



INFORMATION PACKAGING IN DAGBANI

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DEDICATION

In ever-loving memory of my beloved late brother: Benjamin Bonayo Issah,

He passed away in March 2005, when the entire family was waiting to celebrate his recovery from illness.

Dear Benjamin, you had always fuelled my academic ambitions, but did not live long to see me come this far. I would have really loved to celebrate this victory with “A DOO” as we affectionately called each other, but God decided otherwise. May you find rest in the bosom of the Lord.

And to: Jemima Buntugu whose presence in my life as of the time I wrote this thesis gave me different perspective of life.

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List of abbreviations

1sg=first person singular.

2sg=second person singular.

2plu=second person plural.

3sg=third person singular.

A=answer.

Adjec=adjective.

Adjun=adjunct.

Conj=conjunction.

Cop=copula.

Def=definite.

DP=determiner phrase.

Emph=emphatic.

Foc=focus.

Imperf=imperfective.

Inten=intensifier.

IS=information structure.

Loc=locative.

Neg=negative morpheme.

Perf=perfective.

Plu=plural.

Q=question.

Quan=quantifier.

Rel=relative word.

Sg=singular.

TD=time depth marker.

VP=verb phrase

ABSTRACT

This research investigates information structuring in Dagbani, a Gur language spoken in Ghana. It is claimed that the particles *ka*, *n* and *la* are very central in information packaging in Dagbani. I claim that whilst the post verbal particle *la*, marks background on the linguistic material that precedes it and new information on what follows it (where the background does not have to be presupposed and the new information does not have to be exhaustive), *ka* and *n* encode identificational focus.

Following Minimalist assumptions about movement: Chomsky (1995), Radford (1997), and Sabel (2000), I argue that a constituent that is marked with identificational focus undergoes syntactic movement to the Specifier of Foc in order to check a feature associated with the head. This movement creates the needed Spec-head configuration, which is an essential syntactic requirement for the checking of features associated with the head. It is argued that the encoding of identificational focus is a morphosyntactic property in Dagbani. It is further assumed that the feature specification on the Dagbani lexicon must be strong which is what invariably triggers the movement of the focused constituents to Spec Foc. I also argue in favour of analysing Dagbani *ex-situ* focus constructions as monoclausals rather than biclausal or clefts as in Fiedler, and Schwarz, (2005) and Fusheini (2006).

It is also argued that though *ka* and *n* encode identificational/exhaustive focus, the two particles have some differences. For instance; it is observed that *n* occurs in the contexts of the so-called “all new information” in the contexts of wh-questions, whilst *ka* does not. Also whilst *n* only attracts the closest DP within the clausal structure, *ka* can be used in successive cyclic movement. Thus, *n* is not really a Foc head in Dagbani, but to get an exhaustive reading on the subject, the subject must always undergo movement to the *n* head before moving to Spec FocP. The head is hypothesized to be FinP. I also argue that the structural asymmetry that has been observed of focused constituents in Dagbani, might not be as “strict” an asymmetry as researchers have noticed, since it is possible for *ka* (traditionally assumed mark focus on adjuncts and non-subject constituents) to focus subject constituents of embedded clauses.

It will be argued that the post verbal particle *la* marks presentational focus. It will further be argued that what precedes *la* gives background information and what follows it is new information. However, the background does not have to be presupposed and the new information does not also have to be exhaustive. The argument is made that, this is different from the [+Foc] feature which partitions the sentence into a presupposed part and an exhaustively focused part.

Key words: Dagbani, identificational focus, new information focus, successive cyclic, interpretable features, local movement.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Language and its Speakers

Dagbani is a Gur language spoken by the Dagombas in the Northern part of Ghana. This language belongs to the Niger-Congo language family. Native speakers of Dagbani are called Dagbamba (plural) or Dagbana (singular). These have been modified to Dagombas and Dagomba respectively. The geographical area within which Dagbani is spoken is called Dagboŋ. Dagbani has been classified as belonging to the Moore Gurma sub-group of African languages: Bendor-Samuel (1971), Greenberg (1963), and Wilson (1970a). Though Dagbani has a continuum of dialects, two major dialects stand out: Toonsili (the Western dialect) and Nayali (the Eastern dialect). Whilst the former is spoken in and around Tamale, the political capital of the Northern Region, the latter is spoken in and around Yendi, the seat of the traditional head of Dagboŋ. The data used for analysis in this thesis is based on the (Western dialect) Toonsili dialect. Though Dagbani is a tonal language, this work, following the orthographic conventions of Dagbani, does not mark tone.

1.1.1. Basic Properties of Dagbani

Dagbani is basically an SVO language, also called agent verb object in linguistic typology, based on the sentence structure of majority of its sentence types.

- (1) a. Abu da-Ø buku
 Abu buy-perf book
 “Abu (has) bought a book”.
- b. *buku Abu da-Ø.
 book Abu buy-perf.
- c. *da-Ø buku Abu
 buy-perf book Abu.

It is seen in the data in (1) that whilst the sentence in (1a) is grammatical, those of (1b) and (1c) are ungrammatical. The ungrammaticality of (1b) and (1c) is occasioned by the change in word order in which a strict SVO word order that is required of the basic clause structure of Dagbani is violated.

Dagbani also displays some form of agreement. This is especially common between nouns and the determiners they co-occur with. This agreement distinction is made between animacy and inanimacy.

- (2) a. loori shɛli
car certain
“a certain car”
- b. bia so
child certain
“a certain child”
- c. *bia shɛli
child certain

It is seen in the data in (2a-2c) that Dagbani makes a distinction in the selection of determiners; a phenomenon which is determined by the animacy or inanimacy of the NP that precedes it. The determiner “a certain” for instance has two different variants and the choice between the two depends on whether the NP it has as its complement is an animate or inanimate nominal word. The form in (3c) is unacceptable in the language because an inanimate determiner is combined with an animate nominal word. This same pattern extends to wh-phrases as in (3).

- (3) a. buku dini
book which
“Which book?”
- b. bia ηuni¹
child which
“Which child?”

¹ The word *ηuni* can also mean “who” in certain contexts of the language. That is to say that it is ambiguous in the language.

c. *bia dini

child which

“which child?”

d. *buku ηuni

book which

“which book?”

In the data in (3a-3d) we see that the Dagbani wh-phrase “which” also has two different morphological realisations depending on whether the chosen complement of that wh-phrase is an animate or inanimate nominal word. The ungrammaticality of (3c) and (3d) is caused by the “mismatch” between the NP constituents and wh-phrases that are paired with them. The wh-phrase *ηuni* is only compatible with animate NP constituents whilst *dini* is compatible with only inanimate constituents.

The language also has a “rich” aspectual system and also displays a rich pattern of serial verb constructions. There is however no agreement between nouns and verbs in terms of number, gender or person.

The verbal morphology of Dagbani displays different patterns, by the use of specific suffixes which allow transitivity of the verb or otherwise. The perfective aspect, for instance, comes in two different forms. The form in (4a) is same as the neutral form of the verb. It is not suffixed and so I refer to it as “zero morpheme” form of the verb. I mark this morphologically with: \emptyset . It requires an obligatory NP complement or an adjunct. Where it is used without NP complement or adjunct, the resulting structure will be ungrammatical or at its best incomplete as in (4b). The other form of the perfective aspect in Dagbani is suffixed with *-ya* as in (4c). This form of the perfective aspect does not co-occur with NP complements as in (4d) but does occur with adjuncts as in (4e)

(4) a. Abu da- \emptyset buku maa.

Abu buy-perf book def

“Abu bought the book”.

- b.* Abu da- Ø
 Abu buy-perf
 “Abu bought”
- c. Abu da-ya
 Abu buy-perf
 “Abu bought”.
- d. *Abu da-ya bua.
 Abu buy-perf goat
 “Abu bought a goat”.
- e. Abu da-ya pam
 Abu buy-perf adjun.
 “Abu bought a lot”.

The imperfective aspect also has two different morphological shapes as shown in (5). One form of the imperfective requires transitivity as in (5a) and so is never used intransitively as in (5b). It has *di* or its variant *ri* which occurs intervocalically.

- (5) a. Abu da-ri buku-nima pam.
 Abu buy-imperf book-plu adjun
 “Abu buys books a lot”.
- b.*Abu da-ri
 Abu buy-imperf
 “Abu buys”.

The other form of the imperfective aspect has the verb always suffixed with *da* or its allomorph of *ra* which occurs in intervocalic positions. This is shown in (6a) and (6b). The data in (6a) shows that it is used only intransitively. The data in (6b) shows that using it

transitively results in ungrammaticality. The ungrammaticality of sentence (6c) also shows that it is impossible for this form of the imperfective aspect to co-occur with adjuncts without affecting grammaticality.

- (6)
- a. bi-hi maa di-ra
 child-plu def eat-imperf
 “The children are eating”.
- b. *bi-hi maa di-ra bindirigu
 child-plu def eat-imperf food
 “The children are eating food”.
- c. *O chim-da pam
 3sg fry-imperf adjun.
 ”S/he is frying a lot”.

The table in (7) below gives a summary of the various suffixes of the Dagbani verb phrase and the syntactic requirement of each of the identified suffixes.

(7)

Suffix	-syntactic requirement of the suffix.
-∅	-used transitively and demands obligatory NP object or adjunct. Perfective
-ya	-cannot co-occur with NP objects, but can co-occur with an adjunct. Perfective
-ri/ di	-needs an obligatory NP object and can co-occur with an adjunct. Imperfective.
-ra/da	-cannot co- occur with NP object and also cannot occur with adjuncts. Imperfective.

1.1.2. Information Particles in Dagbani

Dagbani makes use of particles which play various information structural functions in the language. The presence of these particles is not unique to Dagbani since it is a common feature of most Gur languages: Dakubu (1995:67-69) for Gurune, Cahill (1999:20-22) for Konni, Schaefer & Schaefer (2004:6-7) for the Safaliba language and Naden (1988:30-37) for Mampruli. Though several such particles exist in the language, this current research is concerned with three of them *ka*, *n*² and *la*. These particles have received some amount of attention from Dagbani researchers although the role of these particles in the information structure of the language continues to be an issue of controversy. Notably in controversy is the particle *la* whose function in the language really continues to be an issue of debate. Though this particle has received some attention from several linguists who are into the research of the Dagbani language, its function in the sentence structure of the language continues to be elusive. The challenge that these particles pose to grammarians is not unique considering the fact that, cross linguistically, the analyses of particles have been acknowledged to be very challenging to grammarians. These particles have various informational functions in the language. However, it continues to be an issue of challenge for most speakers in articulating the differences between these minimal pairs (that is sentences with and without these particles) as shown below:

- (8). a. Abu da-Ø loori
Abu buy-perf car.
“Abu (has) bought a car”
- b. Abu da-Ø la loori
Abu buy-perf LA car.
“Abu (has) bought a car”

² The particle *n* assimilates to the place of articulation of the following segment. Based on this observation, it is seen as a proclitic; that is a clitic that precedes the word to which it is phonologically joined. Until an alternative analysis is given *la* in this thesis, I shall gloss it as LA except otherwise, referring to previous works when I shall gloss as done in those works. The morphemes *ka* and *n/m* are also being glossed as KA and N/M until they are analysed in this work. Where they are cited from previous works, they are glossed as done in those works.

It will later be argued in this thesis that whilst the sentences with *la* encode presentational focus, those sentences without *la*, have neutral readings. This issue shall be given detailed attention in chapter three of this thesis.

Sentences such as (9a) and (9b) below also have difference. Speakers of Dagbani are able to articulate the difference between these two sentences; whilst (9a) is articulated with a neutral reading, (9b) has an identificational (exhaustive) reading.

- (9) a. Abu bo-ri loori
 Abu want-imperf car
 “Abu wants a car”.
- b. loori ka Abu bo-ra.
 Loori KA Abu want-imperf
 “It is a car that Abu wants”

Readers should note the change in transitivity marking on the imperfective form of the verb when it undergoes movement as in (9a) and (9b). That is when the object is fronted, the suffix *ri* is realised as *ra*. In Dagbani, all verbs that occur in clause final positions are morphologically marked with the “intransitive” suffix in Dagbani. *ra* is the imperfective intransitive suffix in Dagbani. Olawsky (1999:43) discusses this morphological restriction of the verb system. Issah (2007) also discusses the various morphological forms of the Dagbani verb. For details, see references cited herein. This issue however seems unclear for this current research and future investigations may shed more light on this. Another information structural particle that is used in Dagbani is *n* as shown in (10a) and (10b) below:

- (10) a. Abu bo-ri bua maa
 Abu want-imperf goat def
 “Abu wants the goat”.
- b. Abu m bo-ri bua maa.
 Abu M want-imperf goat def.
 “It is Abu who wants the goat”.

It will be hypothesized that the particle *n* also encodes identificational (exhaustive) focus. As will later be argued in this thesis, it will be shown that when *n* occurs within the sentence structure of Dagbani, then the subject within that sentence is exhaustively identified. It will however be argued later in this work that though *n* just like *ka* encodes identificational focus, there are instances when *n* occurs in the context of all new information in the context of wh-questions. The argument would then be made that in an “out-of the blue” context, *n* encodes identificational focus, whilst in “at-issue” context, *n* encodes all new information. It is in particular, very challenging to figure out the context in which it is appropriate or otherwise to have the particle *la*, as a post verbal particle in the sentence structure of Dagbani.

Interesting is the observation that each of these mentioned information particles have phonologically similar morphemes in Dagbani, though with different syntactic requirements. For instance, *ka*, has other phonologically similar morphemes: *ka* which is a linker in discourse meaning “and”. As mentioned it only has this function in discourse. Fiedler and Schwarz (2004) observe this and hypothesise that there is parallelism between *ex-situ* non-subject focus constructions and narrative clauses in Dagbani.

(11) a. *ka Abu daa ku-Ø bia maa.*

conj Abu TD kill-perf child def

“And Abu killed the child (some time ago)”.

This usage presupposes that the sentence in (11a) is linking up with something already said in the discourse. It cannot function as a linking word between words:

b. * *Abu ka Amina.* (Intended: Abu and Amina).

There is also a phonologically similar morpheme *ka* which is a verb and means: “not have” as in (12).

a. *Ama ka yili*

Ama have-NEG house

“Ama does not have a house”

b. *Abu ka buku*

Abu has-NEG book

“Abu does not have a book”.

The morpheme *la* also has a phonologically similar morpheme in Dagbani, which occurs as a post nominal particle and functions as a definite particle, as in (12a-12b).

- (12)
- a. *bia la*
child def
“The child”.
- b. *duu la*
room def
“The room”.
- c. *loori maa*
car def
“The car”.
- d. *namda maa*
sandal def
“The sandal”.

It is seen from the data in (12a-12d) that Dagbani has two different morphemes that codify definiteness: *maa* and *la*. Wilson (1972) proposes that there is a pragmatic difference in the choice between the two particles though they both encode definiteness. He argues that whilst *maa* marks definiteness in the context in which the head noun (the noun that precedes it) has already been mentioned or is known by the listener to the context, its pragmatic variant, *la* is used when there is reference to something specific that has not yet been mentioned in the discourse or context under consideration. Olawsky (1999:44) doubts this pragmatic difference between the two particles as argued by Wilson (1972) and posits that “<la>, is described as a “soft” definite article by some, whereas <maa> is interpreted as “strong”, thereby giving more emphasis to the noun”. This research does not pursue the issue further as to the pragmatic difference in use between the two definite particles in Dagbani. This is because this research is concerned with the post verbal *la* and not the post nominal

determiner, *la*. An interesting syntactic behaviour of the post verbal particle *la* particle in Dagbani is the fact that it is never used intransitively. Whenever this particle is used after a verb, the grammatical requirement is that there should be an NP object or an adjunct as in (13a) and (13b). This transitivity requirement of the *la* particle will be given detailed attention in chapter three of this research work.

- (13) a. *Abu da-Ø la
 Abu buy-perf LA
- b. *Abu di-ri la.
 Abu eat-imperf LA
- c. Abu di-ri la bindirigu
 Abu eat-imperf LA food
 “Abu is eating food”.
- d. Abu di-ri la pumpono.
 Abu eat-imperf LA adjun
 “Abu is eating now”.

The sentences in (13a) and (13b) are ungrammatical or at the best incomplete. The ungrammaticality or better put “incompleteness” of these sentences has been caused by the fact that the *la* particle has been used intransitively in those sentences. Their counterparts in (13c) and (13d) are however, grammatical because they meet the syntactic requirements of the *la* particle. It should however be noted that the ungrammaticality of those sentences in (13a) and (13b) is not the “fault” of the verbs *da* and *di* since it is possible for those verbs to be used intransitively if the appropriate particle is chosen as in (14).

- (14) a. Abu di-Ø mi.
 Abu eat-perf MI
 “Abu has eaten”

- b. *Abu di-Ø mi bindirigu.
Abu eat-perf MI food.
- c. Abu kpe-ri mi
Abu enter-imperf MI
“Abu is entering”
- d. *Abu kpe-ri mi duu.
Abu enter-imperf MI room.
- e. *Ama di-ya mi
Ama eat-perf MI.

The sentences in (14a) and (14c) are accepted in Dagbani as grammatical sentences. However those of (14b) and (14d) are ungrammatical. Their ungrammaticality has been caused by the fact that the syntax of those sentences does not meet the intransitivity requirement of the *mi* particle. The ungrammaticality of sentence (14e) also indicates that *mi* is syntactically incompatible with the perfective aspectual marker *ya*.

Perhaps the transitivity requirement of this particle is what has convinced most researchers to argue that that *la* is an object or adjunct focus marker in *in-situ*. However, this current research has some scepticism as to validity of the claim that *la* focuses NP objects and adjuncts within the sentence structure of Dagbani. Consider for instance the data as in (15) below

- (15). **Q.** a. Bo ka Abu sa niŋ-Ø
what foc Abu TD do-perf
“What did Abu do (yesterday)?”
- A:** b. O sa da-Ø la buku
3sg TD buy-perf LA book.
“He bought a book yesterday”.

c. #O sa da-Ø buku

3sg TD buy-perf book.

“He bought a book yesterday”.

