

**INFORMATION STRUCTURE IN ESAHIE**

**BY**

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my Dad

Pastor Fred Kotey Broohm

To the glory of God

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## ABSTRACT

In everyday communication situations, interlocutors make deliberate efforts to communicate their intended meanings with minimal ambiguity. As a result, interlocutors intentionally employ diverse strategies of packaging information in order to reduce misunderstanding and to aid hearers in minimizing processing effort during interpretation.

This study provides a comprehensive description of how information is packaged in Esahie (Kwa, Niger Congo). It primarily discusses how focus and topic constructions are presented in Esahie.

Data is collected largely through elicitation from native speakers and radio programs held using Esahie. In analyzing the data, this work is cast in the Functional Grammar theoretical framework.

This work reveals among other things that:

- Esahie combines both syntactic strategies (fronting and or clefting) and lexical strategies to signal information structure.
- the principal focus marker in Esahie is the lexeme *yéyé*.
- verbs cannot be focused in Esahie.
- Both subject and object arguments cannot be focused in-situ.
- a focused [+human] argument, in Esahie, must be recapitulated in the default position in the rest of the clause by an anaphoric pronoun, while a gap is left in the case of [-human] arguments.
- The choice of a sentence with(out) a topicalised/focused constituent in any discourse situation in Esahie is pragmatically and/or semantically determined.

This thesis offers insight into the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of Esahie, with the view to engendering interest in the research of Information Structure in Ghanaian languages, especially Esahie.

**Keywords:** focus, focus domain, topic marker, scalar marker, focus adverb.

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
ACC	Accusative case
AF	Argument focus
CD	Clause final determiner
CM	Conditional marker
COMPL	Completive aspect
CONJ	Conjunction
CTM	Contrastive topic marker
DEF	Definite determiner
DEM	Demonstrative
DET	Determiner
FG	Functional Grammar
FOC	Focus marker
FUT	Future
H	High tone
HAB	Habitual marker
IS	Information Structure
L	Low tone
LOC	Locative
NOM	Nominal(izing) affix
NP	Noun Phrase

OBJ	Object
PAST/PST	Past tense marker
PERF	Perfective
PF	Predicate focus
PL	Plural
PROG	Progressive marker
QST	Question particle
REFL	Reflexive
REM	Restrictive Emphatic Marker
REL	Relative marker
SF	Sentence focus
SG	Singular
Spec	Specifier
SUBJ	Subject
SUBJNCT	Subjunctive
SVO	Subject Verb Object

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Introductory Remarks**

This study provides a comprehensive description of how information is packaged in Esahie (Kwa, Niger Congo). It explores the topicalizing and focusing of constituents in major and minor clauses in Esahie. In this chapter, I discuss the concept of Information Structure (section 1.1), followed by a brief description of the Sehwi people, and the speakers of Esahie (section 1.2). I then state the problem that motivates this work (section 1.4), and proceed to outline the objectives of this study (section 1.5). While I discuss the sources and methods of data collection used in this thesis in (section 1.7), I highlight the relevance of this study in (section 1.8). Finally, I present an overview of the whole work in (section 1.9).

#### **1.1 The concept of information structure**

Information structure, according to Amfo (2010), deals with how the propositional content of an utterance is structured in such a way that the speaker can successfully communicate new and significant information. The speaker does so, taking into account his or her assumptions about the knowledge that the addressee has or must have about the issue(s) or entities under discussion in order to appreciate the essence of the utterance. This means, a speaker naturally (but consciously) organises his or her utterance in a way that facilitates the effective communication of useful and hitherto

unknown information. The speaker intentionally ensures that the addressee is furnished with “enough” information to facilitate the easy understanding of what is intended. Thus, in any communicative context, when the information encoded is less than required, interlocutors are likely to ask for further information or draw inferences. On the other hand, when the information is more than required, interlocutors are usually prone to be receptive to only information they consider salient, paying relatively less attention to what they do not consider as salient with respect to the communicative context.

The tendency of the hearer to pay vital attention to only the required and relevant information means that speakers also endeavour to package information such that only salient parts of the information intended to be communicated are highlighted. This involves making complicated messages less complex and allowing for more local processing, which involves taking nothing into account apart from the information actually being processed (Sperber and Wilson 1995). Consequently, speakers aspire to frame their intentions in a carefully structured manner to be both relevant and informative to their interlocutor(s).

The aims of packaging information are to “reduce misunderstanding and also for the hearers to minimize processing effort” in interpretation (Van Valin and LaPolla 1997:199). The speaker achieves these aims through the efficient distribution of salient information. Here, salient information is what the speaker knows and assumes the hearer does not know (or might not be paying sufficient attention to), but which the hearer requires to sufficiently understand the message.

Salient information has to be distinguished from new information which is the unknown element or constituent that the speaker introduces into the utterance. Speakers usually place emphasis on the saliency of information rather than the newness or otherwise of the information. Thus, new information might not necessarily be salient.

Based on the information structure analysis, a sentence divides into ground or given information (also called theme), and focus or new information (also called rheme).

The idea of the packaging of information within discourse has gained considerable attention over the years in the syntactic/pragmatic literature. Consequently, different authors have referred to the concept by different names, including *information structure* (Halliday 1967; Lambrecht 1994, Amfo 2010), *information packaging* (Chafe 1976), *informatics*, *communicative dimension*, *psychological articulation* (Vallduví 1990), and *discourse pragmatics* (Kyuseek 2008).

Breul (2004:76) observes that two basic assumptions underlie information packaging in discourse. The first is “the communicator’s understanding of the addressee’s ability to form a mental representation of the referents and denotations of the discourse world and the communicator’s assumptions about the degree of activeness of such referents and denotations.” The second assumption relates to the interaction between “the discourse entities and the proposition of which they form a part.”

Pragmatically, in any discourse, interlocutors exchange a relatively large number of sensory impressions. However, at any given moment within the exchange, not all these sensory information might be actively attended to and

comprehended by the interlocutors. Large complicated sensory phenomena involve more processing time and effort on the part of the hearer in the interpretation process (Sperber and Wilson, 1995).

In any communicative situation, the speaker usually works towards structuring the distribution of constituents to maximise effective and efficient interpretation by the hearer. This is done through semantic and syntactic configuration in the language to produce acceptable utterances within the speech community. In other words, grammatical and acceptable structures or propositions are constructed when the speaker adequately structures information both relationally and referentially to ease interpretation of the discourse entities by the hearer.

Lambrecht (1994) suggests that the most important categories of information structure are: (a) presupposition and assertion, which deal with the organization of the speaker's message based on what she assumes the interlocutor to already know or to be unfamiliar with; (b) identifiability and activation, which relate to the speaker's assumptions about the statuses of the mental representation of discourse referents in the interlocutor's mind and (c) topic and focus, which is concerned with the speaker's assessment of the relative predictability vs. unpredictability of the relations between propositions and their corresponding linguistic elements in specific discourse situations.

The discussion in this thesis will primarily explore how speakers of Esahie lexically signal the syntactico-pragmatic notions of focus and topic, which are two core notions in studies relating to information structure.

## **1.2 The Sehwi people and the Esahie language**

The language we are concerned with is Esahie and its speakers are the Sehwi people. In this section, I discuss the Sehwi people in terms of geographical location, population figures, and aspects of the economy and the main features of the social structure. I also discuss essential aspects of the Esahie language.

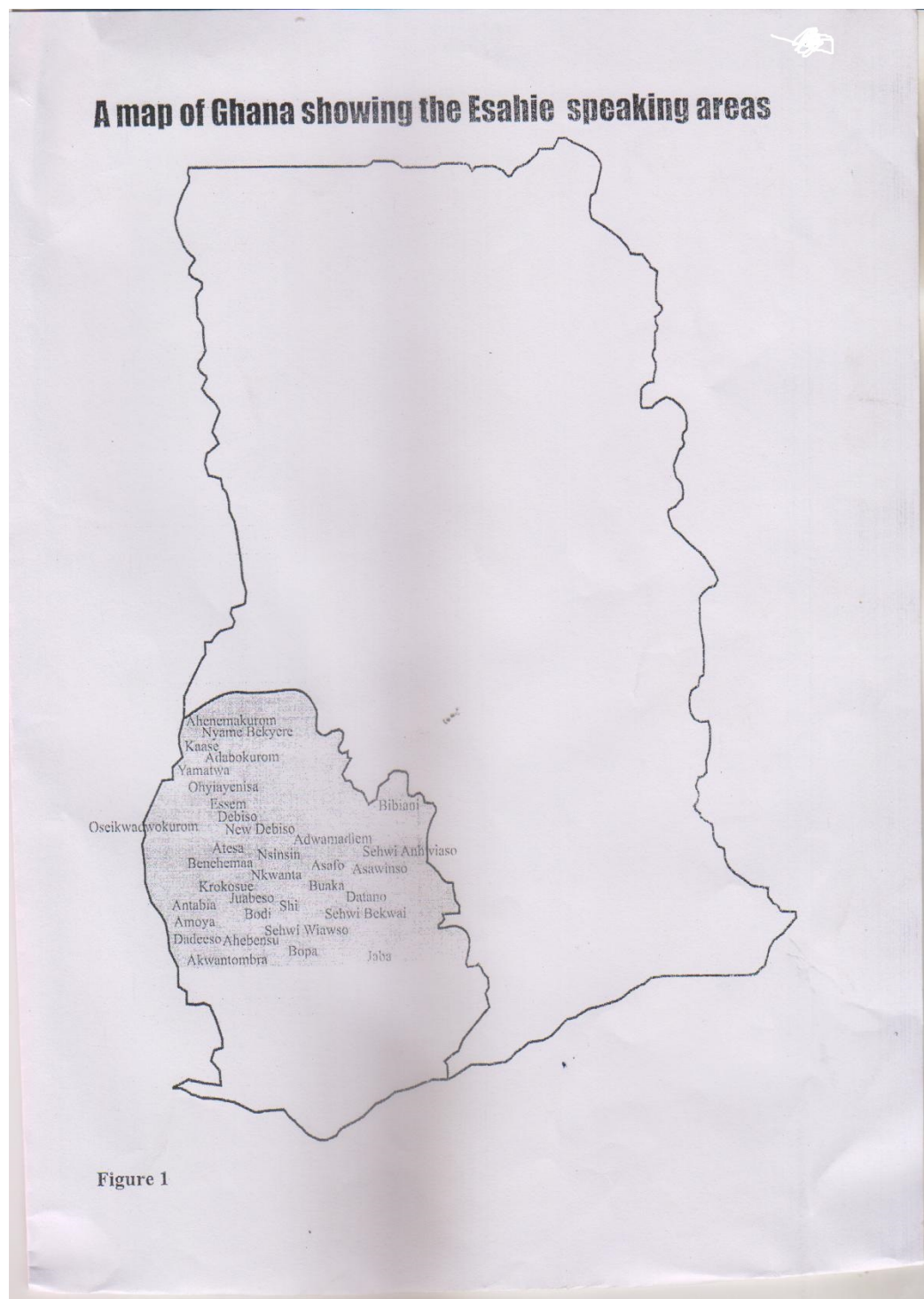
### *1.2.1 The Sehwi People*

Speakers of Esahie, according to the Ghana Statistical Service 2012 report (based on the 2010 National Census) are about 573,020 and live mostly in the Western Region of the country.

Ntumy and Boafo (2002) report that geographically, the Sehwi area occupies the northernmost part of the Western Region of Ghana. Its northern boundary is restricted by the southern boundaries of the Brong Ahafo region and the Ashanti region. Towards the east, the Sehwi area is bounded by the western boundary of the Central Region that stretches approximately between latitudes 6°13' and 6°20'. The southern boundary of the Sehwi area extends from the Ghana-Côte d'Ivoire border (approximately along the 6°00' latitude), and cuts inland along the eastern tributary of the Tano, the Subraw, and then stretches eastwards towards the vicinity of the Ankobra.

Figure 1 is a map of Ghana showing the Esahie speaking areas in the western region.

In terms of traditional paramouncy, Sehwi has three paramount areas – Anhwiaso, Bekwai and Wiawso. Some major towns include Dwinase, Yamatwa, Kaase, Adabokrom, Juaboso, Asafo, Osei Kwadwo, Bodi, Bekwai, Akontombra, Bibiani, and Asawinso.



*Figure 1. A map of Esahie speaking areas (Frimpong 2009).*

The Western region of Ghana is located within the tropical rainforest belt and therefore has very fertile lands and produces large quantities of cash and food crops such as cocoa. Thus, the main occupations of the Sehwi people include

farming, predominantly the growing of cocoa and food crops like plantain, cassava and maize. An increasing number of Sehwi now gain their livelihood in the informal sector as traditional craftsmen, small scale entrepreneurs, skilled and unskilled labourers and drivers. The Western region is rich in natural resources, including gold and host the second largest gold mining company in Ghana – Bibiani Gold Mines. The region also boasts of the only bauxite mining company in Ghana, Awaso Bauxite. The literacy level of Esahie speakers is particularly low. The region is also the only region blessed with an oil find. According to the World report (World Report 386 – June/July), only 53.3% of the Esahie population are literate in English or a known Ghanaian language.

The inheritance system of the Sehwi society is mainly matrilineal. This means a child belongs to, enjoys his first rights and owes his first duties to his/her maternal agnatic kin.

Administratively, the Sehwi area is divided into four districts. These are the Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai, Juaboso, Essam-Debiso and the Wiawso which was upgraded into a municipality in 2012. Politically, it has five constituencies: Bibiani-Anhwiaso-Bekwai, Juaboso, Essam-Debiso, Wiawso and Akontombra.

### *1.2.2 The Esahie Language*

The Sehwi people refer to their language as Esahie. Esahie has been alternatively referred to as Asahyue, Samvi and Sehwi, and coded in Ethnologue as [ISO 639-3] with the identifier [sfw]. Esahie is a Kwa language, belonging to the Northern Bia family of the Central Comoé or Tano subgroup (Dakubu and Dolphyne, 1988). Esahie is genetically close to Aowin and

Nzema and falls in the same language family with Anyi as shown in the Kwa language family tree in Figure 2 below.

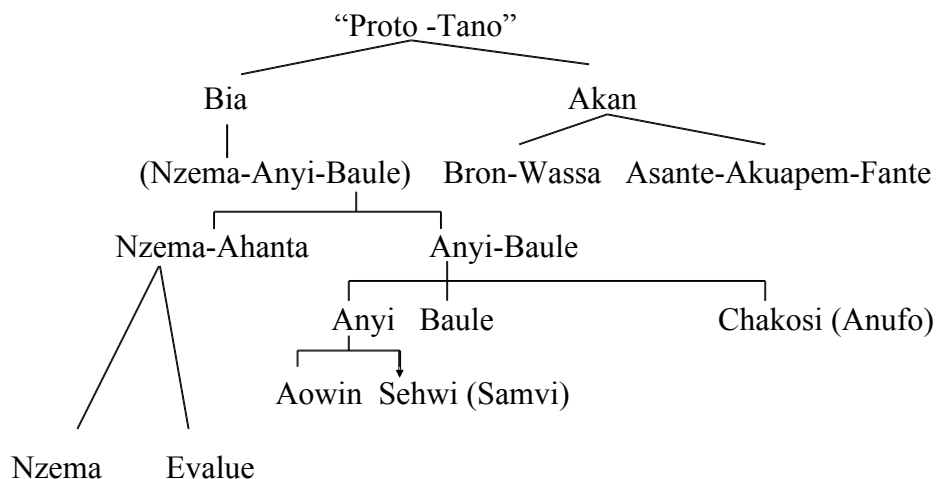


Figure 2. Kwa language family tree (Dakubu and Dolphyne 1988: 56)

Figure 2 shows that under the Bia language group, the first split was between Nzema and Ahanta on one side and Anyi and Baule on the other side. Thereafter, Anyi, Baule, and Chakosi split from each other. Anyi then also split into Anyi (Aowin) and Sehwi (Esahie).

Ntummy and Bofo (2002) identified two varieties of Esahie. The first one is the *Anhwiaso variety*, which is spoken in the extreme east of the area, that is, east of the River Subraw in towns like Sehwi-Anhwiaso, Sehwi-Bekwai, and Asawinso. The second one is the *Wiawso variety*, which is the major variety in use, in the wider area, westwards of the River Subraw. The data for this work will be drawn mainly from the latter variety.

Table 1 presents some dialectal differences in words from the two varieties. The two varieties are, however, mutually intelligible and considered the same language by the speakers of each variety.

**Table 1: Dialectal differences in Esahie**

Anhwiaso Variety	Wiawso Variety	English gloss
Ebure	ebunaen	Charcoal
Binzua	Bienzua	Male
nzasre	nnasrɛ	Towel
nnalie	lalie	Dream
Boni	beni	which one (question particle)

Esahie is a tone language.<sup>1</sup> This means that tone is used phonemically to bring about differences in meaning between two or more otherwise identical words. For instance, in Esahie, the word *bɔkɔɔ* has two meanings depending on its tonal melody. It can either be produced on a high-high-high tonal melody, as in (1), or on a low-low-low tonal melody, as in (2), to convey different meanings. Thus, the meaning of an utterance in Esahie does not only depend on the sound segments, but also on the pitch patterns associated with them.

(1) *bɔ́kɔ́́* ‘completely’

(2) *bɔ̀kɔ̀̀* ‘slowly’

On the tonology of Esahie, Frimpong (2009) observes that Esahie has two basic tones: high tone (H), marked with an acute accent ( ´ ), denoting a relatively high pitch (see 3 and 4), and a low tone (L), marked with a grave accent ( ` ), denoting relatively low pitch (see 5 and 6). Frimpong adds that both tones are contrastive.

<sup>1</sup>The analyses and discussion of the data presented in chapters 3 and 4, is not tone-marked because Esahie does not employ prosody in encoding information. Thus, tone is marked only on the information structure-sensitive particles.

(3) gó ‘dance’

(4) dá ‘sleep’

(5) bùà ‘to answer’

(6) ɲàà ‘leaf’ [Frimpong 2009:129]

Frimpong also shows that the two tones can be combined in several ways, including HH (7 and 8), LH (9) and HL (10).

(7) wórá ‘also’

(8) kókó ‘idiophone, knock at the door’

(9) bètè ‘to grind’

(10) páà ‘labour’ [Frimpong 2009:129]

With regards to the function(s) of tone in Esahie, Frimpong (2009:140) identifies two – lexical and grammatical functions. As shown earlier (regarding the word *bɔkɔɔ* (examples 1 and 2 above), some Esahie words would be formally indistinguishable without the different tone patterns they bear. She also shows that grammatically, tones in Esahie can be used to make changes in the tense/aspect of verbs. For example, tone can be employed in distinguishing between, the habitual aspect and the progressive aspect of Esahie verbs. As can be seen from the data in (11) Esahie habitual form of verbs is marked by a low tone on monosyllabic stems, and low-high tone on the first and second syllables in disyllabic stems respectively.

- (11) mi-kò  
1SG-go/HAB

The progressive form of Esahie verbs is marked by a high tone for monosyllabic stems and their pronoun, and H-H-H tonal melody on disyllabic stems and their pronouns (Frimpong 2009).

- (12) mí-búkyé  
1SG-open.PROG

We notice, from examples (11) and (12) that the only difference between the habitual and progressive forms and their respective pronouns is clearly caused by alternations in tonal melody.

Esahie, has an SVO constituent order, usually with the subject noun phrase (Subj.) being the first element, followed by a verb (V), and then an object noun phrase (Obj.), which could be a direct or an indirect object being the last element. This is exemplified in (13) with a simple clause in which the first element *Mintah* is a noun and functions grammatically as the subject of the clause. It is immediately followed by a verb, and then by another noun *Yaayaa*, which functions as the direct object of the verb.

- (13) Mintah    bo-le            Yaayaa.  
Mintah    beat-COMPL    Yaayaa  
Subj.        V                    Obj.  
'Mintah beat Yaayaa'

In Esahie, it also is possible for the subject and object positions to be occupied by independent pronouns. In sentence (14), an independent pronoun *Bε* ‘they’ occupied the subject position while *hu-ne* ‘killed’ occupied the verb position, and the final (object) position is occupied by the independent pronoun *yè* ‘him/her’.

(14)	<i>Bε</i>	<i>hu-ne</i>	<i>ye.</i>
	3PL	kill-COMPL	3SG
	<u>‘They</u>	<u>killed</u>	<u>him/her’.</u>
	Subj.	V	Obj.

### 1.3 Focus and Topic: Definition and Typology

In this section, I look at the different perspectives from which various authors have discussed the notion of focus and topic either as a linguistic structure or as a pragmatic device. I begin with the notion of focus.

The notion of focus underpins most works in discourse and syntactic studies, but it is also a term often misused or overused in the linguistic analysis of discourse mainly due to the different approaches adopted in analysing focus constructions (cf. Chafe 1971; Saah 1998; Roberts 1998; Payne 1999; Ofoe 2007).

The definitions that various authors have given to the notion of focus often influence their typology of focus markers, the description of the mode of focusing constituents, and the distribution of the focus marker(s) in their analyses. Heine et al (1983:7) as cited in Bearth (1999:124) defines focus as:

A wide range of techniques that languages dispose of in order to mark a given sentence constituent as being in focus, that is, as providing new asserted information, and conversely to mark the rest of the sentence as containing given, presupposed information.

Roberts (1998:109) also defines focus as “a conventionally encoded mode of picking out a distinguished constituent(s) in a sentence, which constituent plays a special role with respect to the immediate discourse context of the utterance of that sentence.” Dik (1978:19) views focus as “representing relatively the most important or salient information in the given setting”.

Opposed to this view, Dakubu (2005:2) characterises focus as “involving a contrast, a specification of what is salient in contrast to other possibilities”. She opines that newness of information must not necessarily be interpreted as contrasting information as focus can also mean the assertion of a choice among conflicting possibilities”.

From the foregoing, we observe that whereas Heine et al (1983) and Roberts (1998) approached the notion of focus from the perspective of linguistic structure, Dik (1978) and Dakubu (2005) explored focus from a meaning (semantic) perspective.

