

What resumption can tell us about definites in Akan and Ewe

Abigail Anne Bimpeh, Imke Driemel, Reggie Duah

2nd Network Meeting on Definiteness, Potsdam University

December 16th, 2022

Structure of the presentation

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 - Types of definiteness
 - Resumption patterns
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Strong definites

German strong definites block contraction of determiner with preposition.

(1) Anaphoric use, *German* (Schwarz 2009: 30)

- a. Hans hat einen Schriftsteller und **einen Politiker** interviewt ...
 Hans has a writer and a politician interviewed
 ‘Hans interviewed a writer and a politician.’
- b. #... Er hat **vom Politiker** keine interessanten Antworten
 he has from-the_{weak} politician no interesting answers
 bekommen.
 gotten
 ‘... He didn’t get any interesting answers from the politician.’
- c. ... Er hat **von dem Politiker** keine interessanten Antworten
 he has from the_{strong} politician no interesting answers
 bekommen.
 gotten
 ‘... He didn’t get any interesting answers from the politician.’

Weak definites

German weak definites enforce contraction of determiner with preposition.

(2) Unique global use, *German* (Schwarz 2009: 40)

- a. Armstrong flog als erster **zum** **Mond**.
 Armstrong flew as first.one to-the_{weak} moon
 ‘Armstrong was the first one to fly to the moon.’
- b. #Armstrong flog als erster **zu dem** **Mond**.
 Armstrong flew as first.one to the_{strong} moon
 ‘Armstrong was the first one to fly to the moon.’

Weak vs. strong definites

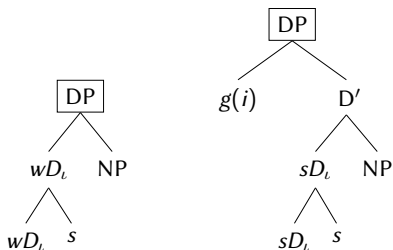
Both types of definites instantiate DPs, strong definites take a silent pronoun as an argument.

(3) Schwarz (2009) on definiteness

a. $\llbracket wD_l \rrbracket = \lambda s_r \lambda P : \exists ! x P(x)(s_r) . \iota x [(P)(x)(s_r)]$ *weak*

b. $\llbracket sD_l \rrbracket = \lambda s_r \lambda P \lambda y : \exists ! x [P(x)(s_r) \wedge x = y] . \iota x [P(x)(s_r) \wedge x = y]$ *strong*

c. Syntax:



Strong definites in Mandarin

(4) Anaphoric use, *Mandarin* (Jenks 2018: 510)

- a. Jiaoshi li zuo-zhe **yi ge nansheng** he yi ge nüsheng ...
 classroom inside sit-PROG one CL boy and one CL girl
 ‘There are a boy and a girl sitting in the classroom.’
- b. #... Wo zuotian yudao **nansheng**.
 I yesterday meet boy
 ‘... I met the boy yesterday.’
- c. ... Wo zuotian yudao **na ge nansheng**.
 I yesterday meet DEM CL boy
 ‘... I met the boy yesterday.’

Weak definites in Mandarin

(5) Unique immediate and global use, *Mandarin* (Jenks 2018: 507)

- a. Hufei he-wan-le **tang**.
 Hufei drink-finish-LE soup
 ‘Hufei finished the soup.’
- b. **Yueliang** sheng shang lai le.
 moon rise up come LE
 ‘The moon has risen.’

Weak vs. strong definites in Mandarin

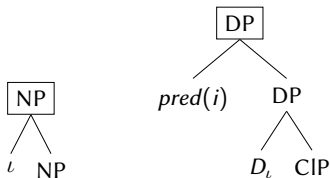
Jenks (2018) proposes for Mandarin that weak definites constitute NPs, where an ι -type shift creates uniqueness, but strong definites are DPs.¹ The semantics in (6b) also captures the meaning of demonstratives (Q is a domain restrictor).