It is seen that in the context of (15) above, the focus (new information) is not provided by only the object, but also the verb. That notwithstanding, *la* becomes obligatory in the sentence that is regarded as a contextually appropriate answer in that context, that is (15b). The sentence structure of (15c) is however considered contextually infelicitous. This observation poses a threat to previous claims that *la* focuses the NP object of a sentence on which it occurs. An alternative analysis of *la* in the sentence structure of Dagbani shall get detailed attention in chapter three.

In this thesis, the focus is on the particles which have information structural functions. The particle *mi*, however does not receive attention from this current thesis. It will thus give an account of the functions of *ka*, *n* and *la* in information structuring in Dagbani. The role (s) each of these particles (have) has in the information structure of the language will be given detailed investigation in this research.

1.1.3. Literature Review on Information Structure

The interaction between sentence forms and information structure continues to be an interesting aspect of linguistic research. This has accordingly drawn the attention of linguists in this area of research to the pragmatic function of focus and topic which has been seen as essential components of what has been called “information packaging” or what other scholars have called “communicative dynamism”. The concepts of topic and focus have been linked with the function of highlighting certain aspects of a structure (sentence), aimed at showing that the part of the sentence that is highlighted communicates something of semantic value assumed to be more “essential” than the rest of the sentence. According to Comrie (1989:63-64), whilst focus is “the essential piece of new information that is carried by a sentence” topic is “what the sentence is about” and is invariably contrasted with comment, which is seen as “the remainder of the sentence”. The area of information structure has in recent years received detailed attention from linguists especially syntacticians. It however, continues to be a controversial area of research in the field of linguistics. Just to mention but a few of the works that have concerned themselves with investigation into information structure are: Lambrecht (1994), Aboh (2004), Rizzi (1997), Kiss (1998) and Vallduví (1993).

According to Lambrecht (1994:5) information structure is defined as:

The component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs are paired with lexicogrammatical structures in accordance with mental states of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts.

He argues that information structure is an essential component of the grammar of every language especially at the sentence level. He further argues that information structure is very central in determining the formal structure that a given sentence should have. Information structure therefore concerns itself with the interaction between sentence form and their felicitous contexts of usage. The assumption then is that sentence form of any language is to a large extent “controlled” by the information structure of that language. Accordingly, the question as to why there are several forms of sentences in a given language is addressed by the information structure of that language. According to him, the sentence structure of a language has information structural effects; informational appropriateness has an effect on the sentence form of languages. I strongly presume based on empirical evidence that will be laid out, that this argument is valid for Dagbani, since the language seems to be very sensitive to information structure, resulting in the production of different sentence structures for different given discourse contexts.

In Lambrecht’s approach to the study of information structure, he postulates that by virtue of the fact that sentence structures in languages are invariably governed by the information packaging systems, it is possible to have two sentences in a language which will have same semantics but differ dramatically in the realm of pragmatics. According to him, information structure constitutes an essential component of grammar in light of semantics, morphosyntax, and prosodic features. He quickly points out that there is a language-specific manifestation of the interaction of these various identified components assumed to be affected by information structure of each language. This claim of Lambrecht is assumed to be in the spirit of generative-based approach to information structure. Lambrecht however argues that the definition of focus as “new information” is too simple an approach to the concept and so must be revisited. He however admits that, though it is hard to conclude that the information structure of a language plays a role in its sentence structure, it is equally misleading for one to deny the fact that information structure and sentence structure do not have any correlation. He then postulates that information structure as a component of grammar has an “interpretive

mechanism” which is responsible for checking fully formed syntactic structures and alternatively determines their appropriateness within given discourse contexts. This claim is very valid for Dagbani as it will later be shown in this research, as the observation seems that Dagbani is very sensitive to information structure which to a large extent determines the sentence structure of the language. On the pragmatic issue of topic, Lambrecht (1994) sees topic as contributing to text cohesion rather than grammaticality per se. In his framework of topic, he argues against the traditional view of always associating topic with sentence-initial constituents. His view then is that a sentence initial constituent may either be topic or focus and does not necessarily have to be topic as viewed by many scholars particularly the Prague School Research. In defining topic Lambrecht (1994:118) bases his definition on traditional grammar and postulates that: “the topic of a sentence is the thing which the proposition expressed by the subject is “ABOUT”. He however, points out that, though his definition of topic is derived from the traditional view of “subject”, the two are distinct in his framework. He for instance, concludes based on English that, topics are not always grammatical subjects and grammatical subjects too do not always have to be topics. It is the view of Lambrecht that it is possible to have a non-subject as topic in a topicalization construction, and also possible to have subjects acting as non-topics in accent-initial sentences as in:

(16) My CAR broke down.

While this work agrees with Lambrecht with respect to the importance of information structure in languages, it will also take a more directly syntactic approach when analysing how information structure is expressed in Dagbani.

Kiss (1998) is also very fundamental when discussing literature on information studies. In her studies of focus, Kiss makes a distinction between two types of focus structures. She claims the two different types of focus structures have different syntactic and semantic properties though this distinction has often been taken for granted. She thus distinguishes between what she calls identificational focus and information focus. According to Kiss (1998), whilst the former on syntactic grounds is always located in specifier position of a functional projection (that is, involves syntactic movement), the latter type of focus does not involve syntactic movement. She further argues that the specifier position in which the identificational (contrastive) focus is located is a functional projection which according to her is the Focus phrase. On semantic grounds, she further postulates that, whilst identificational focus is an abstract operator that expresses exhaustive identification, information (presentational) focus

lacks such a semantic feature as it merely presents new information. On the function of identificational focus, Kiss (1998:245) postulates that:

An identificational focus represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold, it is identified as the exhaustive subset of this set for which the predicate actually holds.

Based on data from English and Hungarian, Kiss (1998) uses five tests which she claims can be used to identify what she calls identificational focus. The tests she argues could be used to distinguish identificational focus from information focus are: co-ordination and entailment test, interpretation of negation, distributional restriction of identificational focus, the claim that identificational focus occupies a scope position, and the claim that identificational focus is manifested in a functional projection. Four of these tests will later be applied to Dagbani data (in chapter two) of this thesis to see the extent to which these claims are consistent with the Dagbani language. Whilst according to Kiss (1998), identificational focus in English is a cleft construction, in Hungarian; it is located in preverbal position. It will be posited for the case of Dagbani, that though they are translated as clefts in English, identificational focus really is a monoclausal sentence headed by a focus projection, which is located in the Spec Foc. This claim will be borne out of application of tests available in the literature of information packaging on Dagbani data. The focus phrase in Dagbani as it will be argued is also located in left periphery position.

Kiss further posits that the feature specification of identificational focus displays some parametric variation. This parametric variation, she postulates, could be specified for the feature values: [+exhaustive] or both [+exhaustive, +contrastive]. The feature specification as argued by Kiss could also be strong or weak; a parameter that determines whether there is focus movement in a language or optional movement. When the feature is strong, there is an obligatory movement, whilst weak feature specifications, results in an optional focus movement. For the case of Dagbani, it will be argued that there is a strong feature specification in the lexicon based on the observation that there is always an obligatory focus movement in the language. The concept of focus as a component of information packaging in Dagbani will be analysed within the theoretical assumptions of Kiss (1998).

Vallduví (1993) in his work on informational component also addresses crucial issues relating to sentence structure and their role in pragmatics. It is not unknown to linguists who concern themselves with pragmatics, as argued by Vallduví (1993:2) that in the realm of

information packaging, it is usually the case that either different sentence forms may convey the same propositional content or, the same semantic proposition may be conveyed by variety of sentence forms. He illustrates his claim with data from English:

- (17) a. He hates broccoli
b. broccoli, he hates

According to Vallduví (1993:2) the truth conditions that are necessary for (17a) to be true are same truth conditions that are needed for (17b) to be true. He further postulates that though these two sentences are the same “logico-semantically, they differ informationally. In otherwise, though they have same “propositional contents” as Vallduví calls it, they do not have same information. He further posits that speakers of languages have particular “styles” of structuring or packaging information based on the assumptions they have about other interlocutors as well as the interlocutors’ attentional state. He points out that information packaging is a very context-sensitive aspect of language understanding. He also argues that informational packaging could structurally be represented by syntactic, morphological, prosodic means or a combination of any of these as usually the case in languages. In the case of the English language for instance, he argues that informational packaging is done via prosodic means as he illustrates with data in (18).

- (18) a. The boss hates BROCCOLI.
b. The boss HATES broccoli. *(Vallduví 1993:6)*

Vallduví argues that though these two (18a) and (18b) have same truth conditions, they may as well differ in some respect. The only difference these two sentences according to him may be a matter of information packaging. Vallduví views the interpretation and generation of information packaging as informatics which is achieved differently in different languages. Just as other researchers concerned with the study of information packaging, he admits that sentences are packaged differently as may be determined by the informational function of the sentences. Vallduví (1993:18) defines information packaging as:

a small set of instructions with which the hearer is instructed by the speaker to retrieve information carried by the sentence and enter it into his/her knowledge store.

Based on this definition, he sees information packaging to be a relational notion, between the speaker and the hearer. Vallduví's (1993) claim that information packaging is a relational notion between the speaker and hearer is valid since the manner in which information is packaged in a given discourse context is to a large extent dependent on the shared assumptions between the interlocutors, that is, the speaker and the hearer.

An instruction according to him is the different ways of packaging information. In viewing information packaging, he identifies Topic and Focus as two important elements that come to be mentioned when dealing with issues of information packaging. Vallduví (1993:39) defines topic after Gundel (1988:210) as:

an entity E is the topic of a sentence S, if in using S, the speaker intends to increase the addressee's knowledge about, request information about, or otherwise get the addressee's to act with respect to E.

He reviews several approaches to sentence articulation in the world's languages, which he sees as an essential component responsible for difference in sentence structures, such as the topic-comment articulation: Mathesius (1915)³ among others. Following Mathesius (1915) on the notion of "aboutness", Vallduví hypothesises that the Topic of a sentence is what a given sentence is about whilst the comment is what is said about the topic. Following this model, the English sentence as in (19) can be divided into comment and topic.

(19) Abu ran away.

Within the topic-comment framework, *Abu* will be assigned the topic role whilst the comment will be: *ran away*. Vallduví (1993:40) however admits that the issue of "topichood" has been thought of in many different ways by different scholars: according to him, whilst some scholars see topichood as a property of an entity (encoded in a given constituent), to others it is a property of constituents (which encodes a given discourse entity). He admits that this framework is not without flaws as the main question that is posed by this approach is the question as to what should be identified as being what a sentence is about-that is the topic. He further posits that the argument that has been assumed by many scholars is the fact that topic always occupies a sentence initial position. This he said is not always true since it gives too

³ For other approaches to the articulations of sentence structures, see Vallduví (1993:35ff) and references cited there.

much of a strict syntax to whatever is assumed to be a topic of a sentence, thereby making the whole concept of topic problematic. Notwithstanding the diverse views that scholars have had on what is assumed topic, one fact that is near-generalisation and seemingly accepted by all is the claim that the topic of a sentence is not always in the sentence initial position. In an attempt to address the question as to how to identify the topic of a sentence, such operational tests such as “as for” test, the “what about” test, and the “said about” test have been put forth by researchers. The “as for” test according to Vallduví (1993:40) determines that an NP is a topic of a sentence only if it can be left-detached and preceded by *as for*, whilst the “what about” test establishes an NP as a topic of a sentence if that particular sentence can answer the question *what about x?* where *x* is the topic NP. The third operational test labels a given NP as a topic of a sentence if that NP can be inserted as *x*, in “the frame *she said about x that comment*”.

These tests just like any human endeavour are also identified to be problematic in their use in really establishing an NP as a topic of a sentence.

He also makes mention of the background-focus articulation. However, it should be noted that new information focus is distinct from exhaustive focus. The question-answer pair test is known to be the most reliable test available for new information focus.

Another work that is assumed relevant to this current research is Rizzi (1997). Rizzi (1997) argues the left periphery of the clause just as the IP should be seen as consisting of several elements. He then opines that the CP layer (left periphery) should be universally seen as consisting of highly structured hierarchical set of projections. This set of projections he proposes is ordered as in (20).

(20). Force>Topic*>Focus>Fin-----IP.

Topicalized and focused constituents on the other hand occupy “designate projections”. In his study therefore, he associates four kinds of elements with the left periphery as shown in (20) above.

It is also his postulation that, movement to the left periphery structure is motivated by the need to satisfy a particular criterion. This he argues is what calls for the presence of a head which invariably enters into a spec-head configuration with a particular moved constituent.

On what the C system does within the domain of the clausal structure, Rizzi (1997) argues that it is a kind of interface between a kind of proposition content of a sentence (IP) and higher structure, which could be at a higher sentence, or the discourse level itself. Accordingly, the left periphery is seen to have properties “from the outside” and “from the inside” as well.

According to Rizzi, from “the outside” of the left periphery, one kind of information that is coded in the left periphery is Force. He views Force as expressing the clausal type. This he says is mostly realised morphologically and sometimes is also called clausal type. From “the inside” of the left periphery however, Rizzi claims that the kind of information that is expressed in the C- system is the content of the IP that is embedded in it, that is Finiteness. By virtue of this, complementizers become sensitive to the finiteness of the embedded clause. This he illustrates with the English *for* versus *that* agreement. Whereas the former will always requires an infinitive verb in English, the latter will invariably always require a tensed verb. Finiteness then is concerned with the finiteness of the IP. Though he admits that the finiteness distinction seems linguistically valid, he points out that its morphological realization is a language specific property. Topic, another element that is located with the left periphery, is old information which is known usually from preceding discourse. Focus can however be either new information or contrastive. This research will later explore the extent to which the strict order of the left periphery proposed by Rizzi is valid for Dagbani.

On the relationship between the CP system and the rest of the clausal structure, Rizzi has a view that is different from existing views that sees it as an extension of the V system. He thus posits that, the CP is an “analogous” extension of the IP system. In his opinion therefore, the C-system should be seen as distinct from the I-system. He further argues that it is possible for the C-system to perform functions which may be independent of selectional constraints. According to Rizzi, a traditional articulation of the clause that is typical of the left periphery is the articulation of topic and comment. He illustrates this with the English example:

(21) Your book, you should give it to Paul (not to Bill) *Rizzi (1997:4)*.

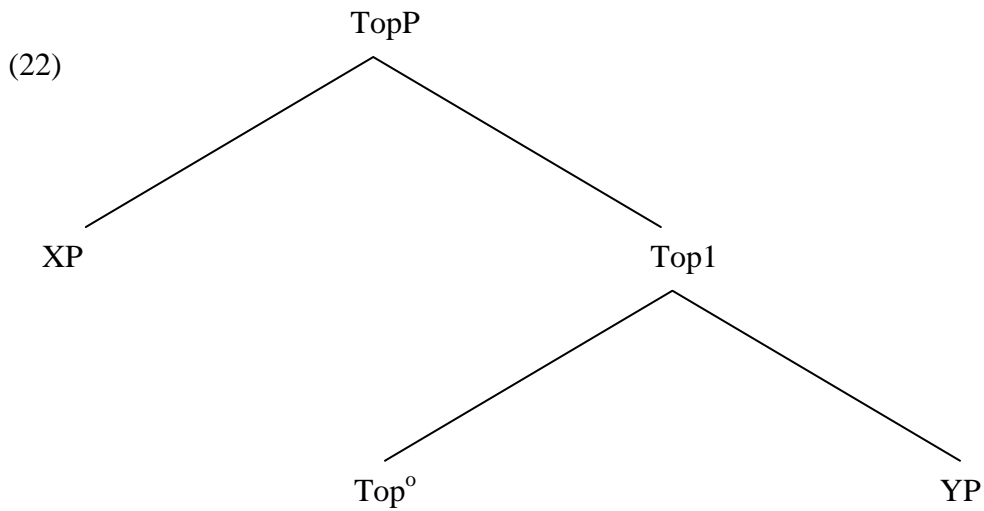
The topic as he argues is the comment, that is a kind of preposed element that is characteristically set off in the clause by “comma intonation” and invariably expresses old information. This old information as Rizzi argues is usually: “somehow available and salient in previous discourse” whilst the comment is a kind of complex predicate, an open sentence

predicated of the topic and mostly introduces new information. He contrasts the topic comment articulation with the focus-presupposition which he says has a:

Preposed element bearing focal stress, introduces new information whereas the open sentence expresses contextually given information, knowledge that the speaker presupposes to be shared with the hearer. *Rizzi (1997:4)*

It will later be shown in this work that the focus-presupposition articulation is relevant to the current study of information packaging in Dagbani.

According to Rizzi, some languages make a distinction between these two types of articulations. He claims that in Italian for instance and more generally in Romance languages, the topic comment articulation is expressed by what Cinque (1990) calls Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD). The focus presupposition on the other hand is expressed by moving the focal element and assigning “special focal stress”. The focus presupposition as would be seen later in this thesis would be relevant to the understanding of focus constructions in Dagbani. According to Rizzi, this structural position in a language like Italian is a “host” of contrastive focus and cannot host non-contrastive new information. He however further points out that, it is not unusual for some languages to use the “clause initial” position for non-contrastive focus as well. He proposes the structure below for the topic-comment articulation:



XP=Topic

YP=comment.

It is Rizzi's view that A Top head is a functional head belonging to the complementizer system projecting its own X-bar schema and has its specifier as the topic whilst the comment functions as its complement. According to Rizzi, Top and Foc are phonetically null in Italian, though they may be pronounced in some languages. It will later be shown in this work that Foc is phonetically pronounced and those particles as *ka* and *n* can be analysed as Foc in Dagbani similar to the observation of Aboh (2004) for *wε* in Gungbe. In the spirit of movement, Rizzi argues that any constituent that is endowed with topic or focus features must always be in a spec-head configuration with Top or Foc. This then tallies with the assumptions that movement must be triggered by particular criterion, or the need to check some features associated with the head, that is in the terminology of Chomsky (1993). He points out that although both focus and topic are somewhat similar they are nonetheless different structural positions within the left periphery clausal structure. Using data from

Italian, it is claimed by Rizzi (1997) that multiple foci are not permitted in Italian. This same conclusion will be made of focus constructions in Dagbani.