Chafe (1971) cited in Givón (2001:222) explains the relationship between linguistic structure and meaning, observing that “definiteness and identifiability *per se* are not decisive factors in placing chunks of information under contrastive focus”. Similarly, the ability or inability of the hearer to predict the constituents that may be placed in focus position will arise from the expectations established by both the speaker and hearer in the particular

discourse context. In a particular context, information that the listener has no knowledge of or cannot predict can be contrastive and new information, while it is possible in another context that information which is predictable or is in the short term memory of the listener may not be contrastive. Thus, it is conceivable that the unpredictability feature, and not necessarily newness of information, could be the defining characteristic of contrastive focus.

For the purpose of this study, I define focus as a signalling code or device available in a language, used to specify or assign an emphatic exhaustive or contrastive status to relevant constituents in a given discourse. This is meant to either replace an earlier assumption of the hearer, or single out an element for contrastive emphasis or to fill in the knowledge of the hearer.

Focus invariably brings to the fore the central idea of the speaker's message in a particular communicative context. This idea, usually conveyed by a constituent, might be new or old but its importance to the communication process entails the assignment of a special status to it. This is consistent with Chafe's (1971:224) observation that "contrastive sentences should not be thought to contain the specification, 'new' at all, but rather some other specification which might be labelled focus. As such new and focus would be in complementary distribution". In a contrastive sentence, new information means the choice of the unit to which it is attached is being signalled by the speaker as new information, but focus would be represented as the specific unit out of other possibilities whose newness is predominantly contrastive.

Focusing of constituents is hence, an option the speaker resorts to in order to emphasize the argument(s) that capture(s) the essence of his/her utterance. This mode of assigning special status to significant constituents may be reflected not

only in the phonology but also in the syntax of the language. That is while some languages may use morphology to indicate focus, other languages resort to phonology or word order for focus.

There are two types of structural/syntactic focus: In-situ and Ex-situ. In-situ focus is realised through linguistic features such as higher pitch on the focused constituent, or paralinguistic features such as gestures. Ex-situ focus on the other hand is a syntactic phenomenon whereby the structure of the clause is re-organised. Here, the constituent that the speaker wants to contrastively emphasize is exported to another position in the clause.

Esahie speakers typically employ the phenomenon of lexical signalling, as well as the syntactic phenomena of fronting and clefting when focusing, among other strategies (see Chapter 3 for details). As will be seen later in this thesis (Chapters 3 and 4), the notion of topic/focus in Esahie, aside from being lexico-syntactically realized, is also pragmatically motivated, because speakers can choose to focus any pertinent constituent, depending on the contextual meaning they want to convey, and the constituent on which they want to place contrastive emphasis in the discourse.

Typologically, Esahie belongs to the class of languages in which, according to Schachter (1973), cited in Roberts (1998:129), “the focused constituent is moves to a preverbal position in the sentence and is immediately followed by the focus marker”. Other related languages that signal focus lexically include Akan (Boadi 1974, Saah 1998, Amfo 2010, Ofori 2011), Ewe (Ameka 1992), and Ga (Dakubu 2005) and Dangme (Ofoe 2007, Akortia 2014).

#### 1.4 Problem statement

Most of the studies in the area of information structure, as far as Ghanaian languages are concerned, have focused on major languages, like Akan (Boadi 1974, 1990; Bearth 1999; Saah 1998; Marfo and Bodomo 2005; Amfo 2010; Ameka 2010; Ofori 2011), Ewe (Ameka 1990, 1991 and 1992), Ga (Dakubu 1992 and 2005), and Dangme (Ofoe 2007 and Akortia 2014).

Akan, has received quite a fair concentration of attention. Boadi (1974) analyses how focus is encoded in Akan from a transformational grammar theoretical perspective. Saah (1998) similarly approaches the study of focus marking in Akan from a transformational grammar framework. Marfo and Bodomo (2005), also, investigate Akan focus constructions from a Lexical Functional Grammar and Optimality theoretic perspectives.

Dakubu (1992, 2005) examines information structure in Ga. Ofoe (2007) and Akortia (2014) both work on the signaling of information structure in Dangme, a language related to Ga. Ameka (1990, 1991 and 1992) also deals with focus marking in Ewe. In Ameka's (2010) study on Information Packaging in Kwa, he never cites examples from Esahie, rather, all the examples were from major languages including Akan, Ewe, Ga and Fongbe. Hudu (2012) and Issah (2013) both study the subject of focus marking in Dagbani.

Very little is known about the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of Esahie. It is only the phonology of Esahie that has received some scholarly attention, as far as I am aware (cf. Frimpong 2009). To the best of my knowledge, information structure, particularly the encoding of focus and topic in Esahie, has not yet received any academic attention. There is therefore a need for the

present work, which seeks to present a detailed description of information structure is encoded in Esahie. Employing the tenets of the Functional Grammar theory, as proposed by Dik (1978) and Givón (2001) in this work will be a useful contribution to the empirical coverage of Functional Grammar.

## **1.5 Objectives**

### *1.5.1 General objective*

The general objective of this thesis is to explore, analyse, and provide a comprehensive description of how information is packaged in Esahie.

### *1.5.2 Specific Objectives*

The specific objectives of this thesis are:

1. To analyse the type of constituents that can be focused/topicalised in Esahie.
2. To describe the strategies used in focusing/topicalising constituents in the major and minor clause types in Esahie.
3. To contribute to the understanding of the syntax and semantics of the pragmatic notions of focus and topic in the description of Esahie.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

1. How is information packaging signalled in Esahie?
2. What strategies are used in forming topic constructions in Esahie?
3. What strategies are used in forming focus constructions in Esahie?
4. What are the pragmatic implications of the structural and lexical strategies for packaging information in an Esahie discourse?

## 1.7 Data and Methods

The primary source of data used in this work is naturally occurring oral data derived through elicitations from informants during participant observation in Sehwi-Wiawso in the Western Region.

Other sources include examples taken from both published and unpublished literature such as *Sehwi Forever* (written partly in English and partly in Esahie) by George Kobiri, and a translation of the New Testament of the Holy Bible into Esahie by the Bible Society of Ghana (BSG). Some focus sensitive particles are also identified from the Esahie New Testament Bible and analysed semantically by means of an in-depth interview with four language consultants, who were resource persons on selected radio programs. They are George Kobiri, Gerorge Atta Boateng, Ngya Kwaw, DJ Abebe and Nana Nyame Paul.

Recordings of newspaper reviews, news broadcast and other radio programs in Esahie from Liberty Fm and Uniq Fm, both of which are based in Sefwi Wiawso were also obtained. These stations were chosen because of their fair blend of the two dialects of Esahie. The justification for selecting those specific programs is that they are all held in Esahie.

Owing to the fact that the researcher is not a not native speaker, additional sentences were elicited from other sources to supplement information, as a quality control measure. The data were recorded using audio (mini disc) after which they were transcribed and interlinearised. These constituted a database for the analysis of the grammar presented.

## **1.8 Relevance of the Study**

It is my hope that when the set objectives are achieved, this work would among other things:

1. become a primary work on the syntax, semantics and pragmatics of Esahie.
2. serve as a springboard for future research in the area of information packaging in Ghanaian languages, especially Esahie.
3. provide a reference point for further studies in Esahie.

## **1.9 Overview of thesis**

This section provides information on the outline of chapters of the present thesis.

Chapter one gives an overview of the research that is carried out in this thesis. I have explained the concept of information structure (henceforth IS), particularly its pragmatic aspect, involving the notion of topic and focus. I looked at Esahie as a language and its speakers as a people, highlighting their demographics, geography and economy. I also outlined the objective(s) of this study, stating exactly what aspect(s) of the grammar of Esahie I am investigating, and finally, presented the significance of this study.

Chapter two delves into the theoretical foundation for this work. The chapter touches on how FG works, its strengths, and which functions defined in the theory are useful for our purposes. I also look at two pertinent problems associated with the pragmatic notions of focus and topic. In order to ground this work, in this chapter, I finally review some works relevant to the area of IS, particularly, how focus and topic are encoded in some Ghanaian languages.

Chapter three primarily discusses and analyses how focus is encoded in Esahie. I identify one focus marker, and five focus-sensitive particles, and examine their syntax and semantic properties. I discuss which constituents in Esahie can be focused. I also scrutinize how some such focus-sensitive particles are employed in the formation of constituent interrogatives.

Chapter four addresses how the lexico-pragmatic phenomenon of topic marking is realised in Esahie. I identify and discuss one topic particle, dealing with its syntactic and pragmatic properties.

Chapter five summarises the whole thesis, highlighting the core points put forward in all the four preceding chapters. I provide a conclusion of the whole work, and make recommendations for future works.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introductory Remarks

In this chapter, I first discuss the theoretical framework within which this study is conducted (section 2.1). I then take a look at two pertinent problems associated with the pragmatic notions of topic and focus (section 2.2). I proceed to review some literature on focus/topic constructions, particularly on Ghana languages (section 2.3). This is important because, although, as noted above, no work has been done with respect to focus construction in Esahie, various works exist on focus constructions in other Ghanaian languages including Akan (Boadi 1974; Saah 1998; Bearth 1999; Marfo and Bodomo 2005; Amfo 2010; Ofori 2011), Ewe (Ameka 1992), Ga (Dakubu 2005) Dangme (Ofoe 2007 and Akortia 2014), and Dagbani (Issah 2008, 2012 and 2013; Olawsky 1999; Fusheini 2012).

#### 2.1 Functional Grammar (FG)

The description of focus and topic constructions in Esahie presented in this thesis is cast in the Functional Grammar (FG) framework of Dik (1978) and Givón (2001). FG is a general theory of the organization of natural language. It is 'functional' in at least three different, but interrelated senses:

- i. It takes a functional view of the nature of language. This means that the FG theory explains the way human beings employ language in various discourse contexts either as a means to an end or as an end in itself.

- ii. It attaches primary importance to practical relations at different levels in the organization of grammar. FG looks at the role of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics in language and how they function together to make communication meaningful. Functionalists emphasize the dynamism of language and the importance of its expressive, social and conative functions, in contrast with or in addition to its descriptive function.
- iii. It is practically applicable to the analysis of different aspects of language and language use. The different levels of language have independent and interrelated functions that together serve a holistic function in communication. FG looks at how the parts of the whole work together to achieve its function.

According to Givón (2001), Functional Grammar is an interpretation of words by reference to what they mean in particular contexts. In effect, as Givón (2001: 16) puts it, to determine the semantic correlates of a form, you hold all variables constant but one, or you manipulate one variable and record the semantic effect of the correlation. Alternatively, you can manipulate one semantic variable while holding all others constant, and then record the structural effect of the manipulation.

According to Dik (1978), FG follows standards of adequacy including the following:

- i. Typological adequacy: The theory is formulated in terms of rules and principles that can be applied to any type of natural language.

- ii. Pragmatic adequacy: The theory is able to explain how a language helps us to understand how linguistic expressions can be effectively used in communicative interactions.
- iii. Psychological adequacy: What the theory says about language is that it is compatible with (what is known about) the psychological mechanisms involved in natural language processing. For example, this involves anticipation of certain constituents by the hearer and how the speaker sometimes reshapes such expectations through focusing of constituents in a discourse context.

In FG, functional notions play essential and fundamental roles at different levels of grammatical organization. Thus, many of the rules and principles of FG are formulated in terms of functional notions. Three types or levels of functions are distinguished:

- i. Semantic functions like Agent, Patient, Recipient, etc, define the roles participants play in states of affairs, as designated by predications.

15. Ngruma    bɔ-le                    Ama    soa-nu  
               Nkrumah hit-COMPL    Ama    cheek-containing region  
               ‘Nkrumah slapped Ama’

From example (15), *Ngruma* has the semantic role “agent”, and *Ama* as the role “patient” in the event designated by *bɔ-le* ‘to hit’.

- ii. Syntactic/Grammatical functions like Subject and Object define different structural perspectives through which the states of affairs are presented in linguistic expressions.

In example (15), *Ngruma* syntactically functions as the subject, while *Ama* functions as the direct object (or object 1), and *soa-nu* 'cheeks' will be the indirect object (object 2).

- iii. Pragmatic functions like *theme* and *tail*, *topic* and *focus* define the informational status of the constituents of linguistic expressions. They relate to the embedding of the expressions in the ongoing discourse, that are determined by the status of the pragmatic information of the speaker and addressee as it develops in verbal interaction.

## **2.2 Problems associated with the notion of focus and topic**

Roberts (1998: 130) observes that as a universal notion, focus encounters two significant problems, one is conceptual and the other is intellectual. The conceptual difficulty is that writers perceive the concept of focus in various languages differently. The intellectual difficulty on the other hand is that a perusing of the literature reveals clearly that in some instances, what is termed as focus by one author is not accepted by other authors. In this section, I discuss the defining properties of focus as a problem.

### *2.2.1 The defining characteristics of focus*

The first complexity in the definition of focus comes from the defining characteristics of focus in a discourse situation. Bearth (1999:147) describes focus based on the notion of contrastiveness rather than informativity. For him,

the definite feature of focus resides in its explicit or implicit reference to excluded alternatives. Informativity or identifiability which is non-contrastive is considered independent of focus. Dakubu (2005:02) also argues that the notion of focus implies a salient contrast of a constituent among possible alternatives. However, she observes that in focusing constituents, saliency alone does not necessarily indicate or restrictively convey a meaning of contrast.

According to Rooth (1985) cited in Horn and Ward (2006:181), evoking alternatives is the primary function of focus. As such the relational qualities presented by the non-given salient constituent can place them in a focus position. Hence, focus highlights the new contrastive information in relation to the topic. Topic, on the other hand, is that relationally given notion in the sense that it is what the clause is about.

### *2.2.2 The intellectual complexity of distinguishing between the two puzzling notions of focus and topic*

The second problem in the characterization of focus/topic emanates from the first, as various defining features have been used to distinguish the notion of focus from other closely related notions like topic. The identified defining features of focus have included “unpredictable information as against new information” (Chafe 1976), “old versus new information” (Halliday 1994, Van Valin and LaPolla 1997) “contrastiveness and informativity” (Bearth 1999), “presupposition and asserted /contrastive information” (Lambrecht 1994, Givon 2001:222).

Conceptually, Lambrecht (1994:209) explains that focus is that portion of a proposition that cannot be taken for granted at the time of speech. It is that which makes an utterance an assertion. Thus, for Lambrecht, “focus, like topic, is a relational pragmatic category, which involves establishing certain relations between denotata and propositions”, and not merely about assigning properties to single lexical items. This relational nature of focus and topic is found in the works of various authors (cf, Boadi 1974; Dakubu 2005; Saah 1998).

### 2.3 Literature Review

There is enormous literature on IS. However, in this thesis, I concentrate on works on Ghanaian languages because Esahie has a lot in common with these sister languages.<sup>2</sup>

Boadi (1974), working from a transformational grammar theoretical model, explains that Akan has two focus makers *na* (exclusive focus marker) and *de* or *de(ε)* (potentially inclusive focus marker). Boadi (1974:09) states, inter alia that, “... *na* is more precise in definition and presupposes certainty on the part of the speaker. And it may be said to be THE [his emphasis] focus marker of the language.”

The interpretation of the notion of focus thus led to difficulty in Boadi’s terminology and use of the focus markers (*na* and *de(ε)*), which he identified in Akan. Boadi opines that the choice of either of the morphemes is not only stylistic but also semantic. He explains that in using the *de(ε)*-focus morpheme, the speaker does not commit himself to saying that the focused element is

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<sup>2</sup> The assumption that Esahie has a lot in common many other Ghanaian languages is based on some preliminary findings in my literature reiew. Akan, for example, has a null object rule similar to what obtains in Esahie.

placed in any unique class by itself because the potential of there being other possible referent(s) is left open. He adds that one important semantic feature of the *de(ε)*-focus morpheme is its indefiniteness. Boadi also showed that all major syntactic categories in Akan could be brought into focus. This view of *na* and *de(ε)* as focus markers in Akan is shared by Saah (1998).

In differentiating focus construction from ordinary unmarked subject-predicate constructions, Boadi (1974:06) appeals to Transformational Grammar, in demonstrating that in Akan, focused sentences have as their underlying representation a node dominating a focus marker.

Secondly, focus constructions in Akan undergo a process of clefting or recapitulating, the effects of which shows in the repetition of one of the constituents on the left of the focus marker at the beginning of the sentences. Thus, for Boadi (1974:6), focused structures in Akan differ from ordinary subject-predicate sentences, as in (16), in containing what Haliday (1967) calls points of prominence within the message.

- (16) Kofi ba-a ha.  
 Kofi come-PAST here  
 ‘Kofi came here.’

Boadi (1974) identified four focus sentence-types in Akan, they are: simple-*na* focus (17a), clefted focus (17b), non-extraposed pseudo-clefted focus (17c), and extraposed pseudo clefted focus (17d).

(17) a. *Simple na focus.*

Kofi<sub>i</sub> na            ɔ<sub>i</sub>-ba-a            ha.

Kofi FOC:REL 3SG-come-PAST here

‘Kofi is the one who came here.’

b. *Clefted focus*

Eye            Kofi<sub>i</sub> na    ɔ<sub>i</sub>-ba-a            ha.

It-is(Cleft) Kofi FOC 3SG-come-PAST here

‘It is Kofi who came here.’

c. *Non-extraposed pseudo-clefted focus*

[Onipa a    ɔ-ba-a            ha ]<sub>NP</sub> ne [Kofi]<sub>NP</sub>

person REL 3SG-come-PAST here FOC Kofi

‘The one who came here is Kofi.’

d. *Extraposed pseudo-clefted focus*

[Kofi]<sub>NP</sub> ne [Onipa a    ɔ-ba-a            ha ]<sub>NP</sub>

Kofi FOC person REL 3SG-come-PAST here

‘Kofi is the person/one who came here.’

The frames and processes in (18) and (19) are Boadi’s account of how the four focus sentences derive from his two underlying structures.

(18) Deriving simple-*na* and clefted focus sentences.

(i) Non-focus: [*Kofi baa ha*]<sub>sentence</sub>

(ii) Introduction of *na* at clause left-periphery: *na* (Foc) + [*Kofi baa ha*]

(iii) Constituent copying for focus: *Kofi*<sub>1</sub> *na* [*Kofi*<sub>2</sub> *baa ha*].

(iv) Pronominalization (ɔ-replaces *Kofi*<sub>2</sub>): [*Kofi*<sub>1</sub> *na* ɔ-*baa ha*]

(v) Deriving clefted focus (εyε/cleft-addition): *εyε Kofi na əbaa ha*.(3b)

(vi) Deriving simple-*na* focus (εyε-deletion): *Kofi na əbaa ha*.(17a)

(19) Deriving non-extraposed pseudo-clefted focus, and extraposed pseudo-clefted focus.

(i) [*ə-baa ha*]<sub>Sentence</sub> yε [*Kofi*]<sub>NP</sub>

(ii) Introduction of *na*/focus: *na+* [*ə-baa ha*] yε [*Kofi*]<sub>NP</sub>

(iii) Morphophonological fusion of *na-yε* into *ne*: [*ə-baa ha*] *ne* [*Kofi*]<sub>NP</sub>

(iv) Relativization (NP + relativizer): *Onipa a [əbaa ha] ne* [*Kofi*]<sub>NP</sub> (v)

Deriving non-extraposed pseudoclefted focus: *Onipa a əbaa ha ne Kofi*

(17c)

(vi) Deriving extraposed pseudoclefted focus (Swapping of nonextraposed pseudoclefted NPs): *Kofi ne onipa a əbaa ha* as in (3d)

Saah (1998) asserts that focus in Akan is marked both morphologically and syntactically. He explains that morphologically, a focus morpheme is attached to the constituent in focus and must necessarily occur in what he designates as the focus position – the left periphery of the sentence and before a complement clause. This is exemplified in (20), where the focused NP *Ama* appears on the left periphery of the sentence and is followed by the focus particle *na/de* and then the complement clause.

(20) *Ama na/de ə-di-i aduan(e) no.*

NAME FOC 1sg-eat-PAST food DEF

‘Ama ate the food’, ‘As for Ama, she ate the food’

[Saah 1998: 2]

Saah terms *na* as contrastive and *de(ε)* as non-contrastive focus markers in Akan. He also shows that a constituent, specifically the object NP cannot be focused in-situ.

(21) \* Ama di-i aduan no *na/de*.

NAME eat-PAST food DEF FOC [Saah 1998: 3]

The ungrammaticality of sentence (21), according Saah (1998:3), results from the impossibility in Akan of focusing a constituent (particularly the object NP) in-situ with either of the markers. Saah explains that it is possible to use a cleft construction in addition to the focus marker, adding that this is restricted to the *na*-focus marker only. He also showed that the *de*-focus morpheme cannot be used when clefting a sentence, as (23) shows.

(22) ε-yε Ama *na* ɔ-di-i aduan(e) no.

It-be NAME FOC 1SG-eat-PST food DEF

‘It was Ama who ate the food’ [Saah 1998: 8]

(23) \* ε-yε Ama *de* ɔ-di-i aduan(e) no.

It-be NAME FOC 1sg.eat-PST food DEF

According to Saah (1998), the ungrammaticality of sentence (23) is owed to the use of the *de*-focus morpheme which he explains cannot be used in cleft constructions. Saah points out that the choice of a sentence with or without a focused constituent, in any Akan discourse is pragmatically and/or

semantically-driven; it is a function of the meaning the speaker wants to impart in that particular context. This is exemplified in (24).

