

# PHRASAL IDENTIFICATIONAL AND CONTRASTIVE FOCUS IN DAGBANI

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This paper examines the morpho-syntactic properties of phrasal identificational and contrastive focus in Dagbani, a Gur language. I show that **ka** and **n** can be used to encode phrasal identificational and contrastive focus. I argue that whilst the use of **ka** in encoding contrastive focus invariably involves an overt leftward movement of the focused constituent, the use of the **n** particle involves a covert movement. I further show that the focused constituents have demarcated syntactic slots they occupy within the sentence structure hypothesised to be the specifier position of the focus phrase located in the left periphery of the clausal structure. Constituents focused by **ka** and **n** are proposed to have contrastive information. I also show that the choice of **ka** or **n** is controlled by the grammatical role of the constituent that is focused; whilst **ka** focuses non-subject constituents and adjuncts, **n** focuses subject constituents. I conclude that Dagbani has overt contrastive focus marking with case differentiation.

Cet article traite des propriétés morphosyntaxiques du focus en dagbani, une langue du Gur, relatives à son identification syntagmatique et contrastive. Il montre notamment que **ka** et **n** peuvent s'utiliser pour encoder le focus pour son identification syntagmatique et contrastive. Selon l'analyse, l'utilisation de **ka** dans l'encodage du focus contrastif implique invariablement un mouvement visible vers la gauche des constitués focalisés alors que l'utilisation de la particule **n** implique un mouvement invisible. Il démontre en outre que les constituants focalisés entraînent la démarcation des points d'ancrage syntactiques qu'ils occupent au sein de la structure de la phrase considérée comme la position du spécificateur du syntagme focalisé située dans la périphérie gauche de la structure propositionnelle. L'auteur propose que les constituants focalisés par **ka** et **n** contiennent une information contrastive. Il démontre également que le choix de **ka** ou de **n** est contrôlé par le rôle grammatical du constituant focalisé ; **ka** focalise les constituants qui ne sont pas sujets ainsi que les adjonctions tandis que **n** focalise les constituants sujets. Il conclut que le dagbani fait usage du focus contrastif visible avec la différenciation de cas.

## 0. INTRODUCTION

The main thesis of this paper is to investigate the morpho-syntactic and semantic properties of phrasal identificational and contrastive focus in Dagbani. Dagbani is a Mabilia (Oti-Volta) language of the Gur branch of the Niger-Congo family spoken in the Northern region of Ghana. Bodomo (1994), a Gur linguist suggests the indigenous term **Mabilia** as a classificatory term for these languages which include Dagbani, Dagaari, Mampruli and Kusaal. The suggestion of this indigenous terminology **Mabilia** is probably a reflection of the historical and cultural affinities that exist among speakers of these languages. Morphologically, **Mabilia** is a compound word consisting of **ma** (mother) and **bia** (child). The term therefore probably signals the sibling relationship among these languages. Dagbani has three main dialects: **Tomosili**, that is the Western dialect which is spoken in Tamale, **Nayahali** (the eastern dialect), spoken in and around Yendi, and **Nanuni**, which is also spoken around Bimbilla. The canonical word order of Dagbani is basically SVO. However, other word orders are allowed in the language for certain pragmatic or semantic reasons. In this paper, I show that: (1) the particles **ka** and **n** can be used to encode narrow or constituent focus in Dagbani, (2) while the use of the **ka** focus particle involves overt syntactic movement of the focused constituent to a demarcated syntactic position claimed to be specifier position of focus phrase, the use of the **n** focus particle involves overt

movement of the focused constituent to the specifier position of the focus phrase (3) the **ka** particle is used in the focusing of non-subject constituents while the **n** focus marker focuses subject constituents (4) any constituent that is marked for contrastive focus is located within the preverbal slot (left periphery) of the sentence structure (5) constituents which are focused by **ka** and **n** have contrastive information. Being a speaker of the **Tomosili** dialect of Dagbani, data constructed in this paper is based on the Tomosili dialect.

As to the source of the data, being a native speaker myself, I have constructed the sentences used in this work. I have consulted other native speakers for grammaticality judgments and semantic interpretation of the constructed data. The discussion is on the morpho-syntactic realization and uses of phrasal identificational and contrastive focus markers from a descriptive point of view. It therefore has not considered the marking of focus in Dagbani from a formal perspective.

This paper is structured as follows: Section 1 gives a general overview of focus as a grammatical phenomenon of natural languages. Section 2 reviews previous analyses of the particles **ka** and **n**, proposed to be markers of identificational and contrastive focus in Dagbani bringing out the gaps that this current paper intends to fill up. Section 3 presents the analysis of **ka** as phrasal identificational and contrastive focus marker in Dagbani. In section 4, the focus marker **n** is also discussed heightening the categories that are focused by this particle. Section 5 discusses the pragmatic and semantic uses of contrastive focus in Dagbani. In section 6, the pragmatic scope of **ka** and **n** as contrastive focus markers is discussed. Section 7 reinforces an argument proposed in Issah (2010) that the post verbal **la** of Dagbani should be analysed as a presentational focus marker and not a contrastive focus marker. Finally, section 8 offers some concluding remarks<sup>1</sup>.

## 1. DEFINING FOCUS

Though focus remains one area in syntactic analyses that has won the interest of most researchers, it is also one controversial area of study. The term focus has therefore been used to refer to different things in the studies of information structure. The concept of information structure (IS) is very essential in the study of pragmatics. Information structure is defined by Lambrecht (1994:5) as “that component of sentence grammar in which propositions as conceptual representations of states of affairs are paired with lexicogrammatical structures in accordance with the mental states of interlocutors who use and interpret these structures as units of information in given discourse contexts”. In this work, I adopt the notion of focus proposed in Kiss (1998). Kiss distinguishes between two types of foci: presentational focus and identificational focus. Contrastive focus as used in this paper ‘represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase potentially hold; it is identified as the exhaustive subset of this set for which the predicate phrase actually holds’ Kiss (1998: 246). It is also sometimes referred to as identificational or exhaustive focus. Based on the proposal of Kiss (1998) that contrastive focus may not be present in some sentences I opine that this focus type is non-obligatory. The other type of focus called information/presentational focus only

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gives non-presupposed/new information within a discourse<sup>2</sup>. However, the latter type of focus is not considered in this paper.

The coding of focus as a grammatical notion is a universal phenomenon in languages; that is to say that probably, 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. Different languages however, employ different strategies in the coding of focus. Whilst some languages mark focus by prosodic prominence, that is, mostly by main stress or pitch accent, others encode it via morpho-syntactic strategies. For instance, in a language like English, intonation and cleft constructions are employed as focus strategies Ameka (1992), Kiss (1999) and Van Valin and LaPolla (1997). Also, languages like French and Italian are reported to use mainly cleft constructions especially for narrow focus Van Valin and LaPolla (1997); Japanese also makes use of intonation and morphological strategies in the coding of focus; Turkish uses intonational and syntactic strategies, whilst a language like Hungarian is argued to have a “focus position” which hosts focused elements.