Another researcher who addresses issues of information structure which is relevant to this current research is Aboh (2004). Aboh addresses issues of left periphery movement using data from Gungbe- a Kwa language. He argues that the focused constructions of Gungbe could be accounted for using the split- C hypothesis of Rizzi (1997). He makes claims which to some extent hold for Dagbani. He for instance argues that in Gungbe, the focused constituent moves to a sentence initial position and leaves a copy in the IP internal position. His assumption is that Gungbe focused constructions involve the leftward movement of the focused constituent to a focus position, which according to him, is the maximal projection of the head. It will later be shown in chapter two of this research that this claim of Aboh holds for Dagbani as the encoding of focus in Dagbani also involves the movement of the focused constituent into left periphery position. Another parallel between focus encoding in Dagbani and Gungbe is the fact that both do not allow in-situ focus strategies. A sentence that is assigned focus interpretation in Gungbe as he posits has different semantic, syntactic and phonological properties from one that is not assigned focus- what he calls a neutral sentence. Aboh, based on empirical evidence from Gungbe, makes the claim that focus movement is available in both main and embedded clauses in Gungbe. It is also his conclusion that the focused constituent is always expected grammatically to be in a particular position which he labels the focus site. In the spirit of generative-based accounts of focus constructions, Aboh (2004) hypothesises that the Gungbe focus constructions are needed in a particular position (the focus site) because of the need of the focus phrases to be in spec-head configuration with their heads.

In addressing issues as to the types of constituents that can be accommodated in the focus site, Aboh (2004:240) argues that there is no restriction on the nature of constituents that can appear at the focus site. He states that the focus phrase of Gungbe can accommodate such categories as: DPs (whether definite or indefinite), or generic, adverbs, adjectives as well as well as verbal categories. Based on the non-restrictive nature of categories that are “hosted” by the Gungbe focus phrase, Aboh posits that what he calls the focus site (at least for Gungbe) is not a reserve for a particular type of constituent, as it is capable of “hosting” any focused XP without affecting grammaticality. This observation serves as evidence for him to conclude that focusing is not a case-driven phenomenon in Gungbe.

Within the split-C hypothesis of Rizzi (1997), Aboh argues that ForceP and FinP in Gungbe should be distinguished from FocP. One major piece of evidence that he gives for this claim of his is his observation that relative structures in Gungbe cannot be focused. He further investigates the number of foci that can occur in a Gungbe sentence. On this, he makes the claim that multiple foci are not allowed in Gungbe. To account for this claim, he argues that one plausible reason that could be given to the non-occurrence of multiple foci in Gungbe is the fact that only one specifier position is allowed in the language and therefore the prohibition on multiple foci. He also buttresses his claim with assumptions made on similar data in Hungarian by Pukás (1995) where it is also observed that multiple foci are not permitted in Hungarian. According to Pukás (1995:4) quoted in Aboh (2004:245), the impossibility of focus recursion may be best seen as a manifestation of an interpretational constraint on focus. This makes Pukás (1995:4) conclude:

If focus is understood as selecting one individual in identificational way...there can be no multiple occurrence of separate focusing, syntactically realized as separate focus projections.

It is also claimed by Rizzi (1997) that multiple foci are not permitted in Italian. Based on these claims made in literature on the impermissibility of multiple foci, it is claimed in this work that it is a near-cross linguistic observation in the study of morphosyntax of focus constructions. Injecting some typological flavour into his work, Aboh takes a brief look at the comparison of focus constructions between Italian and Gungbe. On this note he postulates that, just like Italian focus constructions, Gungbe focus constructions does not allow multiple occurrence of focused constituents within the clausal structure. He further shows with empirical evidence that simultaneous occurrence of focus is possible in both main and embedded clauses in Gungbe. He sees this to be a contrast between Italian and Gungbe focus constructions since whilst the former does not allow it, the latter allows it.

Within the theoretical assumptions of Chomsky (1995), he argues that movement of focused constituent is necessitated by the need of the focused constituents to be in a spec-head configuration with the (+f) phrase. He argues that the need for spec-head configuration is what results in ungrammaticality in Gungbe when there is a morphosyntactic absence of the focus marker in the focus constructions. It will later be shown in this work that this same assumption is valid for the Dagbani focus construction. In his work, he assumes that focused constructions and wh-phrases have same syntactic and semantic properties in Gungbe. This

current research on Dagbani however, does not extend to such a comparison between the morphosyntax of focus constructions and *wh*-questions. Though this review has taken a look at the concept of focus as viewed by different scholars, chapter two shall look at focus constructions using the diagnostics of Kiss (1998) since that gives attention to both information (presentational) focus and identificational focus constructions as compared to the other theories like Vallduví (1993) and Lambrecht (1994) that seemingly concentrate mainly on information focus. Information focus will be seen to be relevant in discussion of the *la* particle in chapter three.

1.1.4. Previous Analyses of these Particles in Dagbani Literature

The particles *la*, *ka* and *n* have received attention from Dagbani researchers who concern themselves with information packaging in the language: notably among them are: Olawsky (1999), Fiedler and Schwarz (2004), Fiedler and Schwarz (2005), Fusheini (2006). There however continue to be diversified views by various researchers as to the role of these various particles in the information structure of the language. Thus researchers have really not come to a consensus on the functions of these particles in the information structure of the language. Notably for controversy in the study of Dagbani linguistics has been the post verbal particle *la*. Olawsky (1999) identifies *la* as a morpheme with aspectual function (albeit he glosses the particle both as a focus marker and aspectual marker). He then argues that as an aspectual morpheme, *la* marks habitual as well as continuous aspect when it is inserted in between the verb and the object. He uses the data below to buttress his claims:

- (22) a. Fati bari la tɛtɛɛ
 Fati ride imperf. foc bicycle
 “Fati is riding a bicycle”
- b. m bɔhɛndi la Dagbanli.
 I learn imperf.foc Dagbani
 “I am learning Dagbani” (Olawsky 1999:38).

Olawsky however points out that the *la* particle could as well be marking emphasis in the language. Olawsky however fails to pin down the constituent within the sentence structure on which *la* marks focus or emphasis. His claim that *la* also has imperfective aspectual function in the language is questionable. The scepticism on the aspectual function of *la* is based on two observations. In the first place, it is possible to have an imperfective reading in Dagbani without the *la* particle as in (23a) and (23b). On the other hand, it is also possible in

Dagbani to have the *la* particle in the sentence structure of Dagbani without necessarily getting an imperfective reading of that sentence as in (23c) and (23d). These observations thus pose a threat to the claim of Olawsky (1999) that the presence of *la* in the sentence structure of Dagbani injects imperfective aspectual reading into that sentence.

- (23)
- a. Abu bu-ri bi-hi
 Abu beat-imperf child-plu
 “Abu is beating children”
- b. Ama di-ra
 Ama eat-imperf
 “Ama is eating”
- c. Ama ku- Ø la bua
 Ama kill-perf LA goat
 “Ama has killed a goat”
- d. bi-hi maa tu- Ø la Abu
 Child-plu def insult-perf LA Abu
 “The children (have) insulted Abu”

Olawsky further observes that the fact that focus morphemes only mark emphatic constituents and that the impermissible co-occurrence of the *la* morpheme with non-emphatic constituents further confirms its status as a focus marker morpheme in Dagbani rather than aspectual morpheme.

Fusheini (2006) also addresses *ka* and *la* as focus markers in Dagbani. In addition to these particles, he further identifies *n* as a focus marker. He argues that *ka* and *n* mark contrastive/identificational focus in what he calls “sentence initial position”. He further argues that *la* also marks contrastive focus. However, he claims that unlike *ka* and *n* which mark contrastive focus in “sentence initial positions” *la* marks contrastive focus in *in-situ* position.

According to Fusheini, *la* marks focus on full NPs, adjuncts, emphatic pronouns and *wh*-phrases. He gives the data below to argue that *wh*-phrases (24a) and full NPs (24b) can really be focused using *la*.

(24). a. Abu da-Ø la **bo**?

Abu buy-perf foc what

“Abu bought what?”

b. Abu da-Ø la **bu**.

Abu buy-perf foc goat

“Abu bought a **goat**”. (Fusheini 2006:9).

It will however be argued that the sentence as in (24b) which is claimed to be exhaustively focused is not a promising analysis of Dagbani, since the language as will be shown in this research, does not mark exhaustive focus in *in-situ* position. Thus, I will show that there is no exhaustivity associated with the use of *la* as posited by Fusheini (2006).

Also the data that is provided on *wh*-questions is questionable since the *wh*-questions in that context as in (24a) will only be accepted by Dagbani speakers as an echo question and not as a *wh*-question. The fact that the generation of *wh*-questions will be generated via movement rather than in situ and preceded by the *la* morpheme indicates that it does not really focus the *wh*-phrase as Fusheini (2006) argues. An alternative analysis will be offered for the particle *la* in chapter three of this work rather than the current analysis that assigns it the status of *in-situ* focus.

Fusheini (2006) posits that whilst *n* marks contrastive focus on subject constituents, *ka* marks focus on non-subject constituents. The choice between the two forms as he claims is defined by the grammatical role of the constituent that is to be focused within a given clause, and this brings in its wake a clear structural asymmetry between subject and non-subject constituents.

However, it will also be argued that analysing *n* just as contrastive focus marker in Dagbani seems too simplistic. This is because it is possible to have these same morphemes in what Kiss (1998) calls all new information; that is instances where the focus is not restricted to just the subject, but to the entire sentence as in (25).

(25) Q: a. Bo n niŋ-Ø?

What n happen-perf?

“What happened?”

IS: All new information.

A: b. ti loori n sayim-Ø

our car N spoil-perf

“Our car broke down”

A: c. *ti loori lu-Ø

our car fall-perf.

“Our car broke down”.

The sentence in (25c) is ungrammatical because the information structural particle *n* is not present in the sentence structure of that sentence. Though the information scope of those sentences is all new information, the *n* is still an obligatory structural element of sentences which will be considered felicitous. This means that *n* must do something more in the information structure of Dagbani than just marking contrastive focus on subject constituents as posited by Fusheini (2006). In this thesis, it shall be argued that Dagbani makes a distinction between what shall be called At-Issue information, that is information which is given in context and out-of-the-blue information, that is information that is given without being requested for or any connectivity with previous discourse. The fact that *n* is obligatory in the sentence structure of (25b) indicates that the status of *n* as a contrastive focus marker or all new information marker should be dependent on discourse context.

The particle *ka*, has also received attention from Dagbani researchers. For instance, it receives attention from Olawsky (1999). In his work, Olawsky (1999:66) proposes that *ka* marks focus on fronted constituents. Though he is torn between analysing the particle as one that is associated with topic or focus, he opts for the latter because as he argues: “the construction seems to fit into the concept of focus as the fronting of constituents by the particle <ka> usually marks “what is important”, rather than to indicate what the sentence “is all about”. Following Comrie (1989:63) Olawsky defines focus as the introduction of new information into a sentence, whilst Topic is perceived as what a clause or sentence is about.

He further points out that despite the fact that a simultaneous function of topic and focus cannot be excluded in Dagbani, he opts to analyse <ka> as a focus particle. According to Olawsky (1999), the co-occurrence between this particle and wh-phrases is one reason for his claiming that it is a focus particle. According to him such an occurrence is commonly associated with focus rather than topic.

(26) a. o bori namda

3sg want sandals

“He wants sandals”

b. namda ka o bora

Sandal-PL FRO he want-IPF.

“Sandals is what he wants”

c. o sa kpi sohila.

3sg TD die-perf yesterday

“He died yesterday”

d. sohila ka o sa kpi

yesterday FRO he TD die

“Yesterday he died (adapted from Olawsky: 1999:67)

Olawsky (1999) further observes that the particle not only focuses objects, but also is used in the focusing of “complements indicating time or place”. The impermissible co-occurrence between *la* and *ka* is also mentioned briefly by Olawsky. He calls this “elision of <la> in sentences with focus”. By this, he stipulates that there is prohibition on the co-occurrence of *ka* and *la* within the sentence structure of Dagbani.

(27) a. o bo-ri la kodu

he want foc banana

“He wants banana”

b. kodu ka o bo-ra.

banana foc 3sg want

“banana is what he wants”

c. *kodu ka o borila

(adapted from Olawsky 1999:67)

The ungrammaticality of sentence (27c), according to Olawsky is caused by the co-occurrence of *ka* and *la* in the sentence. The claim of prohibition on the co-occurrence of these particles as claimed by Olawsky (1999) might be why *la* has also been analysed as exhaustive focus marker in Dagbani. It will be shown in chapter three that, it is not strictly true that *ka* and *la* do not co-occur in Dagbani. Olawsky also observes that when pronouns are focused via the use of *ka*, they are realised as emphatic pronouns. He posits that this may be as a result of the relationship between focus and emphasis. Olawsky however does not identify *n* as a focus marker.

Olawsky’s claim that *ka* and *la* do not co-occur is also not strictly true since it is possible for *la* and *ka* to co-occur as shown in (28).

(28). a. Adam kpe-ri la duu

Adam enter-imperf LA room

“Adam is entering a room”.

b. duu ka Adam kpe-ri la.

room foc Adam enter-imperf LA

“It is a room that Adam is entering”.

c. Abu tu-ri la Abiba.

Abu insult-imperf LA Abiba

“Abu is insulting Abiba”.

d. Abiba ka Abu tu-ri la.

Abiba foc Abu insult-imperf LA

‘‘It is Abiba that Abu is insulting’’.

Though native speakers consulted could not readily provide the appropriate contexts in which such sentences as (29b&29d) could be used in Dagbani, they maintained that they are nevertheless correct sentences. The only observed fact that results when *ka* and *la* co-occur is that *la* occurs sentence finally; a syntactic behaviour that is not same when it occurs alone as a post verbal item. The distribution of *la* will receive detailed attention in chapter three.

As mentioned earlier, in Fusheini (2006:9) *la* is also identified as a particle that marks identificational/contrastive focus on *in-situ* constituents. He describes the focus that is associated with *la* as ‘‘post verbal’’ whilst that one associated with *ka* and *n* as ‘‘preverbal’’. Though this research shares the view of Fusheini (2006) that *ka* and *n* can both encode identificational/ exhaustive focus in Dagbani, it is not certain of the analysis of *la* as an identificational/ exhaustive focus marker in the language. This research also maintains that though the particles *n* and *ka* encode exhaustive focus, the two particles are different since it is possible for *n* to occur in the context of the so called ‘‘all new information’’ in the context of *wh*-questions.

Another work that addresses the functions of these information structural particles in Dagbani is Fiedler and Schwarz (2005). They look at what they call ‘‘out-of-focus’’ encoding and posit that there is a structural asymmetry between SF (subject focus) and NSF (non subject focus). According to Fiedler and Schwarz (2005:119), ‘‘the canonical SF construction contains a postponed syllabic nasal called ‘‘emphatic’’ by Olwasky (1999)’’. In the non-subject focus, termed as NSF in their terminology, ‘‘the so-called FM *ka* Olwasky (1999:63) has to be put at the beginning of the out-of-focus part’’. Though Fusheni (2006) also makes the same observation on structural asymmetry between subject and non subject focus constituents, this work makes the hypothesis that such an observed structural asymmetry is not as strict as pointed out. This claim as will later be shown in this work is borne out of the observation that it is possible to focus subjects of embedded clauses with the *ka* particles which has been traditionally associated with the focusing of non subject in the information structure literature in Dagbani. Fiedler and Schwarz (2005) also make the hypothesis that Dagbani non subject focus (NSF) exhibits some parallel with the narrative clause in Dagbani. This hypothesis of

theirs is based on observation that the NSF marker, *ka* has a clausal conjunction counterpart *ka* “and” in narrative contexts. They further argue, using the cleft analysis hypothesis, that these constructions are biclausal. Their analysis of *the ex-situ* focus constructions in Dagbani as biclausal structures is not surprising since that is a prototypical assumption of the cleft analysis hypothesis. This thesis shall later present counterevidence for the biclausal analysis of the *ex-situ* focus constructions in Dagbani. It is then opined that *ex-situ* focus constructions in Dagbani be analysed as monoclausals.

1.1.5. Objectives of the Research

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, notwithstanding the fact that these particles have received attention from Dagbani researchers, there are still some issues about these information related particles in Dagbani that continue to be elusive. The main objectives in this research work are therefore to:

- (1) To give a detailed description of information structuring/packaging in Dagbani within the context of focus constructions.
- (2) To argue that the encoding of identificational/contrastive focus in Dagbani invariably involves a syntactic movement of the focused constituent to Spec Foc .
- (3) To suggest an alternative analysis of the post verbal particle *la* in the information structure of Dagbani.
- (4) To show that *ka* and *n* are different in the information structure of Dagbani.

1.1.6. Theoretical framework:

The analysis of *ex-situ* focus in Dagbani will be based on the stipulations made by Minimalist Programme, a fundamental claim made by Principles and Parameters. For details on the postulations of Principles and Parameters, I refer the reader to Chomsky (1986a; 1993; 1995). According to Minimalist Programme (MP hereafter), there are two basic distinctions of syntactic forms: the Phonetic Form (PF) and the Logical Form (LF). Whilst the PF form of a linguistic expression deals with how it is pronounced, the Logical Form (LF) deals with the linguistic aspect of meaning of a linguistic expression. A fundamental claim of MP is that movement of every linguistic element is motivated by the need to check some features. It is further assumed by MP that, the features that motivate movement of linguistic elements are

of two categories: [+interpretable] and [+strong]. Features that do not have any contribution towards the meaning or interpretation of a linguistic expression are specified as [-interpretable]. Such features as posited by MP need be checked and eliminated before the LF, since failing to have these features checked results in a crash, Chomsky (1995). However, [+interpretable] features are features that have fundamental contribution to the semantics of a linguistic expression. In line with stipulations of Chomsky (1993; 1995) and Sabel (2000), it is assumed in this research that the features associated with focus-movement in Dagbani are [+interpretable]. The features located at C and the need for these features to be checked trigger movement. When there is no overt movement, I assume following tradition in current syntactic theory about movement that, the features at C must therefore be [-strong].

1.1.7. Organisation of the Research

Beyond this chapter which gives general introduction to the research, this research is structured as follows. In chapter 2, I investigate the functions of *ka* and *n* in Dagbani information packaging. It will be claimed in this chapter that *ka* and *n* can encode identificational/ exhaustive focus in Dagbani. It is however argued that although *n* and *ka* can encode exhaustive focus in Dagbani, it is possible for *n* unlike its counterpart, to occur in the context of all new information; that is context in which the focus is on a whole proposition and not just a particular constituent or argument. I further attempt investigating such issues as the correlation between word order and focus marking in Dagbani, as well as the theoretical explanations for the encoding identificational focus marking in the Dagbani language.

