

FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS IN NKAMI

Rogers Krobea Asante
University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

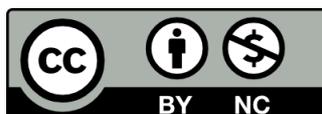
ABSTRACT

This article extracts from synchronic data to systematically discuss focus clause constructions (FCCs) of Nkami, an endangered Kwa language of Ghana. It deals with issues that are of general interest in focus, syntax, typology, animacy and grammaticalization. It shows that Nkami exhibits both in-situ and ex-situ FCCs but, like most West African languages (cf. Boadi 1974, Fiedler et al. 2006/2010, Ameka 2010), there is an asymmetry between subject and non-subject focus. Almost all lexical words/phrases including adjectives can be preposed for focus in Nkami. Nkami joins Akan as being the only two Kwa languages described that obligatorily co-reference animate object NPs in ex-situ focus. Unlike most Kwa languages, predicates in focus are always overtly marked by focus markers (FMs). The paper varies from the convention by some Kwa linguists (cf. Boadi 1974, Saah 1988, Ameka 2010, Ofori 2011, Duah 2015) by recognizing a morpheme, which is similar in distribution/function to what is so-called ‘Determiner’ as a FM.

Keywords: focus clause constructions, enclosing focus markers, resumptive pronouns, ex-situ focus, Kwa languages.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rogers Krobea Asante holds a PhD from Tongji University, Shanghai, China. He is presently a Lecturer of Linguistics at the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana. His research interests include documentation and grammatical description of endangered languages including Nkami and Nkonya (Kwa, Niger-Congo). He also has an interest in typological studies involving Kwa and Gur languages.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

The purpose of this paper is to offer a comprehensive description of focus constructions in Nkami. In doing so, in many instances, it compares the phenomena in Nkami with what pertains in other languages, particularly sister Kwa languages. Following linguists such as Jackendoff (1972), Dik et al. (1981) and Lambrecht (1994), Aboh et al. (2007: 01) refer to a constituent in focus as “that part of the clause that provides the most relevant or most salient information in a given discourse situation”. The part of the clause that is most relevant or most salient is the constituent that is prominent, new, or contrasted with one or more constituents in the preceding or subsequent clause. The part of the clause that is not in focus is normally called ‘out-of-focus’ (cf. Reineke 2007, Schwarz & Fiedler 2007, Ameka 2010, Fiedler et al. 2006/2010) or ‘background’ (cf. Aboh et al. 2007). For instance, as occurs in many Kwa, Gur and Chadic languages of West Africa, in (1) the post-verbal argument, **ayikún** ‘beans’, is the constituent in focus in Fon (Kwa, Niger-Congo) because it is the ‘new’ information that answers the question ‘What did the woman eat?’²

- (1) Fon (Fiedler et al. 2006: 2)
Q: *What did the woman eat?*
A: **é** **ɖu** **ayikún.**
3SG eat beans
‘She ate BEANS.’

The expression, **é ɖu** ‘she ate’, is the out-of-focus part of the clause, which provides background information. The question in (1), ‘What did the woman eat?’, may also be appropriately answered by (2) below (Fiedler et al. 2006: 3).

- (2) Fon
Q: *What did the woman eat?*
A: **ayikún** **(wɛ)** **nyɔnú** **ɔ́** **ɖu.**
beans FOC woman DEF eat
‘The woman ate BEANS.’

The construction in (2) performs the same function as the one in (1) since both indicate that **ayikún** ‘beans’ was what the woman ate. Thus, in both constructions **ayikún** ‘beans’ serves as the most relevant part of the clause. Bear in mind that though in most West African languages the direction of movement of the focused constituent is dominantly regressive, as (2) illustrates, there are also cases where progressive movement is observed. For instance, in Bole (West Chadic) a subject argument in focus may be moved to the right-peripheral position of the

¹ I sincerely acknowledge the helpful comments of two anonymous reviewers and the outstanding editorial support from Thera M. Crane. The usual disclaimers apply.

² The following abbreviations are used: ANM = animate, ATR = advanced tongue root, COND = conditional marker, CONJ = conjunction, DEF = definite article, DDP = distal directional prefix, DDP = distal demonstrative pronoun, DEM = demonstrative, FCC = focus clause construction, FM = focus marker, FOC = focus marker, FUT = future, HAB = habitual, IMPF = imperfective, INANM = inanimate, INDEF = indefinite, NEG = negation, NOML = nominalizer, NSF = non-subject focus, OBJ = object, PDP = proximal directional prefix, PDP = proximal demonstrative pronoun, PRT = Particle, PST = past, PRF = perfect, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PROG = progressive, REL = relative marker, SF = subject focus, SG = singular, SVC = serial verb construction.

sentence, as (3) shows:

- (3) Bole (Fiedler et al. 2006: 6)
- a. **Léngi** **jii** **kappa** **mordó** (*Léngi: not in focus*)
 Lengi PROG planting millet
 ‘Lengi is planting the MILLET.’
- b. Q: *Who is planting the millet?*
 A: **(An) jii kappa mordó yé Léngi.** (*Léngi: in focus*)
 (3SG) PROG planting millet FOC Lengi
 ‘LENGI is planting the millet.’

As we observe in (3), the subject of the clause, **Léngi**, has been moved from its default position (3a) to the sentence-final position (3A) to signal that it is the constituent in focus. Notice that when **Léngi** is moved, an optional pronominal element, **an** ‘3SG’, may be placed in its default position. Thus, in many languages of West Africa, the position of a constituent that is moved for focus may be replaced by a resumptive pronoun or particle.

There are three major linguistic strategies for marking focus cross-linguistically: phonological (prosodic), morphological and syntactic. It is syntactic when a constituent is moved from its default position to another position for the purpose of focus, as we have seen with **ayikún** ‘beans’ and **Léngi** in (2) and (3), respectively. When a constituent in focus is marked by a special particle or morpheme such as **yé** in (3), then, we say that focus is morphologically marked. This type of particle and similar forms are often referred to as focus markers (FMs). Last but not least, focus may be said to be phonologically marked when focus marking results in alternation of the phonology of the constituent in focus or out-of-focus part of the clause. Perhaps the most conspicuously cited example is English, whose focus is prosodically signaled by stress placement. Moreover, it is noted that in Tangale (cf. Kenstowicz 1985, Hartmann & Zimmermann 2004, Fiedler et al. 2006: 4) focus marking may prevent some phonological processes that take place within the verb cluster in the out-of-focus part. This is illustrated in (4) below.

- (4) Tangale (West Chadic)
- Q: *What did Laku sell?*
- a. A: **Lak way-ug lánda.** (*lánda: not in focus*)
 Laku sell-PRF dress
 ‘Laku sold a dress.’
- b. A: **Lak wai-gó lánda.** (*lánda: pragmatically in focus*)
 Laku sell-PRF dress
 ‘Laku sold a DRESS.’³

It is noted, among others, that the realization of **lánda** ‘dress’ as the pragmatically focused constituent in (4b) blocks a common vowel elision process in the preceding verb cluster. Thus, **wai-gó** is supposed to be realized as **way-ug**, as shown in the default clause in (4a); however, to signal that **lánda** ‘dress’ is the constituent in focus in (4b), the vowel elision process is not

³ We use the term ‘phonologically marked focus’, instead of ‘prosodically marked focus’ (cf. Ameka 2010, Fiedler et al. 2006/2010), to cater for these two distinct types of focus marking strategies, i.e. prosodically marked focus (as in, for instance, English) and, if you like, ‘segmentally’ marked focus (as in, for instance, Tangale), and any other strategy that may be phonologically related.

obeyed (see Fiedler et al. 2010 and the references above for further details).

Moreover, another thing that has occupied recent discussions of focus clause constructions in West African languages is the issue about the asymmetry between subject focus (FC) and non-subject focus (NSF) (cf., Schwarz & Fiedler 2007, Ameka 2010, Fiedler et al. 2010). It has been observed that generally whereas NSF may not be marked syntactically and/or morphologically, SF must be marked. Nkami also exhibits this behaviour.

