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Lexical Marking of Information Structure in Dangme

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## DEDICATION

This thesis work is dedicated to my lovely wife, Jennifer Kukua Eshun.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims at investigating the lexical marking of information structure in Dangme. The Dangme particles *nɛ*, *po*, *hu*, *nitɛ*, *pɛ* and *lɛɛ* were analysed through the use of minimal pair of sentences with one containing the particle under investigation. The study brings to bear how the afore-mentioned particles are used in marking information structure, their syntactic occurrences and restrictions, and the pragmatic contributions of the particles in the utterances in which they occur.

The following research questions served as a guide to the study:

- When are the particles *nɛ*, *po*, *hu*, *nitɛ*, *pɛ* and *lɛɛ* used in Dangme discourse? This includes the following three sub-questions:
  - Are the particles *nɛ*, *po*, *hu*, *nitɛ*, *pɛ* and *lɛɛ* markers of information structure, and if so, are they markers of topic or focus?
  - What are the pragmatic interpretations that may occur for these particles?
  - In what syntactic positions can each of these particles occur?

The data used in the investigation were created examples and native speaker intuitions in terms of researcher's introspection. The analyses of the data revealed that all the particles above are focus markers except *lɛɛ* which is a contrast marker compatible with both focus and topic.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### *1.1 Topic*

An utterance will usually contain some new and some given information. This division of the content of an utterance into new and given information is called *information structure* (see e.g. Gundel and Fretheim (2004)). Some linguists refer to the most salient and relationally new information as the *focus* of the utterance while they term the relationally given part of the sentence's content as the *topic*. The partitioning of a sentence's information structure into topic and focus is universal across languages. However, how and whether this is linguistically marked varies from language to language. Some languages mark topic and focus through phonological means (i.e. by tone/stress), others mark it morphologically, or lexically whilst some languages leave the phenomenon unmarked (see Gundel and Fretheim (2004)). The topic of this thesis is lexical marking of information structure in Dangme. The more specific object of study of this thesis are the Dangme words *ne*, *po*, *hu*, *nitse*, *pe* and *lee* and the bedrock of this thesis is to investigate whether these lexical items may be seen as topic or focus markers.

#### *1.2 Background*

The topic-focus phenomenon has not been investigated in Dangme before, as far as I am aware. Dakubu (1992) investigates information structure in Ga, the most related language to Dangme. In this work, however, Dakubu concentrates on the role of definiteness and its relation to information structure. In addition to Dakubu's (1992) work on Ga, there are also other research works on information structure in Kwa languages. These include Ameka (1990) on Ewe, Ameka (2010) on Kwa, Boadi (1974) on Akan, Ofori (2011) on Akan and Amfo (2010) on Akan. The most relevant among these with regard to the aim of this thesis is Amfo (2010), who discusses the various information structure markers in Akan and the effect they have on the interpretation of the utterances in which they occur.

#### *1.3 Research goals*

This thesis investigates the particles *ne*, *po*, *hu*, *nitse*, *pe* and *lee* which are hypothesized to be relevant in marking information structure in Dangme discourse. The suspicion is born out of

similar particles in Akan discussed by Amfo (2010). The research aims at answering the following research questions:

- When are the particles *nɛ*, *po*, *pɛ*, *hu*, *nitɛ* and *lɛɛ* used in Dangme discourse? This includes the following three sub-questions:
  1. Are the particles *nɛ*, *po*, *hu*, *nitɛ*, *pɛ* and *lɛɛ* markers of information structure, and if so, are they markers of topic or focus?
  2. What are the pragmatic interpretations that may occur for these particles?
  3. In what syntactic positions can each of these particles occur?

These questions also contribute indirectly to a more general question, namely whether topic and focus is linguistically marked in Dangme.

#### *1.4 The Dangme language*

Dangme is a language spoken by about 1.4 million people in Ghana, West Africa. The language belongs to the Congo-Basin language group, specifically the Kwa language family. The language stretches from the south-eastern coast of the country through the Accra plains to the Shai hills as illustrated in figure 1 below. Out of the ten political regions in Ghana, the Dangme language is spoken and taught in three of the regions; Greater Accra, which is estimated to have the highest number of speakers, followed by the Eastern region and finally the Volta region. It is taught as a subject in elementary school, high school and the universities. Most researchers claim the Dangme language has six dialects; Ada, Krobo, Nugo, Gbugbla, Sɛ and Osudoku. Recent researches, however, reveal that the people of Agortime of Volta region have another dialect of the language. My visit to Agortime confirmed this revelation therefore increasing the dialects of the Dangme language to seven instead of six as commonly claimed. Because of the various dialects, the Dangme language is also called Adangme or Krobo. Ga, a sister language spoken in the same political and geographical region as Dangme, is by some scholars argued to be the same language as Dangme. That is, they claim that the two are dialects of the umbrella language Ga-Adangme. However, Mary Esther Kropp Dakubu who has worked on both languages extensively, disagrees with this view (see Dakubu (1988)). I hold to Kropp Dakubu's opinion on the languages in the sense that the two so called dialects have different sound systems. Secondly, it is my personal experience that speakers of Ga rarely understand Dangme utterances.



Figure1. Language Map of Ghana (source: <http://www.ethnologue.com/map/GH> )

The Dangme language uses the Latin symbols in its orthography. Similar to the English language, Dangme has a Subject-Verb- Object canonical structure. Researchers claim the language has no prepositions but rather relational noun particles which occur after the head noun (see e.g. Adi, 1997). Also, the Dangme language does not mark tense.

### *1.5 Data and Methodology*

Many researchers rely on oral interviews, questionnaires, observations, recordings and other secondary sources of data in investigating linguistic phenomena. However, another way of getting data for a research is through introspection (see e.g. Schütze, 1996). In this work, I employ the latter method. This is a possibility, since I am a native speaker of Dangme. Furthermore, intuitions about information structure are generally quite subtle, and thus the method of interviewing native speakers about these matters is challenging. I have therefore chosen to do this work based on introspection. At a later stage, the research should be supplemented with other methods, e.g. elicitation with informants or discourse studies.

### *1.6 Outline of the thesis*

The thesis has four chapters in all, including the present one.

The second chapter has the heading *literature review and various notions of topic and focus*. In that chapter, I discuss the opinions and views of other researchers on the topic-focus phenomena which are relevant to this thesis.

Chapter three, which is the nucleus of my thesis, tests the data and investigates the above mentioned phenomena in Dangme for the purpose of achieving the set objectives. In this investigation, I compare minimal pairs of utterances in context, one containing the particle under investigation, the other without the particle. I then check the compatibility of the particle with the information structure imposed by the context. If the particle turns out to be compatible with focus in several various examples but not compatible with topic, then the conclusion is that the particle is a focus marker and not a topic marker. On the other hand, when the particle turns out to be compatible with topic but not focus, then the particle is concluded to be a topic marker and not a focus marker. When a particle suspected to be a marker of information structure is compatible with both topic and focus, I conclude that the particle is under-specified with respect to information structure and that it may have a different linguistic function in the utterance.

Secondly, I look out for the pragmatic interpretation of each of the particles in the examples in which they occur and I use this interpretation to categorise the markers according to the more specific sub-categories of focus found in Dik et al. (1981) and Amfo (2010). Furthermore, I discuss the syntactic positions of the particles in the utterances in which they occur and the type of phrases or word classes they can modify. In the last part of this chapter, I discuss the possibility of combining two particles in the same sentence and possibly modifying the same constituent.

The fourth and final chapter discusses the findings of this thesis. It summarises the thesis and also assesses the extent to which the objectives of the study have been achieved.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND VARIOUS NOTIONS OF TOPIC AND FOCUS

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter consists mainly of the view of other researchers on topic and focus. In my use of the terms *topic* and *focus*, I will be guided by the definitions of Gundel and Fretheim (2004) because of their in-depth explanation on topic-focus as a relational phenomenon. Also, I will take into account the definition of the terms as explicated by Dik et al. (1981) with regard to contrastive focus. Furthermore, in discussing the focus markers in Dangme and their functions, I will use the analyses outlined in Dik et al. (1981) and Amfo (2010) since Gundel and Fretheim (2004) do not talk about focus markers, and furthermore do not distinguish among as many focus categories as in Dik et al. (1981).

My aim is to investigate topic and focus markers in Dangme using the notion of topic and focus categories outlined in this chapter.

#### 2.2 Literature Review

There has been several research works on the phenomena *topic* and *focus*. One common thing among these research works is the fact that they all try to explain topic and focus and also establish the relationship between the two.

##### 2.2.1 Definition of Topic

Most researchers who have dealt with information structure, including Lambrecht (1996), Dakubu (1992:6), Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182), and Casper de Groot (1981:75), define topic as the entity which an utterance is about. Lambrecht explains further that a topic is “what is a matter of standing current interest or concern”. Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182) opine that topics provide the context for the main predication and that topics must be familiar or uniquely identifiable. They also argue that a topic is relationally given, independent and outside the scope of what is predicated. To Amfo (2010:216), “A referent is considered the topic of a particular proposition if the information contained in the proposition increases our knowledge of it.” In the view of Dik (1978) cited in Dik et al. (1981:42), the definition of topic could still be traced to the issue of aboutness. He defines topic as “the entity ‘about’ which the predication predicates something in the given setting.” Also, Casper de Groot (1981:75) defines topic as “the entity about which the predication predicates something in a

given setting. Below is a tabulated summary of the view of the various researchers on the definition of topic:

*Table 1. Summary of the various definitions of Topic*

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Definition of topic</b>
Lambrecht (1994)	A topic is what is a matter of standing current interest or concern.
Gundel and Fretheim (2004:179,182)	A topic is relationally given, independent and outside the scope of what is predicated. Topics provide the context for the main predication and that topics must be familiar or uniquely identifiable.
Amfo (2010:216)	A referent is considered the topic of a particular proposition if the information contained in the proposition increases our knowledge of it.
Dik (1978:19)	Topic is the entity ‘about’ which the predication predicates something in the given setting.
Casper de Groot (1981:75)	Topic is the entity ‘about’ which the predication predicates something in the given setting.

From the above views, it could be noticed that both Dik (1978:19) and Casper de Groot (1981:75) have the same definition of topic. In this research, I will pay particular attention to the definition of Gundel and Fretheim (2004:179,182) and Dik (1978:19). This is because their definitions best explain the Dangme topic and focus phenomena.

### *2.2.2 Definition of Focus*

For Gundel and Fretheim (2004:179, 182), focus is what is predicated about the logical subject i.e. the topic. It is the new information in relation to the topic. According to Halliday (1967:203, 204) “Information focus is one kind of emphasis, whereby the speaker marks out a part (which may be the whole) of a message block as that which he wishes to be interpreted

as informative.” He explains that “information focus reflects the speaker's decision as to where the main burden of the message lies”. He also adds that information focus involves the selection within each information unit, of a certain element or elements as points of prominence within the message. For Dik (1978) cited in Dik et al. (1981:42) “the focus represents what is relatively the most important or salient information in the given setting.” Dik et al. (1981:42) further explain the phenomenon of focus citing Dik (1978:149), who says that “a constituent with focus function presents information bearing upon the difference in pragmatic information between speaker and addressee as estimated by the speaker.” Also Dik et al. (1981:43) indicate that in every questioned term there is a focus. It could be observed that Dik et al.’s (1981) use of the term focus refers to information focus. In trying to establish the relationship between information focus and contrastive focus, Dik et al. (1981:57-58) assert that “there will always be a certain contrast between the focus part of a predication i.e. information focus which is ‘foregrounded’ in one way or another to the ‘backgrounded’ rest of the predication”. In other words, Dik et al. (1981:57-58) suggest that there is always a contrast in every information focus and that contrasting is the function of focus. This opinion of Dik et al. (1981) on the relationship between information focus and contrastive focus confirms what is explicated in Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182-183), i.e. that some researchers hold the view that evoking alternatives is the primary function of focus. However, Dik et al. were quick to add that not all focus is contrastive. In my view, it is contradicting for Dik et al. (1981:57-58) to say that “there will always be a certain contrast between the focus part of a predication i.e. information focus” and turn to quickly say that not all focus is contrastive. Talking about what contrastive focus entails, Dik et al. (1981:58) see contrastive focus as “usually restricted, however, to the more specific case in which one piece of information, say X, is explicitly or implicitly opposed to some other piece of information, say Y, which stands in some specific relation of opposition to X in the given setting.” They opine that “although certainly a piece of ‘new’ information may be contrasted with a piece of ‘given’ information, the contrast may also be between two pieces of ‘given’ information or two pieces of ‘new’ information.”