In chapter 3, I revisit the role of *la* in the sentence structure of Dagbani. Arguing that earlier analyses of *la* such as Olawsky's (1999) analysis of it as imperfective aspectual marker and Fusheini's (2006) analysis of *la* as an exhaustive focus marker on *in-situ* constituents are not adequate, an alternative analysis is suggested for the particle's role in information packaging in Dagbani. It will be hypothesised in this thesis, that when *la* occurs within a sentence structure, it indicates that the linguistic material that precedes it, that is, the VP internal material is backgrounded, while the material that follows it must be new information. However, in these cases the background is not presupposed and the new information is not exhaustive.

In chapter 4, I give a summary of the issues discussed in this research work. The theoretical implications of the findings in this thesis are also discussed in this chapter.

1.1.8. Summary of Issues Discussed in this Chapter

Generally, this chapter was devoted to the general background of the thesis. Such issues as basic information on the language under study, previous analysis of the particles to be investigated, and theoretical framework are dealt with in this chapter. The basic structural properties of Dagbani are also considered in this chapter. The previous analyses that the particles: *ka*, *n* and *la* have received from Dagbani grammarians as well as the weaknesses of each of these particles have been given detailed attention. The theoretical framework within which ex-situ focus in Dagbani will be analysed is also given in this chapter.

Dagbani was observed to be an SVO language, which makes use of particles, as in most other Gur languages. These particles are claimed to be relevant in information structuring in the language.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PARTICLES *ka* AND *n* IN DAGBANI

2.1. Focus as a Universal Grammatical Phenomenon

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this thesis is aimed at investigating the roles of some information structural particles in Dagbani. In the previous chapter, we had taken a look at some previous analyses that these particles have received as well as certain issues that still remain elusive about these particles and will need alternative approach by this current research. This chapter is devoted to the investigation of two such particles: *ka* and *n*. It shall be shown in this chapter that these particles can be used to encode identificational focus in Dagbani. As usual of typological treatment of identificational (contrastive) focus, it will be posited in this work that identificational/contrastive focus in Dagbani has an exhaustive listing reading. It will also be argued on the distribution of *n* that although it can encode exhaustivity, it does occur in other contexts in which they do not encode exhaustivity. There is for instance the possibility (in the context of *wh*-questions) that these morphemes will occur in the so called “all new information”, that is instances in which the focus is on an entire proposition rather than a particular argument or constituent within the clause.

The encoding of focus is a universal phenomenon in languages; that is to say that all languages have one strategy or the other, or a combination of different strategies that can be used to indicate that a particular constituent is focused. Whilst some languages mark focus by prosodic prominence, that is, mostly by main stress or pitch accent, other languages encode focus via morphosyntactic strategies. For the case of the Dagbani language, the claim will be made in this research that encoding of focus is a morphosyntactic property.

It will further be argued that these particles mark focus via the movement of the focused constituents to the left periphery position. The tests of exhaustivity available in Kiss (1998) when applied on these morphemes also confirm that they really are identificational/exhaustive focus markers in Dagbani. It will be shown that *ka*, marks focus via the movement of focused non-subject constituents and adjuncts to left periphery position, whilst *n* marks focus on subject constituents. Both particles however will be assumed to involve the movement of the focused constituent to the left periphery position. The movement that is involved with the use of *n* is however assumed to be string vacuous; a movement that does not affect the linear order of words apart from the addition of the *n*-prefix. It will further be shown that with the use of *n*, the movement is local in that it is used to focus only subject constituents which are very local within the clausal structure. Using the

tests available in Kiss (1998) will ascertain the current claim that these morphemes are exhaustive focus markers in Dagbani. Following tradition in the current literature, I show that a constituent is exhaustively focused by putting it in bold.

2.1.1. The Particle *ka* and *n* as Focus Markers

As pointed out earlier, it will be argued that *ka* and *n* can encode identificational (contrastive) focus on constituents which is always invariably located in the clausal left periphery. Both particles involve the movement of the constituent that is in focus to the left periphery position and then following it immediately with *ka* or *n*. There is a difference between these morphemes: whilst *ka* focuses non-subject constituents, *n* focuses subject constituents. The choice between *ka* and *n* has been argued to be dependent on the grammatical role of the constituent that is to be moved to the left periphery position: Fiedler and Schwarz (2004), Fiedler and Schwarz (2005) and Fusheini (2006). However, it will be shown that this asymmetry holds only for simple clauses since it is possible to focus subject constituents of embedded clauses with *ka* which otherwise is used to focus-mark only non-subject constituents and adjuncts.

(1) a. N da-Ø bua maa.

Isg buy-*perf* goat def

“I (have) bought the goat”

b. **Bua maa** ka n da-Ø

goat def foc n buy-*perf*

“It is the goat I have bought” (not sheep).⁴

(2) a. Bɛ di-ya pam zuŋo.

2pl eat-*perf* quan today

“They ate a lot today”

b. **zuŋo** ka bɛ di-Ø pam

today foc 2pl eat-*perf* quan

“It is today they ate a lot” (not last week)

⁴ Though the exhaustively marked constituents in Dagbani are translated as clefts in English, it is done for the purpose of achieving naturalness in the reading of those sentences in English. It will however be argued that they really are not clefts in Dagbani, but monoclausal.

- (3) a. Bɛ tu-ri ma.
2pl insult-*imperf* me
“They are insulting me”
- b. **Mani** ka bɛ tu-ra
sg (emph) Foc 2pl insult-*imperf*
“It is me (that) they are insulting”.
- c. * Mani bɛ tu-ra
sg (emph) 2pl insult-*imperf*
- (4) a. * buku Abu ka da-∅ maa
book Abu foc buy-perf perf
- b. *zuno bɛ ka di-∅ pam.
Adjun 2plu foc eat-perf quan
- c. *mani n bɛ tu-ra
1sg (emph) foc 2plu insult-imperf

It is seen from the data above that, constituents that can be focused via the use of *ka* are NP objects as in (1b), adjuncts as in (2b), and pronouns as in (3b). These are the categories that can be hosted by the left periphery position of Dagbani. These constituents however, undergo overt movement to left periphery positions. The observation that marking of focus using *ka*, always demands an obligatory movement of the focused constituent to sentence initial position is at the centre of the current claim in this research that *ka* does not mark focus *in-situ* rather *ex-situ*. When a pronoun is the focused item via movement, it is realised as an emphatic pronoun in the focused construction as in (3b). This might perhaps, be showing the correlation between focus and emphasis. The ungrammaticality in (4c) is caused by the fact that a non-subject constituent has been focused with *n*. This ungrammaticality supports the claimed structural asymmetry between subject and non-subject constituents in simple clauses. It is further observed that the perfective form of the verb does not change transitivity marking under movement as in (1a) versus (1b) as expected, but the imperfective marking does seem to be sensitive to the overtness of the complement as in (3a) versus (3b). This research does not have any plausible explanation for this observation.

The ungrammaticality of (4a) and (4b) indicate that there cannot be any intervening linguistic material between a moved constituent and the particles analysed as focus markers in Dagbani. This issue shall receive detailed attention under theoretical assumptions.

2.1.2. The Focus Morpheme: *n*

It is argued here that just like *ka*, *n* also triggers movement of focused constituents to the left periphery position. The movement that is involved with the use of *n* shall also be argued to be for purposes of encoding identificational focus. It shall be argued that the major difference displayed by these two focus markers, as observed in earlier researches is that unlike *ka*, which is used in focusing of NP objects and adverbials, *n* is used in the focusing of NP subject constituents. This current work would however opine that, this structural asymmetry is not strictly true since it is possible to focus subject constituents of embedded clauses with *ka*. It would then be claimed that the asymmetry between *ka* and *n* is more of an issue of locality of the constituent to be focused than grammatical category of the constituent that is to be focused. As pointed out already, *n* is used in the movement involving only the closest NP subject within the clausal structure-local movement. Both particles however, will always demand that the constituent to be focused be moved to the left periphery position so that it enters into a spec-head configuration with the moved constituent.

- (5)
- a. Abu da-∅ buku maa
Abu buy-*perf* book def
“Abu (has) bought the book”
 - b. **Abu** n da-∅ buku maa.
Abu foc buy-*perf* book def
“It is Abu who bought the book”
 - *c. Abu ka da-∅ buku maa.
Abu foc buy-*perf* book def.
- (6)
- a. Tina mali liyiri pam
Tina has money plenty
“Tina has a lot of money”
 - b. **Tina** m mali liiryi pam
Tina foc has-*imperf* money
“It is Tina who has a lot of money”

In (5c) too, it is observed that, focusing the subject of a simple clause with *ka* results in ungrammaticality. It will later be shown in this work, that it is grammatically accepted to focus subject constituents with *ka* if those subjects are within the embedded clause.

In the following section, I use data on question answer pairs aimed at laying a foundation for the argument that will be made in this thesis that *ka* and *n* really behave differently (syntactically and semantically) within the information structure of Dagbani, though they both can encode identificational focus. It will for instance be shown that whilst the morpheme *n* be used in the context of all new information as in (7b), the same is not true of the *ka* morpheme. The infelicity of (7c) in the context of (7a) shows that *ka* cannot occur in the context of all new information.

- (7) **Q:** a. Bo n niŋ-Ø?
 What foc happen-perf?
 “What happened?”
IS: All new information.
- A:** b. Ama n da-Ø bua
 Ama foc buy-perf goat
 “It is Ama who bought a goat”.
- A:** c. # bua ka Ama da-Ø
 goat foc Ama buy-perf
 “It is a goat Ama has bought”.

However, there is empirical evidence in Dagbani to show that *n* is not just compatible with all new information as in (7) above, but also can encode identificational focus on subjects of simple clauses by moving those DPs to the left periphery of the clausal structure. This is shown in (8).

- (8) **Q:** a. ŋuni n da-Ø bua maa.
 who foc buy-perf goat def.
 “Who bought the goat”.

IS: subject is new, object is old, and verb is old

- A:**
- b. Abena n da-Ø bua maa
Abena foc buy-perf goat def
“It is Abena who bought the goat”.
- c. #Abena da-Ø bua maa
Abena buy-perf goat def
“Abena bought the goat”.

It is seen that in the context of (8a) the answer that is felicitous has the exhaustive focus marker *n* in the sentence structure. This explains why (8c) is infelicitous. In the context of (8a) therefore, Abena is exhaustively identified as the only one who out of several possibilities of persons, was the one who bought a goat.

2.1.3. Clefts or Monoclausal-the Case of *Ex-situ* Focus Constructions in Dagbani

As far as the author knows, the works that deal with the question as to whether the *ex-situ* focus construction in Dagbani should be analysed as biclausal or monoclausal are: Fiedler, and Schwarz (2004), Fiedler and Schwarz, (2005) and Fusheini (2006). Fusheini (2006) posits that left periphery focused constructions are cleft constructions. However, he gives no reason(s) for his claim that they are cleft constructions. Fiedler, and Schwarz, (2005) also make the hypothesis that Dagbani focus constructions are bi-clausal. Contrary to these claims of the cleft nature of *ex-situ* focused constructions in Dagbani is the claim in this work that they really are monoclausal.

I present arguments which favour the analysis of left periphery focused constituents as monoclausal structures in Dagbani.

This claim contradicts the earlier analyses which assert they are clefts or biclausals. This claim that they are monoclausal structures is based on synchronic evidence which does not support the status of *ka* and *n* as copulas in Dagbani. As usually assumed in cross-linguistic approach to the study of focus constructions, it is easily established that a given structure is a cleft or biclausal if the morpheme that is used in focusing strategy can be established as a copula verb. This however is not the case of Dagbani since *ka* and *n* are purely focus markers. Going by Fusheini’s claim that focus constructions in Dagbani are cleft constructions, it implies that he is seemingly making the claim that the DP or constituent that

Foc is attracted to in Dagbani, is a complement of a null copula. This then tallies with the traditional analysis of clefts in English as assumed in Chomsky (1997), that in accounting for a cleft construction in English, such as “*It was Abu who killed the goat*”, that, the cleft NP is base-generated in an adjoined position to the CP, which triggers movement of a wh-operator in the specifier of CP. However, the assumption in this research is that such an analysis cannot capture the phenomenon as it pertains in Dagbani. This is borne out of the observation that the focus construction in Dagbani as opposed to its English counterpart, involves a syntactic movement of the focused constituent to a particular position, claimed in this work to be the specifier position of the focus phrase. Aboh (2004) making a same observation for Gungbe focused constructions concludes that, it will not be a promising analysis to see them as cleft constructions. If Dagbani focus constructions cannot be accounted for in terms of operator movement, a traditional view of cleft constructions, then, it will be more promising of an analysis to see them as monoclausal. For instance, the data below indicate that these morphemes cannot really be assigned copula status in Dagbani:

- (9) a. **Abu n karimba* (intended: Abu is a teacher).
 b. * *Adam ka m biɛli*. (intended: Adam is my senior brother/sister)

The data in (9) pose a threat to plausible analysis of *ka* and *n* as copula verbs in Dagbani. Dagbani has a copula which is different from the focus markers *ka* and *n*. The copula in Dagbani is *nyɛ*,-“is”, “to be” which is invariably followed by *la* as in (10a and 10b), except in cases of where the subject and the copula are inverted. When this happens, the predicate precedes the copula verb as in (11a, 11b). The data in (12a) and (12b) (12b) show that it is not possible to have the copula without the *la* particle

- (10) a. *abu nyɛ la m bia*
 abu cop LA my child
 “Abu is my child”
 b. *Ama nyɛ la karimba*
 Ama cop LA teacher
 “*Ama is a teacher*”

- (11) a. m bia n nyε o
 my child N cop 3sg
 “He is my child”
- b. karimba n nyε Ama
 teacher N cop Ama
 “Ama is a teacher”
- (12) a. *Abu nyε m bia
 Abu cop my child
 “Abu is my child”
- b. *Ama nyε karimba
 Ama cop teacher
 “Ama is a teacher”

From the data given above, it is clear that the copula is never null in Dagbani. This observation thus serves as a counter-argument for the analysis of *ex-situ* focus in Dagbani as cleft or biclausal.

Another argument that this work advances in favour of the analysis of Dagbani *ex-situ* focus as monoclausal comes from locality restrictions. This test is adapted from Abels and Muriungi (2007). According to this test, in the cleft-structure analysis, the prediction is made that, the locality effect that is shown by relative and focalisation should pattern with each other, whilst that of the monoclausal analysis has no such a prediction. For instance, consider topicalisation, which according to Abels and Muriungi (2007) is a very good grounds for this test. It is shown that it is impossible to topicalise temporal adjuncts out of a relative clause (13a-13b). Owing to the fact that the main clause has a future reading, it is impossible to make a matrix reading of *yesterday*. However, the assumption of the cleft analysis is that, a sentence with the corresponding sentence with a focus fronting of the object involves a relative clause. Accordingly, such examples will be expected to have the same status as clear

relative clause counterparts (14a-14b). This prediction of the cleft analysis, is however, seen not to be valid as the examples below show.

- (13) a. Adam ni ηmε do so ηuni sa zu-∅ cheche maa sohala.
 Adam fut hit man cert rel TD steal-perf bicycle def adjun
 “Adam will hit the man who stole the bicycle yesterday”.
- b. *Sohala Adam ni ηmε do so maa ηuni sa zu-∅ cheche maa
 adjun Adam fut hit man cert def rel TD steal-perf bicycle def.
 “Adam will hit the man who stole the bicycle yesterday”.
- (14) a. Buku ka Adam sa zu-∅ sohala.
 book foc Adam TD steal-perf adjun
 “It was a book (that) Adam stole yesterday”.
- b. sohala buku ka Adam sa zu-∅.
 adjun book foc Adam TD steal-perf
 “Yesterday, it was a book (that) Adam stole”

The assumption is then made that these two categories of constructions as in (13) and (14) are distinct from each other. Ameka (1992:2) makes same claim for Ewe and Akan (two Kwa languages) spoken in Ghana, and argues:

Focus constructions are different from cleft constructions in these languages. For example in Ewe and Akan, the focus marker may occur on a constituent in the cleft sentence, a focus-marked construction does not have to be a cleft. Obviously the two constructions are related in terms of their information structure, but I maintain that they should be distinguished because they have different grammatical, semantic and pragmatic properties... One difference between such focus movement and cleft constructions, for example in English, is that the focused entity should be thought of to be salient...and they do not necessarily have known information status in the discourse.

It is then claimed by the author based on the aforementioned counterarguments of the cleft or biclausal analysis of Dagbani *ex-situ* focus, that of Dagbani *ex-situ* focus constructions be analysed as monoclausal as that seems a more promising analysis. The pieces of evidence presented in favour of these claims are: the observation that *ka* and *n* are purely focus markers in the language (and not predicative markers or copular verbs), and the locality

restriction between clefts and focus constructions. Based on this evidence, the focus construction of Dagbani is tentatively established as monoclausal.

2.2. Testing for Focus in Dagbani

In this section, I try to justify the claim that *ka* and *n* are identificational or contrastive focus markers. This is achieved by using the tests in Kiss (1998). When the tests available in Kiss (1998) are applied in Dagbani data, it confirms the status of the particle *ka* and *n* as focus markers. The tests used in this work are: the interpretation of negation, coordination and entailment test and the prohibition on co-occurrence between exhaustive focus, the scope nature of identificational focus, and claims on the position of the focus phrase projection, it will be shown that the particles *ka* and *n* really are identificational focus markers in Dagbani. It will nevertheless be observed that not all the tests are consistent with data from Dagbani.

2.2.1. Interpretation of Negation

This test for exhaustivity is used by Kiss (1998) but attributed to Donka Farkas. This test is used here to show that the morphemes claimed to be focus markers in Dagbani really are. The test of interpretation of negation asserts that in a dialogue, only exhaustivity can be negated as in (15b) versus. (16b).

- (15) a. It was a hat that Mary picked for herself.
 b. No she picked a coat too. (*Kiss; 1998:251*).
- (16) a. Mary picked a hat for herself.
 b. # No, she picked a coat too (*Kiss; 1998:251*).