The following facts are essential about FCCs in Nkami:⁴

- ◆ There is evidence of both in-situ and ex-situ FCCs but, like in most West African languages (cf. Fiedler et al. 2010), an asymmetrical relationship is observed between subject and non-subject focus.
- ◆ Almost all lexical words/phrases including verb/verb phrases, nominalized verbs, adjectives, adverbials, coordinate NPs, postpositional phrases, and possessive phrases can be preposed for focus.
- ◆ Whereas a focused constituent in in-situ FCCs provides new or prominent information, that of ex-situ FCCs expresses contrast.
- ◆ Nkami has two enclosing FMs, **ní** and **amó**, that co-function to mark focus.
- ◆ Just like Akan, a predicate in focus is obligatorily marked, unlike Ga, Gungbe, Ewe and other Gbe lects.
- ◆ Apart from serving as FMs, **ní** and **amó** perform several other grammatical functions, and are both related to demonstratives.
- ◆ Like Akan, but unlike other Kwa languages such as Ga, Gungbe, Ewe and other Gbe lects, whenever the constituent in focus is an animate noun (subject or non-subject argument), a resumptive pronoun overtly occupies its default position within the core clause.
- ◆ The high tone of the FM **ní** may assimilate to the following underlying low tones in the core clause.

The rest of the discussion is arranged as follows: section 2 - an overview of FCC formation in Nkami, section 3 - the form and possible source concepts of the FMs, section 4 - the statement of the focused constituent within the out-of-focus part, section 5 - which syntactic category can be focused?, and section 6 - conclusion.

1.1 SOME SOCIO-LINGUISTIC INFORMATION ON NKAMI⁵

Nkami is a Southern Guang language (Kwa, Niger-Congo) spoken by about 400 people. They presently reside in a resettlement community in the Eastern Region of Ghana called Amankwa (Asante 2017). Nkami displays parallel features with regional languages in most of the areal-

⁴ This article is a thoroughly revised excerpt from a PhD dissertation which is part of a larger documentation project on Nkami, sponsored by the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP), SOAS (grant: IGS0228). The database includes spontaneous spoken and elicited texts gathered from about a hundred speakers of diverse backgrounds in a period of one year in Amankwa, the spoken community. Annotation and verification of data were done in collaboration with a team of two adult Nkami speakers, Akuamoah and Ketewa, and several other language consultants. For the people of Nkami, this is yours.

⁵ Interested readers may see Asante (2017) for an introduction of Nkami as a forgotten Guang language and people of Ghana, and Asante (2016a) for a detailed discussion of the grammar of Nkami.

typological linguistic features. For instance, it is tonal, exhibits tongue root (ATR) harmony (cf. Akanlig-Pare & Asante 2016), has dominant AVO and SV clause types, its verb features are expressed by prefixes and verbal particles, and it is mainly isolating. It showcases ‘head-initial features’ (cf. Boadi 2005) in the sense that nouns come before adjectives, numerals and determiners in an endocentric NP. Besides transitive, intransitive, copula, verbless and other simple clauses, it also shows evidence of rich and prototypical examples of constructions involving multi-verbs and clause combinations such as serial verb, relative clause (Asante & Ma 2016), complement clause (Asante 2016b), adverbial clause and coordinate clause constructions (Asante 2018).

There are nine phonemic oral /i, e, ɪ, ɛ, a, o, ɔ, u, ʊ/ and seven phonemic nasal /ĩ, ỹ, ẽ, ã, õ, ù, õ/ vowels in Nkami. It also has an inventory of 28 consonant sounds. Out of these, 15 are simple oral sounds /t, d, k, g, p, b, s, ʃ, f, l, r (ɾ), j, w, h and ʔ/, 4 are simple nasal sounds /n, ɲ, ŋ, m/, and 9 are secondary sounds: /kp, tʃ, dʒ, hw (ʃ^w), kw (k^w), tw (tʃ^w), dw (dʒ^w), ɲw (ɲ^w). The orthography of Nkami, which is adopted in this study, directly corresponds to these phonemic sounds (consonants and vowels). Lastly, Nkami has two level tones, low and high. As a convention in this paper, the latter is marked (á), where necessary, but the former is unmarked (a).

2. FOCUS CLAUSE CONSTRUCTION FORMATION IN NKAMI

This section presents a conspectus of all the canonical features of FCCs in Nkami. Like in most languages of West Africa, there is evidence of both in-situ and ex-situ focus, as (5a) and (5b) illustrate respectively.

- (5) Q: Who did Kofi beat?
- a. In-situ
Kofi da Ama
 Kofi beat Ama
 ‘Kofi beat AMA.’
- b. Ex-situ
Ama ní Kofi da mu (amu)
 Ama FOC Kofi beat her (FOC)
 ‘Kofi beat AMA.’

The two sentences in (5) may appropriately answer the question ‘Who did Kofi beat?’ In both sentences, **Ama** is the constituent in focus. However, whereas **Ama** appears in in-situ focus in (5a) because it occupies the default position for objects in Nkami (i.e. the immediate post-verbal position), it is in ex-situ focus in (5b) because it occurs at sentence-initial position. As has been observed for many languages of West Africa (cf. Duthie 1996, Ameka 2010, Fiedler et al. 2010), the rightmost element of a pragmatically neutral clause constitutes the focused constituent in in-situ focus in Nkami. So, for instance, whereas **Ama** is the constituent in focus in (5a), the temporal adverbial, **inie** ‘yesterday’, is the constituent in focus in (6).

- (6) Q: *When did Kofi beat Ama?*
 A: **Kofi da Ama inie**
 Kofi beat Ama yesterday
 ‘Kofi beat Ama YESTERDAY.’

By implication, because the subject of a pragmatically neutral clause occurs in clause-initial position and focus is reserved for clause-final constituents, the subject cannot be the focused constituent in a pragmatically neutral clause. Thus, unlike non-subject constituents in Nkami, for a subject argument to be in focus an ex-situ focus strategy must be invoked, as (7) shows.

- (7) Q: *Who beat Ama?*
 a. In-situ
Kofi da Ama
 Kofi beat Ama
 ‘Kofi beat AMA (*KOFI beat Ama).’
 b. Ex-situ
Kofi ní ɔ̀-dá Ama (amu)
 Kofi FOC 3SG-beat Ama (FOC)
 ‘KOFI beat Ama.’

Thus, if the speaker wants to emphasise that it was **Kofi** who beat **Ama** (as against any other possible set of candidates in the immediate context), then the ex-situ focus construction in (7b), rather than the pragmatically neutral clause in (7a), is required. **Kofi** cannot be the focused constituent in its default subject position, as the English translation of (7a) in brackets shows. Apart from the syntactic difference, the language also shows a morphological difference between in-situ and ex-situ FCCs through the use of FMs. Whereas no FM is employed in in-situ focus, as shown in (5a, 6 and 7a), Nkami has two FMs, **ní** and **amó**, that co-function to realise ex-situ focus. However, whereas **ní** obligatorily occurs immediately after the focused constituent, **amó** may optionally occur as the final element in FCCs, as (5b and 7b) exemplify. In other words, while the omission of **amó** will not affect the grammaticality of a focus clause construction, the omission of **ní** will. At the prosodic level, it appears that, like some high-toned grammatical morphemes in the language (cf. Asante 2016), generally the high tone of the focus marker **ní** spreads to the following subject pronoun and verb stem. So, for instance, whereas both the 3SG subject pronoun, **ɔ̀** ‘he/she/it (animate)’, and verb, **da** ‘eat’, bear low tones in a simple clause, they are realized as high-toned morphemes in (7b), i.e. **ɔ̀-da** → **ɔ̀-dá** ‘he beats’.⁶ Thus far, we have seen that Nkami speakers may simultaneously employ all three strategies to mark focus in the language: syntactic (left-fronting of focused constituent), prosodic/phonological (high-tone spreading from **ní** to the out-of-focus part), and morphological (the use of bipartite/enclosing FMs **ní** and **amó**).

Another thing worth noting about the ex-situ FCC in (5b) is the placement of the resumptive pronoun **mu** ‘him/her/it (animate)’ in the default object slot of the constituent in focus, **Ama**. Thus, when **Ama** is left-fronted, **mu** ‘him/her/it (animate)’ resumes its position. As we shall see below, replacing a focused constituent with a resumptive pronoun in Nkami is obligatory if the constituent in focus has an animate reference.

⁶ A reviewer feels that the prosodic effects of the high tone of the focus marker **ní** on the following verb plus subject clitic/prefix may not be a matter of prosody but rather a reflex of the structure, similarly to observations made for Akan by Boadi (1974).

