Exploring Expressions of Focus in Ewe
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ABSTRACT

In this article we investigate various focus constructions in Ewe. The contribution of this paper is two-fold: First, it presents new evidence that focus fronting in Ewe is simply movement to a focus phrase in left periphery of the clause, and, secondly, it presents an analysis of the focus ðè construction in which little previous work has been conducted. In the first part of the paper we investigate the pragmatic uses of the particle yé, which we analyse as the head of a focus projection that does not encode a specific kind of focus, but can host elements expressing a range of focal interpretations. In the second part of the paper we argue that the ðè construction used in one form of predicate focus is not a focus particle of the same class as yé, but rather an overt focus operator located in the C domain.

Keywords: focus, syntax, pragmatics, Ewe.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ewe is a language of the Gbe sub-group of Kwa, spoken primarily in Ghana and Togo. This paper examines various focus-related phenomena in this language, all involving the left periphery. The basic word order in Ewe is SVO, as shown in (1).

(1) Kòfí ðù máŋò-nyè-wó.
Kofi eat mango-1SG-PL
‘Kofi ate my mangos.’

However, in spite of this basic word order, a variety of topicalized and focused elements can appear in left-peripheral positions, as illustrated with a focused direct object in (2). As can be seen, a focused element can be followed by the particle yé/é, which in many contexts is optional.

(2) Máŋò-nyè-wó (yé) Kòfí ðù.
mango-1SG-PL FOC Kofi eat
‘Kofi ate MY MANGOES.’
In this article we investigate various focus constructions in Ewe, proposing a unified syntactic analysis exploiting the FocP projection of the articulated complementizer domain (C domain) hosting left-peripheral focused phrases (Rizzi, 1997). The contribution of this paper is two-fold: First, it presents new evidence that focus fronting in Ewe is simply movement to a FocP phrase in left periphery of the clause, and second it presents an analysis of a focus construction (the ḏè construction) on which little previous work has been conducted. The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we investigate the pragmatic uses of focus particle yé and analyze it as the head of a FocP. Section 3 discusses a type of predicate focus in Ewe. We argue that the particle ḏè used in one form of predicate focus is not a focus particle in the same class as yé, but rather an overt focus operator in the CP area. Section 4 concludes the article.

2. THE FOCUS PARTICLE YÉ

The particle yé, often pronounced é, is sometimes referred to as the “emphatic particle” (see Ameka, 1992; Warburton et al., 1968). In the standard orthography, the variant yé is written as a separate word, while the variant é is written as part of the preceding word.¹

Yé can follow a constituent such as a DP that is preposed to the beginning of the sentence and, as we will show, it does not indicate any particular type of focus reading. Although its presence is optional in most environments, in certain specific syntactic contexts it is either required or prohibited. Familiarity with yé is important for understanding the other issues discussed later in the paper.

2.1 PRAGMATIC USES OF THE FOCUS PARTICLE YÉ IN EWE

We begin by examining the different pragmatic contexts in which yé can appear. Since both topics and foci can occur in the left periphery in Ewe, it is perhaps useful to note that two simple and robust morphosyntactic phenomena distinguish these two pragmatic categories. First, in a simple sentence consisting of a single clause with a single object, a topicalized object must be resumed with an object clitic, while a focused object cannot. In analogous clauses with a fronted DP that is questioned or focused, there is no resumption of that element with a clitic (Ameka, 2010).² In (3a) the fronted element is focused, as can be seen by the presence of the focus particle yé, and by the ungrammaticality of

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¹ One form of the 3rd person singular subject clitic is é-, and there is sometimes orthographic confusion as to whether an “é” between a(n arguable) subject and the verb is the subject marker é- or the focus marker -é.

² In certain more complex environments, focus may either permit or require a resumptive clitic Ameka (1992).
resumption with the object clitic -ì is ungrammatical. In contrast, (3b) shows that a fronted topic, here followed by the particle yá, requires such a resumptive clitic.

(3) a. Mólú-é míá-dù-(*ì).
   rice-FOC 1PL-eat-it
   ‘THE RICE we ate.’

   b. Mólú yá míá-dù-*(í).
   rice TOP 1PL-eat-it
   ‘As for the rice, we ate it.

The second phenomenon distinguishing focus and topicalization involves clauses in which a 3rd person singular subject is represented only by a subject clitic, as in (4a). If in such a sentence the verb is preceded by a focused element, the subject clitic takes the special form wǒ- as in (4b). When the object is topicalized, the 3rd person singular subject clitic retains its usual form é- (4c).

(4) a. É-nò bîyà sià.
   3SG-drink beer this
   ‘He drank this beer.’

   b. Bîyà sià-é wǒ-nò.
   beer this-FOC 3SG-drink
   ‘It’s this beer that he drank.’

   c. Bîyà sià yá é-nò-è.
   beer this TOP 3SG-drink-3SG
   ‘This beer he drank.’

