

Chapter 18

Contrastive focus particles in Kusaal

Hasiyatu Abubakari

University of Vienna, Austria

This paper presents and discusses the particles used in expressing contrastive focus¹ in Kusaal, a Gur language spoken in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Togo. Contrary to the earlier claim made by Abubakari (2011) that focus is morphologically null in the language, the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* are identified as contrastive focus markers in Kusaal. The particle *kà* is limited to fronted focused items, whilst *ń* and *né* are limited to in-situ focused constituents. Ex-situ focus always bears contrastive interpretation, hence the obligatory use of *kà*. In-situ focus is marked prosodically. However, the in-situ use of *ń* and *né* correlates with a contrastive and exhaustive focus interpretation. To determine the validity of *ń*, *né* and *kà* as contrastive focus particles, I subject them to various tests of exhaustivity from which I conclude that these are contrastive focus particles in the language.

1 Introduction

The concept of contrastive focus, marked with different strategies in most languages, has received a lot of attention in the literature. É. Kiss (1998) looks at the concept with data from Hungarian and English, Horn (1981) with data from English, Szabolcsi (1981) with Hungarian, Hartmann & Zimmermann (2007) with Hausa, and Duah (2015) with Akan. Additionally, Hudu (2012) discusses contrastive focus constructions in Dagbani, Hiraiwa (2005) and Hiraiwa & Adams (2008) also mention focus constructions in Buli and Dagaare respectively. Abubakari (2011) analyses focus as morphologically null in Kusaal. This paper seeks to clarify that notion by showing that *information* focus is not overtly marked

¹The use of the term contrastive focus is aligned with what É. Kiss (1998) refers to as exhaustive focus or identificational focus. With this background, the terminological use of identificational focus, contrastive focus and exhaustive focus are meant to refer to the same notion that is expressed by the particles *kà*, *ń*, *né* in Kusaal.



since Kusaal does not have a grammatical focus marker (1b); but *contrastive* focus is marked using the particles *kà*, *ń*, *né* (2a–b).

Context: Meals are not to be repeated; the questioner in (1a) knows that the children ate something yesterday but does not know what exactly they ate. Focus is therefore on what was eaten.²

- (1) a. Q: Bíís lá sà dī bós?
children DEF PRT eat.PERF what
‘What did the children eat yesterday?’
b. Ans: Bíís lá sà dī **mùì**.
children DEF PRT eat.PERF rice
‘The children eat *rice* yesterday.’

Context: The hearer thought the children ate something other than rice, for example beans. The sentences in (2a–b) are corrections to the perceived notion of what was eaten yesterday.

- (2) a. **Mùì** kà bà sá dī.
rice FOC 3PL. PRT eat.PERF
‘It is *rice* (and nothing else) that they ate yesterday’
b. Bà sà dī né **mùì**.
3PL. PRT eat.PERF FOC rice
‘It is *rice* (and nothing else) that they ate yesterday’

In these examples, (1b) is an instance of information or presentational focus, where the focused constituent does not carry any contrastive interpretation. The utterances in (2a–b) on the other hand convey exhaustive interpretation, where what is eaten is not only emphasized but also exhaustive (in the sense that *only rice* is eaten) and contrastive (in the sense that *what is eaten is rice and nothing else*).

Extensive research on discourse-related information widely differentiates between two different forms of focus (Halliday 1967; Chafe 1976; Szabolcsi 1981; Michael 1986; É. Kiss 1998; Vallduví & Vilkuna 1998; Molnár 2002). É. Kiss (1998) refers to the two forms as: “information focus” and “identificational focus”. Alongside É. Kiss (1998), Vallduví & Vilkuna (1998) and Selkirk (2008), where it is

²Verbs do not inflect for tense in Kusaal. The remoteness of an activity is expressed using particles. The particle *sà* means the event is a day old, *dàà* means the event is two days old but less than a year and *dà* means the event is a year and beyond.

assumed that the evocation of alternative is restricted to contrastive or identificational focus, another widely acknowledged semantic definition of focus is Rooth's (1985; 1992; 1996) "alternative semantics" where the argument is made that "focus indicates the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expression" (cf Krifka 2007:6). By consequence, any kind of focus is assumed to set an alternative against which focused constituents are evaluated. This line of argumentation is followed by Zimmermann, who further adds that:

...the alternatives that play a role with contrastive focus are not just calculated relative to the semantic denotation of the focus constituent (the semantic alternative). Instead, they are calculated relative to the focus denotation together with the speaker's suppositions as to which of these alternatives the hearer is likely to expect (discourse-semantic alternative). (Zimmermann 2008: 3).

This work is not intended to go through the merits or demerits of these arguments. The fundamental goal is to provide empirical evidence in support of the claim that Kusaal does not have an overt grammatical focus particle and that the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* are used in marking contrastive focus. I will therefore align this work with the definition of É. Kiss (1998), which provides the platform for differentiating information focus, which is morphologically null, from identificational focus, which uses the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* in Kusaal. The following serve as the working definitions for (I) information focus and (II) identificational focus respectively.