- (24). a. Kofi ba-a ha.  
 Kofi come-PAST here  
 ‘Kofi came here.’ [Saah 1998: 7]
- b. Kofi<sub>i</sub> na o<sub>i</sub>-ba-a ha.  
 Kofi FOC 3SG-come-PAST here  
 ‘Kofi is the one who came here.’ [Saah 1998: 8]
- c. Kofi<sub>i</sub> de o<sub>i</sub>-ba-a ha.  
 Kofi FOC:REL 3SG-come-PAST here  
 ‘As for Kofi, he came here.’ [Saah 1998: 8]

The simple unmarked sentence in (24a) is making the assertion that someone identified as *Kofi* came here. Sentences (24b) and (24c) however, differ both structurally and semantically from (24a) in that the NP *Kofi* is focused in both of them. Semantically, (24b & c) differ from (24a) and from each other. The open proposition in the two focused constructions is: *A came here*. That is the ‘old information’ or the information shared by both the speaker and the hearer. “*Kofi*” is the ‘new information’ that the speaker wants to impart to the hearer. In (24b) the *na*-focus morpheme gives the additional information that *Kofi* is the only and particular person who came here. The sentence could hence be paraphrased as: *It was Kofi (and no-one-else) who came here*. In effect, *Kofi* is being contrasted with all other possible person(s) who were expected, suspected or likely to “*come here*”.

Saah (1998) labels the *na*-morpheme, which Boadi (1974) terms an exclusive marker as a *contrastive* focus marker, because to him there are certain nuances of meaning associated with these focused constructions which go beyond the idea of exclusiveness. He suggests that apart from being contrastive in interpretation, (24b) can also be counter-assertive, which means it can be used to correct an assertion or provide information that is different in propositional content from what has already been asserted.

Commenting on the *de*-focus morpheme, however, he contends that it is not contrastive in its interpretation, so he labelled *de* as a non-contrastive focus marker. He explains that no such idea of contrast and counter-assertion can be found in (24c) which has the *de*-focus morpheme. He believes that the *de*-focus morpheme rather “singles-out” the constituent to which it is attached and does not necessarily contrast that constituent with any other possible constituent(s). He adds that, the *de*-focus morpheme can be used in certain contexts to indicate “a reversal of the truth of presupposed or previously asserted predication” (Saah 1998:9), in which situations what was presupposed or previously asserted will be in the affirmative, and the clause containing the *de*-focus marker would have the opposite value and vice versa.

Thus, Saah observes that the *na*-focus morpheme can be given the semantic features: [+ Emphasis, + Contrast], while the *de*-focus morpheme on the other hand can be given the semantic features: [+ Emphasis, -Contrast].

Syntactically, Saah (1998) complements the analysis of Boadi (1974), whilst asserting in Government and Binding (GB) terms, that focus placement in Akan is not the result of movement but a base generation of the focused constituent or a copy of the focused constituent in the Complementizer Phrase

(CP). He also explains that in Akan there is no evidence of any trace of movement, as obtains in English, in the clause structure which triggers the focused constituent to be fronted. Moreover, the presence of the resumptive pronoun when objects are preposed and focused argues for such immunity to the Government and Binding subjacency rules (Saah 1998: 15-16).

Marfo and Bodomo (2005:180) note that in focus constructions in Akan, focusing is used to create contrast intentionally for emphasis. The constituent to be focused is “fronted in its extra-sentential projection of the focus phrase”. This focused constituent is immediately followed by the focus marker *na* and when the sentential head is the constituent that is focused, “the same form of the verb stem remains in situ”.

Analysing focusing and question-word fronting in Akan from a Lexical Functional Grammar and Optimality theoretic approach, they assert that unlike *na*, *de(ε)* cannot occur after question words like *hwan* “who”, a finding consistent with what is observed in Saah (1998). They adduce evidence to the effect that in Akan, focusing and Q-word fronting (in wh-questions) essentially share the same phrase structure configuration. This involves constituent left dislocation, introduction of the focus marker (FOC), *na*, and insertion of a resumptive pronoun (RPro) for a dislocated argument function.

The most relevant work, with regard to the aim of this thesis is Amfo (2010)<sup>3</sup>, which presents a detailed work on focus/topic marking in Akan. She primarily probes how the pragmatic notions of focus and topic are lexically signaled (expressed by means of markers or particles) in Akan. Working from a pragmatic point of view, she disagrees with Boadi (1974) and Saah (1998) on

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<sup>3</sup> Amfo’s work extremely useful due to the close contact and resultant semblance between Esahie and Akan.

the status of *de*( $\epsilon$ ) as a focus marker in Akan. Amfo explains that the marker which Boadi (1974:8) and Saah (1998:3) term as potentially inclusive and non-contrastive focus marker respectively is in fact a topic marker. She argues that *de* is better analyzed as a/an contrastive/emphatic topic marker. This is because *de* marks a constituent as the topic of the utterance in which it is contained. That is, it indicates that the constituent to which it is attached is “what is a matter of current concern or standing interest,” (Amfo 2010:216).

Amfo’s analysis, thus leaves the *na*-particle as the principal focus marker in Akan. Reasoning along with Dik et al. (1981:59-68), Amfo argues that the *na*-particle can be employed to serve complete, selective, replacing and restricting focus functions, as illustrated in (25).

- (25) Maame Ama; *na* Kwesi boro-o noj.  
 Maame Ama FM Kwesi beat-COMPL her  
 ‘It was MAAME AMA whom Kwesi beat’. [Amfo 2010: 200]

Amfo argues that the focused constituent in sentence (25) express complete focus in that it is intended to fill in the gaps about who Kwesi beat. She also opines that supposing that the speaker in (26) is eating bread and porridge, She indicates to her host that she wants more, and the host brings more porridge, She then utters (26) to indicate that she actually meant more bread, rather than more porridge.

- (26) Paanoo *na* me-pe  
 Bread FM I-like  
 ‘I want BREAD.’ [Amfo 2010:200]

In her view, the *na*-particle in this context is being used to indicate selective focus, because the focus particle picks/selects one item from a presupposed set of possible values. She also shows that in certain contexts the use of *na* indicates replacing focus. In a situation where the interlocutor in (27) is looking for *Kwamena*, now speaker *A*, who arrived earlier and did not meet *Kwamena*, assumed *Kwamena* had gone to school, since it was during the time period that *Kwamena* is expected to be in school. Speaker *B* who actually is privy to the whereabouts of *Kwamena* then comes in with (27) to correct the presupposition that *Kwamena* has gone to school.

(27). Daabi, ayaresabea *na* ɔ-kɔ

No, hospital FM he-go

‘No, he has gone to the HOSPITAL’. [Amfo 2010:201]

In sentence (27), Amfo reveals that indeed the *na*-morpheme in certain contexts indicates replacing focus, because a particular entity (in this case *school*, the wrongly perceived whereabouts of *Kwamena*), which is mutually manifest to the interactants is removed and replaced with the correct item (in this case *hospital*).

Amfo (2010) proposes that the *na*-morpheme can be used together with the exclusive markers to signal restricting focus, where a presupposed set is restricted to one or more correct values. She goes further to show that Akan has a rich inventory of markers of information structure by identifying four more particles in addition to what was identified in Boadi (1974) and Saah (1998). She categorized one of the two classes of markers she identified as inclusive

markers, including particles like *(n)so* and *mpo*, tagging the other category as exclusive markers which also included particles like *nko* and *ara*. Concerning *(n)so* and *mpo*, Amfo argues that they involve inclusion of some sort. Particularly, she *described* *(n)so* as a simple additive marker, meaning that the utterance to which it is attached has to be interpreted within a parallel context as the immediately preceding utterance.

As demonstrated in Amfo (2010), *(n)so*, like *na*, occurs to the immediate right of the constituent over which it has scope and modifies. The essential difference between *(n)so* and *na*, which can only modify a phrase, is that *(n)so* may either modify a noun phrase, as in example (28a, below), or a predicate as seen in example (28b, below).

(28).a Araba boa me wɔ edzɪban-yɛ mu. Kodwo so boa wo wɔ  
 Araba help.HAB me at food-do inside. Kodwo also helps you at  
 haban mu  
 farm in  
 ‘Araba helps me in cooking. Kodwo also helps you on the farm.’

[Amfo 2010: 202]

b. Kodwo hohor n-kyense mu so.  
 Kodwo wash PL-dish inside also  
 ‘Kodwo does the dishes too.’

[Amfo 2010: 202]

Amfo (2010) states that the equivalent context for both sentences in (28a), is that both children (*Kodwo* and *Araba*) are helpful to their parents, despite the fact the exact kind of help that they individually offer is not the same. While



to its English gloss (even). She explains that one important feature of *mpo* is that the proposition expressed by an *mpo*-utterance “contains information which is contrary to expectation (given some particular background information), because it is least expected” (cf. Amfo 2010: 207).

Concerning *nko* and *ara*, Amfo argues that they mark exclusivity of one kind or the other. Amfo (2010:210) tags *nko* as a restrictive marker, owing to the fact that the *nko*-marked constituent is “presented or interpreted as the only choice within a contextually determined set of alternatives”.

- (31). Nyame *nko* ne me boafɔɔ  
 God only is my helper  
 ‘Only God is my help.’

To the speaker, of all the persons that can suitably qualify, the *nko*-modified constituent, *Nyame* ‘God’, is the only accurate one the speaker believes can truly help him/her. A summary of Amfo’s analysis of the particles *nko* and *na* is presented in table 2 below.

**Table 2: Syntactic similarities/differences between *nko* and *na*.**

Similarities	Differences
1. Both markers can take scope over a constituent within a clause.	1. When using <i>nko</i> , unlike <i>na</i> , the constituent in focus is not preposed, and does not leave any copy in the clause.
2. Both markers cannot take scope over predicate or the whole clause.	2. While the <i>na</i> -modified entity is always formally expressed, the <i>nko</i> -focused entity may be assumed.

The second exclusive marker that Amfo (2010) deals with is *ara*, which she contends may be used in various contexts to communicate a variety of meanings. She argues that *ara* may be used to indicate restriction, simultaneity, continuity (or iteration), and in other contexts to induce a scalar interpretation.

Ofori's (2011) work (also on Akan) is mainly a rebuttal against certain positions taken in the seminal work of Boadi (1974). Ofori's work presents alternative viewpoints on these areas of Boadi (1974):

- (a) his position on the basic and the derived focus marker;
- (b) his position on the types of focus sentences in Akan; and
- (c) his position on functions/senses of the focus marker in Akan.

He echoes that central to Boadi's analysis is his establishment of the basic focus marker as *na*, with *ne* as its allomorphic variant from a *na-yε* fusion.

Ofori contends, however, that missing from Boadi's account is the morphophonological process that accounts for the *na + yε* fusion to *ne* [*ni*], and the morphophonological motivation and the language-internal support for the said fusion. Premised on this, he argues that Boadi's *na+yε* fusion is morphophonologically indefensible in Akan linguistics.

He also observes that in Boadi's account, although the relative clause is present in *na* focus sentences, we are unable to account for the relative marker. In response to this inconsistency too, Ofori points out that there is never an instance in Akan syntax where a clause can have the relative reading without the relativizer.

In contradistinction to Boadi (1974), Ofori posits *ne* rather as the basic focus verb/unit in Akan, and *na* as its allomorphic variant. He believes *ne* to be the basic focus marker in Akan. Discussing what he believes to be the basic focus

marker in Akan, Ofori posits that *ne* is an equational/ascriptive copula/verb in the focus sentence, whose basic semantic function is to equate a focused-unit and a presuppositional constituent to demand, assert or achieve definiteness.

The theory of focus has to be distinguished from the theory of topic although they both express pragmatic relations between denoted constituents and propositions, and are considered as two core notions in studies relating to information structure.

Dakubu (2005), working on Ga, explains that a topicalized phrase, in contrast to a focused constituent, represents a salient feature in the presupposition, a specification of what is salient in contrast to other possibilities. A topicalized phrase is a salient constituent in the present discourse which has a referent in a relatively earlier discourse and as such is part of the presupposed knowledge of the hearer.

Focus in Esahie, for example, resembles topicalization in many respects, particularly the syntax, in that both employ fronting. Besides, in topicalization as well as in focus marking, a lexical marker immediately follows the fronted argument or constituent. Syntactically, Dakubu (2005) explains that in Ga, as in Akan but unlike in Ewe, it is possible to focus the verb itself, by preposing it in the same manner as its arguments. This, she demonstrates, requires a non-finite form of the verb to be fronted, while the finite form still occurs at its normal site as the example in (32) shows:

(32). Gbó (ni) è! -gbó.

Die (FM) 3SG.SUBJ PERF-die

‘He had died’.

[Ga, Dakubu 2005: 09]

With regards to object NPs, Dakubu (2005:13) shows that, it is when an indirect object is put in focus that a pronoun occurs at the extraction site in the main clause. This is clearly different from Akan where a pronoun occurs at the extraction site whether a direct or indirect object is preposed and focused.

Ofoe (2007), working on Dangme, suggests that Dangme speakers emphasize constituents by preposing them to clause-initial position. He asserts that morpho-phonemically, the topic marker in Dangme is indicated by the morpheme *lɛɛ*, which has a low tone, adding that phonologically, in a topic construction (example 33), there is the potential of pausing, usually indicated with a comma, after the topic phrase in the construction.

(33). Tòkòtá né lèè, é klé pé mò.

Shoe DEM TM, 3SG.SUBJ big exceed 2SG.OBJ.

‘As for this shoe, it is bigger than you.’ [Ofoe 2007:89]

On the other hand, he suggests that the focus marker in Dangme is *lɛ* (Coastal dialect group) or *nɛ* (Inland dialect group) which has a low tone, and adds that phonologically, there is no possibility of pausing after the focus marker and before the subject NP in the clause (example 34).

(34). Tòkòtá né nɛ, é klé pé mò.

Shoe DEM FM 3SG.SUBJ big exceed 2SG.OBJ.

‘As for this shoe, it is bigger than you.’ [Ofoe 2007:89]

Morpho-syntactically, while the resumptive pronoun is obligatory in the topic construction, under certain circumstances<sup>4</sup>, it is optional in the focus construction. He also states that in Dangme, manner and epistemic adverbs cannot be in focus and when adverbs occur in a sequence, it is only a sequence of time and temporal adverbs that can be fronted and focused. In the copula construction, he detected that when the noun phrase is focused, the focus marker precedes the resumptive pronoun and it is followed by the copula and the referent.

Ameka (1992) discusses focus in Ewe from a functional framework and explains that in terms of inventory, Ewe has two focus markers; argument focus marker *(y)é* and the predicate focus marker *de*. These focus markers can be distinguished because of their different grammatical, semantic and pragmatic properties. The argument focus marker is used for signaling focus on fronted nominals and adverbials while the predicate focus marker is used for focusing verbal predicates.

Finally, Issah (2013) explored how constituent interrogativization and focus play out in Dagbani, a Gur (Niger-Congo) language. Issah (2013) proposes that focus in Dagbani is indicated by the syntactic strategy of fronting, adding that this syntactic strategy is then combined with a morphological/lexical strategy; the presence of a special morpheme labeled as a focus marker. The foundation for this argument is that, in Dagbani, a constituent that is marked for contrastive focus must invariably be located within the clause initial position of the sentence and there is also an obligatory introduction of special morphemes called focus markers.

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<sup>4</sup> The resumptive pronoun is optional only when the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular or the singular subject NP is in focus in a clause in which the independent verb indicates a completive aspect, Ofoe (2007).

He identified two focus morphemes in the language, *kà* and *n*, arguing that the focus morphemes *kà* or *n* are obligatory in the formation of constituent interrogatives. He explains that when this happens, the canonical word order of SVO is distorted (as can be seen in examples 35a and 35b).

- (35) a. O kù-rí wòhú  
 s/he kill.IMPERF snake  
 ‘S/he is killing a snake’ [Issah 2013: 44]
- b. Wòhú kà ó kù-rá.  
 snake FM 3SG kill.IMPERF  
 It is a snake (that) s/he is killing’ [Issah 2013:44]
- c. \*Wòhú n ó kù-rá.  
 snake FM 3SG kill.IMPERF [Issah 2013:44]
- d. Chéntiwúni tú-Ø biá máá  
 Chentiwuni insult.PERF child DEF  
 ‘Chentiwuni has insulted the child’ [Issah 2013:44]
- e. Chéntiwúni n tú-Ø biá máá  
 Chentiwuni FM insult.PERF child DEF  
 ‘It is Chentiwuni who has insulted the child’ [Issah 2013:44]
- f. \*Chéntiwúni kà tú-Ø biá máá  
 Chentiwuni FM insult.PERF child DEF [Issah 2013:44]
- g. Bε bù-rí bi-hí kpè  
 3SG kill.IMPERF child.PLU here  
 ‘They beat children here’ [Issah 2013:44]

- h. Kpè kà bɛ bù-rí bì-hí  
 Here FM 3SG kill.IMPERF child.PLU  
 ‘It is here that they beat children’ [Issah 2013:44]
- i. \*Kpè m bɛ bù-rí bì-hí  
 Here FM 3SG kill.IMPERF child.PL [Issah 2013:44]

We realize that sentences (35a), (35d) and (35g) have the canonical (undistorted) word order of Dagbani which is SVO while, (35b), (35e) and (35h) have distorted sentences in which certain constituents as objects (35b) and (35d) and an adjunct (35h) have been fronted for the purpose of focusing. We also notice from examples (35b) and (35e) that the contrastively focused constituents *wòhú* ‘snake’ and *Chéntìwùni* respectively, have been placed in the sentence initial positions and are immediately followed by focus markers *kà* and *n*. We also notice that when the focused constituent is an NP object as in (35b) or adjunct as in (35h), then, the *kà*-contrastive (subject) focus particle is selected. Issah (2013) contends that ungrammaticality of (35c) indicates that *n*-focus particle cannot focus NP objects, while the ungrammatical sentence in (35f) also shows that NP subjects cannot be focused by *kà*. Thus, he suggests that the *kà*-focus particle occurs with interrogatives that question non-subject arguments, while *n*-focus morpheme occurs with arguments that question subject constituents.

In terms of language categorization with regards to focus construction, Esahie belongs to the class of languages in which focusing is encoded through lexical signaling of the constituent, which is fronted to a preverbal position in the sentence followed by the focus marker (Schachter 1973, cited in Roberts

1998:129). Other Ghanaian languages which can be grouped under this category include Akan (Boadi 1974; Saah 1998; Amfo 2010; Ofori 2011), Ga (Dakubu 2005), Dangme (Ofoe 2007, Akortia 2014), Dagbani (Issah 2008; 2013; Olawsky 1999; Fusheini 2012) and Ewe (Ameka 1992).

The focus marker in Esahie is a lexical device usually used by speakers to signal significant constituents, which are principally contrastive, in a discourse setting (see section 3.4.2). As we will see (section 3.4.2), focus as expressed in Esahie is similar to what is expressed by the *na* focus marker in Akan termed as ‘the *exclusive focus* type’ in (Boadi 1974) or ‘the *contrastive focus* type’ in Saah (1998); *é* as an *argument focus marker* in Ewe (Ameka 1992); *kà* as a *contrastive focus marker* in Dagbani (Issah 2013, Fusheini 2012); *nè* (or *lè*) in Dangme (Ofoe 2007, Akortia 2014); or *nì* in Ga (Dakubu 2005).

Particularly, we will see (section 3.4.1) that the Esahie principal focus marker *yéyé*, resembles the Akan *na* (cf. Amfo 2010) in form and function. Amfo’s (2010) syntactico-pragmatic analysis of inclusive and exclusive markers in Akan will serve as a guide for the analysis in chapter 3.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FOCUS MARKING IN ESAHIE

#### 3.0 Introductory Remarks

In this chapter, I basically discuss and analyse how focus is formally encoded in Esahie. I examine the lexico-syntactic coding of focus in Esahie (section 3.2), identifying five focus-sensitive particles (section 3.2.1), and exploring their syntax and semantics/pragmatics. This chapter also takes a look at some syntactic strategies available in Esahie for signalling focus (section 3.2.2). Following Lambrecht (2000), I discuss types of focus based on what syntactic constituent is focused (section 3.3.1), and demonstrate how his categorization of focus applies to Esahie (section 3.3.2). Based on the typology of focus function that Dik et al.'s (1981) provides (section 3.4.1), and the analyses of focus marking in Akan, as suggested in Amfo (2010), I present a semantic analysis of the Esahie focus marker (section 3.4.2), and the five other focus-sensitive particles (sections 3.5 and 3.6).

#### 3.1 Defining focus

Focus is a signalling device used to specify or assign an emphatic exhaustive or contrastive status to relevant constituents in a given discourse, to either replace an earlier assumption of the hearer, or single out an element for contrastive emphasis or fill in the knowledge of the hearer. What this means is that the focused constituents in the utterance that receives emphasis, because it is selected, and contrasted with other possible constituents. This conscious

contrast with other possible constituents, is usually an effort to cancel an earlier supposition or to furnish the hearer with new and significant information.

Jacobs (1988) and Rooth (1985) cited in König (1991) consider focus as a strategy for establishing a relation between the value of a focused expression and a set of alternatives. I assume along with Amfo (2010), regarding the encoding of focus, that the grammars of languages make available phonetic, morphological, syntactic or lexical signals which are supposed to lead to the accurate interpretation of focus. Focus constructions are therefore often thought of as marked constructions.<sup>5</sup>

### **3.2 The Lexico-syntactic Coding of Focus in Esahie**

Cross-linguistically, the lexico-syntactic strategies of encoding focus include clefting, preposing, and pseudo-clefting. Esahie employs word order variation (syntax) and specific lexical items to encode the focus. As has been noted (cf. Gundel 1977; 1988; Givón 1991), languages seldom use only morphological means to signal focal information. Hence, typologically, Esahie combines both syntactic strategies (including fronting or left dislocation and clefting) and lexical strategies to signal information structure.

The focused constituent moves to a sentence-initial position and is immediately followed by a lexical item, the focus marker. Saah (1998:2) refers to this left periphery position of the sentence as the focus position in Akan. In structures where a constituent is preposed and is followed by the focus marker,

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<sup>5</sup> Dik et al. (1981) and Watters (1979) claim the existence of unmarked focus constructions (i.e., focus neutral), but Lambrecht (1994) argues that no sentence is pragmatically neutral, i.e., without information structure.

there is usually a specific indication of contrast<sup>6</sup>. Conversely, when a focus marker does not explicitly follow the constituent, specificity cannot be absolutely assumed.

### 3.2.1 *Inventory of focus markers in Esahie*

Ameka (2010) argues, in his general characterisation of Kwa, that all the languages have a dedicated focus marker. Esahie has a rich inventory of lexical items/markers which guide the interlocutor to various aspects of the context of the discourse.

