas Sarkozy geheiratet]<sub>Comment</sub>

### Focus

Focus is that information in an utterance „*which is relatively the most important or the most salient in the given communicative setting, and considered by [the] S[peaker] to be the most essential for [the] A[dressee] to integrate into his pragmatic information.*“ (Dik 1989: 277)

→ focus is a pragmatic category that primarily reflects the perspective of the speaker under specific contextual conditions; the perspective of the hearer is only secondarily integrated

+ two different focus types (communicative point):

- information focus = „focus of assertion“: refers to parts of an utterance that represent new, non-presupposed or context-enlarging information

+ contrastive focus: identifies part of an utterance as subset of a given set of alternatives that is the only one, with the exclusion of all other alternatives for which the predication is valid

## 1.2 Contact-induced changes and information structure

- I do not intend to give an overview over language contact in general but try to show, whether or not information-structural categories are prone for contact-induced changes and, if yes, how this is realized

- thereby I follow the definition of Thomason (2007):

“..., I will set the stage by giving my definition of ‘contact-induced change’: a particular linguistic change is caused at least in part by language (or dialect) contact if it would have been less likely to occur outside a particular contact situation. This definition includes interference of all kinds – that is, changes in which forms or structures or both are transferred from one language to another – but also changes that distance one language or dialect from another (typically, maybe always, when the two speech forms are very closely related), changes other than borrowing that occur during a process of language death (specifically, attrition), and changes that are set off by an instance of interference but then proceed via internally-motivated processes. (Thomason 2007: 42)

“Deliberate changes can be found in all grammatical subsystems, from the phonology to the morphology to the syntax and the lexicon, including lexical semantics as well as the forms of

words. Examples are easiest to find, however, for phonological and lexical changes, and it is likely that these are the most frequent.” (Thomason 2007: 50)

+ definition of borrowing (Matras 2009: 146)

"the replication of a linguistic structure, of any kind, in a new, extended set of contexts, understood to be negotiated in a different 'language'"

- basis for borrowing is often the occasional integration of elements of L2 into the speech of bilingual speakers

+ motivation for borrowings (Matras 2009: 149f.)

- gaps in the structural inventory (mostly cultural loans)

- prestige of the dominating language which is donor language

- cognitive necessities of language processing – in the brain of bilingual speakers are not two clearly separated areas for each language, but these overlap so that he must always select between the subsets, according to the communicative needs and the norms in the communicative setting

- costs-benefit calculation

basic assumptions for borrowings (Matras 2009: 153)

- “(1) The degree of borrowing is related to the extent of exposure to the contact language.
- (2) The outcome of language contact is a product of the structural similarities and differences (congruence) among the languages concerned, and
- (3) Borrowability is conditioned by inherent semantic-pragmatic or structural properties of the affected categories.”

Thomason & Kaufmann (1988): borrowing scale (following Matras 2009: 156)

Casual contact	Category 1: content words
↓	Category 2: <b>function words</b> , minor phonological features, lexical semantic features
↓	Category 3: adpositions, derivational suffixes, phonemes
↓	Category 4: <b>word order</b> , distinctive features in phonology, inflectional morphology
Intense contact	Category 5: significant typological disruption, phonetic changes

→ for IS important: function words, word order changes, and intonational changes

- function words: abstract meaning, controlled by linguistic routines, little reflection on their meaning – very often borrowed: „utterance modifiers or discourse markers” (Matras 2009: 144)

“Studies published over the past two decades or so, [...], have established a widespread consensus that discourse markers occupy a position at the very top of the borrowability hierarchy. This holds true at least for the type of contact situations characterized by unidirectional bilingualism and diglossia, where the recipient language tends to be reserved for more personal, informal domains of interaction, and is often an oral and/or minority language.” (Matras 2009: 193)

discourse markers

- fillers, tags interjections, hesitation markers = kind of paralinguistic inventory
- discourse particles, interjections, and connectivity markers.
- frequently affected are the particles ‘yes’ and ‘no’, the conjunctions ‘because’, ‘and’, ‘or’, and ‘but’, fillers and tags, interjections, and occasionally focus particles such as ‘too’, ‘even’ or ‘at all’. (Matras 2009: 20)

(5) Aja (Kwa)

nyé m̄́ ń́sú yí fī pársèké, ní j̄́ tá, ñ̄́ m̄́ ń́sú yí fī ́, ...  
 1S say man FOC steal because thing pass head 1S say man FOC steal TP  
 Me, I said that the man has stolen it (the watch), because, the reason why I said that  
 the man has stolen, ... (Fiedler, f.n.)