Below is a summary of the various views on what focus refers to:

*Table 2. Summary of the various definitions of Focus*

<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Definition of focus</b>
Gundel and Fretheim (2004:179,182)	Focus is what is predicated about the logical

	subject i.e. the topic. It is the new information in relation to the topic.
Halliday (1967:203, 204)	Information focus is one kind of emphasis, that whereby the speaker marks out a part (which may be the whole) of a message block as that which he wishes to be interpreted as informative. Information focus reflects the speaker's decision as to where the main burden of the message lies. Information focus involves the selection within each information unit, of a certain element or elements as points of prominence within the message.
Dik (1978:149).	The focus represents what is relatively the most important or salient information in the given setting. A constituent with focus function presents information bearing upon the difference in pragmatic information between speaker and addressee as estimated by the speaker.

I will concentrate more on the definition of Gundel and Fretheim (2004) because of its grounding on relational newness. However, in the case of focus as a contrastive tool, I prefer the definition of Dik (1978:149) as cited in Dik et al. (1981). Furthermore, Dik et al. outline more subcategories of focus than Gundel and Fretheim do, and these subcategories turn out to be relevant for the discussion of the Dangme data.

### *2.3 Various notions of topic and focus*

#### *2.3.1 Gundel and Fretheim's Notion of Topic and Focus*

Gundel and Fretheim (2004) take their definition of the term focus from Yuen Ren Chao's (1968) description of logical predicate in his book *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese*. They state that focus has to do with the new information which is predicated about the topic and that the topic is the complement of focus. In explaining the notion of topic further, they note that the

topic has to do with what the utterance is about. According to other writers which they refer to, the topic-focus distinction has been generally aligned with given and new information. However, given and new information in their opinion could be either referential or relational, and should not be confused. According to Gundel and Fretheim (2004), referential givenness-newness has to do with a relationship between a linguistic expression and a corresponding non-linguistic entity in the speaker's or hearer's mind, the discourse, or some real or possible world, depending on where the referent or corresponding meanings of these linguistic expressions are assumed to reside. Let's take a look at example 1 below.

- 1)           A. Who called?  
              B. Pat said SHE called.

In their example above, their assertion is that if "Pat" is an antecedent to the pronoun "she", then "she" is referentially given since the referent is specific, presupposed, familiar, activated, identifiable, in focus, hearer old and discourse old. Although referentially given, the interpretation of *she* which is 'Pat' is still *relationally* new in relative to the topic, hence the focus of example 1 above.

The same thing is illustrated in example 2 below:

- 2)           A: Did you order the chicken or the pork?  
              B: It was the PORK that I ordered.

In example 2 above, "pork" is referentially given from A's utterance. It means that it is activated before it's occurrence in B. All the same, it is new in relation to the topic, which is what B ordered. Hence it is information focus according to Gundel and Fretheim.

In this thesis, it will be less beneficial to talk about the two kinds of givenness since my thesis is more concerned with information structure which has to do with relational givenness. I will therefore concentrate on relational givenness-newness. For instance, example 1 above, has the following correspondence in Dangme:

- 3)           *Mɛnɔ    fia?*  
              *Who    call*  
              Pat       ke     lɛ     nɛ         e         fia.  
              Np       said    she    FM       emphatic PN   call

The referent of the pronoun *le* is referentially given but relationally new according to Gundel and Fretheim's definition. Thus, the referent of the pronoun *le* is the focus of the utterance according to their definition. We will see later that the particle *ne* is used with constituents that are information focus, not constituents that are relationally given.

For relational givenness-newness which is the kind of givenness that has to do with information structure as I mentioned earlier, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:178-179) claim the semantic representation of the sentence is partitioned into two complementary parts, i.e. X and Y where X is the logical subject which the sentence is about and Y is what is predicated about X. This is what Chao (1968) calls the logical predicate. Thus, X is given in relation to Y and Y is relationally new to X. This makes Y the new information which is asserted or questioned about X. It is this claim that represents their definition of topic and focus.

Again on the issue of topic, Gundel and Fretheim (2004) claim the topic in most instances is expressed by definite phrases. This is in the sense that it must be familiar to both the speaker and the addressee. It is for this reason that "the windows" in example 4a will be a better topic as compared to "a window" in example 4b below.

- 4) a. The window, it's still open.
- b. \*A window, it's still open.

My understanding of what they mean in example 4 is that both the speaker and the addressee are familiar with the window in 4a but not that of 4b and that 4b could only be accepted when there is more information to aid the addressee to identify the window. In summarizing what a topic is, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182) assert that topics are relationally given and that they are what the sentence/utterance is about. They explain that topics provide the context for the main predication which is accessed relative to the topic. They say the association of topics with definiteness across languages suggests that topics must be familiar or at least uniquely identifiable.

### 2.3.2 Gundel and Fretheim's Notion on Information Focus and Contrastive Focus

Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182-183) distinguish between two types of focus. They say one is **relational - the information predicated about the topic** and the other is **referential - material which the speaker calls to the addressee's attention thereby often evoking a contrast with other entities that might fill the same position**. Gundel and Fretheim (2004) refer to these two assertions as **information focus** and **contrastive focus** respectively. In

explaining the function of focus, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182-183) note a controversy over the view of researchers. They mention that some researchers affirm that evoking alternatives is the primary function of focus; and that the “contrast set” evoked by the focus provide the locus for focus sensitive operators such as *only*, *even* and *also*. Contrary to this assertion, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182-183) also mention that other researchers take information focus to be primary, and treat contrast as secondary and derivative. Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182-183) point out that both information focus and contrastive focus are coded by some type of linguistic prominence across languages. This kind of linguistic coding, in the case in Dangme, is done using different lexical markers which I will discuss later in this thesis.

In defining information focus, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182-183) indicated that **information focus is relational to the topic - the information predicated about the topic** and it is given linguistic prominence typically by means of some sort of prosodic highlighting. This is because it is the main predication expressed in the sentence. In their opinion, information focus correlates with the questioned position in the relevant *wh-question* or alternative *yes/no* question that the sentence would be a response to. They argue that in both examples 5 and 6 below, *Bill* expresses the information focus that identifies the one who called the meeting (the topic).

- 5)           A: Do you know who called the meeting?  
              B: (It was) BILL (who) called the meeting.
  
- 6)           Every time we get together I’m the one who has to organize things, but this time (it was) BILL (who) called the meeting.

In my opinion, if Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182) agree that a constituent which contrasts with other entities that might fill the same position is a contrastive focus constituent then example 6 illustrates contrastive focus as well as information focus.

According to Gundel and Fretheim (2004:182), **contrastive focus is referential – material which the speaker calls to the addressee’s attention thereby often evoking a contrast with other entities that might fill the same position**. Commenting on the function of contrastive focus, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:183) point out that marking information focus is not the only reason to call attention to a constituent. In their opinion a constituent may also be made prominent because the speaker does not think the addressee’s attention is

focused on the corresponding entity and for one reason or another would like it to be. For example, this may be urged because a new topic is being introduced or reintroduced (topic shift) or because the meaning associated with some constituent is being contrasted, implicitly or explicitly with something else. The example in 7 illustrates a contrastive focus on the topic *the coat*. Example 8 has a contrastive focus on the topic expression *the curry* as well as on the information focus *Bill*. This according to Gundel and Fretheim (2004) shows that contrastive focus and information focus can coincide in one and the same constituent, and that contrastive focus can appear on topics as well.

- 7) We have to get rid of some of these clothes. That COAT you're wearing I think we can give to the salvation ARMY.
- 8) A: Who made all this great food?  
B: BILL made the CURRY.

Gundel and Fretheim maintain that all sentences have an information focus as an essential part of the function of sentences in information processing. They also note that not all sentences/utterances have a contrastive focus, the latter is determined primarily by a speaker's intention to affect the addressee's attention state at a given point in the discourse.

On the issue of topic, focus and syntactic structure, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:186) assert that the relationship between surface syntactic form and topic-focus structure is complex. They explain that there is no simple one-to-one correlation between information structure and particular syntactic constructions neither across languages, nor even within particular languages. They point out that *the beans* in 9b below may refer either to the topic or to the information focus.

- 9) a. Fred ate the beans.  
b. The beans, Fred ate.  
c. It was the beans that Fred ate.  
d. The beans, Fred ate them.  
e. Fred ate them, the beans.

The constituent *the beans* in 9b could be a contrastive topic (e.g. as an answer to *what about the beans? Who ate them?*) or an information focus (e.g. as an answer to *what did Fred eat?*).

Gundel and Fretheim (2004:186) point out that "the mapping between topic-focus structure and cleft sentences like those in 9c is less straightforward than has often been

assumed. It is widely accepted that in canonical clefts with a single prominent pitch accent on the clefted constituent (the beans in 9c), the clefted constituent is the information focus and the open proposition expressed by the cleft clause (Fred ate x in 9c is presupposed and topical.”

Gundel and Fretheim point out that, clefts in English do not always have an information structure in accordance with this traditional view. However, the former seems to hold for Dangme, as will be illustrated later in this thesis.

In conclusion, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:191-192) noted that topic and focus can be partly semantic and partly pragmatic as well. In their view, though some constraints on information structure may be grammatically or semantically determined, topic and focus are pragmatically relevant categories, with clear pragmatic effects including the appropriateness/inappropriateness of sentences with different possibilities for topic-focus interpretation in different discourse contexts. In chapter three of this thesis, I will discuss how Dangme sees topic and focus marking as a semantic and pragmatic phenomenon. Gundel and Fretheim (2004:191-192) opine that the attempt to explain a speaker’s ability to choose among various morphosyntactic and prosodic options and the corresponding ability of speakers to judge sentences with different topic-focus structure as more or less felicitous in different contexts has been one of the primary motivations for introducing these categories into linguistic analysis and theory. In agreement with other researchers, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:192) indicate that a relevance-theoretic pragmatics proposes that topic-focus structure is an essential component of the semantic/conceptual representation associated with natural language sentences by the grammar and that it is basic to the information processing function of language. Also, Gundel and Fretheim (2004:191) explain that human languages differ in the manner in which topic and focus are marked. They claim the phenomenon of topic and focus could be marked by prosody, syntax, morphology or a combination of any of these linguistic forms. Later in this thesis, I will discuss how Dangme marks the phenomenon of topic and focus using lexical items.

### *2.3.3 Dik et al.’s Categorization of Focus*

As mentioned earlier, my discussion on the focus markers in Dangme will be guided by the framework outlined in Dik et al.’s (1981) categorization since this is not discussed in Gundel and Fretheim’s work. This section talks about how Dik et al. (1981) categorize focus and also

the parameters of focus. Their categorization is not in opposition to Gundel and Fretheim's information and contrastive focus even though they establish more sub-categories of focus.