In Dagbani, I will show that the encoding of phrasal identificational and contrastive focus is a morpho-syntactic process. Morphologically, it is coded by a focus marker or morpheme which signals that a particular constituent is in focus and syntactically, the focus marker must obligatorily occur in a particular syntactic slot, which is the immediate right of the focused constituent. Other languages in which the encoding of focus has been analysed as a morpho-syntactic process include Akan, Saah (1998), Logba, Dorvlo (2009), Gungbe, Aboh (2004), Kîtharaka, Abels and Muriungi, (2007) Ewe, Ameka (1992), and Kikuyu, Schwarz (2007).

I will show that in Dagbani, constituents that could be overtly fronted for focus include NP objects and adjuncts while NP subjects undergo covert movement and are focused contrastively. Based on the observation that not every constituent can be fronted for focusing, I make the claim that there probably are some constraints that regulate what constituents can be fronted for purposes of focus. Adjectives and verbs of Dagbani, unlike their counterparts of Akan as argued in Saah (1998) can therefore not be fronted for focus marking.

## 2. EARLIER ANALYSES OF **ka** AND **n** IN DAGBANI

The particles **ka** and **n**, have received attention from some Dagbani researchers. For instance, the particle **ka** is analysed by 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”. 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

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<sup>2</sup>There are however, a number of competing definitions of focus in the literature. For other definitions of focus readers can refer to: Crystal (2003), Dik et al (1981), Erteschik-Shir (1997), Halliday (1967), Krifka (2007), Lambrecht (1994), Van Valin and LaPolla (1997:206ff).

analyse **ka** as a focus particle. Olawsky (1999) argues that 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. It should be noted that **ka** marks non-subject focus and **n**<sup>3</sup> marks subject focus. The use of these particles in the coding of focus is demonstrated in (1) and (2).

- (1) a. **Mikashini tu-Ø           bia   maa**  
 Mikashini   insult-PERF child   DEF  
 Mikashini has insulted the child
- b. **Mikashini n   tu-Ø           bia   maa**  
 Mikashini   FOC insult-PERF child   DEF  
 It is Mikashini who has insulted the child
- (2) a. **Mikashini tu-Ø           bia   maa**  
 Mikashini   insult-PERF child   DEF  
 Mikashini has insulted the child
- b. **Bia   maa ka   Mikashini tu-Ø**  
 child   DEF FOC Mikashini   insult-PERF  
 It is the child that Mikashini has insulted

We see that in (1a) and (2a) we have the canonical sentence structures of Dagbani which is SVO. In sentence (1b), we observe that the subject focus marker **n** is selected when the subject of the sentence **Mikashini** is to be focused. In the case of (2b) however, where we have the object **bia maa** ‘the child’ being focused, we observe that it is the non-subject focus marker **ka** which is chosen. The use of these focus markers in the coding of contrastive focus will be given a detailed discussion under sections 3 and 4 of this paper.

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”. Hudu (2006) also identifies **ka** and **n** as identificational focus markers in Dagbani and further argues that there is a structural asymmetry between subject and non subject focus constituents.

Schwarz and Fiedler (2007:276) also discuss morphologically marked focus constructions and propose that in such constructions, the focused nominal invariably takes the sentence initial position. Using the narrative hypothesis, they further stipulate that in non-subject focus constructions, there is a tight relationship between ex-situ focus constructions and narrative clauses in Dagbani. According to Schwarz

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<sup>3</sup>The particle **n** assimilates to the place of articulation of the following segment. The **n** particle however may not be best analysed as a proclitic as earlier suggested in Issah (2008). It is therefore analysed as a separate syntactic particle that assimilates to the place of articulation of the following consonant.

and Fiedler (2007:280) it is further shown that there is a structural asymmetry between subject focus constituents and non-subject focused constituents. They thus opine that: “Dagbani provides a strong structural asymmetry between SF and NSF”. They demonstrate that in that light, Dagbani differs from languages like Buli and Akan, which do not exhibit this structural asymmetry and so use **ka** and **na** in the coding of both *non-subject* and *subject* focus constructions respectively.

Although these earlier works state convincingly that **ka** and **n** encode focus, they do not narrow down to give details as to the type of focus that they encode. As stated already, the main uniqueness of this work is that I will deal with the semantics and pragmatics of these focus markers in Dagbani.

### 3. THE PARTICLE **ka** AS A CONTRASTIVE FOCUS MARKER

As pointed out earlier, it is argued that **ka** can be used to mark focus on non-subject constituents, including NP complements and adjuncts. The use of the **ka** particle in the encoding of focus always involves overt syntactic movement of the constituent to be focused from the in-situ position to the sentence initial position. When the constituent in focus is moved to the left periphery position, it is immediately followed by the **ka** particle. I postulate that the syntactic slot that is taken by the moved constituent within the clausal left periphery could be assigned the specifier position of the focus head, labelled SpecFoc in generative linguistics. The movement therefore allows the constituent to be focused to take scope over the entire sentence and consequently enters into a spec-head configuration with the focus marker which immediately follows the ‘extracted’ constituent. This claim is illustrated by the examples in (3) to (6) below:

- (3) a. **N da-Ø bua maa.** *Canonical sentence*  
 1SG buy-PERF goat DEF  
 I have bought the goat.
- b. **Bua maa ka n da-Ø**  
 goat DEF FOC 1SG buy-PERF  
 It is the goat (that) I have bought (not sheep).
- (4) a. **Bɛ di-ya pam zuŋɔ.**  
 3PL eat-PERF QUAN ADJUN  
 They have eaten a lot today
- b. **Zuŋɔ ka bɛ di-Ø pam**  
 today FOC 3PL eat-PERF QUAN  
 It is today (that) they have eaten a lot
- (5) a. **Bɛ tu-ri ma.** *Canonical sentence*  
 3PL insult-IMPERF me  
 They are insulting me.
- b. **Mani ka bɛ tu-ra**  
 1SG-EMPH FOC 3PL insult-IMPERF  
 It is me (that) they are insulting

- c.\* **Mani bɛ tu-ra**  
1SG-EMPH 3PL insult-IMPERF
- d.\* **ma ka bɛ tu-ra**  
1SG FOC 3PL insult-IMPERF
- (6) a. \* **Buku Abu ka da-Ø maa**  
book Abu FOC buy-PERF DEF
- b. \* **Zuɔɔ bani ka di-Ø pam.**  
ADJUN 3PL FOC eat-PERF QUAN
- c. \* **Mani m bani tu-ra**  
1SG-EMPH FOC 3PL insult-IMPERF

We observe from the examples that the morpho-syntactic manifestation of focus in Dagbani using the **ka** particle involves the fronting of the focused constituent within the clause. Also, we see that aside the fronting, the fronted constituent enters into a syntactic configuration with the **ka** morpheme which I analyze as a focus marker.