- as discourse markers generally do not have a semantic content on its own and are not part of the proposition, they are difficult to identify with the right context → often incorrectly used, but easily borrowed (Matras 2009: 194)
- are more universally accepted, thus ‘pragmatically detachable’ from their source language (Matras 2009: 140)

→ Assumption: focus and topic markers, as well as focus-sensitive particles might be borrowed

Prince (2001)

- first clear reference to semanto-pragmatic level as here syntactic representations are associated with their meaning in discourse (Prince 2001: 2)

(6) Yiddish

**Dos** hot Leyb gezen Erike-n.  
 DEM.neut AUX Leonard.M.NOM see.PART Erica-F.ACC  
 It's Leonard who saw Erica. (Prince 2001: 4)

(7) Russian

**Eto** L'eon'id uv'id'el Er'iku.  
 DEM.neut Leonard.M.NOM see.PFV.M Erica- F.ACC

It's Leonard who saw Erica. (Prince 2001: 5)

Comparison of both sentences:

- simple declarative without subordination
- expletive NP in sentence-initial position – crucial point!
- expletive NP = neutral demonstrative
- translated as it-Cleft

→ clear case of borrowing – for a long time treated as syntactic borrowing, but Prince claims that it is rather the borrowing of a discourse function transferred from a Slavic language to Yiddish, where an already existing form was associated with that function

- before Yiddish came into contact with Slavic languages, no *do*-sentences were known, but similar sentences beginning with another expletive 'es' – i.e. no syntactic borrowing but exchange of expletive: neutral pronoun against demonstrative

→ same information structure connected with both structures:

- a. organization of proposition in *in-focus* and *out-of-focus*
- b. *out-of-focus* = open proposition (X saw Erika; X = Leonard)
- c. *out-of-focus* is known information whereby the identification of the variable itself is new information (Prince 2001: 8)

## 2. The linguistic area of the Lower Volta Basin

### 2.1 The Lower Volta Basin

- part of the Volta River Basin in West Africa which occupies the area around the river Volta and its neighbouring rivers
- six countries: Ghana and Burkina Faso share the major portion, others are: Mali, Togo, Benin and Côte d'Ivoire
- the Lower Volta Basin is situated at the downstream part of the Volta Basin, near Lake Volta (see language map of Ghana)
- concentration on the Volta region of Ghana east of Lake Volta and neighboring areas in Togo



Map No. 4186 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS  
February 2005

Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Cartographic Section

Map 1: Ghana



Map 2: Languages spoken in the Volta region (Ghana) (provided by project B1 of the SFB 632, on the basis of: ...)



## 2.2 Genealogical classification

- is an area of high multilingualism, where different languages of the New Kwa language

group are spoken:   Akan, Ewe  
                           Ghana-Togo-Mountain-Languages  
                           Guan-Languages

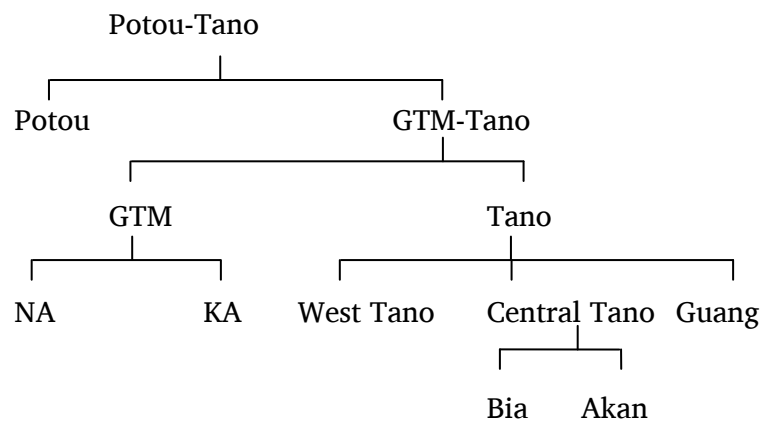
- further North:     Gur languages: Konkomba, Dagbani

- concentration on GTM languages and Ewe and Akan

- genetic classification of these Kwa languages still under debate, especially also with respect to the GTM languages:

(cf. classification in Williamson & Blench 2000)

new proposed classification (Kropp Dakubu 2008)



