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## A familiar definite article in Akan<sup>☆</sup>

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### Abstract

There is a long-standing debate on the nature of definiteness in natural language: does it involve familiarity, uniqueness, or both? This paper contributes to the debate by providing a semantic analysis of the definite article *nu* in Akan (Kwa). We provide evidence that *nu* strictly encodes familiarity; it introduces a presupposition that the relevant discourse referent is present in the common ground between speaker and hearer. In almost every respect it parallels German 'strong' definite articles as analyzed by Schwarz (2009), and thus provides cross-linguistic support for Schwarz's claim that there are definite articles which encode pure familiarity.

Following other researchers, we observe that *nu* can also be used as a third-person singular (animate) pronoun. We argue that in both its determiner and pronominal uses *nu* contributes the same core semantics: familiarity. This is in line with the close parallel between determiners and third person pronouns (cf. Postal, 1966).

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### 1. Introduction

For many decades, researchers have been debating the correct analysis of definite noun phrases. One particular issue of controversy is whether definites encode familiarity, uniqueness, or both; see Frege (1892), Russell (1905), Christophersen (1939), Strawson (1950), Hawkins (1978, 1991), Prince (1981, 1992), Heim (1982, 1990), Kadmon (1987, 1990), Hawkins (1991), Birner and Ward (1994), Lyons (1999), Abbott (1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004), Szabo (2000, 2003), Elbourne (2001), Farkas (2002), Roberts (2003, 2005), among many others, for discussion. One interesting recent advance is that of Schwarz (2009). Schwarz argues that German possesses a distinction between a 'strong' definite article – which enforces familiarity – and a 'weak' definite article, which enforces uniqueness (cf. also Ebert, 1971 for Fering, and see references in Schwarz, 2012 for various Germanic dialects).

The debate about the nature of definite articles has so far focussed largely on Indo-European languages.<sup>2</sup> In this paper we bring data to bear on the issue from Akan (Kwa, Niger-Congo). Akan possesses an article *nu*, which has been analyzed as a definite by Amfo and Fretheim (2005) and Amfo (2006), and which at first glance behaves similarly to

<sup>☆</sup> This paper is based on Chapter 4 of Arkoh (2011); the core analysis and much of the data are taken from that work. Sections 2.3.2, 2.4, 4.2, 4.3 and 5 of this paper are either entirely new, or significantly altered from Arkoh (2011).

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<sup>2</sup> A few exceptions to this are discussed by Schwarz (2012), including for example work by Wespel (2008) on Mauritian Creole.

English *the*. We see in (1) that discourse-initial mention of an orange disallows *nu*, while subsequent reference to the familiar orange requires *nu*.

- (1) Context: Beginning of conversation.  
Mù-tó-ò èkùtú *(\*nú)*. Èkùtú *(\*nú)* yè dèw pápá  
1SG.SUBJ-buy-PAST orange *(\*FAM)* orange *(\*FAM)* be nice good  
'I bought an orange. The orange was really tasty.'

However, Akan *nu* behaves unlike English *the* in certain respects. For example, *nu* is absent on both 'person' and 'moon' in (2), while omitting *the* in the English translation is impossible.

- (2) Ámstròŋ nyí nyímpá áà ó-dzí-i kán tú-ù kó-ò òsirán dù  
Armstrong is person REL 3SG.SUBJ-eat-PAST first fly-PAST go-PAST moon top  
'Armstrong was the first person to fly to the moon.'

In this paper we provide a semantic analysis of *nu*, and investigate the theoretical consequences of the analysis. Following Arkoh (2011), we show that *nu* is very similar empirically to the German strong (familiar) article as discussed by Schwarz (2009). This provides cross-linguistic support for the claim that definites exist which encode purely familiarity, rather than uniqueness.

While we concentrate mainly on the determiner uses of *nu*, we also briefly address its other uses. As pointed out by Amfo and Fretheim (2005), Fretheim and Amfo (2005) and Amfo (2006), *nu* also functions (albeit with different tonal realizations) as a third-person singular animate pronoun, and as a subordinate clause marker. In line with Amfo and Fretheim (2005), Amfo (2006) and Arkoh (2011),<sup>3</sup> we argue that the determiner and the pronominal uses of *nu* are formed from one underlying morpheme; we further argue that the tonal differences between the two uses are the predictable result of syntactic position. Our analysis thus also provides cross-linguistic support for Elbourne's (2001, 2005) proposed close connection between third person pronouns and determiners (see originally Postal, 1966).

The paper is structured as follows. In the remainder of the introduction we provide background on the Akan language, our methodology, the three distinct syntactic functions of *nu*, and the theoretical notion of familiarity. In Section 2 we argue that the determiner *nu* requires that the hearer be familiar with the referent of the noun phrase; it crucially does not merely require that the referent be uniquely identifiable (as argued by Fretheim and Amfo, 2005; Amfo, 2006, 2007). We also show that the determiner *nu* is almost identical to the German strong article of Schwarz (2009), and that the main empirical difference between *nu* and the German strong article results from the absence in Akan of an alternative weak definite article. In Section 3 we show that pronominal *nu*, just like determiner *nu*, requires familiarity, and in addition requires salience (as well as animacy). In Section 4 we take steps towards a unification of the determiner and pronominal uses. We argue (following Amfo, 2006) that the tonal differences between determiner and pronominal *nu* are predictable: *nu* bears high tone when it functions as a determiner, but is inherently toneless when it functions as a pronoun (pace Amfo, 2006). We suggest that *nu* itself does not occupy the D position; instead, high tone activates a null D head (cf. Manfredi, 2011, and pace Arkoh, 2011). In Section 5 we briefly compare the Akan facts to those of some other Kwa languages. We show that Akan differs from its relatives in obligatorily marking definiteness via an overt article. Thus, unlike in e.g. Yorùbá (Ajiboye, 2005), a bare noun in Akan cannot be used to refer to a familiar individual. Section 6 concludes.

### 1.1. Akan

Akan belongs to the Kwa sub-family of the Niger-Congo family. It is spoken mainly in the southern part of Ghana and part of Ivory Coast. In Ghana approximately 44% of the population speaks Akan as a native language. This group comprises about 7,753,830 people, according to Osam (2004).

Akan has three main dialects and many sub-dialects. The three main dialects are Akuapem Twi (spoken mainly in the Eastern Region of Ghana), Asante-Twi (spoken mainly in the Ashanti Region), and Fante (spoken in the Central Region and some parts of the Western Region). The dialects are mutually intelligible, with only slight variations. The dialect we will focus on most closely here is Fante.

When presenting Akan data, we represent vowels according to their pronunciation in the IPA. Consonants are given as in the standard orthography of the language. Where we cite data from other sources, we preserve the original spelling.

<sup>3</sup> but unlike Fretheim and Amfo (2005).

Akan is a tonal language; it has two basic tones: high (H) marked with (´) and low (L) marked with (˘). The tone-bearing unit in Akan is the syllable, so every syllable must bear a tone (Dolphyne, 1988). Vowels can be distinguished based on the tones they bear. Minimal pairs showing this are given in (3), adapted from Arkoh (2011:3).

(3)	Low Tone		High Tone	
	/dà/	‘never’	/dá/	‘day’
	/pàpà	‘fan’	/pápá/	‘good’
	/dàn/	‘turn it over’	/dán/	‘room/house’
	/fír/	‘buy on credit’	/fíir/	‘go out’
	/òbòfú/	‘hunter’	/òbófú/	‘messenger’

The word order in Akan is SVO, as shown in (4).<sup>4</sup>

- (4) a. *Kwèsí hú-ù Ámá*  
Kwesi see-PAST Ama  
‘Kwesi saw Ama.’
- b. *Kwèsí bɔ-ɔ àbùfrá kàkrábá nídídà*  
Kwesi beat-PAST child little yesterday  
‘Kwesi beat a little child yesterday.’ (Arkoh, 2011:4)

We follow Saah (1994) in assuming that Akan has Determiner Phrases.<sup>5</sup> (5a) shows the specific indefinite article *bí* (analyzed by Arkoh, 2011 as a referential indefinite in the sense of Fodor and Sag, 1982), and (5b) shows the definite article *nú*, the focus of the current paper.<sup>6</sup> Extensive discussion of the discourse contexts which do and do not license (5b) will be given below.

- (5) a. *Kwámì hwí-ì [àbùfrá (tùntúm) bí]<sub>DP</sub>*  
Kwame cane-PAST child black REF  
‘Kwame caned a certain (dark) child.’ (Arkoh, 2011:8)
- b. *Kwámì hwí-ì [àbùfrá (tùntúm) nú]<sub>DP</sub>*  
Kwame cane-PAST child black FAM  
‘Kwame caned the (dark) child.’ (Arkoh, 2011:9)

Bare noun arguments, as in (1), (2) and (4b), raise the question of whether argument phrases in Akan obligatorily contain a D head (as in Longobardi 1994) or not (as in Chierchia 1998). Although analysis of bare nouns goes beyond the scope of this paper, we will provide some semantic evidence below that bare nouns do not contain a null definite determiner.

Akan also possesses demonstrative markers, which appear DP-initially as in (6).

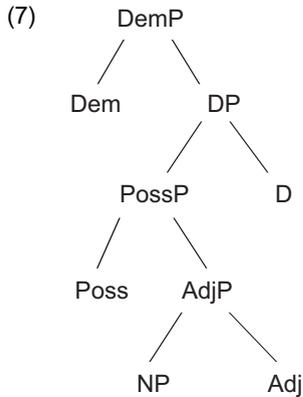
- (6) *Kwámì hwí-ì [dém àbùfrá (tùntúm) nú]<sub>DP</sub>*  
Kwame cane-PAST DEM child black FAM  
‘Kwame caned that (dark) child.’ (Arkoh, 2011:9)

We will be setting the demonstrative markers aside here for reasons of space; see Amfo (2007) and Arkoh (2011) for discussion and semantic analysis. The structure we assume for Akan DPs, based on surface word order facts, is given in (7).

<sup>4</sup> Abbreviations which are not covered by the Leipzig glossing rules: ATR = advanced tongue root, DCM = dependent clause marker, EXPL = expletive, FAM = familiar, INAN = inanimate, PART = particle, REF = referential.

<sup>5</sup> This is also the null hypothesis, given the existence of DPs in many other languages.

<sup>6</sup> In Section 4 we will propose that what the Akan literature calls ‘determiners’ (*bí*, *nú*) are not actually in D position.