In the environments we will now examine – contrastive focus, informational focus, and with wh items – if yé can be omitted, the type of sentence in question can be determined to employ focus rather than topicalization, not only on the basis of the discourse context, but also on the basis of these two phenomena.

Pragmatically speaking, contrastive focus expresses a correction contradicting something asserted in a previous clause. Example (5) shows that fronting in Ewe, with or without yé, is compatible with contrastive focus, as described by Zimmermann (2007: 147).

   1SG-read that farmer-PL cultivate-HAB cassava-field at America
   ‘I read that farmers grow cassava in the US.’
In the answer in (5B2) the focused element ‘field of maize’ fronted to the left of the subject is highlighted as the new information, which stands in contrast to the assertion expressed by speaker A. The presence of ye to the right of the fronted object in this context is optional, without any apparent change in the interpretation.

Example (6) below shows that fronting, whether with or without ye, is also compatible with informational focus, by which is meant a focus that simply provides the new information in a clause. In an answer to a wh question, the focused constituent may be fronted and can appear either with or without ye, as in (6A1). Example (6A2) shows that ye can also be used in an analogous short answer, in which all material following the focus is elided.

(6) Q: Àfìkà nè-tsô?  
‘Where are you from?’

A1: Ghànà (ye) mè-tsó.  
Ghana FOC 1SG-come.from  
‘I come from Ghana.’

A2: Ghànà (ye).  
Ghana FOC

A3: Mè-tsó Ghànà.  
1SG-come.from Ghana

As in many other languages (e.g., English, Mandarin, French), in the answer to a question like (6) the focused constituent may alternatively be left in situ (6A3), and this is in fact a very natural way to answer such a question in Ewe.3 This last focus strategy does not hold for subjects since, as will be shown, when a subject constitutes the focused information, it requires ye to be present.

Wh questions in Ewe fronting of the questioned constituent, and the focus particle ye can be present, as illustrated in (7).

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3 See Aboh (2007) for an analysis of the fronted and in situ answer strategies in terms of focused and unfocused wh-questions.
(7) a. Àmékà-é nè-kpɔ?
who-FOC 2SG-see
‘Who did you see?’

b. *E-kpɔ ameka?
2SG-see who

(Acceptable as an echo question.)

In the literature, wh elements are often analysed as occupying a syntactic focus position and as having undergone focus movement, triggered by the need to check focus features (Horvath, 1986; Grewendorf, 2001). So, the fact that the focus particle yé can follow a wh phrase is not surprising. While yé is possible with wh fronting, its presence is not obligatory (Ameeka, 1992), as shown in the adjunct question above in (6).

In connection with the optionality of yé in wh questions, Aboh (2007) notes that those speakers of closely related Gungbe who allow omission of the focus particle (not all speakers do) have two different interpretations depending on whether the particle is present. When present, the constituent is D-linked (linked to the discourse), a property which is absent when the particle is omitted. That is, presence of the particle indicates that the speaker is asking a question with reference to a discourse-salient set of possible choices. Attempts to apply this idea to the Ewe focus particle yé in D-linked and non-D-linked contexts failed. The focus particle proved to always be optional for non-subjects. Therefore, it appears that the presence versus the absence of the Ewe particle yé is not related to the D-linked or non-D-linked contexts, as shown in examples (8) through (10). The questioned element in the questions in (8) and (9) are not D-linked, because ‘what’ and ‘when’ in the context constitute open questions. In (10), in contrast, the element ‘which one’ is a question over the set of two discourse-defined pineapples. As can be seen, the focus particle is optional regardless of the D-linked status of the questioned element.

(8) Né gà frâ milyɔn ɖèká lè àsì-wò ðé, if money franc million one be.at hand-2sg top
núkà-(é) n-à-wɔ̀-è?
what-FOC 2SG-FUT-do-3SG
‘If you had a million francs, what would you do with it?’

(9) Ɣèyiyika-(é) n-à-wɔ̀dɔ̀ wò?
when-FOC 2SG-FUT-do work-2SG finish
‘When will you finish your work?’
While the focus particle is not obligatory following a fronted *wh* phrase in the general case, there is a known asymmetry between subjects and non-subjects in Gbe languages. Aboh (2007) notes that while some speakers of these languages accept *wh* fronting without a concomitant focus particle in the general case, the particle is still obligatory in subject questions, as our own data also shows in (11).

(11) Àmékà * (yé) yì àfútà?
    who FOC go beach
    ‘Who went to the beach?’

This fact extends to subjects modified by kò ‘only’, which when followed by yé surfaces as köé. When a fronted non-subject is modified by ‘only’, it may be followed by either kò or köé, as shown in (12a). In contrast, when a subject is modified by ‘only’, the composite form is the only possibility, as shown in (13).