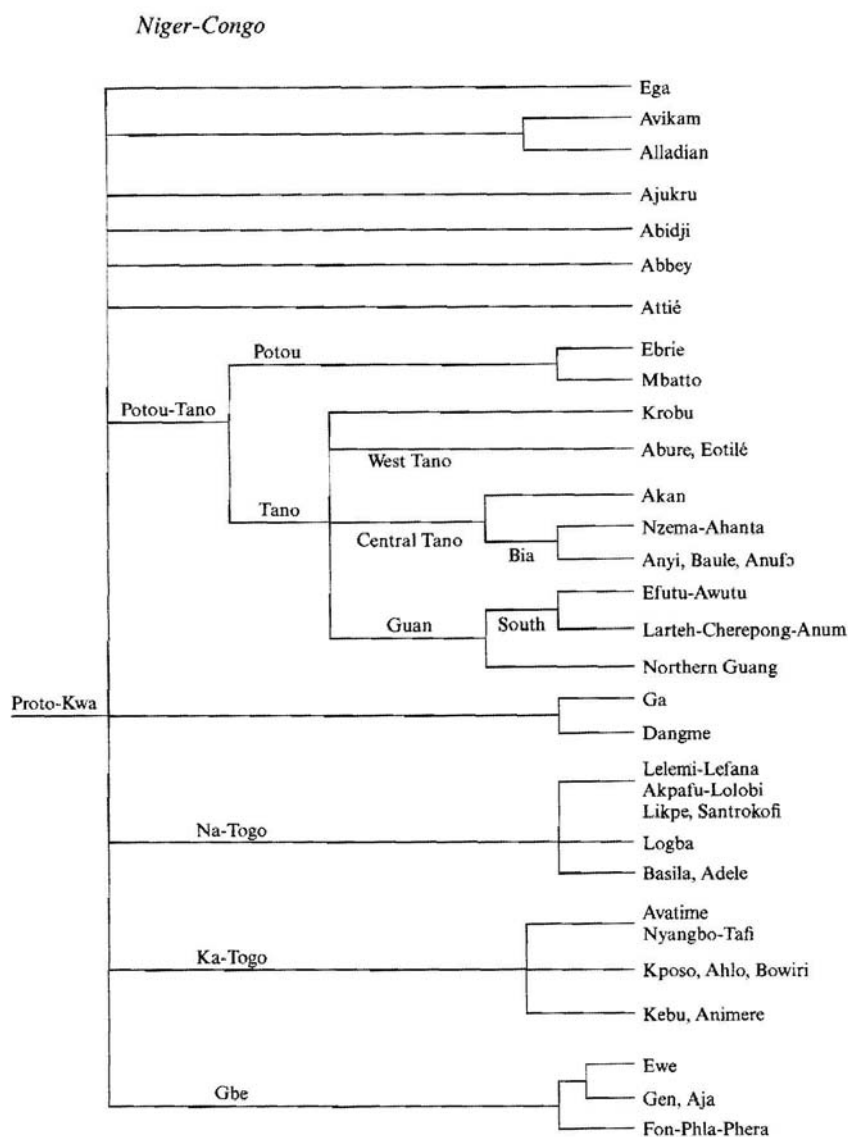


Fig. 2.10. Classification of Kwa languages.

(Source: Williamson and Blench 2000: 29)

→ Problem: all languages in the region are said to be genealogically close relatives so that the decision between borrowed or inherited material, or changes due to language-internal processes is rather difficult

## 2.3 Typological characteristics

(cf. Ameka 2007a)

Feature	Ewe	Akan	GTM languages
ATR harmony	-	+	+
Tonemes	two	two	(at least) three
Function of tone	mainly lexical	lexical and grammatical	lexical and grammatical
Morphological type	isolating with agglutinative features	agglutinative	agglutinative with some fusion
Marking type	Neither head nor dependent marking	Head marking in the clause	Dependant marking in the NP, head marking in the clause
Noun classes	noun prefixes without function	noun prefixes with little classificatory function	active noun class system with prefixes
Word order	SV/AVO	SV/AVO	SV/AVO
VP	Preverbal marker and grammatical constructions for the expression of TAM	Preverbal marker and grammatical constructions for the expression of TAM	Preverbal marker and grammatical constructions for the expression of TAM; Subject-crossreference at verb, depending on IS configuration

## 2.4 Sociolinguistic characterization and historical facts

- Ewe is, besides Akan, the dominant language in Volta region: Akan is the official language in the North of the region (starting from Jasikan), Ewe is used southwards (school, radio, church)

- GTM languages are only used locally and in private domain

- high degree of bilingualism between GTM and Ewe/Akan and English, but not different GTM languages among → already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, R. Plehn observed that situation and predicted that they would die out in near future (Plehn 1899, quoted in Heine 1968: 130)

+ unequal degree of knowledge in Ewe

– only 75 % of the speakers of Lelemi (the biggest GTM language) speak Ewe, whereas nearly all speakers of neighboring languages like Likpe speak it (Ameka 2007a: 120);

- more than 90% of the speakers of Southern languages (Logba and Nyangbo) speak Ewe
- stable bilingualism between Ewe and one of the GTM languages (Kropp Dakubu 1988)