(6) Jenks (2018) on definiteness in Mandarin

a. $[[\iota]] = \lambda s_r \lambda P : \exists ! x P(x)(s_r). \iota x [(P)(x)(s_r)]$ *weak*

b. $[[D_\iota]] = \lambda s_r \lambda P \lambda Q : \exists ! x [P(x)(s_r) \wedge Q(x)]. \iota x [P(x)(s_r)]$ *strong*

c. Syntax:



¹The situation argument is provided pragmatically.

Research agenda

- If in languages with a bare noun vs. determiner contrast arguments can be DP or NP, we might detect this size difference in other domains.
- We can then compare a language like Mandarin to a language like German/English (where there is no size difference) wrt. this domain.
- We then predict cross-linguistic variation:
 - Mandarin-type languages show contrasts depending on the type of definiteness.
 - English-type languages show no contrasts depending on the type of definiteness.
- In this talk, we will look at resumption to investigate this hypothesis.
- Kwa languages are known to have productive resumption patterns, so we will look at Ewe and Akan.

Language profiles

The 2 languages belong to the Niger-Congo language family:

Ewe

- spoken in Ghana (Volta & Oti regions) and Togo (southern) by about 2.5 million people.
- data is from the Ewedome dialect
- SVO language
- tonal marking is high/low

Akan

- spoken in Ghana by about 11 million speakers
- data is from Asante twi dialect
- SVO language
- tonal marking is high/low

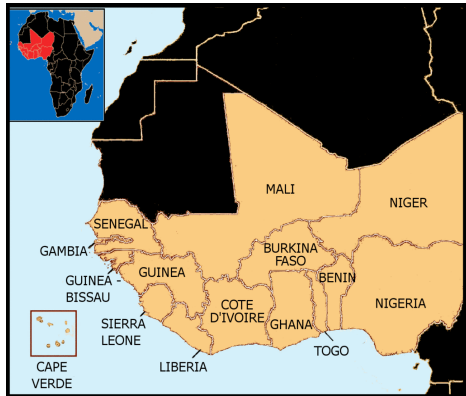


Figure: West Africa

Akan

Strong definites in Akan

Akan disposes of a definite determiner *nó* that is argued to encode familiarity (Bombi 2018, Bombi et al. 2019; cf. Arkoh and Matthewson 2013). Anaphoric definites require the definite marker, see (7).

(7) Anaphoric use, *Akan*

(Bombi 2018: 148,155)

a. Mè-tò-ò **àtààdéé bí** ònórà...
 1SG-buy-PST dress INDEF yesterday
 ‘I bought a dress yesterday.’

b. ... **àtààdéé nó** yé fè.
 dress DEF COP nice
 ‘The dress is nice.’

c. #... **àtààdéé** yé fè.
 dress COP nice
 ‘The dress is nice.’

Weak definites in Akan

Bombi (2018) reports that in some uniqueness contexts (global and larger situation) it is also possible to omit the definite determiner, i.e. in those contexts a bare noun is used to express a definite meaning.

- (8) Uniqueness use, *Akan* (Bombi 2018: 150,155)

Context : Afia is sitting on a bus, when a woman she doesn't know sits down beside her. The woman says:

- a. **Àwìà nó** ré-b̀̀ ènné.
 sun DEF PROG-hit today
 'The sun is shining today.'
- b. **Àwìà** ré-b̀̀ ènné.
 sun PROG-hit today
 'The sun is shining today.'

Weak definites in Akan

But we have to be careful! Owusu (2021) provides uniqueness contexts where the definite marker in Akan is not optional (enforces an interpretation of the widest possible situation).

(9) *Context: The beginning of a documentary on the solar system...*

Ewia (*nó) yé nsoroma.

sun DEF is star

‘The sun is a star.’

In context (10), the definite marker is optional since the situation is narrowed down to a book.

(10) *Context: A parent is showing a child a book on the solar system. They open a page with a picture of the sun...*

Ewia (nó) yé nsoroma.

sun DEF is star

‘The sun is a star.’

Resumption in Akan

Akan produces resumptive pronouns in subject and object position (Saah 1994, Ameka 2010, Korsah 2016, Korsah and Murphy 2020). We use focus structures for illustration. Animacy plays a role (inanimates result in a null pronoun).