We further observe from the data above that constituents that can be focused via the use of the contrastive focus marker **ka** are NP objects as in (3b), adjuncts as in (4b), and pronouns as in (5b). These are the categories that can be hosted by the left periphery position of Dagbani using the **ka** morpheme. When a pronoun is the focused item via movement, it is realised as an emphatic pronoun in the focused construction as in (5b). The ungrammaticality of sentence (5d) is caused by the fact that a weak form of the pronoun has been put in the focus position. The ungrammaticality in (6c) 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 that are focused as proposed in the literature information structure of Dagbani.

The ungrammaticality of (6a) and (6b) indicate that there cannot be any intervening linguistic material between the focused constituents and the particles analysed as focus markers in Dagbani. This prohibition that there should not be any intervening material between the focused constituent and the focus markers therefore is to ensure that there is a spec-head relationship between the focus head (realised with the presence of the focus marker) and the focused constituent as suggested in the focus and feature checking theory of generative linguistics.

As discussed above, I will show in this section that just like NP objects; adjuncts are generally focused contrastively using the **ka** focus marker. This is done via an overt syntactic movement of that adjunct phrase to the sentence initial position and immediately following it with the focus marker **ka**.

- (7) a. **Abu sa da-Ø buku maa sɔhala.** *Canonical sentence*  
Abu PST buy-PERF book DEF ADJUN  
Abu bought the book yesterday
- b. **Sɔhala ka Abu sa da-Ø buku maa.**  
ADJUN FOC Abu PST buy-PERF book DEF  
It was yesterday (that) Abu bought the book (not last year)
- c. \* **Sɔhala n Abu sa da-Ø buku maa**  
ADJUN FOC Abu PST buy-PERF book DEF

- (8) a. **O da-Ø buɟa maa yomyom.** *Canonical sentence*  
 3SG buy-PERF monkey DEF quickly  
 S/he has bought the monkey quickly
- b. **yomyom ka o da-Ø buɟa maa**  
 quickly FOC 3SG buy-PERF donkey DEF  
 Quickly s/he has bought the donkey. (not slowly)
- c. **\*yomyom n o da-Ø buɟa maa**  
 quickly FOC 3SG buy-PERF donkey DEF
- (9) a. **Baako mɛ-Ø o yil' palli maa kpe** *Canonical sentence*  
 Baako build-PERF 3SG-POSS house new DEF here  
 Baako has built his new house here
- b. **Kpe ka Baako mɛ-Ø o yil' palli maa**  
 Here FOC Baako buy-PERF 3SG-POSS house new DEF  
 It is here (that) Baako has built his new house (not there)
- c. **\*Kpe n Baako mɛ-Ø o yil' palli maa**  
 Here FOC Baako build-PERF 3SG-POSS house new DEF

The particle **sa** is one of the several preverbal particles of Dagbani that have tense functions. These tense particles generally occupy the preverbal syntactic slot and so the name preverbal particles. They also generally do not inflect morphologically. Atintono (forthcoming) working on Gureɛ, a closely related language to Dagbani, postulates that the tense particles are time adverbials/temporal adverbs which express different degrees of remoteness of the time'. Tense is indicated when the speaker is interested in portraying the time of occurrence of the event designated by the verb<sup>4</sup>. The particle **sa** indicates that the action denoted by the verb is just a day away.

We observe from the data above that in (7a) we have an adjunct phrase of time, **sɔhala** 'yesterday'. This adjunct is fronted in (7b) and focused with the **ka** focus marker. In (8a) and (9a) too, we have adjunct phrases, adverb phrase of manner **yomyom** 'quickly' and **kpe** 'here', adverbs of manner and place respectively. These adjuncts are also fronted and focused with the **ka** focus marker as in (8b) and (9b). In each of these cases in (7b), (8b) and (9b), the adjuncts **sɔhala** 'yesterday' **yomyom** 'quickly' and **kpe** 'here' respectively are contrastively identified in those sentences and so seen as the only things that hold for the context in which they have each occurred.

The ungrammaticality of (7c), (8c) and (9c) validates the arguments that adjuncts just like the NP objects cannot be fronted and focused with the **n** focus marker. This, as argued in this paper might be probably due to the case that the **n** focus marker only focuses subject constituents.

Hudu (2006) however 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 **ka**. Accordingly, Hudu (2006) argues that such structures as in (10 and 11b) are also considered as focused constructions though they lack the focus markers.

<sup>4</sup>Other researchers into Gur languages such as Olawsky (1999), Bodomo (1997) refer these particles as time depth particles (TDPs). Saanchi (2005) however glosses particles with similar function in Dagaare, a closely related language as tense particles. I see **sa** as a past tense marker in this paper.

- (10) a. **Abu sa da-Ø buku maa sɔhala.** *Canonical sentence*  
 Abu PST buy-PERF book DEF ADJUN  
 Abu bought the book (yesterday)
- b. **Sɔhala Abu sa da-Ø buku maa**  
 ADJUN Abu PST buy-PERF book DEF  
 Yesterday Abu bought the book
- (11) a. **Ti nya-Ø bi-hi maa zaa pumpɔŋɔ.**  
 1PL ee-PERF child-PL DEF QUAN ADJUN  
 We have seen all the children now
- b. **Pumpɔŋɔ ti nya-Ø bi-hi maa zaa.**  
 ADJUN 1PL see-PERF child-PL DEF QUAN  
 Now we have seen all the children

I however opine that the postulation of Hudu (2006), that time adverbials display a unique property where it is possible to focus them without the use of **ka** may not hold for Dagbani. He admits however, that, the absence of a focus marker in a given structure, will remove any contrastive interpretation within that linguistic structure in Dagbani. The adverbials in (10b) and (11b) however lack the focus marker **ka**. If contrastive focus is proposed to be encoded morpho-syntactically, as I claim in this paper, then it implies that a constituent is moved to a sentence initial position is just not enough evidence to argue that such a constituent is focused, but that there must be an obligatory morphological manifestation of a focus marker, which enters into a syntactic configuration with the moved constituent. The lack of the focus marker **ka** in (10b) and (11b) thus indicates that, the adverbials are not being challenged. If they were, the **ka** would DEFINITELY have been inserted.

Also, if the adverbs in (10b) and (11b) are in focus (without the focus marker), as suggested by Hudu (2006) then it should be impossible to focus *something else* in the presence of a left peripheral adverb. Accordingly, the sentences in (12a) and (12b) should be ungrammatical because it would involve multiple foci that is two points of focus within the clause which is generally perceived as a linguistic taboo.