(12) a. Àgbàlè sìà kò-(é) Yàwò xlè.
    book this only-FOC Yawo read

b. Yàwò xlè àgbàlè sia kò.
    Yawo read book this only
    ‘Yawo read only a book.’

(13) a. Fòfó-nyè kò-*(é) dó àgbèlì.
    father-1SGonly-FOC cultivate cassava
    ‘Only my father grows cassava.’

One special case was found in which yé was not obligatory in subject questions, namely rhetorical subject questions like in the first utterance in (14B), in which àmékà ‘who’ is not followed by the particle:

(14) A: Ví-wò-wó á-té nú á-yò dó ná wò
can child-2SG-pl FUT-can can FUT-care sickness to 2SG
né è-dzè dò.
if 2SG-suffer sickness
    ‘You children can take care of you if you become ill.’
If we consider yé to be the head encoding focus as the new information, here the *wh* in the rhetorical question does not require new information. Rhetorical questions, in fact, do not need to be answered with new information. The fact that a subjects in an ironic question does not require yé seems best accounted for by assuming that such questions are actually echo questions, since the subject of the sentence that it echoes also lacks the focus particle. The exchange in (15), with *nikà* ‘what’ in situ, shows that non-subject echo questions can be used ironically (in the same way as in English):

(15) A: Mè-lè mé-ufé áfè dzrà gé.
    1SG-be.at 1PL-POSS house sell PROSP
    ‘I’m going to sell our house.’

    B: Nè-lè *nikà* wò gê? Mè-dí bé m-á-nò àfisìà!
    2SG-be.at what do PROSP 1SG-want that 1SG-FUT-be.at here
    ‘You going to do what? I want to stay here!’

Descriptively speaking, we can conclude that yé is used with a variety of focus interpretations. However, even if it does not encode a particular type of focus, when it is optional, our speakers’ own explanations suggest that its presence accentuates the new and relevant information in the sentence. Yé is used in conjunction with another phenomenon – fronting – which is also used for different types of focus. However, it will be noted that the distribution of these two phenomena is distinct. While *wh* questioning requires fronting (unlike other types of focus examined), it does not usually require the use of yé.

2.2 **YÉ AS THE HEAD OF A FOCP**

Having discussed some of the most essential pragmatic and syntactic properties of focus in Ewe, we can now approach the particle yé from a structural point of view.

Aboh (2004) has proposed that the analogous focus particle *wɛ́* in Gungbe heads a FocP in the CP field. This section will present two facts not previously discussed which support a similar analysis of Ewe yé. The proposed structure is
depicted in (16), in which the DP in the specifier of ye is the fronted focused noun phrase.

(16) \[ FocP \ DP [ Foc' ye \ldots [TP \ldots [VP \ldots ] ] ] \]

One of the reasons why this issue is of particular importance is that certain other discourse-related particles can occur inside the DP. This is shown in (17), in which the particles lá/a and ýá can appear in sentence-medial positions.

(17) a. Mè-lè [ mòlù lá ] ñù-m.  
1SG-be.at rice DET eat-PROG  
‘I’m eating the rice.’

b. Mè-lè [ mòlù ýá ] ñù-m.  
1SG-be.at rice top eat-PROG  
‘I’m eating rice (as opposed to other things).’

Our first fact supporting the idea that ye is a Foc\(^0\) head is that it cannot appear medially in a post-verbal position. This fact is shown here in four ways by focusing an object. First, in (18) the object has been moved to precede the lexical verb, as is required in progressive aspect (Aboh, 2004, chapter 6). Second, in (19) the object is followed by a locative adjunct. Third, in (20) the object appears between two verbs in a serial verb construction. And fourth, in (21) the direct object precedes the indirect object in a double object construction. (The most unmarked word order in a double object construction is V DO IO (Essegbey, 2003).)

(18) Kòfí lè ṑùtì (*ye) ñù-m.  
Kofi be.at orange FOC eat-PROG  
‘Kofi is eating an orange.’

(19) Mè-kpó Kòfí (*ye) lè àsimè.  
1SG-see Kofi FOC be.at market  
‘I saw Kofi at the market.’

(20) Kòfí òà mòlì *(ye) ñù.  
Kofi give rice FOC eat  
‘Kofi made some rice and ate it.’

(21) Kòfí ná àgbálé síà (*ye) Yàwò.  
Kofi give book this FOC Yawo  
‘Kofi gave Yawo a book.’
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This type of data supports an analysis in which yé is a Foc⁰ head in the complementizer field, because we would expect medial yé of the type in (18) through (21) to be grammatical only if yé actually headed some lower position, either along the main line of projection or contained in the same constituent as the focused element.