- (11) a. [ɔbaa no]_i na me huu no_i (Saah 1994: 102)
 woman DEF FOC I saw 3SG.RES
 ‘It’s the woman I saw.’
- b. [adaka no]_i na me huui ____i
 box DEF FOC I saw
 ‘It’s the box I saw.’

Resumption in Akan

Inanimates can produce resumptive pronouns in the presence of a sentence-final adverb (Korsah and Murphy 2020: 846).

- (12) a. [aduane nó]_i na Kofí pè ____i
 food DEF FOC Kofi like
 ‘It’s the food that Kofi likes.’
- b. [aduane nó]_i na Kofí pè no_i anɔ́pá
 food DEF FOC Kofi like 3SG.RES morning
 ‘It’s the food that Kofi likes in the morning.’

So we make sure all of our examples have sentence final particles.

Resumption in Akan: size effects

Georgi and Hein (2021) document semantic effects with resumptive pronouns in Akan: focused objects can leave gaps but the objects that do so have to be non-referential, or what is likely an NP (and not a DP). We present their data on non-specific indefinites.

- (13) a. *Context: You're a new student at a school and tell a classmate that you're planning to rent a school uniform instead of buying one. However, you don't know if that's possible. Your classmate asks:*

wo-be-bisa headmaster no?
 2SG-FUT-ask headmaster DEF
 'Will you ask the headmaster?'

- b. ... *But you didn't want to bother the headmaster with this so you say:*

Daabi. ɔkyerɛkyeɛni; na me-be-bisa ___; kane.
 no teacher FOC 1SG-FUT-ask first

'No. I will ask a (random) teacher first.' (one of the many teachers around)

Resumption in Akan: size effects

Georgi and Hein (2021) argue that resumption in Akan comes about via partial lower copy deletion. Chain reduction for movement chains only deletes NP. Non-specific indefinites are NPs, hence the gap. But for DP-arguments the D head remains.

- (14) a. [ɔbaa no]_i na me huu no_i
 woman DEF FOC I saw 3SG.RES
 ‘It’s the woman I saw.’
- b. [DP [NP ɔbaa] no]_i na me huu [DP [NP ~~ɔbaa~~] no]_i
-

- (15) a. ɔkyerèkyeèni_i na me-be-bisa ___i kane.
 teacher FOC 1SG-FUT-ask first
 ‘I will ask a (random) teacher first.’
- b. [NP ɔkyerèkyeèni]_i na me-be-bisa [NP ~~ɔkyerèkyeèni~~]_i kane
-

Resumption in Akan: strong definites

We created anaphoric contexts in focus scenarios (correction focus). Anaphoric definites leave a resumptive pronoun as expected.

- (16) *Context: We both talk about Yaw and that he met a boy and a girl yesterday. I think I heard that the boy needed some help, so Yaw helped him. But you disagree and tell me:*

Dààbí. [Àbááyéwá nó]_i nà Yaw bóá-à nó_i ènórà.
 no girl DEF FOC Yaw help-PST 3SG.RES yesterday

‘No. It’s the girl that Yaw helped yesterday.’

Resumption in Akan: weak definites

Uniqueness definites leave a gap, again as expected. We tested first with an inanimate object.

- (17) *Context: I showed you a documentary of the solar system. You were not wearing your glasses and now you keep telling me how much you learned about the sun. But I tell you:*

Dààbí. Bòsómé; nà wó hú-ùì ___ i ènórà.
 no moon FOC 2SG see-PST yesterday
 ‘No. It’s the moon that you saw yesterday.’

Resumption in Akan: weak definites

We also tested uniqueness definites with an animate object. They also seem to leave gaps.

- (18) *Context: My friend is glancing through a magazine. She sees a nice man but does not know who he is. She says "I like this man!". I exclaim:*

Éìì! Pope_i nà wó pɛ ____i sèsésí?

PRT pope FOC 2SG like now

‘Hey. Is it the Pope that you like now?’

BUT: With animates it seems to matter whether the addressee knows the actual person the weak definite is referring to.

- (19) *Context: My friend is glancing through a magazine. She sees a picture of the pope and says, "I like this man!". I exclaim:*

Éìì! Pope_i nà wó pɛ nò_i sèsésí?