An issue of importance in this test is the correlation between denial and the morpheme *too*, which indicates that the content of the first sentence (that is Mary's picking the hat for herself) is not what is being negated, but the negation is associated with the claim of exhaustivity. The main proposal of this test then is that if a structure is said to be exhaustive, then it should not be possible to follow such a structure up, by agreeing and adding anything to what is said to be in focus. The examples in (15a) must then be exhaustive, whilst the example in (16a) must not be exhaustive. The test then seems suggestive that negating new information is odd since it does not exclude other possibilities. Thus whilst exhaustivity can be negated, new information cannot be negated. This test is valid for Dagbani as shown in the following sub section, where the test is applied to the morphemes asserted to be contrastive focus morphemes in Dagbani.

2.2.2. The Particle *ka*

- (17) a. daa ka Tina sa chaŋ-Ø sohala
Market foc Tina TD go-perf adjun
“It was **market** (that) Tina went yesterday”
- b. aayi, o sa chaŋ-Ø puuni gba
No, 3sg TD go-perf farm too
“No, she went to farm too (yesterday)”
- (18) a. Tina sa chaŋ-Ø daa sohala
Tina TD go-perf market adjun
“Tina went to market yesterday”
- b. #aayi, o sa chaŋ-Ø puuni gba sohala
No, 3sg TD go-perf farm too adjun
“No she went to farm too (yesterday)”

Whilst in the set in (17), exhaustivity is expressed that of (18) do not express exhaustivity. This indicates that the morpheme *ka* becomes syntactically, an indispensable element in constituents which are contrastively focused.

2.2.3. The Particle *n*⁵

The claim is that *n* and *ka* have similar function as they both mark identificational or contrastive focus on constituents which are moved to left periphery position (that is left-adjacent) position of the focused constituent. The test of interpretation of negation when applied to the particle *n* has a similar effect as observed in (17) and (18) above.

⁵ -The particle *n* assimilates to the place of articulation of the following segment. Based on this observation as will be seen in data used in this work, it is assumed to be proclitic; that is a clitic that precedes the word to which it is phonologically joined. Though *n* has been observed to have a free variant *lee*, Olawsky (1999), Fiedler and Schwarz (2005) this work does not consider the *lee* variant since that variation is valid only in the context of wh-questions.

- (19) a. **Bia maa** n di-Ø bindirigu maa zaa.
 Child def foc eat-perf food def quan
 “It is the child who ate all the food”
- b. aayi, bia maa ma gba di-Ø sheli
 No, child def mother too eat-perf quan
 “No, the child’s mother too ate some (of the food).”
- (20) a. Bia maa di-Ø bindirigu maa zaa
 Child def eat-perf food def quan
 “The child ate all the food”
- b. #aayi, bia maa ma gba di-Ø sheli
 No, child def mother too eat-perf quan
 “No the child’s mother too ate some (of the food)”

In these sentences, it is the case that sentence (19) has an exhaustive interpretation whilst that of (20) does not have. The cardinal issue in this test is that if a given structure is assigned an exhaustive interpretation, then it should not be possible to follow it up by agreeing and then adding any other item to the set assumed to be in focus. Thus, only exhaustivity can be negated in a given dialogue. This means then that, *n* marks exhaustivity and as such should be seen as a contrastive focus marker in Dagbani.

2.2.4. Coordination and Entailment test

This test is used in Kiss (1998) but attributed to Szabolcsi (1981). According to this test, if a sentence that is coordinated does not entail same sentence when one of the coordinates is dropped, then the construction is exhaustive. When this test is applied on *ka* and *n*, their status as identificational/contrastive focus markers in Dagbani is confirmed.

- (21) a. **buku mini alikalimi** ka ti da-Ø zuŋo
 book conj pen Foc 2pl buy-perf adjun
 “It is a book and a pen (that) we bought today”
- b. **buku** ka ti da-Ø zuŋo
 book foc 2pl buy -perf adjun
 “It is a book (that) we bought today”
- (22). a. Ti da-Ø buku mini alikalimi zuŋo
 2pl buy-perf book conj pen adjun
 “We bought a book and a pen today”

- b. Ti da-∅ buku zuŋo
 2pl buy-perf book adjun
 “We bought a book today”.

Whilst (21a) does not entail (21b), (22a) does entail (22b). The assumption that is held with this test is that because the co-ordinate DPs constitutes the exhaustively defined set, all other possibilities including even the subset are assumed to be excluded.

2.2.5. The Particle *n*

The particles *n* and *ka* have similar function as they both focus constituents via movement of those constituents to sentence initial position that is left-adjacent position of the focus marker. The test of coordination and entailment when applied on the particle *n* has a similar effect as observed in (23) and (24) below:

- (23) a. **shinkaafa mini nyu-ya** m mali daa.
 rice conj yam-pl foc have market
 “**It is rice and yams** that are expensive”.
- b. Shinkaafa m mali daa.
 Rice foc has market.
 “It is rice that is expensive”.
- (24) a. shinkaafa mini nyu-ya mali daa.
 Rice conj yam-pl has market
 “Rice and yams are expensive”.
- b. Shinkaafa mali daa.
 Rice has market.
 “Rice is expensive”.

In these sentences, it is the case that (24a) entails (24b), whilst (23a) does not entail (23b). This means then that, *n* marks exhaustivity and as such should be seen as a contrastive focus marker in Dagbani.

2.2.6. Co-occurrence Restriction of Identificational Focus and Universal Quantifiers

Another test that is used by Kiss to identify identificational focus is the claim that identificational focus cannot consist of such items as universal quantifiers, even-phrases; also-phrases; someone/something. This combinational impermissibility has been associated with semantic incompatibility. This prediction of Kiss however, seems inconsistent with Dagbani data.

- (25) a. **bia kam** ka Abu daa bu-∅
 child every foc Abu TD beat-perf
 “It was every child (that) Abu beat”
- b. **so** ka Adam daa da-∅ nimdi maa ti-∅.
 Someone foc Adam TD buy-perf meat def give-perf
 “It was somebody (that) Adam bought the meat for”.
- c. ?? **buku** gba ka Adam daa da-∅.
 book also foc Adam TD buy-perf
 “It was also a book (that) Adam bought (some time ago)”.
- d. ??hali **nyu-ya** ka Ama sa chim-∅.
 even yam-pl foc Ama TD fry-perf
 “It was even yams (that) Ama fried (yesterday)”.

It is seen from the data in (25) that this prediction of Kiss does not hold for Dagbani. For instance, (25a&25b) show that, it is possible for Dagbani exhaustivity to co-occur with universal quantifiers; *kam* “every” and *so* “someone” without affecting grammaticality. However, combination with *also* and *even-phrases* yields sentences with marginal grammaticality as seen in (25c&25d) above.

2.2.7. The Particle *n*

When the claim that Kiss makes about the incompatible co-occurrence restriction of identificational focus and some class of words is applied to *n*, the results are similar to that of *ka* as shown in (26) below.

- (26) a. **bia kam** n yu-ri Ama
 child every foc like-imperf Ama
 “It is every child who loves Ama”.
- b. **do so** n yu-ri Ama
 man some foc love-imperf Ama
 “It is some man who loves Ama”.
- c.?? Hali Ama n yu-ri Baba
 even Ama foc love-imperf Baba.
 “It is even Ama who is in love with Baba”

d.?? Abu gba n da-∅ nimdi maa.

Abu also foc buy-perf meat def

‘‘It is Abu who also bought the meat.’’

The data in (26) show that the predictions of Kiss do not entirely hold for Dagbani. For instance, the data in (26a&26b) indicate that it is possible in Dagbani, to have contrastive focus co-occur with *every*, and *someone*-universal quantifiers though, they are. Those of (26c&26d) however produce structures that are marginally ungrammatical. Though this current work does not have a readily available reason for this observation, it is hypothesised tentatively that the fact that the co-occurrence of *gba* ‘‘also’’ and *hali* ‘‘even’’ with identificational focus results in marginally ungrammatical sentences could be explained in terms of the fact that those quantifiers are cross linguistically associated with identificational focus. In encoding identificational focus therefore, one could use just these quantifiers. However, there may be the need to study the properties of these quantifiers in Hungary and Dagbani to cast more light on this observation.

2.2.8. Position of Focus Phrase Projection

Kiss (1998) further posits in line with Brody (1990, 1995) and in the spirit in generative linguistics, that identificational focus is located in the specifier position of a functional projection. This functional head according to Kiss (1998) is labelled focus phrase. She argues that [+f] is a head of the focus phrase which she argues is an abstract head. She further argues that focus phrase is constrained by the focus criterion which according to Kiss requires that the specifier of focus phrase has a [+f] phrase. She distinguishes this from information focus; which she asserts has no particular restrictive position which it occupies.

- (27). a. **Abu** ka o bo-ra
Abu foc 3sg want-imperf
‘‘It is Abu s/he wants’’
- b. *Abu o bo-ra
Abu 3sg want-imperf
- c. **Man** n da-∅ loori palli
1sg (emph) foc buy-perf car new
‘‘It is I who bought a new car’’
- d. Man da-∅ loori palli
1sg (emph) buy car new
‘‘I bought a new car!’’

The argument of this research is that this test of Kiss (1998) is consistent with the data of Dagbani. This conclusion is borne out of the observation that in Dagbani, a sentence that expresses exhaustivity is invariably located in the specifier position of a focus marker, which is claimed in this work to be *ka* or *n*. The functional projection manifests itself with the obligatory presence of the focus marker in every focused constituent. For instance the sentence in (27b) is ungrammatical because of the absence of the *ka* particle by which the functional projection is lost. In (27d) though, the sentence is grammatical, it loses its exhaustivity interpretation because of the absence of *n*. This is a difference observed between *ka* and *n*; whilst the absence of the former results in the formation of an ungrammatical sentence, the absence of the latter only “deprives” a sentence of an exhaustive reading.

Using the test of interpretation of negation, co-occurrence restriction of Exhaustive focus and universal quantifiers, and coordination and entailment test, position of focus phrase projection, as in (Kiss, 1998) it has been demonstrated that *ka*, and *n* mark identificational focus in Dagbani and as such are labelled as contrastive focus morphemes or markers. Typologically, Dagbani is then assumed to be different from languages such as English and Hausa which mark focus via focal stress and parallels languages such as Gungbe ; Aboh, (2004) and Kîtharaka; Muriungi (2004), Ewe and Akan ; Ameka (1992) which mark focus via the morphosyntactic presence of focus morphemes.

2.3. Focusing of Adjuncts in Dagbani

In this section, I give an account of the focusing of adjuncts in Dagbani. It will be argued that adjuncts just like non-subject constituents are focused via the use of *ka*. It will be shown that adjuncts are generally focused using the *ka* morpheme via movement of the focused constituent to sentence initial position (left periphery position). It will also be argued that the postulation of Fusheini (2006) that time adverbials display a unique property where it is possible to focus them without the use of *ka* is not correct for Dagbani since it is not possible to have focused constituents in Dagbani without the morphosyntactic presence of a focus marker. Perhaps a plausible syntactic explanation that could be given for this phenomenon is the “universal mobility” that is associated with adverbials. Thus, they do have “free syntax” but such structures without the morphosyntactic presence of *ka* cannot really be seen as focus constructions. The claim in this research then is that the absence of a focus marker in a given structure, will remove the possibility of an identificational focus interpretation of a given linguistic form in Dagbani. It is interesting to note, Fusheini (2006) also maintains that those

sentences cannot have exhaustive listing effects and yet maintains that they are focused constituents. If focus is encoded by the syntactic movement of the focused constituent to a sentence initial position (left periphery position) with obligatory morphosyntactic manifestation of a focus marker (which could either be *ka* or *n* for the case of Dagbani, then it could be argued that structure occupying a left periphery position is not necessarily a condition that gives that structure an identificational/contrastive (exhaustive) focus reading, since a contrastive focus structure should not be in left periphery, but must be attracted by a focus marker. This is in line with the prediction of Rizzi (1997) that other “things” can appear in the left periphery. These adjuncts will be assumed to be located in the topic phrase.

- (28) a. Abu sa da-Ø buku maa sohala
 Abu TD buy-perf book def adjun
 “Abu bought the book yesterday”
- b. **Sohala** ka Abu sa da-Ø buku maa
 adjun foc Abu TD buy-perf book def
 “It was **yesterday** that Abu bought the book”
- (29) a. O kpe-Ø gariche maa ni.
 3sg enter-perf garden def loc
 “S/he entered the garden”
- b. **gariche maa** ni ka o kpe- Ø
 Garden def loc foc 3sg enter-perf
 “It is in **the garden** that s/he entered”

As mentioned earlier, Fusheini (2006) argues that adverbials of time have a special behaviour where it is possible to focus them via movement to clause initial position, without the use of the *ka* particle as in (28). According to Fusheini (2006) such structures as in (30b&30d) are also considered as focused constructions though they lack the focus markers.

- (30) a. Abu sa da-Ø buku maa sohala.
 Abu TD buy-perf book def adjun
 “Abu bought the book (yesterday).”
- b. Sohala Abu sa da-Ø buku maa
 Yesterday Abu TD buy-perf book def
 “Yesterday Abu bought the book”
- c. Ti nye-Ø bi-hi maa zaa pumpono.
 2plu see-perf child-plu def quan adjun
 “We saw all the children now”
- d. pumpono ti nye-Ø bi-hi maa zaa
 adjun 2plu see-perf child-plu def quan
 “Now we have seen all the children”

The current claim that (30b) and (30d) cannot be considered as focused constituents is seen on grounds that they are infelicitous as answers to questions that will demand focused adjuncts as answers as in (31) and (32).

- (31). **Q.** a. bondali ka Abu da-Ø loori maa?
 When foc Abu buy-perf car def
 “When did Abu buy the car?”
- A.** b. #Sohala Abu sa da-Ø loori maa.
 Yesterday Abu TD buy-perf car def
 “Abu bought the car yesterday”
- A.** c. **Sohala** ka Abu sa da-Ø loori maa
 adjun foc Abu TD buy-perf car def
 “It was yesterday (that) Abu bought the car”

(32) Q. a. Bondali ka yi nye-Ø bi-hi maa zaa?

When foc 2plu see-perf child-pl def quan

“When did you see all the children?”

A: b. # pumponjo ti nye- Ø bi-hi maa zaa

Now 2plu see-perf child-plu def quan

“Now we have seen all the children”

A. b. **pumponjo** ka ti nye- Ø bi-hi maa zaa

Now foc 2plu see-perf child-plu def quan

“It is now (that) we have seen all the children”

In the questions given in (31) and (32), the answers that will be considered contextually appropriate are answers that will have focused adjunct occasioned by the claim that wh-questions will always demand that the corresponding constituent serving as an answer should be focused. The fact that the answers in (31b) and (32b) are considered infelicitous means that the adjuncts *sohala* “yesterday” and *pumponjo* “now” are really not focused positions in those sentences. If they were focused constituents, then they would have been felicitous as answers to (31) and (32). It is also observed that it is possible to have adverb fronting co-occur with focus movement in Dagbani.

(33). a. sohala loori maa ka Abu sa da-Ø.

adjun car def foc Abu TD buy-perf

“Yesterday, it was the car (that) Abu bought”.

b. *loori maa ka sohala Abu sa da-Ø.

car def foc yesterday Abu TD buy-perf.

The ungrammaticality of sentence (33b) implies that though adverb fronting is allowed in the grammar of Dagbani, the adverb targets a particular syntactic position, claimed in this work to be a position that must precede the focus marker as in (33a). If this were allowed, then the sentence in (33b) will have been grammatical in the language. This observation then makes me claim that the position that is occupied by the frame adverbials in Dagbani, without the *ka* morpheme should be the topic position. This then patterns with the claim of Rizzi (1997) that several constituents can occupy the left periphery of the clausal structure.

Quite a number of temporal expressions in natural languages are classified as frame adverbial phrases. Smith (1981) makes a hypothesis that, temporal frame adverbials could be

categorized into three different types: deictic, clock-calendar, and dependent.⁶. It is possible in most natural languages to have these frame adverbials syntactically, occur as adverbs, noun phrases and even prepositional phrases. It would be shown, using the proposal of Rizzi (1997) on the left periphery structure, that these frame adverbials in Dagbani do work as adverbials and can be hosted within the topic position of the Dagbani left periphery structure. It will also be shown that also the topmost topic position can host a frame adverbial in the language.

2.3.1. Subordinate Clauses and Focusing

To buttress the current claim in this research that focused constituents have specific positions in which they land- where I claim is Spec Foc and called the focus site after Aboh, (2004), there is the need to look at complex sentences and how focusing is done since a consideration of just simple sentences may not be decisive enough for any solid conclusion to be drawn as to the morphosyntactic properties of focus constructions. This then calls for the need to investigate the morphosyntax of focus constructions in subordinate clauses.

Empirical evidence will show that, focus movement in Dagbani is also possible with subordinate clauses and has the same morphosyntactic property as that observed for simple sentences- that is the focused constituents have Spec-Foc as their landing sites and are always in spec-head configuration with the focus markers. In sentences (34a) and (35a) for instance, it is clear that they are neutral sentences and have no focus marker. Sentences (34b) and (35b) are however, focused embedded structures which indicate that movement of focused constituents to left periphery position is not only available with simple sentences but also are possible in subordinate clauses. The fact that the verb in the matrix clause in (34c) is suffixed with *ya* is what is responsible for its ungrammaticality. The interaction between verb morphology and successive cyclic movement is left for clarification in future research. Thus the *ka* morpheme in Dagbani can be used for successive cyclic movement.

(34) a. Abu tehi-ya ni Jemima di-Ø bindirigu maa

Abu think-*perf* that Jemima eat-*perf* food def

“Abu thought that Jemima has eaten the food”.

⁶ For details on the classifications proposal, readers are referred to Smith (1981)

b. **bindirigu maa** ka Abu tehi-Ø ni Jemima di-ya

Food def foc Abu think-*perf* that Jemima eat-*perf*

“It is the food that I thought that Jemima ate”

c. *bindirigu maa ka Abu tehi-ya ni Jemima di-Ø/di-ya.

Food def foc Abu think-*perf* that Jemima eat-*perf*

In sentence (3b) for instance, in attempt to focus the object, “*bindirigu maa*”- the food, it moves to sentence initial position (a position immediately to the left of the focus marker) *ka*. This movement does not affect grammaticality. In (35b) too, the subject of the embedded clause *bihi maa*, “the children” is focused and it takes a position that is immediately to the left of *ka*, the focus marker that focuses non-subject constituents. The observation that successive cyclic movement is possible by the use of *ka* is evidence that *ka* and *n* must be syntactically different in Dagbani.