The second new fact supporting the idea that yé is a Foc⁰ head is that yé cannot appear after a postverbal constituent (such as an object) to focus that constituent, even though (in other discourse contexts) the focused element may appear in situ without the particle. This is shown in (22c).

(22) Nyè-mé-xlɛ̃ nyàdzòdzoùgbàlɛ̃̀ ọ.
1SG-NEG-read newspaper NEG context: ‘I didn’t read the newspaper.’

a. Àgbàlɛ̃̀ sia yé mè-xlɛ̃.
book this FOC 1SG-read
‘I read this book.’

b. Mè-xlɛ̃ àgbàlɛ̃̀ sià.
1SG-read book this
‘I read this book.’

c. #Mè-xlɛ̃ àgbàlɛ̃̀ sia yé.
1SG-read book this FOC

While (22c) is grammatical, it does not have the intended interpretation, but rather one in which the entire clause is in focus. This is compatible with Aboh’s (2004) analysis of Gungbe, which assumes that in such a case the entire clause has moved to the specifier of FocP in CP. A more illustrative example of such whole-clause focus is given in (23A2), which shows that the embedding complementizer and the focus particle are both possible, while neither is required. (Not all speakers allow the complementizer bé in sentences like (23A2).) The proposed structure for (23A2) is schematized in (24).

(23) Q: Núkà Kòfí gblɔ̀ ná-wò?
what Kofi say to-2SG
Context: ‘What did Kofi tell you?’

A1: È-gblɔ̀ bé wó-tú sùkû lá.
3SG-say that 3PL-close school DET
‘He said that the school has been closed.’
‘That the school has been closed.’

(24) \[[\text{FocP} [ \text{Bé} \text{ wótú sùkù lá }] , [\text{Foc′ yé } t_1 ] \] \]

On the basis of both the fact that yé cannot appear in a medial post-verbal position and the nature of its interpretation when it is sentence-final, we conclude that yé is a head in the CP field in Ewe, along the lines proposed by Aboh (2004) for the focus particle in Gungbe.

Analysing yé as a focus head has a consequence for subjects in Ewe. Recall that when the subject is in focus, such as when it is questioned or modified by ‘only’, yé is obligatory. If yé is a Foc⁰ head that this means that the subject, unlike other constituent, obligatorily moves to spec-FocP when focused, as in the diagram in (25).

(25) \[[\text{FocP} \text{ Ámekà; [Foc′ yé } [\text{IP } t_1 yì àfútā? ]]] \]

‘Who went to the beach?’

3. PREDICATE F: TWO STRATEGIES

Ewe has two strategies for focusing a predicate. The first strategy is the so-called verb fronting construction (not available in all dialects) and the second is the ɖè construction. The two strategies have different interpretations: in verb fronting structures, focus has narrow scope, only on the verb itself, while in the ɖè construction, focus scopes over the whole event. We will now examine these two constructions and analyse them both in a way that, like structures employing the focus particle yé, makes use of the left-peripheral FocP projection.

3.1 THE VERB FRONTING CONSTRUCTION

In the verb fronting construction, illustrated in (26), a reduplicated form of the verb appears at beginning of the sentence, optionally followed by the focus particle yé. A non-reduplicated doublet of the verb remains lower in the clause.

(26) \[\text{Fò-fò-é wò-fò ɖèvì-á.} \]

\text{RED-hit-FOC \ 3SG-hit \ child-DEF}

literally ‘Beating, he beat the child.’

‘He gave the child a thorough beating.’

(Amekà, 2010)
This strategy obeys a common generalization given by Manfredi (1993): the verbal constituent in spec-FocP must be nominalized.

As Aboh (2006) notes, verb reduplication in Ewe gives a gerund-like interpretation denoting an event, and it often corresponds to nominalization in other African languages (see also Aboh & Dyakorova, 2009 for Gungbe). The reduplicated verb does not bear any kind of aspectual or inflectional morphology. Rather, the verb appears in its non-finite form which is simply reduplicated. Moreover, the optional focus marker yé that can follow the reduplicated verb in Ewe, as in (26), is the same focus marker appearing after a focused noun. We explain the necessity of the doubling of the verb with the fact that, the verb in FocP is some sort of nominalization. For this reason, it cannot appear in that position with the aspectual marker, which is proper of a verbal item.

3.2 THE ĐÈ CONSTRUCTION

The second strategy for focused predicates in Ewe employs the particle qè to the left of the predicate:

(27) Đè  wò-dżè  ànyí.  
qè  3SG-fall  ground.  
‘She/he fell down. / Fall down, he/she did.’  
(Ameka 1992: 2)

The particle qè appears at or near the beginning of the sentence and focuses the whole predicate. As we will see in detail, differently from the verb fronting construction illustrated in the previous section, qè doesn’t just focus the lexical verb. Rather, it has scope over the whole proposition.