- (12) a. **Sɔhala buku ka Abu sa da-Ø**  
 ADJUN book FOC Abu PST buy-PERF  
 Yesterday, it was a book that Abu bought
- b. **Pumpɔŋɔ bi-hi maa zaa ka ti bi nya- ra**  
 ADJUN children DEF QUAN FOC 1PL NEG see-IMPERF  
 Now, it is all the children that we do not see

The data in (12) however reveal that it is possible for something else to be focused after there has been a leftward movement of an adverbial. This explicates that the adverbials are probably not focused as suggested in Hudu (ibid).

Another piece of evidence that serves as an argument in favour of my claim that the adverbials given by Hudu (ibid) are not focused is the observation that they cannot serve as answers in a context that will demand that the adjuncts be contrastively focused. This is illustrated with the question-answer pair in the data in (13).

- (13) Q: a. **Bondali ka Abu da-Ø buku maa?**  
 When FOC Abu buy-PERF book DEF  
 When did Abu buy the book?

- A: b. # **Sohala Abu sa da buku maa**  
 ADJUN Abu PST buy-PERF book DEF  
 Yesterday Abu bought the book.
- c. **Sohala ka Abu sa da-Ø buku maa**  
 ADJUN FOC Abu PST buy-PERF book DEF  
 It was yesterday Abu bought the book.

We see from the data in (13) that though the structure in (13b) has the adjunct **sohala** ‘yesterday’ fronted, it is not felicitous as an answer to the question in (13a). It is rather the structure in (13c) which serves as an appropriate answer. We observe that the sentence in (13c) does not only have the adjunct fronted, but combines the fronting strategy with the morphological realization of the appropriate focus marker.

#### 4. THE PARTICLE **n** CONTRASTIVE FOCUS MARKER

I demonstrate here that just like the **ka** morpheme, the **n** morpheme can be used to encode contrastive focus. Unlike its **ka** counterpart however, the **n** particle encodes contrastive focus on subject constituents. Also, it is unclear whether the use of **n** involves covert movement, unlike its **ka** counterpart that involves the use of overt syntactic dislocation of constituents to be focused. It is, therefore, suggested tentatively that the use of **n** focus marker involves probably, an overt syntactic movement of the constituent that is to be focused. The use of **n** in the coding of contrastive focus is shown in (14) and (15) below.

- (14) a. **Abu da-Ø buku maa** *Canonical sentence*  
 Abu buy-PERF book DEF  
 Abu has bought the book.
- b. **Abu n da-Ø buku maa.**  
 Abu FOC buy-PERF book DEF  
 It is Abu who has bought the book (not Napari)
- c. \***Abu ka da-Ø buku maa.**  
 Abu FOC buy-PERF book DEF
- (15) a. **Napari ku-Ø bua maa** *Canonical sentence*  
 Napari kill-PERF goat DEF  
 Napari has killed the goat.
- b. **Napari ŋ ku-Ø bua maa** (*not Adam*)  
 Napari FOC kill-PERF goat DEF  
 It is Napari who has killed the goat
- c. \***Napari ka ku-Ø bua maa**  
 Napari FOC kill-PERF goat DEF

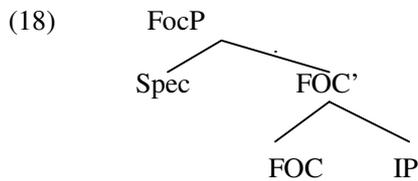
We observe from the data in (14) and (15) that NP subjects are focused contrastively using the **n** particle. For instance, in (14b), the subject of the sentence, Abu is focused contrastively by moving it covertly to the sentence initial position and that following it immediately with the introduction of the **n** particle in a specific syntactic position, which the immediate right of **Abu**, the subject of the sentence. The same thing is done to the **Napari** as in (15b) which is also the subject of the sentence.

We observe that just as it was observed for the non-subject **ka** that there is a leftward movement of the constituent to be focused, the same holds for the subject focus particle **n**. It seems to me therefore, that there both subject and non-subject foci move into the left periphery of the clause structure follow by the introduction of the appropriate focus marker. It is however, probably the case that the movement that is involved with the use of **n** is covert. The schema for the structure of focus construction using **ka** is shown in (16) while that of the use of **n** is shown in (17)

(16)  $XP_i$  **ka**  $t_i$  non-subject

(17)  $XP_i$  **n**  $t_i$  subject

The focus markers **ka** and **n** contrast the constituents that they focus with other possibilities that may exist within a given discourse setting/context. It is in recognition of this function of the focus particles that Boadi (1974:7) characterises the **na** particle that has the same contrastive focus function in Akan as “exclusive focus marker” since according to him “it narrows down the referential range of the constituent to which it is attached and places it in an exclusive class by itself, thus, bringing this constituent into sharp contrast, with all other members of the paradigm to which it belongs”. Thus FOC in contrastive focus constructions has a function of narrowing down the referential range of its host, which is of course, the constituent in focus. The structure of a sentence with a focus construction is therefore hypothesized to be as in (18)



The specifier slot is filled by the constituent that is moved (whether covertly or overtly) from the canonical position to the left periphery of the clause. The FOC position is filled with **ka** or **n** which are analysed to be the head of the functional projection, focus phrase.

When it happens that the subject of a sentence is not a full NP, but a pronominal, the **n** morpheme is still used in encoding focus. In such a situation however, the pronominal will change from the weak form to the emphatic form. The pronominal will however change from the weak form to the emphatic form when it is in the focus position, as was observed of object pronominals in section 3. Consider examples (19) and (20):

(19) a. **O bu-Ø bi-hi maa.**

3SG beat-PERF child-PL DEF

S/he has beaten the children

*Canonical sentence*

b. \***O m bu-Ø bi-hi maa**

3SG FOC beat-PERF child-PL DEF

It is s/he who has beaten the children

c. **ɲuna m bu-Ø bi-hi maa**

3SG-EMPH FOC beat-PERF child-PL DEF

It is s/he who has beaten the children(not me)

- (20) a. **Be ku-ri bu-hi maa kpe.** *Canonical setence*  
 3PL kill-IMPERF goat-PL DEF here  
 They kill the goats here
- b.\* **Be η ku-ri bu-hi maa kpe**  
 3PL FOC kill-IMPERF goat-PL DEF here  
 It is they who kill the goats here
- c. **Bani η ku-ri bu-hi maa kpe**  
 3PL-EMPH FOC kill-IMPERF goat-PL DEF here  
 It is they who kill the goats here'

We observe from the examples in (19a) and (20a) that the “weak” pronouns **o** ‘s/he’ and **be**, “they” are changed into emphatic pronouns **ηuna** “s/he-emphatic” and **bani** “they-emphatic” as in (19c) and (20c). The ungrammaticality of (19b) and (20b) is caused by the fact that pronominal subjects are focused with **n** in the weak form. This may be explained in the light that there is co-occurrence restriction between the focus particles and the weak forms of the pronoun. I then maintain that focus on a pronoun (whether in subject or non-subject position) requires one of the emphatic paradigm.