(35) a. Abu tehi-ya ni bi-hi maa chaŋ-Ø daa.

Abu think-*perf* that child-plu def go-*perf* market

“Abu thought that the children went to the market”

b. **Bi-hi maa** ka Abu tehi-Ø ni bɛ chaŋ- Ø daa

child-plu def foc 1sg think-*perf* 2pl go-*perf* market

“It is the children who Abu thought went to the market”.

c. *bi-hi maa n Abu tehi ni bɛ chaŋ- Ø daa⁷

child-plu def foc Abu think-*perf*

d. *Bi-hi maa ka Abu tehi-ya ni bɛ chaŋ- Ø daa.

child-plu def foc Abu think-*perf* that 2pl go-*perf* market.

⁷ - It is observed based on (34c) and (35c) that in successive cyclic movement, the verb in the matrix clause is invariably not marked with the perfective aspectual suffix *ya*. When it is marked with the morpheme, the resulting structure is ungrammatical. This issue is unclear in this current research and is left for future to shed more light on. *ya* is the intransitive version. Why *ya* changes to transitive Ø in the matrix clause is unclear.

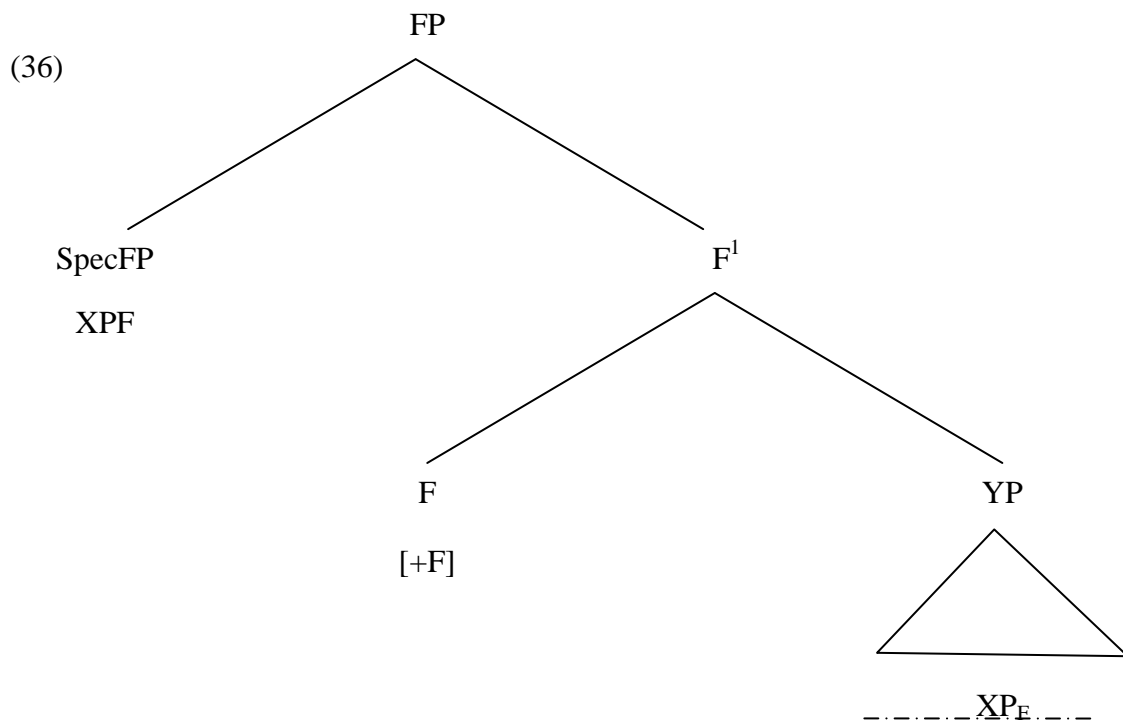
It is also possible to focus the subject of an embedded clause as in (35b) where the subject of the embedded clause: *bihi maa*, “the children” has been focused. It is however interesting to observe that *bihi maa* “the children” has been focused with the use of the morpheme *ka* which has been associated with non-subject constituents in the literature of Dagbani. The fact that *ka* has been used in focusing a subject constituent of an embedded clause shows that; *ka* can focus subject constituents as well. The assumption of this research is that, *ka* focuses non-subject constituents as well as subject constituents that are not located within the matrix clause. Thus whilst *n* only attracts the closest DP within the clause, *ka* focuses non-subject constituents of the matrix clause as well as subject constituents within the embedded clause of a given structure. Thus the movement that is involved with the use of *n* is strictly local. The ungrammaticality of the sentence in (35d) shows that it is not possible to have the subject of the embedded clause focused using the *n* morpheme. The assumption is then made that the structural asymmetry in Dagbani focus marking with *ka* and *n* is not strictly an issue of subject versus non-subject asymmetry, but local versus non-local position of the constituent to be moved to the left periphery. An interesting issue that is worthy of mention is the ungrammaticality of sentences (34c) and (35c). A plausible explanation to the ungrammaticality of these sentences may be that there is some restriction between focus movement and verbal morphology in subordinate clauses. It is then hypothesised, based on (34c) and (35c) that the verb that immediately precedes the subordinate clause of a focus constituent cannot be morphologically marked with the intransitive completive or perfective aspectual marker *ya* as that result in ungrammaticality. There is thus a prohibition of the presence of *ya* on the intermediate verb in Dagbani as seen from data.

Data used in this thesis seem enough evidence to conclude that focusing in Dagbani is realized via the movement of the focused constituent to a particular position which is focus position. This position is hypothesized to be immediately to the left of *ka* or *n* depending on whether the movement is strictly local or to an A-bar position which can then be successive cyclic. Occasioned by the frequent occurrence of *ka* and *n* in focused constituents, they have been labelled focus markers. Arguing in line with, Aboh, (2004), Rizzi, (1997) it is assumed that these particles are morphological manifestations of the focus features [+F], that is the head.

2.4. Theoretical Assumptions/Explanations

Within the theoretical assumptions of Minimalism, it is argued that encoding of identificational focus in Dagbani involves an overt syntactic movement of the focused

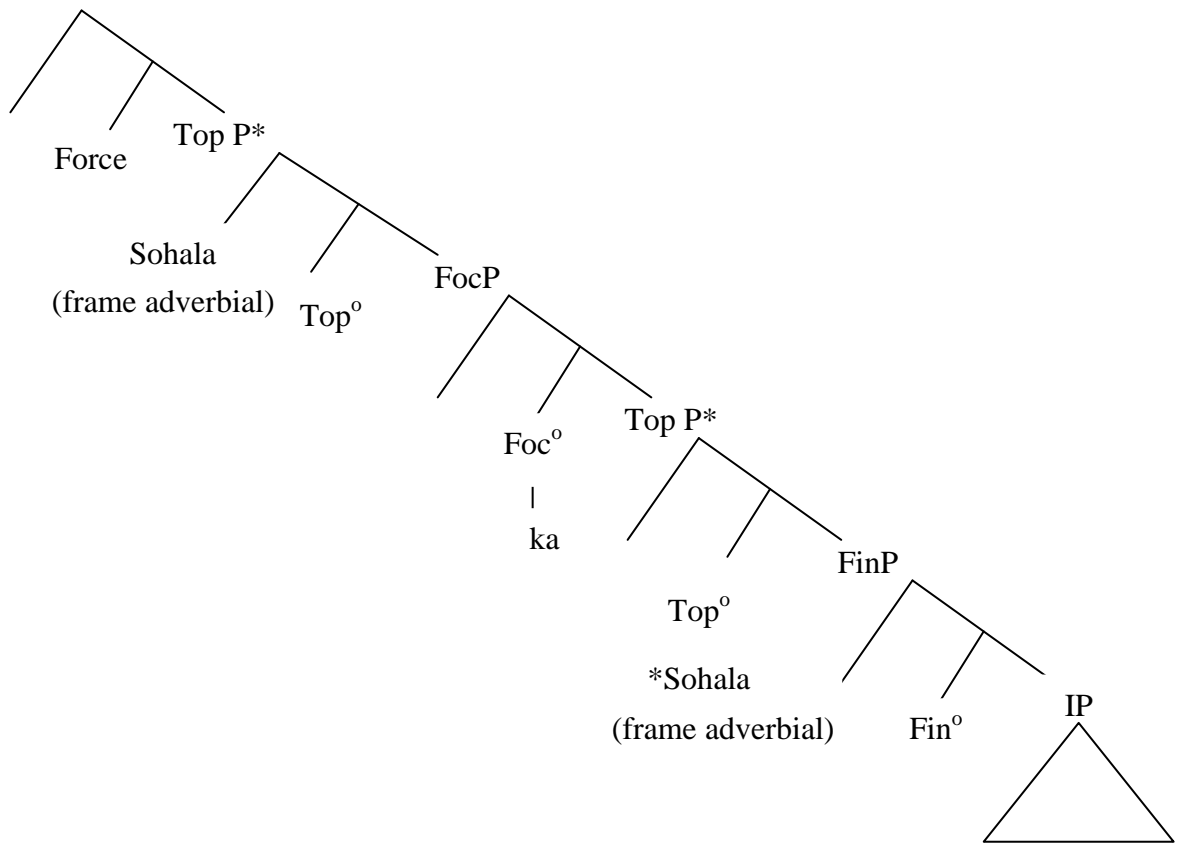
constituent to sentence initial position; left periphery position. The movement is triggered by a strong feature in the head of the focus phrase. Based on the fact that the movement in Dagbani is overt, it is posited that the feature specification in the Dagbani lexicon must be strong. This movement then displaces an XP bearing which is assumed to be bearing the focus feature to the specifier position of the focus phrase. In the case of Dagbani, the claim is that *ka* and *n* are the heads of the focus phrase in line with their status as focus markers in the language; a traditional assumption associated with focus markers in generative-based accounts of focus constructions. Once *ka* and *n* occupy the focus heads position within the clausal left periphery, they then attract focused constituents to their immediate left. Following Aboh (2004), it is posited in this research that, the movement is necessitated by the need for the focused constituent to be in specifier position of the functional projection which is labelled as FocP, and has its head as Foc specified as [+F] (Aboh; 1995, 1998a, 1999). It is further stipulated that every focused constituent in Dagbani is subject to licensing condition; specified in overt syntax, assumed in this research to be at (PF). It is what calls for the need of every constituent that is specified as [+F] to be in spec-head configuration with [+F] so as to make feasible the checking of interpretable features associated with the head. With the current claim that focused constituents target focus positions (Spec Foc), it then implies that Foc has the feature [+F] and must always be in specifier position of the focus projection to check the [+F] features that are associated with the head Foc (Rizzi 1991, 1996, Pukás 1992, Aboh 1998a). As usual of generative accounts of *ex-situ* focus, it is argued that the focused constituent raises in the syntax so as to check its focus features (Rizzi, 1997, Chomsky 1995). The schema, in line with the focus phrase postulation of Schwarz (2007) for Kikuyu as shown in (36):



With these theoretical assumptions above, the ungrammaticality of sentence (3c) is self explanatory. In that sentence, it is seen that there is a morphosyntactic absence of the focus marker *ka* and once there is the requirement that focused constituents must be in Spec-head configuration, the absence of the focus marker means that there cannot be any spec-head configuration. This lack of spec-head configuration results in formation of ungrammatical sentence since the features associated with the head cannot be checked without the spec-head configuration. Thus, the spec-head relationship which is an essential syntactic requirement necessary for the checking of interpretable features is threatened resulting in the ungrammaticality of that sentence. In sentences (4a) and (4b) too, the ungrammaticality is occasioned by the fact that there is intervening linguistic material between the head and the specifier position. This also threatens the needed configuration that is required of the focused constituent located at SpecFocP and Foc, which is expressed morphosyntactically via the presence of *ka* and *n*, thereby resulting in ungrammaticality. This also indicates that there

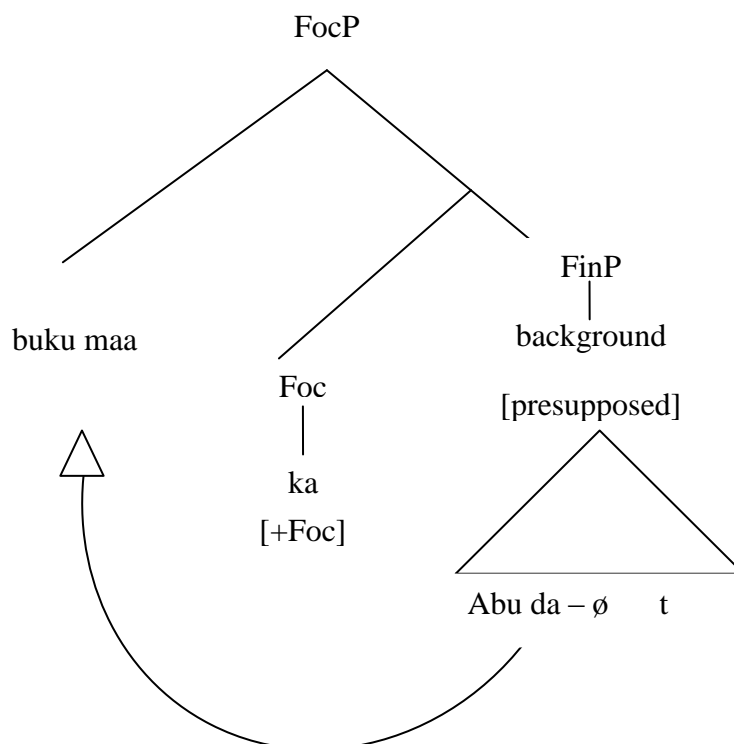
cannot be any linguistic material between the focused constituent and focus marker. This same theoretical proposal has been made for many languages that have received Minimalist approach to the study of focus constructions with the difference being only with the location of focus as far as its syntactic relation to other heads may be concerned, and the question as to whether the movement of the focused constituent (is overt or covert). The ungrammaticality of (4c) also indicates that object constituents of simple clauses cannot be focused with the *n* particle. The syntactic representation of the system will be as shown in (37) that is following Rizzi (1997):

(37) Force P



A default information structure involving the encoding of exhaustivity in Dagbani with the use of the *ka* particle is then hypothesized in (38).

(38)

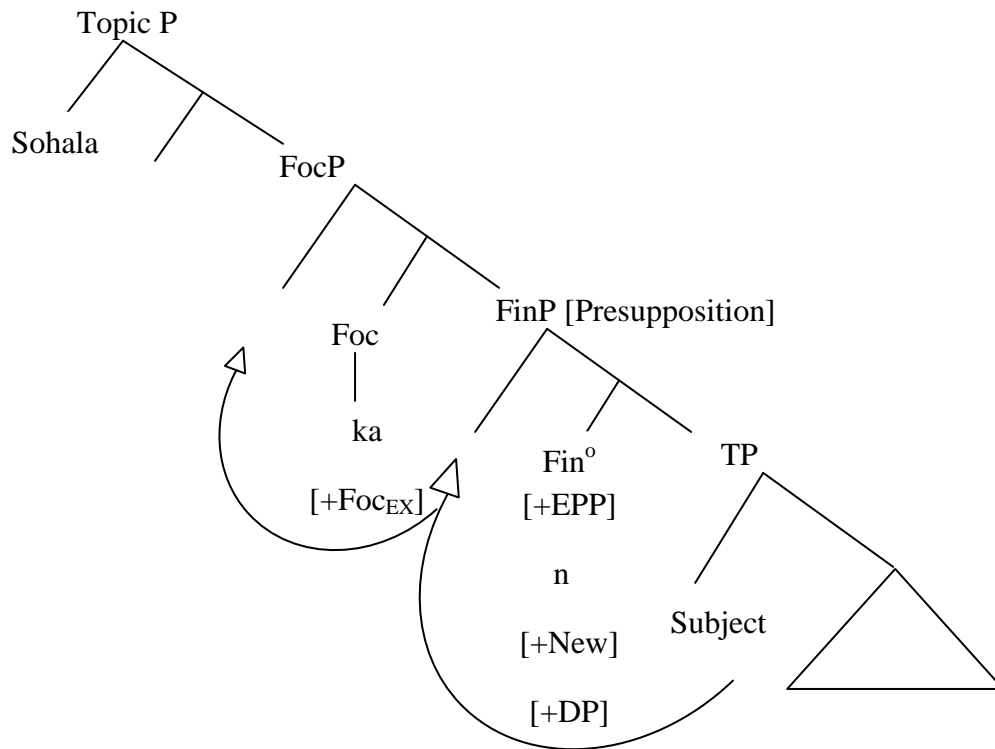


An attentive reader would remember that, it has been mentioned that the *n* particle unlike its *ka* counterpart, is compatible with all new information in the context wh-questions- that is “out- of -the-blue “ context. In such a context, it has a non-exhaustive reading in Dagbani. It also however, has an exhaustive reading in an “at-issue” discourse context. Based on these different functions of the particle in Dagbani, a proposal has been made on the default structure of this particle in information structuring in Dagbani. It is argued that the two functions might be located within different positions in the left periphery of the clausal structure. The syntactic projection in (39) shows a default structure in the use of *n* in information structuring in Dagbani. As mentioned earlier the use of *n* in the encoding of identificational focus involves local movement. It is further speculated that Fin° might have an EPP feature since it attracts only [+DP] constituents. A tentative representation of the movement involved in focusing the closest DP within the clause undergoes by the use of *n* is given in (39).

We can speculate that *n* is really a head of a lower projection possibly FinP , that attracts the closest DP to its spec position. We further hypothesize that the exhaustive reading of the subject occurs when the subject moves further to the Spec of the higher FocP projection. In this case however, an overt *ka* particle is not necessary, although I have no independent explanation of this fact. The argument is then made that a constituent that is [+Foc] must also

be [+new] but a constituent that is [+new] does not have to be [+Foc]. The default structure below is aimed at making a proposal that captures these two functions of the particle in Dagbani.⁸

(39)



The table in (40) gives a summary of the identificational focus markers in the language and the types of movement involved in the choice of the two particles as well as the grammatical categories that can be focused by the use of these particles are also shown in the table.

