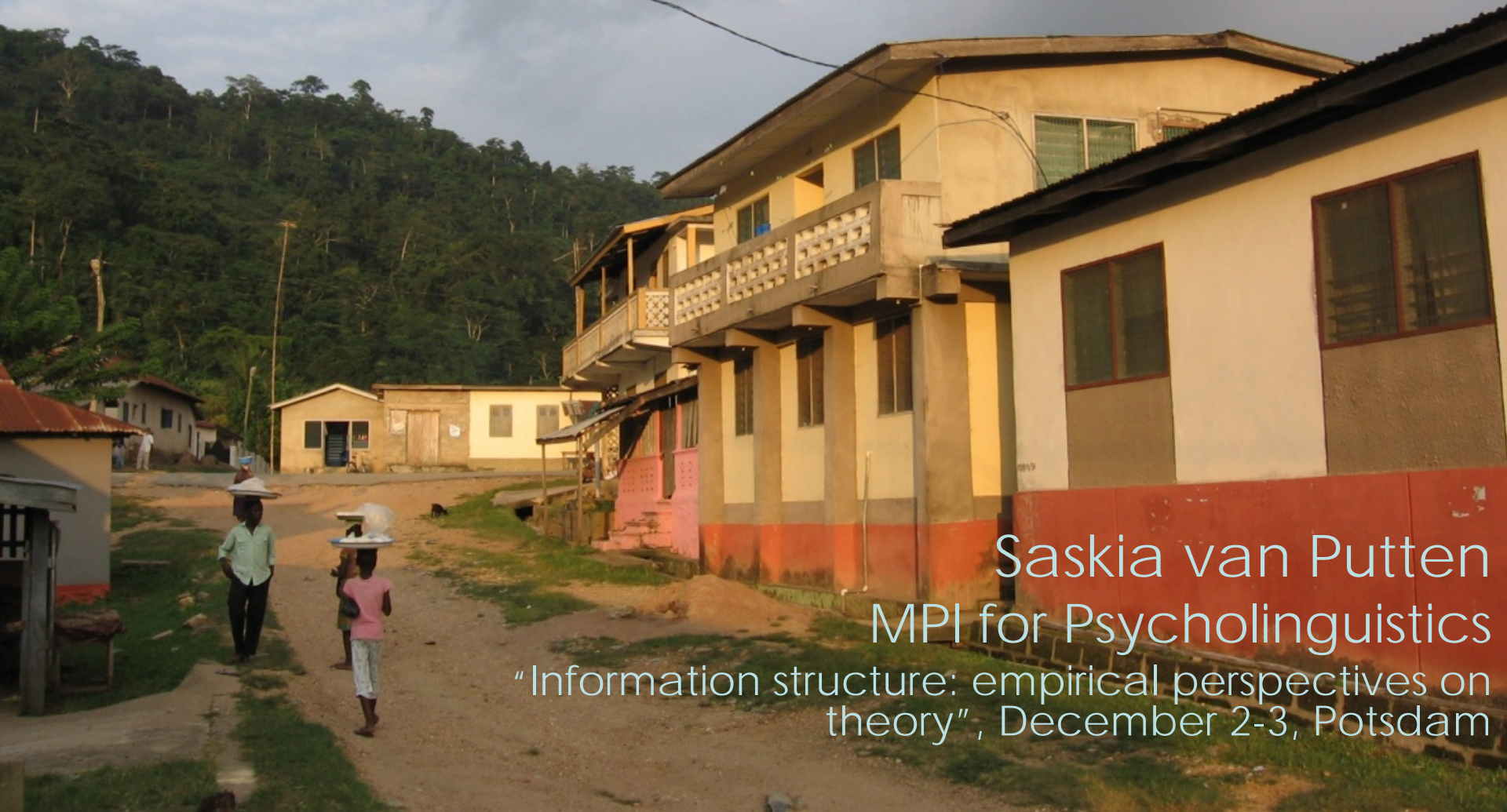


Marked topics and contrast in Avatime



Saskia van Putten

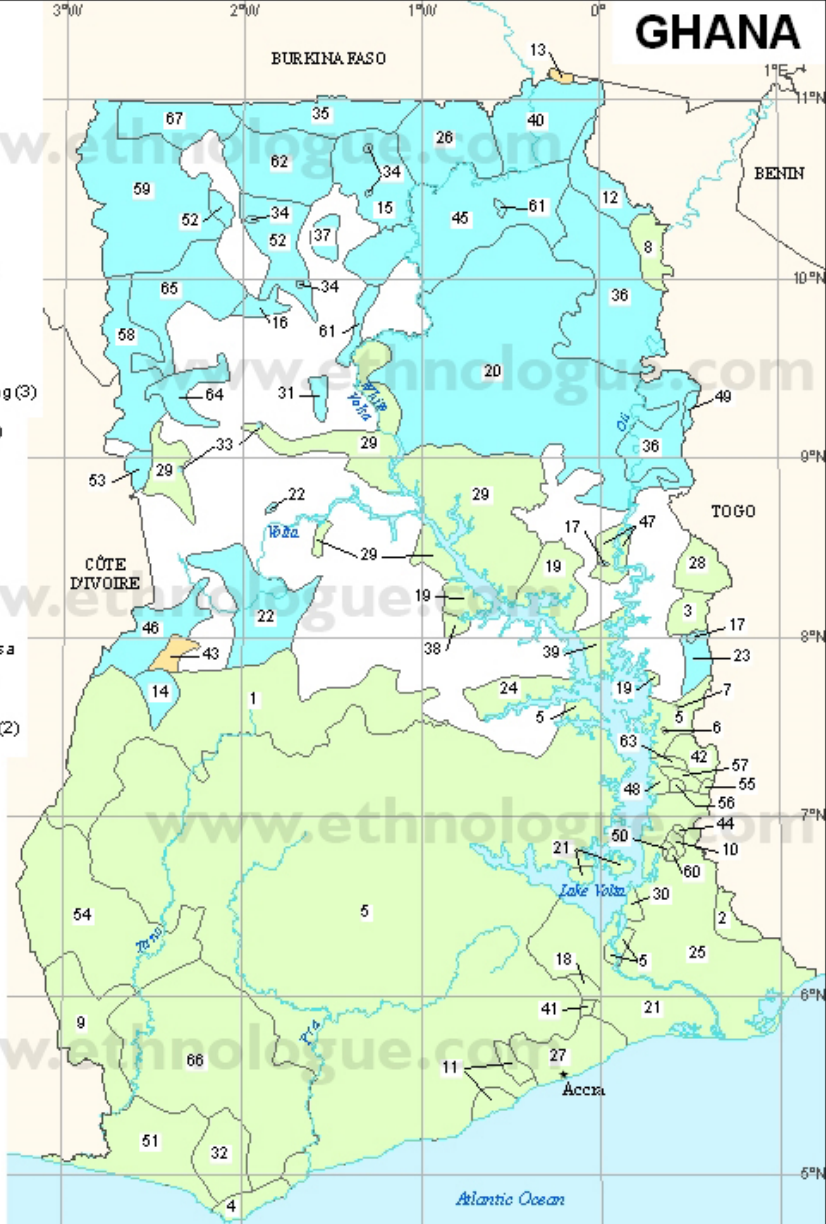
MPI for Psycholinguistics

"Information structure: empirical perspectives on
theory", December 2-3, Potsdam

Avatime



- 1 Abon
- 2 Adangbe
- 3 Adele
- 4 Ahanta
- 5 Akan (4)
- 6 Akposo
- 7 Animere
- 8 Anufo
- 9 Anyin
- 10 Avatime
- 11 Awutu
- 12 Birnoba
- 13 Bissa
- 14 Bondoukou Kulango
- 15 Buli
- 16 Chakali
- 17 Chala (2)
- 18 Cherepon
- 19 Chumbung (3)
- 20 Dagbani
- 21 Dangme (2)
- 22 Deg (2)
- 23 Dolo
- 24 Dwang
- 25 Ewé
- 26 Farefare
- 27 Ga
- 28 Gkyode
- 29 Gonja (4)
- 30 Gwa
- 31 Hanga
- 32 Jwira-Pepesa
- 33 Kamara
- 34 Kantosi (3)
- 35 Kasem
- 36 Konkomba (2)
- 37 Konni
- 38 Kplang
- 39 Krache
- 40 Kusaal
- 41 Larteh
- 42 Lelemi
- 43 Ligbi
- 44 Logba
- 45 Mampruli
- 46 Nafanra
- 47 Nawuri
- 48 Nkonya
- 49 Ntcham
- 50 Nyangbo
- 51 Nzema
- 52 Paasaa (2)
- 53 Safaliba
- 54 Sehwi
- 55 Sekpele
- 56 Selee
- 57 Siwu
- 58 Southern Birfor
- 59 Southern Dagaare
- 60 Tafi
- 61 Tamulma (2)
- 62 Tumulung
- 63 Tuwuli
- 64 Vagla
- 65 Wali
- 66 Wasa
- 67 Western Sisala



WIDESPREAD LANGUAGES

- Akan
- Ewé
- Ghanaian Sign Language
- Hausa
- Maasina Fulfude

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

- English

Language Families

- Gur
- Kwa
- Mande

Notes:

1. White areas are sparsely populated or uninhabited.
2. Brackets show the number of times a language's number appears on map, if more than once.