### 1.2. Methodology

All data in this paper which are not referenced derive from the first author's judgments as a native speaker of the Fante dialect of Akan. Data taken from Arkoh (2011) are also derived primarily from the first author's judgments. However, other native speakers were also consulted by Arkoh. Over a period of one year, three native speakers of Akan (two Fantes and one Ashanti) were consulted for their judgments on the grammaticality and felicity of sentences. In some cases the consultants were asked for judgments which dealt with the potential ambiguity of sentences. In those instances different contexts would be presented to the consultants to find out which readings are permitted or preferred in a particular context. Real life situations were also used. For example, sentences with suspected familiarity presuppositions were uttered out of the blue in discourse contexts in which the presupposition was not satisfied, to see the response and reaction of the consultants. All fieldwork sessions were conducted in Akan.

### 1.3. The three uses of *nɔ*

The Akan morpheme *nɔ* is used in three distinct syntactic environments. As observed by Amfo and Fretheim (2005), Fretheim and Amfo (2005) and Amfo (2006), *nɔ* can be used as a definite determiner, a third person singular animate object pronoun, or a dependent clause marker. (8–10) give examples of the three uses. While pronominal *nɔ* is restricted to animate referents, determiner *nɔ* is not, as shown in (8b).

- (8) a. *Pàpá nɔ bá-à há*  
man FAM come-PAST here  
'The man came here.' (Arkoh, 2011:51)
- b. *Kwámì dzi èdzibán nɔ má-à àbùfrá nɔ*  
Kwame take food FAM give-PAST child FAM  
'Kwame gave the food to the child.' (Arkoh, 2011:54)
- (9) a. *Ésí ká-à nɔ*  
Esi bite-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Esi bit him/her.' (Arkoh, 2011:51)
- b. *Kwámì dzi èdzibán nɔ má-à nɔ*  
Kwame take food FAM give-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Kwame gave the food to him/her.' (Arkoh, 2011:54)
- (10) a. *Kòfí hú-ù mààmí nɔ áà ò-tòn tám nɔ*  
Kofi see-PAST woman FAM REL 3SG.SUBJ-sell cloth DCM  
'Kofi saw the woman who sells cloth.' (Arkoh, 2011:51)
- b. *Ànàpá nɔ nà Kwámì dzi èdzibán nɔ má-à nɔ*  
morning DCM FOC Kwame take food FAM give-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'It was in the morning that Kwame gave the food to him/her.' (Arkoh, 2011:54)

While we concentrate mainly on the determiner uses of *nú*, we will briefly address the other uses in Sections 3 and 4. We will argue that all uses of *nú* encode the same core semantics: familiarity.

#### 1.4. Familiarity

We adopt a fairly standard definition of familiarity: the referent of a noun phrase is familiar if at the time of utterance, the speaker takes the existence of the referent to already be present in the common ground of the discourse (the shared knowledge between speaker and hearer; Stalnaker, 1978). Familiarity forms the core of many analyses of definites, including that of Heim (1982). This notion of familiarity is essentially equivalent to Prince's (1992) 'hearer-old'. Prince defines hearer-old entities to be those for which the speaker presumes the hearer to already have a mental representation (Prince, 1992:301). Prince notes that in English there is a close, but not perfect, correlation between formal marking of definiteness (e.g., by a definite article) and hearer-old informational status.<sup>7</sup> We will argue in this paper that Akan *nú* encodes hearer-oldness.

Prince also makes a distinction between discourse-old and discourse-new information; this relates to whether the information has been previously evoked in the current discourse. Prince argues that what is hearer-new is necessarily discourse-new, since 'hearers are expected to remember what they have been told' (Prince, 1992:303). See also Roberts (2003) for relevant discussion; Roberts argues that English definites only require what she calls 'weak familiarity' (somewhat similar to Prince's 'hearer-oldness'), and not 'strong familiarity' (discourse-oldness, or linguistic anaphoricity). The distinction between discourse-old and discourse-new is not explicitly encoded in Akan.

Finally, Prince also identifies a third category of 'inferrables', illustrated in (11).

(11) He passed by the Bastille and *the door* was painted purple. (Prince, 1992:305)

Here, the door was not mentioned in prior discourse, and may not be known to the hearer, yet a definite is felicitous. Inferrables 'are technically Hearer-new and Discourse-new but depend upon beliefs assumed to be Hearer-old, and . . . these beliefs crucially involve some trigger entity, which is itself Discourse-old' (Prince, 1992:305). In other literature (e.g., Clark, 1975) these cases are known as *bridging*; we return to them in Section 2.3.1.

## 2. The determiner *nú* encodes familiarity

In this section we argue that the determiner *nú* encodes familiarity, and in this it parallels the German strong definite article as analyzed by Schwarz (2009). In Section 2.1 we introduce the basic data, and argue that *nú* encodes familiarity rather than uniqueness. In 2.2 we outline the strong/weak article distinction in German, and in Section 2.3 we show that *nú* patterns like a strong, familiar article, rather than like a weak, unique article. Section 2.4 discusses the main respect in which Akan *nú* differs from a German strong article, and argues that the difference results from the absence in Akan of a contrasting weak definite.

### 2.1. *Nú* encodes familiarity, not uniqueness

In Akan, the definite determiner *nú*<sup>8</sup> can be distinguished from the indefinite determiner *bí*, as shown in (12), and from a bare noun, as shown in (13). ('Bare' nouns lack a determiner; they may contain material other than the noun, as for example in (4b) above.)

- (12) a. *Mùtò-ò èkùtú bí*  
1SG.SUBJ-buy-PAST orange REF  
'I bought a (certain) orange.'
- b. *Èkùtú nú yè dèw déè*  
orange FAM be nice so  
'The orange is/was so nice.'

(Arkoh, 2011:52)

<sup>7</sup> As noted above, there is a long-standing debate about the correct analysis of English definiteness. It is not our purpose here to enter the debate about English, but merely to define the notion of familiarity, which we will argue is crucial for understanding Akan determiners.

<sup>8</sup> As mentioned above, the different syntactic environments in which *nú* appears correlate with differing tonal marking. We discuss this in Section 4.1, but for now, since the determiner use of *nú* always surfaces with a high tone, we write the determiner use as *nú*.

- (13) a. *Mù-tó-ò èkùtú*  
1SG.SUBJ-buy-PAST orange  
'I bought an orange.'
- b. *Èkùtú nú yè dèw pápá*  
orange FAM be nice good  
'The orange is/was really tasty.'

In (12a), a specific orange is mentioned for the first time in the discourse; in (12b) the referent is mentioned for the second time, so *nú* rather than *bí* has to be used. Similarly in (13), the (a) sentence has a discourse-new referent, so a bare noun is possible, but in (13b) the referent is mentioned for the second time, so *nú* is obligatory. The definite determiner *nú* is not exchangeable for *bí* or the bare noun. That is, neither (12a) nor (13a) can be used if the orange is already under discussion. Conversely, (12b/13b) cannot be used if the orange is unfamiliar to the hearer. Thus, the use of *bí* and *nú* is not optional; in any given discourse context, there is one correct form of the noun phrase.<sup>9</sup> For analysis of *bí* and the bare noun construction, the reader is referred to Amfo (2010) and Arkoh (2011).

It seems reasonable based on data such as (12–13) to conclude that the determiner *nú* is a definite article, and Amfo (2006) proposes exactly this. We adopt this proposal. However, we differ from Amfo in the precise semantics assigned to *nú*. According to Amfo, the semantics of *nú* is that of 'uniquely identifiable'. We will now explain the difference between familiarity and unique identifiability, and then present data to argue that *nú* encodes familiarity.

The term 'uniquely identifiable' comes from Gundel et al. (1993), and forms part of their Givenness Hierarchy, a hierarchy of cognitive statuses which helps explain the discourse conditions under which various types of noun phrases are felicitous. The hierarchy is given in Table 1, along with English items corresponding to each cognitive status.

Table 1  
Givenness hierarchy (Gundel et al., 1993:275).

>	in focus	<i>it</i>
>	activated	<i>that/this/this N</i>
>	familiar	<i>that N</i>
>	uniquely identifiable	<i>the N</i>
>	referential	indefinite <i>this N</i>
>	type identifiable	<i>a N</i>

Gundel et al. (1993:275–276) argue that when a speaker uses a form associated with a particular status, she 'signals that she assumes the associated cognitive status is met and . . . she also signals that all lower statuses . . . have been met.' Explanations of each of the statuses are given in (14), following Gundel et al. (1993:276–280) and starting at the bottom. Each higher status entails all lower statuses; for example, an in-focus referent is necessarily also activated, and so on.

- (14) type identifiable: The hearer is able to access a representation of the type of object.  
referential: The speaker intends to refer to (a) certain object(s); the hearer either already has, or can immediately construct, a representation for this object.  
uniquely identifiable: The addressee can identify the speaker's intended referent on the basis of the nominal alone, as it is unique. The referent may or may not be already familiar to the hearer.  
familiar: The hearer already has a representation of the referent in (long- or short-term) memory.  
activated: The referent is present in short-term memory.  
in focus: The referent is at the current center of attention.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The inability of bare nouns in Akan to be used when the referent is familiar differentiates Akan from, for example, Yorùbá (Ajiboye, 2005). See Manfredi (2011) and Section 5 below for discussion of the cross-Kwa facts. Our claim that *nú* is obligatory with familiar referents is questioned by an anonymous reviewer, who reports that his/her Akan consultants accept a dropped article in one sub-type of familiar context, namely on second mention of a referent. This would make the Akan equivalents of sentences like (i) acceptable:

(i) Look John, I bought [a dog], but [dog] became a problem in the house as it kept biting everyone except me!

We are not sure why there appears to be Akan-internal variation here; further research is required. The first author and our three consultants reject sentences like (i); they sound very odd.

<sup>10</sup> This is not the same as 'focussed' in the sense of e.g., Rooth (1992) (see Gundel et al., 1993:279); it is more similar to 'salient'.

Of particular interest for current concerns is the difference between familiarity and unique identifiability. Unique identifiability means that the speaker's intended referent can be identified by the hearer on the basis of the nominal alone. An example is given in (15).

(15) I couldn't sleep last night. The dog (next door) kept me awake. (Gundel et al., 1993:277)

If the material inside the parentheses is left out, then the hearer is probably assumed to have a pre-existing mental representation of a unique dog (and hence, the dog is familiar). However, if *next door* is pronounced, the fact that the neighbours have a dog can be entirely new information for the hearer, since the description is rich enough to enable the hearer to create a unique representation. In the latter case, the definite is only uniquely identifiable.