#### 5. THE PRAGMATIC AND SEMANTIC USES OF CONTRASTIVE FOCUS IN DAGBANI

This section discusses the pragmatic and semantic uses of focus. I will also discuss *wh*-questions and corrective focus both of which involve the focus markers **ka** and **n**. The pragmatic and semantic uses of focus are well articulated in Ameka (1992), Krifka (2007) and it is established that there is correlation between focus and *wh*-questions. Some of the pragmatic uses of focus include answers to *wh*-questions, corrections, confirmations, parallel expressions and delimitations as suggested in Ameka (1992). It is therefore no surprise that in the study of information structure, a standard diagnostic strategy that is used to determine focus elements is question-answer pairs. This claim is demonstrated in works such as Aboh (2007) Dik (1978), Krifka (2004, 2007), Lambrecht (1987) Rochemont, (1986), and Watters, (1979). Ameka (1992:5) also asserts that “a felicitous answer to a content question would be a focused constituent since it would provide information that would be substitute for the interrogative word”. Consider this question-answer congruence that clearly illustrates the pragmatic use of focus in Dagbani.

- (21) Q: a. **ηuni n da-∅ bua maa.**  
 Who FOC buy-PERF goat DEF  
 Who has bought the goat?  
*IS: subject is new, object is old, and verb is old*
- A: b. **Dawuni n/\*ka da-∅ bua maa**  
 Dawuni FOC buy-PERF goat DEF  
 It is Dawuni who bought the goat (not Danaa)
- c. **#Dawuni da-∅ bua maa**  
 Dawuni buy-PERF goat DEF  
 Dawuni has bought the goat.
- d. \* **ηuni da-∅ bua maa**  
 Who buy-PERF goat DEF

We again see that in the context of (21), it is the subject that is new and so it is the answer that is marked with the **n** particle that is considered appropriate. This observation above explicates the hypothesis in this paper that in instances where the NP subject is to be focused contrastively, then that NP subject must enter into a syntactic configuration with the **n** focus particle. If it were just an instance of new information focus, then, the contrastive focus marker will not have been an obligatory syntactic element in the answer. The structure in (21b) therefore can be paraphrased as ‘it was Dawuni and not any other person who bought the goat.’ The ungrammaticality of the sentence in (21d) shows that a wh-subject must be focused. In the next question, we investigate the context in which the object is ‘new information’ to the hearer. Once Dawuni is not a non-subject constituent in (21) it is seen in (21b) that choosing **ka** as focus marker yields ungrammatical sentence.

(22). Q: a. **Bo ka Danaa sa da-Ø**  
 What FOC Danaa PST buy-PERF  
 What was it that Danaa bought yesterday?

A: b. **Nimdi ka/\*n Danaa sa da-Ø**  
 meat FOC Danaa PST buy-PERF  
 It was meat that Danaa bought yesterday (not drinks)

In the example in (22) we see that the question demands a new object. On the same note, a felicitous answer to a content question would be a focused constituent since it would provide information that would substitute for the interrogative word as pointed out already. In the case of Dagbani as has been shown already, when the focused constituent is a non-subject constituent, the **ka** focus marker is used in the coding of focus. It is therefore no surprise that the answer in (22b) is felicitous in the context of (22). The unacceptability of **n** as a focus marker in the context of (22b) reinforces the proposal I make that left peripheral non-subject constituents cannot be focused using the **n** focus marker.

In the next examples, I investigate question-answer pairs applicable to adjuncts. I show that just like the object constituents, adjuncts in content questions also need an obligatory **ka** to be considered as felicitous answers to content questions that seek ‘new’ adjuncts in Dagbani. Consider the examples below:

(23) Q: a. **Bondali ka Mikashini duhi-Ø loori?**  
 When FOC Mikashini drive-PERF lorry  
 When has Mikashini driven a car?

A: b. **Pumpɔɔ ka Mikashini duhi-Ø loori**  
 ADJUN FOC Mikashini drive-PERF lorry  
 It is now that Mikashini has driven a lorry (not yesterday).

c. **≠Pumpɔɔ Mikashini duhi-Ø loori**  
 ADJUN Mikashini drive-PERF lorry  
 Now Mikashini has driven a lorry

d. **\*Pumpɔɔ m Mikashini duhi-Ø loori**  
 ADJUN FOC Mikashini drive-PERF lorry

In the examples under (23) above, we see that only the answer in (23b) is felicitous in the context of (23). In (23b) therefore **pumpɔɔ** ‘now’ is contrasted with any other time frame within which **Mikashini** might have driven the car. We mentioned earlier that adjuncts are focused by placing them clause initially and following the moved

adjunct with the **ka** focus particle. If (23c) lacks the **ka** morpheme, it could not be felicitous as an answer in this context. The sentence in (23d) also has the **n** morpheme which can only focus subject constituents as has been proposed in this paper.

We observe from the data so far analyzed that both **n** and **ka** can be used as contrastive focus markers in Dagbani. I speculate based on the fact that both **n** and **ka** can be used to encode constituent focus that one could argue that in terms of the inventory and distribution of contrastive focus markers, Dagbani has two contrastive focus markers. It was also observed that the pragmatic use of focus as illustrated in Dagbani falls in line with claims in the literature that “the classical pragmatic use of focus is to highlight the part of an answer that corresponds to the wh-part of a constituent question” Krifka (2007:21).

Another pragmatic use of focus is to correct or confirm information. For instance, in the situation that one wants to correct or confirm a proposition within a given discourse setting, the pragmatic use of focus becomes inevitable. The data in (24a, b) and (25a, b) will explicate the claim. It is worthy of mention however, that in a case as pointed out, where focus is used for correction or confirmation, “the focus alternatives must include a proposition that has been proposed in the immediately Common Ground” Krifka (2007:23). The Dagbani data below illustrate this pragmatic use of focus.

- (24) a. **Bonayo ku-Ø bua maa.**  
 Bonayo kill-PERF goat DEF  
 Bonayo has killed the goat.
- b. **aayi, Dawuni ŋ ku-Ø bua maa.**  
 No, Dawuni FOC kill-PERF goat DEF  
 No, it is Dawuni who has killed the goat.
- c. **iin Bonayo ŋ ku-Ø bua maa.**  
 Yes Bonayo FOC kill-PERF goat DEF  
 Yes it is Bonayo who has killed the goat.
- d. **≠aayi, Dawuni ku-Ø bua maa.**  
 No, Dawuni kill-PERF goat DEF  
 No, Dawuni has killed the goat.
- e. **≠iin Bonayo ku-Ø bua maa**  
 Yes Bonayo kill-PERF goat DEF  
 Yes Bonayo has killed the goat’.