It gives a summary of the type of movement(s) that the two particles can be used in as well as the grammatical categories that are involved in the movement.

⁸ I do not have an explanation for why *ka* and *n* morphemes do not co-occur in Dagbani, given the hypothesis that they represent slightly different functions. One possibility is that *n* carries both [+new] and [+foc] features and lexicalises both heads. I leave the working out of this idea to further research.

(40). the particles: *ka* and *n*; the movement they take part in and categories focused.

<i>particle</i>	<i>type of movement</i>	<i>grammatical category of moved constituents</i>	<i>Reading</i>
<i>Ka</i>	A-bar movement	objects and adjuncts	Exhaustive
	successive cyclic movement	subject constituents (embedded subjects), objects as well as adjuncts.	Exhaustive
<i>n/m</i>	local A- movement.	subject constituents	new information.

2.5. Interim Summary

This chapter was devoted to investigating the function(s) of *ka* and *n* in information packaging in Dagbani. It was observed in this chapter that *ka* marks identificational focus in Dagbani via the movement of the focused constituents to spec foc. It was further observed that though *ka* and *n* both allow identificational focus in Dagbani, the two particles are different. The differences between the two particles were observed at the syntactic level and the use of the tests of exhaustivity available in Kiss (1998).

At the syntactic level, it was observed that whilst *ka* can be used in successive cyclic movement, the same is not the case of the *n* morpheme. The particle *n* therefore only focuses the closest DP subject within the clausal structure, and is not necessarily exhaustive, an observation that made me conclude that the two particles are in different positions in the clause structure. The *ka* morpheme as observed, is able to focus non-subject constituents of simple clauses, but also used in focusing subject constituents of embedded clauses. In line with the distinction Kiss (1998) makes on identificational and information focus, this chapter observed that exhaustively focused items marked with *ka* and *n* are always located in the specifier position of the focus phrase as claimed by Kiss. There is thus the movement of the constituent to be focused to a specific position.

On the test used for exhaustivity, it was established based on empirical evidence, that it is possible to have *n* occur in the contexts of all new information, whilst that is not possible with the *ka* particle. It is observed that *n* is compatible with all new information in the “out-of-the-blue” discourse and also compatible with exhaustive reading in the context of “at-

issue” discourse. This is not possible of the *ka* morpheme since it is only compatible with exhaustive reading in Dagbani.

On the structural asymmetry between subjects and non-subjects focused constituents in Dagbani, this work concludes that the asymmetry is not as strict as earlier researchers have pointed out. This tentative assumption is based on the observation that it is possible for *ka*, to focus subject constituents of embedded clauses, though it has traditionally been associated with the focusing of non-subject constituents. The claim is then made in this thesis that, the asymmetry between *ka* and *n* must be an issue of locality rather than subject versus non-subject as earlier researchers have advanced. Thus, whilst *n* focuses local DP subjects that is “attracts” the closest DP within the clausal structure, *ka* focuses non-local subject constituents as well as object constituents of simple clauses.

Thus, *n* is not really a Foc head in Dagbani, but to get an exhaustive reading on the subject, the subject must always undergo movement to the *n* head before moving to Spec FocP. I speculate that this is because an exhaustively focused subject always also have a [+new] feature to check in addition to the [+Foc] feature.

Within the theoretical assumptions of Minimalism, it is argued in this thesis that constituents that are exhaustively focused in Dagbani involve syntactic movement to a particular position within the clausal structure. These constituents are then located to the immediate left of the focus markers: *ka* and *n*. Based on the observation that the focused constituents are invariably located at Spec-Foc, it is argued in this thesis that the landing site of every exhaustively focused constituent is Spec-Foc, occasioned by the need for focused constituents to always be in Spec-head configuration with their heads. It was further observed in this chapter that focus movement to left periphery position in Dagbani is available for both main and subordinate clauses. Multiple foci are not allowed in Dagbani occasioned by the fact that only one specifier position is available in the language.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PARTICLE *la* IN THE SENTENCE STRUCTURE OF DAGBANI

3.1. Particles and Sentence Structures in Languages

Cross linguistically, the analysis of particles has been acknowledged to be very challenging to grammarians. One such particle in the study of the grammar of Oti-Volta languages is the controversial post verbal morpheme *la* which has attracted the attention of researchers in Oti Volta linguistics: Olawsky (1999) , Fusheini (2006), and Fiedler, and Schwarz (2005) for Dagbani, Dakubu (2000) for Gurune, Bodomo (2000) for Dagaare and Schwarz (2007), for Konkomba. Though the morpheme has often been associated with focus marking in these languages, it continues to be an issue of debate as to whether it focuses the verb, the post verbal complement or both the verb and its complement that is the entire predicate. Section 1.3 of this research was devoted to earlier analyses that the post verbal particle *la*, has received from researchers into Dagbani linguistics. It also pointed out the weaknesses of each of these analyses. This then calls for a revisit of the role of this particle in the sentence structure of Dagbani. This section of the thesis shall give attention to the analysis of this particle within the Dagbani sentence structure.

Well-formed sentences of a given language satisfy all the syntactic, semantic, and morphological as well as the phonological principles or rules of the grammar of that language. Accordingly, an utterance in a given language must always tally with the grammatical principles of that language. This does not imply, however, that utterances of linguistic structures can be used and considered appropriate in any given discourse context just on grounds that they are grammatically correct. That is, besides a given linguistic structure meeting the grammatical rules of a given language, the contextual appropriateness is something that is of great importance in language, since using the appropriate sentence form in a right discourse enhances efficiency of communication. Considering the fact that discourse is organized by the use of information packaging devices, such as topic, focus among others, it is usually the case that, if the information structure of a particular expression does not match the information packaging that is required in that given context, that particular linguistic form is infelicitous in that context, and as such unacceptable, although it might be grammatically well-formed. This presupposes that language usage is not only built on grammatical acceptance of linguistic form, but also the contextual appropriateness of a given linguistic expression in a given context. Linguistic forms thus have contexts in which they are judged appropriate by the users of the language which usually portray structural

differences in sentences with their contextual usage. As mentioned briefly in the introductory chapter of this work, the post verbal particle *la* continues to be controversial in this study of Dagbani. This section of the thesis is aimed at investigating the function of this particle aimed at coming out with a hypothesis as to what this particle does in Dagbani sentence structure. Consider the following minimal pairs:

- (1) a. Abu da Ø la loori
 Abu buy-perf LA car
 “Abu (has) bought a car”
- b. Abu da- Ø loori
 Abu buy-perf car
 “Abu (has) bought a car”.
- c. O nya-Ø la Anna
 3sg see-perf LA Anna
 “S/he saw Anna”
- d. O nya- Ø Anna
 3sg see-perf Anna
 “S/he saw Anna”.

As mentioned earlier in the introductory chapter of this work, the issue is the difference between these pairs of sentences as in (1a, 1b) and (1c, 1d) continues to be controversial for most native speakers. Many native speakers however, argue that the presence of the particle within the sentence structure of the language indicates that what is presented to the hearer is not “shared knowledge” (that is it is known by the speaker alone, and so new to the hearer) whilst its absence implies that the information presented is shared knowledge. Judging with my native intuitions supported by opinions gathered from other native speakers, it is argued that the presence of *la* in the sentence structure asserts some new information, whilst the absence of it indicates that the information conveyed is not new information. Based on the ground that the absence of this particle in the sentence may also impact on the pragmatic

feature which partitions the sentence into a presupposed part and an exhaustively focused part. Consider the context below:

(3) a. Context: Abena’s father has bought a new car. Abena’s friend, Kojo is not aware of this, and Abena wants to get him (Kojo) informed of the news:

b. # Abu: M ba sa da-Ø loori palli

my father TD buy-perf car new

“My father bought a new car (yesterday).”

c. Abu: M ba sa da-Ø la loori palli

my father TD buy-perf LA car new

“My father bought a new car (yesterday).”

In this context in (3) above, it is seen that the answer in (3b) is infelicitous. This is borne out of the fact that it does not have a *la*. This then makes it contextually inappropriate as an answer since the new information would require the syntactic presence of *la* within the sentence structure. This explains why (3b) is contextually inappropriate. It should however be noted that, the occurrence of *la* in all new information focus and that of *n* is an issue of pragmatics. In “at-issue” context, *n* is what is appropriate whilst in an “out-of-the-blue” context, *la* is chosen. This is captured clearly by comparing data in (3) and (10).

It will also be shown in this test that, with Dagbani speakers, it is always possible to have this particle in answering wh-questions.

(4). Q: a. bondali ka Abu da-Ø loori maa?

when foc Abu buy-perf car def

“When did Abu buy the car?”

IS: Subject is old, adjunct is new, and object is old.

A: b. sohala ka o sa da-Ø o.

yesterday foc 3sg TD buy-perf 3sg

“It was yesterday that he bought it”.

c. # Sohala o sa da-Ø o.

yesterday 3sg TD buy-perf 3sg

“Yesterday, he bought it”

d. O sa da-Ø o la sohala.
3sg TD buy-perf 3sg LA adjun.
“He bought it yesterday”

(5) **Q:** a. Bo ka o da-Ø?
what foc 3sg buy-perf
“What has s/he bought?”

IS: subject is old, object is new, verb is old

A: b. loori ka o da-Ø
car foc 3sg buy-perf
“It is a car that s/he bought”

c. o da-Ø la loori
3sg buy-perf LA car
“S/he bought a car”.

(6) **Q:** a. ηuni n da-Ø loori maa?
who foc buy-perf car def
“who bought the car”

IS: Subject new, verb is old, object is old.

A: b. Abu n da-Ø loori maa
Abu foc buy-perf car def
“It is Abu who bought the car”

c. #Abu da-Ø loori maa
Abu buy-perf car def
“Abu has bought the car”.

d. # Abu da-∅ la loori maa

Abu buy-perf LA car def.

“Abu bought the car”.

Looking at the data in (4), (5) and (6), one is tempted to conclude that the presence of the post verbal *la* in the sentence structure of Dagbani indicates that an NP object or adjunct that follows it is focused. It is then no surprise that some scholars on Dagbani grammar have analysed it as a marker of focus on *in-situ* NP object and adjunct constituents. In the sentence in (4), we have an adjunct question, whose felicitous answer has the post verbal *la* in the sentence structure. That of (5) is an object question which also has an answer with *la* within its sentence structure as the felicitous answer. The question in (6) which is a subject question, however, does not accept a sentence with *la* as a felicitous one. These data seem convincing for one to conclude that this particle marks focus on *in-situ* constituents within the VP.

However there is evidence in the language which argues against the assumption that *la* marks focus on NP objects and adjuncts in *in-situ* positions. This is clear in cases where we find this particle being obligatory in sentence structures which are felicitous as answers to questions which require the entire VP to be focused as in the context of (7) below.

(7). Q: a. Bo ka Mary mini Abu sa niŋ-∅ sohala?

what foc Mary conj Abu TD do-perf adjun

“What did Mary and Abu do yesterday?”

IS: subject is old, adjunct is old, and VP is new information.

A: b. Bɛ sa da-∅ la loori.

2pl TD buy-perf LA car

“They bought a car yesterday”.

A: c. # loori ka bE sa da-Ø.

car foc 2pl TD buy-perf

“It was car they bought (yesterday)”.

The observation that it is possible for *la* to occur in structures that demand an entire VP be focused serves as counterevidence to its analysis as a focus marker on NP object and adjuncts in *in-situ* position.

This thesis further observes that when *la* is used, it is felicitous to continue the sentence within which it occurs with some linguistic material as shown in (8a) whilst (8b) which is identificational focus is shown to be infelicitous in the language. The infelicity of adding something to what is assumed to be in identificational focus was mentioned earlier on the exhaustive test in chapter two.

(8). a. O da-Ø la namda mini loori

3sg buy-perf LA sandals conj car

“S/he bought a pair of sandals and a car”.

b. ??namda ka o da-Ø ni loori

sandals foc 3sg buy-perf conj car.

“??It is a pair of sandals he bought and a car”

The observation in (8) also implies that *la* does not mark exhaustive focus as assumed in earlier research. The claim is then made in this thesis that this particle could not be analysed as an exhaustive focus marker on NP objects and adjuncts. It is then analysed as a particle that partitions a sentence within which it is found between background and new information. Interestingly, presenting one part of the sentence as background does not require that it is shared information. This makes the background new partition information partition different from what is generally assumed about new information focus in the literature; Lambrecht (1994) and Vallduví (1993).

There are however, some contexts in which in the context of *wh*-questions, a sentence with *la* will be considered as infelicitous. The information structures of such sentences further buttress the current claim that the presence of the particle *la* within the sentence structure

indicates that the linguistic material that precedes it must be background and what follows it must be new. This is shown in data in (9) and (10) below.

(9) Q: a. η uni n ku- \emptyset bua maa?

who foc kill-perf goat def

“Who killed the goat?”

IS: subject is new, verb is old and object is old

A: b. Adam n ku- \emptyset bua maa.

Adam foc kill-perf goat def

“It is Adam who killed the goat”

c. #Adam ku- \emptyset la bua maa

Adam killed LA goat def

“Adam killed the goat”.

d. #Adam ku- \emptyset bua maa.

Adam kill-perf goat def

“Adam killed the goat”.

It is seen from the data in (9) that when the constituent that correspond to the *wh*-question is a subject constituent, then the answer that will be considered felicitous in that context cannot have the *la* particle in its sentence structure. The aforementioned explanation clarifies why (9c) is contextually infelicitous. The answer in (9d) also is considered infelicitous in the context of (9) because it is not a logical answer to the question. The structure in (9c) cannot be an answer to a *wh*-question in Dagbani since the subject has been backgrounded when it should have be an answer to a question.

(10) Q: a. Bo n niŋ-Ø?
 What foc happen-perf?
 “What happened?”
IS: All new information.

A: b. Ama n da-Ø bua
 Ama foc buy-perf goat
 “It is Ama who bought a goat”.

A: c. # bua ka Ama da-Ø
 goat foc Ama buy-perf
 “It is a goat Ama has bought”.

d. # Ama da-Ø la bua.
 Ama buy-perf LA goat.
 “Ama bought a goat”

In the context of all new information as in (10) above, it is seen that a sentence with *la* in its sentence structure could not be felicitous as an answer. This gives a clue that *la* is not felicitous in contexts that demand all new information sentence structure. This explains why (10d) is infelicitous as an answer in that context. The structure in (10b) is good because *Ama* has a [+new] feature, therefore, the information status of the rest of the sentence is vague.

Dakubu (2000:61) identifies a phonologically and syntactically similar particle in Gurune, another Gur language somewhat close to the Dagbani language and argues that:

When *la* follows the verb, it marks Focus on the entire predicate, that is, it asserts the concreteness or factivity of the VP-the verb together with its Complement. --- it never occurs with an intransitive verb or a verb whose Complement (which may be an NP, a pronoun, a locative NP or an entire clause is not expressed.

Though the particle *la* in Dagbani does manifest same syntactic restrictions as the one discussed of Gurune in Dakubu (2000); it never occurs with intransitive verbs, or a verb whose complement is not expressed, they seem to have different functions in the two related languages. It is for instance seen that it cannot be concluded that *la* marks focus on the VP in Dagbani, since there are instances in which *la* occurs within sentence structures in which only the NP object or adjunct, are in focus. The claim is made that the fact that *la* is a presentational focus marker, partitioning the sentence into background and presentational focus. This could be supported by considering the fact that when it occurs with NP objects pronouns, the NP object pronouns come before it. This could be explained in light of the fact that pronouns are backgrounded within the clause structure.

3.3. The Syntactic Distribution of *la*

The post verbal particle *la* in Dagbani has a syntactic restriction. It is for instance observed that this particle never occurs without some kind of post verbal complement. When it is used with a verb that has no object complement, which could either be an object NP, or an adjunct, then the resulting structure is ungrammatical or at best incomplete. This ‘transitive’ requirement of the *la* particle is very clear in Dagbani grammar as shown below.

- (11)
- a. Abu da-ri la bu-hi
 Abu buy-imperf LA goat-plu
 “Abu buys goats”.
 - b. Abu da-Ø la bu-hi
 Abu buy-perf LA goat-plu.
 “Abu (has) bought goats”
 - c. O di-Ø la zuŋo
 3sg eat-perf LA adjun
 “S/he ate today”
 - d. *Abu da-ri la
 Abu buy-imperf LA

e. *Abu da-Ø la

Abu buy-perf LA.

Descriptively, the sentences in (11a-11c) are accepted as grammatical ones in the language because they meet the syntactic requirement of the language, as they have either NP objects after the post verbal *la* as in (11a and 11b) or an adjunct as in (11c). The ungrammaticality or better put incompleteness of the sentences in (11d and 11e) is borne out of the fact that they do not meet the syntactic requirement of the language- which has it that whatever verb *la* comes after must be assigned an NP object or an adjunct.

Looking at the transitivity requirement of the *la* particle, one might be tempted to assume that it might be an accusative case particle in the language. This is however, not the case, because both objects and adjuncts satisfy the *la* particle. This probably patterns with the claims of Vallduví that no sentence can be all background, something must be new. If *la* marks what precedes it as background, then something must follow. The hypothesis then is that *la* is [+assertoric], which means that the sentence cannot be all background, that is there must be new information.

It is however, also observed that when the NP object that follows the *la* particle is an object pronoun, there is a different syntactic relationship between the particle and the object pronoun. As seen with data in (11a-11c), the NP object always follows the *la* particle and thus it is immediately preceded by the particle. However, if it happens that the NP object is a pronoun, and then it must come between the verb and the particle *la* as in (12). This, as mentioned earlier is due to the fact that pronouns are old information in the discourse context.

(12) a. Abu sa ti-Ø o la buku palli

Abu TD give-perf 3sg LA book adjec

“Abu gave him/her a new book (yesterday)”.

b. *Abu sa ti-Ø la o buku palli

Abu TD give-perf LA 3sg book new (yesterday).

- c. Tina bu-Ø ba la kpe
 Tina beat-perf 2plu LA here
 “Tina beat them here”
- d. *Tina bu-Ø la ba kpe.
 Tina beat-perf LA 2plu here.
 “Tina beat them here”.
- e. Anna sa tu- Ø ma la sohala.
 Anna TD insult-perf 2sg LA yesterday
 “Anna insulted me yesterday”.
- f. *Anna sa tu- Ø la ba sohala.
 Anna TD insult-perf LA 2plu adjun.
 “Anna insulted them yesterday”.

