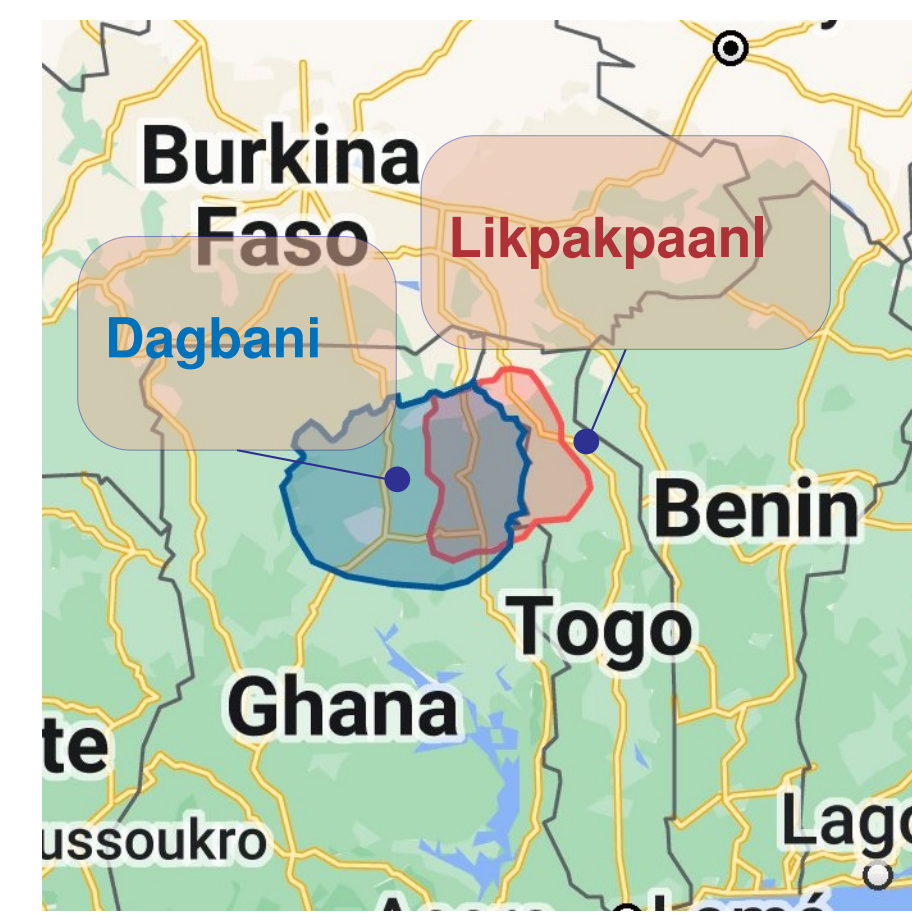


Overview & Claims

- We discuss the distribution of in-situ **focus markers** in two closely related Mabia languages (Gur, Northern Ghana). Focus markers behave differently in the two languages:
- 1. **Dagbani** (Olawsky 1999, Issah 2020):
The in-situ focus marker **lá** is in a separate projection and therefore in a fixed position in the clause.
- 2. **Likpakpaanl** (Schwarz 2009):
The in-situ focus markers (**là** clause-final, **lè** otherwise) are adjoined to the focused constituent and therefore variable in their position.
- The data provide evidence for focus projections at the vP-periphery (Belletti 2004, Mursell 2021).

Mabia languages



- The Mabia languages (about 70 languages) belong to the Niger–Congo languages.
- This talk focuses on Likpakpaanl (600,000 speakers) and Dagbani (1,160,000 speakers).

Dagbani focus

- in-situ DO focus in Dagbani**
Q: 'What did Napari buy?'
A: Napari dá **lá** búá.
Napari buy.PFV FOC goat
'Napari bought A GOAT.'
- in-situ verbal focus in Dagbani**
Q: 'Are you pushing the wagon?'
A: N **vóri** **lá** búŋlɔyú máa.
2SG pull.IPFV FOC wagon DEF
'I am PULLING the wagon.'
- ex-situ DO focus in Dagbani**
Q: 'What did Napari buy?'
A: **Búá** **ká** Napari dá.
goat FOC Napari buy.PFV
'Napari bought a GOAT.'

Likpakpaanl focus

- in-situ DO focus in Likpakpaanl**
Q: 'What did Konja beg from Sam?'
A: Konja mèè Sam **ki-gban** **là**.
Konja beg Sam NC-book FOC
'Konja begged a BOOK from Sam.'
- in-situ IO focus in Likpakpaanl**
Q: 'Who did Konja beg a book from?'
A: Konja mèè **Sam** **lè** ki-gban.
Konja beg Sam FOC NC-book
'Konja begged a book from SAM.'
- ex-situ DO focus in Likpakpaanl**
Q: 'What did Adam slaughter?'
A: **Ukola** **lè** Adam nan kɔr.
fowl FOC Adam PST slaughter
'Adam slaughtered a FOWL.'

