

# Modeling definiteness in language contact situations

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# Background

Modeling  
definiteness in  
language  
contact  
situations

Background

Codeswitching

CS and *no*  
contexts

Questions ...

- 2 types of definiteness (Schwarz, 2009, 2013)<sup>1</sup>
  - Weak article definites: situationally unique nouns
  - Strong article definites: used in anaphoric contexts.

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<sup>1</sup>Schwarz, Florian. *Two types of definites in natural language*. University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2009.

Schwarz, Florian. "Two kinds of definites cross-linguistically." *Language and Linguistics Compass* 7.10 (2013): 534-559.

# Background cont.

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Questions ...

- Akan
  - Arkoh & Matthewson (2013)<sup>2</sup>: Akan provides evidence for the strong-weak divide. *nó* is a strong definite and encodes familiarity.
  - Bombi (2018)<sup>3</sup>: Akan does not provide evidence for the strong-weak divide. *nó* encodes uniqueness.
  - Owusu (2022)<sup>4</sup>: Akan does not provide evidence for the strong-weak divide. *nó* encodes familiarity + anti-uniqueness (potential for contrast borrowing Veneeta's terminology from yesterday)

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<sup>2</sup> Arkoh, Ruby, and Lisa Matthewson. "A familiar definite article in Akan." *Lingua* 123 (2013): 1-30.

<sup>3</sup> Bombi, Carla. "Definiteness in Akan: Familiarity and uniqueness revisited." *Semantics and Linguistic Theory*. Vol. 28. 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Owusu, Augustina P. *Cross-Categorialdefiniteness/Familiarity*. Diss. Rutgers The State University of New Jersey, School of Graduate Studies, 2022.

# So far ...

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- No consensus on the semantics of the Akan definiteness marker *nó*

# Goal of the project

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Questions ...

- Many Akan speakers are bilinguals; most of the data presented in all three research are from bilingual speakers.
- How does bilingualism, particularly in contexts of codeswitching, affect the production and interpretation of *nó*?

- CS is common in bilingual contexts..
- Akan-English CS is pervasive (Cf. Forson, 1979; Mensah, 1992; a.o.)<sup>5</sup>

- (1) Ne **condition** a-yε      **very critical**.  
his condition PERF-be very critical  
'His condition is very critical' (Forson, 1979:149)
- (2) Fie no wɔ      **just by the street**.  
house DEF be.LOC just by the street  
'The house is just by the street.' (Mensah, 1992:33)
- (3) Me **feel** dε ɔbe-yε      yie  
I feel that 3SG.FUT-be alright.  
'I feel that it will be alright.' (Mensah, 1992:81)

<sup>5</sup>Forson, Barnabas. *Code-switching in Akan-English bilingualism*. University of California, Los Angeles, 1979.

- The grammar architecture is basically Akan; it controls the morpho-syntax.
- Akan is the Matrix Language while English is the Embedded Language (Classical CS a la Myers-Scotton's 1999 Matrix Language Frame model.)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Myers-Scotton, Carol. "Compromise structural strategies in codeswitching." *Bilingualism and migration* 14 (1999): 211.

# *no* in Akan-English CS

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Questions ...

- Owusu (2022) points out that *ɔmanpanin* 'president' is incompatible with *nó* in Akan.

(4) **ɔmanpanin** (~~#no~~) bɛ-kasa weekend yi.  
president DEF FUT-talk weekend DEM.PROX  
'The president will speak this weekend.'

- However, substituting the Akan word *ɔmanpanin* for the English word *president* shows different distribution.

(5) **President** (**no**) bɛ-kasa weekend yi.  
president DEF FUT-talk weekend DEM.PROX  
'The president will speak this weekend.'



# \**no* in Akan-English CS

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*Context:* There is a new teacher at a school. A colleague is explaining to him how everything works. This is the beg

- (6)    **ɔkyerɛkyerɛnipanin (#no)** bɛ-ma    wo    timetable.  
         headmaster                    DEF        FUT-ma 2SG timetable  
         ‘The headmaster will give you a timetable.’
- (7)    **Headmaster (no)** bɛ-ma    wo    timetable.  
         headmaster    DEF    FUT-ma 2SG timetable  
         ‘The headmaster will give you a timetable.’ (Bombi 20  
         ...’ glossing modified)

# \**no* in Akan-English CS

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- (8) a. **Abusuapanin (#no)** agye n-'akonwa.  
family.head DEF PERF-take 3SG.POSS-chair
- b. **Familyhead (no)** agye n-'akonwa.  
familyhead DEF PERF-take 3SG.POSS-chair  
'The head of the family has taken his seat.'

# More Data

- Also in certain contexts, *nó* is obligatory with the Akan word but optional with an English codeswitched word.

*Context:* Kofi and Kwame share an office. When Kofi was left for lunch break his brother came to look for him. When Kofi comes back, Kwame tells him...

- (9) Wo **nua** **nó** ba-a ha.  
3SG sibling DEF come-PST here  
'Your sibling came here.'
- (10) Wo **brother** (**nó**) ba-a ha.  
3SG brother DEF come-PST here  
'Your brother came here.'

# What's going on with *no*?


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-  Hypothesis: Double marking in CS literature
- In Classical CS: functional words/morphemes may be doubled (See Myers-Scotton, 2008; Poplack et al. 1989; Sankoff et al., 1990; Myers-Scotton 1993, Nishimura, 1995; Hicks, 2012, a.o.)
  - The monolingual version has definite interpretation; the bilingual version allows the for a morphological encoding of an extra definiteness .

## \**no* in Akan-English CS

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- (11) mutta se oli kidney-sta **to** aorta-**an**  
but it was kidney-from to aorta-to  
'But it was from the kidney to the aorta.'  
(English-Finnish: Poplack et al., 1987)
- (12) **ma-game-s**  
CL6.PL-game-PL  
'games' (Shona-English: Myers-Scotton, 1993)

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- (12) **ma-game-s**  
CL6.PL-game-PL  
'games' (Shona-English: Myers-Scotton, 1993)
- And Akan?
- (13) **the** previous year **no**  
DEF previous year DEF  
'in the past year' (TwumasiAgyei, 2021:82)

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- What do the new data tell us about
  - the semantics of *no* relative to semantically unique nouns
  - analysis of *no* Arko and Matthewson, Bombie, Owusu
- What kind of data do we need for semantic analysis?