Last but not least, like in many other languages (cf. Boadi 1974, Saah 1988, & Duah 2015 on Akan; Somaiya & Bisang 2004 on Yoruba), the contexts of usage and meanings conveyed by in-situ and ex-situ FCCs are not identical in Nkami. Generally, whereas unmarked in-situ focus is used to present ‘new’ or ‘non-exhaustive’ information, marked ex-situ FCC is employed to provide ‘exhaustive’, ‘contrastive’, ‘exclusive’ or ‘identificational’ information onto the discourse stage (cf. Boadi 1974, Saah 1988, É. Kiss 1998, Duah 2015). For instance, whereas the ex-situ FCC in (5b) restricts the referential range of the person who was beaten, i.e. **Ama**, the in-situ FCC in (5a) does not. Thus, the ex-situ FCC goes beyond providing the information, ‘Kofi beat AMA’, to literally emphasise that ‘It was AMA that Kofi beat, not, say, LINDA or LI’. Significantly, ex-situ FCCs in Nkami may be typically employed by speakers to correct false impressions they perceive their addressees to be carrying. There are some language internal linguistic facts that support this interpretation. Firstly, typically whereas in-situ FCCs respond to in-situ focus questions, ex-situ FCCs respond to ex-situ questions. Consider the following question and answer pairs:

(8) In-situ FCC replies in-situ question

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p>a. Question
 Kofi yɔ bile (fã)?
 Kofi go where
 ‘WHERE did Kofi go?’</p> | → | <p>b. Answer
 Kofi yɔ Kumasi
 Kofi go Kumasi
 ‘Kofi went to KUMASI.’</p> |
|--|---|---|

(9) Ex-situ FCC replies ex-situ question

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>a. Question
 Bile (fã) ní Kofi yɔ?
 where FOC Kofi go
 ‘WHERE did Kofi go?’</p> | → | <p>b. Answer
 Kumasi ní Kofi yɔ
 Kumasi FOC Kofi go
 ‘Kofi went to KUMASI.’</p> |
|---|---|--|

Thus, whereas the unmarked question clause in (8a) requires the unmarked answer in (8b), the marked ex-situ focus question in (9a) requires the marked ex-situ answer in (9b). Obviously, the fact that speakers consistently employ in-situ FCCs to respond to in-situ focus questions and ex-situ FCCs to respond to ex-situ questions cannot be a mere coincidence (cf. Saah 1988). Additional evidence supporting the ‘exclusivity’ and ‘non-exclusivity’ argument about the information provided by the two types of FCCs in Nkami is that whereas it is generally possible for the focused constituent in an in-situ FCC to be a list of items belonging to the same set, as shown in (10a), it is unacceptable in ex-situ FCCs, as (10b) illustrates.

- (10) a. **Kofi yɔ Kumasi, Accra na Ho**
 Kofi go Kumasi Accra and Ho
 ‘Kofi went to KUMASI, ACCRA and HO.’
- b. **?Kumasi, Accra na Ho ní Kofi yɔ**
 Kumasi Accra and Ho FOC Kofi go
 ‘Kofi went to KUMASI, ACCRA and HO.’

In other words, while (10a) is totally acceptable as an answer to the in-situ question in (8a), **Kofi yɔ bile (fã)?** ‘Where did Kofi go?’, (10b) is infelicitous as an answer to the ex-situ question in (9a), **bile (fã) ní Kofi yɔ?** ‘Where did Kofi go?’ Note, however, that (10b) can be acceptable if the questioned word/phrase is a compound phrase, as in:

- (11) **bile (fã) na bile ní Kofi yɔ?**
 where (place) and where FOC Kofi go
 ‘WHERE (and WHERE) did Kofi go?’

That is, the ex-situ focus question in (11) implies that the asker is aware that **Kofi** went to two or more places and, so, the use of (10b), where the focused constituent consists of a list of items belonging to the same set (i.e. place names), as an answer is felicitous.⁷

3. THE FORM AND HISTORICAL PATHS OF THE FOCUS MARKERS

As has been noted earlier, there are two morphemes, **ní** and **amó**, that co-function to mark focus in ex-situ FCCs in Nkami. Whereas **ní** obligatorily appears at the left edge of a clause immediately after the focused constituent and before the out-of-focus part, **amó** is optionally flanked just after the out-of-focus part.⁸ This is schematized and exemplified in (12) below.

- (12) a. Focus constituent + **ní** [out-of-focus part] + (**amó**)
 b. *What did you hit/beat?*
ntuntum ní [ń-dá mú] (amó)
 mosquito FOC [1SG-hit 3SG.OBJ] FOC
 ‘I hit/beat MOSQUITO.’

Similar to most West African languages, as succinctly framed in the expression of Boadi (1974: 7) on Akan, besides marking constituents in focus, the focus marker(s) “narrows down the referential range of the constituent to which it is attached and places it in an exclusive class by itself, thus bringing this constituent into sharp contrast with all other members of the paradigm to which it belongs”. Thus, the FMs in Nkami help speakers to interpret a focused constituent to mean ‘only X and nothing/nobody else’.

The case of Nkami is quite intriguing for the following reasons. To begin with, apart from Nkami, Akan and Ga (cf. Boadi 1974, Dakubu 2005, Ameka 2010) are the only two Kwa languages of Ghana and West Africa that I am aware of that use two morphemes to mark focus. This is illustrated in (13).

- (13) Akan: (Ameka 2010: 156)
 a. **Me na me-ba-a ha (no)**
 1SG FOC 1SG-come-PST here (DEF)
 ‘I came here.’

⁷ Apart from these language internal facts, other tests that may be used to differentiate ex-situ from in-situ FCCs in terms of their informational content (i.e. their exhaustive and non-exhaustive nature) include coordination (and focused numerals) (Szabolcsi 1981), mention-some contexts (Hartmann & Zimmermann 2007), distributional restrictions on exhaustivity (É. Kiss 1998), and necessity to answer ‘no, also X’ instead of ‘yes, also X’ (É. Kiss 1998, Hartmann & Zimmermann 2007). See Duah (2015) for an excellent application of these tests on Akan (Kwa, Niger-Congo) focus.

⁸ Like most other syllables ending with the syllable **mú** or final /**u**/, **amó** may undergo some common phonological processes, leaving it on the surface as [**am**, **an**, **aŋ**, **aɲ** or **a**] (cf. Asante 2016a).

- b. Ga: (Ameka 2010: 156)
Kofí **(ni)** **e-yí** **(!é)**
 NAME (FOC) 3SG-beat DEF
 ‘He indeed beat KOFI.’

As can be gathered from (13), while Akan uses **na** and **no**, Ga uses **ni** and **é**. Like Nkami, the terminal morphemes, **no** and **é**, are not obligatory in both Akan and Ga. Observe also that the two morphemes in both languages occur in identical syntactic slots, just like **ní** and **amú** in Nkami (12). Moreover, **amú** encodes some ‘definite meaning’ or ‘background information’ similarly to **no** and **é** in Akan and Ga (cf. Boadi 1974, Dakubu 2005, Ameka 2010). However, it must be noted that in both Akan and Ga it is only the initial morpheme **na/ni** that has been treated as a FM. The terminal morpheme **no/é** has been treated as a (clause final) determiner. This is, for instance, evident in Ameka’s glossing of both **no** and **é** as DEF ‘definite article’ in (13) above. This, notwithstanding, it is argued shortly that when **amú** appears as the terminal element in focus clause constructions, it functions specifically as a FM and not as a determiner of any form.

The obligatory use of the introductory FM **ní** also makes the situation in Nkami quite interesting. Though most West African languages of the Kwa, Chadic and Gur families including Ga, Logba, Akan, Gungbe and other Gbe lects, Buli, Hausa, etc. have clearly distinct FMs or particles, in some cases the FMs/particles may be optionally used or may be entirely unacceptable to focalize certain constituents. For instance, observe in (14-16) that in Fon, Hausa and Buli the use of the FMs/particles **wɛ**, **nee** and **ká** is optional (Fiedler et al. 2006: 2-8).