Likpakpaanl XP-internal focus

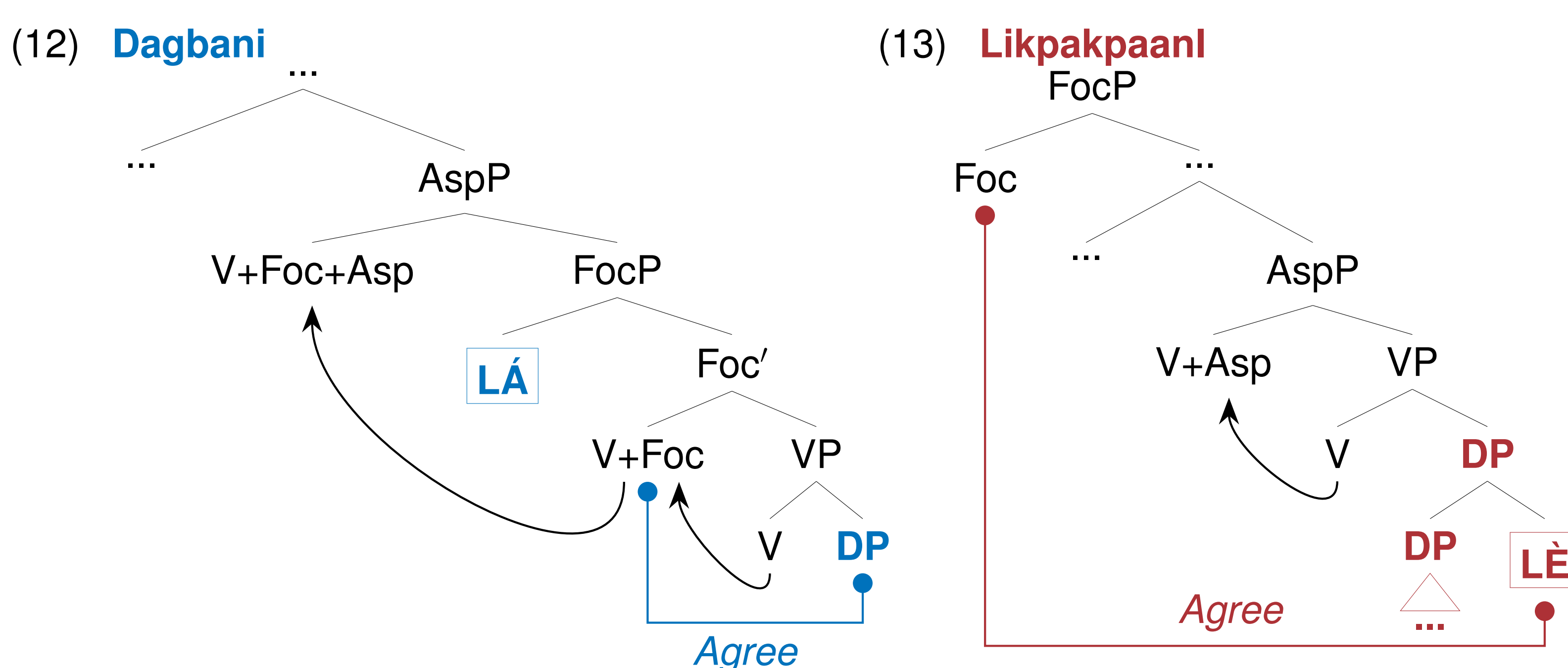
- in-situ possessor focus in Likpakpaanl**
Q: 'Whose fowl did Mary kill?'
A: Mary kɔr [**Peter** **(*lè)** aa-kɔla] **(*là)**?
Mary kill Peter FOC POSS-fowl FOC
'Mary killed PETER'S fowl.'
- in-situ focus in finite RelC in Likpakpaanl**
Q: 'Did you see the man that said that Peter killed fowl?'
A: Aayi, n kan uja [u lèn kè **John** **lè** kɔr ukɔla na].
no I see man REL say C J. FOC kill fowl DEF
'No, I saw the man that said that JOHN killed fowl.'
- in-situ V focus in Likpakpaanl**
Q: 'What did Adam do to a fowl?'
A: Adam nan **kɔr** **(*lè)** ukɔla **(*là)**.
Adam PST slaughter FOC fowl FOC
'Adam SLAUGHTERED a fowl.'

Observations

- The focus marker in Dagbani appears in a fixed position in the clause, independent of what is focused.
- The focus marker follows the verb, which is marked for tense and aspect:
(10) a. ... **V-TAM** **lá** object_[FOC]
b. ... **V-TAM**_[FOC] **lá** object
- Ex-situ focus is marked by a different focus marker **ká**.

- The focus marker in Likpakpaanl can vary in its position.
- It is right-adjacent to the constituent in the clause that is focused or contains the focused element:
(11) a. ... **V-TAM IO** **DO**_[FOC] **lè**
b. ... **V-TAM IO**_[FOC] **lè** **DO**
- Ex-situ focus is marked by the same focus marker **lè**.

Analysis



Assumptions

- Focused constituents need to agree with a focus head.**
- Dagbani has a low focus projection (in addition to a high focus position marked by **ká**) that contains the focus marker **lá** and that the in-situ focused constituent agrees with. Therefore, the focus marker is in a fixed position.
 - The verb undergoes head movement first to the focus head and then continues moving up.
 - Likpakpaanl has only a high focus position that the in-situ focused constituent agrees with. There is no evidence for a low focus projection. That is why there is only one focus marker.
 - The focus marker **lè** is right-adjacent to the focused element. Therefore, it has a variable position.

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Data sources if not indicated otherwise: Samuel A. Issah (Dagbani), Samuel O. Acheampong (Likpakpaanl)

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