The subject in the qè construction is subject to some restrictions. First, it must precede qè, as shown in (28).

(28)  a. Đèvi-wó  đè  wó-fé-ná.  
child-PL  qè  3PL-play-HAB  
‘Children do play.’

qè  child-PL  3PL-play-HAB

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4 This is the judgement reported by Felix Ameka (1992), which was confirmed to us by James Essegbey, who checked it with three other speakers of the Anglo dialect. However, two of our own speakers actually preferred pre-subject qè in certain instances.
This subject can be followed by the topic particle yá or be separated from the rest of the sentence with a pause:

Kofi TOP ɖe 3SG-fall ground.  
‘(As for) Kofi, he fell down.’ / ‘(As for) Kofi, fall down, he did.’

b. Kòfí, ɖè wò-dzè ànyí.  
Kofi , ɖe 3SG-fall ground.  
‘(As for) Kofi, he fell down. / (As for) Kofi, fall down, he did.’

c. Ètsɔ̀ lá,⁵ ɖè mìè-lè fɔ̀-fɔ̀ gé kábá.  
tomorrow TOP ɖe 2PL-PRES wake-wake INGR early  
‘Tomorrow, you will get up early.’  
(Ameka 1992: 30)

Second, the subject cannot be followed by the focus particle yé, which clearly shows that the subject itself does not occupy spec-FocP in this construction:

(30)  Đèví-wó (*yé) ɖè wó-fé-ná.  
child-PL FOC ɖe 3PL-play-HAB  
‘Children do play.’

(Ameka 1992: 30)

Third, regardless of whether or not there is full lexical subject is overt, a corresponding clitic pronoun must be attached to the main verb in the IP.

(31)  a. Amá ɖè wò-ɖa fufú ɖù.  
Ama ɖe 3SG-cook fufu eat  
‘Ama did cook fufu and ate.’  
(Ameka 1992: 32)

b. Đé  wó-fé-ná.  
ɖe 3PL-play-HAB  
‘They are playing’ / ‘They do play.’  
(Ameka 1992: 29, slightly modified)

Đè is not linked to a specific tense. The predicate that follows ɖè can take any aspectual suffix (32a) and can be part of a serial verb construction (32b). In the latter case, there is still only one occurrence of the particle ɖè immediately to the left of the subject clitic on the first verb.

⁵ Ameka (1992) analyses lá as a topic particle.
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(32) a. Đè wó-fé-ná.
    ṭe 3PL-play-HAB
    ‘They are playing.’ / ‘They do play.’
    (Ameka 1992: 29, slightly modified)

b. Ámà đè wò-ɖà fúfú đù.
    Ama ṭe 3SG-cook fufu eat
    ‘Ama did cook fufu and ate.’
    (Ameka 1992: 32, slightly modified)

Đè does not display any kind of inflectional property. It remains invariable in form by its inability to bear the habitual affix -na:

(33) *Đè-ná wó-fé-ná.
    ṭe HAB 3PL-play-HAB
    ‘They are playing.’ / ‘They do play.’
    (Ameka 1992: 29, slightly modified)

Like the subject itself (as shown in (34)), the particle ṭe cannot be followed by a focus marker:

(34) Đèví-wó ṭe (*yé) wó-fé-ná.
    child-PL ṭe FOC 3PL-play-HAB
    ‘Children do play.’

The particle ṭe shows affinities with the nearly homophonous emphatic propositional question introducer in (35a), with the interrogative final question particle6 in (35b), and with a counterfactual conditional marker in (35c). Ameka (1992) proposes that these are distinct particles and that the connections between these functions can be easily established on the basis of typological polysemy.

(35) a. Đè nè-gà-tró gbò-nà lóò?
    Q 2SG-REP-turn come-HAB DISJ-Q
    ‘Are you coming back or?’
    (Ameka 1992: 33)

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6 “By using ṭe [as an interrogative final question particle] the speaker is alluding to the pertinent set of contextual assumptions considered to be mutually manifest to the interactants.” (Fretheim, Boateng and Vaskó 2003: 68)
b. Nyônù-à dë?
    woman-ART Q
    ‘What about the woman?’

c. Đé mè-gà dë afɔ dëká dó dë́ ngɔ lá né
    COND 1SG-REP take foot one send to front TOP then
    mè-gé dzè do-a mè.
    1SG-fall land hole-DEF in
    ‘Had I taken another step forward, I would have fallen into the pit.’
    (Ameka 1992: 35)

We agree with Ameka in considering the homophonous particles in the examples (35) to be distinct particles. To support this idea, we can add that, differently from the dë in the dë construction, the counterfactual conditional marker dë can be followed by a lexical subject, as in (36). This might also mean that the counterfactual conditional marker dë occupies a different position in the structure from the dë of the dë construction.

