

ABSTRACT

Focus constructions in Akan have received considerable attention in the existing literature in linguistics; yet, a number of issues remain unresolved. One of which is the controversy over the focus markers in the language. Some scholars view *nà* and *dèè* as the focus markers in Akan (Boadi, 1974; Saah, 1998; Marfo 2005), others consider *nà* as the focus marker and *dèè* as a topic marker (Bearth, 1999) while others consider *dèè* as the focus marker and *nà* as the focus marker of Akan (Dakubu, 1992). Given the inconsistency in the characterization of focus markers in Akan, this study sought to give a comprehensive description of the phenomenon. The objectives of the study were to: (i) examine the focus strategies in Akan (ii) evaluate the grammatical status of the particles *nà* and *dèè* in Akan; (iii) find out whether or not all the identified focused markers are really focus markers; (iv) explore the role of tone in Akan focus constructions.

With the use of interview, both introspective and informant methods were employed in collecting relevant data for the study. The target population was the native speakers of Akan in Ghana, specifically, those who speak Asante-Twi, Akuapem-Twi or Fante. Six elderly educated native speakers were purposefully selected to verify and ascertain the accuracy of the data. The Minimalist Programme was adopted for data analysis.

The findings of the study are that:

- i. both the *in-situ* and *ex-situ* focus strategies are attested in Akan focus constructions;
- ii. the *in-situ* focus strategy is marked prosodically, while the *ex-situ* focus strategy employs focus markers like *nà*, *á*, *né* and *ní*;

- iii. contrary to the earlier scholarly submissions, *dèè* does not function as a focus marker in Akan;
- iv. apart from a nominalised verb, other *ex-situ* focused constituents are internally merged; and
- v. there is a floating high tone associated with Akan focus constructions.

The study concludes that contrary to earlier submissions, Akan attests both the *in-situ* and *ex-situ* focus strategies. Also, in addition to *nà*, the particles *á*, *né* and *ní* also function as focus markers in Akan. However, contrary to the earlier scholarly assumption, *dèè* does not function as a focus marker in the language.