PRT pope FOC 2SG like 3SG.RES now

‘Hey. Is it the Pope that you like now?’

Ewe

Definiteness in Ewe

Not much is known about definiteness in Ewe. So we first introduce some data. Definiteness in Standard Ewe comes from the marker or article *la* which is realised as *a* in rapid speech (20a), as ε in the Ewedome (pronounced Evedome) dialect (20b) and as ɔ in the Tongu (pronounced Toŋu) dialect (20c).

- (20) a. Ati la/a mù
 tree DEF fall
 ‘The tree fell.’
- b. ɖevi ε yì sukoo
 child DEF yi school
 ‘The child went to school.’
- c. Nu-ɖuɖu ɔ bí
 thing-eat.REDU DEF cook
 ‘The food is ready.’

Definiteness in Ewe

The morpheme indicating definiteness is also used as a topic marker. So our data always includes definiteness in object position, or an adverb filling the topic position. Note that the topic marker only has the *a* variant.

- (21) a. etsɔ **la/a**, ηutsuvi **la** yí sukoo
 yesterday TOP man.DIM DEF go school
 ‘As for yesterday, the boy attended school.’
- b. etsɔ **a**, ηutsuvi ε yí sukoo
 yesterday TOP man.DIM DEF go school
 ‘As for yesterday, the boy attended school.’
- c. etsɔ **a**, ηu-ɖuɖu ɔ bí
 yesterday TOP thing-eat.REDU DEF cook
 ‘As for yesterday, the food was cooked.’
- d. etsɔ #ɔ / #ε, ηutsuvi **la** yí sukoo
 yesterday TOP / TOP man.DIM DEF go school
 ‘As for yesterday, the boy attended school (intended).’

Strong definites in Ewe

Anaphoric contexts enforce the use of the definite marker.

(22) Me tù nyɔnuvi kple ɲutsuvi aɖe ...
 1SG met woman.DIM and man.DIM INDEF
 ‘I met a boy and a girl.’

a. ... me ga kpɔ ɲ**utsuvi** la ɲukeke la me
 1SG REP see man.DIM DEF day.break DEF inside
 ‘I saw the boy again the next day.’

b. #... me ga kpɔ ɲ**utsuvi** ɲukeke la me
 1SG REP see man.DIM day.break DEF inside
 ‘I saw the boy again the next day.’

Weak definites in Ewe

For uniqueness contexts, the definite marker still seems required.

(23) *Context: I couldn't sleep last night and I woke up. Because of this ...*

me kpɔ dzinu ***(la)** ɛtsɔ-zã me
 1SG see moon DEF yesterday-night inside
 'I saw the moon last night.'

There might be an interaction with animacy since the bare noun becomes more acceptable with animate inherently unique noun phrases (24), though the definite marker is still preferred.

(24) Me kpɔ Kenya du-ta-tɔ ??(la).
 1SG see Kenya town-head-own DEF
 'I saw the Kenyan president.'

Weak definites in Ewe

Recall that in Akan the context in (25) enforces the use of a bare noun. In Ewe, the definite marker becomes optional, but is still possible.

(25) *Context: The beginning of a documentary on the solar system...*

- a. ηdɔ (ɔ) nye ɣleti
 sun DEF is star
 The sun is a star.

- b. ɣleti ɔka nye ηdɔ (ɔ).
 star one is sun DEF
 ‘One of the stars is the sun.’

Weak definites in Ewe

In context (26), the definite marker was optional in Akan. In Ewe, the definite marker is also optional.

(26) *Context: A parent is showing a child a book on the solar system. They open a page with a picture of the sun...*

- a. ɲɔ (a) nye ɣleti
 sun DEF is star
 ‘The sun is a star.’
- b. ɣleti ɖeka nye ɲɔ (la)
 star one is sun DEF
 ‘One of the stars is the sun.’

Resumption in Ewe: size effects?

With proper names we get resumption (tested with an ICV).