- (I) "If a sentence part conveys new, nonpresupposed information marked by one or more pitch accents – without expressing exhaustive identification performed on a set of contextually or situationally given entities, it is a mere information focus." (É. Kiss 1998: 246)
- (II) "An identificational focus represents a subset of the set of contextually or situationally given elements for which the predicate phrase can potentially hold; it is identified as the exhaustive subset of this set for which the predicate phrase actually holds." (É. Kiss 1998: 249)

In this paper I discuss the syntax and semantics of the particles *kà*, *ń*, and *né* in Kusaal and argue that these particles are used in expressing exhaustive/contrastive focus every time they occur in a construction with focus interpretation. Whereas the particle *kà* is limited to fronted focused items only and is

obligatory whenever fronting occurs, *ń* and *né* are limited to in-situ focused constituents any time a contrastive/exhaustive focus interpretation is desired. Ex-situ focus always bears a contrastive interpretation and as such requires the obligatory use of *kà*. Kusaal marks in-situ focus using focal stress. The use of *ń* and *né* correlates with a contrastive/exhaustive focus interpretation. The grounds for these assertions are born out of the observed syntactic and semantic properties exhibited by these particles in Kusaal. Even though they perform similar functions compared to grammatical focus markers by triggering focus related interpretations, they differ significantly from default grammatical focus markers on the following grounds: First, the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* are not default grammatical focus elements like *lá* and its variants in Dagaare, where the default focus marker must obligatorily occur in all declarative constructions (Bodomo 1997), even when no contrastive/exhaustive focus interpretations are encoded. Second, the presence of these particles has a direct semantic impact on the interpretation of the focused constituent. Either they cause an exhaustive/contrastive interpretation of the focused item, or the focused status of the constituent could be said to cause the appearance of these particles. They are excluded in non-exhaustive environments such as ‘mention-some’ contexts or contexts where a property is known to hold more than the focused entity (Hartmann & Zimmermann 2007: 242).

Some of the major questions this paper seeks to answer are:

1. How is discourse-related information packaged using the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* in Kusaal?
2. How can one determine whether indeed the identified particles are contrastive/exhaustive focus particles in Kusaal?

The paper is organized into five sections. The second section looks at information packaging strategies in Kusaal and analyses the various types of focus constructions. In the third and fourth sections, I apply various standard tests for exhaustivity on the identified focus particles to verify whether they are indeed contrastive/exhaustive focus particles. The conclusion forms the final section.

2 Focus constructions in Kusaal

As indicated earlier, this work uses the definition of É. Kiss (1998) as a background in analyzing and setting apart the two types of focus in Kusaal. Information or presentational focus is expressed prosodically where the focused item

receives extra stress in its pronunciation. No grammaticalized focus particle is used in such instances. Information focus is therefore argued to be overtly null in Kusaal. Contrastive focus on the other hand uses the particles *kà*, *ń*, and *né*. In the following subsections, I present various contexts that naturally elucidate the use of information focus (§2.1) and contrastive focus (§2.2).

2.1 Information focus constructions in Kusaal

Following the definition in (I) by É. Kiss (1998: 246), the notions expressed using information focus are not expected to be exhaustive in nature. They serve to dissuade one's ignorance about an event, action or situation. The answers to the *wh*-questions in the examples below represent instances of information focus in Kusaal.

Context 1: Several things need to be done. The questioner does not know the activity carried out by a partner and underrates the relevance of what was done. The question in (3a) is used and the response in (3b) provides new information with focus on the activity that was carried out. It could be that several other activities were carried out but the most salient is the *buying of the items*.

- (3) a. Q: Ò sà kēŋŋē māāl bós?
 3SG PRT go.PERF do.PERF what
 ‘What at all did s/she go to do yesterday.’
 b. Ans: Ò sà kēŋŋē *dā'* *lá'ád lá*.
 3SG PRT go.PERF buy.PERF items DEF
 ‘S/he went and *bought the items* yesterday.’

Context 2: A group of children are playing. The youngest one is hit and he starts crying. The mother in (4a) wants to know who hit the child. One of the children who saw *Aduku* hitting the child responds as in (4b). It could also be the case that there are other children who hit the child although they are not mentioned.

- (4) a. Q: Ànó'ɔn bŭ' bííg lá?
 who beat-PERF child DEF.
 ‘Who beat the child?’
 b. Ans: *Àdúkú* bŭ' bííg lá.
 Aduku beat-PERF child DEF.
 ‘*Aduku* beat the child.’

Aduku's mother also hears that her child has beaten someone, and asks to know who her child has beaten (5a). Again it could be that there are other victims of *Aduku* but only *Asibi* is mentioned (5b).