These markers include the focus marker *yéyé* (or *yéé*, section 3.4.2), and another class of words often called ‘focus adverbs’ or ‘focus-sensitive particles’ like the inclusive markers *kósó* ‘also’ (section 3.3.1) and *pó* ‘even’ (section 3.5.2), and the exclusive markers such *ngóm* ‘only’ (section 3.6.1), *déín* (section 3.6.2) and *álà* ‘just’ (section 3.6.3).

A focus particle is a lexical item whose meaning interacts with the focus/background partition of sentences in which it occurs (Sudhoff 2010:6)<sup>7</sup>. Focus adverbs or focus-sensitive particles<sup>8</sup>, on the other hand, have been argued to have an intimate connection with focus, a phenomenon referred to as ‘*association with focus*’ (cf. Jackendoff 1972, Rooth 1985, 1992).

Formally, a focus marker or a focus-sensitive particle (including *yéyé*, or *kósó*, *pó*, *ngóm*, *déín*, and *álà*) immediately follows the constituent in focus and may appear either at the left periphery of the sentence before a complement clause or after the object. This is exemplified in (36) and (37).

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<sup>6</sup> Fronting of constituents in Esahie, however, may not necessarily occur with the focus marker, depending on the meaning the speaker wants to convey in that particular context.

<sup>7</sup> The terms, focus marker and focus particle are used interchangeable in this work.

<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the terms focus-sensitive particle and focus adverb are used interchangeably.

(36) Yaa, wo ye nyemene.

NAME self be beautiful

‘Yaa is beautiful’.

(37) Simple yéyé-focus

Yaa yéyé ye-wo ye nyemene.

NAME FOC 3SG-self be beautiful

‘Yaa is this particular person who is beautiful’

The simple unmarked sentence in (36) makes the assertion that someone identified as *Yaa* is beautiful. (37) differs structurally and semantically from example (36) because the NP *Yaa* is focused here. The proposition in the two (36 & 37) is: *Yaa is beautiful*. This is ‘old information’ which is shared by both the speaker and the addressee. *Yaa* is the ‘new information’ that the speaker wants to communicate to the addressee. In example (37) the *yéyé*-focus morpheme gives the additional information that *Yaa* is the only and particular person who is beautiful. The semantics (and pragmatics) of this marker is discussed in section 3.3.1.

Diverse kinds of focus occurring in natural languages can be typologized based on the syntactic and pragmatic scope of the focus marker or the specific function of the focused constituent in a given communicative situation. The syntactic and pragmatic scope of Esahie focus markers will be discussed in subsequently (see section 3.4.2), dealing with specific markers earlier mentioned.

### 3.2.2 Syntactic operations for coding focus in Esahie

There are a number of syntactic mechanisms available to languages, including permutation (or variation) of constituent order, preposing (or fronting), clefting, and pseudo-clefting that can be used in signaling focus. Esahie can encode focus through at least two strategies; pre-posing (or fronting) and clefting. In this work, I discuss these two cross-linguistically noted syntactic strategies, and how they are employed in signalling focus in Esahie<sup>9</sup>. I first consider the strategy of fronting (or preposing), and then proceed to look at the strategy of clefting.

#### 3.2.2.1 The Fronting/Preposing Strategy

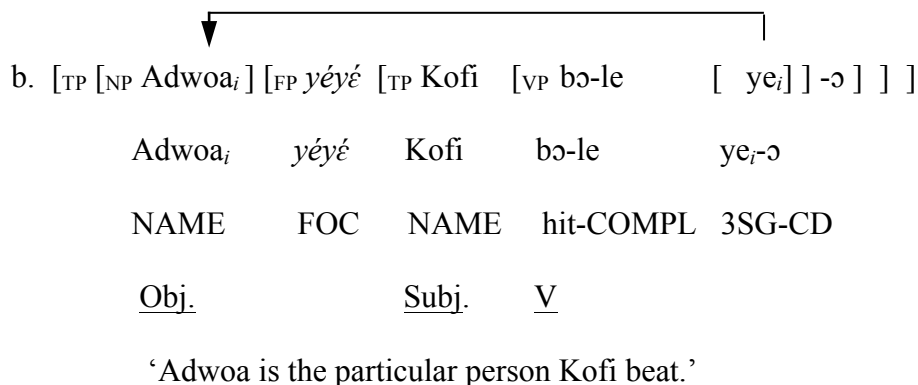
Like most of its sister languages such as Akan (Saah 1998, Amfo 2010), Ewe; (Ameka 1992), Ga (Dakubu 2005), Esahie employs the syntactic strategy of fronting for the purpose of focus. The constituent being focused is moved to the left periphery of the sentence, usually the clause-initial position, and is immediately followed by the focus marker.

In (38a) *Kofi*, the subject, is said to have beaten *Adwoa*, the object, in the event designated by *bɔ* ‘to hit’. If one asked the question “*Whom did Kofi hit?*”, (38b) could be given as an answer.

- (38) a. Kofi    bɔ-le            Adwoa  
           Kofi   hit-COMPL   Adwoa  
           Subj.   V                Obj.  
           ‘Kofi hit Ama’

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<sup>9</sup> I discuss only two of these strategies for the purpose of space, and also because the strategy of pseudo-clefting is not supported in the data gathered).



To focus the object, Esahie usually moves the constituent intended to be focused (in this case *Adwoa*) to a clause-initial position, and is immediately followed by the focus marker as seen in (38b).

As can be observed in (38b), in an attempt to answer the question “*Whom did Kofi hit?*”, there is a seeming distortion in the canonical SVO order of Esahie. This is the result of the preposing of *Adwoa*, the object of 38a) into a pre-sentence position, particularly the focal slot. To show that the object, *Adwoa*, was moved from the canonical clause-final position and also to avoid creating a gap in its original position, an overt copy of the Object, in the form of an anaphoric pronoun *ye* ‘she’ is left in its original canonical position. This anaphoric pronoun is also co-indexed with *Adwoa* to indicate that they are co-referential.

To encode focus, the fronting strategy is obligatorily complemented by a lexical strategy (lexical signalling). This is done by immediately following the fronted constituent with the focus marker *yéyé*.

The final element in (38b) ‘-ɔ’, glossed CD (clause-final determiner), is a specific/definite distal determiner, whose use indicates that the entity to which the NP (in our case *Adwoa*) refers is away from the speaker/place of utterance

in time and space. It is similar in form and function to *nó* in Akan (Amfo 2007, Saah 2010) and *la* in Ewe (Dzameshi 1983).

Like what obtains in Fongbe (Lefebvre 1993), the Esahie clause-final determiner is used to “express event deixis” and its presence is assumed to indicate old or known information. Again, like what pertains in Akan (Saah 2010), the Esahie clause-final determiner also expresses deictic information.

### 3.2.2.2 *The Clefting Strategy*

Another widely acknowledged syntactic strategy that can be adopted to encode focus is the strategy of clefting. Clefting in Esahie for the purpose of signalling focus usually requires an embedding of a simple *yéyé*-focused sentence in a matrix clause whose head is a copula *te* ‘be’. Specifically, it involves placing a sequence of words within the structure beginning with *ɔ-te* ‘it be’. This is demonstrated in (39b), which is formed by placing the simple *yéyé*-focused sentence in (39a) within a structure which begins with *ɔ-te* ‘it is’.

(39) a. Yaa      *yéyé*      ye-wo      yε      nyemene.

NAME    FOC      3SG-REFL    be      beautiful

‘Yaa is this particular lady who is beautiful’

b. *ɔ-te* Yaa      *yéyé*      ye-wo      yε      nyemene.

It be NAME      FOC      3SG-REFL    be      beautiful

‘It is particularly Yaa who is beautiful.’

(39a) is a simple *yéyé*-focused sentence, which is placed within a structure that begins with *ɔ-te* ‘it be’ to form a cleft construction in (39b) for the purpose of encoding focus.

### 3.3.0 *Types/Categories of focus*

Lambrecht (2000) argues that, propositions are categorized into what is already known (to the interactants) and what is being newly communicated. He observes that cross-linguistically there are only a few types of focus articulation or FOCUS CATEGORIES through which this pragmatic organisation of propositions is done. I adopt Lambrecht’s view in categorizing Esahie focus. In section 3.3.1, I will summarise Lambrecht’s categorization of focus, and in 3.3.2, I will present the categories of Esahie focus.

#### 3.3.1 *Lambrecht’s FOCUS CATEGORIZATION*

In this subsection, I provide a summary of Lambrecht’s (2000) syntactic categorization of focus, which is based on what can be focused. I go on to demonstrate how this syntactic classification of focus applies to Esahie.

Lambrecht distinguishes three major focus categories: the PREDICATE-FOCUS (PF), the SENTENCE FOCUS (SF), and the ARGUMENT FOCUS (AF) category.<sup>10</sup>

Lambrecht’s first category is the PF category, which has been alternatively termed in the literature as ‘subject predicate’, ‘topic-comment’, or ‘categorical’ type, is a kind of focus in which the predicate of the clause is in focus and an

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<sup>10</sup> It will be useful at this point to introduce what Lambrecht calls ‘*focus domain*’, the specific syntactic constituent denoting the focus of the pragmatically structured proposition; the particular syntactic constituent which is being focused.

argument (typically the subject) is within the presupposition. With the PF type, the assertion adds a new predicate to a given argument. In the PF sentence (40), the focus (or technically the focus domain) happens to be the predicate, expressed in the verb phrase.

*(What has happened to your dog?)*

(40) It *HAS GOT A HEADACHE*.

This predicate represents a comment on the topic ‘dog’, expressed in the subject *It* (a ratified-topic expression). While the occurrence of this topic (*dog*) as an argument in the proposition is treated as relatively predictable, or communicatively presupposed, the appearance of the predicate for this given argument is taken to be unpredictable, i.e. the predicate denotatum is focal.

Lambrecht’s second category of focus, which he calls AF, is also known as the ‘focus-presupposition’, ‘identificational’, or ‘contrastive’ type, where an argument is in focus and the predicate (or rather the open proposition minus the focus argument) is within the presupposition.

In the AF sentence in (41), it is the ‘predicate’ of the sentence whose occurrence is relatively predictable, or assumed to be known already (hence it is coded in unaccented form), since the notion that someone or something did something yesterday is implied by the question. What is being focused (the focus domain) in the proposition is the object *THE MALL*.

*(WHERE did you go yesterday?)*

(41) We went *to THE MALL*.

The last category Lambrecht deals with is SF, which is also been called the ‘all-new’, ‘presentational’, ‘neutral-description’, or ‘thetic’ type. SF is a kind of focus in which both the predicate and the subject are in focus, hence the proposition lacks a focus-presupposition articulation.

Other labels for the SF kind of focus are ‘news sentence’ (Schmerling 1976), ‘neutral description’ (Kuno 1972), ‘all-new utterance’ (Allerton and Cruttenden 1979; Fuchs 1980), ‘thetic sentence’ (Kuroda 1972; Sasse 1987; Lambrecht 1987), ‘event-reporting sentence’ (Lambrecht 1988). This is different from the PF type where the assertion adds a new predicate to a given argument (a comment to a given topic) or the AF type, which adds a new argument to a given predicate (by providing a missing entity in a given situation).

In the SF type, both a new argument and a new predicate are introduced into the discourse. Phrased differently, in the SF category of focus, the occurrence of neither the argument nor the predicate in the proposition is in any way predictable or contextually presupposed; hence Lambrecht (2000:614) argues that the whole proposition is in some sense ‘all-new’. He explains that the subject of a SF construction is an S rather than an A argument, i.e. SF sentences are usually intransitive (with certain exceptions though).

In the SF sentence in (42), it can be observed that neither the occurrence of the argument “*MY HUSBAND*” nor that of the predicate in the proposition “*HAS BEEN FIRED*” is by any chance predictable or contextually presupposed. This confirms Lambrecht’s claim that the proposition is in some sense ‘all-new’.

(What is wrong?)

(42) *MY HUSBAND HAS BEEN FIRED.*

Table 3 summarises the defining properties of Lambrecht's focus categories.

**Table 3: Summary of Lambrecht's defining features Focus Categories**

	<b>Argument in focus</b>	<b>Predicate in focus</b>
Predicate Focus	-	+
Argument Focus	+	-
Sentence Focus	+	+

We realise from the table (3) that the AF type is a reversal of the PF type and vice versa, while the SF category differs essentially from the two other categories in that it lacks a bipartition of the proposition into a focal and a non-focal or presupposed portions.

### 3.3.2 *Kinds/Categories of Focus in Esahie*

In the previous subsection, we looked at how Lambrecht (2000) categorised focus based on whether it is the argument, predicate, or sentence which is in focus.

For languages that encode focus by the strategy of lexical signalling, argument focus involves a focus marker taking scope over a noun (or nominal) phrase in the sentence, predicate focus where the scope of the focus marker is

over the predication, and sentence focus where the syntactic scope of the focus marker is over the whole proposition or sentence.

Esahie (like Akan) may use the same marker for different types of syntactic focus. This is unlike Ewe (Ameka 2010) which has two separate markers for argument and predicate focus. In the sections below, I consider, in particular, ex-situ constructions in Esahie, and examine which syntactic elements are focused.

### *3.3.2.1 Argument focus in Esahie*

The discussion on the focusing of arguments in this section is limited to cases where of the focus marker has syntactic scope over subject and object NPs. We shall discuss what goes into the focusing of subject and object arguments.

#### *3.3.2.1.1 Subject focus constructions*

A subject argument that is in focus in Esahie must be obligatorily marked by a focus particle. Subject arguments cannot be focused in-situ. A focused subject argument is preposed into the focal position in the clause, and is immediately followed by the focus marker. This preposed subject is then recapitulated in the rest of the clause by an anaphoric pronoun.

(43). a. Mahama te manpaen wɔ Ghana

NAME    be President LOC Ghana

Subj.      Subj. Complement

‘Mahama is President in Ghana’

## b. Nominal Subject focus:

(Obligatory focus particle and obligatory anaphoric pronoun)

Mahama<sub>i</sub> yéyé ɔ<sub>i</sub>-te manpaen wɔ Ghana-ɔ

NAME FOC 3SG-be President LOC Ghana-CD

‘Mahama (not another person) is the one who is President of Ghana’.

In (43a), a subject-argument, identified as *Mahama*, is purported to be the President of Ghana. This subject-argument in the construction in (43a) is focused in (43b) by the introduction of the *yéyé*-focus morpheme occurring right after it. The use of *yéyé* in turn necessitates the introduction of an anaphoric pronoun attached to the verb in the embedded clause. As can be observed, the subject-argument in (43a) is placed in the focus position in the left periphery in (43b). Similarly, in (44a), a subject-argument identified as *Kofi* is said to have eaten food

(44). a. Kofi li-le alee-n

Kofi eat-COMPL food=DET

‘Kofi ate the fufu’

b. Kofi<sub>j</sub> yéyé ɔ<sub>j</sub>-li-le alee-ne-ɔNAME FOC 3SG-eat-COMPL food=DET-CD

Subj. V Obj.

‘Kofi was the one who ate fufu.’

This subject-argument *Kofi* in the construction in (44a) is focused in (44b) in the focus position, the left periphery of the matrix clause, by the introduction of

the *yéyé*-focus particle occurring right after it. Once this happens, the subject-argument, as can be observed in (44b), is obligatorily recapitulated in the embedded clause through the introduction of an anaphoric pronoun which is attached to the verb in the embedded clause. This is consistent with what has been observed in many Kwa languages such as Akan (Boadi 1974; Saah 1998; Amfo 2010), Ga (Dakubu 2005), Attié (Bogny 2005) and Yoruba (Awobuluyi 1992).

Esahie varies in subject focus constructions formation, from some of the central and northern Ghana-Togo Mountain languages such as Likpe and Tuwuli. Rather than using a lexical focus marker, these languages resort to morphological means, using some dedicated verbal prefixes (as shown in 45).

(45). An example from Tuwuli (G-T-M)

Renata (\*lɛ-)ny<sup>a</sup> fɔfɛ a

NAME NP.SubjFoc-eat rice DET

‘RENATA ATE THE RICE’ [Harley 2005, cited in Ameka 2010]

3.3.2.1.2 *Object focus constructions*

Like subject arguments, object arguments can also not be focused in-situ. When an argument with the grammatical function of object is being focused, the argument in question is obligatorily preposed to left periphery, into a pre-sentence position, and is immediately (and obligatorily) followed by the focus marker. The preposed object-argument maintains its syntactic function as an object.

Ameka's (2010) generalization about Kwa, that in almost all (Kwa) languages there is a gap in the default object position in the clause, once the object is preposed, does not hold for Esahie. What happens in Esahie, in contrast, is that a [+human] object-argument that is in focus must be formally represented in the default position. Ameka's generalization, therefore, only holds true when [-human] animate object-arguments are focused.

Sentences (46) and (47) are examples of how [+human] objects are focused in Esahie. In (46a), an entity identified as *Akosua*, which functions grammatically as the subject, is said to have helped *Fuachie*, the grammatical Object, in the event designated by *boka* 'to help'. Suppose the question, "Whom did *Akosua* help?" were posed, (46b) could be given as an answer. To focus the object, Esahie usually moves the constituent intended to be focused (in this case, *Fuachie*) to the pre-sentence position, and immediately follows it with the focus marker as seen in (46b).

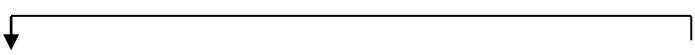
(46) a. Simple un-focused sentence

Akosua boka-le Fuachie

NAME help-COMPL NAME

Subj. V Obj.

'Akosua helped Fuachie'

b. Object focused version of (46a)


[ <sub>TP</sub> [ <sub>NP</sub> Fuachie <sub>j</sub> ] [ <sub>FP</sub> yéyé ] [ <sub>TP</sub> Akosua [ <sub>VP</sub> boka-le [ <sub>NP</sub> ye <sub>j</sub> ]]]] -ɔ]
Fuachie      yéyé      Akosua      boka-le      ye-ɔ
NAME      FOC      NAME      help-COMPL      3SG -CD
Obj.                      Subj.      V      anaphoric pronoun

‘Fuachie (not another person) was the one Akosua helped’.

As can be observed in (46b), in the construction that is used to answer the question “*Whom did Akosua help?*”, there is an obvious distortion in the canonical SVO order of Esahie, which can be attributed to the fronting of the grammatical object *Fuachie* into the focal initial slot of the matrix clause. To avoid creating a gap in the object slot, and to show that the object, *Fuachie*, was actually moved from its canonical clause-final position, an overt copy of the object, in the form of an anaphoric pronoun *ye* ‘him’ is left in its original canonical position.

This demonstrates that when focusing [+human] object-arguments in Esahie, the focused argument, though preposed, must obligatorily be represented in the default (object) position.

What happens in (47a) is similar to what happens in (46a), simply because in (47b), a person identified as *Kobiri*, who functions grammatically as the subject, is understood to have married *Dufie*, the grammatical object. Now if the question “*Whom did Kobiri marry?*” were to be asked, (47b) could be given as an appropriate answer.

In focusing the Object in (47a) to form (47b), the object-argument (in this case, *Dufie*) is fronted to the pre-sentence position. The fronted object-argument is then immediately followed by the focus marker.

Again, an obligatory resumptive pronoun *ye* ‘her’ is left in the object slot of the embedded clause to show that the object was initially positioned there. This anaphoric pronoun *ye* ‘her’, which occupies the default object slot is co-indexed with the focused object-argument *Dufie*, to show that they are co-referential.

(47) a. Simple (un-focused) construction

Kobiri	gya-le	Dufie
<u>NAME</u>	<u>marry-COMPL</u>	<u>NAME</u>
Subj.	V	Obj.

‘Kobiri married Dufie’

b. Object focused version of (47a).

↓				
[TP [NP Dufie <sub>k</sub> ]	[FP yéyé ]	[TP [NP Kobiri]	[VP gya-le ]	[NP ye <sub>k</sub> ]]- ɔ]]
Dufie	yéyé	Kobiri	gya-le	ye- ɔ
NAME	FOC	NAME	marry-COMPL	<u>3SG-CD</u>
Obj.		Subj.	V	Obj.

‘Dufie (not another person) was the one Kobiri married’.

c. \*[<sub>TP</sub> Dufie] [<sub>FP</sub> yéyé] [<sub>TP</sub> [<sub>NP</sub> Kobiri ] [<sub>VP</sub> gya-le [<sub>NP</sub> Ø ] -ɔ]]]

NAME	FOC	NAME	marry-COMPL	CD
Obj.		Subj.	V	Obj.

The ungrammaticality of (47c) arises as a result of the gap left in the default object slot, due to the absence of the anaphoric pronoun in the object slot. Thus, as noted above, like Akan (Saah 1998), focusing of animate object arguments in Esahie requires that a copy of the argument, in the form of an anaphoric pronoun be left in the object slot of the embedded clause, unlike Ewe (Ameka 2010) which leaves a gap in the object slot when focusing animate object arguments.

All the examples we have looked at so far dealt with only [+human] object arguments so we shall look at what pertains in the case of [-human] object arguments.

(48) a. Simple (un-focused) sentence.

Asante	hu-ne	abɔŋgye
NAME	kill-COMPL	goat
Subj.	V	Obj.

‘Asantewaa killed a goat’

b. [-human] Object focused version of (31a)

[TP [NP Abɔŋgye] [FP yéyɛ ] [TP [NP Asante] [VP hu-ne [NP Ø] ]]-ɔ]				
Goat	FOC	NAME	kill-COMPL	CD
Obj.		Subj.	V	Obj.

‘A goat (and no other animal) did Asante kill’

As can be observed, (48a) is a simple un-focused sentence with a person identified as *Asante* playing the grammatical role of a subject and *abɔŋgye* ‘goat’ functioning as the object. It is focusing the object of (48a) *abɔŋgye* that

produces the focused construction in (48b). We realise that the canonical SVO constituent order of Esahie is distorted in (48b). That is, focusing of grammatical objects in Esahie involves fronting of the constituent being focussed into the focal slot, leaving the object *abɔŋgye* rather filling a pre-sentence slot.