In (24a), we observe that a speaker makes a statement to the effect that Bonayo has killed the goat. In reacting to the statement made in (24a), focus is used pragmatically in (24b) to suggest that it is not Bonayo who has killed the goat, but Dawuni in which case focus has a corrective usage. In (24c), however, there is confirmation that it is really Bonayo who has killed the goat. This leads to the corrective interpretation of focus as in (24b) and then the confirmative use of focus as in (24c). It should be pointed out that the use of the focus marker **n** in (24b) and (24c) is tightly related to the earlier claim laid that NP subjects are focus-marked with **n**. Once the correction and confirmation are on the NP subject Bonayo and Dawuni, the **n** particle is selected. Using structures which are not focus-marked for corrective or confirmative purposes will yield infelicitous sentences as in (24d) and (24e) shows.

In the data in (25) that follow, we consider this pragmatic use of focus for corrective or interpretative purposes but now concentrating on the NP object and not on the subject NPs as previously noted.

- (25) a. **Mbelayim da-Ø loori palli**  
 Mbelayim buy-PERF lorry new  
 Mbelayim has bought a new car
- b. **aayi, moto palli ka Mbelayim da-Ø**  
 No, motorbike new FOC Mbelayim da-PERF  
 No, it is a new motorbike that Mbelayim has bought
- c. **iin loori palli ka Mbelayim da-Ø**  
 Yes car new FOC Mbelayim buy-PERF  
 Yes, it is a new car that Mbelayim has bought
- d. \* **aayi, moto palli Mbelayim da-Ø**  
 No, motorbike new Mbelayim da-PERF  
 No, a new motorbike Mbelayim has bought
- e. \* **iin loori palli Mbelayim da-Ø**  
 Yes car new Mbelayim buy-PERF  
 Yes, a new car Mbelayim has bought

We further observe that the structures in (25d) and (25e) are equally ungrammatical as corrective or confirmative sentences borne out of the fact that they are not focus-marked with the contrastive focus particles. In the data above, sentence (25b) is corrective and is said to be felicitous since the contrastive focus marker **ka** is introduced. The sentence in (25c) however is confirmative that it is a new car that Mbelayim has bought and it is also marked with the particle **ka**. The sentences in (25d) and (25e) are ungrammatical structures in the language due to the morpho-syntactic absence of the **ka** particle. This probably suggests that the focus markers, **ka** is very essential in the realization of corrective as corrective and confirmative structures in Dagbani if the correction or confirmation is on a non-subject constituent. While the absence of the subject focus marker **n**, in confirmative and corrective sentences resulted in the formation of contextually inappropriate sentences, as in (24d) and (24e), the absence of the non-subject focus marker, **ka** yields ungrammatical sentences as in (25d) and (25e). This difference could probably be due to the fact that there is slightly difference between these two particles in terms of their pragmatic scope.

Notwithstanding this connectivity between the uses of focus, there are prototypical cases that clearly belong to one or to the other category, to which we now turn. Some semantic uses of focus are focus-sensitive particles (so called association with focus cases), negations, reason clauses and restrictors and quantifiers. We say that semantic operators whose interpretational effects depend on focus are associated with focus. Like English and many (if not all) other languages König (1991), Jacobs (1983), Dagbani exhibits essentially three kinds of focus-sensitive particles: the exclusive particle **ko** 'only' (26a), inclusive or additive particle **gba**, 'also/too' (26b), and scalar particle **hali** 'even' (26c):

- (26) a. **Chentiwuni ko m biri-Ø kawana .**  
 Chentiwuni only FOC sow-PERF maiz.  
 It is only Chentiwuni who has sown maize

b. **Chentiwuni gba biri-Ø kawana**

Chentiwuni too sow-PERF maize  
 Chentiwuni too has sown maize

c. **Hali Chentiwuni gba da-Ø loori palli.**

Even Chentiwuni too buy-PERF car new  
 Even Chentiwuni too has bought a new car<sup>5</sup>

In terms of their syntactic distribution, it is observed that with the exception of **hali** ‘even’, focus-sensitive particles in Dagbani generally follow the constituent they associate with, similar to English ‘too’. I further observe that the particle and associate are adjacent in (26a) and (26b), and I propose that this should be an absolute syntactic requirement in Dagbani as explicated by the change in meanings of sentences, cf. (27a) and (27b), where **ko** and **gba** *cannot* associate with the subject from sentence-final position but rather associate with the objects which they are adjacent to.

(27) a. **Chentiwuni m biri-Ø kawana ko.**

Chentiwuni FOC sow-PERF maize only.  
 It is Chentiwuni who has sown only maize

b. **Chentiwuni biri-Ø kawana gba**

Chentiwuni plant-PERF maize too  
 Chentiwuni has sown maize too

c. **Chentiwuni chaŋ-Ø Tiyumba sani ko**

Chentiwuni go-PERF Tiyumba LM only  
 Chentiwuni has gone only to Tiyumba

Based on the data in (26) and (27), I propose the following analysis for Dagbani focus sensitive particles (i.) they always follow a focus constituent; (ii.) they are focus-functional in the sense of Beaver and Clark (2003): Its focus associate must be clearly identifiable, which can be achieved either by means of formal focus marking with a focus particle as (26a, 27a), or by means of adjacency (27c).

It is interesting to note that it is possible for these focus sensitive particles to occur with focus particles **ka** and **n** as shown in examples (28).

(28) a. **Chentiwuni gba m biri-Ø kawana**

Chentiwuni too sow-PERF maize  
 It is Chentiwuni too who has sown maize

b. **kawana ka Chentiwuni gba biri-Ø**

maize FOC Chentiwuni too sow-PERF  
 It is maize that Chentiwuni too has planted

c. **Hali Chentiwuni gba n da-Ø loori palli.**

Even Chentiwuni too FOC buy-PERF car new  
 It Even Chentiwuni too has bought a car lorry

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<sup>5</sup>Notice that **hali** ‘even’ co-occurs with the additive particle **gba** as in (26c). This observation makes me to assert that the only meaning component of **hali** is scalarity, unlike the English **even** and German **sogar**, which are argued to have both features of additivity and scalarity in their meaning as suggested in König (1991).

It is seen that in (28a) there is co-occurrence of the focus sensitive particle **gba** and the subject focus maker **n** realised in that environment as **m** because of the preceding bilabial sound. In the same way, in (28b) the non-subject focus marker **ka** co-occurs with the focus sensitive particle **gba**. In (28c), it is again observed that the subject focus marker **n** co-occurs with the **focus** sensitive particles **gba** ‘too’ and **hali** ‘even’. This probably suggests that there is no co-occurrence prohibition between the focus particles discussed in this paper and the focus sensitive particles.