In pioneering work on Akan nominal semantics, Fretheim and Amfo (2005) and Amfo (2007) assign Akan forms to Gundel et al.'s cognitive statuses on the Givenness Hierarchy. Their proposal is given in (16), with *nú* highlighted (spelled as *nó*, following Fretheim and Amfo's orthographic convention).

(16)	in focus	ɔ- 's/he' / è- 'it' / nó 'him/her'	
	activated	ónó 'S/HE, HIM/HER' / éno 'IT/THAT' / N yí 'this N' / éyí <sup>11</sup> 'this'	
	familiar	sàá <sup>12</sup> N nó 'that N'	
	uniquely identifiable	N <b>nó</b> 'the N'	
	referential	N bí 'a certain N'	
	type identifiable	N	(Fretheim and Amfo, 2005:110; Amfo, 2007:143)

Fretheim and Amfo (2005) and Amfo (2006, 2007) argue that although referents of phrases containing determiner *nú* are often familiar, the determiner only has the cognitive status of uniquely identifiable. Some data in support of this proposal is given in (17). Amfo states that in (17), the dress 'could be just uniquely identifiable, such that the interlocutor has no prior knowledge of the dress being referred to' (2007:146).

(17) *Mè-pè àtààdéé nó*  
I-like dress DEF  
'I like the dress.' (Amfo, 2007:146)

However, Saah (1994:152–153), in a brief discussion of *nú*, says that it has a familiarity requirement. He gives the sentence in (18) followed by the explanation below (emphasis original):

(18) *Mbofra nó wó dan nó mu*  
children **the** be room the in  
'The children are in the room.' (Saah, 1994:152)

[I]n [18] the use of *nó* makes it clear that the children are known to the speaker and/or the hearer (e.g. a parent talking to the spouse about their children). It could also mean that the children have already been introduced in the discourse. The sentence can be paraphrased as: *The children (you and I know/have talked about) are in the room (that you and I know/have talked about)* (Saah, 1994:153).

Similarly, according to the judgments of our consultants, sentences like (17) (or their Fante equivalents) are not felicitous in non-familiar discourse contexts. Our consultants consistently judge that *nú* is infelicitous when the information is hearer-new, even if the individual satisfying the NP is uniquely identified. Instead, *nú* is used only when the hearer has prior information about the entity or referent. For example, when (19) is uttered, it presupposes that the food has already been mentioned previously, making it hearer-old. The hearer must have knowledge particularly about that food the speaker is making reference to.

(19) *Kwèsí è-dzi èdzibán nŭ*  
Kwesi PFV-eat food FAM  
'Kwesi has eaten the food.' (Arkoh, 2011:69)

<sup>11</sup> In Fante (the dialect used for this research), this form is *íyí*.

<sup>12</sup> The Fante version of this is *dém*.

A similar point is made by (20). These sentences are only felicitous if the food/cloth is hearer-old. They attract a ‘What/which food/cloth?’ type of response from the hearer, if there has not been prior mention of the noun phrase in the discourse, or the referent is not shared information between the interlocutors.

- (20) a. *Èdzibán nù é-gù fàmù*  
 food FAM PFV-fall ground  
 ‘The food has poured down.’
- b. *Kòfí á-fà tám nù*  
 Kofi PFV-take cloth FAM  
 ‘Kofi has taken the cloth.’

(Arkoh, 2011:70)

Spontaneously given support for our claim that *nù* requires familiarity is shown in (21–22). These are real-life conversations conducted between the first author and consultant S.

- (21) Context: Consultant S has just come home from university.  
 A: *Àbùfrá nù bá-à há*  
 child FAM come-PAST here  
 ‘The child came here.’  
 S: (with a confused face)  
*Ìbèn àbùfrá à? Á-n-ká àbùfrá bíará hò ásém ò*  
 which child Q PAST-NEG-say child every self case EXPL  
 ‘Which child? You did not say anything about any child oh!’

- (22) A: *Èdzibán nù yè dèw*  
 food FAM be nice  
 ‘The food is nice.’  
 S: (looking around for evidence)  
*Áh é-dzidzi à? Íbèn èdzibán à?*  
 EXPL PFV-eat Q which food Q  
 ‘Ah, have you eaten? Which food?’

Our proposal that *nù* is familiar entails that there is no difference in familiarity status between plain *nù*-phrases, and phrases which also contain an overt demonstrative. In this we differ from Fretheim and Amfo (2005) and Amfo (2007), who argue that a familiarity difference can be detected between *nù* by itself, and *nù* with a co-occurring demonstrative marker *sáá* (*dém* for the Fante dialect). They argue that the former is only uniquely identifiable, but the latter is familiar. In (23), Fretheim and Amfo argue that the pictures in (a) are only uniquely identifiable, since the demonstrative marker is absent, but in (b) they are familiar due to the presence of the demonstrative marker.<sup>13</sup>

- (23) a. *Mé-kyèré wò m̀fòní nó á é-firi Egypt nó*  
 1.FUT-show you pictures DEF REL they-come.from Egypt DCM  
 ‘I will show you the pictures from Egypt.’ (Fretheim and Amfo, 2005:109)
- b. *Mé-kyèré wò sáá m̀fòní nó á é-firi Egypt nó*  
 1.FUT-show you DEM pictures DEF REL they-come.from Egypt DCM  
 ‘I will show you those pictures from Egypt.’ (Fretheim and Amfo, 2005:109)

The sentences in (23) each contain two instances of *nù*, one of which is functioning as a dependent clause marker. To avoid any interference from this extra *nù*, we give simplified versions of (23) in (24):

- (24) a. *Mé-kyèré wò m̀fòní nó*  
 1.FUT-show you pictures FAM  
 ‘I will show you the pictures.’
- b. *Mé-kyèré wò sáá m̀fòní nó*  
 1.FUT-show you DEM pictures FAM  
 ‘I will show you those pictures.’

(adapted from Fretheim and Amfo, 2005:109)

<sup>13</sup> We have added the tones to Fretheim and Amfo’s examples.

According to the intuitions of the first author, and of the three native speakers we have consulted, none of the sentences in (23–24) can be uttered unless the hearer is aware of the fact that pictures will be arriving, or have arrived (from Egypt). Thus, even the (a) sentences, which lack any demonstrative but contain *nú*, still presuppose that the pictures are hearer-old/familiar. Arkoh (2011) argues that the addition of a demonstrative to a *nú*-phrase adds not familiarity, but salience.

As a final note, the Akan determiner *nú* enforces familiarity more strictly than the English definite article does. The English sentence ‘Can you please bring me *the pack of noodles* I left in the shopping bag?’ might not need familiarity of the pack of noodles to be felicitous (cf. (15) above). However in Akan, if the hearer has no knowledge of the referent of the noun phrase the sentence will be odd. For instance, consider a context where Esi visits her friend Ama and in conversation, Ama utters (25). Suppose that Esi has no prior knowledge of the said cassava:

- (25) ?? *Ésì fá b̀̀nkyí nú áà ó-gú k̀̀ntsén mù nú b̀̀rà*  
Esi take cassava FAM REL it-pour basket in FAM come  
‘Esi, bring the cassava that is in the basket.’ (Arkoh, 2011:78)

This statement is odd in this context. However, if Ama had already talked about the cassava in the basket, say that it is what they are going to use for lunch when Esi visits, then (25) is accepted.

As noted above, the status of uniqueness vs. familiarity for English definites is a matter of much debate (see the references given in the introduction). We have argued here that Akan possesses a purely familiarity-based definite article. In this it is strikingly similar to one sub-type of definite in German, as analyzed by Schwarz (2009). In the next subsection we outline the German facts and Schwarz’s analysis.

## 2.2. Weak vs. strong definites in German

Schwarz (2009) argues that there are two types of definite article in German, weak and strong. The weak article contracts after certain prepositions in standard German, as illustrated in (26).<sup>14</sup>

- (26) *Hans ging zum/zu dem Haus*  
Hans went to-**the**<sub>weak</sub>/to **the**<sub>strong</sub> house  
‘Hans went to the house.’ (Schwarz, 2009:7)

In a nutshell, Schwarz argues that the weak article enforces uniqueness, while the strong article enforces anaphoricity. In (27–28), the grocer/mailman are uniquely identifiable within a particular situation, but need not be familiar to the hearer. Thus, weak articles are used.<sup>15</sup> ((27) is from the related language Frisian (Fering dialect), as are various examples given below.)

- (27) *Ik skal deel tu a\*di kuupmaan*  
I must down to **the**<sub>weak</sub>/\***the**<sub>strong</sub> grocer  
‘I have to go down to the grocer.’ (Schwarz, 2009:13, from Ebert, 1971:161)

- (28) (Was ist los? [What is going on?])  
*Der<sup>16</sup> Postbote kommt*  
**the**<sub>weak</sub> mailman comes  
‘The mailman is coming.’ (Schwarz, 2009:38, from Krifka, 1984:28)

Cases where uniqueness is satisfied within a global situation are shown in (29–30). Here again, weak articles are used.

- (29) *Armstrong flog als erster zum Mond*  
Armstrong flew as first one to-**the**<sub>weak</sub> moon  
‘Armstrong was the first one to fly to the moon.’ (Schwarz, 2009:40)

<sup>14</sup> The articles inflect for number, gender and case, hence there is more than one surface form for each type.

<sup>15</sup> In fact, (27) may involve a ‘weak definite’ in the sense of Carlson et al. (2006). Weak definites in this sense occur in semi-lexicalized constructions like *go to the hospital*. They do not even require uniqueness (and certainly do not require familiarity). Schwarz (2009:73) sets these uses aside as a separate case, observing that we ultimately need to understand why they take the weak article in German. For our purposes, all that is relevant is that they do not involve familiarity, and as such are predicted not to allow *nú* in Akan.

<sup>16</sup> In this syntactic position in standard German, the weak/strong distinction does not have a morphological reflex. However it is clear from Schwarz’s discussion that he analyzes this as a weak article.