(5) a. Q: Àdúkú bú' àn'óné?
Aduku beat-PERF who

'Who did Aduku beat?'

b. Ans: Àdúkú bú' Àsíbí.
Aduku beat-PERF Asibi.

'Aduku beat *Asibi*.

In all the answers to questions (3a–5i) above, the sentences convey new, non-presupposed information, since the questioner has no knowledge of the information or the response the respondent is going to offer. The focused items do not have any form of contrastive/exhaustive interpretation and no overt morphological focus particles are used.

2.2 Contrastive focus constructions in Kusaal

Again following the working definition for identificational focus in (II), it will be seen that unlike information focus, contrastive focus constructions are largely inherently exhaustive or exhaustive by implicature. I illustrate the various distributions of the particles *kà*, *ń*, *né* in packaging this notion.

2.2.1 Ex-situ focus marking with *kà*

The particle *kà* occurs immediately after any item fronted to the left periphery of any construction. *Wh*-focus phrases are assumed to have moved to a designated focus position and they co-occur with the ex-situ focus particle *kà* (see Aboh 2007). Answers to questions involving *wh*-focus-phrases must have the particle *kà* after the focused constituent. It is ungrammatical to substitute *kà* with either *ń* or *né* in ex-situ focus constructions in the language.

(6) a. Q: Bó kà fù dá dā': búúg béε p'égó?
what FOC 2SG PRT buy.PERF: goat or sheep

'What did you buy: a goat or a sheep?'

b. Q: *Bó né fù dá dā': búúg béε p'égó?
what FOC 2SG PRT buy.PERF: goat or sheep

'What did you buy: a goat or a sheep?'

- c. Q: *Bó ní fù dá dā': búúg béε pé'úgǝ?
 what FOC 2SG PRT buy.PERF: goat or sheep
 'What did you buy: a goat or a sheep?'
- d. Ans: Búúg kà m̀ dá dā'.
 goat FOC 1SG PRT buy.PERF
 'It is *a goat* that I bought' (not a sheep)
- e. Ans: *Búúg né m̀ dá dā'.
 goat FOC 1SG PRT buy.PERF
 'It is *a goat* that I bought' (not a sheep)
- f. Ans: *Búúg ní m̀ dá dā'.
 goat FOC 1SG PRT buy.PERF
 'It is *a goat* that I bought' (not a sheep)
- (7) a. Q: Ànó'ón bííg kà fù īēdá: Àsíbí béε Àdúkǝ?
 who child FOC 2SG search Asibi or Aduko
 'Whose child are you after: Asibi or Aduko?'
- b. Ans: Àsíbí bííg kà m̀ īēd.
 Asibi child FOC 1SG search
 'It is *Asibi's child* I am after.'

The question in (6a) is an example of a contrastive *wh*-focus construction with a set of alternatives. The response equally conveys a strong contrastive focus interpretation by excluding other alternatives from what is bought to 'a goat' and not, for instance, 'a sheep'. The use of *kà* in *wh*-questions as well as in fronted focused items causes a contrastive focus interpretation of the focused constituent. It is implied that the particle *kà* serves as a contrastive focus particle in Kusaal in ways similar to the particle *ka* in Dagbani (Hudu 2012).

2.2.2 In-situ focus marking with *né*

The particle *né* can be used with the object NP, the VP as well as the entire IP. Whenever focus is expressed on the entire IP, *né* occurs at the end of the entire clause and has its scope spread across the whole construction. However, when focus is expressed on an object NP or an adverbial, the particle occurs before the object NP, thus after the verb (8b), and before the locative adverbial adjunct or complement (9b). The particle *kà* cannot be used in-situ, nor can the particle *ní* substitute *né*. This explains the ungrammaticality of the examples in (8c-d).

- (8) a. Q: Bó kà pú'á lá sà dā' dá'á-n lá?
 what FOC woman DEF. PRT buy.PERF market-LOC DEF.
 'What did the woman buy at the market?'
- b. Ans: Pú'á lá [_{VP} sà dā' né núá] [_{PP} dá'á-n lá.]
 woman DEF PRT buy.PERF FOC fowl marke-LOC DEF.
 'The woman bought a *fowl* at the market'
- c. Ans: *Pú'á lá sà dā' kà núá dá'á-n lá.
 woman DEF PRT buy.PERF FOC fowl marke-LOC DEF.
 'The woman bought a *fowl* at the market'
- d. Ans: *Pú'á lá sà dā' n' núá dá'á-n lá.
 woman DEF PRT buy.PERF FOC fowl marke-LOC DEF.
 'The woman bought a *fowl* at the market'
- (9) a. Q: Yà kà pú'á lá sà dā' núá lá?
 where FOC woman DEF. PRT buy.PERF fowl DEF
 'Where did the woman buy the fowl?'
- b. Ans: Pú'á lá sà dā' [_{NP} núá lá] né [_{PP} dá'á-n lá].
 woman DEF PRT buy.PERF fowl DEF FOC market-LOC DEF
 'The woman bought the fowl *at the market*'
- (10) a. Q: Bó kà Àdólúbà sà mǎǎle?
 what FOC Adoluba PRT do.PERF
 'What did Adoluba do?'
- b. Ans: Àdólúbà [_{VP} sà kūl né.]
 Adoluba PRT go-home.PERF FOC
 'Adoluba went-home.'
- (11) a. Q: Bó mǎǎle?
 what make/do.PERF
 'What happened?'
- b. Ans: [_{IP} Bís lá dī dīb lá né.]
 child DEF. eat.PERF food DEF FOC
 'The children ate the food.'(an unexpected occurrence)