#### 6. THE PRAGMATIC SCOPE OF **Ka** AND **N** IN DAGBANI

In this section, I use data on question answer pairs aimed at laying a foundation for the argument I make in this paper that though both **ka** and **n** can be used to encode contrastive focus, they really behave differently as information packaging devices within the information structure of Dagbani. I show with empirical evidence that though both particles encode contrastive focus, there is difference in their pragmatic scope. For instance, I will demonstrate that while the **n** focus particle is compatible with instances of all new information, the **ka** particle cannot be used in such a context.

(29) Q: a. **Bo n niŋ-Ø?**

What FOC happen-PERF?

What has happened?

*IS: All new information*

A: b. **Danaa n da-Ø bua**

Danaa FOC buy-PERF goat

Danaa has bought a goat.

c. **\*Danaa ka da-Ø bua**

Danaa FOC buy-PERF goat

Danaa has bought a goat.

d. **≠ Danaa da-Ø bua**

Danaa buy-PERF goat

Danaa has bought a goat.

In (29) for instance, the response to the question: **Bo n niŋ-Ø?** contains no presupposition, the focus and what is asserted therefore coincide. This means that the entire clause is in focus. The felicitous response to this question however is one that is marked by **n** argued to be used in marking focus on subject constituents. This means that it is possible for this particle to be compatible with instances of all new information. This makes me to suggest that the pragmatic scope of the **n** morpheme form may be over the whole proposition as in (29b) even though this same morpheme marks focus only on an NP subjects. Ameka (1992:5) makes the same claim of the (y)é particle in Ewe which syntactically focuses arguments that are fronted and also has the pragmatic scope of occurring in structures in which the whole proposition is in focus. The fact that the answer with the **ka** focus marker as in (29c) is infelicitous makes me to opine that it is not possible for **ka** to occur in instances in which the entire clause is in focus. If it really were the case that **ka** could also mark focus on entire clauses, then the answer in (29c) should have been felicitous as an answer in the context of (29).

My claim that **ka** cannot be used to mark focus on an entire clause contradicts a proposal by Hudu (this issue) that **ka** can be used to encode focus on a whole clause. Hudu illustrates his claim with the data below:

- (30) a. **ka a bi labi-ri o**  
 FOC. 2SG. NEG. throw-IMPERF. 3SG  
 Why not throw (your stick) at it?
- b. **ka a bi dira**  
 FOC. 2SG. NEG. eat  
 Why not eat?

This claim of Hudu is not very convincing. It is absolutely the case that the function of **ka** in this context is not from what Fiedler and Schwarz (2005) observe and argue that “the so-called ‘focus marker’ is in fact just a conjunction at the beginning of a narrative clause...” (Fiedler and Schwarz 2005:135). Discussion with several other native speakers and judgment based on my own native intuitions suggests that the **ka** in the context of (30a) and (30b) are obviously conjunctions, that link up those sentences to previous ones. It is therefore surprising that Hudu in his analysis rather sees the conclusions of Fiedler and Schwarz (2005) as confusing. By this suggestion currently proposed that the **ka** in the data of (30a) and (30b) are conjunctions and not focus markers as suggested by Hudu is based on two major observations: first is the fact that none of those could serve as responses to a context that will demand that the entire clause be focused. Secondly, they could only perfectly serve as conjoined structures linking at previously structures which have been deleted. For instance, in the context of (30a) there could a situation in which a wild goat is following someone, and the fellow seems to be inattentive as to potential dangers of the wild goat following him/her. The fellow then complains to another person who will react by suggesting as in (31a). The same thing applies to (30b) which could be a conjoined structure as in a situation where a child is hungry but does not eat and keeps complaining to the father. In response to the child’s complains the father may say as in (31b). In each of the sentences in (31) what Hudu calls “entire focus constructions” are really subordinate clauses. For instance, in (31a) **ka a bi labi-ri o** is subordinated to **a yi je ni bua maa doli a** and in (31b) too, **ka a bi di-ra** is subordinated to **bindirigu beni**.

- (31) a. **A yi je ni bua maa doli a**  
 1SG COND like-not FUT goat DEF follow 1SG
- ka a bi labi-ri o?**  
 CONJ 1SG NEG throw-IMPERF 3SG  
 If you don’t want the goat to follow you, why not throw (a stick) at it?
- b. **bindirigu beni, ka a bi di-ra?**  
 Food available CONJ 1SG NEG eat-IMPERF  
 There is food available and you are not eating?

Hudu then goes on to postulate that ‘**ka** focuses whole clauses in a way that does not involve movement of any constituent. This is where the particle is placed in sentence-initial position of a rhetorical question in which the predicate has a negative morpheme (**bi** or **ku**). In such a construction, the speaker uses **ka** to focus the entire clause and present it to the listener as a polite imperative or request’. This is not a convincing analysis as it has been shown and I suggest based on the aforementioned reasons, that **ka** in that context cannot be analysed as focusing the entire clause as Hudu claims. Even what Hudu analyses as discourse **ka** in a two-way exchange should better be appreciated as a conjunction in the language.

Though there are other homophonous **ka** particles in Dagbani which function as either conjunction as elaborately discussed in Fiedler and Schwarz (2005) or as a negative verb, as shown in the data in (32) and (33) below, the claim of Hudu that **ka** can be used to focused entire clauses as demonstrated above, faces serious problems. In the data that follow (32-33), I illustrate the other analogous **ka** in Dagbani where it serves as a linker.

- (32) a. **ka a bia ku-ri bu-hi?**  
 CONJ 1SG child kill-IMPERF goat-PL  
 and your child kill goats?
- b. **ka duu maa lu-Ø**  
 CONJ room DEF fall-PERF  
 and the room has fallen?

In the data in (32) the morpheme **ka** serves as a linker, linking the dependent clauses to some independent clauses which have been deleted. For instance, the dependent clauses in (32a) and (32b) could be linked to independent clauses as in (33a) and (33b) respectively.

- (33) a. **a be la kpe ka a bia ku-ri niriba bu-hi?**  
 1SG be-LOC FOC here CONJ 1SG child kill-IMPERF people goat-PL  
 Are you here and your child is killing peoples goats?
- b. **Yi me--Ø la du' palli ka di lu-Ø**  
 2PL build-PERF FOC room new CONJ 3SG-INAN fall-PERF  
 Have you built a new room and it (the room) has fallen

The data in (32) and (33) clearly demonstrate the use of **ka** as a conjunction or linker in Dagbani.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth pointing out however, that the observation that a focus marker works also as a linker as observed of **ka** is not a unique phenomenon in Dagbani. This is because in some other languages, research has established that there is a striking phonological identity between with clausal conjunctions and focus markers. For in Akan, it has been established that the focus particle **na** can also work as a linker Amfo (2007). Also, in Foodo, a Kwa language spoken in Benin (Fiedler 2007), a similar observation is made where focus markers also work as clausal linkers and also in Dangme as in Ofoe (2007).