- 10 R. Arkoh, L. Matthewson / *Lingua xxx (2012) xxx–xxx*
- (30) Context: Hans just came home from work and is talking to his wife about what's new.  
 H: What did the mailman bring today?  
 W: *Für dich ist ein Brief vom Papst gekommen*  
 for you is a letter from-the<sub>weak</sub> pope come  
 'You got a letter from the pope.' (Schwarz, 2009:158)

Unlike the weak article, the strong definite article is anaphoric in nature. The interpretation of a strong article noun phrase generally depends on a preceding expression, as in (31) from Fering.

- (31) *Oki hee an hingst keeft. Di hingst haaltet*  
 Oki has a horse bought. the<sub>strong</sub> horse limps  
 'Oki has bought a horse. The horse limps.' (Schwarz, 2009:13, from Ebert, 1971:161)

The referent in the second clause is familiar because it has already been mentioned in the first clause. Schwarz argues, following Ebert (1971), that strong articles are infelicitous in cases where there is uniqueness but no familiarity (this would include (27–28) above).

The basic idea of Schwarz's analysis is that the weak article presupposes uniqueness of the referent within a certain discourse situation. The strong article also presupposes uniqueness within a situation, but in addition contributes an extra index argument. The index argument is interpreted as an individual variable, and comes with an identity condition: its referent must be identical to some individual provided in the context by the assignment function (Schwarz, 2009:262). Schwarz's denotations for the two articles are given in (32). They both have a uniqueness presupposition (underlined), and they both denote the unique individual in the reference situation (represented by the  $x$ ). They differ in the anaphoric nature of the strong article, indicated by the identity condition (bolded). The symbol  $s_r$  is a variable representing the situation within which the noun phrase is interpreted (the 'resource situation').

- (32) a. *Weak article:*  
 $\lambda s_r. \lambda P: \underline{\exists!x(P(x)(s_r))}. \iota x. [P(x)(s_r)]$  (adapted from Schwarz, 2009:264)  
 b. *Strong article:*  
 $\lambda s_r. \lambda P. \lambda y: \underline{\exists!x(P(x)(s_r) \ \& \ \mathbf{x = y})}. \iota x. [P(x)(s_r) \ \& \ \mathbf{x = y}]$  (Schwarz, 2009:260)

The strong article denotation is applied to an example in (33).

- (33) *In der New Yorker Bibliothek gibt es ein Buch über Topinambur. Neulich war ich dort und habe*  
 in the New York library exists EXPL a book about topinambur recently was I there and have  
 #*im/in dem* Buch nach einer Antwort auf die Frage gesucht, ob man Topinambur grillen  
 #*in-the<sub>weak</sub>/in the<sub>strong</sub>* book for an answer to the question searched whether one topinambur grill  
 kann  
 can  
 'In the New York public library, there is a book about topinambur. Recently, I was there and looked in the  
 book for an answer to the question of whether one can grill topinambur.' (Schwarz, 2009:240)  
 $[1 \ [ [the_{strong} s_r] \ book]]^g = \iota x. \ book(x)(s_r) \ \& \ x = g(1)$  (Schwarz, 2009:261)

The noun phrase *dem Buch* 'the<sub>strong</sub> book' denotes the unique individual which is a book in the relevant situation and which is identical to the individual which the assignment function  $g$  assigns to the index 1. This must be the book which was introduced in the previous sentence:

All that is required for the correct interpretation is that the assignment function picks out the individual introduced by the indefinite in the first sentence as the value of the index on the strong-article definite ... there are various theoretical options for how exactly the indefinite affects the assignment function. But as long as one ensures that this happens in a way that the index on the definite can be interpreted relative to its antecedent, the right interpretation will ensue (Schwarz, 2009:262).

In the next section we will show that Akan *nú* corresponds closely to the German strong article. We will start by showing that for the basic data, *nú* behaves like a strong article, and in Section 2.3.1 we turn to bridging constructions.

### 2.3. *Nú* is a strong definite

In Akan, *nú* is the only determiner which encodes any kind of definiteness. However, the only environments *nú* is allowed in are strong definite environments. Thus, although Akan does not have two separate definite determiners – one of which is weak and the other strong, like in German – it marks the strong meaning with *nú*, while weak readings are in almost all cases rendered with bare nouns. Recall that we do not assume that bare nouns in Akan contain null weak definite articles. Akan bare nouns are always non-familiar, but unspecified for uniqueness. Thus they are felicitous in weak definite contexts, but also in contexts where there is no uniqueness. In short, familiarity is explicitly encoded in the Akan DP (by the *nú* / absence of *nú* contrast), but uniqueness is not encoded.<sup>17</sup>

A sentence similar to (27) above, which in German uses the weak article because there is uniqueness but no familiarity, will in Akan not require a definite article. This is shown in (34).

- (34) *Mù-rú-kò gúá mù*  
1SG.SUBJ-PROG-go market in  
'I am going to (the) market.'  
(Arkoh, 2011:73)

Sentences similar to the mailman sentence in (28) above will have quite a different interpretation in Akan, depending on whether the definite article is attached to the NP or not:

- (35) a. *Kòfí hú-ù òtùmfú nú*  
Kofi see-PAST blacksmith FAM  
'Kofi saw the blacksmith.'  
b. *Kòfí hú-ù òtùmfú*  
Kofi see-PAST blacksmith  
'Kofi saw a blacksmith.'  
(Arkoh, 2011:74)

In (35a), the definite article demands that the blacksmith be familiar to the hearer; otherwise the sentence will be infelicitous. However in (35b), the interpretation of the NP complement is quantificational; the existence of a blacksmith is merely asserted.

Our claim that Akan *nú* corresponds to a German strong article predicts that when talking about globally unique referents such as the pope or the moon – which in German take a weak article, as shown above – *nú* will be left out. This is correct, as illustrated in (35–36); Akan uses bare nouns in such contexts.<sup>18</sup>

- (36) *Kwámì nyá-à kràtàá fí-i Ègyá krónkrón póp hó*  
Kwame get-PAST letter from-PAST father holy pope there  
'Kwame got a letter from the holy father Pope.'  
(37) *Ámstròŋ nyí nyímpá áà ó-dzí-i kán tú-ù kó-ò òsírán dù*  
Armstrong is person REL 3SG.SUBJ-eat-PAST first fly-PAST go-PAST moon top  
'Armstrong was the first person to fly to the moon.'

So far, *nú* is behaving like a German (or Fering) strong article. In further confirmation of this, consider the example in (38), where either weak or strong articles are possible, but require slightly different discourse contexts.

- (38) **A/Di** *húnj hee tuswark*  
the<sub>weak</sub>/the<sub>strong</sub> dog has tooth ache  
'The dog has a tooth ache.'  
(Schwarz, 2009:37, from Ebert, 1971:83)

According to Ebert (1971) (cited in Schwarz, 2009:37–38), the weak article version of (38) is used when the dog does not need to be specified further, since there is only one dog at the time and place of the speech; it is uniquely identifiable. The strong article is used if the dog has been mentioned in prior discourse. Schwarz also observes that deictic gestures can

<sup>17</sup> An anonymous reviewer points out that Akan bare nouns could contain a covert weak definite determiner that is slightly different from that of German. However, given that Akan bare nouns can be used in indefinite contexts as well as in weakly definite (unique) ones, the only plausible alternative to our proposal that the bare nouns are unspecified for uniqueness would be an ambiguity analysis. Under this analysis, bare nouns would be ambiguous between indefinites, and weak definites marked with a phonologically null determiner. This alternative is conceptually less appealing than the underspecification analysis, and we know of no empirical evidence which requires it.

<sup>18</sup> *Nú* is possible in certain specific discourse contexts with the moon; we return to this below.

license the strong article, ‘whether or not there is a unique referent meeting the descriptive content of the noun phrase in the context’ (Schwarz, 2009:38).

Our analysis of Akan *nú* predicts that we should find it only in cases where there has been prior discussion of the dog, or where there is a deictic gesture. The prediction is upheld. First, observe in (39) that if the hearer has no knowledge about the relevant dog, the bare noun is used.<sup>19,20</sup>

(39) Context: Hearer has no prior knowledge of the dog.

*Kwèsí bɔ̀-ɔ̀ b̀d̀d̀óm*  
Kwesi beat-PAST dog  
‘Kwesi beat a dog.’

However when the dog is in view at the time of utterance, *nú* can be used with an accompanying deictic gesture. Otherwise, the sentence will trigger a question like ‘Which dog?’ This is illustrated in (40).

(40) Context: Out of the blue; no deictic gesture.

A: *Kwèsí bɔ̀-ɔ̀ b̀d̀d̀óm nú*  
Kwesi beat-PAST dog FAM  
‘Kwesi beat the dog.’  
B: *Íbén b̀d̀d̀óm á?*  
which dog QP  
‘Which dog?’

Before we leave the basic data and turn to bridging cases, we need to address one argument Amfo (2007) uses to support her proposal that *nú* is only uniquely identifiable rather than familiar. The argument rests on examples involving descriptions whose referent may not be known even to the speaker, let alone the hearer. For example, Amfo writes that in (41), ‘the referent of *ɔ̀kàsàmáfo nó* ‘the speaker’ . . . need not be familiar to either speaker or interlocutor. It may be used in reference to whoever fits that description’ (Amfo, 2007:146).

(41) *ɔ̀kàsàmáfo nó bé-bá séèséí árá, éntí yé-n-twéí kàkrá*  
speaker DEF FUT-COME NOW just so we-IMP-wait little  
‘The speaker will arrive soon, so let’s wait a little while.’

(Amfo, 2007:146)

However, the felicity of (41) does not show that *nú* lacks familiarity status, because familiarity does not require that the interlocutors be personally acquainted with the referents, or know their names. Rather, it merely requires that both interlocutors already have a mental representation for the individual.<sup>21</sup> Our proposal that *nú* is familiar predicts that if the hearer does not already have a mental representation for the unique referent of the noun phrase at the time of the utterance, it will be infelicitous. In other words, (41) should be bad if the hearer does not know anyone is supposed to speak. This is correct; if the hearer is unaware that there is a speaker at this event, the noun *ɔ̀kàsàmáfo* will be used without *nú* in the usual case.

A similar example is given in (42).

(42) *Sófú nú bé-dzí-kán àbò ñpáá*  
priest FAM FUT-take-first beat prayer  
‘The priest will pray first (before anything taking place).’