According to Dik et al. (1981:42), focus is relatively the most important or salient information of an utterance in a giving setting. They opine that most focus, i.e. information focus, is also contrastive. They explain that whether focus is contrastive or not, the scope of the focus could be; i) the predication as a whole, ii) the predicate, and iii) some terms. These possibilities will be outlined below.

i. The predication as a whole

According to Dik et al. (1981:53), in examples 10 and 11 below, the scope or parameter of focus is the whole predication.

- 10) DO come over for dinner!
- 11) DON'T give up!

They mention that this type of focus where the whole predication is the scope of the focus can also be called *predication focus*.

ii. The predicate

In the view of Dik et al. (1981:54), in answering the question on *what John did to the book*, there will be the presupposition in example 12 below:

- 12) John verb-ed the book to Peter.

Examples 13 to 15 below are possible outcomes of the presupposition in 12. In these examples, Dik et al. (1981:54) argue that the scope of the focus is the predicate.

- 13) John GAVE the book to Peter.
- 14) John GAVE the book to Peter, he didn't SELL it to him.
- 15) John did not GIVE the book to Peter.

iii. Some term(s)

According to Dik et al. (1981:53, 54), examples 17 to 19 are possible responses to the question in example 16.

- 16) To whom did John give the book?
- 17) John gave the book to PETER.
- 18) John gave the book to PETER, not to CHARLES.
- 19) John did not give the book to CHARLES.

They argue that in the responses in examples 17, 18 and 19, only a term (the object) in the predication is the scope of the focus.

Dik et al. argue that whatever the scope of the focus is, it could have one of the following functions:

- a. Completive
- b. Selective
- c. Replacing
- d. Expanding
- e. Restricting
- f. Parallel

Dik et al. (1981:60) suggest that a focus is referred to as *completive* when it fills in a gap in the pragmatic information of the addressee as illustrated in the example 21 and 22 below which emanates from the question in example 20 where COFFEE in 22 fills the gap in 21.

- 20) What did John buy?
- 21) John bought X; X= \_\_\_\_\_.
- 22) John bought COFFEE.

Dik et al. (1981:61) assert that completive focus does not involve contrast. They also mention that this function of focus is well illustrated in answers to *wh-questions*.

They refer to a focus as *selective focus* when one item is selected from a presupposed set of possible values as the most salient at the given time. They explain that COFFEE in 23B below indicates selective focus as regards the question in 23A.

- 23) A: Did John buy coffee or rice?  
Presupposition: John bought X; X= coffee or X= rice.  
B: He bought COFFEE.

As for *replacing focus*, Dik et al. (1981:63) say that “we speak of replacing focus in cases in which a specific item in the pragmatic information of the addressee is removed and replaced by another, correct item.” They argue that the process involves two main steps; *removing* and *substituting*.

They illustrate this in example 24 saying that *b*, *c*, *d* and *e* are responses of B to A.

- 24) a. A: John went to London.  
b. B: No, he didn't go to LONDON, he went to NEW YORK.  
c. No, he went to NEW YORK, not to LONDON.  
d. No, he didn't go to LONDON.  
e. No, he went to NEW YORK.

Dik et al. explain that it is only (d) that did not observe both steps mentioned earlier hence it is not a *replacing focus*.

By *expanding focus*, Dik et al. mean that the focus information is to be added to an antecedently given presupposed information. They say that in example 25 below, B indicates that he believes A's information is incomplete with respect to the value for X.

- 25) Presupposition of A: John bought X; X = coffee.  
B: John not only bought COFFEE, he also bought RICE.  
B: Yes, but he also bought RICE.

In defining *restricting focus*, Dik et al. (1981:66) state that restricting focus “is a type of focus by which an antecedently given presupposed set is restricted to one or more correct values.” In example 26 below, they argue that “restricting focus clearly corrects the presupposed information of A, in that one value for X is explicitly or implicitly rejected as incorrect.”

- 26) Presupposition of A: John bought X; X = coffee and rice  
B: No, he didn't buy RICE, he only bought COFFEE.  
B: No, he only bought COFFEE.

Dik et al. (1981:66) say that a *parallel focus* is when a speaker contrasts two pieces of information within one linguistic expression as in example 27 below:

27) JOHN bought a BIKE, but PETER a CAR.

They explain that in the sentence above, the contrast is not between the speaker's assertion and the addressee's presupposition but rather a result of the relationships of contrast between the pairs (JOHN, BIKE) and (PETER, CAR).

To make things easier, Dik et al. (1981:60) illustrated the various focus functions in Figure 2 below.

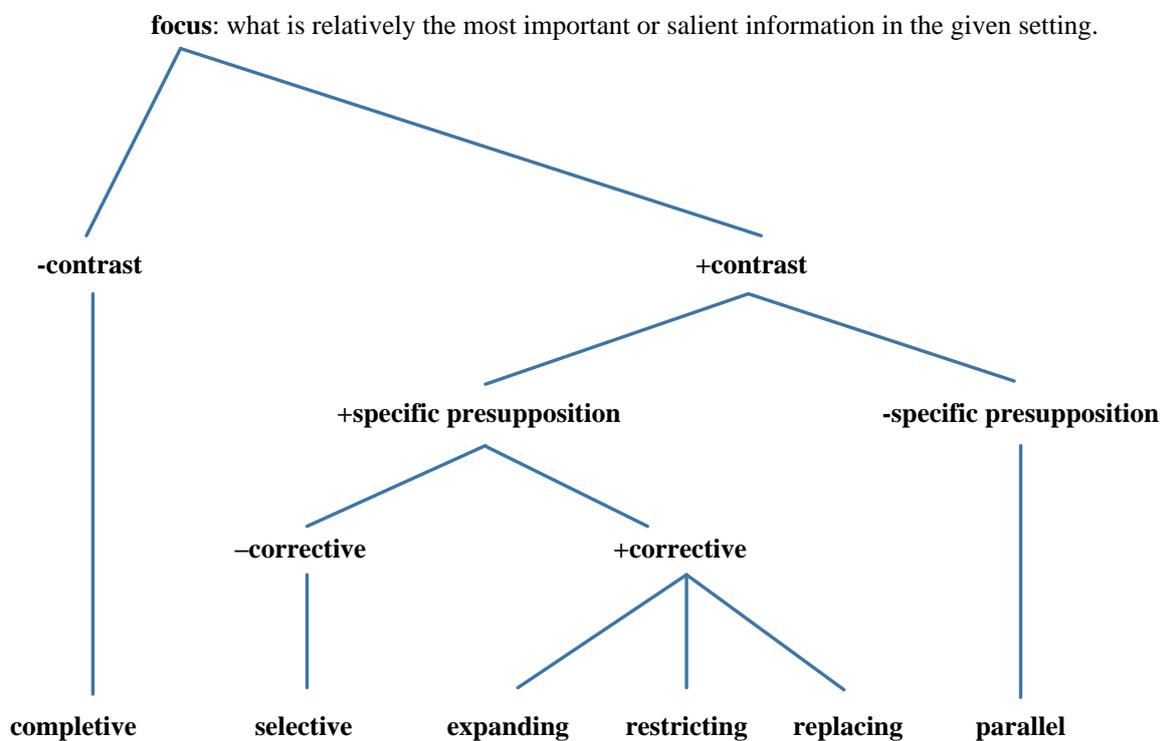


Figure 2. *Dik et al.*'s structure of focus function (“+” and “-” mean plausible/implausible)

#### 2.3.4 Amfo's Analysis of Akan Focus Markers

As mentioned earlier in chapter 1, Amfo (2010) is the most detailed work on focus markers among the Kwa languages to the best of my knowledge. She works on Akan which is a closely related language to Dangme and they both belong to the Kwa group of languages. She investigates lexical items used in focus and topic marking in Akan, categorizing them by function with the framework in Dik et al. (1981) and enriching the categorization in Dik et al.



‘He didn’t tell even his friend Ato.’

Example 30 above means that among those who were not informed, Ato was the closest to the subject noun and at least should be informed. This kind of focus of comparing/scaling the focus constituent with others is what Amfo refers to as *scalar focus*.

Amfo (2010) also categorizes the function attributed to focused constituents by the lexical markers into two. She implies that when a focused constituent is attributed with the function of completive, selective, restricting, replacing, adding, or scaling, it is either other elements could have same feature in the predication as the focus constituent or no element could have this feature, except the focus constituent. It is on this ground that she categorizes the functions attributed to the focus constituents as either being *exclusive* or *inclusive*.

Amfo (2010:201) opines that the Akan focus marker *na* marks focus constituents. The focus constituents modified by *na* can function as completive focus, selective focus, replacing focus and restricting focus and Amfo (2010:201) implies that *na* is an *exclusive focus marker* as mention in Boadi (1974:7). In my view, Amfo (2010:201) suggests that focus constituents which function as completive focus, selective focus, replacing focus and restricting focus are all exclusive focus. Similarly Amfo (2010:201) also argues that the restricting focus markers *ara* and *nko* in the examples below are also expressing exclusive focus.

- 31) Àbèrèwá nó ká kyèrè-è nò sé, ònó dé,  
 Old.lady DEF say show-COMPL her COMP, she CTM,  
 fùfú **ńkó** né àdùàń á o-di.  
 fufu only COP food REL she-eat  
 ‘The Old lady told her that, so far as she is concerned, fufu is the  
 only food she eats.’

- 32) Dèm ństí Màmé Máńsá **ára** nà Àkyèrè  
 DEM because Maame Mansa just FM Akyerè  
 nyím nó.  
 know her  
 ‘Because of that, it is only Maame Mansa that Akyerè knows.’

Amfo (2010:202) suggests that *nso* and *mpo* (even), which attribute the function of addition and scaling to the focus constituent under their scope are inclusive focus markers. Hence, additive focus and scalar focus denote inclusive focus categories.

Below is a summary of the categories, functions and lexical focus markers in Akan discuss by Amfo (2010):

Table 3. *Categories and Functions of Akan Lexical Focus Markers*

CATEGORIES	FUNCTIONS	FOCUS MARKER
Exclusive focus	Completive, Selective, Replacing, Restricting	Na
	Restricting	Nko, Ara
Inclusive focus	Addition	Nso
	Scaling	Mpo

Just as Amfo (2010) categorizes the focus markers in Akan based on functions, I will be guided by her categories and functions together with what Dik et al. (1981) explicated to discuss the focus markers in Dangme in the upcoming sections.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. LEXICAL MARKING OF INFORMATION STRUCTURE IN DANGME

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the sections below, I try to investigate each of the Dangme lexical items *nɛ*, *po*, *hu*, *nitse*, *pɛ* and *lɛ* and whether these can mark topic, focus or both. I also investigate the type of phrase which can be under the scope of each of these words and the pragmatic meanings they contribute in context, as suggested by Dik et al. (1981) and Amfo (2010).

#### 3.2 The Particle “Nɛ”

The particles *nɛ* and *lɛ* are variants of the same word and are used interchangeably by some Dangme speakers. Whilst *nɛ* is the most commonly used and widely accepted as well as the one used in the standardized Dangme orthography, *lɛ* dominates among the Ada dialect of the Dangme language. It is important to note that the written form *nɛ* could have different meanings and syntactic functions based on the tone it carries. This is so since Dangme, like other Kwa languages is tonal. I therefore want to mention that the *nɛ* used in this chapter and the thesis as a whole has a low tone.

Let us take a look at some examples containing the particle *nɛ* and compare them with an example which does not contain *nɛ*.

*Mɛɔ ju sika a?*

*Who stole the money?*

33) Nyumu    ɔ    ju    sika    a.  
Man        the    steal    money    the  
The man stole the money.