(36) Đé Koﬁ gblò ná-m bé yè-m-à-nò vòvò mè
dë Koﬁ say to-1SG that LOG-NEG-FUT-be.at free inside
égbè ô lá, dë m-à-vá ètɔ sì vá yì.
today NEG ART dë 1SG-FUT-come tomorrow REL come go
‘If Kofi had told me you were busy today, I would have come yesterday.’

Moreover, differently again from the dë construction, after the counterfactual dë particle, the third person singular clitic can appear not only in the special form wò-/wǒ- (as in the dë construction, see (32a)), but also in its “regular” form é-:

(37) a. Đé wǒ-gblò ná-m bé....
dë 3SG-say to-1SG that
‘If he had told me that....’

b. Đé é-gblò ná-m bé....
dë 3SG-say to-1SG that

Previous analyses. The verb fronting focus strategy has been studied extensively in the literature on Gbe languages (Ameka, 1992, 2010; Aboh, 1997, 2006; Aboh and Dyakorova, 2009, Fiedler, in press), whereas very little work has been done on the dë construction. Ameka analyses dë as a focus marker on par with yé, and Aboh analyses it as the focus head of a focus projection. Đé encodes a predicate focus: the scope of dë is over the predication that it introduces, as exemplified in (38).
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(38) Ɖè mè-ɖẹ̀, mé-nyé ɖè mè-mè-ɖè ṃ.  
ɖè 1SG-cook:3SGNEG-be ɖe 1SG-roast:3SGNEG  
‘I cooked it, it is not that I roasted it.’  
(Ameka 1992: 31)

If we follow Ameka and Aboh in characterizing ɖè as a focus marker, ɖè’s behaviour should correspond to that of yé, the head of a focus projection, whose specifier is a constituent in focus. However, ɖè does not seem to belong either to the same class of elements as the focus particle yé or to the specificity/topicality-related particles lá/á and yá. In contrast to these particles, ɖè does not have scope over the element to its left. Instead, it focuses the whole predicate to its right. In this paper, we therefore pursue a different line of thought and do not analyze ɖè as a focus particle on par with yé.

**Interpretation.** Ɖè is commonly called a predicate focus marker, because it focuses only on the predication (see Fiedler, in press). The example in (39), in fact, shows that it cannot be used as an answer to a wh sub-constituent of the predicate:

(39) Q: Àfíkà wò-lè?  
where 3S-stay  
‘Where does he live?’ / ‘Where is he?’

A: # Ɖè wòlè Tógó.  
ɖe 1SG-be.in Togo

As mentioned above the verb fronting construction and the ɖè construction have different interpretations. While the verb fronting strategy has narrow scope, only on the lexical verb itself, the ɖè construction, focuses the whole predication. Consider, for example, the question-answer pair in (40): since the question requires an answer with a focus on the whole event, the verb fronting strategy in (40A1) is infelicitous. The verb fronting strategy focuses only on the verb ‘beating’, in contrast to another possible action against the child. In other words, everything except the verb is known information. It is only the verb which fills the information gap and is thus at the center of attention. In contrast, the answer with the ɖè construction in (40A2) is appropriate, since the new information is the whole proposition, the event of ‘beating a child’.
A remarkable fact in support of the claim that ḍè focuses only the event is the obligatory attachment of the subject clitic to the main verb. As Ameka (1992, 2010) notes, a lexical subject can only appear to the left of ḍè, and it can be followed by a topic marker (or can be separated by the rest of the sentence by a pause). When the lexical subject is absent, it must realized as a clitic pronoun whose referent can be understood from the discourse context. In the literature, in fact, the subject in the initial ḍè construction is interpreted as a topic and the initial ḍè construction is characterized as a “comment only sentence”. That is, it is the comment on a topic. Moreover, recall the fact that ḍè cannot be preceded by a subject followed by a focus marker (see example (30)), and therefore cannot co-occur with another focused element in the same clause. Ameka (1992) notes that the fact that a full pronoun can never appear between ḍè and the main verb, but can appear only in its clitic form, indicates that the subject is out of the scope of focus (Ameka 2010: 326). Further, Ameka (2010) points out that the ḍè construction can be used to answer questions like What did X do? What happened to X?, which designate X as the topic of discourse. Therefore, the ḍè construction marks an answer to a question about the predicate and forces an interpretation in which the subject is interpreted as the topic. In other words, the scope of focus given by ḍè is only the event, the comment of the topic, since the subject is always interpreted as already “given” or “mentioned” in the context. Note further that the ḍè construction cannot be used in an answer where the focus is the subject, as shown in response to a wh question in (41) and in the corrective contrast in (42).
A: Ámà fò Kôfì.
     Ama hit Kofi
     ‘Ama hit Kofi.’

B1: Àò, Kòkú-é fò-è.
     no Koku-FOC hit-3SG
     ‘No, Koku hit him.’