(Arkoh, 2011:71)

Like (41), (42) allows the hearer to be unfamiliar with the priest, in terms of his name or actual identity, but he must be familiar in terms of the function he is performing, as in being a priest and being expected to pray for whatever function is going on. (42) is not felicitous if uttered in a place where no prayer from any priest is needed or expected, say at a night club (in that case, *sófú* ‘priest’ will be used without *nú*). So long as it is the norm that at that particular function a priest is

<sup>19</sup> We have altered Ebert’s example to put the relevant noun phrase in object position. This is because bare singulars are distributionally restricted in Akan; in subject position they are not always accepted.

<sup>20</sup> The bare noun in (39) is infelicitous if the speaker is referring to a familiar dog (for example the dog the speaker and hearer both own). This differs from bare noun possibilities in some other Kwa languages; see Section 5 below.

<sup>21</sup> With uniquely identifiable individuals, the hearer is able to form a mental representation, but with familiar individuals, they already have the representation at the time of utterance.

expected to pray, the audience may take the presence of the priest for granted, though it might not have been mentioned in the immediate past. The fact that the information is registered in the mental faculty of the people present as the usual norm means that the priest counts as familiar, even if we do not know exactly who he is.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.3.1. Bridging

An important mechanism used by Schwarz (2009) to distinguish between weak and strong definites is bridging (what Prince, 1992 called ‘inferred’; see Section 1.4). There is a distinction between *part–whole bridging*, which licenses a weak article, and *relational anaphora bridging* (where the interpretation of an NP is inferred from the preceding utterance or discourse), which licenses a strong article. In these contexts, the articles cannot alternate with each other: the weak article cannot be used in relational anaphora bridging, and the strong cannot be used in part–whole bridging. The following sentences illustrate this; (43–44) show part–whole bridging, and (45–46) show relational anaphora bridging.

(43) *Wi foom a sark uun a maden faan't taarep. A törem stän wat skiaf*  
we found the church in the middle of-the village **the<sub>weak</sub>** tower stood a-little crooked  
'We found the church in the middle of the village. The tower was a little crooked.'  
(Schwarz, 2009:52, from Ebert, 1971:118)

(44) *Der Kühlschrank war so groß, dass der Kürbis problemlos im/#in dem*  
the fridge was so big that the pumpkin without a problem in-**the<sub>weak</sub>**/#in **the<sub>strong</sub>**  
*Gemüsefach untergebracht werden konnte*  
crisper stowed be could  
'The fridge was so big that the pumpkin could easily be stowed in the crisper.'  
(Schwarz, 2009:52)

(45) *Das Theaterstück missfiel dem Kritiker so sehr, dass er in seiner Besprechung kein gutes Haar*  
the play displeased the critic so much that he in his review no good hair  
**#am/an dem** Autor ließ  
**#on-the<sub>weak</sub>/on the<sub>strong</sub>** author left  
'The play displeased the critic so much that he tore the author into pieces in his review'. (Schwarz, 2009:53)

(46) *Jedes Mal, wenn Hans ein Gemälde in einem Museum besonders gefällt, kauft er sich hinterher eine*  
every time when Hans a painting in a museum especially likes buys he REFL afterwards a  
*Biografie von dem Maler*  
biography of **the<sub>strong</sub>** painter  
'Every time Hans really likes a painting in a museum he buys a biography of the painter/artist afterwards.'  
(Schwarz, 2009:249)

Schwarz argues that part–whole bridging allows a weak article because, for example, if there is a unique car in the relevant situation, there is also necessarily a unique steering wheel. Since the weak article does not require familiarity, the fact that the steering wheel has not been mentioned before is unproblematic. For relational anaphora bridging, Schwarz's analysis relies on the fact that the second noun phrase contains a relational noun (such as ‘author’). He argues that the relatum argument of the relational noun can be the argument which receives an anaphoric interpretation (Schwarz, 2009:246). So, while normally an utterance of ‘**the<sub>strong</sub> author**’ would require the index on the entire noun phrase to be familiar in the discourse context, with a relational noun, it can be the relatum argument (the book written by the author) which is familiar.

If Akan *nú* corresponds to the German strong article, we predict that it will appear only in relational anaphora bridging, and not in part–whole bridging. This is correct. In (47), we have a part–whole relation, and *nú* is not used, as shown in (47a). (47b) is the preferred way to describe this situation, as the possessive marker *ní* signifies that the NP complement is part of the whole mentioned in the preceding clause. For completeness we show in (47c) that neither a bare noun nor the specific indefinite determiner *bí* is felicitous in this context. The infelicity of the bare noun in part–whole bridging is consistent with our claim that the Akan bare noun does not take a null weak definite article.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Our claim that Akan *nú* parallels the German strong article predicts that reference to priests in out of the blue contexts will not license a strong article in German. This was confirmed in fieldwork with four native speakers. Akan and German are also similar in that sentences like (42), even though they are possible with a strong article if the priest is not known to the interlocutors except in terms of his role, prefer the weak article (German) / bare noun (Akan).

<sup>23</sup> An anonymous reviewer asks whether (47a) improves if the speaker goes on to make a comment about the neck. The answer is no; (47a) is still very dispreferred in this context.

- (47) a. # *Ìgùán nú sù árá mà nyímpá ànán nà wó-dzí-i kón nú*  
 sheep FAM big just COMP person four and 3PL.SUBJ-eat-PAST neck FAM  
 ‘The sheep was so big that it was four people that ate (the) neck.’
- b. *Ìgùán nú sù árá mà nyímpá ànán nà wó-dzí-i ní kón*  
 sheep FAM big just COMP person four FOC 3PL.SUBJ-eat-PAST POSS neck  
 ‘The sheep was so big that it was four people that ate its neck.’
- c. # *Ìgùán nú sù árá mà nyímpá ànán nà wó-dzí-i kón (bí)*  
 sheep FAM big just COMP person four and 3PL.SUBJ-eat-PAST neck (REF)  
 ‘The sheep was so big that it was four people that ate a neck/a (certain) neck.’

Another part–whole bridging case is given in (48). The definite *nú* in (48a) results in a different interpretation from the intended part–whole relationship between the building and the roof. Instead, (48a) contains two separate utterances, one reporting on the speaker’s seeing an old building in the village, and the other referring to a roof familiar to the hearer which has become worn out. Consequently, one consultant comments that (48a) is ‘two statements put together.’ She corrects (48a) to (48b), which contains a possessive pronoun. As before and as predicted, an indefinite noun phrase is infelicitous, as in (48c).

- (48) a. # *Yè-hú-ù dàn dádáw bí wò èkùrásí hó níkyénsidán nú é-hódwòw*  
 1PL.SUBJ-see-PAST building old REF at village there roof FAM PFV-worn-out  
 ‘We saw an old building in the village; the roof was worn out.’ (Arkoh, 2011:80)
- b. *Yè-hú-ù dàn dádáw bí wò èkùrásí hó ní níkyénsidán é-hódwòw*  
 1PL.SUBJ-see-PAST building old REF at village there POSS roof PFV-worn-out  
 ‘We saw an old building in the village; its roof was worn out.’ (Arkoh, 2011:80)
- c. # *Yè-hú-ù dàn dádáw bí wò èkùrásí hó níkyénsidán (bí) é-hódwòw*  
 1PL.SUBJ-see-PAST building old REF at village there roof (REF) PFV-worn-out  
 ‘We saw an old building in the village; a (certain) roof was worn out.’

(49) shows the same result. (49a) contains two separate utterances, and a possessive is required to convey the part–whole interpretation, as in (49b).

- (49) a. # *Àsórdán nú áà ó-sí èkyír hó nú, àdónbáá nú á-stìw*  
 church FAM REL 3SG.SUBJ-stand back there DCM bell FAM PFV-tear  
 ‘The church at the back there, the bell is torn.’ (adapted from Schwarz, 2009:52)  
 Consultant’s comment: “This sentence is also odd because there are two different statements put together.”<sup>24</sup> (Arkoh, 2011:81)
- b. *Àsórdán nú áà ó-sí èkyír hó nú, ná-àdónbáá á-stìw*  
 church FAM REL 3SG.SUBJ-stand back there DCM POSS-bell PFV-tear  
 ‘The church at the back there, its bell is torn.’ (Arkoh, 2011:81)
- c. # *Àsórdán nú áà ó-sí èkyír hó nú, àdónbáá (bí) á-stìw*  
 church FAM REL 3SG.SUBJ-stand back there DCM bell (REF) PFV-tear  
 ‘The church at the back there, a bell/a (certain) bell is torn.’

So far we have seen that in Akan, part–whole bridging cases (where the object is only uniquely identifiable, but not familiar) disallow the definite article *nú*. The infelicity of *nú* in uniquely identifiable cases lends support to our argument that *nú* is not a marker of unique identifiability (as Amfo, 2006, 2007 had argued).

Now we turn to relational anaphora bridging, which in German uses the strong article. The data in (50–52) show that *nú* is used in relational anaphora bridging; all the (a) examples are felicitous. The (b) examples show for completeness that a bare noun gives an indefinite reading in these contexts. For instance in (50a) with *nú*, the lead drummer is the one who drummed for the dance, while in (50b) with a bare noun, the drummer could be any at all, not necessarily the one involved in the beautiful dance.

<sup>24</sup> For one consultant, though the sentence is odd, she will accept it because she belongs to a church that uses bells.

- (50) a. *Àsáw nú yé-è ðhín nú fèw árá mà ò-kyé-è àyìrbófú pényín nú àdzí*  
 dance FAM DO-PAST chief FAM beautiful just COMP 3SG.SUBJ-give-PAST drummer lead FAM thing  
 'The dance was so beautiful that the chief gave the lead drummer a gift.'
- b. *Àsáw nú yé-è ðhín nú fèw árá mà ò-kyé-è àyìrbófú pényín àdzí*  
 dance FAM DO-PAST chief FAM beautiful just COMP 3SG.SUBJ-give-PAST drummer lead thing  
 'The dance was so beautiful that the chief gave a lead drummer a gift.'

The same effect is seen in (51): in (51a), the flowers are ones from the particular tree Kwame cut, but in (51b), the interpretation is merely that no flowers were found on the ground when Kwame cut the tree.

- (51) a. *Kwámi twá-à dùá nú, ñhyírén nú à-mpùrów*  
 Kwame cut-PAST tree FAM flowers FAM PVF-fall.off  
 'When Kwame cut the tree the flowers did not fall off.'
- b. *Kwámi twá-à dùá nú, ñhyírén à-mpùrów*  
 Kwame cut-PAST tree FAM flowers PVF-fall.off  
 'When Kwame cut the tree flowers did not fall off.'