- (28) *Context: You and me fight about who should get the job. You think I encouraged Ablá. And I tell you:*

ao, Kofi yé me de-dzi-fo *(è)
 no, Kofi FOC 1SG put-heart-IC RES-3SG
 ‘No, it’s Kofi I encouraged.’

Resumption in Ewe: size effects?

The context in (29) puts an anaphoric definite in focus position, which also leads to a resumptive pronoun (tested with double object construction).

- (29) *Context: A boy and a girl are at home. Someone delivered a package and we are arguing who the package was given to. So I go and check. I find out that they gave it to the girl. So I say:*

nyɔnuvi la yé wó tsɔ package a na *(è)
 woman.DIM DEF FOC 3PL take package DEF give RES.3SG
 ‘It’s the girl they gave the package to.’

Resumption in Ewe: size effects?

Focused indefinites, however, also lead to resumption.

- (30) *Context: I'm expecting a package but I didn't receive it. My friend tells me who they gave it to. He says:*

nyɔnuvi aɖe yé wó tsɔ package a na *(è)
 woman.DIM INDEF FOC 3PL take package DEF give RES.3SG
 'It's a girl they gave the package to.'

Resumption in Ewe: size effects?

We also wondered if specificity plays a role. So we constructed a context supporting the non-specific indefinite reading. Still a resumptive pronoun appears, see (31).

- (31) *Context: I'm expecting a package but I didn't receive it. I think my neighbor might have received the package. But my neighbor tells me they didn't give it to him. But he heard a female voice in the building talking to the postman. So he tells me instead:*

nyɔnuvi aɖe yé wó tsɔ package a na *(è)
 woman.DIM INDEF FOC 3PL take package DEF give RES.3SG
 'It's a (random) girl they gave the package to.'

Resumption in Ewe: size effects?

Can the focused indefinite occur without *aɖe*? Yes, but we still get a resumptive pronoun.

- (32) *Context: I'm expecting a package but I didn't receive it. I have only two neighbours: a boy (guy) and a girl (lady). My friend doesn't know that I have only 2 neighbours. My friend tells me who they gave it to. He says:*

nyɔnuvi yé wó tsɔ package a na *(è)
 woman.DIM FOC 3PL take package DEF give RES.3SG

'It's a girl they gave the package to (not the boy).'

Conclusion

Conclusion

- Results for Ewe:
 - Ewe's definite determiner does not come with a non-uniqueness requirement since it can combine with inherently unique nouns.
 - But it is unlike English in that it can be dropped with globally unique nouns in some environments.
 - It looks like the choice between resumptives and gaps in Ewe is not influenced by the nominal type (either because they are all DPs or because we can only test with oblique objects).
- Results for Akan:
 - Akan's definite determiner cannot combine with inherently unique nouns (non-uniqueness requirement).
 - So bare nouns might indeed be NPs (become definite via ι -type shift).
 - Referential arguments require a resumptive pronoun, while non-specific indefinites leave a gap.
 - We could reproduce some of the effects but the results are not conclusive.

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Appendix: demonstratives, Akan

According to Amfo (2007), the definite marker *nó* also has a distal demonstrative use, but on its own it has to be accompanied by a pointing gesture. It can also be combined with another prenominal morpheme, in which case both of them together signal demonstrative use unambiguously. In addition, Akan also disposes of a proximal demonstrative *yí*.

(33) Demonstratives in Akan (Amfo 2007)

- a. Fá tó épónó **nó** só.
take put table DET on
'Put (it) on that table. (accompanied by pointing)'
- b. Mè-pé **sàá** àtààdéé **nó**.
I-like DEM dress DEF
'I like that dress.'
- c. Fá tó épónó **yí** só.
take put table DEM on
'Put (it) on this table'

Appendix: demonstratives, Akan

We tested demonstratives and definites in contexts enforcing pointing (Wolter 2006, Ahn 2017). Both are possible.

(34) *Zoom-in context:*

Eli and Abba take a walk in the evening and they can see many stars in the sky. Eli points to one star and says:

a. Hwè sàá òsórómá nó!
 look.IMP DEM star DEF
 ‘... Look at that star!’

b. Hwè òsórómá nó!
 look.IMP star DEF
 ‘... Look at the star!’