B2: #Àò, Kòkú dè wô-fò-è.
     no Koku dè 3SG-hit-3SG

The formal explanation that we propose for this intuition is in line with the topic versus focus distinction in Ewe: topicalization leaves a resumptive clitic, whereas in the simplest cases focus does not, as was shown in (3). Thus, we assume that the obligatory presence of the clitic and the impossibility of a full pronoun following dè indicate that the subject occupies a topic position and binds a resumptive clitic within the IP.

Finally, as Ameka (1992: 5) claims, the sentences with dè can receive a contrastive meaning, as is also suggested by the use of the English emphatic do-support in translations, and in fact, certain parallels can be drawn between dè and do. Consider the Ewe sentence in (43a) and the English sentence in (43b):

(43) a. Đè mè-dâ-è.
     DE 1SG-cook:3SG
     ‘I did cook it.’

   b. I did cook it.

Both (43a) and (43b) can have a contrastive meaning. They can be used as a correction of an assumption made explicitly or merely implied in the context, as shown in the following:

(44) a. Đè me- qa, mé-nyé dè me-me-é o.
     DE 1SG-cook:3SGNEG:3SG-be DE 1SG-roast-3SG NEG
     ‘I cooked it, it is not that I roasted it.’
     (Ameka 1992: 31)

   b. I DID cook it, I didn’t roast it.

However, both emphatic do-support and dè can also be used to simply assert or emphasize the proposition, to stress the reality of the verbal action or state, or
perhaps rather, to remove any doubt as to the reality of the action on state (Ard, 1982; Ellegard, 1953).

As we illustrated above, ɖè can introduce sentences to answer a question like *What happened to X?*, as in (45):

(45)  Q: Núkàé dzò ɖè édzì?
    ‘What’s happened to him?’

    A: Ɖè wò-dze  anyí.
    ɖè 3SG-fall  ground.
    ‘She/he fell down. / Fall down, he/she did.’
    (Ameka 1992: 2)

In this case, the ɖè construction doesn’t seem to express any contrast. However, the Ewe speakers we have consulted indicate two things. First, the answer to (45Q) can be realized as a simple sentence without ɖè, but with a difference: the answer with ɖè is much more emphasized, in the sense that, adding ɖè, the speaker wants to stress the assertion and the reality of the event. Second, if considered in isolation, ɖè is sometimes translated by the Ewe speakers with *c’est que...* in French and with *it’s that...* in English (see also Warburton 1968: 235). This kind of emphasis is parallel to the emphasis given by the English *do*-support when used non-contrastively (see Quirk et al. 1985: 1371 for examples).

**Syntax.** Ɖè does not seem to belong either to the same class of elements as the focus particle ỳé or to the specificity/topicality-related particles lâ/lá and ỳá. In contrast to these particles, ɖè does not have scope over the element to its left, but rather it focuses the whole predicate to its right. Therefore, we argue that ɖè does not head a focus projection on par with ỳé for the focus fronting for the noun phrase. If ɖè is not a focus head, no element needs to move to its specifier. We propose that ɖè is an overt verum focus operator positioned in the CP area. Specifically, we argue that ɖè occupies a complementizer position.

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7 Note also that other unrelated languages like Korean and Central Western Basque require a sort of *do*-support in certain marked environment (e.g., negation in Korean and verb focus in Basque), i.e., when the predicate is in some way focused.

(i) Chelswu-ka chayk-ul ilk-ci ani ha-ess-ta. Korean
    Chelswu-NOM book-ACC read-CL NEG do-PST-DECL
    ‘Chelswu DID NOT read the book.’
    (from Hagstrom 1996: 2)

(ii) Ines etorri egin da. Basque
    Ines come do AUX
    ‘Ines has COME.’
    (from Haddican 2007: 1–2)
In the literature it has been shown that there is a hierarchy consisting of multiple positions for different types of complementizers. Haegeman (2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2006) has introduced a distinction between the functional head that ensures speaker anchoring, which she labeled as Force, and the head hosting the subordinating conjunction (Sub), which serves to subordimate the clause. She develops her hypothesis on the lines of Roussou’s (2000) analysis of the CP area in Greek, which is based on the observation that in many languages it is possible to have multiple complementizers in a sequence. The availability of sequences of complementizers in certain languages has been accounted for in terms of CP recursion (see, for example, Authier, 1992: Rizzi, 1997). C is split into two basic heads: Force and Finiteness. The higher C is Force, which carries clause-typing properties, while the lower C is Fin, which carries information about finiteness. Force and Fin can be separated by the interpolation of Topic and Focus. Roussou (2000) considers Finiteness to be a cover term that subsumes a cluster of inflectional properties associated with verbal paradigms, including modality. She thus proposes three central C positions, each specified for different features of complementizer-related elements:

(46) \[ C \{\text{Topic/Focus} \{C_{\text{OP}} \{\text{Neg} \{C_{\text{M}} \{I \text{ clitic+V}\}\}\}\}\}\]

(slightly modified from Roussou 2000:79)

The higher C gives us subordination, the middle C clause-typing, and the lower C modality.\(^9\) The Neg projection is between the latter two complementizers.