34) Nyumu    ɔ        *nɛ*    ju    sika    a.  
Man        the        PRT    steal    money    the  
It was the man that stole the money.

- 35) #Sika a nɛ nyumu ɔ ju.  
 Money the PRT man the steal  
 It was the money that the man stole.

In example 33, there is no *nɛ* but context suggests that *nyumu ɔ* (the man) is the focus of the utterance and *sika a* (the money) belongs to the topic constituent. This is because according to Gundel and Fretheim (2004), the new information in relation to the question asked is the focus, and in this case the question is *Who stole the money*. Also according to Dik et al. (1981), *nyumu ɔ* is the focus constituent, since this is the most salient information provided by the respondent. *Ju sika a* (stole the money), on the other hand, is what the sentence is about hence the topic constituent. Similarly, in example 34, *nyumu ɔ* (the man) is still the new information suggested by the context hence the focus constituent of utterance 34 and *ju sika a* is what the sentence is about hence the topic constituent of the sentence. The focus of utterance 34, which is the subject *nyumu ɔ* is compatible with the particle *nɛ* at the right of the noun phrase in this context. This suggests that *nɛ* may be a focus marker.

Considering example 35, when *nɛ* modifies the object *sika a* (the money) instead of the subject *nyumu ɔ* (the man), the object has to move to sentence initial position. This is because syntactically the particle *nɛ* cannot modify a phrase in sentence final position as example 36 below illustrates. Though example 35 is grammatically well formed, it cannot be used in answering the question *Who stole the money?* because the word order and the presence of *nɛ* is not pragmatically acceptable in this context. This inappropriateness is because the topic-focus structure of the context expects *nyumu ɔ* (the man) to be the focus of the utterance. But in example 35, the presence of *nɛ* suggests that *sika a* (the money) is the focus. This incompatibility occurs both on an account of focus as relationally new information and an account of focus as the salient information with regard to the setting.

It is also relevant to note that the use of the particle *nɛ* in example 34 suggests that the focus constituent *nyumu ɔ* (the man) fills the gap in the information structure thereby functioning as a *completive focus marker*. Again, *nɛ* in example 34 distinguishes example 34 from example 33 in the sense that *nɛ* implies that *nyumu ɔ* is the only response that will make the utterance true and that the gap left in the information structure could only be filled with *nyumu ɔ* and not by any other alternative. This makes *nɛ* a *selective and restricting marker* as Amfo (2010:201) claims for the Akan *na*.

Next, take a look at example 36 and 37 below. Here, a different question is asked, which raises different expectations with respect to the information structure of the answer.

*Meni nyumu ɔ ju?*

*What has the man stolen?*

36) \*Nyumu ɔ ju sika a nɛ.  
Man the steal money the PRT

37) Sika a nɛ nyumu ɔ ju.  
Money the PRT man the steal  
It was the money that the man stole.

Considering the context of examples 36 and 37, the new and most salient information in relation to the context/setting is the object *sika a* (the money). *Sika a* is therefore the focus constituent with the object *nyumu ɔ* (the man) belonging to the topic constituent. In example 36, the sentence is ungrammatical, that is, it has no place in the Dangme language. The problem with the utterance is that the particle *nɛ* is not compatible with the object *sika a* in sentence final position though it is located to the right of the object. This does not mean that there is the possibility of getting a grammatically correct sentence should the particle be relocated to the left of the object. The only way to make the sentence grammatical is to either delete *nɛ* or swap the syntactic position of the subject and the object. Similar constituent movement in languages such as English and Spanish is what Ward and Birner (2004) and Arregi (2003) respectively refer to as topicalization, in which the preposed constituent represents the topic of the utterance. In Dangme, however, where the preposed constituent is modified by *nɛ*, the same word order imposes a different information structure (focus before topic), more similar to clefting in English (see Ward and Birner, 2004 and Arregi, 2003). We can see this in example 37, which answers the question *What has the man stolen?* Here, the new information in the answer is represented by the object *sika a* (the money). This is thus the focus of the utterance. Again we see that the particle *nɛ* modifies a nominal phrase which is placed in sentence initial position and represents the focus of the utterance.

Furthermore, let's take a look at the example below testing the compatibility of *nɛ* with verbs. In this case, the question concerns what the man has done to the money.

*Meni nyumu ɔ pee sika a?*

*What did the man do to the money?*

38) \*Nyumu ɔ ju nɛ sika a.  
Man the steal PRT money the

39) Nyumu ɔ ju sika a.  
Man the steal money the

The man stole the money.

In example 38 and 39 above, the context suggests that the interpretation of the verb *ju* (steal) is the focus of both utterances. The word order of example 38 is wrong because *nɛ* is not compatible with the verb *ju* and for that matter cannot modify it. The sentence is therefore ungrammatical and has no place in the Dangme language. It cannot be considered in any sense as an answer to the question *What did the man do to the money?* Example 39 is a correct answer to the question *What did the man do?*. Unlike other particles which can modify a verb phrase, *nɛ* can modify neither simple verbs nor verb phrases in Dangme. It has also been realized using earlier examples such as examples 36 and 37 that there is no instance where the particle *nɛ* will modify the verb and the object when they precede each other. \**Nyumu ɔ ju sika a nɛ* is thus ungrammatical, and consequently cannot be used as a response to *What has the man done?*

Let us consider the sentence below in which there are two occurrences of *nɛ*.

40) Nyumu ɔ nɛ ju sika a nɛ.  
Man the PRT steal money the PRT

It was the man who stole the money.

Example 40 can only answer the question in 33 i.e. *Who stole the money?* The reason is that the first *nɛ* which modifies the subject *nyumu ɔ* (the man) suggests that the focus of example 40 is the subject which agrees with the expectation of the topic-focus structure compatible with the question *Who stole the money?* Hence it will only be appropriate in answering the question in 33. The new information is therefore *nyumu ɔ* (the man) and it is compatible with the first particle *nɛ*. The second particle *nɛ* does not modify the object and cannot pick its own focus as it may seem. Amfo (2010:200) claims that Akan *no*, in a similar linguistic environment is a resumptive pronoun which refers to the subject. In my opinion, the second

particle *nε* in the Dangme utterance as example 40 illustrates, takes scope over the whole utterance. Semantically, it suggests that the topic of discussion is already in focus to the participants in the discussion. It should be mentioned that considering the question in 33 above, *sika a* is a topic constituent in example 40 and that the particle *nε* does not encode that *sika a* is in contrast with some other things which may be stolen as the case may be in some languages.

Now, let's take a look at the example below taking note of the positioning of *nε*.

- 41)        Sika        a        *lεε*    nyumu    ɔ        *nε*        ju'ε.  
              Money      the      PRT     man      the      PRT      steal-it  
              For the money, the man is the one who stole it.

Example 41 above is a correct answer to the question *Who stole the money?* where the interlocutor intends to inform the speaker that other things were also stolen by other people. The topic constituent *sika a* (the money) is modified by a particle *lεε*. For this analysis let's restrict ourselves to the position of *nε* and reserve the meaning of the utterance and the compatibility of the topic constituent *sika a* and the particle *lεε* for later discussion. *Nε* in example 41 above modifies the subject *nyumu ɔ* (the man) which is the focus constituent of the utterance. It modifies a constituent located in sentence mid position and selects the referent from a larger domain as the only one who stole the money. *Nε* does this, i.e. modifies constituents in sentence mid position, only when the topic is marked as in the case above.

Before we conclude, let's look at example 42 below where *nε* functions as a replacing focus marker.

- 42)        A:        Afi        je        kpo.  
              Afi        go        out.  
              Afi went out.  
              B:        Ohoo,    Kukua    *nε*        je        kpo.  
              No,        Kukua    PRT      go        out.  
              No, it was Kukua who went out.

In example 42 above, speaker A sees someone going out and thinks it is Afi so when he is asked who went out he responds that Afi went out. Speaker B knowing very well it is not Afi, objects and says No, it was Kukua who went out. In this case, speaker B substitutes one of the constituents in A's assertion with the constituent that he believes is correct. This process of substituting is what Dik et al. (1981) refer to as *replacing focus* in information structure. Though speaker B can say that Kukua went out without using the particle *nɛ*, he/she would not be correcting or replacing the wrong constituent if doing so. This illustrates that *nɛ* can function as a marker of replacing focus, and furthermore that replacing focus cannot be expressed in Dangme without the use of this marker.

In conclusion, the particle *nɛ* only marks noun phrases, be it object or subject noun phrase. Though *nɛ* may have scope over object noun phrases, it does that only when the object is in sentence initial position or sentence mid position. The particle *nɛ* only appears immediately to the right of a noun phrase. It can modify either subjects or fronted objects.

It is clear in all the examples above that the *nɛ* modified constituent fills the linguistic gap provided in the context provided by the question. It is for this reason that I conclude that *nɛ* functions as a *completive focus marker*. Apart from the function of *nɛ* as a completive marker, it can be inferred from the examples that *nɛ* can also be used in cases of *selective, restricting and replacing focus*, just as Amfo (2010) claims for the Akan *na*. *Nɛ* selects the constituent it has scope over from a large domain of possible candidates providing it as important information necessary to complete or satisfy the demands of the context and the speaker. It is for this reason that *nɛ* can be referred to as a marker of information focus. More often than not, it contrasts the constituent under its scope with other candidates in the larger domain. I disagree with Dik et al. (1981) on their opinion that completive focus is not compatible with contrast since the Dangme examples we have seen so far proves otherwise. For example, in example 34, the man is the only one who stole money and no one else while example 37 means that the man stole money and nothing else. Though *nɛ* in 34 is completive, it is compatible with contrastive focus as well in the sense that it indicates that its constituent is the only constituent that makes the proposition correct. *Nɛ* as mentioned earlier, possesses the selective feature and the exclusive feature which are not present without *nɛ*. Therefore, though example 33 above (without *nɛ*) can be used as an answer to the question which is specified in 33, and the focus could be realised or inferred as the man, the man has not been contrasted as it is the case in example 34. Example 33 therefore means that there are or may

be other people as well within the possibly larger domain from which the man was located who may also have stolen the money. In example 34 on the other hand, *nɛ* has made it strictly exclusive that no one except the man stole the money.

To sum up, we have seen syntactic evidence which suggests that:

- i. *Nɛ* only modifies noun phrases.
- ii. *Nɛ* is located at the immediate right of the constituent it modifies.
- iii. *Nɛ* modifies an object if and only if the object is fronted.
- iv. *Nɛ* modifies a subject if and only if the subject occurs in sentence initial position or sentence mid position.
- v. *Nɛ* modifies a focus constituent in sentence mid position only when the topic of the utterance is a fronted object and the topic is modified by another particle.

Semantically, we also have reason to conclude that:

- i. *Nɛ* is a marker of information focus as opposed to topic.
- ii. More specifically, *nɛ* is an exclusive focus marker
- iii. *Nɛ* is compatible with *completive, selective, restricting and replacing focus* as well as *contrast*.

### 3.3 The Particle “Po”

Now let’s take a look at some examples in which the particle *po* is present comparing them with examples without *po*.

*Mɛnɔ gbe lo?*  
*Who killed fish?*

43) Manyadalo      ɔ      gbe      lo.  
 President      the      kill      fish  
 The president killed fish.

44) Manyadalo      ɔ      *po*      gbe      lo.  
 President      the      PRT      kill      fish

Even the president killed fish.

- 45) #Manyadalɔ ɔ gbe lo po.  
President the kill fish PRT  
The president even killed fish.