In (10b–11b) the particle *né* assumes an IP internal right position with a scope that extends to cover the entire construction. It is equally possible to have *né* focusing the object DP in instances such as below.

- (12) a. Q: Bó kà Àdólúbá dā'ā?
 what FOC Adoluba buy.PERF
 ‘What did Adoluba buy?’
 b. Ans 1: Àdólúbá dā' né núá.
 Adoluba buy.PERF FOC fowl
 ‘Adoluba bought a fowl’
 c. Ans 2: Àdólúbá dā' núá né.
 Adoluba buy.PERF fowl FOC
 ‘Adoluba bought a fowl’

The example in (12b) serves as the expected response to the question in (12a). The particle *né* occurs before the focused item and causes an exhaustive/contrastive interpretation of the item bought. On the other hand, the example in (12c), where the particle occurs after the focused object DP, can be used in a context where *Adoluba* is known for not buying anything when he is visiting. This time around he surprises everybody by buying ‘a fowl’.

To account for the word order variation, it is assumed that *né* behaves as an adnominal selected by the NP/DP or PP it modifies (see Renans 2016:§3). It behaves as an adverbial when it modifies VPs and IPs, in which case it merges with the entire IP or VP as illustrated below.

- a. *né* [NP/DP].....Adnominal *né*
 b. [VP] *né* Adverbial *né*
 c. [IP] *né* Adverbial *né*

2.3 In-situ focus marking with *ń*

The particle *ń* is restricted to subject focus. It is expected to occur after all subject NPs or DPs deemed to have an exhaustive/contrastive focus interpretations.

It is infelicitous to use the particles *né* and *kà* in focusing subject constituents, as shown in (13b-c).³

³A reviewer raised a question as to whether subject focus involves any form of movement in Kusaal. The situation is not immediately clear for the following reasons:

(1) Assuming that subject focus has the structure: [_{FocP} n [_{TP} Subj [VP OBJ]]], the hypothesis is that the subject moves from Spec TP to Spec FocP, triggered by both Agree and EPP features on FocP.

(2) A problem arises when the subject is substituted by other elements such as the *wh*-phrases *ànw'ən(ε)* 'who' and *bɔɔ* 'what'. It is ungrammatical to focus the *wh*-phrase as subject with the subject focus particle *ń*, as in (ii) and (vi), though the constituent that corresponds to the *wh*-phrase in the answer to the question can be focused with *ń* as in (iii) or it can be left bare as in (iv).

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>(i) Ànɔ́'ónè dī dííb lá? who eat.PERF food DEF 'Who ate the food?'</p> | <p>(ii) *Ànɔ́'ónè ń dī dííb lá? who FOC eat food DEF</p> |
| <p>(iii) Ans: Pú'á lá ń dī dííb lá. woman DEF FOC eat food DEF 'It is the woman who ate the food.'</p> | <p>(iv) Pú'á lá dī dííb lá. woman DEF eat food DEF 'The woman ate the food.'</p> |
| <p>(v) Bɔ́ɔ ɔ́nb váánd lá? what chew leaves DEF 'What chewed the leaves?'</p> | <p>(vi) *Bɔ́ɔ ń ɔ́nb váánd lá? what FOC chew leaves DEF</p> |

However, it is grammatical to focus *wh*-phrases, using the non-subject focus particle *né*, if they happen to be objects of the sentence.

- (vii) Àdúk bŭ' né ànɔ́nè?
 Aduk beat.PERF FOC who
 'Who (specifically) did Aduk beat?'
- (viii) Búóg lá ɔ́nb né bɔ́ɔ?
 goat DEF chew FOC what
 'What (specifically) did the goat chew?'

The situation is unclear in view of the fact that *wh*-phrases cannot co-occur with the focus particle *ń* in subject position, even though it is grammatical to have the non-subject focus particle *né* co-occurring with the same *wh*-phrases at object position. One cannot argue that *wh*-phrases in subject position have the structure in (1) even though the constituents in the answer which correspond to the *wh*-phrase can be focused using *ń*. I therefore assume the vacuous movement hypothesis and argue that subject focus in Kusaal is an instance of in-situ focus until further evidence is found to counter this assumption.