Finally in (52), the cutlass in (a) is the one that was being used to cut the tree, but in (b), the interpretation is merely that no cutlass could cut the tree (so probably a saw was used).

- (52) a. *Kwámi yé-è déè ó-rú-twà dùá nú, àdár nú è-n-túm è-n-twá*  
 Kwame do-past comp 3sg.subj-prog-cut tree fam cutlass FAM PVF-NEG-power PVF-NEG-cut  
 'Kwame tried cutting the tree but the cutlass could not cut it.'
- b. *Kwámi yé-è déè ó-rú-twà dùá nú, àdár è-n-túm è-n-twá*  
 Kwame DO-PAST COMP 3SG.SUBJ-PROG-CUT tree FAM **cutlass** PVF-NEG-power PVF-NEG-cut  
 'Kwame tried cutting the tree but a cutlass could not cut it.'
- (Arkoh, 2011:82)

The data in (47–52) strongly support our claim that the Akan definite article *nú* patterns with the strong article in German, and not with the weak one. This follows from our proposal that *nú* encodes familiarity, given that it is the strong article which is argued by Schwarz to involve familiarity, while the weak article encodes only uniqueness.<sup>25</sup>

In the next subsection we continue the comparison between Akan and German, showing that other contexts in which only a German strong article is allowed require *nú* in Akan.

### 2.3.2. Other things that only strong articles can do

The data in (53–54) involve cases where the same referent is described in two different ways, the second of which is more general. The strong article is felicitous here, since the hearer can infer that there is an anaphoric relationship between the two noun phrases. The weak article is infelicitous, since its uniqueness requirement is not met. For example in (53), there may be many men in the seminar.

- (53) *Maria hat einen Ornithologen ins Seminar eingeladen. Ich halte #vom / von dem Mann nicht sehr viel*  
 Maria has an ornithologist to-the seminar invited. I hold #of-the<sub>weak</sub>/ of the<sub>strong</sub> man not very much  
 'Maria has invited an ornithologist to the seminar. I don't think very highly of the man.'  
 (Schwarz, 2009:239)
- (54) *Hans hat schon wieder angerufen. Ich will #vom / von dem Idioten nichts mehr hören*  
 Hans has already again called. I want #of-the<sub>weak</sub> / of the<sub>strong</sub> idiot not more hear  
 'Hans has called again. I don't want to hear anything anymore from that idiot.'  
 (Schwarz, 2009:240)

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, the relevant nouns in (50–52) are not inherently relational, although they function relationally in these contexts. Florian Schwarz (p.c.) observes that this is an apparent difference between Akan and German, since in German, a relational noun is required for relational anaphora bridging. However, Schwarz also observes that according to his intuitions, a variant of (52) might work with a German strong article, if the verb is strongly associated with a particular kind of instrument which performs that action. Further research is required on this issue.

(55–56) show that these same cases in Akan require the presence of *nú*. Again, *nú* patterns with the German strong article. If *nú* is removed from (55–56), a different (non-anaphoric) interpretation will result.

(55) *Ámá tú-ù ñsá fré-è ñnùmàhwèfú bí bá-à ñkyirèkyíré náásí. Mì-n-gyí*  
Ama throw-PAST hand call-PAST birds.observer REF come-PAST teaching.NOM POSS.under 1SG.SUBJ-NEG-take  
*pàpá nú ñ-dzí kitsikitsi*  
man FAM NEG-eat small.RED  
'Ama invited a (certain) ornithologist to the seminar. I don't trust the man in the least.'

(56) *Òkúm fré-è bìò, mì-n-pé dé-è mè-tsi biribíará éfi òkwàsàmpányí nú hó bìò*  
Okum call-PAST again 1SG.SUBJ-NEG COMP 1SG.SUBJ-hear thing.any from idiot FAM there again  
'Okum called again, I don't want to hear anything from the idiot.'

More cases distinguishing German weak and strong articles are given in (57–58). The weak article is out because uniqueness is not satisfied; there are many books in the New York public library (even potentially many about topinambur), and there are many rooms in the mansion. The strong article forces the anaphoric interpretation.

(57) *In der New Yorker Bibliothek gibt es ein Buch über Topinambur. Neulich war ich dort und habe*  
in the New York library exists EXPL a book about topinambur recently was I there and have  
**#im/in dem** *Buch nach einer Antwort auf die Frage gesucht, ob man Topinambur*  
**#in-the<sub>weak</sub>/in the<sub>strong</sub>** book for an answer to the question searched whether one topinambur  
*grillen kann*  
grill can  
'In the New York public library, there is a book about topinambur. Recently, I was there and looked in the book for an answer to the question of whether one can grill topinambur.' (Schwarz, 2009:240)

(58) *Bei der Gutshausbesichtigung hat mich eines der Zimmer besonders beeindruckt. Angeblich hat*  
during the mansion tour has me one the<sub>GEN</sub> rooms especially impressed supposedly has  
*Goethe im Jahr 1810 eine Nacht #im/in dem Zimmer verbracht.*  
Goethe in-the<sub>weak</sub> year 1810 a night **#in-the<sub>weak</sub>/in the<sub>strong</sub>** room spent  
'One of the rooms especially impressed me during the mansion tour. Supposedly Goethe spent a night in the room in 1810.' (Schwarz, 2009:241)

(59–60) show that again, Akan *nú* behaves like the German strong article.

(59) *Búùkúú bí wò Swédúr búùkúú kùràbíá hó áà ó-fà hyèmdònúm hò. Nànsá yth*  
book REF at Swedru library there REL 3SG.SUBJ-take hyèmdònúm self three.day this  
*mù-kó-ò hó kò-hwé-è búùkúú nú mù déé mó-hú déé wó-dzi hyèmdònúm à*  
1SG.SUBJ-go-PAST there go-look-PAST book FAM in COMP 1SG.SUBJ-see COMP 3PL.SUBJ-eat hyèmdònúm part  
'At the Swedru library, there is a (certain) book about the leaf (hyèmdònúm). Recently I visited there to see if I could find in the book that the leaf (hyèmdònúm) is edible.'

(60) *Dán kúr nà mé-nyí gyí-ì hù páá wò fikèsí ñsràhwé nú áà yé-kó-ì nú.*  
room one FOC 1SG.SUBJ-eye take-PAST self more at mansion tour FAM REL 1PL.SUBJ-go-PAST FAM  
*Mì-tsí-ì déé Kwámì Nkrúmá tsiná-à dán nú mù wò 1923*  
1SG.SUBJ-hear-PAST COMP Kwame Nkrumah sit-PAST room FAM in at 1923  
'I liked one of the rooms more at the mansion tour we went on. I heard Kwame Nkrumah stayed in the room in 1923.'

One final type of data which differentiates weak from strong articles in German are so-called bishop sentences, illustrated in (61).

(61) When a bishop meets another bishop, he blesses him. (Schwarz, 2009:243)

Bishop sentences are a well-known challenge for uniqueness analyses of definites, since there is no unique bishop in the relevant situations; see Heim (1990), Elbourne (2001, 2005), among others, for discussion. Schwarz points out that in German, if we put a full definite description in the consequent clause, only the strong article is felicitous:

- (62) *Wenn ein Minister den anderen Ministern im Kabinett den Haushalt kürzt, dann gehen*  
when a minister the other ministers in-the<sub>weak</sub> cabinet the budget cuts then go  
**#beim/bei dem** Minister viele Beschwerden ein  
by-the<sub>weak</sub>/by the<sub>strong</sub> minister many complaints in  
'When a minister cuts the budget of other ministers in the cabinet, the minister receives a lot of complaints.'  
(Schwarz, 2009:245)

As predicted, in Akan *nú* appears in bishop sentences:

- (63) *Sɛ ɔsɔ́ányi<sup>th</sup>siw siká áá ɔ-kò àsɔ́áfú à-fúfú<sup>h</sup>ón sikásém hú ntòtùf mù dù á*  
if minister plug money REL 3SG.SUBJ-go ministers PL-new 3PL.POSS budget in ON PART  
*wò-kánfù ɔsɔ́ányi<sup>th</sup>nó yéè*  
3PL.SUBJ-praise minister FAM well  
'If a minister cut the budget of other ministers, the minister is well praised.'

In this section, we have argued that the Akan definite marker *nú* is equivalent to what is termed a strong definite article in the literature. We have compared data from German and Akan to show that where German demands the presence of the strong, familiar article, Akan uses the definite article *nú*. Where in German a weak, uniqueness article is used, Akan can sometimes, but not always, use a bare noun. We have postulated that the bare noun in Akan does not co-occur with a null weak definite article. The only definite article in Akan is *nú*.

In the next subsection we address one apparent difference between German and Akan strong articles, and one real difference.

#### 2.4. One apparent, and one real, difference between German and Akan strong articles

We have seen so far that the Akan definite article is very similar to the German strong article, behaving like it in a range of contexts, including bridging environments. However, there is an apparent difference between the two types of definite. Schwarz describes the German strong article as anaphoric, in that the interpretation of its noun phrase generally depends on a preceding expression. He argues (2009:75) that when a referent has been introduced linguistically, a strong article is required, but when a unique individual is available for reference 'simply because it is common ground that there is only one such individual (relative to the relevant domain),' then a weak article is used. Here lies the apparent difference, because Akan *nú* does not enforce anaphoricity, but instead can be used even for referents mentioned in the remote past, for instance a year ago.

Another way of stating this is that in Akan, the referent of a *nú*-phrase need not be discourse-old (only hearer-old, as we have argued throughout), whereas it appears that the referent of a German strong definite must be discourse-old, a stronger requirement. Recall that a deictic gesture suffices to license a strong article in German (Schwarz, 2009:38). We saw above that a deictic gesture licenses Akan *nú*, so in this the two languages are similar. Where they appear to differ is that *nú* is felicitous even without either a deictic gesture or an overt antecedent in the preceding discourse, as long as the referent is familiar to the hearer.<sup>26</sup>

However, there is some indication that the German strong article also does not strictly require a linguistic antecedent. Schwarz himself gives several examples of antecedent-less strong articles, and observes (2009:281) that these examples 'pose a challenge to an account of strong-article definites as containing an anaphoric index . . . Simply saying that there has to be an antecedent noun phrase for the strong article is too restrictive.' One example of such a case is (64); these are the 'marble' cases from Heim (1982) (originally attributed to Barbara Partee).