In examples 43, 44 and 45 above, *manyadalɔ ɔ* (the president) is the focus constituent because it is the new information with regard to the topic-focus structure imposed by the question *Who killed fish?* *Gbe lo* (kill fish) is the topic constituent since that is what the statements are about. Both example 43 and 44 are possible responses to the question *Who killed fish?* However, example 44 contains the particle *po* whilst example 43 does not. *Po* modifies the focus constituent of the utterance *manyadalɔ ɔ* which is the subject of the statement. In example 45, *po* modifies the verb phrase *gbe lo* which is the topic constituent in the given context. It is interesting to note that even though example 45 is grammatically well formed, it cannot be used as a response to the question *Who killed fish?* above. The utterance could, however, be used as a response to other questions, as illustrated in 46 and 47 below.

*Meni manyadalɔ ɔ gbe?*

*What has the president killed?*

- 46) Manyadalɔ ɔ gbe lo po.  
President the kill fish PRT  
The president even killed fish.

*Meni manyadalɔ ɔ pee?*

*What has the president done?*

- 47) Manyadalɔ ɔ gbe lo po.  
President the kill fish FM  
The president even killed fish.

Utterances 46 is an accurate response to the question *What has the president killed?* Considering the context of example 46 again, the focus constituent of the utterances is *lo* (fish) and the topic constituent is *manyadalɔ ɔ gbe* (the president killed). Unlike in example 47 where *po* has scope over both the verb and the object (i.e. the verb phrase) *gbe lo* (kill

fish), the question of example 46 strictly restricts the scope of *po* to take scope over only the focus constituent which is *lo* (fish). Also, example 47 which is the same as the utterance in 45 is now pragmatically acceptable considering the context and the question *What has the president done?* This inappropriateness of the statement in example 45 and the appropriateness of the same utterance in example 47 in answering questions of different discourse context affirm Gundel and Fretheim's (2004) opinion that topic and focus are pragmatically relevant categories, with clear pragmatic effects. In summary, the examples in 46 and 47 show that *po* can modify noun phrases and verb phrases and that it (in contrast to *ne*) can appear in sentence final position, modifying a non-fronted nominal phrase acting as an object. We have also seen that it modifies focus constituents rather than topic constituents.

One question that comes to mind is whether the particle *po* could also appear at the immediate right position of a verb taking scope over only the verb. Let us see what happens in the following examples:

*Meni manyadalɔ ɔ pee lo ɔ?*  
*What has the president done to the fish?*

48) Manyadalɔ      ɔ      gbe      lo      ɔ      *po*.  
 President      the      kill      fish      the      FM  
 The president even killed the fish.

49) \*Manyadalɔ      ɔ      gbe      *po*      lo      ɔ.  
 President      the      kill      FM      fish      the

In examples 48 and 49, the focus constituent as by the context is *gbe* (kill) and *manyadalɔ ɔ* (the president) is part of the topic. *Po* in 48 has scope only over the verb though the object occurs in between the verb and the particle *po*. However, in example 49, *po* is not syntactically compatible with the verb rendering the utterance grammatically ill-formed. This therefore suggests that *po* can modify the verb phrase syntactically but it may take just the verb as its semantic scope as in example 48, as well as the whole verb phrase as illustrated in 47 earlier. Example 49 on the other hand suggests that *po* cannot be placed to the immediate right of the verb.

Let's assume we have a question like *What did the president do?*, and the interlocutor responds with *manyadalɔ ɔ do po* meaning *the president even danced*. The focus of this

utterance is the content of the verb phrase, i.e. the fact that the president danced. In this case, *po* has scope over the verb *do* (dance) and it occurs at the immediate right of the verb as in the case of noun phrases. This is not the case in example 49 where the verb is transitive.

Considering the examples we have seen so far, *po* cannot modify topics. This is illustrated in example 45. This implies that *po* is a focus marker equivalent to the English *even* and Akan *mpo* as mentioned in Amfo (2010). The particle *po* does not only mark the focus of the utterance but also enriches the meaning of the expression. It suggests that the constituent it takes scope over is the least expected among entities placed on a presupposed “scale”. It is for this reason that I claim that *po* in Dangme is a *scalar focus marker*, just as *mpo* in Akan according to Amfo (2010). As demonstrated earlier, the focus in both examples 43 and 44 is the president considering the question *Who killed fish?* What *po* enriches the utterance in 44 with is the fact that by virtue of social status, the president would normally be expected to lack the skills to kill fish. This is so since people hold the notion that killing fish is a skill that only people living at the countryside possess and a person of social status such as a president does not normally involve in countryside activities like fishing. Thus on a scale ranging from people most expected to kill fish to those least expected to kill fish, it is less expected and more surprising that the president killed fish than if any other person did so. This information is not present in example 43 without *po*, whereas it is communicated in 44 with *po*. Similarly, in the sentence *manyadalɔ ɔ do po* meaning *the president even danced*, the focus marker *po* suggests that the president by his/her social status is the least expected to dance on a public platform. When he/she does, it is surprising. In fact, if it happens, it would lead to headlines in the newspapers and social media.

To summarise, it is clear that *po* has the following syntactic properties:

- i. *Po* modifies noun phrases and verb phrases as well as verbs.
- ii. It can modify constituents located in sentence initial position and sentence final position.
- iii. It occurs to the right of the constituent it modifies except for the fact that it occurs to the right of a verb phrase (i.e. after the object as well as the verb) also when it semantically modifies the verb.

Semantically, *po* has the following properties:

- i. *Po* is a marker of information focus as opposed to topic
- ii. It is a scalar focus marker.

### 3.4 The Particle “Hu”

In this section, we look at the particle *hu*. Again, the function of *hu* is investigated by testing utterances with *hu* as answers to different kinds of questions. In the following question-answer pairs, *hu* modifies relationally new information functioning as objects.

*Menɔmɛ ba sukuu ɔ?*

*Which people came to the school?*

50) Matɛ ɔ ba sukuu ɔ.  
 Chief the come school the  
 The chief came to the school.

51) Matɛ ɔ *hu* ba sukuu ɔ.  
 Chief the PRT come school the  
 The chief also came to the school.

Both sentences 50 and 51 are good responses to the question *Which people came to the school?* This means that *hu* can modify focus constituents. The difference between 50 and 51 is that example 51 communicates more information than 50. In example 50, the interlocutor has not informed the speaker whether the chief is the only one who went to the school or whether other people were there too. Example 51 with *hu*, on the other hand, conveys the information that though the chief was at the school, other people were there too. In other words, it can be said that what the particle *hu* contributes to the sentence is to mark a certain piece of information as expanding an already given set or add to it. In both responses in 50 and 51, there is the same new information which is the focus i.e. the subject noun phrase *matɛ ɔ*, but in 51 the speaker makes it clear that this person is only one out of several persons who were at the school.

Next, let us consider the compatibility of the same particle *hu* with already given information, as in the examples below;

*Jeme ne matse ɔ slaa?*

*Which places did the chief visit?*

- 52) Matse ɔ slaa sukuu ɔ hu.  
Chief the visited school the PRT  
The chief visited the school as well.

- 53) #Matse ɔ hu slaa sukuu ɔ.  
Chief the PRT visited school the  
Also the chief visited the school.

In example 52 and 53, by virtue of the expectation of the topic-focus structure imposed by the question, the focus constituent of both sentences is *sukuu ɔ* (the school). The utterance in 52, in which *hu* modifies *sukuu ɔ*, is an appropriate follow-up response to the question *Which places has the chief visited?* This is because, by virtue of the use of *hu*, it presupposes that it has earlier been mentioned that the chief visited one or many other places already. The particle *hu* is semantically and pragmatically compatible with information focus. By comparison, example 53, in which *hu* occurs to the right of a topic constituent *matse ɔ* (the chief), is not a good response to the question *Which places has the chief visited?* Example 53 is grammatically well formed but pragmatically unacceptable. This supports the above conclusion that *hu* is a focus marker.

Now, let us take a look at an example where *hu* modifies the verb or the verb phrase.

*Menihi matse ɔ pee?*

*What things did the chief do?*

- 54) Matse ɔ la nge sukuu ɔ hu.  
Chief the sing at school the PRT  
The chief sang at the school as well.

Considering example 54 and its context, *hu* has scope over the verb *la* (sing) which as a result of the topic-focus structure suggested by the question is the focus of the utterance. The focus can also (more likely) be the whole verb phrase, i.e. the verb plus the phrase *nge sukuu ɔ* (in the school). It is interesting to note that the particle *hu* could take scope over the verb phrase *la nge sukuu ɔ* (sing at the school) as well as the verb alone.

Let's assume we have a question *Jemε matε ɔ la nge?* meaning *Where did the chief sing?* and the interlocutor responds *matε ɔ la nge tso ɔ sisi hu* meaning *the chief sung under the tree as well*. In this case, *the chief sung* will be the topic and *under the tree* will be the focus. The particle *hu* then takes scope over the relational noun phrase *under the tree* which is the focus of the utterance. The utterance is a good response to the question considering that the chief sung at many places which the interlocutor is not ready to mention explicitly; he only wants to mention one but important place which is *under the tree*.

To summarise, the particle *hu* can only be used to modify focus and not topic as evident in example 53 above. It is for this reason that I consider *hu* as a focus marker. *Hu* is an *additive focus marker* just as Amfo (2010) claims for Akan *nso*. Dik et al. (1981) refer to this function (illustrated by the additive focus marker) as *expanding focus*. This means that other constituents could share the features and roles of the constituent marked by *hu*. It is for this reason that I describe *hu* as an inclusive additive focus marker. Point a) and b) below summarise the syntactic and semantic properties of *hu*.

a) *Syntactic properties of hu:*

- i. *Hu* modifies noun phrases and verb phrases as well as verbs.
- ii. It modifies constituents in sentence initial position and sentence final position as well.
- iii. *Hu* occurs to the right of the constituent it modifies except for the fact that it occurs to the right of a verb phrase (i.e. after the object as well as the verb) also when it semantically modifies the verb.

b) *Semantic properties of hu:*

- i. *Hu* is an information focus marker but not a topic marker.
- ii. It is an additive/expanding focus marker.

### 3.5 The Particle “Nitse”

The examples below concern the particle *nitse*. Like, *ne*, *po*, and *hu*, *nitse* is a particle which only modifies focus constituents. This is illustrated below:

*Menɔ ta Kwesi de mi?*

*Who gave Kwesi a handshake?*

- 55) Manyadalɔ ɔ ta Kwesi de mi.  
President the shake Kwesi palm inside  
The president gave Kwesi a hand shake.

- 56) Manyadalɔ ɔ *nitse* ta Kwesi de mi.  
President the PRT shake Kwesi palm inside  
The president himself gave Kwesi a handshake.

In example 55 and 56, the new information is *manyadalɔ ɔ* (the president) which is consequently the focus constituent of both utterances and *ta Kwesi de mi* (gave Kwesi a handshake) is what the two sentences are about, hence the topic constituent. The two utterances, 55 and 56 are good responses to the question. The difference is that example 56 contains the particle *nitse* which takes scope over and modifies the noun phrase *manyadalɔ ɔ* (the president). *Nitse* is very compatible with the focus of the utterance. It enriches the focus with other features which could not be attributed to the meaning of *manyadalɔ ɔ* in 55. Sentence 56 is used to communicate that the president is someone with social prestige, hence Kwesi has really been honoured to have received a handshake from no less a person than the president. *Nitse* enriches the noun phrase *manyadalɔ ɔ* with a status above any other person who possibly shook people including Kwesi, for example at a ceremony such as a university congregation.

In the next example, *nitse* modifies the object. Also in this case, it attributes a social status to the referent of the constituent it modifies.

*Menɔ de mi manyadalɔ ɔ ta?*

*Who did the president shake?*

- 57) Manyadalɔ ɔ ta Kwesi *nitse* de mi.  
President the shake Kwesi PRT palm inside  
The president gave Kwesi himself a handshake.