- (13) a. Dáú lá *ń* dā' bʋʋg lá.
 man DEF FOC buy.PERF goat DEF
 'The man bought the goat (not the woman)'
- b. *Dáú lá *né* dā' bʋʋg lá.
 man DEF FOC buy.PERF goat DEF
 'The man bought the goat (not the woman)'
- c. *Dáú lá *kà* dā' bʋʋg lá.
 man DEF FOC buy.PERF goat DEF
 'The man bought the goat (not the woman)'

- (14) Dáú *ń* bēē dǔǔgin lá.
 man FOC COP.be room-LOC DEF
 'A man is in the room (not a woman)'
 'A brave man is in the room (not a coward).'

The particle *ń* also cliticizes on subject pronouns to form strong or emphatic forms.⁴

- (15) Ón sá dā' núá lá
 3SG-EMPH PRT buy.PERF fowl DEF
 'S/he bought the fowl'

In (15), the focus particle is attached to the subject pronoun to create the emphatic form *on/ɔn* '3SG.EMPH'. The emphatic pronoun is not exclusive in its interpretation. In fronting, it occurs with *kà* and in in-situ focus it co-occurs with the adverbials *má'áá* 'alone, only, just' and *kvn-kvn* 'just' for an exclusive interpretation as illustrated in (16–17). This will be further discussed in §4.1.

- (16) Ón *kà* m̄ b̄ɔ̄ɔd.
 3SG-EMPH FOC 1SG like
 'It is *him/her* that I like (not any other person).'
- (17) Ón *má'áá* dá dā' núá lá
 3SG-EMPH alone PRT buy.PERF fowl DEF
 'S/he alone bought the fowl.'

⁴Subject pronouns and their corresponding emphatic forms: m/man '1SG/1SG.EMPH' fu/fun '2SG/2SG.EMPH' ɔ/ɔn '3SG/3SG.EMPH' ti/tinam '1PL/1PL.EMPH', ya/yanam '2PL/PL.EMPH', ba-ban/banam '3PL./3PL.EMPH'

In this section, the various ways of packaging both information and contrastive focus in Kusaal have been demonstrated. It has been shown that Kusaal does not have an overt grammatical focus particle and whereas information focus is morphologically null, contrastive focus is marked using the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né*. The particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* are purposely used to convey contrastive/exhaustive focus any time they occur in a construction with focus interpretation. Whereas *kà* is used for fronted DPs and NPs, *ń* and *né* are used in-situ: *ń* for subject NPs, and *né* for object NPs, VPs as well as IPs. In the following section, the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* are subjected to several tests for exhaustivity to ascertain their true statuses as contrastive/exhaustive focus particle in Kusaal.

3 Tests for exhaustivity

Several standard tests are used in the literature in testing exhaustive focus. In this section, I demonstrate how some of these tests are used to justify the claim that the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* are indeed contrastive/exhaustive focus particles in Kusaal. In all focus constructions with the aforementioned particles in the language, there is a conversational implicature that the answer to the question/subject under discussion is the strongest true answer (Beaver & Clark 2008; Roberts 2012). The following are accounts of some tests on the particles: *kà*, *ń* and *né* in Kusaal.

3.1 Natural context/Spontaneous speech context

This test is in line with what van der Wal (2014) refers to as “Heuristic: Context conjuring”. It is considered as one of the simplest tests for focus diagnostics in languages. This test involves the creation of contexts or scenarios where speakers are presented with situations that will naturally incite/elicit responses with contrastive focus interpretations. Another angle is to present speakers with utterances with a (contrastive) focus interpretation and ask their intuitions about when these utterances could be used felicitously or more naturally (van der Wal 2014: 5). The following contexts, (18) and (19), generate the responses in examples (18a–b) and (19a) respectively.

- (18) Context i: There are two animals, a goat and a sheep, and you ask which one the man bought (contrast).
Context ii: You expect the man to buy a sheep. (The responses could be used as corrections because the hearer believes something different. It could also be used to show surprise in unexpected situations).

- a. Dáú lá sà dā' né búúg.
 man DEF PRT buy.PERF FOC goat
 'It is a goat the man bought.'
- b. Búúg kà dāú lá sá dā'.
 goat FOC man DEF PRT buy.PERF
 'It is a goat the man bought.'

(19) Context i: There are two people, a man and a woman. Which one of them bought a goat? (contrast)

Context ii: You expect the woman to buy a goat (correction/unexpectedly)

- a. Dáú lá ní sá dā' búúg.
 man DEF FOC PRT buy.PERF goat
 'It is the man that bought a goat.'

The examples in (18–19) are naturally produced by speakers under the proposed contexts with the use of the particles *kà*, *ní* and *né*. These sentences convey both contrastive and exhaustive focus interpretations. It is infelicitous to respond to the questions under the supposed contexts without using these particles.