We also notice that (48b) is somewhat similar to the constructions in (46b) and (47b) because they all involve the object arguments being fronted to the clause-initial position, and they all were also immediately followed by the focus marker. What actually distinguishes (48b) uniquely, from (46b) and (47b) is the fact that in spite of the absence of the usual (and expected) anaphoric pronoun in the default object position of the embedded clause, (48b) remains a grammatical sentence, bearing in mind that this same ‘deviation’ rendered (47c) ungrammatical. What is interesting about (48b) is that even without leaving a copy of the object (usually in the form of an anaphoric pronoun) in the default object position, the construction remained grammatical.

I argue based on this premise that Esahie has a Null Object Parameter, something close to what Saah (1992) proposes for Akan, but with some crucial difference. That is [-human] pronominal objects are realised as null in the canonical object position when the original object is focused.

In other words, in Esahie, when a [-human] object is fronted into the clause-initial focal slot, for the purpose of focus, unlike what happens in the case of [+human] objects, no copy of the fronted object-argument is left in the default object position, implying that the canonical object slot will be left empty or null. A fronted [-human] object is not expressed in its canonical (object) position.

### 3.3.2.2 *Predicate Focus Constructions*

As has been noted, Kwa languages generally have distinct morpho-syntactic mechanisms for signalling predicate focus (Ameka 2010; Hyman and Watters 1984; Bearth 1999).

There are two types of predicate focus in Esahie. The first type involves a nominalised form of the verbal predicate, while the second involves predicative adjectives. In this subsection, we shall discuss both cases.

As far as Kwa languages are concerned, there are at least two notable strategies for focusing of verbal predicates. In one instance, a copy of the verb is fronted and marked with a focus particle. Alternatively, a nominalised form of the verb is placed in clause-initial position and marked with a focus particle.

Languages like Ga and Gungbe employ both the bare verb copy and the nominalised verb strategies, while others such as Likpe seem to have only the nominalisation strategy. It is worth noting, however, that Ewe uses another distinct strategy, which differs from the two strategies earlier mentioned. Ewe (Ameka 2010) employs a strategy which involves using a particle which occurs in predicate initial position.

Esahie uses the second of the two strategies, in that verb focus in Esahie is expressed by placing a nominalised form of the verb in the core clause initial position and marking it with a focus particle, or a focus adverb. Specifically, a copy of the verb is nominalised and preposed. It is important to admit, that as a result of the obligatory nominalisation the verb undergoes when being focused, what is actually focused is never a verb, but a nominal.

In (49a), a pronominal Subject  $\text{ɔ}$ -‘s/he’ is described in the predicate as being talkative. This predicator (verb) *dwudwo* ‘talk’ in (49a) happens to be the clause final element.

(49) a.  $\text{ɔ}$ -             $\text{kɔ}$ -wora                            *dwudwo*.

3SG    FUT-can    talk

Subject    Predicate

‘S/he can (really) talk’.

b. Verb focused version of (49a).

*Dwudwo-le*            *yéyé*             $\text{ɔ}$  - $\text{kɔ}$ -wora                            *dwudwo*.

Talk-NOM            FOC            3SG-FUT-can                            talk.HAB

(Nominal)    Subj.    Predicate

‘It is (only) talking he really is good at’

c. *Kwadwo kro mmrasua*

NAME    love-HAB    ladies.

Subj.            Predicate

‘Kwadwo loves women or Kwadwo womanizes’

d. Verb focused version of (49c)

*E-hro-le*    *yéyé* *Kwadwo kro mmrasua*  $\text{ɔ}$

NOM-love-NOM    FOC NAME    love-HAB ladies    CD

Preposed nominal    Subj.            Predicate

‘It is womanizing that Kwadwo is good at’

Like Akan, Esahie sometimes employs the second strategy involving the use of a nominalised form of the verb, where this nominalised verb is placed in the

clause-initial focus position. As can be observed from (49b), a nominalised copy of this predicator *dwudwo* ‘talk’ in (49a) is fronted to the clause initial position of (49b) and is immediately followed by the focus marker for the purpose of signalling focus. It is for the purpose of placing emphasis on the action of “talking” in (49b), that a copy of the verb *dwudwo* ‘talk’ is first nominalised, and preposed to the clause initial position, and immediately followed by the focus marker. The attachment of this nominalising suffix to the fronted nominal somewhat turns the verb into a gerund.

In (49c) a subject-argument identified as *Kwadwo*, is described as being fond of womanizing in the event designated by *kro* ‘to love or enjoy something’. This predicator *kro* ‘to love or enjoy something’ in (49c) is in the “focus domain”.

As can be observed from (49d), a nominalised copy of this predicator *kro* is fronted to the clause initial position of (49d) and is immediately followed by the focus marker to encode focus. The addition of both a nominalising prefix and suffix to the fronted verb in this construction (49d), here again, changes the verb into a kind of gerund, similar to what was witnessed in (49b).

In (49d), it is for the purpose of highlighting that the action of “loving”, that a nominalised copy of the verb *e-hro-le* ‘loving’ is preposed to the clause initial position and immediately followed by the focus marker.<sup>11</sup>

The difference between Akan, which also employs this verb nominalisation strategy, and Esahie, is that while Esahie alternates between attaching a nominalising suffix to the verb, or simultaneously attaching a nominalising

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<sup>11</sup> It can also be noticed that the initial segment of the verb *kro* ‘to love or enjoy something’, a voiceless velar stop /k/, when nominalised in (49d) changes into a voiceless glottal fricative /h/, as a result of an assimilatory process (glottalisation), which causes a consonant mutation effect. As has been noted in Esahie, the voiceless velar stop /k/ is glottalised into a voiceless glottal fricative /h/ when it occurs intervocalically, (Frimpong 2009).

prefix and suffix to the verb, Akan restricts itself to using (only) a nominalising prefix, as exemplified in (50, below).

- (50) n-kyerɛw    *na*    me-kyerɛw  
 NOM-write    FOC    1SG-HAB.write  
 ‘Writing I do’    [Akan, Boadi 1974:38]

Verb focus constructions in Esahie (and many other Kwa languages) tend to be used in contrastive contexts or to express intensity of the event denoted by the verb.

Having discussed what goes into focusing of verbal predicates, we shall now deal with the second instance of predicate focus in Esahie, which involves adjectives. Esahie seems to have a class of predicative adjectives which may also be fronted and focused. Predicative adjectives have been argued to be predicates, and not adjuncts (cf. Payne 1997, Givon 2001)<sup>12</sup>. You may find the fronted adjective (or its copy) being left in the default position in the rest of the clause, i.e. after the copular *yɛ* or a gap is left in the default position. Compare (51a) and (51b): In (51a), the focus domain happens to be a predicative adjective *nyemene* ‘beautiful’, and a copy of this adjective is fronted to the clause initial position to encode focus on the adjective. In (51b) however, no copy of the adjective *nyemene* ‘beautiful’ is left in the default position after it is fronted to the clause initial position.

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<sup>12</sup> In such construction as (51), the verb or copular is vacuous, so the main idea is expressed by the adjective, hence the label predicative adjective.

(51) a.  $\text{ɔ-yɛ}$             nyemene

3SG-COP    beautiful

‘It is BEAUTIFUL’

b. Fronted Predicative Adjective with gap left in the default position

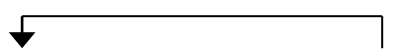
Nyemeni     $yéyè$      $\text{ɔ-yɛ}$              $\text{ɔ}$

beautiful FOC    3SG-COP    CD

‘It is beautiful that it is’

This is similar to what obtains in Akan, in that Akan also has a category of predicative adjectives which may also be fronted and focused. Like Esahie, there could be instances in Akan where such an adjective is left in the default position in the rest of the clause, i.e. after the copular  $yɛ$  or a gap is left in the default position, as exemplified in the Akan sentences below.

(52) a. Fronted Predicative Adjective


  
 $Fɛ$              $na$      $\varepsilon-yɛ$              $fɛ$

beautiful FOC 3SG-COP beautiful

‘It is BEAUTIFUL’

[Akan, Boadi 1974]

b. Fronted Predicative Adjective with gap left in the default position

$Fɛ$              $na$              $\varepsilon-yɛ$

beautiful FOC 3SG-COP

‘It is BEAUTIFUL’

[Akan, Boadi 1974: 12]

As can be similarly observed from the Akan examples above, in (52a), the focus domain happens to be a predicative adjective *fɛ* ‘beautiful’, and a copy of this adjective is fronted to the clause initial position to encode focus in the adjective. In (52b) however, we realise that no copy of the adjective *fɛ* ‘beautiful’ is left in the default position after it is fronted to the clause initial position.

Another remarkable resemblance between Esahie and Akan in terms of adjective focus is that, it appears that in both languages, when predicative adjectives are focused, they do not undergo any formal change. In this regard, they both behave differently from focused verbs, where the verbs get nominalised while being focused. Put differently, focusing of adjectives in both languages, unlike focusing of verbs, does not result in the adjectives becoming nominalised<sup>13</sup>.

In conclusion, we have shown that there are no instances where a verb is fronted, for the purpose of focus in Esahie, without a change in its form. The change that is always observed is the addition of a nominalising affix to the verb, resulting in the verb becoming a nominal. This implies that what is actually focused is a nominal, and not a verb, because in focusing a verb, what is eventually focused is a nominal. Therefore, in effect, the only instances of predicate focus involves verbs, which for the purpose of focus are nominalised, and predicative adjectives. We have demonstrated, regarding the focus of predicative adjectives that you may find the adjective (or its copy) fronted, and being left in the default position in the rest of the clause, i.e. after the copular *ye* or a gap is left in the default position.

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<sup>13</sup> Though Akan does not undergo any formal change, fronted adjectives invariably bear a high tone which may be different from what originally obtains in the adjective.

### 3.3.2.2 *Adjunct Focus Constructions*

Our discussion so far on what syntactic elements can be focussed has centred on only nouns and verbs, and adjectives (predicative). We will now take a look at how adjuncts, such as adverbs and nominals in adjunct function are focused. What pertains in Esahie as regards focusing of adverbs corroborates Ameka's (2010) generalisation about Kwa, that adverbs and nominals in adjunct function, can be placed in the clause initial focus position and optionally marked for focus.

In Esahie (like Akan), no copy of the adverb which is preposed to the clause initial focus position, is left in the default adjunct position. There is no recapitulation of the fronted adverb in the rest of the clause.

In (53a), a pronominal Subject *M-* 'I' is said to have come "*here*" in the event denoted by *ma-le* 'to come' yesterday. The adverbial adjunct in (53a) *anoma* 'yesterday', which is also a temporal noun, for the purpose of focus is fronted to the clause initial position in (53b). As can be realised from (53b), there is no copy of this fronted adverbial is left in the default adjunct. In (53c), another pronominal Subject *M-* 'I' is said to have come *here* in the event designated by *ma-le* 'to come' in an angry manner.

- (53) a. *M-ma-le*                      *wa*      *anoma*  
           1SG-come-COMPL    *here*    *yesterday*  
           Subj.      V                              Adverbial adjunct  
           'I came here yesterday'

b. Adverb focused version of (53a)

Anoma      yeyε    m-ma-le                      wa-ɔ  
 yesterday   FOC   1SG-come-COMPL   here-DET

‘YESTERDAY I came here’

## c. M-ma-le                      wa    eyaaso

1SG-come-COMPL   here   angrily

‘I came here ANGRILY’

d. Adverb focused version of (53c)

Eyaaso    yeyε    m-ma-le                      wa-ɔ  
 Angrily   FOC   1SG-come-COMPL   here-CD

‘ANGRILY I came here.’

The adverb of manner *eyaaso* ‘angrily’ which expressed the manner in which the pronominal Subject *M-* ‘I’ of (53c) is said to have come, is fronted in (53d) for the purpose of focus. Like the focused adverb of time in (53b), no copy of the fronted adverb of manner in (53d) is left in the default adjunct position.

In summary, the only instances of adjunct focus in Esahie, involve adverbs/nominals in adjunct position. The adverb or nominal is preposed, and there is no recapitulation of the fronted adverb/nominal in the rest of the clause.

### 3.4 Focus Functions

Our discussion so far has been on the form (ie, the syntax) of focus in Esahie, including the syntactic strategies available in Esahie for focus, and what syntactic elements can be focused, and how they are focused.

We will now delve into the function (semantics and pragmatics) of focus in Esahie, looking at the interpretative effect of the presence or absence of the

focus marker or any of the focus-sensitive particles in an utterance. We will also discuss and the syntactic and pragmatic/semantic scope of the focus marker as well as the focus-sensitive particles.

I follow Dik et al.'s (1981) typology of focus function in analysing the focus markers identified in Esahie, premised on the fact that Dik et al.'s typology provides a wider and more flexible range of the semantic function(s) of focus.

I will first summarise Dik et al.'s (1981) typology of focus function (see section 3.4.1) and in subsequent sections, discuss to what extent this typology is applicable in Esahie.

#### 3.4.1 *Dik et al.'s typology of focus function*

This subsection provides a summary of Dik et al.'s (1981) typology of focus function. According to Dik et al. (1981: 59–68), the function of focus could be any one of the following: *completive*, *selective*, *replacing*, *expanding*, *restricting* or *parallel*.

*Completive focus*, which has been alternatively referred to as *presentational focus*, *focus of assertion*, or *information focus* (cf. Jackendoff 1972, Dombrowsky-Hahn 2006), occurs when the focus information fills a gap in the pragmatic information of the addressee. The most prominent example of this kind of focus function is found in answers to WH-questions, as exemplified in (54).

(54) A: Who baked the pie?

Pressupposition: someone *X* baked the pie.

B: Emerald (baked the pie).

In (54), *A* presupposes that *someone baked the pie*, but does not indicate that he has any particular person in mind. Completive focus here, corresponds to an assertion *X [Emerald (baked the pie)]* that fills the gap in an open proposition, as it appears in (54).

Amfo (2010:198) observes that “even though completive focus relates to a presupposition, it does not relate to a specific identity of the unknown entity.”

*Selective focus* involves the focus constituent picking out one item from a presupposed set of potential values. As such, it involves at least two constituents out of which one is selected for the correct value and the other is (explicitly or implicitly) rejected as incorrect. This is demonstrated in (55) which could be an answer to the question ‘do you admire Kwamina or Kofi?’.

(55) I admire Kwamina (not KOFI).

In instances where a particular entity, which happens to be known to interactants, is removed and replaced with the correct item, it is termed *replacing focus*. Replacing focus involves two separate steps: the information that is judged as incorrect information is rejected (and removed) and then substituted with the correct information, as in (56).

(56) Jesus was not hanged; he was crucified.

There are also instances where the focused constituent comes to add on to already given (presupposed) information, and this has been called *expanding focus*. The speaker in (57) is providing extra or supplementary information to the presupposed information that Chomsky is a linguist.

Presupposition: Chomsky is a Linguist.

(57) Chomsky is not only a linguist, but also a political activist.

With *restrictive focus*, a presupposed set (of referents or entities) is delimited to one or more correct values.

Presupposition: Appah taught Morphology and Syntax.

(58) Appah taught only Morphology (not SYNTAX).

*Parallel focus* involves instances where two pieces of information are contrasted within a single utterance. This type of focus function is motivated by the internal relations between the contrasted pairs rather than the relation between the speaker's assertion and the interlocutor's presuppositions (Amfo 2010: 199). (59) demonstrates this kind of focus function.

(59) ADWOA stole a necklace, but MANSAAH stole a make-up box.

Dik et al. actually do not consider the parallel focus to have a set of alternatives because the focused elements are not presupposed at the time of utterance. This work adopts the typology of focus function as presented in Dik (1981) and Amfo (2010), and show to what extent this typology is applicable in Esahie.

The Esahie marker *yéyé*, which I propose to be the focus marker of Esahie can be used to serve complete, selective and replacing focus functions, and it can be used together with the exclusive markers *ígóm* and *álà* in signaling

restricting focus (see sections 3.4.2, 3.6.1 and 3.6.2). However, it cannot be used to indicate expanding focus.

### 3.4.2 *The focus marker yéyé.*

This focus marker *yéyé* has been extensively used in all the examples given so far. It is worth noting that this *yéyé*-focus morpheme has an allomorph *yéé*<sup>14</sup>, which is equally used as the *yéyé*-focus morpheme. As shown earlier, this marker may immediately follow, and have scope over any of the major word class in an utterance.

In almost all the examples given so far, the focused constituent is fronted with the focus marker usually immediately following it. The only exception is when *yéyé* co-occurs with either or both exclusive markers *álà* and *íjóm*, in which case these exclusive markers precede *yéyé*. *Yéyé* has scope over the phrasal constituent which occurs to its immediate left.

In (60), the subject noun phrase *Ngya Kwaw* is focused, whereas it is the object noun phrase *Ebote* ‘rat’ of (60) that is focused in (61). The focused element occurs pre-clausally and it binds a variable in the main clause.

(60).	<i>Ngya Kwaw</i> <sub>i</sub>	<i>yéyé</i>	<i>o<sub>i</sub>-hu-ne</i>	<i>ebote-n</i>
	<u>NAME</u>	FOC	3SG-kill-COMPL	<u>rat=DET</u>
	Subj.		V	Obj.

‘Oldman Kwaw (not another person) was the one who killed the rat.’

<sup>14</sup> This variant of the focus marker undergoes *y-deletion* when used in spontaneous speech. In fact, it is only this variant that is used in the Esahie New Testament translation of the Bible.

- (61). Ebote yéyé Ngya Kwaw hu-ne -o  
 Rat FOC NAME kill-COMPL-CD  
 Obj. Subj. V

Rat (not another animal) did Oldman Kwaw kill.'

In Dik et al.'s (1981) typology, the focused constituents in both (60) and (61) will be said to express completive focus, because they are intended to fill in the gaps about who killed the rat and what Ngya Kwaw killed, respectively.

*Yéyé* may be used to indicate selective focus. Suppose that it is the birthday of the Speaker of (62), and his mother asks what he would want for a birthday present, from a variety of options including a car, a vacation trip and money. He then utters (62) to indicate to his mother that he prefers a cash present, rather than a car or a vacation trip.

- (62) Sikaa yéyé me-kro-o  
 Money/cash FOC 1SG-like-CD  
 'I want/prefer cash/money'

Or assuming there is an argument about what a woman identified as *Abrafi* sells at the market, with some arguing that she sells yam and others arguing that she sells plantain. The Speaker, who is in a privileged position to know exactly what *Abrafi* sells, then comes in with (63) to end the argument.

- (63) Baana yéyé Abrafi tōne-o na boolio-o  
 Plantain FOC NAME sell.HAB not yam-CD  
 'Plantain is what *Abrafi* sells, not yam.'

Both (62) and (63) involve the focus marker *yéyé* picking out one item from a presupposed set of potential values. As such, both instances involve at least two constituents out of which one is selected for the correct value and the other is (explicitly, as in (63) or implicitly as in (62)) rejected as incorrect. This is demonstrated in (62) which could be an answer to the question “*What do you want for a birthday present, a car, money or a vacation trip?*”, while (63) could also be an answer to the question “*What does Abrafi sell, yam or plantain?*”

In other contexts, the use of the *yéyé*-focus morpheme may indicate replacing focus. Assume there is a debate about the occupation of Kwabena, whose occupation the interactants are not so certain of. One of the interlocutors A proffers an opinion that Kwabena is a Pastor. Now the Speaker, B who is privy to the actual occupation of Kwabena now comes in with (64).

(64) Tikyaniε *yéyé* Kwabena teɔ, na Sɔfo-ɔ  
 Teacher FOC NAME be not Pastor-CD  
 ‘Kwabena is a teacher, not a Pastor’

By uttering (64), a particular “wrong” occupation, ie, being a Pastor, which happens to be known to interactants, is removed and replaced with the correct one, being a teacher. Replacing focus usually involves two separate steps: the information that is judged as incorrect, in this case *Kwabena being a Pastor*, is rejected (and removed), and is then substituted with the correct information (ie, *Kwabena being a teacher*).

Or suppose there is confusion about what food Esi cooked. Her husband *A* claims she cooked rice, then her daughter *B* who was with her while the cooking was on-going, utters (65) to indicate exactly what Esi cooked.

- (65) Aleε yéyé o-si-le -o na mmõ  
 Fufu FOC 3SG-pound-COMPL CD not rice  
 ‘Fufu was what she prepared, not rice’

By uttering (65), the wrong information (of Esi having cooked rice) as proposed by *A*, is rejected (and removed), and is then substituted with the correct information (of Esi having actually prepared fufu).

To mark restricting focus, *yéyé* has to combine with other exclusive markers such as *álà* and *hógóm*.

- (66) Nyameε hógóm yéyé o-kɔ-nia yε-o  
 God only FOC 3SG-FUT-watch 1PL-CD  
 ‘Only God takes care of us’

In (66), the Speaker asserts explicitly that it is solely God, and no one else than God, who takes care of and protects the referents of *yε* ‘us’ (ie. the speaker and the interlocutors).

- (67) Nyameε álà yéyé o-kɔ-li me dwirε kɔma me-o  
 God just FOC 3SG-FUT-eat my matter for 1SG-CD  
 ‘God is the only one who will defend me/ be my advocate’

The Speaker in (67) presents God, as the only one who will be his advocate in his current situation. He expects help in his current predicament from no one else than *God*. In both (66) and (67) a presupposed set (of referents or entities) is delimited (or restricted) to one correct value (the referent *God*).

The *yéyé*-focus marker, has a distinctive status, compared to all the forms which can be labelled as focus markers in Esahie. As has been demonstrated above, it is the only (focus) marker which can perform a range of focus functions including completion, selection, replacing and, to a certain point, restricting.

Like the Akan lexeme *na* labelled by Boadi (1974: 7) as an exclusive focus marker, *yéyé* “narrows down the referential range of the constituent to which it is attached and places it in an exclusive class by itself”. Thus, it brings the constituent in focus, into sharp contrast with all other members of the set to which it belongs.