Bilingualism among Logba speakers (Ring 1981):

Ewe - 92%      Akan - 28%      English - 56%      Avatime- 11% (Dorvlo 2008: 6)

+ History (after Kropp Dakubu 2006)

- problematic to clearly determine the history of the languages in that area, as the earliest documents only go back to the end of the 19th century – little is known until now
- there was always migration in the area, due to wars and other conflicts and search for land
- 15th century: Dagomba, Mamprusi and Nanumba states
- 17th century: Gonja empire,
- 17th-19th cent.: Akan-speaking states
- the incomers partly adopted already existing languages in the area, brought their own languages, mixed up with the people already living there
- “The general picture we get is that people have moved around a lot over considerable distances, but languages have moved only a little, and all were close to their present locations before the end of the 17th century.” (Kropp Dakubu 2006: 10)
- some languages formerly spoken in the area are now extinct
- the Ewe probably arrived in the area in the late 16th, early 17th century (move out from ɲotsie)
- contact between GTM languages and Ewe and Akan started in the 17th century, so for about 300 years

+ lots of lexical borrowings from these languages into GTM

- Ameka (2007a) also describes the borrowing of grammatical structures of Ewe into Likpe: plural marking, present progressive construction, complementation strategies

Logba:

“The relative clause is a postnominal clause introduced by a relativizer *xé*. This particle is used in the northern Ewe dialects surrounding Logba as relativizer and also as temporal and conditional introducer.” (Dorvlo 2008: 39)

→ What about IS structures?

### 3. Information-structural constructions in the languages of the Lower Volta Basin

#### 3.1 Presentation: Focus strategies

##### Ewe (Ameka 2010)

- (8) mama-e                    na    ga            Kofi le    asi-me  
 Grandmother-FOC give money PN LOC market-containing.region  
 GRANDMA gave money to Kofi in the market. (2010: 150)

Subject focus:    - FOC (*y*)é follows subject  
                          - no further changes

- (9) ame-ká-é                Kofí kpɔ le        afé-á                me  
 person-CQ-FOC PN see LOC house-DEF containing.region  
 WHO did Kofi see in the house? (2010: 152)

Object focus:    - FOC (*y*)é follows preposed object  
                          - no resumption of object  
                          - no further changes

- (10) a.    ɖeví-wó    ɖe    wó-fé-ná  
           child-P    PC.FOC    3P-play-HAB  
           Children DO play.
- c.    ɖe    me-ɖɛ    mé-nyé        ɖe    me-me-e    o  
           PC.FOC 1S-cook:3S NEG:3S-COP PC.FOC 1S-roast-3S NEG  
           I cooked it, it is not that I ROASTed it. (Ameka 2010: 160)

Predicate-centered focus:

- FOC *ɖe* has position before the predicate and after a topic

##### Akan (Ameka 2010)

- (11) a.    Mè-bà-à                há  
           1S-come-PST here  
           I came here.
- b.    Mé nà    mè-bá-à                há  
           1S FOC 1S-come-PST here  
           I came here. (2010: 149)

- c. Mé **nà** m̀è-bá-à há (nó)  
 1S FOC 1S-come-PST here (DEF)  
 I came here. (2010: 156)

Subject focus: - FOC *nà* follows subject  
 - tonal changes in the predicate  
 - optionally, out-of-focus clause can be finished with the marker for definiteness/background

- (12) a. hena **na** Kofi huu no wɔ fie hɔ  
 who FOC PN see:PST 3S.RES LOC house DEI  
 WHO did Kofi see in the house? (Saah 1988: 25 ex 32b, translation modified by Ameka, glosses modified, IF)
- b. Kwame **na** Kofi huu no wɔ fie hɔ  
 PN FOC PN see:PST 3S.RES LOC house DEI  
 KWAME Kofi met in the house. (Saah 1988: 26 ex 34b, translation modified by Ameka, glosses modified, IF) (2010: 152)

Object focus: - object in sentence-initial position  
 - FOC *nà* follows preposed object  
 - object is resumed, when [+ human]

### Lelemi (Fiedler & Schwarz 2009)

- (13) a. ònàabì ùmwì pé m̀-̀dì kùtú. ò-̀-dì  
 boy one only REL.IPFV-eat orange  
 Only ONE boy is eating an orange.
- b. ònàabì ñ-tì ùlòkùbì. ù-tì  
 boy REL.STAT-carry girl  
 A BOY was carrying a girl.
- c. lóólì ínyò ná-sà. lé-sà  
 lorry two REL.PFV-meet  
 TWO LORRIES COLLIDED.