3.2 Coordination

Szabolcsi (1981) uses coordination in order to identify exhaustive focus in Hungarian. Duah (2015) applies this technique to data in Akan, a Kwa language, with similar results. In my own test, I use a pair of sentences: one with a focused coordinated DP (20b–c) and another one where one of the coordinated DPs is dropped (20d–e). With exhaustive focus, the second sentence without the coordination cannot be a logical consequence of the first one. In the answers to question (20a), I use both *ex-situ* and *in-situ* contrastive/exhaustive particles *kà* (20b) and *né* (20c) in comparison with *in-situ* focus without these particles (21a).

- (20) a. Q: Bó kà dāú lá dā'ā?
 what FOC man DEF. buy-PERF
 'What did the man buy?'
- b. Ans1: Búúg né nááf kà dāú lá dā'ā.
 goat CONJ cow FOC man DEF. buy-PERF
 'It is a goat and a cow that the man bought.'

c. Ans2: Dáú lá dā' né búúg né nááf.
 man DEF buy.PERF FOC goat CONJ cow

'It is *a goat* and *a cow* that the man bought.'

d. Ans3: #Búúg kà dáu lá dā'.
 goat FOC man DEF buy-PERF

'It is *a goat* that the man bought'

e. Ans4: #Dáú lá dā' né búúg.
 man DEF buy.PERF FOC goat

'It is *a goat* that the man bought'

(21) a. Ans1: Dáú lá dā' búúg né nááf.
 man DEF buy.PERF goat CONJ cow

'The man bought *a goat* and *a cow*.'

b. Ans2: Dáú lá dā' búúg.
 man DEF buy-PERF goat

'The man bought *a goat*.'

If the utterances in (20b-c), in which the coordinated NPs *a goat and a cow* are focused with the particles *kà* and *né* respectively, are given by a speaker, this speaker cannot give the responses in (20d-e) as partial descriptions of the former since this will amount to a contradiction. This arises due to the presence of the particles *kà* and *né* which contrastively/exhaustively express the number of items bought to be two: 'a goat and a cow'. However, if the speaker had used the construction in (21a) where 'a goat' and 'a sheep' are focused in-situ (suprasegmentally) without the use of *kà* or *né* then the answer in (21b) can also be given as a partial response to the question in (20a)⁵.

3.3 Numerals

Using a variation of the coordination test with focused numerals (see Szabolcsi 1981; É. Kiss 1998) where a numeral is added to the noun and focused in instances where focus is exhaustive, the focused entity must be equal to the original entity in number; if not there will be contradiction in the sentence. The scope of the quantifier interprets as 'exactly' in exhaustive focus environments whereas it interprets as 'at least' in non-exhaustive environments in Kusaal. (see Szabolcsi 1981: 155).

⁵See Duah (2015) for a similar analysis of data from Akan.

The sentence in (22b) suggests that the number of people who went to the market is five. But (22c) which follows from (22b) shows that if five people went to the market then at least three people went to the market.

- (22) a. Q. Nídíb àlà sà kēŋ dá'á lá?
 people how.many PRT go.PERF market DEF
 'How many people went to the market?'
- b. Ans1: **Nídíb ànú** sà kēŋ dá'á lá.
 people five PRT go.PERF market DEF
 'Five people went to the market'
- c. Ans2: **Nídíb àtán'** sà kēŋ dá'á lá.
 people three PRT go.PERF market DEF
 'Three people went to the market'

The logical conclusion from the interpretations of (22b-c) further reveals that the semantics of numerals is not always exact. It could be either the exact amount or a lower boundary (Horn 1972; Levinson 2000; cf van der Wal 2014: 15).

In contrast, the contrastive and exhaustive focus particles; *kà*, *ń* and *né*, make it impossible for numerals to maintain their upward entailing quality and as such they only refer to the exact quantity of the number (see van Kuppevelt 1996; van Rooij 2002; van Rooij & Schulz 2004).

- (23) a. Q. Nídíb àlà sà kēŋ dá'á lá?
 people how.many PRT go.PERF market DEF
 'How many people went to the market?'
- b. Ans1: **Nídíb ànú ń** sà kēŋ dá'á lá.
 people five FOC PRT go.PERF market DEF
 'It was *five people* who went to the market.'
- c. Ans2: Nídíb àtán' **ń** sà kēŋ dá'á lá.
 people three FOC PRT go.PERF market DEF
 'It was *three people* who went to the market.'

The answer in (23b) contradicts (23c) because (23b) implies that exactly five people went to the market, whilst (23c) implies that exactly three people went to the market.

The different interpretations of the answers to the same questions (22a) and (23a) are due to the types of focus expressed by the answers to these questions.