- 58) #Manyadalɔ ɔ *nitse* ta Kwesi de mi.  
President the PRT shake Kwesi palm inside

The president himself gave Kwesi a handshake.

In example 57 and 58, the new information is Kwesi, hence Kwesi is the focus constituent of the utterances and *manyadalɔ ɔ ta* (the president shook) belongs to the topic constituent due to the context. The particle *nitse* takes scope over and modifies the focus constituent *Kwesi* in 57 and they are compatible with each other with regard to the expectation of the topic-focus structure imposed by the question. Hence utterance 57 answers the question *Menɔ de mi manyadalɔ ɔ ta* meaning *Who did the president shake?* The particle *nitse* indicates a special social status for the entity it modifies. For instance in 57, it can be interpreted to mean that Kwesi is a leader of a team or that Kwesi is the one around which a ceremony revolves and for that matter carries more attention than anyone else. Unlike example 57, the particle *nitse* in example 58 takes scope over the subject *manyadalɔ ɔ* (the president) which belongs to the topic in this context, as mentioned earlier. The topic constituent *manyadalɔ ɔ* is not compatible with the particle *nitse* in the context above. This suggests that *nitse* is a focus marker.

Now, in example 59 below, *nitse* evokes a relationship between the constituent it modifies and other constituents;

*Menɔ julɔ ɔ ju?*

*Whom has the thief stolen from?*

- 59) Julɔ ɔ ju Kofi *nitse*.  
Thief the steal Kofi PRT  
The thief stole from Kofi himself.

In 59 above, *Kofi* is a new information, hence it is the focus constituent and *julɔ ɔ ju* (the thief stole) is the topic constituent. The particle *nitse* takes scope over and modifies the object which is the focus. *Nitse* is compatible with the focus constituent and the utterance answers the question *Whom has the thief stolen from?* *Nitse* influences the interpretation of the utterance in 59 to mean for instance that Kofi is in a family relation to the thief, a friend or someone who defends the thief.

In summary, *nitse* enriches the constituent it modifies with some level of social dignity, possession or relational tie in some cases, in addition to restricting the interpretation to focus information. For instance, example 56 is interpreted to mean that the president is a

person regarded as someone who has the highest social status or dignity among other people who may be shaking *Kwesi*, and the president constitutes new information and thus the focus domain. In example 57, *nitse* takes scope over the focus constituent *Kwesi*. A possible context for this use of *nitse* is that Kwesi, by virtue of winning an award possesses honour on this occasion. Example 59 could mean that Kofi is a family member, or friend to the thief or possibly Kofi is always at the defence of the thief. The syntactic role of *nitse* is limited to taking scope over nominal phrases. This means that when the focus of an utterance is a verb, *nitse* cannot modify it. It can take scope over constituents located in sentence initial and final position in simple sentences. It appears at the immediate right of the constituent it modifies. Also, it should be noted that *nitse* apart from being an information focus marker could also be compatible with contrast. For instance, in example 56, *The president himself gave Kwesi a handshake* could be interpreted to mean:

1. The president but not the ministers gave Kwesi a handshake.
2. The ministers and the president as well gave Kwesi a handshake.

If the interpretation in 1 is the case, then *nitse* is an information focus marker which also evokes contrast. The interpretation in 1 also suggests that *nitse* is a *selective* and *restricting* focus marker in the sense that *nitse* selects the president as the only response that makes the proposition true and that it is the one with the highest social status. On the other hand, the interpretation in 2 gives the impression that *nitse* could not be absolutely restrictive and that other particles must be employed to make it so. This absolute restrictiveness with the help of other particles will be discussed later in this chapter.

Let's assume we have a question such as *Kwesi je manyadalɔ ɔ ta?* meaning "Which part of Kwesi has the president touched?" and the interlocutor responds *Manyadalɔ ɔ ta Kwesi de mi nitse* which means "the president touched Kwesi's palm". Due to the preceding question, the focus of this utterance lies in the phrase *de mi* (the palm). The topic constituent of the utterance is *manyadalɔ ɔ ta Kwesi* (the president touched Kwesi). The particle *nitse* takes scope and modifies *de mi* alone in the utterance. The focus of the utterance and *nitse* are very compatible in answering the question under consideration. Just as mentioned in example 57 where Kwesi was the centre of attraction of an occasion, the phrase *de mi* is what the interlocutor decides to bring to attention and he did this by modifying it with the marker *nitse*. In my opinion, *nitse* shares same functions and features of the Akan restrictive focus marker *nko* as this is presented by Amfo (2010). *Nitse*, similar to Akan *nko*, takes scope over

constituents in a clause and phrases but not clauses as a whole. It should be noted that while both *nitse* and *po* ascribe a status to a referent, *po* is a scalar marker whereas *nitse* is a selective marker.

In conclusion, we have seen that syntactically:

- i. *Nitse* modifies noun phrases.
- ii. It takes scope over constituents located at sentence initial position and sentence final position.
- iii. It occurs at the immediate right of the constituent it modifies.

In a semantic perspective, I conclude that:

- i. *Nitse* is an information focus marker as opposed to a topic marker.
- ii. *Nitse* is a selective focus marker which is compatible with contrast and to some extent restricting as well.
- iii. As in the case of *po*, *nitse* ascribes a status or relationship to the constituent under its scope.

### 3.6 The Particle “*Pe*”

The following examples investigate the use of the particle *pe* as topic marker, focus marker or both. In the examples below, imagine a context in which there was a contribution for a developmental project in a community. The financial secretary in rendering accounts to the people made the utterance below suggesting that money and other things were donated by various people and institutions:

*Menome ke sika a?*

*Who donated the money?*

- 60) Sukuu    ɔ        ke        sika    a.  
 School   the     donate   money   the.  
 The school donated the money.

- 61) Sukuu        ɔ        *pe*        ke        sika    a.

School the PRT donate money the.

The school alone donated the money.

62) #Sukuu ɔ ke sika a pɛ.

School the donate money the PRT

The school donated the money.

In example 60, 61 and 62, the new information in relation to the topic-focus structure suggested by the question is *sukuu ɔ* (the school) and the topic which is what the utterance is about is *sika a* (the money). The statements in 60 and 61 answer the question above but utterance 62 does not. One lexical difference among the utterances is that examples 61 and 62 contain the particle *pɛ* while 60 does not. *pɛ* in 61 modifies the subject *sukuu ɔ* which is the focus constituent while *pɛ* in 62 modifies the object *sika a*, a topic constituent of the utterance. The focus constituent *sukuu ɔ* (the school) is very compatible with *pɛ* in answering the question *Who donated the money?* On the other hand, the topic constituent *sika a* (the money) is not compatible with the particle (*pɛ*) in this context. It is for this reason that no speaker of Dangme will utter example 62 as a response to the question above since it does not answer the question. The sentence in example 62 is grammatically correct but pragmatically ill-formed. In addition to restricting the entity in its scope to being a focus material, *pɛ* contributes some additional meaning such as a restrictive function.

Example 63 shows that *pɛ* can modify objects as well. Notice that differently from *nɛ*, the object doesn't have to be fronted when modified by this focus particle. For the utterance in 63 below, imagine a context in which various things were donated by various charity contributors, i.e. other things were donated by others apart from what the school donated.

*Menihi sukuu ɔ ke?*

*What things has the school donated?*

63) Sukuu ɔ ke sika pɛ.

School the donate money PRT

The school donated only money.

The new information according to the context is *sika* (money) which is the object and the focus constituent of the utterance. By virtue of relational givenness and aboutness, *sukuu ɔ ke*

(the school donated) is the topic constituent of example 63. *Pε* modifies the object *sika* and it is compatible with *sika* whose interpretation is the focus in example 63. With this compatibility between the focus and the particle *pε*, the utterance in 63 answers the question *What things has the school donated?*

*Pε* in the utterance below modifies a verb:

*Mɛni e pee?*

*What has she done?*

- 64)        E            la            *pε*.  
               She     sing        PRT  
               She only sang.

In the utterance in example 64, the new information in relation to the context is *la* (sing) hence this is the focus constituent. What the sentence is about is the referent of the pronoun *E* (she), which is thus the topic constituent. *Pε* in this environment is compatible with the focus and modifies it as well, consequentially rendering the utterance as an answer to the question *What has she done?* The particle selects *la* (sing) from other things and also contrasts the focus constituent *la* with other things that the subject referent could possibly do. I therefore claim that *pε* is a selective focus marker

*Pε* implies continuity in example 65 and simultaneity in example 66 just as Amfo (2010) proposes for *ara* in Akan.

- 65)        Kojo bɛɛ    tsu    ɔ    mi    ta    *pε*    nɛ    e    je    ni    hoomi    sisi.  
               Kojo sweep room the inside finish PRT and he start food cooking begin  
               As soon as Kojo finished sweeping the room he started cooking.
- 66)        Otuko    je        sukuu    kɛ    ba    *pε*    nɛ    Kabu    hɛli.  
               Otuko from school to come FM and Kabu collapse.  
               As soon as Otuko came from school Kabu collapsed.

Though examples 65 and 66 have similar English translation, the interpretation of the original utterances in Dangme suggests that in example 65 above, Kojo finished sweeping the room and then he started cooking. In the case of 66, the arrival of Otuko and the collapse of Kabu

coincided. In both utterances, the marker *pe* modifies the whole clause that appears to its left and not the closest constituent as in the case of other particles discussed earlier.

In conclusion, when we take note of the particle *pe* as demonstrated in examples 61 and 62, and examples 63 and 64, we have reason to conclude that *pe* is a *focus marker* but not a *topic marker*. The focus marker *pe* is interpreted to mean that whatever feature or attribute the focus constituent has, has been selected and restricted to the focus constituent only and not to any other candidate within the larger domain as in the case of *ne*. For instance in example 61, the focus marker *pe* indicates that it is “the school and only the school” that gave the money. This information is not part of the meaning to be interpreted in example 60 where the focus marker is absent. In example 63, the focus marker indicates that it is “money and solely money” that the school donated. Also in 64, the focus marker indicates that the subject sung and did nothing more. The statements below sum up the insights of this section: Syntactically, *pe* has the following properties:

- i. *Pe* modifies noun phrases, verbs, verb phrases as well as whole clauses.
- ii. It modifies constituents at sentence initial position and sentence final position but could modify a constituent in sentence mid position in complex and compound sentences.
- iii. *Pe* is located at the immediate right of the constituent or clause it modifies.

The semantic role of the particle is the following:

- i. *Pe* is an information focus marker and not a topic marker.
- ii. It functions as a selective and a restricting focus marker.
- iii. It can be used to communicate continuity and simultaneity.

### 3.7 The Particle “*Leε*”

With the examples below, I try to investigate whether *leε* is a topic marker, focus marker or a marker compatible with both topic and focus. Examples 67, 68 and 69 illustrate that *leε* marks focus.

*Menɔ o wa pe?*

*Who are you older than?*

- 67) I wa pe Afi.  
I old than Afi.  
I am older than Afi.
- 68) I wa pe Afi lεε. Kojo wa pe mi.  
I old than Afi PRT Kojo old than me  
For Afi, I am older than her. Kojo is older than me.
- 69) I wa pe Afi lεε.  
I old than Afi PRT  
For Afi, I am older than her.