Again, like the Akan *na* (cf. Amfo 2010: 202), whether *yéyé* is performing a complete, selective or replacing focus function, it “points to the referent of the immediately preceding phrase as the only denotatum that would make the proposition expressed true”. Lastly, in its replacing focus function, the *yéyé*-focused entity, like the Akan (cf. Amfo 2010: 202) *na*-focused entity, “replaces a previously incorrectly identified entity”.

In summary, the *yéyé*-focus marker can perform the widest range of focus functions, including perform completion, selection and replacement and restriction, justifying my position that it is the principal focus marker in Esahie.

### 3.5 Inclusive markers

In this subsection, I discuss the communicative role of two inclusive markers earlier mentioned, *kósó* and *pó*<sup>15</sup>. Both of the two markers discussed in this section can be said to predominantly involve inclusion of some sort. *Kósó* is a simple additive marker, which indicates that the utterance to which it is attached has to be interpreted within a similar context as the immediately preceding utterance. *Pó*, on the other hand, is a scalar marker. The constituent to which it is attached is ranked as quite low on a given scale.

#### 3.5.1 *The Additive focus marker: kósó.*

One of the focus-sensitive particles which can be used in highlighting or making salient an aspect of Esahie discourse is *kósó* glossed as ‘also’ or ‘too’. Like the Esahie focus marker *yéyé*, *kósó* occurs to the immediate right of the constituent which it modifies and takes scope over. Unlike *yéyé*, which can only modify a phrase, *kósó* may either modify a noun phrase or a whole clause. The use of *kósó* in an utterance is a signal to the interlocutor to process the *kósó*-utterance within a parallel context provided by the immediately preceding discourse. In (68) the parallel context for the two sentences, is that the activity of selling cutlasses, even though the persons doing this kind of selling are not the same. In the first sentence of (68), the person performing the action of selling cutlasses is Ngua, while in the second, the person performing the action is identified as Kobiri.

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<sup>15</sup> It worthy of mention that the analyses of *kósó* and *pó* in this work, draws inspiration from the analysis made for the Akan inclusive markers *nso* and *mpo*, as discussed in Amfo (2010). The pragmatic roles of these markers as discussed in this work, is guided by the analyses proffered in Amfo (2010).

- (68) Ngua tɔne dadie. Kobiri kósó tɔne dadie.  
 NAME sell-HAB cutlass. NAME also sell.HAB cutlass.  
 ‘Nguua sells cutlasses. Kobiri also sells cutlasses.’

By modifying Kobiri with *kósó*, the speaker of (68) suggests that there is someone else who has recently been mentioned, who engages in a similar activity as the one described in the *kósó* -utterance.

The speaker of (69) is not merely interested in communicating the truth of the proposition expressed in the clause, that ‘Kobiri sells hoes’. It is important for him that the interlocutor recognizes that the clause ought to be interpreted within a similar context as the preceding one, which states that ‘Kobiri also sells cutlasses’. This kind of interpretation is reminiscent of the Akan *nso* (cf. Amfo 2010). The utterance of (69) may be considered an attempt to encourage the interlocutor to derive certain implicatures, such as, ‘Kobiri’s selling business is bigger or expanded than that of Nguua’ or ‘Kobiri is more enterprising/innovative than Nguua’, depending on other contextual information.

- (69) Kobiri tɔne kona kósó.  
 NAME sell.HAB hoe also  
 ‘Kobiri sells hoes also’.

Following Amfo (2010), I call *kósó* an additive focus marker. The presence of *kósó* in an utterance has no effect on the truth conditions of that particular utterance. The use of *kósó* shows that some aspect of the context in which the utterance with *kósó* is to be interpreted has been made salient by the

immediately preceding utterance. This communicative effect of *kósó* is reminiscent of the Akan *nso* (cf. Amfo 2010: 203).

In (68), although the information contained in the two sentences is not identical, they both allude to the fact that both children, Ngua and Kobiri, sell cutlasses. Having already mentioned that Ngua sells cutlasses, it is suitable to use *kósó* in the second utterance to indicate that the immediately preceding utterance relates to the present one to the extent that they share some similar contextual effects (specifically, what their Agents sell).

*Kósó*, like the Akan *nso* (cf. Amfo 2010), could be used in a context where the subjects are completely different and what is predicated about them involve different actions, as in (70).

- (70) Ama    hɔ-le            awuro.    Adomah *kósó*    tu-le            atẽẽ.  
 NAME go-COMPL home.    NAME    also    dig-COMPL road.  
 ‘Ama went home. Adomah also travelled.’

The pair of sentences in (70) have different subjects and what is predicated about them involve different actions. In the first sentence, the Subject *Ama* is described to have gone home, while in the second sentence, the Subject *Adomah* is described to have travelled.

Another instance in which *kósó* plays its usual additive role is when it is used to encode a confirmatory interpretation. In such contexts, the presence of *kósó* in the utterance confirms an earlier assertion, which was probably in doubt. Suppose there is conversation concerning the repute of person *Aseda* is, Speaker A then utters (71) based on his knowledge of *Aseda*.

Now Speaker *B* who is also privy to an earlier statement made by another person who is outside the conversation, *Kofi*, then utters (72) to re-echo what was said earlier about *Aseda* in confirmation of *A*'s assertion that 'Aseda is a King'.

(71) *Aseda te ɔhene.*

NAME be king

'Aseda is a King.'

(72) *Kofi<sub>j</sub> kósó wã ɔ-te ɔhene.*

NAME also say he-COP king

'Kofi also says (confirms) that he is King.'

The utterance of (72) is particularly to confirm or validate the earlier assertion of (71). By uttering the *kósó*-utterance in (72), speaker *B* is only adding to the earlier assertion made by *A*, for the purpose of confirmation. The pronoun *ɔ*- 'he' which is used in (72) refers to *Aseda* (and not *Kofi*), and that is why the pronoun is not co-indexed with *Kofi*.

There are other instances where *kósó* encodes a sort of repetitive/intensive interpretation. In such instances, the action being attributed to the subject is analysed as being intensive or having being repeated over and over. In (73), the referent of *Wɔ* 'you' is described as being fond of talking. Assuming *A* comes to complain to *B* that he was heckled when he attempted speaking at an earlier meeting, if *B* is aware of this talkative nature of *A*, *B* could then utter

(73) to let A know his too much talking is what landed him in that undesirable experience.

(73) *Wɔ kósó e-kro dwudwo-le*  
 You also 3PL-like talk-NOM  
 ‘You really like talking, or You are really talkative’

The use of *kósó* in the context of (73), does not suggest that the utterance presupposes that someone else is talkative as well, but that the action of talking, as attributed to the referent of *Wɔ* ‘you’, is done repetitively or intensively. Since the use of *kósó* in this context does not necessarily indicate that someone else is also talkative, we cannot argue that the use of *kósó* in this context is clearly additive, as was seen in the earlier uses of *kósó*.

Often, a *kósó*-utterance and the preceding one(s) with which it shares a similar context are of the same polarity, but it is possible to find a *kósó*-utterance which is preceded by an utterance of a different polarity. Though the first utterance in (74) is a positive one, and the second a negative one, *kósó* is acceptable in the second pair of the utterances in (74). This is evocative of *nso* (cf. Amfo 2010)

(74) *Ye awuro pingye asɔre sua-n,*  
 3SG.POSS house near church building-DET,  
*ɔ-n-gɔ hɔ asɔre kósó.*  
 3SG-NEG-will go church also.  
 ‘His house is near the church building, he won’t also go to church.’

We realise that while the initial sentence in (74) has a positive polarity, the second sentence, which is *kósó*-marked has a negative polarity. Both utterances were of a different polarity.

A major deviation of *kósó* from the usual additive role is when it is used to express speaker attitude, usually a negative one (cf. Amfo 2010). The attitude could be one of contempt, disdain, disapproval, disregard, denigration, sarcasm, jealousy, or disgust. We notice that the use of *kósó* in (75) does not suggest that the utterance presupposes that someone somewhere else also calls himself a Pastor, rather, it expresses the Speaker's attitude towards the topic of (75), *Sobre*. The Speaker's attitude towards *Sobre*, deducing from the interpretation of (75), is clearly one of denigration and disdain. In (75), the fact that *Sobre* calls himself a pastor is something that the Speaker finds disquieting and disgusting, and is something the speaker clearly disapproves of. Here, *kósó* is not meant to indicate access to a parallel context but it is used as an indication of the Speaker's disapproval of *Sobre* calling himself a pastor.

(75) *Sobre*<sub>j</sub>    *kósó*    *frɛ*            *ye-wo*    *Sɔfɔ*  
           NAME    too    call.HAB    himself    pastor  
           ‘*Sobre* too calls himself a Pastor.’

So far, we have shown that the Esahie additive focus marker *kósó*, apart from being used predominantly to signal an additive interpretation, may also be used to communicate an emphatic and confirmatory effect. We have also seen that *kósó* modifies a phrase or even a whole clause. Another significant observation about the additive focus marker *kósó* is that like most focus-sensitive particles,

it does not add to or change the information value or truth condition of the utterance in which it is found. The main deviation of *kósó* from the usual additive function is found in instances where it is used to express speaker attitude. In which case it is usually used to encode a derogatory, denigrating, negative, disapproving, and uncomplimentary attitude.

### 3.5.2 *The Scalar focus marker: pó.*

I label *pó* as a scalar focus marker on the basis its function. As noted by König (1991), the presence of such markers in utterances results in a scalar interpretation. Such interpretations involve a comparative ordering of values in hierarchy or scale. Scalar markers in general, have been argued as capable of detecting the least likely point on the scale of interpretation of utterances (cf. Fauconnier 1975a, 1975b, Amfo 2010).

Indeed, like scalar focus in many languages, a constituent in *pó*-focus, is presented as the most unlikely of all the options that could make the proposition being considered true. What this means is that a *pó*-utterance usually contains information which is contradictory with what is expected, redolent of Akan *mpo* (cf. Amfo 2010).

The proposition expressed by (76) is that they rebel against God, and therefore they rebel against man. The relevance of *pó* in the utterance is that it indicates to the interlocutor the specific contextual information that there are others (apart from GOD) who can be rebelled against, and that GOD was the least likely expected to be rebelled against.

(76) Nyameε *pó* bε-te ye so atua  
 God even they-act him on rebellion

‘Even God is rebelled against.’

If even God (Almighty) can be rebelled against, it implies that any other (mortal) person(s) can also be rebelled against. In other words, it is no surprise for (mortal) men to be rebelled against, since God (Almighty) has already had his fair share of the rebellion.

Apart from making the constituent it modifies (in this case, God) the lowest on the scale of likelihood, *pó* indicates some level inclusion. The interpretation derived from (76) is that, God is a member of a set, consisting of persons who are rebelled against, and more so that a scale of persons who are likely to be rebelled against, God is at the very bottom, and hence the least expected candidate of persons who can be rebelled against. The constituent over which *pó* has scope, is ranked as the most unlikely or improbable constituent out of a number of possible constituents to experience the action described in the utterance.

It then follows logically that if the action described in the utterance is experienced even by this least expected constituent/entity/person, then the event of this action being experienced by any of the other (likely or expected) constituents/entities/persons becomes no surprise, since it is already deemed likely. The inclusive nature of this marker is reinforced in (77) by the co-occurrence of *kósó* and *pó*.

- (77) Bentum<sub>i</sub> n-zua nitse  
 NAME NEG-learn thing  
 ‘Bentum doesn’t learn.’

In (77), *Bentum* in an on-going discourse is described as not being serious with his academic life. Speaker *A* who is also part of the discourse, then comes in with (78) to add on to the already known academic unseriousness of *Bentum*. The collocation of *kósó* and *pó* in (78) suggests that there are other things the pronominal referent of *ɔ-* ‘he’ (*Bentum*, a Pastor’s son) is similarly not serious about. The presence of *pó* in the utterance suggests that of all the things that one might expect a Pastor’s son, like *Bentum*, to neglect doing, attending church is the least on the scale, if what *Bentum* is expected to neglect were to be ranked. In other words, if he had otherwise done nothing at all, one would have expected of him (as a Pastor’s son) to attend church regularly.

- (78) Asɔre nen *kósó* *pó* ɔ<sub>i</sub>-n-nia nu ɲ-go  
 Church DET too even he-NEG-watch inside NEG-go  
 ‘He is not serious, even in attending church services regularly.’

If *pó* marks a constituent as the most unlikely one to make a given proposition true, then logically, it is to be expected that such utterances containing *pó* may express some amount of surprise or even shock. In (79), the emphasis is placed on the surprise of *Nzafufuo* ‘palm wine’ being able to intoxicate. What the speaker seeks to achieve by modifying the noun phrase *Nzafufuo* ‘palm wine’

with *pó*, is to communicate that becoming intoxicated by palm wine is a very unlikely and shocking situation.

- (79) Nzafufuo; *pó* ɔj-bo na akpeteshie  
 Palm wine even 3SG-intoxicate.HAB let alone alcoholic drink  
 ‘Even palm wine intoxicates let alone akpeteshie <sup>16</sup>.’

What is considered most unlikely, surprising, unexpected and unbelievable is not so much the experience of getting intoxicated, but rather, palm wine being capable of intoxicating. The surprise expressed by modifying the noun phrase *Nzafufuo* ‘palm wine’ with *pó*, stems from the fact that *Nzafufuo* ‘palm wine’ is ranked lowest on the scale of intoxicating drinks.

As noted by Amfo (2010), another characteristic of scalar markers is their argumentative or persuasive force, especially when they collocate with conditional markers for example, the English *even if*, and the French *même si*. *Pó* has a similar function. This is demonstrated in (80).

- (80) Aṅgore *pó* yéyé na-medi o, ne fe-yaa  
 Playing even FOC COMPL-1SG-eat particle, don’t be-angry  
 ‘I was only joking, don’t be angry.’

Example (80) is an excerpt taken from a conversation between two friends (A and B). As the conversation ensued, *A* signified to *B* that He was offended by *B*’s earlier comment. *B* then uttered (66) in an attempt to express his remorse

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<sup>16</sup> Akpeteshie is highly alcoholic drink, which is very affordable and easy to find.

about his earlier statement, in order to persuade *A* into letting go of the offence. Here, no surprise or unexpectedness is communicated, rather, *pó* intensifies *B*'s sincerest remorse, and further communicates that *B* meant no offence. Having communicated this, *B*'s *pó*-utterance is pragmatically aimed at persuading *A*, so as to attract his forgiveness.

### 3.6 Exclusive markers

In addition the focus marker *yéyé*, there are a few markers in Esahie, which mark exclusivity. They include *ńgóm*, *álà* and *déín*.

#### 3.6.1 The Restrictive focus marker: *ńgóm*

The marker *ńgóm* 'only or alone' immediately follows a nominal phrase which falls within its scope, as illustrated in examples (81) and (82). Of all the alternatives available, the *ńgóm*-marked constituent is presented as the only suitable candidate. The use of *ńgóm* indicates that the *ńgóm*-modified constituent is the only applicable one, implying that *ńgóm* (like *yéyé*) can be used in encoding restricting focus.

In (81), the proposition expressed by the *ńgóm*-utterance is that during Christmas the referents of the pronominal *ye* 'we' eat eggs. Pragmatically, what is communicated, by the use of *ńgóm*, is that there is absolutely nothing else that they eat, within a specific period, as stated in the utterance.

- (81) Bronya    dwu            a    ye-di    kyrenvua    *ńgóm*  
 Christmas arrive-HAB    REL    1PL-eat    egg            only

'When it's Christmas we eat only eggs.'

In (82), the Speaker's suggestion is that punishment alone is not enough to change the referent of *ye* 'him'. This implies the authorities in-charge have decided to only punish the referent of the *ye* 'him', and do nothing else to him in addition. It also evokes the implicature that the referent of *ye* 'him' is so stubborn or dangerous that punishment alone would not be corrective enough for him.

- (82) Asotwe he *ǎgóm* η-gɔ sesa ye  
 Punishment DEM alone NEG-can change him  
 'This punishment alone cannot change him'

The function of *ǎgóm* demonstrated above seems very much like that of *yéyé* (cf. Section 3.4.2). Unlike the other focus markers discussed earlier, the analyses of the form of *ǎgóm* has shown that like *yéyé*, *ǎgóm* can only take scope over a constituent within a clause, and not a whole clause. In contrast with *yéyé*, however, the *ǎgóm*-focused constituent is not preposed and does not leave a copy in the clause, as summarised in Table 4. These similarities and dissimilarities are reminiscent of the Akan *nko* and *na* (cf. Amfo 2010).

**Table 4: Syntactic similarities/differences between *ǎgóm* and *yéyé*.**

Similarities	Differences
1. Both markers can only take scope over a constituent within a clause.	1. With <i>ǎgóm</i> , unlike <i>yéyé</i> , the focused constituent is not fronted and does not bind a variable within the clause.
2. Both markers cannot modify a whole clause.	2. While a <i>yéyé</i> -modified entity is always formally expressed, an <i>nko</i> -focused entity may be assumed.



has scope over. In (85), however, what receives emphasis, by the use of *déin*, is the clause *ɔhɔle brɛ* (he went there). Similarly, in (86), *déin* has scope over the clause *Okundom kyɪ ye* (Okundom detests him). We shall now look at the communicative role of *déin*, in subsection 3.6.2.1.

### 3.6.2.1 *The communicative role of déin*

The primary role of *déin* is encoding restriction, specificity and emphasis. The marker *déin* is used to isolate and emphasise an entity. It is also employed in attributing certain properties to such an entity. It encodes a high level of restriction to the constituent over which it has scope.

The property being expressed in the comment of a *déin*-marked utterance is strictly restricted to the *déin*-marked constituent, and hence cannot be attributed to some other members of that pragmatically determined set. Based on Dik et al.'s (1981) typology, *déin* can be argued to indicate restricting and selecting focus.

Like *álà* (the multifunctional marker, discussed in section 3.6.3), *déin* is used to indicate that the noun phrase within its scope is the only one within a contextually determined set that makes the proposition containing *déin* true.

(87) Kaka he *déin* kɔ-sɛkye eboo ne.

Animal DEM REM FUT-destroy farm DEF

‘This particular animal will destroy the farm’

In (87), the referent of the NP *kaka he* ‘this animal’ is presented as the only and specific animal that will destroy the farm. This interpretation is derived from

the use of *déin*, and other contextual information including what is retrievable from that physical context. If the morpheme *déin* in (87), were to be replaced with *álà*, the restriction encoded would still be maintained. It is even possible for *déin* to be used simultaneously with the focus marker for intensified emphasis, as demonstrated (88) and (89) respectively.

(88) Kaka he *álà* kɔ-sɛkye eboo ne.  
 Animal DEM just FUT-destroy farm DEF  
 ‘This particular animal will destroy the farm’

(89) Kaka<sub>i</sub> he *déin* yéyè ɔ<sub>i</sub>-kɔ-sɛkye eboo ne.  
 Animal DEM REM FOC 3SG-FUT-destroy farm DEF  
 ‘It is this particular animal will destroy the farm’

We realise that when *déin* in (88) was replaced with *álà* in (89), the same pragmatic effect was achieved yielding almost the same interpretation, ie, the same restriction encoded in the use of *déin*-focus.

*Déin* makes strongly emphatic claims about the reference of the constituent to which it is attached, and it makes suggestions of highly appreciable certainty on the part of the speaker. The use of *déin* implies that the speaker is decidedly certain of the claims s/he is making. The referent of the *déin*-marked constituent is usually not new information. All *déin*-marked constituents are of current standing interest, and usually what the discourses are about<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Remember, Lambrecht (1994) calls an earlier mentioned topic a “ratified topic”.

### 3.6.3 The marker *álà*

The morpheme *álà*, like the Akan multifunctional *ara*,<sup>18</sup> could be “used in several contexts to communicate a variety of meanings” (cf. Amfo 2010: 211). As a result of its versatile function, it could be used like *ígóm* to encode restrictive focus, it may also be used to indicate contiguity of two events; it could also be used in constructions to express a situation of uninterruptedness or iteration of an activity. Lastly, the use of *álà* could induce a scalar interpretation.

Due to the seeming cumulative exponence<sup>19</sup> of *álà*, it is a bit arduous finding an encapsulating term for it, hence the label *multifunctional álà*. I present the various functions in the following subsections.

#### 3.6.2.1 Restriction

Like the marker *ígóm*, *álà* may be used to indicate that the constituent it modifies is the only one in the context that makes the utterance containing *álà* true.

- (90) *Panoo álà yéyé ɔ-kora di ɔ*  
 Bread just FOC he-can eat CD  
 ‘It’s only bread that he can eat.’

In (90), *paanoo* ‘bread’ is presented as the only food that the referent of *ɔ* ‘he’ can eat. This interpretation is not induced solely as a result of the presence of

<sup>18</sup> I suspect, on the basis of the close contact between Esahie and Akan, that *álà* was borrowed from the Akan *ara*, and nativised. It not surprising that *álà* functions almost exactly like the Akan *ara*, virtually without any deviation.

<sup>19</sup> This is a morphological situation where a form maps to many functions. The form has many meanings embedded in it, leading to a one-to-many form-meaning situation. It is however not clear, how the various functions of *álà* are related.

*álà*. Actually, this interpretation can be attributed to the interaction between the focus marker *yéyé* and *álà*, and other contextual information including what is inferrable from the immediately preceding discourse.

It is possible to replace *álà* with *ígóm* in (90) and achieve the same effect of restriction. It is equally possible to use both markers simultaneously with the focus marker for intensified emphasis, as demonstrated (91) and (92) respectively.

(91) Panoo *ígóm* *yéyé* ɔ-kora di ɔ  
 Bread only FOC he-can eat CD  
 ‘It is only bread that he can eat.’

(92) Panoo *ígóm álà* *yéyé* ɔ-kora di ɔ  
 Bread only just FOC he-can eat CD  
 ‘It is only bread (and nothing else but bread) that he can eat.’