Whereas the answers to the question in (22a) express information focus, the answers to the question in (23a) express exhaustive/contrastive focus using the particle *ń* for subject focus. The answers in (23b-c) suggest the impossibility of using the exhaustive focus marker in identifying a single entity out of a plural group (Hartmann & Zimmermann 2007: 253). This suggests that the particles identified are contrastive and exhaustive focus particles in Kusaal.

3.4 Weak quantifiers

The indefinite quantifiers *sí'á/siéba* 'some' and *bí'él/bí'élá* 'a few' cause a narrow focus interpretation whenever they co-occur with the contrastive/exhaustive focus particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* in Kusaal. This, as also observed by Skopeteas & Gisbert (2010: 1387; cf van der Wal 2014), is because "the definite quantifiers 'some' and 'a few' are upward entailing, i.e. they imply that the denoted quantity reaches at least a minimum from a scale of potential quantities" (cf van der Wal 2014: 15).

- (24) Tì sà pāām lígídi lá síébá.
3PL PRT get.PERF money DEF some
'We got the/some of the money'
(..., so we can solve the problem)
#(..., so we cannot solve the problem)

The upward entailment quality of the quantifier in (24) makes it possible to interpret the sentence as 'receiving/getting all the required money or getting at least a substantial amount of the required money which can be used to address the situation at hand'.

On the other hand, when the contrastive or exhaustive focus particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* are used with the indefinite quantifiers, *si'a/sieba* 'some', the derived interpretation excludes the upward entailing quality of the quantifier, resulting in an interpretation with a narrow focus (25b).

- (25) a. Lígídi là síébá kà tì sá pāām.
money DEF some FOC 3PL PRT get
'It is some/part of the money we got.'
- b. Tì sà pāām né lígídi lá síébá.
3PL PRT get FOC money DEF some
'It is some/part of the money we got.'
(..., so we can solve the problem)
(..., so we cannot solve the problem)

3.5 Part as a whole relationship

Unlike instances involving non-exhaustive focus when a part can be used in connection to a whole as illustrated in (26b), which is an answer to (26a), it is illogical and illicit to use the exhaustive particles *ní* and *né* after a focused entity, (26c), which captures part of a whole group (wider entity). Hartmann & Zimmermann (2007: 253) refer to this context as the “mention-some environment”. Consider the scenario below and the question and answer that follow it.

(26) Context: *Asibi* is looking for a child to send on an errand. There are a lot of children playing at the playground. For lack of time, she only wants to get the name of one of them and she finds out from *Akuda*:

- a. Q: Àsíbí: fù mí' báne díém yíŋ lá?
2SG know those play-IMPERF outside LA
'Do you know those playing outside?'
- b. Ans 1: Àkúdà: één, Àzúmà bēē bà sùúgi-n.
Yes, Azuma COP.be their middle-LOC
'Azuma is among them'
- c. Ans 2: Àkúdà:? één, Àzúma m bēē bà sùúgi-n.
Yes, Azuma FOC COP.be their middle-LOC
'It is Azuma who is among them.'

Akuda in (26b) mentions the name of a child who is among the children who are playing. In this context it would be contradictory as well as illogical to use the exhaustive in-situ subject particle *m* (=/*ní*/), as in (26c), since it would capture only part of the entire group of children playing outside. What this implies is that the stronger the effect of an exhaustive focus interpretation, whether by implicature or in the semantics, the less appropriate it will be as a response to a mention-some question (see van der Wal 2014: 10).

4 “Strongly exhaustive” and “Weakly exhaustive” particles

There appears to be a subtle difference in the statuses of the exhaustive particles *kà* on the one hand and *ní* and *né* on the other. Available data reveal a tendency for the particles *ní* and *né* to be inherently “strongly exhaustive” compared to the particle *kà*, which is only inherently contrastive and exhaustive by implicature, hence referred to as “weakly exhaustive”. The tests in sections §4.1 and §4.2

show that whereas *ń* and *né* are in complementary distribution with exhaustive adverbial particles as well as exhaustive additive particles, the particle *kà* freely co-occurs with both adverbial and additive particles.

4.1 The omission of *ń*, *né* in the environment of adverbials

The adverbials *má'áa/má'áane* 'only, just, alone', *kun-kun* 'only/just', *zaŋ-zaŋ* 'only' correlate with an exhaustive focus interpretation such that all other alternative possibilities are excluded from the reading (see Rooth 1985; 1992; Krifka 2006; van der Wal 2014, among others). The particles *ń* and *né* are often in complementary distribution with the exhaustive adverbial particles on the grounds of redundancy. This trend is consistent with the observation made by Hartmann & Zimmermann (2007: 256), Jaggar (2001: 511) and Newman (2000: 190) that the exhaustive particles *nee/cee* in Hausa are often omitted in the environment of other adverbials.

- (27) *Bíís lá má'áa (ń) sà dī mùì lá.*
children DEF only FOC PRT eat.PERF rice DEF.
'Only the children ate the rice.'