- (14) Fon (Gbe, Kwa)
 Q: *What did the woman eat?*
 A: **ayikún** **(wɛ)** **nyɔnú** **ɖu.**
 beans FOC woman eat
 ‘She ate BEANS.’
- (15) Hausa (West Chadic)
 Q: *What is Kande cooking?*
 A: **kíiffi** **(nee)** **Kandé** **tá-kee** **dáfaawáa.**
 fish (PRT) Kande 3sg.f-PROG.REL cooking
 ‘Kande is cooking FISH.’
- (16) Buli (Gur, Oti-Volta, Buli-Konni)
 Q: *What did she eat?*
 A: **(ká)** **tú-mɔantaŋā** **te** **wa** **ŋɔb.**
 (FM) beans-red.DEF CONJ 3sg eat
 ‘She ate the RED BEANS (The RED BEANS is what she ate).’

Moreover, making a typological observation about the obligatory use of FMs when the grammatical function of the argument in focus is an object among Kwa languages, Ameka (2010: 152) notes that although the use of FMs in such cases is obligatory in a few languages such as Yoruba⁹, in the majority of languages, however, the FM is optional. This, he illustrated with the

⁹ Note that Yoruba is classified as a Benue-Congo (not Kwa) language in some recent publications.

- (20) a. **Ní** as a focus marker
oyu ní wu-da mú (amó)
 thief FOC 2SG-beat 3SG.OBJ (FOC)
 ‘You beat a THIEF (not a saint, for instance).’
- b. **Ní** as a relative marker
oyu ní [wu-da mú] amó le-wu
 thief REL 2SG-beat 3SG.OBJ REL PRF-die
 ‘The/that thief you beat is dead.’
- c. **Ní** as a clausal connective
ɔɔɔɔ amó sɔ ɔɔ ní mu ka sɔ anu
 man DET buy two and his wife buy five
 ‘The man bought two and his wife bought five.’

Thus, **ní** functions as a FM to introduce the out-of-focus clause, **wu-da mú** ‘you beat him’, in (20a), as a relative marker to introduce the relative clause, **wu-da mú** ‘(who) you beat him’ in (20b), and as a clausal connective to introduce/connect the second conjunct, **mu ka sɔ anu** ‘his wife bought five’, in (20c). That is, in all three cases in (20), **ní** appears to serve as a ‘clausal introducer’ or a ‘boundary marker’. The use of **ní** as a clausal introducer in (20) appears to be more abstract and more grammatical than its use as a proximal predicative demonstrative in (19a). Moreover, as we saw in (19), as a PPD, **ní** can contrast **nó** in verbless clauses to indicate the location of Figures in relation to speakers in the real world. However, as a clausal or boundary introducer/linker in (20) (i.e. as a focus marker, relative marker, and clausal connective), **ní** is neither deictic nor contrastive. Thus, **ní** cannot contrast with **nó** to indicate the location of entities as it does in (19). Furthermore, besides the general tendency that cross-linguistically less abstract and less grammatical linguistic forms generally develop into forms that express more abstract and more grammatical meanings than vice versa, it has been largely demonstrated that forms with deictic reference are viable source concepts for the development of many grammatical items including FMs and relative markers (cf. Hopper & Traugott 1993, Diessel 1999, Kuteva and Comrie 2005, Dixon 2010). Relying on these real language-internal and cross-linguistic facts, it may appear reasonable to suggest that the proximal predicative demonstrative is a probable source concept of the focus marker and the other grammatical markers.¹⁰

Similarly, apart from functioning as a FM, **amó** may function as a relative marker and a conditional marker, and it is also in heterosemic relation with the definite article, **amó** ‘the’, and the distal demonstrative determiner, **amó** ‘that’, as (21) indicates.

- (21) a. **amó** as a FM
ɔɔɔɔɔɔ ɔɔ ní ó-dzɔ mɪ bi (amó)/(*ná)
 boy this FOC 3SG-be my son (FOC)/(FOC)
 ‘THIS BOY is my child.’
- b. **amó** as a relative marker
ɔɔɔɔɔɔ ní ɔ-bá mɪ amó dzɔ mɪ bi
 boy REL 3SG-come here REL be my son
 ‘The boy who came here is my child.’

¹⁰ The argument (analysis) done here follows from one used by Asante and Ma (2016) for the development of relative markers in Nkami.

- c. **amó** as a conditional marker
mi-tʃi **amó** **ene** **ke** **ɲaw** **amó** **be-ba**
 1SG-watch COND today as.for rain DET FUT-come
 ‘If I watch (watching), it will rain today.’
- d. **amó** as a determiner
ɔtʃi **amó** **le-di**
 woman that/the PRF-sleep
 ‘That/The woman has slept.’
- e. **ɔtʃi** **ɲá** **le-di**
 woman this PRF-sleep
 ‘This woman has slept.’

Thus, **amó** may function as a focus marker (FOC) in (21a), as a relative marker (REL) in (21b), as a conditional marker (COND) in (21c), and as a distal demonstrative determiner ‘that’ or a definite article ‘the’ in (20d). Similarly to the supposition put forward for **ní**, it may also be rational to posit that **amó**, as a (terminal) FM, evolved from the distal demonstrative determiner **amó** ‘that’. As indicated above, though **amó** still keeps part of its ‘definite’ semantics, ‘that/the’, when used as a FM, it is not contrastive in this new role. Put differently, though **amó** can be substituted with its deictic opposite, **ɲá** ‘this’, to express contrast when used as a demonstrative, as (21d-21e) demonstrates, the same cannot be done when it (**amó**) functions as a FM in FCCs, as (21a) exemplifies.

Now, I return to the reason why I consider **amó** as a FM, rather than simply as a determiner or clausal final marker, when it occurs in FCCs. As argued for the relative marker **amó** by Asante and Ma (2016), if we should consider **amó** as a determiner or clause final particle because it is phonetically and semantically related to the determiner ‘the/that’, then we may as well consider Nkami’s (introductory) focus marker **ní** as a ‘clausal introductory/boundary particle’, since it is the same form that marks focus in focus clause constructions and introduce/link subsequent clauses in coordinate and relative clause constructions. Such a move, as Asante and Ma (2016: 37) rightly observe, will obviously hinder clarity of description. Consider (20a-d) as (22a-d) here, where **ní** is glossed as a ‘clause introductory particle (CIP)’ and **amó** as a ‘clause final determiner (CFD)’.

- (22) a. **Ní** as a focus marker
oyu ní wú-dá mú amó
 thief CIP 2SG.beat 3SG.OBJ CFD
 ‘You beat a THIEF (not a saint, for instance).’
- b. **Ní** as a relative marker
oyu ní [wú-dá mú] amó le-wu
 thief CIP 2SG-beat 3SG.OBJ CFD PRF-die
 ‘The/that thief you beat is dead.’
- c. **Ní** as a clausal connective
ɔɲini amó sɔ ɲo ní mu ka sɔ anu
 man DET buy two CIP his wife buy five
 ‘The man bought two and her wife bought five.’

As Asante and Ma (2016: 37) note, clearly the substitution provides a more general charac-

terisation of **ní** and **amú** in (22) than in (20). However, this will be at the expense of clarity, especially to the non-native speaker reader: They would be confused as to what the data in (22) are dealing with. Are they referring to FCCs, relative clause constructions, coordinate clause constructions, or altogether? It is my opinion that, in Nkami's context, clarity is of more importance than a description that aims at 'wider' characterization. Significantly, the position is that it may be more appropriate to posit that **amú** and the other dedicated morphemes in Akan and Ga, **no/é**, that contribute to mark background information in FCCs, are better treated as FMs that are in heterosemic relations with determiners of various types, rather than considering them as determiners by themselves. They certainly might have evolved from determiners but in focus clause constructions, they function as FMs.

4. THE STATEMENT OF THE FOCUSED CONSTITUENT WITHIN THE DEFAULT CLAUSE

As indicated before, in Nkami a focused constituent may be co-referenced by a resumptive pronoun within the out-of-focus part. That is, an anaphoric pronoun that agrees with the left-fronted focused constituent in number, person and/or animacy typically occupies the base position of the focused constituent in the canonical clause. See in (23), for instance, that the resumptive pronouns in object function, **mú** 'her/him' and **ámú** 'them', agree with their head nouns, **oyebi** 'child' (23a) and **npebi** 'children' (19b), in person and number.