In utterances 67, 68 and 69, the new information with regard to the context is *Afi* and the topic, which is what the utterance is about, is the content of *I wa pe* (I am older than X). Example 67 does not contain the particle *lεε* while 68 and 69 do. It should be noted that all the three responses from the interlocutor are appropriate answers to the question *Mεnc o wa pe?* (Who are you older than?). In 67, the interlocutor is not contrasting the focus with any other person but in example 68, the interlocutor contrasts the focus with *Kojo* and in 69 with other possible candidates. The particle *lεε* has scope over and modifies the object *Afi*, which is the focus constituent in utterance 68 and 69. Taking a critical look at example 68, *Kojo* is relationally new to the topic and per Gundel and Fretheim's (2004) definition, it is a focus constituent. Dik et al. (1981) also define focus in such a way that it follows that *Kojo* is a focus constituent. In line with Dik et al.'s (1981) categorizations, I will claim that there is furthermore a contrastive relationship between *Afi* and *Kojo*. It is also vital to note that the use of the particle *lεε* as used in example 69 presupposes that someone else is also older than me or has the same age as me. This reveals that it is the particle *lεε* which creates the effect of comparison and contrasts in 68 and not the second utterance.

Furthermore, let us take a look at example 70 and 71 where 71 expresses parallel focus.

*Kε o na Dede kεε?*

*What do you make of Dede?*

- 70) Dede jɔ se e juɔ.  
Dede calm but she steals

. Dede is calm but she steals.

- 71) Dede jɔ lɛɛ se e juɔ.  
Dede calm PRT but she steals  
Though Dede is calm, she steals.

In both utterances above, the content of Dede and the pronoun *e* (which is co-referential to Dede) is the topic of the utterance. Similarly, *jɔ* (calm) and *juɔ* (steals) are focus constituents of the utterance. Both sentences contrast two pieces of information i.e. *Dede jɔ* (Dede is calm) and *e juɔ* (she steals) within the same linguistic expression. It is this kind of focus in which two pieces of information are contrasted within the same linguistic expression that Dik et al. (1981) refer to as *parallel focus*. Both pieces of information in example 70 could be said to be the view of the respondent. However, example 71 means that the first piece of information *Dede jɔ* (Dede is calm), which is marked by the particle *lɛɛ*, is the view of the interrogator that the respondent consents to. The second piece of information *se e juɔ* (but she steals) is only the view of the respondent which he/she intends to contrast with the first piece of information. This use of *lɛɛ* could also be said to be compatible with parallel focus.

Let's take a look at example 72 below where *lɛɛ* modifies the topic constituent with regard to the context evoked by the question *Who are you older than?*

- 72) Imi lɛɛ I wa pe Afi.  
Me PRT I old than Afi  
For me, I am older than Afi.

In example 72, the topic-focus structure given by the question suggests that *Afi* is the focus constituent and the topic constituent is *Imi* (me) *lɛɛ* in 72 takes scope over and modifies the topic constituent *Imi* which is a left-dislocated phrase coreferential with the subject of the expression *I*. In other words, while *lɛɛ* modifies the focus constituent in example 68, 69 and 71, it modifies the topic in example 72.

The following example supports the previous established hypothesis that *lɛɛ* can modify topics.

*Meni a ye?*  
*What have they eaten?*

- 73)        Kofi     *lɛɛ*     e     ye     omɔ.  
              Kofi     PRT    he    eat    rice  
              For Kofi, he has eaten rice.

In the example above, the subject Kofi, is a topic constituent because it is the given information (a subset of ‘they’) and the content of *omɔ* (rice) is the focus since that is the new information. The particle *lɛɛ* modifies the topic constituent *Kofi* and this is very compatible with answering the question *Mɛni a ye?* (What have they eaten?). Just as in examples 68 and 69 above, the use of the particle *lɛɛ* in 73 contrasts Kofi with others who possibly belong to the larger domain referred to by the pronoun *they*.

So far, we have seen examples where *lɛɛ* modifies noun phrases. The examples in 74 and 75 show that *lɛɛ* can modify verbs as well. For these examples, imagine that the question concerns what Ama did at a party, and that Ama is known to do a lot of things, such as dance, sing, make friends etc. during parties.

*Mɛni Ama pee?*  
*What did Ama do?*

- 74)        Ama     do.  
              Ama     dance  
              Ama danced.
- 75)        Ama     do        *lɛɛ*.  
              Ama     danced    PRT  
              For dancing, Ama danced.

In both examples 74 and 75, the focus constituent is *do* (dance) and the topic constituent is *Ama*. Both utterances answer the question *What did Ama do?* The difference between 74 and 75 is that 75 contains *lɛɛ* while 74 does not. It is visible that *lɛɛ* modifies the verb *do*, selects and contrasting it with other activities such as *singing* that Ama could have done. In 74, the verb *do* is not contrasted with any other action. This supports the previously established hypothesis that the particle *lɛɛ* is contrastive.

Apart from modifying verbs, the particle *lɛɛ* can also modify verb phrases as illustrated in the utterance below. In this context, Dɛdo’s chores include sweeping, cooking, washing and many others.

*Dɛdo pee we mi ni ta lo?*

*Has Dɛdo finished her house chores?*

76) Ohoo! E hoo ni læ.

No! She cook food PRT

No, but she cooked some food.

In example 76 above, the topic-focus structure imposed by the context suggests that the focus of the utterance is the meaning of the verb phrase *hoo ni* (cooked food) and the topic is the content of pronoun *E* (she) which is coreferential with *Dɛdo*. *læ* takes scope over the verb phrase *hoo ni* which is the focus constituent of the utterance.

Furthermore, granting that example 76 is in response to the proposition *Dɛdo bæ ta*, which means *Dɛdo has finished with sweeping*, then the interlocutor introduces the particle *læ* to correct the proposition that she has not finished sweeping, however, she is done with cooking. In this instance, the interlocutor corrects the claim of the speaker and substitutes sweeping with cooking. *læ* in this case becomes a replacing marker as per Dik et al.'s (1981) categorization.

Finally, let us look at example 77, where *læ* takes scope over a clause. Imagine that the speaker made the utterance during an award night when he was caught applauding someone he dislikes.

77) I sume e sane læ se e bɔ mɔde.

I dislike his issues PRT but he perform great

Though I dislike him, he performed greatly.

Unlike earlier examples where *læ* only takes scope over the constituent next to it, *læ* in this example (example 77) takes scope over the whole proposition (clause) *I sume e sane* meaning *I dislike him* and contrasts it with *se e bɔ mɔde* (but he/she performed greatly).

To sum up, it is clear that *læ* can modify both the focus and the topic of an utterance as long as it contrasts the entity it modifies with other possible candidates. Thus, *læ* is a marker of contrast rather than a marker of information structure. It has also been observed that *læ* is compatible with modifying subjects and objects as well as verbs and verb phrases and sentences. Anytime it modifies a subject noun phrase, there is left-dislocation of the noun as evident in examples 71, 72 and 73. It is for this reason that I conclude that *læ* is a

*contrastive marker*. It modifies constituents at sentence initial position and sentence final position. More often than not, because of its contrastive nature, it is located within complex sentences.

In summary, *lɛɛ* has the following syntactic properties:

- i. *Lɛɛ* can modify nominal phrases, verbs, verbal phrases and also clauses.
- ii. It is located at the immediate right of the constituent it modifies.
- iii. *Lɛɛ* modifies a subject noun phrase if and only if the subject noun phrase is left dislocated.

The examples above also demonstrate that *lɛɛ* has the following semantic properties:

- i. *Lɛɛ* is compatible with both topic and information focus.
- ii. *Lɛɛ* is contrastive marker.
- iii. It is compatible with selective, parallel, replacing as well as restricting focus.

### 3.8 Using Two Particles in an Utterance

Now that the particles *nɛ*, *po*, *hu*, *nitɛ*, and *pɛ* have been proven to be focus markers and *lɛɛ* a contrastive marker, let's test the possibility of combining more than one marker in an utterance.

#### 3.8.1 'Nɛ' and 'lɛɛ'

In examples 78 and 79 below, the topic and the focus are modified by *lɛɛ* and *nɛ*, respectively. As we saw in the previous section, '*lɛɛ*' is a contrastive marker. As shown in section 3.2, '*nɛ*' was claimed to be a focus marker.

78) Nyumu    ɔ    nɛ            ju    sika    a    lɛɛ.  
 Man    the    FM            steal    money    the    CM  
 For the money, it was the man who stole it.

79) Sika    a    lɛɛ            nyumu    ɔ    nɛ    ju'-ɛ.  
 Money    the    CM            man    the    FM    steal-it  
 For the money, it was the man who stole it.

Both examples 78 and 79 above are natural responses to the question *Who stole the money?* but not to the question *What has the man stolen?*. Both responses imply that different people stole different things. The utterances above mean the same but have different syntactic structures which are both accepted in the Dangme language. Whiles 79 conforms to the structure of its English translation, with a left-dislocated object, 78 does not; 78 has the canonical word order with subject before object. The question *Who stole the money?* suggests that *nyumu ɔ* (the man) is the new information hence it is the focus constituent. This is in accordance with the fact that it is modified by the selective focus marker *nɛ*. The topic-focus structure imposed by the question *Who stole the money?* also suggests that *sika a* (the money) is part of the topic. In examples 78 and 79 above, a topic constituent is modified by the contrastive marker *lɛɛ*. For the question *What has the man stolen?*, example 78 and 79 could not be used as natural responses because the question suggests *money* as the focus of the answer and *nyumu ɔ ju* (the man stole) as the topic constituent, whereas *nɛ* picks out the man as the focus. In earlier examples, it has been seen that *nɛ* is a selective focus marker and *lɛɛ* is a contrastive marker. This means that *nyumu ɔ* has been selected from a possible domain or set to be the one who stole money through the use of the marker *nɛ* while the money has also been contrasted with other items which could be stolen through the use of the marker *lɛɛ*. Both utterances are pragmatically acceptable as answer to the question *Who stole the money?*.

It is important to note that the particle *lɛɛ*, which has been proven to be compatible with focus as well as topic in earlier examples, could never occur in an utterance modifying focus when the utterance contains *nɛ* as a focus marker as well. This in my view, is because *nɛ* in itself could imply contrast which is the main function of *lɛɛ*. Moreso, it is vital to know that both markers cannot combine to modify the same constituent.

### 3.8.2 'Po nɛ'

Let us take a look at *po* and *nɛ* below when these combine to modify the same constituent. As we have seen earlier in section 3.3, *po* is an scalar focus marker which is compatible with additive focus but incompatible with contrast. *Nɛ* as seen in section 3.2 is a focus marker compatible with complete, selective, restrictive, replacing and contrastive focus. In this instance, *po* does not function as an inclusive marker.

80)           Manyadalo    ɔ       *po*       *nɛ*       gbe    lo.  
                   President    the     FM       FM       kill   fish

In example 80 above, the focus markers *po* and *nɛ* combine to modify the focus constituent *manyadalɔ ɔ* (the president). The utterance is a natural response to the question *Who killed fish?* and not to the question *What has the president killed?*. This is because *Who killed fish?* suggests that *manyadalɔ ɔ* is the focus constituent of the subsequent answer, which the topic-focus structure of the utterance indeed agrees with. As we have seen earlier in the utterance *even the president killed fish* in example 44 where *po* alone modifies the president, the interlocutor communicates that the president is the least expected to kill fish and that others killed fish as well. In our current example, i.e. 80 above, the marker *nɛ* has enriched the utterance to mean that even though there were other people expected to kill fish, and the president is the least person expected to kill fish, it happened that he was the only one who did kill fish. *Nɛ*, as we have seen earlier, is already known to have a primary function of selective and exclusive focus, and when it combines with *po* it enriches the focus to possess exclusive features. The feature *po* contributes its scalar feature. The use of the focus markers *po* and *nɛ* together, unlike only *po* as in example 44, is selective and restricting. This means that in 80, the possibility of others to also kill fish has been eliminated, as opposed to example 44, in which only *po* occurs. It is important to mention that the combination of a scalar and an exclusive marker (only even) may not be natural in English, hence, the inability to translate example 80. However, this combination of particles is very natural and common in Dangme discourse. It is also significant to mention that the order in which the two markers occur is to have *nɛ* preceded by *po* and not the vice versa.