#### 7. DOES THE POST VERBAL **la** MARK CONTRASTIVE FOCUS IN DAGBANI?

Though several particles have been identified and associated with the marking of focus in Dagbani Fiedler and Schwarz (2005), Hudu (2006) Issah (2008), Olawsky (1999), there continues to be some debate as to the type of focus that is encoded by these identified particles. In the study of the information structural particles of Dagbani, Hudu (this issue) is the first to analyse the particles **la** as contrastive focus particle in the language. He suggests that when **la** occurs with an NP object

<sup>6</sup>As pointed out briefly, there is another homophonous **ka** that functions as a negative verb in Dagbani. This particle however is not considered in this paper.

complement or adjunct, that NP complement or adjunct is contrasted with any other possibility that may exist. The argument of Hudu is that “**la** is a contrastive focus marker”. He uses data on *wh*-questions to buttress his claim that **la** is a contrastive focus marker in Dagbani. This section presents us with data that reinforces arguments in Issah (2010) that the particle **la** marks presentational focus. Consider the data on *wh*-questions in (34) below.

- (34) Q. a. **Bo ka Napari ku-Ø?**  
 what FOC Napari kill-PERF  
 What has Napari killed?
- A b. **#Napari ku-Ø bua**  
 Napari kill-PERF goat  
 Napari has killed a goat
- c. **Napari ku-Ø la bua.**  
 Napari kill-PERF FOC goat.  
 Napari has killed a goat
- d. **Bua ka Napari ku-Ø.**  
 Napari FOC Napari kill-PERF  
 It is a goat (that) Napari has killed a goat’

I maintain that that multiple answers to *wh*-questions are possible depending on what the speaker wants to express. However, a typical answer to this question is (34b), a fact that is rather misleading. In a previous version of his present article Hudu pointed out that in sentence (34b), the object is in presentational focus and gives the information on the NP object as new non-presupposed information. The felicitous answer to the question in (34) could be one in which the NP object is fronted and focus-marked with the **ka** particle as in (34d) or a structure as in (34c) in which the focus is marked within the right periphery of the clausal structure. It should be pointed however, that the type of focus that is chosen is dependent on the semantics that the speaker wants to put across. If it is the case that a speaker just wants to present the answer to the question as new non-presupposed information (presentational/new information focus), then the structure in (34c) is chosen. On the other hand, if the speaker wants to contrast the NP object (the goat) with other possibilities and exhaustively identify it as the only thing that holds within the context and not any other thing, the structure in (32d) is selected.<sup>7</sup> It should accordingly, be noted that the fact an answer to a *wh*-question has the particle **la** in it does not necessarily serve as the basis for a claim that **la** marks contrastive focus in insitu positions in Dagbani.

## 8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the foregoing, this paper has been investigating the properties of phrasal identificational and contrastive focus in Dagbani. The observation that all constituents that are marked for contrastive focus always call for the morphological presence of **ka** or **n** and also that the constituents to be focused are located in a particular syntactic

<sup>7</sup> For details on the functions of the postverbal **la** in Dagbani, refer to Issah (2010) and references cited therein.

slot shows that the coding of phrasal identificational and contrastive focus should be analysed as a morpho-syntactic property in Dagbani.

It was further demonstrated that though both the **ka** and **n** particles can encode contrastive focus, there is some syntactic differences between the two particles. For instance, syntactically, there was evidence to show that the use of the **ka** morpheme in the encoding of constituent focus involves an overt syntactic movement of the constituent that is to be focused from its insitu position to the sentence initial position of the sentence whilst the use of **n** probably involves a covert movement.

Apart from this syntactic difference, it was also observed at the pragmatic level that it was possible for the **n** morpheme to be appropriate in context in which the entire clause will be in focus. The **ka** particle was not observed to be compatible with focus on an entire clause in the information structure of Dagbani. Thus, while **n** focus marker is compatible with instances of all-new information, the **ka** focus marker is not compatible with all-new information.

I also demonstrated that the coding of constituent focus cannot be teased away from the grammatical roles of the arguments that are marked for focus. It was for instance, shown that while the **ka** morpheme focuses non-subject constituents, the **n** particle focuses only NP subjects. This made me to argue that there is a structural asymmetry in the encoding of contrastive focus in Dagbani.

I also investigated the uses of focus in Dagbani and showed that there are two main uses: the pragmatic use of focus and the semantic use of focus. I observed that the pragmatic use of focus is used to heighten the part of an answer that corresponds to the *wh*-part of a constituent, and also for corrective or confirmative interpretations. Under the semantic use of focus however, I investigated the semantic operators also called focus-sensitive particles in Dagbani. I concluded that following proposals of Krifka (2007) that it is plausible to create a distinction between pragmatic use of focus on one hand and the semantic use of focus on the other by suggesting that while the latter type of focus associates with an operator, while the former does not. I established in this paper that the type of focus that occupies a designated A-bar position in the left periphery of the sentence of the Dagbani preverbal focus just like the English cleft constituents is analysed as expressing exhaustive identification from among a set of alternatives present in the domain of discourse. I also presented data that reinforced earlier arguments presented in Issah (2010) that the postverbal **la** be analysed as a presentational focus marker in Dagbani rather than a contrastive focus marker.

I conclude, based on nature of data analysed that constituent focus marking observed in Dagbani fits into cross linguistic generalisations on the marking of focus that sees the coding of identificational/contrastive focus as a morpho-syntactic property and the contrastive focus is mostly located in the left periphery of the clausal structure. The discussion on the function of **ka** and **n** as information packaging devices has however not considered the nature of focus constructions in complex sentences neither did I consider supra-segmental features as possible means by which contrastive focus can be realised in Dagbani. These will be good areas of research in the future.

## ABBREVIATIONS

|        |                        |      |                       |
|--------|------------------------|------|-----------------------|
| 1SG    | First person singular  | IS   | Information Structure |
| 2SG    | Second person singular | LM   | Locative Marker       |
| 3SG    | Third person singular  | NEG  | Negative Morpheme     |
| ADJUN  | Adjunct                | NS   | Subject Focus         |
| A      | Answer                 | NSF  | Non-Subject Focus     |
| CONJ   | Conjunction            | PERF | Perfective            |
| CG     | Common ground          | 1PL  | 1st Person Plural     |
| DEF    | Definite Determiner    | 2PL  | 2nd Person Plural     |
| EMPH   | Emphatic               | 3PL  | 2nd Person Plural     |
| FOC    | Focus                  | PST  | Past Tense            |
| IMPERF | Imperfective           | Q    | Question              |
| INAN   | Inanimate              | QUAN | Quantifier            |
| INTEN  | Intensifier            |      |                       |

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