We notice that when *álà* in (90) was replaced with *ígóm* in (91), the same restriction effect was achieved. One difference between *ígóm* (and *yéyé*), on one hand, and *álà* on the other hand, is that the *álà*’s scope of modification is not restricted to only phrases, it may modify whole clauses as well. This is also the case for the Akan counterparts of these markers (cf. Amfo 2010).

In (93) *álà* is used to communicate that the Speaker’s love is restricted solely to the referent of *ye* ‘her’ (a particular lady the Speaker is interested in), meaning that there is no other lady that the Speaker loves or has interest in apart from the referent of *ye* ‘her’.

- (93) Me kro ye *àlà*  
 1SG love her just  
 ‘I love just (particularly) her.’

### 3.6.2.2 Contiguity

The form *àlà* may be used to signal the contiguity of two events, sometimes because one is perceived as having caused the other. Usually, conditional constructions and complex temporal constructions containing *àlà* demonstrate this side of its function (cf. Akan *ara*; Amfo 2010:212).

We notice that the events described in both clauses of (94) and (95) happened at about the same time, and also that the events described in the second clause of both (94) and (95) took place as soon the one described in the first clause happened. In (95), for example, the speaker’s claim is that immediately after the referent of *ɔ* insulted the referent of *ye* ‘him’, the referent of *ye* slapped the referent of *ɔ* ‘he’. Another inference that can be drawn from (95) is that the event of *slapping* is caused by the event of *insulting*.

- (94) Nzue tɔ *àlà* sua-n kɔ-bu  
 Water fall just buiding-DET will-collapse  
 ‘The building will collapse immediately it rains.’

- (95) ɔ<sub>i</sub>-pɛ-le ye<sub>k</sub> nzoa na *àlà*, yeɛ  
 3SG-insult-COMPL him insults DEF just, then  
 ɔ<sub>k</sub>-bɔ-le ye<sub>i</sub> soa-nu  
 he-slap-COMPL 3SG.ACC cheek-containing region .’  
 ‘Just as he was insulting him, he slapped him.’

In (96) and (97), which are both conditional constructions, the events described in the second clause of both would occur if the conditions specified in the first clauses of both are fulfilled. In (96), for instance, the speaker's claim is that the referent of *ye* 'him' will do a particular work or assignment once (immediately after) the referent of *E-* 'you' gives him money.

- (96)  $\epsilon$ -fa      sika   ma-le      ye<sub>i</sub>   *álà*   a,   ɔ<sub>i</sub>-kɔ-yɛ  
 2SG-take money give-COMPL him just CM 3SG-will-do  
 $\epsilon$ dwuma-n  
 work-DET  
 'As soon as you just give him the money, he will do the work.'

- (97)  $\epsilon$ -fɔ̃a      ye   *álà*   a,    $\epsilon$ -kɔ-to      ye  
 2SG-chase him just CM 2SG-will-reach him  
 'As soon as you just chase him, you will get him.'

The presence of *álà* in examples (94), (95), (96) and (97) is used to encode the simultaneity or contiguity of two events in each sentence, and an inferred causal relation between the two events described in each.

There are also instances where *álà* helps in retrieving the contextual information that the wish, expectation, or anticipation of a person did coincide with what actually happened. In (98), *álà* modifies *sika* 'money' and its associated relative clause. Here, the use of *álà* helps in retrieving the contextual information that the exact wish and anticipation of the first person plural pronominal referents *ye* 'we' regarding what amount was going to be named

was coincidentally the amount that was named. Here, *álà* communicates some kind of fulfilment, correspondence or agreement between what the referents *yε* expected and the amount that was actually named eventually.

- (98) Sikaa                    bɔɔ    yε<sub>i</sub>    susu    kyε    yε<sub>i</sub>-ko-tua    n'    *álà*    yeyε  
 Money/amount REL we think DEM we-will-pay DET just FOC  
 bε    bɔ-le-ɔ  
 3PL mention-COMPL-CD

‘The exact amount (of money) we anticipated was just what they named.’

### 3.6.2.3 Continuity / Iteration

Another interpretation which is often associated with the use of *álà* is that of continuity or iteration.

- (99) Wo    dé    de    di    *álà*.  
 You CTM take eat just  
 ‘As for you, just keep on believing.’

- (100) Yε    e    sɔ    *álà*.  
 Do it such just  
 ‘You continue doing it.’

In (99), the occurrence of *álà* encodes a kind of continuity in the action of believing. The pronominal referent of *Wo* is encouraged to continue believing (probably, in God). In modifying the clause, *álà* encodes some form continuity, which urges on the action of *dedi* (believing) as described in (99). What the

*àlà*-marked clauses (99) and (100) both have in common, is that the actions contained in them are continuous or repetitive in nature.

### 3.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have argued that focus marking in Esahie is lexico-syntactic, rather than morpho-syntactic, because Esahie employs word order variation (syntax) and specific lexical items in encoding the notion of focus.

More specifically, we demonstrated that the focused constituent is preposed to the pre-sentence slot, the focus position of the sentence, and is immediately followed by a lexical item, the focus marker.

We have also shown that Esahie has a rich inventory of lexical items/markers which guide the interlocutor to various aspects of the context, including the focus marker *yéyé* (or *yéé*), and ‘focus-sensitive particles’ like inclusive markers (*kósó* ‘also’ and *pó* ‘even’), and exclusive markers (*ngóm* ‘only’, *àlà* ‘just’, and *déín*).

Commenting on the syntactic strategies available in Esahie for signalling focus, we argued that Esahie can encode focus through preposing (or fronting) and clefting. I zeroed in on fronting and clefting.

With the fronting or pre-posing strategy, we realised that the constituent being focused is usually fronted to the left periphery of the sentence, the clause-initial position, and is immediately followed by the focus marker. To show that an argument being fronted was actually moved from its canonical position, an overt copy of the argument in the form of an anaphoric pronoun is left in its original canonical position. We also demonstrated that the fronting strategy was not enough to encode focus, and that it obligatorily has to be

complemented by a lexical strategy involving immediately following the fronted constituent with the focus marker *yéyé*.

The other syntactic strategy for focus discussed was clefting. In Esahie, this widely acknowledged strategy involves placing a sequence of words within the structure beginning with *ɔ-te* ‘it is’. Clefting in Esahie for the purpose of signalling focus usually requires an embedding of a simple *yéyé*-focused sentence onto a matrix clause whose head is a copula *te* ‘be’.

On focus domains, we have shown that the Esahie focus marker *yéyé* may have scope over either a noun (or nominal), adverb (or adverbial), and an adjective (or adjectival), constituting the major class of words in Esahie.

Subjects cannot be focused in-situ. With arguments, as mentioned earlier, a focused [+human] object-argument is recapitulated in the default position in the rest of the clause by an anaphoric pronoun, while a gap is left in the case of [-human] object-arguments. This work has argued that the gap strategy can be attributed to a Null Object Parameter, because in Esahie, when a [-human] object is fronted into the pre-sentential slot, for the purpose of focus, unlike what happens in the case of [+human] objects, no copy of the fronted object-argument is left in the default object position, implying that the canonical object slot will be left empty or null. A fronted [-human] object is not expressed in its canonical (object) position.

Regarding predicate focus, we showed that there are no instances where a verb is fronted, for the purpose of focus in Esahie, without a change in its form. The change that is always observed is the addition of a nominalising affix to the verb, resulting in the verb becoming a nominal. Implying that what is actually focused is a nominal, and never a verb, because in focusing a verb,

what is eventually focused is a nominal. In effect, the cases of predicate focus in Esahie, involves verbs, which for the purpose of focus are nominalised, predicative adjectives. Further on the focusing of predicative adjectives, we have demonstrated that you may find the adjective (or its copy) fronted, and being left in the default position in the rest of the clause, i.e. after the copular *yɛ* or a gap is left in the default position.

One remarkable feature about Esahie, relative to adjective focus, which was pointed out is that, when predicative adjectives are focused, they do not undergo any formal change, and remain adjectival words. Focusing of adjectives in Esahie, unlike focusing of verbs, does not result in the adjectives becoming nominalised.

Regarding focusing of adverbs, the evidence from Esahie seems to corroborate Ameka's (2010) generalisation about Kwa, that adverbs and nominals in adjunct function, can be placed in the clause initial focus position and optionally marked for focus. In Esahie (just like Akan), no copy of the adverb(ial) that is placed in the clause initial focus position in the default adjunct position referring to such a constituent in the rest of the clause.

Following Dik et al.'s (1981) typology of focus function, and the Akan of analyses of IS as suggested in Amfo (2010), we also probed the semantics and pragmatics of both the focus marker, and focus adverbs earlier mentioned.

It was shown that the focus marker *yéyé* may immediately follow, and have scope over any of the major word class constituents in an utterance (with the exception of verbs). The constituent(s) over which the *yéyé*-focus morpheme has scope is usually a fronted one. The *yéyé*-focus marker, of all the forms which can be labelled as focus markers in Esahie, has a distinctive status in the

language. As has been demonstrated above, it is the only (focus) marker which can perform a range of focus functions including completion, selection, replacing and to a certain extent, restricting.

Guided by Amfo (2010), two inclusive markers were identified and discussed, *kósó* and *pó*. While *kósó* was described as a simple additive marker, which indicates that the utterance to which it is attached has to be interpreted within a similar context as the immediately preceding utterance, *pó* on the other hand, was analysed as a scalar marker, indicating that constituent to which it is attached is ranked as quite low on a given scale.

Like the focus marker *yéyé*, this additive marker *kósó* is placed to the immediate right of the constituent which it modifies and takes scope over. Interestingly, unlike *yéyé*, which can only modify a phrase, *kósó* may either modify a phrase or a whole clause. The presence of *kósó* in an utterance has no effect on the information value or truth conditions of that particular utterance. The use of *kósó* in an utterance is a signal to the interlocutor to process the *kósó*-utterance within a parallel context provided by the immediately preceding discourse.

*Kósó* may be used in encoding a confirmatory, repetitive (or intensive) interpretation. The major deviation of *kósó* playing its usual additive role was when it was used to express speaker attitude, usually a negative one. The attitude could be one of contempt, disdain, disapproval, disregard, denigration, sarcasm, jealousy, or even disgust.

*Pó* ‘even’, which was labelled as a scalar focus marker is functionally equivalent to its English gloss. *Pó* like the English scalar focus marker *even*, indicates that the constituent in its focus is the least likely of the variables

under consideration which makes that proposition true. One outstanding feature of *pó* is that the proposition expressed by a *pó*-utterance contains information which is contrary to expectation (given some particular background information), in that it is least expected.

In addition to the entity within the scope of *pó* being interpreted as low on the likelihood scale, *pó* suggests inclusion of some sort. If *pó* marks a constituent as the most unlikely one to make a given proposition true, then logically, it is to be expected that such utterances containing *pó* may express some amount of surprise or even shock.

Three exclusive markers, *ǎgóm*, *álà* and *déin* were also identified and discussed, following Amfo (2010). All these markers encode exclusivity of one kind or another.

The Restrictive focus marker *ǎgóm* ‘only/alone’ usually immediately follows a nominal phrase which falls under its scope. Of all the values that can potentially fit into a slot, the speaker’s use of *ǎgóm* suggests that the *ǎgóm*-marked constituent is the only factual and applicable one, implying that *ǎgóm* (like *yéyé*) can be used in encoding restricting focus.

*Déin* was analysed as a Restrictive Emphatic Marker (REM) because of its primary role of encoding restriction, specificity and emphasis. It was demonstrated that *déin* is used in isolating, emphasising, and attributing certain properties to an entity. It encodes a high level of restriction to the constituent over which it has scope. Based on Dik et al.’s (1981) typology, it was shown that *déin* can be argued to indicate restricting and selecting focus.

Finally, the multifunctional *álà* may be used in several contexts to communicate a variety of meanings. It could be used to encode restrictive

focus, when it is synonymous with *íggóm*; it may also be used to express simultaneity, when used in temporal constructions, it restricts the activity referred to in the second clause to the time period expressed in the first; it may be used in utterances which express a continuous state of affairs or repeated activity. It may finally be used to induce a scalar interpretation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TOPIC MARKING IN ESAHIE

#### 4.0 Introductory Remarks

Topic is one of the important notions in information structure. Although in most languages, topic is not usually overtly marked (whether syntactically, prosodically, morphologically or lexically) (Amfo 2010), topic may be overtly marked in Esahie. Lexical signalling of topic in Esahie is not obligatory. When employed, it indicates a contrast with a different constituent, usually a contextually retrievable one.

In this chapter, I discuss how the pragmatic notion of topic is encoded in Esahie. I examine the lexico-pragmatic coding of topic in Esahie, identifying one topic marker, and exploring its syntax and semantic (and pragmatic) properties. In section 4.1, I discuss various definitions of the notion of topic. Section 4.2 discusses Lambrecht's (1994) categorisation of topic functions. I will examine the inventory of topic markers in Esahie in 4.3, and introduce the topic marker *dé* in 4.4. In 4.4.2, the pragmatic role of *dé* is examined, while in 4.4.3, the discourse of *dé* is addressed based on a categorisation of topic functions provided in Lambrecht (1994).

#### 4.1 Defining Topic

The definition and analysis of topic in this chapter is congruent with Lambrecht's ([1994] 2005) view, which I find encompassing in scope, than for example, Gundel (1988:210), who opines that:

An entity, E, is the topic of a sentence, S, iff in using S the speaker intends to increase the addressee's knowledge about, request information about, or otherwise get the addressee to act with respect to E. A predication, P, is the comment of a sentence, S, iff in using S the speaker intends P to be assessed relative to the topic of S.

Gundel classifies an entity as the topic of an utterance only when the information expressed in the utterance adds to the addressee's knowledge of that entity. What I find disenchanting with Gundel's definition of topic is that it is limited to only entities. A similar definition of topic is proffered in Lambrecht (1994), who regards topic as the entity which the utterance is about. Expounding on this notion of "aboutness", Lambrecht (1994) cites Strawson's ([1964] 1974) "Principle of Relevance", which submits that a topic is "what is a matter of standing current interest or concern."

Amfo (2010) considers a referent the topic of a particular utterance once the information expressed in the utterance adds to our knowledge of it. Lambrecht (2005) admits, however, that it is necessary, to apply the notion of topic also to situations or states of affairs, which may be matters of current standing interest, and not to limit it to only entities.

As Amfo (2010:219) notes, topic "is not about noun phrases occupying specific argument positions and performing particular theta roles, such as the subject position or the object position". Topic is the pragmatic relation of aboutness and relevance which exists between a particular (specified) referent and the utterance/proposition in question.

## 4.2 Lambrecht's (1994) categorisation of the discourse functions of topic

Lambrecht (1994) explains that the pragmatic function of topic and its associated proposition can be put into four categories, *topic-comment*, *identificational*, *event-reporting* and *background-establishing*.

With the topic-comment category, the information contained in the utterance expressed is aimed at attributing some property, quality or action to an earlier mentioned referent. In contrast with a focus denotatum, a topic denotatum is by definition a relatively predictable element of a proposition.

A denotatum whose topic role in a predication is considered predictable to the point of being taken for granted by the hearer will be called a *ratified topic* (Lambrecht and Michaelis 1998). Given the context: (What did *the guys* eat?), sentence (101) will make sense because in (101), the information expressed in the proposition "*X ate pizza*" is meant to predicate or attribute some property, quality or action about a previously established referent, *the guys* (as inferred from the context provided).

(101) *The guys* ate pizza.

In Lambrecht's typology, we will call the already established referent, "*the guys*", the topic, and the information expressed in the proposition "*ate pizza*", the comment, hence the label topic-comment sentence, rather than subject-predicate sentence. This shows that the information structure analysis of (101), which is a semantico-pragmatic analysis, differs from the 'traditional' subject-predicate analysis, which is a syntactic analysis, in that both the referent(s) and

the proposition are not seen as logical properties, but as pragmatic properties of the sentence used in the discourse.

This semantico-pragmatic analysis of sentences also stems from the fact that there are many contexts, in which subjects are not topics, or in which subjects are not, in Strawson's wording, "what is a matter of standing current interest or concern."

With the identificational type, Amfo (2010), following Lambrecht's typology of topic, explains it as a relation that is established between an argument and a previously evoked open proposition. Lambrecht explains that the communicative purpose of this type of sentence is to provide the referent(s) solicited of the *WHO* in a preceding question.

Given the context: (*Who* mopped the floor?), we realise that the statement in the answer (102) cannot be construed as a statement about *the floor*, rather, its communicative function is to provide the referent(s) solicited by the *WHO* in the preceding question. In the context provided for (102), the answer pragmatically presupposes that "someone mopped the floor", and it asserts that this someone is "*Afriyie*".

(102) *Afriyie* mopped the floor.

Lambrecht (1994) calls this kind of sentence an identificational sentence, owing to the fact that it serves to identify a referent as the missing argument in an open proposition.

The role of the proposition in the event-reporting category of topic is to express a proposition which is not linked to an earlier established referent or to

a presupposed open proposition, rather, the event-reporting category is primarily to inform an addressee of an EVENT. The pragmatic presupposition required by the answer/reply, according to Lambrecht, is merely that something happened.

(103) The former Vice-Chancellor passed on.

Given the context: (*What happened?*), the proposition in (103) is uttered simply to inform the addressee of the demise of the “former Vice-Chancellor”. Since the focus of the assertion in (103) covers the entire proposition “The former Vice-Chancellor passed on”, the sentence is contextually relatively independent and could be felicitously uttered “out of the blue”.

This is not to suggest, however, that the answer in (103) requires no shared knowledge by the interlocutors. For example, the speaker must minimally assume that the referent of the definite noun phrase *the former Vice-Chancellor* is identifiable to the addressee.

Lambrecht proposes a last function of topic, which he labels as background-establishing. With this type, a pragmatically presupposed proposition serves as a scene-setting topic for another proposition, which may itself be any of the other types earlier discussed. Indeed, topic has sometimes been described as a “scene-setting expression”, or as an element which sets a “spatial, temporal or individual framework within which the main predication holds” (Chafe 1976). For that reason, this type of topic function has been alternatively known as the scene-setting topic.

Given the context: (*Akosua was very sad that morning*), we notice that the entire adverbial clause *after the funeral ended* in (104) functions as a scene-

setting topic for the matrix clause, whose topic is *she* (ie. ‘Akosua’). The noun phrase in (104) *the funeral* is a non-topical expression which appears within a sentential scene-setting topic expression, which itself is embedded within a matrix clause whose subject is the primary topic of the sentence.

(104) After the funeral ended, she cried till the next day.

These four categories of topic functions proposed by Lambrecht (1994), will be tested in Esahie, to find out whether the Esahie topic marker indicates all these functions (see section 4.4.2).

### **4.3 Inventory of topic markers in Esahie**

I mentioned earlier that although topic in most languages is not consistently overtly marked (be it prosodically, morphologically, syntactically, or lexically), it may be overtly marked in Esahie, but overt topic marking is pragmatically determined.

Esahie has one topic marker, *dé*, which guides the interlocutor to various aspects of the context. I will introduce and discuss the form of the marker *dé* in section 4.4, and analyse the pragmatic role of *dé* in section 4.4.1. Subsequently, I will examine to what extent *dé* is applicable to Lambrecht’s (1994) categorisation of the discourse function(s) of topic (section 4.4.2).

### **4.4 The contrastive/emphatic topic marker *dé***

I propose *dé*, to be the principal topic marker of Esahie on the basis of its extensive pragmatic function. I analyse *dé* (glossed CTM, contrastive/emphatic

marker), as the Esahie equivalent of the Akan contrastive/emphatic marker discussed in Amfo (2010), because it mirrors the Akan *de* in form and function.

Formally, the scope *dé* may be over a constituent of a clause, as well as a whole clause, this is exemplified in (105a, b) and (105c), respectively.

*Dé* appears to the immediate right of the constituent or clause over which it has scope.

- (105) a. Brəsua<sub>i</sub> ne hã-ne kyirɛ ye<sub>j</sub> kye ye<sub>i</sub> dé  
 Lady DEF tell-COMPL show him that her CTM  
 o<sub>i</sub>-n-gro so.  
 3SG-NEG-like that  
 ‘The lady told him that she didn’t like that.’
- b. Wɔ<sub>i</sub> dé Nyameɛ kɔ boka-ɔ<sub>i</sub>, eti ne su.  
 You CTM God will help-2SG, so NEG cry  
 ‘As for you God will help you, so don’t cry’
- c. E-kro alee dé!!!  
 2SG-like.HAB food CTM  
 ‘You really like food’

In (105a), the pronoun *ye* ‘her’, referring to a ratified topic *the lady*, is what is within the scope of *dé*. Similarly in (105b), it is the pronominal referent of *wɔ* ‘you’ that *dé* has scope over. In (105c), however, what receives emphasis, by the use of *dé*, is the clause *ekro alee* (you like food).

Having established, that formally, the marker may have scope over a constituent of a clause, or a whole clause, I proceed to look at its function by

posing a question. “What exactly is the pragmatic role of *dé*?”, since I have argued that lexical signalling of topic not mandatory in Esahie. I will attempt to answer this question in the next subsection.

#### 4.4.1 *The Pragmatic role of dé.*

I argue above that the Esahie *dé* has a lot in common with its Akan (*Kwa, Niger-Congo*) counterpart *de*. Boadi (1974: 8–10) who first mentions the Akan *de* as an information structure particle labels it as the nonexclusive or potentially inclusive focus marker. Boadi’s characterisation of the Akan *de*, however, does not seem to apply fully to the Esahie contrastive/emphatic marker *dé*. Below are some of the features of the Esahie *dé* which are congruent in function with the Akan *de*, as argued by Amfo (2010):

- *Dé* makes strong, clear, and fairly certain claims about the new information expressed in the proposition, and these claims are made with high speaker commitment and conviction.

The marker *dé* is used to highlight an entity, and attribute special properties to it. It encodes some level of exclusivity to the constituent over which it has scope.