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Avatime

- Niger-Congo – Kwa – Ghana-Togo Mountain
- Spoken in Ghana
- Tone language, three level tones (L, M, H)
- Noun class system
- Obligatory subject marking on verb
- SVO word order
- Optional focus marking by fronting + focus marker (high tone)
- Left dislocation is frequent



Contrastive topics

Topic: What the sentence is about. (eg. Reinhart 1982)

Contrastive topic:

- A topic that evokes alternative topics. (eg. Krifka 2007 ; Büring 2003 ; Vallduvi & Vilkuna 1998)
- Prince (1998: 290-291): "contrast is not a primitive notion but rather arises when **alternate members** of some salient set are evoked and, most importantly, when there is felt to be a salient **opposition in what is predicated of them**".



Contrastive topics

(1) A: What do your siblings do?

B: My SISTER studies MEDICINE, and my BROTHER is working on a FREIGHT SHIP.

Contrastive topics: sister vs. brother

Opposition in what is predicated of them (their different occupations)



Avatime particles

1. Contrastive *kɔ* ‘as for’ (CTR1)
2. Additive *tsyɛ* ‘also/too’ (ADD)

- Follow associate
- Associate usually NP, most often subject or left dislocated
- *tsyɛ* can be used clause-finally (not discussed here)



The particle *kɔ*

- (2) Context: three brothers are sleeping when their house catches fire. The first two do not notice the fire and stay asleep.

ɔ-tanɔ-e *gì* *yé* *o-nu* *ó-nyimemi-yè* *gɔgɔ-e*
C₁S-third-DEF CON C₁S C₁S-be C₁S-young.man-DEF last-CM
ye ***kɔ*** *a-yɔ*
C₁S CTR1 C₁S-get.up

'The third one who was the last young man, as for him, he stood up.'

(FinSto_100614_WE 24)

Alternatives: third brother vs. other two brothers

Opposition: standing up vs. sleeping



The particle *kɔ*

(3) *o kílɛ gí agí ɔ-katsie xunyɔ e-tsée*
oh how CON ? C₁S-old.man CTR2 C₁S-die
xé ð-fɔɛfɔɛ-nð e-dó ye mè
and C₂S-spirit-DEF C₂S-move.out:LOC C₁S inside
kɔ àtrodze kɔ ɔ-í-tse
so spider CTR1 C₁S.NEG-NEG-die

‘Oh, how the old man died and his spirit left him. As for spider, he didn’t die.’

(Kadzidiza_110406_QM 89)

- Alternative topics: spider vs. old man
- Opposition: did not die vs. died



The particle *kɔ*

- Marks a topic as contrastive in the sense of Prince?
 1. There is an **alternative** to the topic
 2. What is predicated about the topic is **opposite** to what is predicated or presupposed about the alternative
- Accounts for the majority of cases (45 out of 64)



The particle kɔ

Other cases

- Opposition, no alternative to topic (8 cases)
 - Opposition with hypothetical situation involving the same topic.
- Alternative to topic but no opposition (11 cases)
 - Contrastive topic in the broad sense / topic switch ?



The particle *kɔ* – no alternative

- (4) Context: when a person dies, some relatives will sit next to the body and people will come and donate money, which these relatives will receive.

a. *le lósòe kɪ-bó lo kɔ ba kí-ne*
so C₄S-money DIST CTR1 C₁P C₄S-POSM
bá-tá-kɔ ɛ-kpé àdákæ mè
C₁P.NEG-INT-take SVM-put:LOC coffin inside
'So that money is theirs, they don 't put it in the coffin.'

b. *pò bí-bìte ñwí sị le nyàfe ɔniyé lo gí e-tsée*
but C₄P.SBJ-do appear COMP ? maybe person DIST CON C₁S-die = CM
yé bɛ-kɔ̃
C₁S:FOC C₁P-give

'But it should be as if they are giving it to the person who is dead.'

(funeral_100531_MM-EM 122)



The particle *kɔ* – no alternative

- (5) *a-mu-nà* *li-wè-le* *kɔ* *bé-tá-ba* *tòò*
C₃P-rice-DEF C₃S-day-DEF CTR1 C₁P.NEG-INT-come anymore
xé *gì* *sì* *ba-kú-kpe* *tróusers-ye*
if CON COMP C₁P-PROH-put trousers-DEF
'As for the rice festival, they will not come anymore, if it is said that they should not wear trousers.'
(tribunal_100513_4 27)

- No “two sets of money” (4)
- No alternative festivals (5)
- Opposition between alternative “realities”



The particle *kɔ* – no opposition

(6) a. *a-na kù-do mè a-tsanì ɔ-dzewí-tɔ*
C₁S-reach C₅S-road inside C₁S-meet C₁S-girl-INDF
'On the road he met a girl.'