- (23) a. o-yebi **ja** **ní** **ń-dá** **mú** **(amú)**
 SG-child this FOC 1SG-beat 3SG.OBJ (FOC)
 'I beat THIS CHILD (not that one).'
- b. n-pebi **ja** **ní** **ń-dá** **amú** **(amú)**
 PL-child this FOC 1SG-beat 3PL.OBJ (FOC)
 'I beat THESE CHILDREN (not those ones).'

Notice also that in (24a) where the subject constituent in focus **oyebi** 'child' is animate, it is co-referenced within the default clause by the 3SG *animate* subject pronoun **ǎ-** 'she/he'; however, in (24b) where the focused constituent in subject function **amangu** 'mango' is inanimate, it is co-referenced by the 3SG *inanimate* subject pronoun **é-** 'it'.

- (24) a. o-yebi **ja** **ní** **ǎ-dá** **mú** **(amú)**
 SG-child this FOC 3SG.ANM-beat 3SG.OBJ (FOC)
 'THIS CHILD (not that one) beat him/her.'
- b. amangu **ja** **ní** **é-bú** **ɔde** **(amú)**
 mango this FOC 3SG.INANM-have sweetness (FOC)
 'THIS MANGO (not that one) has sweetness (is sweet-tasting).'

Thus, like simple clauses and several other areas in the grammar of Nkami (cf. Asante and Akanlig-Pare 2015, Asante 2016a), Nkami speakers make animacy distinction in the statement of the focused constituent within the out-of-focus part; an animate singular subject NP in focus is co-referenced by an animate subject pronoun **ǎ-**, while its inanimate counterpart attracts an inanimate subject pronoun **é-** in the default slot. Failure to have these pronouns overtly ex-

pressed results in anomalies. Notice, however, that whereas a resumptive pronoun explicitly resumes the default position of an *animate non-subject* NP which is left-fronted for focus (23, 25a), the default slot of an *inanimate non-subject* NP does not attract a resumptive pronoun, as (25b) illustrates.¹¹

- (25) a. **ana** **ní** **ń-mó** **mó** **(amó)**
 scorpion FOC 1SG-kill 3SG.ANIM.OBJ (FOC)
 ‘I killed a SCORPION (not a snake, for instance).’
- b. **pelele** **ní** **ń-só** **∅** **(amó)**
 tricycle FOC 1SG-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ (FOC)
 ‘I bought a TRICYCLE (not a car, for instance).’

Thus, whereas the resumptive pronoun **mó** ‘it’ resumes the default slot of the focused animate object NP, **ana** ‘scorpion’, the inanimate object NP, **pelele** ‘tricycle’, is not overtly referenced; thus, indicated by the null sign **∅**. Using ‘zero object’ (cf. Stewart 1963) or ‘null resumptive’ pronoun (cf. Saah 2010) to co-reference inanimate antecedents in non-subject roles is not confined to FCCs in Nkami. For instance, it also occurs in pragmatically neutral simple transitive clauses and extended transitive clauses, content questions, topicalized constructions, and relative clause constructions (cf. Asante 2016a).¹²

Apart from a few languages such as Ewe (cf. Ameka 2010), in most Kwa languages such as Akan, Attie, Ga¹³, Logba, and Yoruba the default subject position of a constituent in focus is recapitulated by a resumptive pronoun. This is illustrated below with data from Logba, Yoruba, and Akan, where the subject constituents in focus, **Seto**, **Ayo** and **Kofi**, are co-referenced by the resumptive pronouns, **ɔ-** (26a), **o** (26b), and **ɔ-** (26c), respectively.

- (26) a. Logba: (Dorvlo 2009: 95)
 Seto **ká** **ɔ-lá** **ebitsí-é**
 Seto FOC 3SG-beat child-DET
 ‘SETO beat the child.’
- b. Yoruba (Somaiya & Bisang 2004: 4 in Ameka 2010: 150)
 Ayo **ni** **o** **fọ** **awo**
 Ayo FOC 3SG wash cloth
 ‘AYO washed the clothes.’
- c. Akan
 Kofi **na** **ɔ-bo-o** **akodaa** **no**
 Kofi FOC 3SG-beat-PST child DET
 ‘KOFI beat the child.’

Like Nkami, the default position of an animate object argument that is preposed for focus in Akan receives an anaphoric pronoun, as (27) shows.

¹¹ The base of a second (indirect) animate object in focus is also replaced by a resumptive pronoun.

¹² Similar observations are made on Akan (cf. Stewart 1963 and Saah 2010) and Ga (Dakubu 2005).

¹³ In the case of Ga, when the subject constituent in focus is a pronoun, the use of a resumptive strategy is optional (Ameka 2010).

(27) Akan

- a. **ana** **na** **me-ku-u** **no** **(no)**
 scorpion FOC 1SG-kill-PST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ FOC
 ‘I killed a SCORPION (not snake, for instance).’
- b. **adua na** **me-dua-ye** **∅** **(no)**
 beans FOC 1SG-plant-PST 3SG.INANM.OBJ FOC
 ‘I planted BEANS (not maize, for instance).’

Thus, like Nkami, while the animate object constituent in focus, **ana** ‘scorpion’, is overtly replaced with a resumptive pronoun **no** ‘it (animate)’, the inanimate object constituent in focus, **adua** ‘beans’, is covertly represented. Besides Akan, in (almost) all Kwa languages described, the default position of an object NP, whether animate or inanimate, in focus is left empty. This is illustrated with examples from Ga, Attié, and Logba.

(28) Ga (Ameka 2010: 152)

- a. **Kofi** **(nì)** **e-yí** **∅**
 NAME (FOC) 3SG-beat 3SG.ANM.OBJ
 ‘KOFI he beat.’
- b. Attié (Bogny 2005: 26 in Ameka 2010: 152)
 āpétè **ŋ** **(m̀m̀)** **o** **bōka** **∅**
 orphan DEF (FOC) 3SG:PST help:PST 3SG.ANM.OBJ
 ‘THE ORPHAN he helped.’
- c. Logba (Dorvlo 2009: 95)
 e-bitsí-é **ká** **Seto** **ɔ-lá** **∅**
 CM-child-DET FOC Seto 3SG-beat 3SG.ANM.OBJ
 ‘Seto beat THE CHILD.’

Thus, unlike Nkami and Akan, the default object slots of the focused constituents, **Kofi**, **āpétè** ‘orphan’, and **Seto**, in all three languages, Ga, Attié and Logba, are all left null. The case of Ga is quite surprising because, like Akan and Nkami, generally Ga also distinguishes between animates and inanimates in object function through the use of overt resumptive pronoun and null representation strategies respectively. While acknowledging that the obligatory use of resumptive pronouns, particularly in object function, in Nkami is quite intriguing since it (Nkami) joins Akan as being the only two Kwa languages described that extensively employ this mechanism in focus clause constructions, I believe that some Kwa languages, particularly those belonging to the Potou-Tano group, e.g. Bia and Guang languages (Williamson & Blench 2000), would behave similarly. This is grounded on the fact that whereas both Nkami and Akan belong to the Potou-Tano sub-family of Kwa, all the others mentioned above including Attie, Ga, Logba, Yoruba, Ewe, Gungbe and other Gbe languages do not. Inspired by Ameka (2010: 157), the discussion on the statement of the focused constituent within the default clause among selected Kwa languages is summarised in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: Resumptive pronoun strategies in Nkami and some Kwa languages

Language	Subject	Object	Second (Ind.) Object	Adjunct
Nkami	Yes	Yes (if animate)	Yes (if animate)	No
Akan	Yes	Yes (if animate)	Yes (if animate)	No
Ga	Yes (optional)	No	Yes	No
Logba	Yes	No	?	No
Attie	Yes	No	?	No
Yoruba	Yes	No	?	No
Ewe	No	No	Yes (Optional)	No
Gungbe	No	No	?	No
Other Guang	?	?	?	?
Bia	?	?	?	?

5. WHICH SYNTACTIC CATEGORY CAN BE FOCUSED?

So far, our concentration has been on nouns; however, besides nouns, almost every syntactic category in Nkami, including verbs, adverbs and adjectives, can be left-fronted for focus. Before going into details, let us first examine focus strategies for some complex phrases including coordinate phrases, possessive phrases and postpositional phrases in the language.

5.1 COMPLEX PHRASES

Like in most Kwa languages (cf. Ameka 2010), it is generally possible to prepose an entire complex phrase such as a coordinate NP, a possessive phrase and a postpositional phrase for focus, as (29) illustrates.