Subject focus: - canonical word order  
 - dependent cross-reference marking at verb

- (14) kùtú (nà) ònàabì ómò òò-dì.  
 orange (FOC.O) boy DEM 3S.IPFV-eat  
 {The boy is eating a banana.} (No,) The boy is eating an ORANGE.

Object focus: - focus marker *nà* optionally follows preposed object  
 - independent cross-reference marking at verb

- (15) óòwò, búyū (nà) ú-yù nyà.  
 no, INF.steal (FOC.O) 3S.PFV-steal CL  
 {Did she buy the bananas?} No, she STOLE them.

Predicate-centered focus:

- focus marker *nà* optionally follows preposed infinitive
- independent cross-reference marking at verb

#### Likpe (Ameka 2007)

- (16) a. Pius ə-bó mfo  
 PN SCR-come here  
 Pius came here.  
 b. Pius li-bó mfo  
 PN SCR-come here  
 PIUS came here. (Ameka 2007: 125)

- (17) a. o-saní é-mé ə-tákə.n.ko u-sio é-mé  
 CL-man AGR-DET SCR-follow CL-woman AGR-DET  
 The man followed the woman.  
 b. o-saní é-mé li-tákə.n.ko u-sio é-mé  
 CL-man AGR-DET DEP:PST-follow CL-woman AGR-DET  
 THE MAN followed the woman.

Subject focus: - canonical word order  
 - dependent cross-reference marking at verb

Object focus (no example):

- object is preposed
- no focus marker (Ameka 2010: 124)
- ?independent cross-reference marking at verb

**Logba (Dorvlo 2008)**

- (18) a. Setɔ            ɔ́-lá            ebítsi    é  
           PN            SCR-beat    child    DET  
           Setɔ beat the child.
- b. Setɔ    **ká**    ɔ́-lá            ebítsi    é  
           PN    FOC SCR-beat    child    DET  
           SETɔ beat the child.

Subject focus:    - FOC *ka* follows the subject  
                       - no further marking, esp. no dependent cross-reference marking

- (19) a. N-dá            á    **ká**    ɔ́-nó  
           CL-liquor    DET    FOC    SCR-drink  
           {What has happened?} LIQUOR he drank.
- b. A-vúdago        é    **iyé**    ɔ́-nó  
           CL-leaf            DET    3S.IND    SCR-drink  
           LEAF he drank. (He smoked wee). (Dorvlo 2008: 226)

Object focus:    (a) - object is preposed  
                       - FOC *ka* follows the object (Alakpeti -Dialekt)  
                       (b) - object is preposed  
                       - independent pronoun follows (Tota-Dialekt)

- (20) a. Akpakpla    á                    ó-kú  
           CL-frog    DET                SCR-die  
           The frog died.
- b. Akpakpla    á    **kú**    ó-kú  
           CL-frog    DET    die    SCR-die  
           The frog DIED. (Dorvlo 2008: 234)

Predicate-centered focus:  
                       - in situ doubling of verb  
                       - doubled verb shows no sign of infinitive marking

**Avatime (van Putten 2014)**

- (21) kedɔné                            èé-ŋà                    li-wè-le  
           avatime.person:FOC    3S.PROG-eat    CL-day-DEF  
           The Avatime person will celebrate the festival. (van Putten 2014: 86)



Subject focus - canonical word order  
 - high tone focus marker  
 - final mid boundary tone  
 - obligatory subject agreement marking on verb (but no dependent marking)

(22) ki-b̀̀é                    bε-tá-kpe            kí            yé  
 CL-money:FOC    CL-INT-put.in    give    3S.OBJ  
 They put MONEY in for him.

Object focus - high tone focus marker  
 - no resumptive pronoun  
 - final mid boundary tone  
 - obligatory subject agreement marking on verb (but no dependent marking)

(23) ki-h́́                    bε-tá-hɔ = ɔ            àlò ...  
 INF-grind:FOC    1P-INT-grind = CL    or  
 Do they grind it or {pound it in a mortar?} (van Putten 2014: 98)

Predicate-centered focus: same structure as object focus with preposed nominalized verb

### Tuwuli (Harley 2005)

(24) Kofi ɛ-kpa            ye    ovoli    a  
 PN    DEP-give    3S    book    DEF  
 Kofi gave him the book. (Harley 2005: 391)

(25) **ade**    Kofi    ɔ-mɔ            ye    a  
 COP    PN            DEP-see    3S    ID  
 Kofi saw him.