Let's take note of the combination *po nɛ* in the utterances below with regard to the positions and constituents it modifies.

*Meni manyadalɔ ɔ gbe?*

*What has the president killed*

- 81) \*Manyadalɔ ɔ gbe jata a *po* *nɛ* .  
 President the kill lion the FM FM
- 82) Jata a *po* *nɛ* manyadalɔ ɔ gbe  
 Lion the FM FM president the kill
- 83) Manyadalɔ ɔ *lɛɛ* jata a *po* *nɛ* e gbe  
 President the CM lion the FM FM he kill

Considering the question *Mɛni manyadalɔ ɔ gbe?* meaning *What has the president killed?*, the topic of the three utterances i.e. 81, 82 and 83 is the content of *manyadalɔ ɔ gbe* (the president killed) and the focus constituent is *jata a* (the lion). Utterances 81 and 82 have different word order and 81 is ungrammatical while 82 is an accurate response to the question. In utterance 81, *po nɛ* modifies the object *jata a* (the lion) which is the focus constituent of the utterance but the two are not compatible. Example 81 can never be used as an answer to any question in dangme since it is grammatically ill-formed. In example 82, the same object noun phrase has been fronted and it is compatible with the particle *po nɛ* in answering the question under consideration. Since example 82 is an appropriate response to the question, it can be said that *po nɛ* can only mark the object as the focus of an utterance if the object is fronted.

Example 83 illustrates the only instance where the marker *po nɛ* could occur in sentence mid position. My finding is such that the topic must be marked by a topic marker before this marker could ever occur in sentence mid position, i.e., just as in the case of *nɛ*.

To summarize, because the qualities of *nɛ* takes dominance, when the markers *nɛ* and *po* are combined, they take the syntactic characteristics of *nɛ* and not that of *po* as shown below:

- i. *Po nɛ* only modifies nominal phrases.
- ii. *Po nɛ* only modifies constituents at sentence initial position and modify constituents at sentence mid position only when the topic of the utterance is marked.
- iii. *Po nɛ* is located at the immediate right of the constituent it modifies.
- iv. *Po nɛ* modifies an object if and only if the object is fronted.
- v. When modifying the same constituent, the two markers *po* and *nɛ* occur in a predictable order where *po* precedes *nɛ* and not the vice versa.

Semantically:

- i. *Po nɛ* marks focus constituents and not topic constituents.

### 3.8.3 'Pohu'

Next, let us look at *po* and *hu*. Recall from section 3.3 and 3.4 that both *po* and *hu* are inclusive markers. It was shown in section 3.3 that *po* is a scalar and an additive focus marker while 3.4 illustrates that *hu* is an additive focus marker. The combination of these particles is lexicalized in Dangme and written as *pohu*. Consider the example below.

- 84)        Manyadalɔ    ɔ    *pohu*    gbe    lo.  
              President    the    FM    catch   fish  
              Even the president also caught fish.

The marker *pohu* modifies the focus constituent of the utterance, i.e. *manyadalɔ ɔ* (the president), and enriches its meaning. As mentioned earlier in *Even the president killed fish*, which is example 44 above where *po* is the only focus marker, the interlocutor communicates that the president is the least expected to kill fish and that others also did kill fish. *Pohu* is used interchangeably to *po* to mean that others also killed fish apart from the president. The utterance above in 84 can answer the same question in 44 i.e. *Who killed fish?*. As seen earlier on, *hu* is an additive marker which means that it marks explicitly that others also belong to the set under discussion. The only difference between example 44 and example 84 in my view is that whereas 84 encodes that there is inclusiveness through the use of the marker *hu*, example 44 does not encode the inclusiveness; in 44 this can only be pragmatically inferred.

To sum up, *pohu* has the following syntactic properties:

- i.        *Pohu* is lexicalized in the Dangme orthography and therefore cannot occur as *hupo*.
- ii.       Its syntactic position in an utterance is the same as that of *po*.

Semantically:

- i.        *Pohu* modifies focus constituents and not topic constituents.
- ii.       It semantically encodes the inclusive quality in *po*.
- iii.      It is a scalar marker as well as an inclusive marker.

### 3.8.4 'Hu nε'

Finally, let us look at example 85 below, where *hu* and *nε* combine to modify the same constituent. As shown in section 3.4, *hu* is an additive focus marker while section 3.2 illustrates that *nε* is a complete, selective, restrictive and replacing focus marker compatible with contrast. Though the Dangme orthography (see BGL (1990)) does not stipulate that *hu nε* should be written as one word, I think they are lexicalized since their meaning is not derived from the meaning in the individual lexical items.

- 85)      Ama      *hu*      *nε*      e      maa      gba'a.  
         Ama      FM      FM      PN      will      marry-him.  
         It's Ama who will marry him.

The utterance in example 85 cannot be a direct response to a question but a quick follow up to an utterance. Granting that speaker A tells speaker B that Ama is married to Kofi who is believed to be irresponsible or not a "marrying material", speaker B can utter example 85 to imply that she is not surprised at all. Speaker B implies that what she is hearing is the obvious and no news to her. Speaker B employs the marker *hu nε* to state that it is plausible and obvious for Ama who is desperate for a husband to be the one to marry such an irresponsible man. *Hu nε* in the utterance contrasts Ama with other women. Ama is the focus constituent of the utterance and the marker is compatible with contrastive focus. It is also relevant to note that there is left-dislocation anytime *hu nε* marks a constituent in sentence initial position, just as mentioned for *lεε*.

Finally, it is vital to note that all the focus markers with the exception of *lεε* can combine with *nε* to mark the same constituent as information focus. At any instance where any marker combines with *nε*, both markers are only plausible with constituents that *nε* is plausible with and can occur only in positions where *nε* alone can occur as discussed earlier.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter aims at assessing the hypothesis of this research and to also evaluate the extent to which the research questions have been answered. Recall that in chapter one, the following research questions were outlined as a guide to this research:

1. Are the particles *nε*, *po*, *hu*, *nitse*, *pε* and *lεε* markers of information structure, and if so, are they markers of topic or focus?
2. What are the pragmatic interpretations that may occur for these particles?
3. In what syntactic positions can each of these particles occur?

In trying to answer the above questions, each of the particles were analysed in chapter three. One thing that this study revealed was that topics are unmarked in Dangme. Furthermore, the particle *lεε* turned out to be neither a topic marker, nor a focus marker, but rather a marker of contrast. Thus, each particle was analysed as either a focus marker or a contrastive marker. For each particle, I have also identified the more specific focus functions that they are compatible with, pragmatically speaking. The tables below represent the findings using binary features. Table 4 answers the first research question; table 5 answers the second research question whereas table 6 answers the third research question above. In the tables presented below, “+” and “-” mean plausible and implausible, respectively.

Table 4 *Information Structure versus Contrast*

Particle	Information Structure		Contrast Marker	Compatibility with Contrast
	Focus Marker	Topic Marker		
Nε	+	-	-	+
Po	+	-	-	-
Hu	+	-	-	-
Nitse	+	-	-	+
Pε	+	-	-	+
Lεε	-	-	+	+

Table 4 gives the following information about each of the lexical items.

- *Nε*: It is a marker of information structure, specifically focus, and it is compatible with contrast.
- *Po*: *Po* marks the focus in an information structure but it is not compatible with contrast.
- *Hu*: It is a marker of focus, thus information structure, but incompatible with contrast.
- *Nitse*: *Nitse*, similar to *nε* is a marker of information focus compatible with contrast.
- *Pε*: It is a focus marker compatible with contrast.
- *Lεε*: Unlike the other particles, *lεε* is a marker of contrast which is compatible with both topic and focus.

Table 5 below answers research question 2 above, i.e. it specifies which specific focus functions the various particles may fulfil in context.

Table 5 *Pragmatic Features and Focus Categories*

Particles	Completive	Selective	Replacing	Expanding/ Additive	Restricting	Parallel	Scalar
<i>Nε</i>	+	+	+	-	+	-	-
<i>Po</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-	+
<i>Hu</i>	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
<i>Nitse</i>	-	+	-	-	+	-	-
<i>Pε</i>	-	+	-	-	+	-	-
<i>Lεε</i>	-	+	+	-	+	+	-

The information in table 5 above illustrates that any time any of the particles *nε*, *po*, *hu*, *nitse*, *pε* and *lεε* are introduced in an utterance as markers of information structure, they may at the same time contribute to some amount of pragmatic meaning to the utterance and these meanings are categorized as *completive*, *selective*, *replacing*, *expanding/additive*, *restricting*, *parallel* and *scalar* as Dik et al. (1981) and Amfo (2010) explicate. Though none of the particles are compatible with all these categories, it is clear in the table that each particle is compatible with at least one of the categories. Notice that though Dik et al. (1981) illustrate that expanding focus is compatible with contrast whiles completive focus on the other hand is

incompatible with contrast, the Dangme data in Table 4 and 5 shows that expanding focus is rather incompatible with contrast whereas completive focus is compatible with contrast.

The information in table 5 shows that:

- *Nε* is compatible with completive, selective, replacing, and restricting focus.
- *Po* is encodes a scalar interpretation and is compatible with expanding/additive focus.
- *Hu* is only compatible with additive and expanding focus.
- *Nitse* is compatible with selective and restrictive focus.
- *Pε*, similar to *nitse*, is compatible with selective and restrictive focus. Though not illustrated in table 5, it came to light in chapter 3 that *pε* might also communicate simultaneity and continuity.
- *Lεε* is compatible with selective, restrictive, replacing and parallel focus.

Table 6 below is an overview of which kind of constituents the various particles were found to modify.

Table 6 *Syntactic properties; constituents that the particles can modify*

Particles	Canonical Subject	Canonical Object	Fronted Object	Verb Phrase	Verb	Clause
<i>Nε</i>	+	-	+	-	-	-
<i>Po</i>	+	+	-	+	+	-
<i>Hu</i>	+	+	+	+	+	-
<i>Nitse</i>	+	+	-	-	-	-
<i>Pε</i>	+	+	-	-	-	+
<i>Lεε</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+

In addition to the syntactic patterns in Table 6, it has been made clear that all the markers under discussion occur at the right of the constituents they modify.

Apart from using single markers to mark information structure, it has also been seen in chapter three that two of the marker can be used together to mark a constituent which is the focus of an utterance. The data in section 3.8 supports the combination of *po nε*, *nitse nε*, *pε nε*, *pohu*, and *hune* in marking the information structure of an utterance. However, in

combining the markers, the vice versa as in *nɛ po*, *nɛ nitɛ*, *nɛ pɛ*, *hupo*, and *nɛhu* are not plausible. Furthermore, the data revealed that the meaning inherent in the combined markers is derived from the basic meaning of the two markers involved, except in the case of *hunɛ*. It is also clear that all the combined markers obey the syntactic restrictions of *nɛ* except *pohu*. Interestingly, *nɛ* and *lɛɛ* cannot combine to mark the same constituent. However, the data showed that *lɛɛ* can be used to contrast the topic in an utterance whenever *nɛ* functions as the focus marker of that utterance.

As for forthcoming research on this topic, it is obvious that this thesis is only a first step towards a semantic and pragmatic account of the given particles. I have used invented examples and introspection as my method and an obvious next step is to look at the occurrence of the particles in natural discourse, and to use native speaker informants to judge their meaning and acceptability in context. It is my hope, though, that the present thesis will be useful in the development of such further studies.

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