- (29) a. Coordinate NP
Kofi na Ama ní bɛ-ba mi (amó)
 Kofi and Ama FOC 3PL-come here (FOC)
 ‘KOFI AND AMA came here.’
- b. Possessive Phrase
Ama kããse ní Kofi sɔ ∅ (amó)
 Ama car FOC Kofi buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ (FOC)
 ‘Kofi bought AMA’S CAR.’
- c. Postpositional Phrase
kããse amó asɪ/lɔ ní bɔɔlu amówaa ∅ (amó)
 car DET under/inside FOC ball DET be.LOC (FOC)
 ‘The ball is UNDER/INSIDE THE CAR.’

Thus, the coordinate NP **Kofi na Ama** ‘Kofi and Ama’, the possessive phrase **Ama kããse** ‘Ama’s car’, and the postpositional phrase **kããse amó asɪ/lɔ** ‘under/inside the car’ have been fronted for focus in (29a), (29b) and (29c) respectively. Like in most other Kwa languages, differences arise as to which of the components of these complex phrases can be extracted for focus. For instance, one major observable difference between Nkami and Akan’s focus clause

constructions is that whereas a coordinand/conjunct of a coordinate NP can be extracted for focus in Akan, it cannot in Nkami. Consider the following:

- (30) a. Akan: Coordinand of a coordinate NP
Kofi na (ɔ)=ne Ama ba-a ha (no)
 Kofi FOC (3SG)=and Ama come-PST here (FOC)
 ‘KOFI (not John, for instance) and Ama came here.’
- b. Nkami: Coordinand of a coordinate NP
***Kofi ní ɔ=na Ama be-ba mi (amu)**
 Kofi FOC 3SG=and Ama 3PL-come here (FOC)
 ‘KOFI (not John, for instance) and Ama came here.’

That is, while it is possible for **Kofi** to be extracted from its coordinate NP, **Kofi na Ama** ‘Kofi and Ama’, for focus in Akan in (30a), the same cannot be done for Nkami in (30b). Regarding possessive phrases, generally whereas a possessor NP can be extracted for focus in Nkami, a possessed NP cannot, as (31) exemplifies.

- (31) a. Basic clause
Kofi sɔ Ama kããse
 Kofi buy Ama car
 ‘Kofi bought Ama’s vehicle’
- b. Possessor NP
Ama ni Kofi sɔ mu kããse (amu)
 Ama FOC Kofi buy 3SG.POSS car FOC
 ‘Kofi bought AMA’s car (not John’s, for instance).’
- c. Possessed NP
***kããse ni Kofi sɔ Ama ø (amu)**
 car FOC Kofi buy Ama 3SG.INANM.OBJ FOC
 ‘Kofi bought Ama’s CAR (not Ama’s house, for instance).’

Thus, whereas the possessor NP, **Ama**, can be separately focused in (31b), the possessed item, **kããse** ‘car’, cannot in (31c). A similar phenomenon occurs in Ewe, Akan and most Kwa languages (Ameka 2010). In Ga, however, both the possessor and possessum can be separately extracted for focus (Dakubu 2005), as (32) shows:

- (32) Ga (Ameka 2010: 164)
- a. Basic Clause
Tete ju nuu ε shika
 NAME steal man DEF money
 ‘Tetty stole the man’s money.’
- b. Possessor NP
nuu ε (ni) Tete ju *(e)-shika
 man DEF (FOC) NAME steal 3SG-money
 ‘THE MAN Tetty stole his money.’

- c. Possessed NP
shika a (ni) Tete ju nuu ε
 money DEF (FOC) NAME steal man DEF
 ‘THE MONEY Tetey stole the man’s.’

As we observe in (32), both the possessor, **nuu** ‘man’ (32b), and possessum, **shika** ‘money’ (32c), can be extracted for focus in Ga. Lastly, in congruence with Ameka’s (2010: 164) observation that “when it comes to heads of postpositional phrases..., the Kwa languages seem to follow a uniform pattern: The postposition cannot be focused”, whereas it is possible for a dependent NP of a postpositional phrase to be extracted for focus, a postposition cannot be extracted in Nkami. Consider the following:

- (33) a. Basic clause
ɔ̀ɔ̀lu amɔ waa kããse ja asi/lo
 ball DET be.LOC car this under/inside
 ‘The ball is under/inside this car.’
- b. Dependent NP in focus
kããse ja ni ɔ̀ɔ̀lu amɔ waa ø asi/lo
 car this FOC ball DET be.LOC 3SG.INANM.OBJ under/inside
 ‘The ball is under/inside THIS CAR.’
- c. Postposition in focus
***asi/elɔ ni ɔ̀ɔ̀lu amɔ waa kããse ja**
 under/inside FOC ball DET be.LOC car this
 ‘The ball is UNDER/INSIDE the car.’

Thus, whereas the dependent NP, **kããse** ‘car’, can be separately focused in (33b), the postposition, **asi/elɔ** ‘under/inside’, cannot in (33c).

5.2 PREDICATE (VERB) FOCUS

Like in many Kwa languages, a verb serving as a predicate of a clause may be preposed for focus in Nkami. Writing on predicate focus among Kwa languages, Ameka (2010) identifies two major morpho-syntactic strategies for signalling predicate focus. He notes that “There are two strategies involving verb forms: in one case, a copy of the verb is fronted and marked with a focus particle. In the other type, a nominalised form of the verb is placed in core clause initial position and marked with a focus particle” (Ameka 2010: 157). Both strategies are applicable in Nkami depending on the verb involved. If the verb is one that can be nominalised, then both strategies can be used, as examples (34-36) illustrate.

- (34) a. **mɔsi ni ɔ̀-ɔ̀-mɔsi (amú) V. COPY**
 laugh FOC 3SG-PROG-laugh (FOC)
 ‘She is LAUGHING (not crying, for instance).’
- b. **ε-mɔsi ni ɔ̀-ɔ̀-mɔsi (amú) NOML**
 NOM-laugh FOC 3SG-PROG-laugh (FOC)
 ‘She is LAUGHING (not crying, for instance).’

- | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|--|-----------|------------|-------------------|--------------|----------------|
| (35) | a. | kpladzɪ | ní | Ama | le-kpladzɪ | (amó) | V. COPY |
| | | vomit | FOC | Ama | PRF-vomit | (FOC) | |
| | | ‘Ama has VOMITED (not defecated, for instance).’ | | | | | |
| | b. | ɛ-kpladzɪ | ní | Ama | le-kpladzɪ | (amó) | NOML |
| | | NOM-vomit | FOC | Ama | PRF-vomit | (FOC) | |
| | | ‘Ama has VOMITED (not defecated, for instance).’ | | | | | |
| (36) | a. | bie | ní | Ama | yɛ-bie | (amó) | V. COPY |
| | | bathe | FOC | Ama | DDP-bathe | (FOC) | |
| | | ‘Ama went to BATHE (not to play, for instance).’ | | | | | |
| | b. | e-bie | ní | Ama | yɛ-bie | (amó) | NOML |
| | | NOM-bathe | FOC | Ama | DDP-bathe | (FOC) | |
| | | ‘Ama went to BATHE (not to play, for instance).’ | | | | | |

Thus, while the examples of predicate focus in (34a, 35a and 36a) employ the verb copy strategy, those in (34c, 35b and 36b) employ the nominalised verb strategy. Speakers observe that there is no significant semantic difference between the two forms. However, if the verb is one that cannot be nominalised, only the verb copy strategy can be used, as (37-38) illustrate.

- | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|--|-----------|--------------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| (37) | a. | wili | ní | adzuro | amó | le-wili | V. COPY |
| | | be.cold | FOC | food | DET | PRF-be.cold | |
| | | ‘The food is COLD (not that it has gone bad, for instance).’ | | | | | |
| | b. | *e-wili | ní | adzuro | amó | le-wili | NOML |
| | | NOM-be.cold | FOC | food | DET | PRF-be.cold | |
| | | ‘The food is COLD (not that it has gone bad, for instance).’ | | | | | |
| (38) | a. | tfɪni | ní | wɔ-be-tfɪni | nte | | V. COPY |
| | | wake | FOC | 2SG-PDP-wake | early | | |
| | | ‘You will (ought to) WAKE early.’ | | | | | |
| | b. | *e-tfɪni | ní | wɔ-be-tfɪni | nte | | NOML |
| | | NOM-wake | FOC | 2SG-PDP-wake | early | | |
| | | ‘You will (ought to) WAKE early.’ | | | | | |

Thus, whereas the examples in (37a and 38a) are felicitous because the verb copy strategy is employed, those in (37b and 38b) are not because the nominalised verb strategy is used.¹⁴

Further, there are also two general possibilities when the predicate to be focused is an inherent complement verb such as **tu lu** ‘sing (call song)’, **sũã atɔ** ‘learn (learn thing)’, and **dʒi adzuro** ‘eat (eat food)’. In one case, a copy of the verb component is fronted for focus and, in another case, only the complement is fronted for focus, as (39a) and (39b) exemplify accordingly.

- | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|--|
| (39) | a. | sũã | ní | ɔ-be-sũã | atɔ | V. COPY | |
| | | learn | FOC | 3SG-FUT-learn | thing | | |
| | | ‘He will (ought to) LEARN.’ | | | | | |
| | b. | atɔ | ní | ɔ-be-sũã | ∅ | COMPL | |
| | | thing | FOC | 3SG-FUT-learn | 3SG.INANM.OBJ | | |
| | | ‘He will (ought to) LEARN.’ | | | | | |

¹⁴ As (34-38) show, while action (non-stative) verbs generally undergo nominalization through prefixation of **ɛ-/e-**, stative verbs do not.

Thus, while the verb component, **sũã** ‘learn’, is copied for focus in (39a), the inherent complement, **ato** ‘thing’, is fronted for focus in (39b). Note that since **ato** ‘thing’ is an inanimate noun, it receives zero marking at its base. In other words, nominals of inherent complement verbs behave similarly to objects of non-inherent complement verbs (simple verbs) in terms of focus formation in Nkami. Yet another possibility, though not accepted by all speakers, is to focus an action nominal formed from the verb and its inherent complement through a noun-verb compounding strategy, as (40) shows.

- (40) **atɔsũã** **ni** **ɔ-be-sũã** **∅**
 learning FOC 3SG-FUT-learn 3SG.INANM.OBJ
 ‘He will (ought to) LEARN.’

Thus, the nominal compound, **atɔsũã** ‘leaning’, which is formed from the verb, **sũã** ‘learn’, and its inherent complement, **ato** ‘thing’, occurs as the constituent in focus in (40). Regarding serial verbs, like in most Kwa languages, it is possible to focus a verb in an SVC by preposing a copy of its bare form to sentence-initial position. Unlike in most Kwa languages where only the initial verb in an SVC can be extracted for focus, however, it is possible for each of the verbs in an SVC to be separately extracted for focus in Nkami.¹⁵ Based on the basic SVC in (41a), the V₁, **yɔ** ‘go’, and the V₂, **wɔdɔɪ** ‘be heaped/be spread’, have been extracted for focus in (41b) and (41c) accordingly.

- (41) a. **Kofi** **bɛ-yɔ** **ntɕu** **wɔdɔɪ** **tankɪ** **amɔ** **lɔ**
 Kofi FUT-go water be.heaped tank DET inside
 ‘Kofi will go (fetch water) and heap the tank (Kofi will fetch water into the tank).’
- b. **yɔ** **ni** **Kofi** **bɛ-yɔ** **ntɕu** **wɔdɔɪ** **tankɪ** **amɔ** **lɔ**
 go FOC Kofi FUT-go water be.heaped tank DET inside
 ‘Kofi will GO (fetch water) and heap the tank.’
- c. **wɔdɔɪ** **ni** **Kofi** **bɛ-yɔ** **ntɕu** **wɔdɔɪ** **tankɪ** **amɔ** **lɔ**
 be.heaped FOC Kofi FUT-go water be.heaped tank DET inside
 ‘Kofi will go (fetch water) and HEAP the tank.’

Predicate (verb) focus marking in Nkami, like in some other Kwa languages, in SVCs is also quite intriguing since it is not permitted in most SVC languages of the world (cf. Aikhenvald and Dixon 2006).

5.3 ADVERBIALS IN FOCUS

Like in most Kwa languages, an adverb or a nominal in adjunct function may be left-dislocated for focus in Nkami. Such constituents may include manner adverbial demonstratives such as **ɔli** ‘like.this’ and **ɔlu** ‘like.that’; locational adverbial demonstratives such as **ɛmi (fã)** ‘here’, **ɛmɔ (fã)** ‘there’, and **ɛnu (fã)** ‘over there’; and temporal adverbials such as **inie** ‘yesterday’, **ofi** ‘year’, **ɔfe** ‘month’, **tweni** ‘morning’, **bmada** ‘Tuesday’, and **kaaku** ‘someday’. Consider the following:

¹⁵ The application of this phenomenon is limited.

- (42) a. **ɛmi (fã)** **ní** **ani-ŋu** **onini (amu)**
 here (place) FOC 1PL-see python FOC
 ‘We saw the python HERE.’
- b. **ɔlo** **ní** **mi-kpa** **mu**
 like.that FOC 1SG-like it
 ‘THAT IS how I like it.’
- c. **ofi na** **ní** **ani-be-dzi** **odzo**
 year this FOC 1PL-FUT-eat yam
 ‘We will eat yam (celebrate yam festival) THIS YEAR.’
- d. **kaaku** **ní** **me-e-kãã** **mi** **asø**
 someday FOC 1SG-FUT-say 1SG.POSS matter
 ‘I will tell my story SOMEDAY.’

Thus, the adverbial expressions **ɛmi (fã)** ‘here’, **ɔlo** ‘like.that’, **ofi** ‘year’ and **kaaku** ‘some-day’ have been fronted to sentence-initial position for ex-situ focus in (42a-d).¹⁶

5.4 ADJECTIVES IN FOCUS

Like Akan (Boadi 1974), but unlike other Kwa languages such as Ewe and Likpe (Ameka 2010), it is possible for an adjective in copula complement (predicative) function to be fronted for focus, as (43) illustrates.

- (43) a. **kugɔ ní o-dzi**
 red FOC 3SG-be
 ‘She is FAIR-SKINNED (not that she is beautiful, for instance).’
- b. **fitaa/dɪda ní e-le-bɔ mɔ me-e-fu mu ɔlo**
 white/old FOC 3SG-PRF-do but 1SG-FUT-take it like.that
 ‘It is (has become) FADED/ OUTMODED but I’ll manage it like that.’
- c. **timi ní e-le-bɔ mɔ me-e-fu mu ɔlo**
 short FOC 3SG-PRF-do but 1SG-FUT-take it like.that
 ‘It is (has become) SHORT (e.g. pestle) but I’ll manage it like that.’

As we observe in (43), the adjectives **kugɔ** ‘red’, **fitaa/dɪda** ‘white/old’ and **timi** ‘short’ have been focused in (43a), (43b) and (43c) accordingly. Note that, like adverbial focus, typically when an adjective is fronted for focus, its default position is left null, as (43) indicates. Moreover, as can be gleaned from (43), the semantic sub-classes of adjectives that characteristically take part in this phenomenon include colour, dimension and age.