We argue, then, that ɖè is a focus operator that occupies the lowest complementizer position. As mentioned above, ɖè cannot be the head of a FocP projection like ɣé is, since it takes scope over the predication to its right. The subject is always excluded from the scope of ɖè: it always appears to ɖè’s left, it can be followed by a topic particle or a pause. The clitic is obligatory in the IP. This indicates that the subject occupies a topic position and is bound to the clitic in the IP. Moreover, the subject is always part of the background of the speakers involved in the conversation and is never in focus. Accordingly, we argue that ɖè occupies the lower C, from where it has scope over the predicate, emphasizing the truth of the proposition. As in the CP structure in (46) proposed by Roussou, negation is between the lower two complementizers. If ɖè is in the position of the lowest complementizer, it shouldn’t be able to have scope over a negated verb. And that is exactly what we find: ɖè cannot precede a negated verb, as in (47).

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8. C: complementizer; C_{OP}: complementizer operator; C_{M}: complementizer modality; I: inflection.
9. Haegeman (2006: 17) replaces C by the label Sub, (because this is the position that hosts the subordinating conjunction), C_{OP} by the label Force, and C_{M} by Fin:
(i) \[ \text{Sub} \{\text{Topic/Focus} \{\text{Force} \{ \text{Fin} \{I \text{ clitic+V}\}\}\}\}\]
The idea that \(dë\) occupies the lowest C position in a hierarchy consisting of multiple C projections is also supported by the fact that \(dë\)-construction is not an exclusively root phenomenon. It can occur in subordinate clauses and it can be preceded by another complementizer. In fact, if \(dë\) is an overt operator in the lowest complementizer position, one can expect that after verbs of saying or feeling, a sequence of two complementizers may occur. One is a complementizer of verbs like ‘hearing’ or ‘saying’, while the other codes another complementizer, the lowest one. This is exactly what we obtain in Ewe:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(48)} & \quad \text{a. Mè-sè bé Kòfí } dë \text{ wò-dzè } \text{ànyí.}^{10} \\
& \quad \text{I-hear that Kofi } dë \text{ 3SG-fall } \text{ground} \\
& \quad \text{‘I heard that he fell down.’} \\
\text{b. Ámà gblɔ̀ nám̀ bé Kòfì } dë \text{ wò-dzè } \text{ànyí.} \\
& \quad \text{Ama sayto- 1SG that Kofi } dë \text{ 3SG-fall } \text{ground} \\
& \quad \text{‘Ama said that Kofi fell down.’}
\end{align*}
\]

In our analysis, the subordinating conjunction \(bé\) occupies the highest C, i.e., the subordinating position (Sub, in Haegeman’s (2006) terms), the subject is in Topic position binding the corresponding subject clitic (in its special form) in IP, while \(dë\) is in the lowest C:

\[
\text{(49) } \ldots [C \text{ be } \text{Top Kofi } [C \text{ dë } [I \text{ wò-dzè ænyí]}])]
\]

Finally, recall that, as mentioned before, that \(dë\) can be translated ‘it’s that...’, that is, by means of a complementizer. From the complementizer position, \(dë\) scopes over elements to its right focusing the truth of the predication.

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10 Frajzyngier (1995) shows a similar structure in some data from Mupun. In Mupun \(páa\) is an epistemic modality marker: it marks doubt in the truth of something. Like \(dë\) in Ewe, it must be preceded by the subject:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(i) } & \quad A \text{ sat ne wu paa mbe yo muan.} \\
& \quad 2M \text{ say COMP 3M doubt FUT go.trip} \\
& \quad \text{‘You said that he will go on a trip (but he may or may not go).’} \\
& \quad \text{(from Frajzyngier 1995: 62)}
\end{align*}
\]
4. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we examined various focus-related phenomena in Ewe, all involving the FocP projection in the left periphery. The focus particle yé, which we analyse as the head of FocP, does not encode a specific kind of focus, but can host elements with a range of focal interpretations. All elements that move to its specifier are focused and constitute the prominent information in the sentence.

The most intriguing focus strategy is the ɖè construction. Contrary to the analysis found in the current literature, we view ɖè as not belonging to same class of elements as the focus particle yé or to the topicality-related particle yá,. Therefore, we argue that ɖè is not a focus head of a focus projection. We propose that ɖè occupies a complementizer position C from where it has scope on the predicate on its right, emphasizing the truth of the proposition.

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