What this means is that the property attributed to the *dé*-marked constituent cannot be attributed to any other members of that pragmatically determined set. In (106), the entity under the scope of *dé*, *kɔrɛɛ* ‘eagle’, of all kinds of birds in the world, is presented as the only bird that can fly very high. The usage of *dé* in this context, first singles out *kɔrɛɛ* ‘eagle’, and then eliminates all other



- b. Abrabɔ *dé* ɔ-la ase.  
 Life CTM 3SG-lie ground  
 ‘As for life, it’s not easy.’
- c. N-gora *dé* bɛ-n-dwene koraa  
 PL-Child CTM 3PL-NEG-think at.all  
 ‘As for children, they don’t think at all’
- d. Ngran asetena *dé* ɔ-yɛ se tra nkaa biala Ghana wa  
 Accra life CTM 3SG-be hard than place every Ghana LOC  
 ‘As for life (cost of living) in Accra, it is expensive than every other  
 place in Ghana.’
- e. Atiensere *dé* ɔ-te nkye pa koraa  
 Stinginess CTM 3SG-be.NEG thing good at all  
 ‘Stinginess is nothing good.’
- f. Nahore *dé* e-ha-nɛ yɛ se  
 Truth CTM 3SG-say-PRES be difficult  
 ‘As for speaking the truth, it’s really difficult.’
- g. E-ko-li ɛmo *dé* fa di bangu  
 2SG-will-eat rice CTM take eat banku  
 ‘Instead of eating rice, I would rather you ate banku’
- h. Me nnya sikaa *dé* a, n-gɔ ho  
 1SG get money CTM CM, 1SG-will go  
 ‘If only I get money, I will go.’

The *dé*-marked constituents in sentences (107a-h) above are discourse topics, essentially because the discourse referents involved had been mentioned earlier

in the discourse, and they were still the matter(s) of current standing interest or else were manifest in the physical context.

With regards to the speaker commitment to the proposition expressed in a *dé*-utterance. I agree with Amfo (2010), that there is a strong speaker commitment to the proposition expressed. Similar to what is argued for the Akan *de* (cf. Amfo 2010), in Esahie, the sequence NP-*dé* suggests that the speaker is fairly certain about, and can, without any iota of uncertainty, vouch for the referent of the NP with regarding to the issue under discussion. This means that, for a speaker to mark a phrase or a clause with *dé*, he must be certain about what is being expressed, and be committed to the truthfulness of it.

Assertions made about *dé*-marked constituents are strong, clear, and with high speaker conviction and confidence. The speaker of (107d), for example, by marking the NP *Ngran asetena* ‘life in Accra’ with *dé* suggests that he is absolutely aware of the fact that the cost of living in Accra is higher than all other places in Ghana. It is a fact he is completely and convincingly certain about. Given the strong speaker commitment that he is fully aware of the economic hardships associated with living in Accra, it is not expected that the speaker would wish to live at such a place.

On this premise, I regard *dé* as a topic marker. It marks a constituent as the topic of the utterance in which it is contained. It indicates that the denotatum of the constituent to which it is attached in Strawson’s (1974) description is “what is a matter of current standing interest or concern”. It is therefore appropriate to analyse *dé* as an emphatic/contrastive topic marker. *Dé* is used

to indicate that a particular entity is the topic of a particular utterance or set of utterances.

Like the Akan topic marker *de*, “the referent of a *dé*-marked constituent is implicitly contrasted with other members of a contextually determined set, with regard to some suggested property explicated in the utterance”, Amfo (2010:219). Consider example (108).

(108) Sikaa *dé* ɔ-ye fɛ

Money CTM 3SG-Be sweet

‘As for money (affluence), it is really good.’

The utterance in (108) was made during a Health insurance registration exercise, when the people in the queue to be registered were skipped, and a bank manager who just got there was registered. It was obvious that the bank manager was given that preferential treatment on the basis of his affluence. One of the disgruntled persons in the queue then uttered (108), to show that they believed that they were not given that special treatment because they weren’t affluent.

Like its Akan counterpart (Amfo 2010), the Esahie topic marker *dé* in (109) can be argued to have a two-fold function. First, it indicates that there is now a topic shift (ie. because a new topic is being introduced), and second, it is used to encode some kind of implicated contrast.

(109) Efia wo yɛ nyemene, Attaa *dé* yewo n-yɛ nyemene.

NAME self be beautiful. NAME CTM REFL NEG-be beautiful

‘Efia is beautiful, (but) as for Attaa she is not.’

The matter of current standing interest in the discourse, as noted in the second sentence in (109), is no longer Efia. Rather, it is shifted to Attaa.

Simultaneously, *dé* is used to encode some kind of implicated contrast between Efia's facial look and that of Attaa, which are exact opposites as far as beauty is concerned to the speaker. The use of *dé* in the context of (109), is to juxtapose two opposite values or properties, in this case, the beauty of Efia and Attaa, in order to strike a dissimilarity between them, from the perspective of the speaker.

#### 4.4.2 *Discourse functions of the Esahie dé*

Recollect that we have mentioned that the *topic-comment*, *identificational*, *event-reporting* and *background-establishing* are the four categories of focus function Lambrecht (1994) proposes. Not all the four categories apply for Esahie regarding *dé*. It is only the background-establishing and topic-comment functions which can be argued for Esahie, as far as the pragmatics of *dé* is concerned, and this is similar to what obtains in Akan (Amfo 2010).

I shall begin with the background-establishing type. Remember that I explained that with the background-establishing type, a pragmatically presupposed proposition serves as a scene-setting topic for another proposition. I also noted that this kind of topic function has sometimes been described as “scene-setting”, or as an element which sets a “spatial, temporal or individual framework within which the main predication holds”, hence its alternative labelling as *scene-setting* topic.

The scene-setting function of *dé* is demonstrated in (105b), repeated here as (110) for convenience.

- (110) *Wɔ<sub>i</sub> dé Nyameɛ kɔ boka-ɔ<sub>i</sub>, eti ne su.*  
 You CTM God will help-2SG, so NEG cry  
 ‘As for you God will help you, so don’t cry’

The assertion in the *dé*-marked clause, (as for you God will help you), serves as background information for the proposition expressed in the subsequent utterance. It is the assertion in the *dé*-marked clause that grounds or facilitates the proposition expressed in the following utterance.

The *dé*-marked clause (as for you God will help you) “sets the scene” or paves the way for the proposition expressed in the following utterance (so don’t cry). In other words, if you receive the assurance that God is on your side to help you, then one would expect that you don’t fret, let alone cry.

Another instance of *dé*’s scene-setting function is realised in the conditional sentence in (107h), which will be repeated here as (111), for easy reference.

- (111) *Me nnya sikaa dé a, n-gɔ hɔ*  
 1SG get money CTM CM 1SG-will go  
 ‘If only I get money, I will go.’

The condition in the *dé*-marked clause (If only I get money), serves as background information for the proposition expressed in the subsequent utterance. It is the assertion in the *dé*-marked clause (If only I get money) that sets “the scene” or grounds for the proposition expressed in the following utterance (I will go).

We shall now look at the second discourse function of *dé*, the topic-comment type of function. Recall that I explained earlier that, with the topic-comment function, the information contained in the proposition expressed has the purpose of predicating or attributing some property, quality or action to a previously established referent. I must add that most of the examples in this chapter fall within this category.

An NP, usually the grammatical subject, is *dé*-marked and then some property, quality or action is attributed to, or predicated of it. The *dé*-marked constituent functions as the discourse topic, while the property, action or quality predicated of this constituent functions as the comment.

In (112), the topical constituent is *abotere* ‘patience’, about which the comment (there is nothing more valuable than it in this world) is made.

- (112) *Abotere<sub>i</sub> dé hwee ndra-e<sub>i</sub> asee he aso.*  
Patience CTM nothing NEG-exceed-3SG earth DEM upper surface  
 Topic Comment

‘As for patience, there is nothing more valuable than it in this world.’

- (113) *Sona tendee dé ye-nwo n-yε se*  
Person-GEN tall CTM REFL NEG-be strong  
 Topic Comment

‘As for tall persons, they are not strong.’

What is predicated in (113) of the generic NP *sona tendee* ‘tall persons’ is that they are not strong, and the topic (114), *akwadworɔ* ‘laziness’, is described as not being a good habit.

(114)	Akwadworo	<i>dé</i>	te	suban	ɔ <sub>i</sub> -te	pa
	<u>Laziness</u>	CTM	<u>be.NEG</u>	habit	3SG-be	<u>good</u>
	Topic		Comment			

‘As for laziness, it is no good behaviour.’

In conclusion, we have shown that *dé* can syntactically take scope over a constituent within a clause, as well as a whole clause. *Dé* appears to the immediate right of the constituent or clause over which it has scope. It makes strong, clear, and fairly certain claims about the new information expressed in the proposition, and these claims are made with high speaker commitment and conviction. Within a given context, whatever property that is attributed to the referent of a *dé*-marked constituent or clause, cannot be attributed to another (referent).

Relative to Lambrecht’s (1994) categorisation of topic function, I shown that it is only the background-establishing and topic-comment functions which can be argued for Esahie, as far as the pragmatics of *dé* is concerned. I have also shown that *dé* is comparable to the Akan *de* (cf. Amfo 2010) in many syntactic and pragmatic ways.

#### 4.5 Chapter Summary

I set out in this Chapter to examine the lexico-pragmatic coding of topic in Esahie, identifying one topic marker, *dé*. I went on to explain that a referent is considered the topic of a particular utterance/proposition if the information contained in the utterance/proposition adds to our knowledge of it.

I added that the notion of topic is not limited to only entities, but also to situations or states of affairs, which may be matters of current standing interest. We explained the four types of topic functions, the *topic-comment*, *identificational*, *event-reporting* and *background-establishing* functions, as proposed by Lambrecht (1994).

*Dé* can syntactically take scope over a constituent within a clause, as well as a whole clause. *Dé* appears to the immediate right of the constituent or clause over which it has scope and it makes strong, clear, and fairly certain claims about the new information expressed in the proposition, and these claims are made with high speaker commitment and conviction.

Within a given context, whatever property is attributed to the referent of a *dé*-marked constituent or clause, cannot be attributed to another (referent). For a speaker to mark a noun phrase or a clause with *dé*, he must be certain of the proposition expressed, and committed to the factuality of it.

With regards to the discourse functions of topic as proposed by Lambrecht, *dé* can be used for only the background-establishing and topic-comment functions. Quite clearly, *dé* resembles the Akan *de* (cf. Amfo 2010), in form and function.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.0 Introductory Remarks

This thesis aimed at investigating how IS is realized in Esahie, particularly, describing the strategies in focusing/topicalising constituents in the major and minor clause structural types. In this chapter, I summarise the main issues dealt with in this thesis. In section 5.1, I provide a summary of the discussions made in this thesis, chapter by chapter. In section 5.2, I highlight the major findings of this thesis. A general conclusion on the encoding of Information Structure in Esahie is given in section 5.3. Recommendations on possible areas of future studies into the encoding of IS in Esahie is proffered in section 5.4.

#### 5.1 Summary of Chapters

Chapter one gives an overview of the thesis. In this chapter, I explained the concept of IS, particularly its pragmatic aspect involving the notions of topic and focus. On the general background of the study, this chapter looked at Esahie as a language and its speakers as a people, highlighting their demographics, geography and economy. I further outlined the objective(s) of this study, stating exactly what aspect(s) of the grammar of Esahie this work is investigating, and finally, the significance of this study.

In chapter two, I delved into the theoretical foundation for this work. I touched on how the theory works, its strengths and the level of functions to which it can be applied.

I also at looked at two pertinent problems associated with the pragmatic notions of focus and topic. In order to ground this work, this section finally reviewed some works relevant to the subject of Information Structure, particularly, how focus and topic are encoded in some Ghanaian languages. The final part of the chapter dealt with problem statement of the work.

In Chapter three, I discussed and analysed how focus is formally encoded in Esahie. The chapter covered types of focus based on what syntactic element is being focused, and a demonstration of how this categorization of focus applies to Esahie. I further delved into the syntactic strategies available in Esahie for encoding focus. Here, I identified one focus marker (*yéyé*), and five focus-sensitive particles (*kósó* ‘also’, *pó* ‘even’, *ngóm* ‘only’, *déln*, and *álà* ‘just’), examining their syntax and semantics (and pragmatics).

Chapter four ferrets out how the lexico-pragmatic process of topic marking is realised in Esahie. I identified and discussed one topic marker, *dé*, exploring its syntax and pragmatics.

## **5.2 Summary of findings**

Regarding the encoding of focus, I have shown that Esahie employs word order variation (syntax) and specific lexical items in the encoding the focus. Hence, typologically, Esahie combines both syntactic strategies (including fronting or left dislocation and clefting) and lexical strategies to signal information structure.

I have also shown that Esahie has a rich inventory of lexical items/markers which guide the interlocutor to various aspects of the context of the discourse. These markers include the focus marker *yéyé*, and focus-sensitive particles like

the inclusive markers *kósó* ‘also’ and *pó* ‘even’, and the exclusive markers *ngóm* ‘only’, *déin* and *álà* ‘just’. Lexically, a focus marker or a focus-sensitive particle (including *yéyé*, or *kósó*, *pó*, *ngóm*, *déin*, and *álà*) immediately follows the constituent in focus, and syntactically, it can appear either at the left periphery of the sentence before a complement clause or after the object.

Esahie can encode focus through two strategies; pre-posing and clefting.

With the fronting or pre-posing strategy, we realised that the constituent being focused is usually fronted to the left periphery of the sentence, the clause-initial position, and is immediately followed by the focus marker. To show that an argument being fronted was actually moved from its canonical position, an overt copy of the argument in the form of an anaphoric pronoun is left in its original canonical position.

We also demonstrated that the fronting strategy was not enough to encode focus, and that it obligatorily has to be complemented by a lexical strategy involving immediately following the fronted constituent with the focus marker *yéyé*.

The other syntactic strategy for focus discussed was clefting. In Esahie, this widely acknowledged strategy involves placing a sequence of words within the structure beginning with *ɔ-te* ‘it is’. Clefting in Esahie for the purpose of signalling focus usually requires an embedding of a simple *yéyé*-focused sentence onto a matrix clause whose head is a copula *te* ‘be’.

Concerning types of focus, based on focus domains, I demonstrated that Esahie has cases of argument, predicate and adjunct focus. The Esahie focus marker *yéyé* may have scope over either a noun (or nominal), adverb (or

adverbial), and an adjective (or adjectival), constituting the major class of words in Esahie.

With argument focus, we saw that both subjects and objects can be focused. Both subject and object arguments cannot be focused in-situ. A subject argument that is in focus in Esahie must be obligatorily marked by a focus particle. A focused subject-argument, in Esahie, is preposed into the focal position in the clause, and is immediately followed by the focus marker. This preposed subject is then recapitulated in the rest of the clause by an anaphoric pronoun. Similarly, when an argument with the grammatical function of object is being focused, the argument in question is obligatorily preposed to the left periphery of the sentence, the clause-initial position of the matrix clause, and is immediately (and obligatorily) followed by the focus marker. With object-arguments, a focussed [+human] argument, in Esahie, is recapitulated in the default position in the rest of the clause by an anaphoric pronoun, while a gap is left in the case of [-human] arguments. This work has argued that the gap strategy can be attributed to a Null Object Parameter.

Regarding predicate focus, we showed that there are no instances where a verb is fronted, for the purpose of focus in Esahie, without a change in its form. The change that is always observed is the addition of a nominalising affix to the verb, resulting in the verb becoming a nominal. This implies that what is actually focused is a nominal, and never a verb, because what is eventually focused is a nominal. In effect, the only instance of predicate focus in Esahie, is when dealing with predicative adjectives.

Further, on the focusing of predicative adjectives, we have demonstrated that you may find the adjective (or its copy) fronted, and being left in the

default position in the rest of the clause, i.e. after the copular *yɛ* or a gap is left in the default position.

One notable feature about Esahie, relative to adjective focus, which was pointed out is that, when predicative adjectives are focused, they do not undergo any formal change. That is, focusing of adjectives in Esahie, unlike focusing of verbs, does not result in the adjectives becoming nominalised.

Regarding focusing of adverbs, the evidence from Esahie corroborate Ameka's (2010) generalisation about Kwa, that adverbs and nominals in adjunct function, can be placed in the clause initial focus position and optionally marked for focus. In Esahie (just like Akan), no copy of the adverb(ial) that is placed in the clause initial focus position in the default adjunct position referring to such a constituent in the rest of the clause.

It was demonstrated that the principal focus marker *yéyé* may immediately follow, and have scope over any of the major word class constituents in an utterance, with the exception of verbs. The constituent(s) over which the *yéyé*-focus morpheme has scope is usually a fronted one. The *yéyé*-focus marker, of all the forms which can be labelled as focus markers in Esahie, has a distinctive status in the language. As has been demonstrated above, it is the only (focus) marker which can perform a range of focus functions including completion, selection, replacing and to a certain extent, restricting.

The two inclusive markers, in Esahie, identified and discussed, were *kósó* and *pó*. While *kósó* was described as a simple additive marker, which indicates that the utterance to which it is attached has to be interpreted within a similar context as the immediately preceding utterance, *pó* on the other hand, was

analysed as a scalar marker, indicating that constituent to which it is attached is ranked as quite low on a given scale.

Like the focus marker *yéyé*, this additive marker *kósó* is placed to the immediate right of the constituent which it modifies and takes scope over. Interestingly, unlike *yéyé*, which can only modify a phrase, *kósó* may either modify a phrase or a whole clause. The presence of *kósó* in an utterance has no effect on the information value or truth conditions of that particular utterance. The use of *kósó* in an utterance is a signal to the interlocutor to process the *kósó*-utterance within a parallel context provided by the immediately preceding discourse.

*Kósó* may be used in encoding a confirmatory, repetitive (or intensive) interpretation. The major deviation of *kósó* playing its usual additive role is when it is used to express speaker attitude, usually a negative one. The attitude could be one of contempt, disdain, disapproval, disregard, denigration, sarcasm, jealousy, or even disgust.

*Pó* ‘even’, which was labelled as a scalar focus marker is functionally equivalent to its English gloss. *Pó* like the English scalar focus marker *even*, indicates that the constituent in its focus is the least likely of the variables under consideration which makes that proposition true. One outstanding feature of *pó* is that the proposition expressed by a *pó*-utterance contains information which is contrary to expectation (given some particular background information), in that it is least expected.

In addition to the entity within the scope of *pó* being interpreted as low on the likelihood scale, *pó* suggests inclusion of some sort.

If *pó* marks a constituent as the most unlikely one to make a given proposition true, then logically, it is to be expected that such utterances containing *pó* may express some amount of surprise or even shock.

Three exclusive markers, *íggóm*, *álà* and *déín* were also identified and discussed, following Amfo (2010). All these markers encode exclusivity of one kind or another.

The Restrictive focus marker *íggóm* ‘only/alone’ usually immediately follows a nominal phrase which falls under its scope. Of all the values that can potentially fit into a slot, the speaker’s use of *íggóm* suggests that the *íggóm*-marked constituent is the only factual and applicable one, implying that *íggóm* (like *yéyé*) can be used in encoding restricting focus.

*Déín* was analysed as a Restrictive Emphatic Marker (REM) because of its primary role of encoding restriction, specificity and emphasis. It was demonstrated that *déín* is used in isolating, emphasising, and attributing certain properties to an entity. It encodes a high level of restriction to the constituent over which it has scope. Based on Dik et al.’s (1981) typology, it was shown that *déín* can be argued to indicate restricting and selecting focus.

Finally, in Chapter 3, I showed that the multifunctional *álà* may be used in several contexts to communicate a variety of meanings. It could be used to encode restrictive focus, when it is synonymous with *íggóm*; it may also be used to express simultaneity, when used in temporal constructions, it restricts the activity referred to in the second clause to the time period expressed in the first; it may be used in utterances which express a continuous state of affairs or repeated activity. It may finally be used to induce a scalar interpretation.

While examining the lexico-pragmatic coding of topic in Esahie, in Chapter 4, one topic marker, *dé*, was identified.

*Dé* can syntactically take scope over a constituent within a clause, as well as a whole clause. *Dé* appears to the immediate right of the constituent or clause over which it has scope and it makes strong, clear, and fairly certain claims about the new information expressed in the proposition, and these claims are made with high speaker commitment and conviction.

Within a given context, whatever property is attributed to the referent of a *dé*-marked constituent or clause, cannot be attributed to another (referent). For a speaker to mark a noun phrase or a clause with *dé*, he must be certain of the proposition expressed, and committed to the factuality of it. With regards to the discourse function of topic as proposed by Lambrecht (1994), *dé* can be used for only the background-establishing and topic-comment functions. Quite clearly, *dé* resembles the Akan *de* (cf. Amfo 2010), in form and function.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The encoding of IS in Esahie is lexico-syntactic, not morpho-syntactic, because in the encoding of IS, nothing morphological happens, it is rather the presence of a lexical item (ie, the focus marker, the focus-sensitive particle, or the topic marker) that leads to the contextual interpretation of the utterance.

Esahie has a rich inventory of lexical forms which may be used to signal the focus or topic of a given utterance. Of all the information structure markers in Esahie, the principal focus marker *yéyé* is unique, because it expresses complete, selective, replacing and restricting focus functions. The Esahie *dé* resembles the Akan *de* (cf. Amfo 2010), in form and function.

#### 5.4 Recommendation

In the data, I came across a marker, *pé*<sup>20</sup>, which functions to some extent like an exclusive marker. Consider the examples below.

- (115) Adwuma he *dé*, yε-kɔ fa ε-lε nyɔ *pé* ye-ko-yie  
 Work DEM CTM 3PL-will take PL-day two ?? 3PL-will-finish  
 ‘As for this work, we are going to use only two days to finish’

- (116) Ye *pé* yéyé me kro ɔ  
 3SG ?? FOC 1SG love CD  
 ‘S/he alone is the one I love’

For the sake of space, however, I couldn’t analyse this marker in this work, so as to determine its status and role in Esahie. I therefore recommend that future studies of IS in Esahie should pay attention to this marker.

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<sup>20</sup> I put ?? at the slot where *pé* is supposed to be glossed because it is yet to be analysed. From my preliminary assessment, however, *pé* could be said to mean ‘only’, ‘just as’ or ‘just when’.

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