- (64) *Wir haben 10 Eier versteckt, aber die Kinder haben erst 9 gefunden. ?Im/in dem fehlenden*  
we have 10 eggs hidden but the kids have only 9 found ?in-the<sub>weak</sub>/in the<sub>strong</sub> missing  
*Ei ist eine Überraschung.*  
egg is a surprise  
'We hid 10 eggs, but the kids have only found 9 of them. There's a surprise in the missing egg.'  
(Schwarz, 2009:277)

<sup>26</sup> See also Roberts (2003) for discussion of these distinctions. As noted above, Roberts argues that English definites do not require anaphoricity (which she calls 'strong familiarity'), but merely hearer-oldness (which she calls 'weak familiarity').

We see in (65–66) that Akan *nú* behaves like the German strong article with respect to these cases.

(65) *Mángù ànán gù kòtòkú nú mú, Ámá hú-ù èbáásá, mángù/kúr nú áà wáyíw nú nà*  
 mango four pour sack FAM in Ama see-PAST three mango/one FAM REL 3SG.SUBJ.PFV.MISS FAM FOC  
*ó-yè-déw páá*  
 3SG.SUBJ-do-nice more  
 ‘There are four mangoes in the sack, Ama found three. The missing mango/one is nicer.’

(66) *Ìpònkýí dú nú, hón mù àkrón yè òtsiétsiá, sè yé-hwè bèébi áà bànkýí nú gú áà tsíntsín*  
 goats ten FAM 3PL.POSS in nine do short if 1PL.SUBJ-look where REL cassava FAM pour REL tall  
*nú nà ó-wí-ì*  
 FAM FOC 3SG.SUBJ-chew-PAST  
 ‘Nine out of the ten goats are short, if we consider where the cassava was kept, the tall one ate it.’

Antecedent-less strong articles also arise in cases like (67), where there is a preceding relevant noun phrase, but its syntactic position (inside the scope of a quantifier) renders it unavailable as an antecedent, even on dynamic approaches which allow cross-sentential anaphora.

(67) *In jedem Zimmer gibt es ein Gästebuch. Bei uns im Zimmer sind #im/in dem Buch einige*  
 In every room there is a guest book by us in-the room are #in-the<sub>weak</sub>/in the<sub>strong</sub> book several  
*beeindruckende Zeichnungen*  
 impressive drawings  
 ‘In every room there is a guest book. In our room there are several impressive drawings in the book.’  
 (Schwarz, 2009:278)

As expected, Akan *nú* patterns like the German strong articles in these constructions also.

(68) *Dán bíará wò àhòhù búúkùú dà mú, hén dán mù hó búúkùú nú òfònyí á-fééféw wò mú*  
 room every at guest book sleep in 3PL.POSS room in there book FAM picture PL-beautiful at in  
 ‘Every room has a guest book, in our room the book there has beautiful pictures in it.’

There are further indications that a linguistic antecedent (or a deictic gesture) is not strictly necessary for German strong articles. Four native speakers judged the following scenario to strongly prefer a strong article over a weak one, even though the referent is only hearer-old, not discourse-old.<sup>27</sup>

(69) Context: A couple of weeks ago, we were talking about a child at the local school who was hit by their teacher, Mr. Bauer. For two weeks we don’t discuss that child or hear anything about them. Then I read something about it in the newspaper and when I see you I say:  
*Herr Bauer ist #vom/von dem Kind verklagt worden*  
 Mr. Bauer is #from-the<sub>weak</sub>/from the<sub>strong</sub> child sued been  
 ‘Mr. Bauer was sued by the child.’

We therefore think that the difference between German and Akan with respect to whether strong articles require strict anaphoricity is only apparent.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, an Akan example similar to (69) was judged marginal, for the reason that the hearer might not know which child is being referred to. One German consultant similarly commented that the sentence with the strong article relies on the hearer having a good enough memory to identify the child. In both languages, the alternative (a weak article in German or a bare noun in Akan) is judged to be much worse.

<sup>28</sup> Another case where the German strong article appears without an antecedent is in ‘establishing relatives’ (Hawkins, 1978), as in (i):

(i) *Maria ist #vom / von dem Mann, mit dem sie gestern verabredet war, versetzt worden*  
 Maria is by-the<sub>weak</sub> / by the<sub>strong</sub> man with whom she yesterday date had stood up been (Schwarz, 2009:145)  
 ‘Maria was stood up by the man with whom she had a date yesterday.’

Schwarz notes that establishing relatives provide a challenge for his analysis, as they do not require familiarity, yet take the strong article. In this respect, Akan is ‘cleaner’, since establishing relatives do not appear to allow *nú* (see (25) above). However, Schwarz also notes (following Hawkins) that establishing relatives must contain content which ties the new referent to some familiar individual, in a way similar to relational anaphora bridging. It is possible that once the discourse contexts are made fully comparable, German and Akan will pattern equivalently with respect to establishing relatives.

Finally, we turn to the one case we have identified where there is a clear empirical difference between the German strong article and Akan *nú*. It involves sentences like the following, where German requires the weak article, but Akan allows *nú*.<sup>29,30</sup>

- (70) Context: You and your spouse own one dog. While your spouse is away, someone breaks into your house and you are telling them about it on the phone. You say:
- Der Einbrecher ist zum Glück vom#von dem Hund verjagt worden*  
the burglar is luckily by-the<sub>weak</sub>#by the<sub>strong</sub> dog chased been  
'Luckily, the burglar was chased away by the dog.'
  - Ōwifú nú, bòdóm nú ká-à nú-dú árá má ò-gúán-ìì*  
thief FAM dog FAM follow-PAST 3SG-OBJ-ON just so 3SG-SUBJ-RUN-PAST  
'The thief, the dog chased away.'

The Akan result is expected here, since the dog is familiar to the interlocutors. The puzzling result is the German: if we are right that German strong articles do not strictly require a linguistic antecedent, we would expect the strong article to be licensed.

Intuitively, the solution must somehow lie in the fact that in German, unlike in Akan, there is an alternative possibility, namely the weak article, which is also licensed since the dog is uniquely identifiable in the situation. The issue of German article choice in situations where the referent is both familiar and unique is complex, and Schwarz does not provide a complete solution. He initially suggests that 'the weak article is preferred in configurations where both articles are available because of a general pragmatic pressure to choose simpler expressions over more complex ones (e.g., along the lines of the Gricean Maxim of Manner)' (Schwarz, 2009:283). This idea would account for (70a). However, Schwarz then observes that this approach fails to account for cases where there is a linguistic antecedent for the relevant noun phrase; in such cases, the *strong* article is slightly preferred over the weak (cf. the topinambur case in (57) above). He therefore proposes that the reason the weak article is chosen in both part-whole bridging and 'larger situation' uses (of which the dog case is an example) is that the weak article directly encodes the relational nature of part-whole and larger situation uses: 'The choice for the weak article thus would be motivated by the additional aspect of meaning it is able to express in part-whole bridging and larger situation uses' (Schwarz, 2009:285). This explanation also seems to correctly predict the facts in (70): Akan uses *nú* because the dog is familiar (hearer-old), and German uses a weak article because the dog is relationally unique, and therefore the weak article is a better choice.

The issue is not quite so simple, however, because it is not the case that Akan generally uses *nú* in part-whole bridging or larger situation uses. Recall from Section 2.3 that Akan uses the bare noun both for larger situation uses (cases involving the pope, or the moon) and for part-whole bridging. In order to explain why the bare noun is infelicitous in the dog case, we have to conclude that the dog case differs in some way from the part-whole bridging and larger situation cases. Further research is required, but our tentative idea is that the Akan judgement in (70b) relies on the fact that a family's dog is often talked about, hence is not only unique, but is hearer-old in a way that e.g. part-whole bridging cases are not. This idea is supported firstly by the fact that unlike with the pope or the moon, there is no unique dog which is generally known in the absence of discourse familiarity. The weak definite interpretation, while technically predicted to be available for the bare noun 'dog', will thus be very unlikely to arise. The idea that *nú* marks hearer-oldness even in apparent larger situation cases is also supported by the first author's judgement that even with the moon, *nú* can be used if the moon is familiar in the context. If for example the moon has not been appearing for the first half of the month, but it does when we enter the second half, the bare noun would be used when speaking to someone we think has not seen the moon yet or is not aware of it. However, if for instance we have argued the previous night about whether the moon will come out today or not, we can use *nú* when it does (although the bare noun is also felicitous in this context).<sup>31</sup>

## 2.5. Summary of analysis

In summary, we propose that the German strong article and Akan *nú* have the same denotation, repeated in (71).

- (71)  $\lambda s_r \lambda P. \lambda y. \exists!x(P(x)(s_r) \ \& \ x = y). \ \iota x [P(x)(s_r) \ \& \ x = y]$  (Schwarz, 2009:260)

<sup>29</sup> (70a) is adapted from an example in Schwarz (2009:28); the discourse context was added. (70a) was tested with four native speakers.

<sup>30</sup> (70a) and (70b) are not syntactically parallel because Akan does not have a passive construction. An anonymous reviewer asks whether (70b) is acceptable if the bare noun 'dog' is used. As expected, it is felicitous but has a different meaning: the sentence no longer refers to the dog owned by the couple, but rather just says that the thief was chased by a dog.

<sup>31</sup> It is still very difficult to put *nú* on the pope, even in similar contexts to the moon scenario. This could be due to the fact that *Ēgyá krónkrón póp* 'Holy Father Pope' functions like a proper name. Proper names only marginally take *nú*, and when they do, there is an insulting connotation.

This enforces familiarity, but as discussed above, cannot be understood as enforcing strict anaphoricity. In cases where the relevant referent is also unique, German has the option of using a weak article, and this is done under pragmatic conditions which are admittedly not yet fully understood. Akan has no contrasting article it can use in uniqueness situations. It therefore uses either the bare noun (for part–whole bridging, or global uniqueness cases), or it uses *nú* (in cases where the referent is discussed often enough to count as familiar as well as unique, as in the dog case). Even though German and Akan differ in that German has both a strong and a weak definite article, and Akan has only a strong one, Akan provides support for Schwarz’s claim that languages can possess a purely familiar definite article. Schwarz’s analysis in fact leads us to expect that there could be a language possessing only a strong definite article and no weak one; we argue that Akan is such a language.

Having analyzed the determiner use of *nú*, we now turn to its other uses, particularly its use as a third-person pronoun. We will argue that all the uses of *nú* share a common semantic core of familiarity, and that their tonal differences are a result of syntactic structure.