b. *yɛ kɔ a-kpɛ à-wù-la a-bìtɛ si-yà-sɛ*
C₁S CTR1 C₁S-wear C₃P-clothing-DEF C₁S-do C₇-hair-DEF
wáà-mò sị sukúvi
2S.POT-see COMP student

'As for her, she wore her clothes and did her hair, you can see she is a student.'
(pear_PhA-DQ 46)

- Alternative topic 'he' (main protagonist)
- No opposition between 'him' and the girl
- "Topic switch"



The particle *tsyε*

- Translated as 'also/too'
- Can be used as focus particle

(8) Context: Q: How many grandchildren do you have?

*be-sòebi-à ... be-srè ... mà-zε **be-soèbesoèbi** **tsyε** be-srè*
C₁P-grandchild-DEF C₁P-plenty 1S-receive C₁P-grandchild.RED ADD C₁P-plenty
'Grandchildren... they are plenty... I have great-grandchildren too, they are plenty.'
(rice_100613_EN-MM 115)



The particle *tsyε*

- Mostly used with topics

(9) Context: two other people have jumped from a burning house and were caught by the firefighters. Then the firefighters went to the third person.

a-yɔ *ye* *tsyε* *bε-sóli* *yε*

C₁S-jump C₁S ADD C₁P-catch C₁S

'He jumped, he too, they caught him.'

(FinSto_100524_SO)

- Comments on alternative topics are identical
- This represents the majority of cases



The particle *tsyε*

(10) Context: a man comes home after being in prison for a long time

a. *ye-dze á-kɔ tsya ye kílɛ gì a-bìtɛ petɛ*

C₁S.POS-wife C₁S-take forgive C₁S how CON C₁S-do all

‘His wife forgave him everything he did.’

b. *loso ye-bie tsye a-é-tsì e-dzi ɔ-yásɔwi*

so C₁S.POS-child ADD C₁S-VEN-grow C₁S-become C₁S-young.man

‘So his child (too) has grown up and has become a young man.’

(famprob_110401_MeD-BeK_story 84)

- Alternative topics: his wife vs. his child
- No identical predicates



The particle *tsyε*

- *tsyε* marks contrastive topics in the broader sense: indicating that there is an alternative topic about which something is also said.
- But there is more: in the majority of cases predicates are identical (9)
- No strict identity condition as for English 'too' (10)
- Condition of coherence in the broader sense?
 - In (10) both predicates describe something that happened while the man was in prison



The particle *tsyε* - no identity

(11) Context: The organizing committee of the upcoming Avatime rice festival wants to invite the president of Ghana and they have asked the paramount chief to do so. The chairman of the committee is relating this.

a. *blɔ* *kù-sùsu-yo* *kui-kò* *lɛ* *bàsi* *ye*
1P C₅S-mind-DEF 1P-take C₃S how him

'That is our mind, we showed it to him (the chief).'

b. *ye* ***tsyε*** *á-zɛ* *lɛ*
C₁S ADD C₁S-accept C₃S

'He (too) accepted it.'

(chiefs-meeting03 52-53, VC)

- Showing / giving and accepting are two sides of the same event.



The particle *tsyε* - no identity

(12) a. *àtrodze e-tsyidzyi sị yi-ze-halì lị-fịfị-ne*
spider C₁S-impatient COMP LOG:C₁S-IT-gather C₃S-t.o.porridge-DEF
'Spider was impatient to go and collect the porridge.'

b. *lulu tsyε e-vu ye sị ó-kí-trε*
small.ant ADD C₁S-hold C₁S COMP C₁S-PROH-go
'Small ant (too) was holding him so that he wouldn't go.'

(Kadzidiza_110406_QM 89)

- Two sides of the same event



The particle *tsyε* - no identity

(13) a. *be-dzìní fèke trɔ́ gàsɔ-yε abà kí ye*
C₁P-return lift.up put:LOC bicycle-DEF on give C₁S
'They put it on the bicycle for him'

b. *xé ye tsyε èé-tutru gàsɔ-yε*
then C₁S ADD C₁S.PROG-push bicycle-DEF
'and he (too) was pushing the bicycle.'

(pear_100719_PhA-DQ 59)

- Predicates connected, following from each other?
- Topic switch?



Conclusion

- Both markers can indicate that there is an alternative to the topic
- Neither is exclusively used for this purpose
- Conditions on comment
 - *kɔ* – comments have to be opposite
 - *tsyɛ* – comments have to be identical, similar or related
- Functions converge as indicator of 'topic switch' (examples (6), (7) and (13))
- Pre-existing information structure categories do not map nicely onto these particles



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Thank you!