Subject focus: - canonical word order  
 - dependent cross-reference marking in clauses with no TAM marking  
 - deictic copula *ade* frequently precedes a focused subject  
 - with copula, the identifiability marker *a* occurs at the end of the sentence

(26) (**ade**) ovoli    ɛ-kpa            yĩ    (a)?  
 COP    book    3S-give    1S    ID  
 He gave me a BOOK? (Harley 2005: 400)

- Object focus: - object preposed in cleft-like construction  
 - independent cross-reference marking  
 - deictic copula *ade* frequently precedes a focused object  
 - with copula, the identifiability marker *a* occurs at the end of the sentence

(27) (ade) ka-bo Kofi bo ye (a)  
 COP INF-beat PN beat 3S ID  
 Kofi beat him. (Harley 2005: 396)

- Predicate-centered focus: - same structure  
 - with nominalized verb preposed

### **Ikposo (Soubrier 2010)**

- focus either sentence-initially or in-situ  
 - focused element is followed by focus marker *là*

(28) ʃtá tà á-mī ná-kpē là  
 hare TOP 3:PFV-do\_eaxtly REP-walk FOC  
 The hare does nothing than walking. (Soubrier 2010: 11)  
 (le lièvre ne fait que se promener)

### **Siwu (Ford and Iddah 1987)**

(29) Kōfí ɖé ʒ-dūē  
 PN FOC 3S:DEP-kill:PFV  
 It was Kofi he killed. (Ford and Iddah 1987: 20)

- form of subject agreement same as in subordinate sentences (Ford and Iddah 1987)

## **3.2 Comparison: Focus**

- + between GTM and Ewe and Akan clear differences  
 - partly completely different structures  
 - in most GTM languages, there is a clear asymmetry in the marking of subject focus against the marking of object and SoA focus  
 - in some of the GTM languages, the cross-referencing on the verb differs in the subject focus condition (Lelemi, Likpe, Tuwuli), but not in Avatime, Logba, Ikposo and Siwu  
 - only one strategy with one exceptional focus marker is found in Ewe, Akan, Avatime, Logba (one dialect), Ikposo and Siwu (?)

- in some languages, the out-of-focus part is marked as dependent by a clause-final particle developed out of the definite article

		Akan	Ewe	Lelemi	Likpe	Logba	Avatime	Tuwuli
SF	FOC	nà	yé	--	--	ká	H-tone	(ade)
	Cross-reference	?no (tonal change)	no	dependent	dependent	<b>no special form</b>	<b>no special form</b>	dependent
	Sentence-final DEF	yes	no	no	no	no	yes	yes
NSF	FOC	nà	yé	nà	--	ká	H-tone	(ade)
	Cross-reference	no	no	absolut	?absolut	absolut	absolut	absolut
	Pronominal resumption	yes (HUM)	no	no	no	no	no	no
	Sentence-final DEF	yes optional	no	no	no	no	yes	yes
PC.FOC	Nominalization	yes	<b>bare verb</b>	yes	?	<b>bare verb</b>	yes	yes
	FOC	nà	yé / dé	nà	--	--	H-tone	
	Cross-reference	no	no	absolut	absolut	absolut	absolut	absolut

→ two possible kinds of borrowing

1. structurally:

a. Avatime, Logba and Ikposo seem to have neutralized a former distinction of cross-reference marking on the verb (if it ever existed) – by now, they dispose about only one set of cross-reference marking so that this kind of marking is not available – this could be traced back to structural influence of Ewe, which has no head marking at all

b. with that change, the subject / non-subject focus marking asymmetry got lost in favor of a more generalized focus marking strategy for all kinds of focus

c. for SoA focus, the preposed verb form in Logba is the bare verb, which is also the case in some Gbe varieties – Dörvlo (p.c.) claimed an influence from Gbe, but more likely is the assumption of language-internal reduction of the gender system

2. borrowing of function words:

Akan > Lelemi      Fokusmarkierer

(Fiedler & Schwarz 2009: “It is quite possible that this morpheme might be borrowed from Akan.”)

but: this is rather unlikely, as Akan as contact language is of no importance for Lelemi

→ comparison to related language outside the Volta Basin

### Anii (Bassila) (Fiedler, in press)

- spoken in Benin, some hundred kilometers away from the GTM region  
 - assumption that speakers of Anii moved out to their present area 200 years ago, so that they were not exposed for longtime to Ewe and Akan – in Benin, other contact languages are of importance (Tem, Yoruba)

+ focus marking in Anii resembles Lelemi, Likpe and Tuwuli insofar as the subject / non-subject dichotomy is also attested

- subject focus in perfective is done with canonical word order, the verb is followed by *ka* (cf. Logba), in imperfective a dependent TAM marker is used – but not this kind of cross-referencing as found in Lelemi, Likpe and Tuwuli

- non-subject focus is realized by preposing the focused element (complement of the verb, adjunct, or nominalized verb) – this element is marked by a gender-sensitive focus marker *na* for the singular of gender I and II (but seems to be outstanding within the series)

(30) àṅà yídá k̄ Sàdikí? ùsǎmpèrè dǎṅ (à) yídá k̄ n̄.  
 who call KA PN woman INDEF (3S) call KA 3S.OBJ  
 WHO called Sadiki? A WOMAN called him.