Appendix: demonstratives, Akan

We tested demonstratives and definites in contexts enforcing pointing (Wolter 2006, Ahn 2017). Both are possible.

(35) *Zoom-out context:*

Eli and Abla take a walk in the evening and they can see many stars in the sky. Eli notices that one star is moving rapidly, while Abla does not seem to be aware of it. So Eli points to the star and says:

a. Hwè sàá òsórómá nó!
 look.IMP DEM star DEF
 ‘... Look at that star!’

b. Hwè òsórómá nó!
 look.IMP star DEF
 ‘... Look at the star!’

Appendix: demonstratives, Ewe

Ewe has the distal (*ma*) and proximal (*ke*) demonstratives. They cannot co-occur with the definite.

- (36) a. Ati **ma** mù
 tree DEM grow
 ‘That tree fell.’
- b. Ati **ke** mù
 tree DEM fall
 ‘This tree fell.’
- c. Me kpɔ̃ ati **ma**
 1SG see tree DEM
 ‘I saw that tree.’

- (37) *Context: You are looking for a particular tree. It's not in this park but...*
 le park ma la, ati **ma** (***la**) le afima.
 in park DEM TOP, tree DEM DEF is place.there
 ‘In that park, that tree is there.’

Appendix: demonstratives, Ewe

(38) *Zoom-in context:*

Eli and Ablā take a walk in the evening and they can see many stars in the sky.

Eli points to one star and says:

a. kpɔ̌ ɣleti ma da

see star DEM IC

‘... Look at that star!’

b. kpɔ̌ ɣleti a da

see star DEF IC

‘... Look at the star!’

c. *kpɔ̌ ɣleti ma la da

see star DEM DEF IC

‘... Look at the star!’

Appendix: demonstratives, Ewe

(39) *Zoom-out context:*

Eli and Ablā take a walk in the evening and they can see many stars in the sky. Eli notices that one star is moving rapidly, while Ablā does not seem to be aware of it. So Eli points to the star and says:

- a. kpɔ̃ ɣleti ma da
 see star DEM IC
 ‘... Look at that star!’
- b. kpɔ̃ ɣleti a da
 see star DEF IC
 ‘... Look at the star!’
- c. *kpɔ̃ ɣleti ma la da
 see star DEM DEF IC
 ‘... Look at the star!’

Appendix: Ewe, homogeneity

Another test for demonstratives indicates that the definite marker works like the English definite and not the English demonstrative.

- (40) a. me di uu ma gake nye me di uu ma o
 1SG want car DEM but 1SG NEG want car DEM NEG
 ‘I like that car but I don’t like that car.’
- b. *me di uu la gake nye me di uu la o
 1SG want car DEF but 1SG NEG want car DEF NEG
 ‘I like that car but I don’t like that car.’

Appendix: Ewe, bridging

Part-whole bridging requires a definite marker (tested with inanimate).

- (41) Fiafi-to aɖe geɖe vu aɖe me. é fi ku-dɔ-ti
 thief-one.who INDEF enter car INDEF inside. 3SG steal drive-guide-stick
 *(la).
 DEF
 ‘A thief entered into a car. He stole the steering wheel.’

Appendix: Ewe, bridging

Product-producer bridging also involves the definite marker. This is difficult to test because professions in Ewe are productively marked with a suffix that looks identical to the definite marker. But see (42c) where this is not the case.

- (42) a. Zikpui la nyakpɔ. é nya é-kpà-la (*la) hã
 chair DEF beautiful. 2SG know 3SG-carve-one.who DEF QPRT
 ‘The chair is beautiful. Do you know the carpenter?’
- b. Zikpui la nyakpɔ. é nya carpenter *(la) hã
 chair DEF beautiful. 2SG know carpenter DEF QPRT
 ‘The chair is beautiful. Do you know the carpenter?’
- c. me kpɔ suku-dɔ-ɖe-asi basaa aɖe. è nya sukuvi
 1SG see school-work-give-hand terrible INDEF. 2SG know school.child
 *(la) hã?
 DEF QPRT
 ‘I saw a terrible assignment. Do you know the student?’