Based on data that is shown in (12), the observation is made that NP object pronouns have different syntactic relations with the post verbal particle *la* within the sentence structure of Dagbani. The ungrammaticality of sentences (12b, 12d and 12f) means that whenever *la* co-occurs in the Dagbani sentence structure with an NP object, that NP object must always come in between the verb and *la* as in (12a, 12c and 12e). This phenomenon of “object shift” which targets objects in particular seems to be common in the world’s languages.

3.4. The Interaction Among *la*, *ka* and *n* in Syntax of Dagbani

Olawsky (1999:67) gives an account of the interaction between *ka* and *la* as information particles in Dagbani. Olawsky in his work, as pointed out already in subsection (1.3) of this work, claims that there is combination impermissibility of these two particles. As data in subsection 1.3 indicate, this claim of Olawsky (1999) is not strictly true. This subsection is devoted to investigating in details the credibility of this claim of Olawsky. Fusheini (2006) on the other hand is silent about any combinational permissibility of these particles. Olawsky

claims that the ungrammaticality of sentence (13a) is due to the co-occurrence of the particles *ka* and *la* in the Dagbani sentence structure.

(13) a. *kodu ka o borila. (Olowsky 1999:67)

banana foc 3sg want-imperf la.

(14) a. man ka bi-hi tu-ri la

1sg (emph) foc child-plu insult-imperf LA.

“It is me that children are insulting”

b. nyin ka Abu la-ri la.

2sg(emph) foc Abu laugh-imperf LA

“It is you (that) Abu is laughing at”.

c. bua ka o ku- la

goat foc 3sg kill-perf LA

“It is a goat that he has killed”

The grammaticality of the sentences in (14a-14c) indicates that it is not absolutely the case that these two particles do not co-occur in the sentence structure of Dagbani. There is a difference between sentence before and after the *ka* morpheme is added. It is interesting to note that the adding of the *la* particle does not deprive the sentence of an exhaustive reading. In a sentence in which *ka* and *la* co-occurs, as in (14a-14c), it means the report is being made to someone (usually a second party) who is not aware of what is happening as of the time of speech. Thus, the information presented is seen as new to the hearer since s/he is not aware of it and is only being told. However the material that precedes it still has an identificational or exhaustive feature. However, it is the case that whenever *la* co-occurs with *n* or *ka*, then whatever follows *ka* or *n* is no longer presupposed within the clausal structure.

One major observation on the co-occurrence of *ka* and *la* in the sentence structure of Dagbani is that whenever these two particles co-occur, it results in change in the syntax of the *la* particle. In sub-section (1.3) of this work, it was argued that *la* does not occur in sentence

final position. The argument was made based in empirical evidence that when *la* occurs in sentence final positions, the resulting structure is ungrammatical in Dagbani. The claim was then made regarding the syntax of *la* that it always needs an obligatory NP complement or adjunct whenever it occurs as a post verb particle. I speculate that this was because *la* is assertoric and it requires that some part of the sentence be non-background. However, it is argued in this thesis based on empirical evidence that when *la* co-occurs with *ka* in the sentence structure of Dagbani, as in (14a-14c), the resulting structure is not ungrammatical. When it occurs alone within sentence structure (without movement), then it has transitivity requirement as discussed in subsection (1.3). A possible explanation to this could be because of the prohibition of against all background sentences: if *la* co-occurs with other information structural particles as *ka*, and *n* which introduce new information, it is possible to have it occur in sentence final position without affecting grammaticality. It will be shown with data in (15) that it is possible to have *la* to-occur with final positions too, in instances it occurs with *n* in the sentence structure of Dagbani.

- (15). a. Abu n da-ri bu-hi la
 Abu foc buy-imperf goat(plu) LA.
 “It is Abu who is buying goats”
- b. Ama n di-ri la
 Ama foc eat-imperf LA
 “It is Ama who is eating”.

It is seen with the data in (15a-15b) above, that just like the combinational permissibility of *ka* and *la*, it is not strictly the case that there is a prohibition on the co-occurrence of *la* and *n* in the sentence structure of Dagbani. The ungrammaticality of sentence (16b) indicates that *la* must always be used in clause final position when it co-occurs with *n*. This same observation was made for the change of syntax (change from obligatory transitive use) to intransitive use when *la* and *ka* co-occur. It is however, not permissible for *ka* and *n* to co-occur within the sentence structure in which there is any linguistic material after the *la* particle as shown in (16).

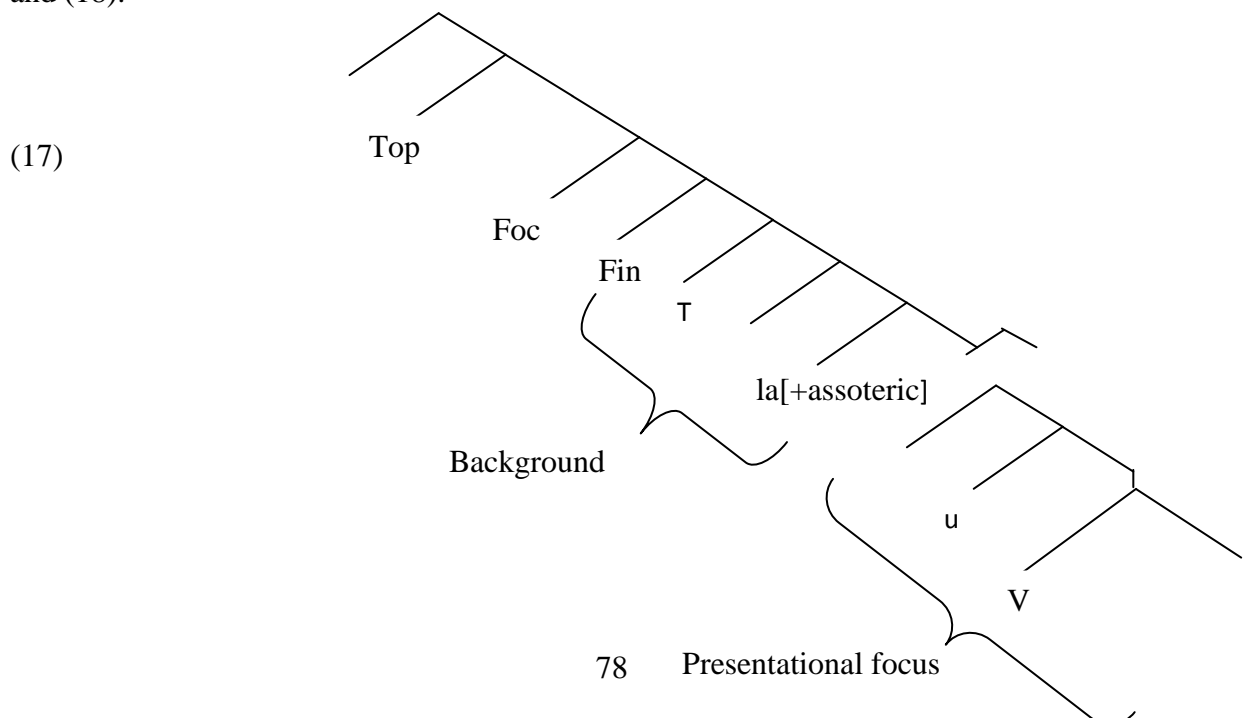
- (16). a. * man ka bi-hi tu-ri la kpe
 1sg (emph) foc child-plu insult-imperf LA here.
- b. *Ama n di-ri la bindirigu
 Ama foc eat-imperf LA food.

Thus the co-occurrence of *ka*, *n* and *la* within a sentence structure will always invariably demand that *la* be used in clause final position.

3.5. Formalizing the Description of *la* Within the Sentence Structure

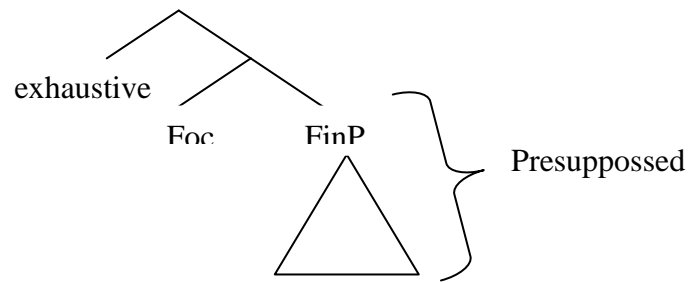
This subsection of the thesis is aimed at finding formal explanations to the presence of *la* within the Dagbani sentence structure. Based on the description above, it is argued that *la* be seen as a head that selects VP within the Dagbani sentence structure. When this is done, everything that is not new information must move out of VP. The subject invariably moves to the Spec of TP, whilst the verb always moves to T. Based on partition mentioned earlier in this chapter, the argument is made that whatever comes before the *la* particle is background, whilst everything that comes after it must be new information.

On the interaction between *la* and the identificational focus particle, the argument is made that it is possible to move anything to Spec-Foc. When this done, FinP now must be compatible with presupposition, which implies that there can be no new information present in the VP since a structure cannot be presupposed and at the same time new information, that is, everything in VP must have moved to the left of *la*. This formalization is captured in (17) and (18).



This partition made by *la* as argued is different from that of *ka* and *n* which partitions the sentence between what is exhaustive focus and presupposition as illustrated in (18) below.

(18).



3.6. Summary of Issues Discussed in this Chapter

This subsection of the thesis gives a summary of key findings and arguments that are put forth in this chapter. The presence of the particle *la* in the sentence structure of Dagbani, does not mark exhaustive focus on NP objects and adjuncts that follows it, as posited in Fusheini (2006), neither does it mark imperfective aspect on the verb that it follows, as argued by Olawsky (1999). It however partitions the sentence into background vs presentational focus. This analysis of focus constructions in Dagbani tallies with the claims of Kiss (1998) that presentation focus, unlike identificational focus which invariably demands the movement of a constituent to a particular syntactic position within the clausal structure information (presentational focus) does not involve any form of syntactic movement. However, it is further posited based on empirical evidence, that when the particle *la* occurs in the sentence structure of Dagbani, it implies that the linguistic material that precedes it is backgrounded, and what follows it is presentational focus. Though the material that precedes *la* is backgrounded, the background must not be presupposed and the new information must not also be exhaustive. Based on this partition and the observation that it occurs in sentences that require NP object and adjunct focus as well as sentence that require VP focus, it is argued that it would not be promising to analyse it as an NP object focus or as an adjunct focus marker on *in-situ* constituents.

It is not strictly true; the assumption held by earlier research in the grammar of Dagbani, that *ka* and *la* do not co-occur in the sentence structure of Dagbani. The assumption is then made in this work, based on empirical data observed that, *ka* and *la* does co-occur in the sentence structure of Dagbani without necessarily affecting grammaticality.

CHAPTER FOUR: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I give a summary of the major findings of this research. The chapter also gives a summary of some of the theoretical implications of the findings of this research on the study of information structuring/packaging in Dagbani.

The research investigated information packaging/structuring in Dagbani within the context of focus constructions. It was observed that such particles as *ka*, *la* and *n* are indispensable syntactic particles in the marking of focus in Dagbani. It was further argued that whilst *ka* and *n* can encode contrastive/identificational focus (exhaustivity), *la* encodes presentational or the so-called new information focus. The conclusion that *ka* and *n* can encode identificational focus is based on the use of such tests as: interpretation of negation, co-occurrence restriction of exhaustive focus and universal quantifiers, and coordination and entailment test, the scope nature of identificational focus, position of focus phrase projection, as in (Kiss, 1998).

It was further observed that though *ka* and *n* both mark identificational focus in Dagbani; there exist some differences in the use of the two particles. For instance whilst it is possible for *n* to be felicitous in the context of the so called all new information, basically in the contexts of *wh*-questions, *ka* cannot be felicitous in the context of all new information in Dagbani. This same observation is made of the Kîtharaka focus marker, what Abels and Muriungi (2007) call FOC where the Kîtharaka focus marker occurs in the contexts of all new information in the context of *wh*-questions.

Another difference between *ka* and *n* that this research observed is the fact that, whilst it is possible for *ka* to be used in successive cyclic movement, *n* does not have such a distributional property. It was accordingly observed that, *n* only attracts the closest DP within the clausal structure. The attracted DP is tentatively hypothesised to have the feature (+new).

The observation on the non-occurrence of *n* in successive cyclic movement made the researcher to make a tentative claim that the movement that what happens in the focusing of subject constituents is not the same kind of movement as what is involved with the use of *ka* since the morpheme simply attracts the closest DP within the clausal structure to itself. The research further observed that whilst the absence of *ka* within the exhaustively focused structure results in ungrammaticality, the absence of *n* only “deprives” a structure of an

exhaustive reading, but does not necessarily make it ungrammatical. It is then argued that when *n* encodes exhaustivity in Dagbani, it should have different syntactic position in the left periphery of the clause from when it is used in encoding new information. Whilst the syntactic position of *n* in encoding exhaustivity has been argued to be spec-foc within the left periphery of the clausal structure that of *n* in encoding new information is hypothesised to be Fin.

On the structural asymmetry that has been observed on Dagbani *ex-situ* focus constructions, as opined in: Fiedler, and Schwarz, (2004) Fiedler, and Schwarz, (2005) and Fusheini (2006), this research makes a claim that the said structural asymmetry is valid only in the context of simple clauses. This tentative conclusion is based on the observation that, subject constituents of embedded clauses can be focused using *ka*, though this particle in the literature of information packaging in Dagbani has been associated with the focusing/fronting of non-subject constituents. It has then been proposed in this thesis that the structural asymmetry might be an issue of “locality” and “non-locality” of the constituents that are to be focused within the clausal structure. Whilst *n* only focuses DP subjects that are local within the clausal structure, *ka* focuses non-subjects constituents which are local within the clausal structure as well as subject constituents of embedded clauses.

The landing site of the exhaustively focused constituent has been hypothesised tentatively to be Spec Foc- which is labelled as focus site in this thesis, following Aboh (2004). It was further noted that various categories such as full DPs, pronouns, and adjuncts can be hosted by the Spec Foc. It was also observed that multiple foci are not permissible in Dagbani as it results in ungrammaticality. The prohibition of occurrence of multiple foci in languages of the world has been observed in various languages as: Gungbe, Aboh (2004) Kîîtharaka, Abels and Muriungi (2007). The Dagbani left periphery, is also observed to accommodate both focalised and focused constituents.

The thesis further made a tentative argument that *ex-situ* focused constructions in Dagbani should be analysed as monoclausal, rather than biclausal as suggested by Fiedler, and Schwarz, (2005) or clefts enshrined in Fusheini (2006). The evidences presented in favour of these claims are: the observation that *ka* and *n* are purely focus markers in the language (and not predicative markers or copular verbs), and the locality restriction between clefts and focus constructions.

It was further speculated that *n* is really a head of a lower projection possibly FinP, that attracts the closest DP to its spec position. We further hypothesize that the exhaustive reading of the subject occurs when the subject moves further to the Spec of the higher FocP projection. It was observed also that in such a case an overt *ka* particle is not necessary. However the current research could give any independent explanation for such a syntactic prohibition. The tentative argument was then made that, unlike *ka*, the *n* particle might not really be a Foc head in Dagbani, but to get an exhaustive reading on the subject, the subject must always undergo movement to the *n* head before moving to Spec FocP. I speculate that this is because an exhaustively focused subject always also have a [+new] feature to check in addition to the [+Foc] feature. Based on this, the hypothesis was made that; the two particles should be located at different positions in the clause structure.

Contrary to previous analyses which had associated the *la* particle with either imperfect aspectual marking, Olawsky (1999) or encoding of exhaustive focus, Fusheini (2006), this research hypothesises that the presence of *la* within the sentence structure of Dagbani marks presentational focus in Dagbani. It is further argued that the particle partitions a sentence within which it occurs on the entire VP and not just the NP object that it precedes. It is accordingly tentatively hypothesised that the particle encodes presentational/information focus in Dagbani. This articulation, that the post verbal *la* encodes presentational focus contradicts earlier assumptions that it is an imperfective aspectual marker, Olawsky (1999) or an exhaustive focus marker on in-situ constituents as articulated in Fusheini (2006). Though Olawsky (1999) observes that *la* could be marking focus within the clausal structure of Dagbani, he does not pin down on the constituent on which the particle could be marking focus. It was further argued that *la* partitions the sentence within which it occurs into background and new information. It was further argued that what precedes *la* gives background information, though the background does not have to be presupposed. The argument is then made that, this is different from the [+Foc] feature which partitions the sentence into a presupposed part and an exhaustively focused part.

It was further observed by this research that, the findings on marking of focus in Dagbani tallies the postulations of Kiss (1998) in the distinction he makes between identificational focus (used by speakers to show that a particular constituent is the only one that is true of the predicate phrase in a given discourse context) and what he calls new information focus, only presents new information focus. At the syntactic level, it was observed that the encoding of identificational focus in Dagbani invariably involves a movement of a given constituent to a

particular position (argued to be spec-foc). This movement as argued is done to make feasible the checking of features associated with the head, which can only be achieved via a spec-head configuration.

The marking of new information in Dagbani, which is encoded by the syntactic presence of *la* within the sentence structure, does not involve any form of syntactic movement. This syntactic difference between identificational focus and presentational focus opined by Kiss (1998) holds for Dagbani.

At the semantic level, it was also observed that the claims of Kiss that identification codifies exhaustive identification, whereas new information focus only presents new information were also found to be true of the Dagbani language.

However, there are also some issues which this thesis could not resolve and as such they are seen as areas of further investigations. One of such areas is the verbal morphology of the Dagbani verb. It remained a mystery why the verb that immediately precedes the subordinate clause of a focus constituent cannot be morphologically marked with the intransitive completive or perfective aspectual marker *ya* since that results in ungrammaticality. Further research may shed more light on this phenomenon.

Also this thesis could not readily offer an explanation for possible connection between the post verbal *la* and the nominal *la* in Dagbani. It was nonetheless assumed that there could be some connectivity between these two particles in the language.

The reason as to why there is a prohibition on the occurrence between *ka* and *n* also remain unclear for this thesis. The question remains as to whether *n* is a Foc head in addition to being a Fin head. This issue is also left for future research to shed more light on.

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