Subject focus: - canonical word order  
 - relative verb paradigm with postverbal *ka*

(31) {The woman has eaten black beans.}  
 (k'à jì ìdòno ná) àcá ìráṅā ní á jì.  
 (NEG.3S eat black NEG) bean red FOC 3S eat  
 (She did not eat the black ones), but she ate RED beans.

Object focus: - preposed object  
 - followed by gender-sensitive focus marker  
 - absolute verb paradigm

(32) {Did you wash the clothes?}  
 a. áái, ùkpál ná ní kpál.  
 no, CL.ironing FOC 1S iron  
 No, I have IRONED them.  
 b. áái, ì kpál p̄ ná.  
 no, 1S iron CL FOC  
 No, I have IRONED them.

- SoA focus:
- a. - nominalized verb in sentence-initial position
  - followed by nominal focus marker from gender 1 and 2
  - absolute verb paradigm
  - b. - canonical word order
  - sentence-final focus marker

1. gender	2. class prefix	3. agreement marker (subject)	4. agreement marker (object)	5. Identifica- tional particle
I	A-	a-	-nɪ	<b>na</b>
	BA-	ba-	-pɪ	nɪ / pɪ
II	U-	ʊ-	-ʊ	<b>na</b>
	I-	ɪ-	-ɪ	nɪ
III	N-	n-	-nɟɪ	nɟɪ
	A-	ɪ-	-ɪ	nɪ
IV	GI-	gɪ-	-jɪ	jɪ
	I-	ɪ-	-ɪ	nɪ
V	GU-	gʊ-	-kʊ	kʊ
	A-	ɪ-	-ɪ	nɪ
VI	GA-	ga-	-jɪ	jɪ
	BU-	bʊ-	-bʊ	bʊ
VII	BU-	bʊ-	-bʊ	bʊ
	A-	ɪ-	-ɪ	nɪ

→ as the contact with Akan in Lelemi is rather marginal and the same focus marker is attested in another GTM language with no contact to Akan, the hypotheses of borrowing is rather unlikely

→ furthermore, the focus marker in Anii is one out of a series of gender-sensitive focus markers whereby the marker for gender 1 (and 2) seems to be on the way of generalization – a similar scenario could also be assumed for Lelemi

→ two other GTM languages seem to dispose about (or have disposed about) gender-sensitive focus markers: one dialect of Logba, and Avatime

- in Avatime, the identificational marker is also gender-sensitive (van Putten, p.c.), but seems to be reduced to the high tone - whether or not due to contact is unclear

### 3.3 Presentation: Topic

#### Ewe (Ameka 2010)

- (33) le nyatefé me lá, dzóqágbe-é nye ya me-vá  
 LOC truth in TOP Monday-FOC 1S as.for 1S-come  
 In truth, MONDAY I (in contrast to some others) came.  
 lá - background marking  
 é - focus  
 ya - contrastive topic

- (34) Émegbé lá, mía-fo nu le e-ńú-a?  
 afterwards TOP 1P-strike mouth LOC 3S-side-Q  
 Afterwards, shall we talk about it? (Ameka 2010: 143)

#### Akan (Ameka 2010)

- (35) kan no wɔ-twe manso, afei wɔa-yɛ biako  
 formerly TOP 3P-pull matter now 3P-do one  
 Formerly they were at variance, now they agree.  
 (Christaller [1875] 1964:150 §250) in Ameka 2010: 143)

- background marking device *no* (und *yi*)

#### Lelemi (Fiedler & Schwarz 2009)

- no topic marking known

#### Likpe (Ameka 2007)

- (36) kasé mi-nɔ nyā ní bǎá bó ba-kpɛle lá, ...  
 how 1S-hear 3S COP QUOT 1P CL-likpe TOP  
 How I heard it is that we the Likpe people ... (Ameka 2007:140)

- (37) nya m.fo tsyá-a mo-fo bó-te a-ka-té  
 CNJ here also-TOP 1S-can CL-know IPFV-give

lá onanto tíki kú sikúu éto əsúə né  
 LOC God word COM school POSS side EMPH

And here too, (what) I know and can tell about religion and the school. (Ameka 2010: 171)

- topic marking by means of lengthening the final vowel or by means of the Ewe particle *lá*  
 - contrastive topic indicated by additive particle *tsyá* from non-standard-Ewe

**Logba (Dorvlo 2008)**

- (38) Afúta á mani é  
 CL-cloth DET 1S-buy 3S.OBJ  
 The cloth, I bought it. (Dorvlo 2008: 224)

- no morphological topic marking

**Avatime (van Putten 2014)**

- (39) wɔ tsyɛ á-dei-lá wèé-ta wiyawiya te  
 2S ADD CL-corn-DEF:FOC 2S.PROG-chew ID like.that  
 You too, you are chewing CORN like that.