6. CONCLUSION

Drawing from synchronic natural data, this paper has provided a systematic exposition of focus clause constructions (FCCs) of Nkami, an endangered Guang (Kwa, Niger-Congo) language of Ghana. It has dealt with issues that are of general interest in focus, syntax, typology, animacy

¹⁶ Since adverbials do not have animate status, they cannot be resumed with resumptive pronouns.

and grammaticalization. It has, among other things, surfaced that Nkami manifests evidence of both in-situ and ex-situ FCCs but, like in most West African languages (cf. Fiedler et al. 2010, Ameka 2010), there is an asymmetrical relationship between subject and non-subject focus: whereas a subject argument can only be focused in ex-situ focus clause constructions, a non-subject argument can be focused in both in-situ and ex-situ FCCs. Secondly, Nkami speakers may employ all three focus marking strategies, morphological, syntactic and prosodic, to indicate focus in ex-situ FCCs. Thirdly, the paper has shown that almost all lexical words/phrases including nouns, verb/verb phrases, nominalised verbs, adjectives, adverbials, interrogative words, coordinate NPs, postpositional phrases, and possessive phrases, can be preposed for focus in ex-situ FCCs. Fourthly, whenever a constituent in focus is an animate noun, a resumptive pronoun, which co-references it in person, number and/or animacy, overtly occupies its default position within the core clause. Thus, Nkami together with Akan are the only two Kwa languages described (as far as I am aware) that obligatorily employ the resumptive pronoun strategy to co-reference an animate object NP in ex-situ focus. Moreover, unlike most Kwa languages such as Ga, Gungbe, Ewe and other dialects, a verbal predicate in focus is always overtly marked by a FM. Further, this paper varied from the convention by some Kwa linguists (cf. Boadi 1974, Saah 1988, Ameka 2010, Ofori 2011, Duah 2015) by recognizing a marker, which is similar in distribution and function to what is so-called ‘Determiner (DET)’ as a FM. Significantly, Nkami’s FCC is seen as one that simultaneously employs two enclosing FMs, **ní** and **amó**, at the ends of the out-of-focus part to mark focus. The paper has also shown that apart from serving as focus markers, **ní** and **amó** perform several other grammatical functions in the language and that both are likely to have developed from demonstratives of varied types. Lastly, while emphasizing that the obligatory use of resumptive pronouns, particularly in object function, in Nkami (and Akan) is quite extraordinary, I predict that some other Kwa languages, especially those belonging to the Potou-Tano group (Williamson & Blench 2000), would behave in a parallel fashion. This belief is based on the fact that whereas both Nkami and Akan belong to the Potou-Tano sub-family of Kwa, all the other languages mentioned above including Attie, Ga, Logba, Yoruba, Ewe, Gungbe and other Gbe languages do not. Future investigation on other Potou-Tano languages (e.g. Bia and Guang languages) may be necessary to update us on the number of languages that employ the resumptive pronoun strategy in object function.

REFERENCES

Aboh E.O. 1998.

Focus constructions and the focus criterion in Gungbe. **Linguistique Africaine** 20: 5-50.

Aboh, E.O., Hartmann, K., & Zimmermann, M. 2007.

Focus and grammar: The contribution of African languages. In: E.O. Aboh, K. Hartmann, & M. Zimmermann (eds.), *Focus strategies in African languages*, pp. 1-14. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Aikhenvald, A.Y., & Dixon, R.M.W. (eds.). 2006.

Serial verb constructions: A cross-linguistic typology. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Akanlig-Pare, G., & Asante, R.K. 2016.

Vowel harmony in Nkami. **Journal of West African Languages** 43 (1): 21-44.

Ameka, F.K. 2010.

Information packaging constructions in Kwa: Micro-variation and typology. In: E.O. Aboh, & J. Essegbey (eds.), *Topics in Kwa syntax*, pp. 141-176. London & New York: Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg.

Asante, R. K. 2016a.

Nkami language: Description and analysis. PhD dissertation, Tongji University, Shanghai.

Asante, R. K. 2016b.

Complement clause constructions in Nkami. **Acta Linguistica Hafniensia** 48 (2): 219-248.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03740463.2016.1242829>.

Asante, R. K. 2017.

Introducing Nkami: The forgotten Guang language and people of Ghana. **Legon Journal of Humanities** 28 (2): 73-104. DOI:<https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ljh.v28i2.4>

Asante, R. K., & Akanlig-Pare, G. 2015.

Animacy in Nkami. **Ghana Journal of Linguistics** 4 (2): 64-91.

Asante, R. K., & Ma, Q. 2016.

Relative clause constructions in Nkami. **Studies in African Linguistics** 45 (1&2): 1-33.

Boadi, L. 1974.

Focus-marking in Akan. **Linguistics** 140: 5-57.

Boadi, L. 2005.

Three major syntactic structures in Akan: Interrogatives, complementation and relativization. Accra: Black Mask Limited.

Bogny, Y. J. 2005.

Kwa disyllabic verbs: an approach through focus characteristics. In: M.E.K Dakubu, & E.K. Osam (eds.), *Studies in the languages of the Volta Basin 3*, pp. 25-32. Department of Linguistics, University of Ghana, Legon.

Dakubu, M.E.K. 2005.

The syntax of focus in Ga and Akan and the significance of related constructions. *Paper presented at the conference on focus in African languages*, Humboldt University, Berlin, 6–8 October 2005.

Diessel, H. 1999.

Demonstratives: Form, function and grammaticalization. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Dik, S., Hoffman, M.E., de Jong, J.E., Djang, S.I., Stroomer, H., & de Vries, L. 1981.

On the typology of focus phenomena. In: T. Hoekstra, H. van der Hulst, & M. Moortgat (eds.), *Perspectives on functional grammar*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Dixon, R.M.W. 2010.

Basic linguistic theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dorvlo, K. 2009.

Focus in Logba. *Journal of West African Languages* 46: 91-106.

Duah, R.A. 2015.

Exhaustive focus marking in Akan. In: F. Bildhauer, & M. Grubic (eds.), *Mood, exhaustivity and focus marking in non-European languages*, pp. 1-28.

Duthie, A .S. 1996.

Introducing Ewe language structures. Accra: Ghana Universities Press.

É. Kiss, K. 1998.

Identificational focus versus information focus. *Language* 74(2): 245-273.

Fiedler, I., Hartmann, K., Reineke, B., Schwarz, A., & Zimmermann, M. 2010.

Subject focus in West African languages. In: M. Zimmermann, & C. Fery (eds.), *Information structure: Theoretical, typological, and experimental perspectives*, pp. 234–257. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fiedler, I., Hartmann, K., Reineke, B., Schwarz, A., & Zimmermann, M. 2006.

Subject focus in West African languages. *International Conference on Information Structure*, pp. 1-12. University of Potsdam, 6-8 June, 2006.

Hartmann, K., & Zimmermann, M. 2004.

Focus strategies in Chadic - The case of Tangale revisited. In: S. Ishihara, M. Schmitz, & A. Schwarz (eds.), *Interdisciplinary Studies on Information Structure. Working Papers of the SFB 632*.

Hartmann, K., & Zimmermann, M. 2007.

Exhaustivity arking in Hausa: A reanalysis of *nee/cee*. In: E.O. Aboh, K. Hartmann, & M. Zimmermann (eds.), *Focus strategies in African languages*, pp. 241-267. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hopper, P. J., & Traugott, E. C. 1993.

Grammaticalization. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jackendoff, R. 1972.

Semantic interpretation in generative grammar. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kenstowicz, M. 1985.

The phonology and syntax of WH-expressions in Tangale. **Studies in the Linguistic Sciences** 15: 79-91.

Kuteva, T., & Comrie, B. 2005.

The typology of relative clause formation in African languages. In: F.K.E. Voeltz (ed.), *Studies in African linguistics typology*, pp. 209-228. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Lambrecht, K. 1994.

Information structure and sentence form. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ofori, S.A. 2011.

On the basic focus marker and the basic focus sentence in Akan. **Nordic Journal of African Studies** 20 (3): 241-262.

Reineke, B. 2007.

Identificational operation as a focus strategy in Byali. In: E.O. Aboh, K. Hartmann, & M. Zimmermann (eds.), *Focus strategies in African languages*, pp. 223-240. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Saah, K.K. 1988.

Wh-questions in Akan. **Journal of West African Languages** 18 (1): 17-28.

Saah, K.K. 2010.

Relative clauses in Akan. In: E.O. Aboh, & J. Essegbey (eds.), *Topics in Kwa syntax*, pp. 91-107. London & New York: Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg.

Schwarz, A., & Fiedler, I. 2007.

Narrative focus strategies in Gur and Kwa. In: E.O. Aboh, K. Hartmann, & M. Zimmermann (eds.), *Focus strategies in African languages*, pp. 287-314. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Somaiya, R. & Bisang, W. 2004.

Left of focus-insights on topic and information structure from the perspective of Yoruba. *Paper presented at Leiden University, Ile Ife & Mainz, February.*

Stewart, J.M. 1963.

Some restrictions on objects in Twi. **Journal of African Languages** 2: 145-149.

Szabolcsi, A. 1981.

Compositionality in focus. **Folia Linguistica** 15: 141-161.

Williamson, K., & Blench, R. 2000.

Niger-Congo In: B. Heine, & D. Nurse (eds.), *African languages: An introduction*, pp. 11-42.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.