- (28) *Bíís lá sà dī (né) mùì lá má'áa.*
children DEF PRT eat.PERF FOC rice DEF only
'The children ate only the rice.'

The particle *kà*, on the other hand, must obligatorily co-occur with the adverbial when the focused constituent is fronted.

- (29) *Mùì kà bíís lá dī.*
rice FOC children DEF eat.PERF
'It is rice that the children ate.' (not, say, beans)

- (30) *Mùì má'áa kà bíís lá dī.*
rice only FOC children DEF eat.PERF
'It is only rice that the children ate.' (and nothing else)
**Mùì má'áa bíís lá dī.*
rice only children DEF eat.PERF

From the exhaustive interpretation derived from the use of the adverbials, it is obvious that these elements are used to introduce exhaustivity into the assertion as part of its truth conditions (Hartmann & Zimmermann 2007). The open option available to speakers to use or not to use *ń* and *nɛ* (whilst *kà* is obligatory) suggests that the particle *kà* is semantically weaker in expressing exhaustivity than the particle *nɛ*.

The lack of exhaustivity in the interpretation of the emphatic pronoun, as indicated elsewhere, explains the grammaticality of having the exhaustive adverbial marker *má'áá* 'only' co-occur with the third person emphatic pronoun *ón* as in (31).

- (31) Ón má'áá (*ń) tǔm tǔmá lá.
 3SG lone FOC work work-Nomimative DEF
 'S/he alone did the work.'

4.2 Restrictions on *ń*, *nɛ* with exhaustive additive particles

The exhaustive focus particles *ń*, and *nɛ* do not co-occur with the additive particles *mén/mé* 'also, too' or *yá'ási* 'else, again'. This is because the additive particles make the referent non-exhaustive in the sense that the action of the verb is assumed to have taken place with different/other referents.

- (32) a. Ànó'ón yá'ási (*n) sá kārīm gbàùŋ lá?
 who else FOC PRT read.PERF book DEF
 'Who else read the book yesterday?'
 b. Àsíbí mé (*n) sá kārīm gbàùŋ lá.
 Asibi also FOC PRT read.PERF book DEF
 'Asibi also read the book yesterday.'

Unlike *ń* and *nɛ*, which do not co-occur with the exhaustive focus additives, it is grammatical to have *kà* in fronted wh-focus questions as well as with fronted DPs co-occurring with the exhaustive focus additive *yá'ási* 'else' (34) and *mé* 'also' (35–36).

- (33) Bóbín yá'ási kà Asibi sá kārīm.
 what else FOC Asibi PRT read.PERF
 'What else did Asibi read yesterday?'

- (34) *Àsíbí sá kārīm (*né) gbàùŋ lá mé.*
Asibi PRT read.PERF FOC book DEF also
'Asibi read the book also yesterday/it was also the book that Asibi read yesterday.'
- (35) *Gbàùŋ lá mé kà Àsíbí sá kārīm.*
book DEF also FOC Asibi PRT read.PERF
'It is also the book that Asibi read yesterday.'
- (36) *Gbàùŋ lá kà Àsíbí sá kārīm mé.*
book DEF FOC Asibi PRT read.PERF also
'It is also the book that Asibi read yesterday/ it was also reading the book that Asibi did'

Since an item or a situation is either exhaustive or additive but not both, the grammaticality of *kà* co-occurring with the additive exhaustive particles *yá'ás* 'else' and *mé* 'also' further shows that the particle *kà* has a weaker exhaustive focus interpretation in Kusaal.

5 Conclusion

Returning to the questions raised at the beginning of this paper, it is now possible to state that Kusaal does not have a default grammatical focus marker and that the language employs two different strategies in the packaging of discourse related information. Whereas information focus is morphologically null, contrastive focus is marked using the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né*. The particle *kà* is used for ex-situ contrastive/exhaustive focus marking and the particles *ń* and *né* are also used for in-situ contrastive/exhaustive focus marking. The evidence from all the tests suggests that the particles *kà*, *ń* and *né* encode strong contrastive focus, leading to the assumption that there are indeed contrastive focus particles in Kusaal. On exhaustivity, the study shows that whereas the particles *ń* and *né* evoke a strong exhaustive focus interpretation, the particle *kà* evokes a weak exhaustive focus interpretation. The reason is that *ń* and *né*, unlike *kà*, are in complementary distribution with the exhaustive adverbial particles and additive particles in Kusaal.

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Abbreviations

| | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|------|----------------|
| DEF | definite determiner | DEM | demonstrative |
| PRT | temporal adverbial particle | REL | relative |
| PL | plural | POSS | possessive |
| SG | singular | Q | question |
| FOC | focus particle | A | answer |
| CONJ | conjunction | LOC | locative, |
| PERF | perfective | EMPH | emphatic |
| FUT | future | FACT | factive marker |

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