- (40) ɔ-dzɛ ye fóto-à be-zè ba pɔ a  
 CL-woman CL photo-DEF.CL CL-receive CL COMP Q  
 The woman's photos, have they collected them all?

- contrastive topic indicated by additive particle *tsyɛ* from non-standard-Ewe

- left-dislocated topics not further marked

- other contrastive particles available, among them *kɔ* (van Putten 2014: 174-184)

**Tuwuli (Harley 2005)**

- (41) Kofi kɔ ɛ-kpa yĩ ovoli  
 PN TOP 3S-give 1S book  
 As for Kofi, he gave me a book. (Harley 2005: 385)

- topic marker *kɔ*

- independent cross-reference marking

**Ikposo (Soubrier 2010)**

- (42) àtàmýú íná mwā ɔ-ká-défù ká mà nú ázà-ě lì  
 3P.POSS mother TOP 3S-PROG-disturb ? 3P LOC farm-DEF in  
 Their mother, she disturbed them at the farm. (Soubrier 2010: 7)

- topic marker *mwa*

- topic marker *la* borrowed from Ewe also used (in same contexts, Soubrier 2010: 1)

**3.4 Comparison: Topic**

+ topic strategies found are mostly left-dislocation constructions found crosslinguistically very often

- but here, lexical material in form of function words is borrowed:

topic marker *lá* in Likpe and Ikposo from Ewe  
 additive focus particle *tsyá* in Likpe and Avatime from Ewe

#### 4. Conclusion

- + strategies of marking IS categories were rather seldom borrowed from the dominant languages Ewe and Akan – in most cases, cross-linguistically well-known strategies were exploited
  - + for focus, focus fronting for non-subject focus was used by all languages – differences wrt. the form of the focus marker
  - neutralization of a possibly existing dichotomy between subject and non-subject focus observable which goes hand in hand with a reduction of the cross-reference marking – as this does not exist in Ewe, this might be due to contact but also to language-internal developments
  - a possible borrowing of the focus marker from Akan is rather unlikely, because a closely related language spoken outside the area also shows that marker
  - + as for topic, left-dislocation was the strategy found in nearly all languages, often accompanied by morphological marking
  - the topic marker in two languages was clearly borrowed from Ewe even though the languages had a topic marker on their own
  - and also the additive particle used to mark contrastive topics was a borrowing from Ewe – whether here only the particle or the whole construction was borrowed as this marking is also known from Gbe is still unclear
- + Why do GTM languages more easily borrow the topic marker, but do not borrow focus marking strategies from Ewe?
- the identification of a topic is crucial for the organization of the discourse whereas the marking of focus is in many languages optional and speaker-dependent
  - topics are referential entities, and the topic marker is identical to the definite marker in Ewe
- “That the marking of definite reference is sensitive to language contact has been established in a number of studies on contact situations in various parts of the world.” (Heine & Kuteva 2007: 60)
- focus marking in GTM was strongly related to specific language properties, as the head marking property and active nominal gender systems (wrt. both features, GTM languages are rather conservative, cf. Dimmendaal 2001: 386) – thus structural conditions disturb the integration of borrowed material



## Abbreviations

ACC	Accusative	NEG	Negative
ADD	Additive particle	NOM	Nominative
AGR	Agreement	OBJ	(Direct) object
AUX	Auxiliary	P	Plural
CL	Class(ifier)	PART	Participle
CNJ	Conjunction	PFV	Perfective
COMP	Complementizer	PN	Proper name
COP	Copula(itive)	POSS	Possessive
DEF	Definite	PROG	Progressive
DEI	Deictic	PRS	Present
DEM	Demonstrative	PST	Past
DET	Determiner	Q	Question
EMPH	Emphatic particle	REL	Relative (paradigm)
EXCL	Exclamation	RES	Resumptive
FOC	Focus	S	Singular
FUT	Future	SBJ	Subject
HAB	Habitual	SCR	Subject cross reference
ID	Ideophone	STAT	Stative
INF	Infinitive	TOP	Topic
INT	Intensive	TP	Terminal particle
IPFV	Imperfective	VN	Verbal noun
LOC	Locative		

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