3. Pronominal *nú*

In this section, we introduce pronominal *nú* and argue that it shares the familiarity semantics of determiner *nú*. First we present some background about the Akan pronominal system. Pronouns can be grouped into strong and weak forms, where the strong forms are more morphologically complex than the weak ones.<sup>32</sup> The chart in Table 2 (taken from Arkoh, 2011:60, in turn adapted from Aboh, 1998) shows the full pronominal paradigm of the language. *Nú* is the only one of these pronouns which has an alternative use as an article.

Table 2  
Akan pronominal paradigm.

Person and number	Strong forms (H)	Weak forms (toneless)		Possessive
		Nominative	Accusative	
1sg	ámí/émí	mí <sup>33</sup>	mí/-m	mí
2sg	ówú	ɪ-	wú/w	wú
3sg animate	ónú	ɔ-	nú/n	ní
1pl	èhén	yɛ	hɛn/yɛn	hén
2pl	íhúm/íhón	wɔ/hum	hum/hɔn	húm/hón
3pl	íhón	wɔ	hɔn	hón
3rd inanimate sg	ónú	ɔ-/o-	∅	ní
3rd inanimate pl	íhón	wɔ	∅	hón

The strong pronominal forms, which bear high tones, occur at the left periphery in A'-configurations, e.g. in focus position. The weak forms occur in argument position, and/or as resumptive pronouns in A'-movement constructions. In (72), (b) is an answer to the question in (a); the weak pronoun *nú* appears in accusative position in a non-A'-movement construction.

- (72) a. *Ì-má-à*            *Ésí*            *íbènàdzí?*  
 2SG.SUBJ.give-PAST    Esi            what  
 'What did you give to Esi?'  
 b. *Mì-má-à*            *nù*            *èdzibán*  
 2SG.SUBJ.give-PAST    3SG.ANIM.OBJ    food  
 'I gave her food.'

(Arkoh, 2011:61)

In (73b), the strong pronoun occurs to the left of the focus marker *nà*, while the weak form appears in sentence final position as a resumptive pronoun.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> This distinction between 'strong' and 'weak' pronouns is inherited from the literature, and bears no relation to the distinction between strong (familiar) and weak (unique) definite articles.

<sup>33</sup> The nominative weak pronouns have a low tone in non-A' constructions and a high tone in A' constructions. The accusative weak pronouns all pattern in the same way as the pronoun *nú*, to be discussed immediately below.

<sup>34</sup> Saah (1994) argues that Akan resumptive pronouns are ordinary base-generated pronouns, not spelled-out traces. The distinction between pronouns and traces may however be moot, given ideas found in Fox (2002), Elbourne (2005) and Schwarz (2009), according to which traces are interpreted as definite descriptions, and definite descriptions are interpreted equivalently to pronouns. Thanks to Florian Schwarz (p.c.) for discussion.

- (73) a. *ì-dzì èdzibán nú má-à wàáná, Àbìná áà?*  
 2SG.SUBJ-take food FAM give-PAST who Abena QP  
 'Who did you give the food to, was it Abena?'  
 b. *Nyèw! ́nú ná mí-dzì èdzibán nú má-à nú*  
 yes 3SG FOC 1SG.SUBJ-take food FAM give-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
 'Yes! It was her that I gave the food to.'

(Arkoh, 2011:61)

Unlike the strong form, the weak pronominal form cannot occur in a focus position.

- (74) \* *Nú ná mí-dzì má-à nú*  
 3SG.ANIM.OBJ FOC 2SG.SUBJ-take give-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
 'It was her that I gave the food to.'

(Arkoh, 2011:62)

The weak pronoun *nú* is an accusative pronoun; therefore, it cannot occur in subject position, as shown in (75a).

- (75) a. \* *Nú dzì-ì èkùtú*  
 3SG.ANIM.OBJ eat-PAST orange  
 'He ate orange(s).'  
 b. *Ó<sup>35</sup>-dzì-ì èkùtú*  
 3SG.ANIM.SUBJ-eat-PAST orange  
 'He ate orange(s).'

(Arkoh, 2011:62–63)

The weak pronoun *nú* cannot be used for an inanimate object. The pronoun in (76a) cannot be used to refer to a knife, but only to an animate individual such as a snake. If *Kwèsi* took a knife, (76b) must be used.

- (76) a. *Kwèsi fá-à nú*  
 Kwesi take-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
 'Kwesi took it.' (e.g. a snake; not e.g. a knife)  
 b. *Kwèsi fá-ì-Ø<sup>36</sup>*  
 Kwesi take-PAST-INAN.OBJ  
 'Kwesi took it.'

(Arkoh, 2011:63)

Recall that the animacy restriction on *nú* is particular to its pronominal use. Determiner *nú* freely occurs in DPs referring to inanimate individuals, as shown in (77), as well as other data throughout the paper.

- (77) *Kòfi fá-à síkán nú*  
 Kofi take-PAST knife FAM  
 'Kofi took the knife.'

### 3.1. Pronominal *nú* is familiar

In this section, we discuss the semantics of pronominal *nú*, arguing that it enforces familiarity in the sense of Heim (1982) (hearer-oldness in the sense of Prince, 1992).

First we show that pronominal *nú* is felicitous in cases where its referent is discourse-old (a subset of hearer-old cases). In (78B) and (79B), *nú* refers back to Ato and Esi, respectively; the antecedent of the pronoun has already been mentioned in the discourse.

- (78) A: *Íbènàdzí rítsí ná Àtú rú-sú?*  
 what reason and Ato PROG-cry  
 'Why is it that Ato is crying?'

<sup>35</sup> The vowels used as clitics are realized with the same ATR status as the vowel of the verb root.

<sup>36</sup> In sentences with singular inanimate pronominal objects, the past-tense verb ends in a high front vowel. The quality of the past-tense vowel depends on the ATR status of the vowel in the verb root.

B: *Kòfí bɔ́-ò nù*  
Kofi beat-past 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Kofi beat him.'

(adapted from Arkoh, 2011:65)

(79) A: *Íbènàdzí rítsí nà Ésí nà ɔ-rí-bà há?*  
what reason and Esi FOC 3SG.SUBJ-PROG-COME here  
'Why is it that it is Esi who is coming here?'

B: *Ónú nà m̀l-fé-è nù*  
3SG FOC 1SG-call-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'It was her that I called.'

(Arkoh, 2011:64–65)

Pronominal *nù* is infelicitous in a context where its intended referent is hearer-new. Thus, native speakers judge that (78B) and (79B) are infelicitous in out of the blue contexts, where the hearer has no pre-established referent in mind to which the pronoun could refer.<sup>37</sup> This argumentation is in line with Saah (1994), who states that '*nù* can be construed with an animate referent whose identity has already been established in the previous discourse or by designation' (Saah, 1994:92).

So far we have argued that *nù* must be hearer-old, just like its determiner counterpart. However, pronouns often have an additional requirement beyond the familiarity of definite descriptions. Prince (1992:304) argues that English pronouns are not merely hearer-old, they are discourse-old and *salient*. Something is said to be salient when it is 'appropriately in the hearer's consciousness ... at that point in the construction of the discourse model' (Prince, 1992:304). Similarly, Roberts (2003:288) argues that 'Pronouns, unlike definite descriptions, carry the additional presupposition that the discourse referent which satisfies their familiarity presupposition is maximally salient at that point in the discourse.'

Akan pronominal *nù* also has a maximal salience requirement, as shown in (80), adapted from Roberts (2003:324). In (80a), the definite *àbùfrá nù* 'the child' is infelicitous, because there is no corresponding unique hearer-old referent. In (80b), on the other hand, the pronoun *nù* unambiguously refers to the most salient – because the most recently-mentioned – child.<sup>38</sup>

- (80) a. # *Àbùfrá bí fí Simpà bá-ì, ñnà àbùfrá bí, sù fí Swèdúr bá-ì. Àbùfrá nù, bá-ípl*  
child REF from Winneba come-PAST and child REF too from Swedru come-PAST child FAM come-PAST  
*ára nà kyìrèkyìrènyí nù hwí-ì ɔ̀pùfrá nù,*  
just FOC teacher FAM cane-PAST child FAM  
'A (certain) child came from Winneba and another child<sub>i</sub> came from Swedru. Immediately the child<sub>i</sub> came, the teacher caned the child<sub>i</sub>.'
- b. # *Àbùfrá bí fí Simpà bá-ì, ñnà àbùfrá bí, sù fí Swèdúr bá-ìth ɔ̀-*bá-í**  
child REF from Winneba come-PAST and child REF too from Swedru come-PAST 3SG.SUBJ-COME-PAST  
*ára nà kyìrèkyìrènyí nù hwí-ì nù,*  
just FOC teacher FAM cane-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'A (certain) child came from Winneba and another child<sub>i</sub> came from Swedru. Immediately s/he<sub>i</sub> came, the teacher caned him/her<sub>i</sub>.'

So far it has been established that the pronoun *nù* is felicitous when it is hearer-old, and that its referent must be salient in the discourse. These findings accord with Fretheim and Amfo's (2005) and Amfo's (2007) previous analysis of pronominal *nù* as having the discourse status of 'in focus' in the Gundel et al. hierarchy (see Table 1).

Importantly, the familiarity and salience requirements of pronominal *nù* do not mean that the referent of *nù* needs to have been linguistically mentioned in preceding discourse. As pointed out by Roberts (2003:297) and Schwarz (2009:37), among others, noun phrases whose referents are not already known to the hearer can attain familiar status when they are accompanied by a deictic gesture at the time of the utterance. This is true also for Akan pronominal *nù* (as well as for determiner *nù*; see Section 2.3). In (81), the pronoun can be used to refer to a man who is walking by if the speaker points at him or makes any deictic gesture in the man's direction, especially when there is

<sup>37</sup> The sentences can however be licensed by a deictic gesture, as discussed shortly below.

<sup>38</sup> It is interesting that in (80a), the strong article is unable to force an anaphoric interpretation in the absence of situational uniqueness, while in (59–60) it was able to. The difference is that in (80a), two separate children are individually mentioned. However, the precise analysis of this contrast must await further research.

no one else in that direction. (81) is infelicitous if there is neither any prior mention of a person, nor any deictic gesture.

- (81) *Mé-bísà nù*  
1SG.SUBJ-ask 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'I will ask him/her.'

(Arkoh, 2011:66)

Given data such as (81), we conclude that deixis not only renders a discourse referent familiar, but also maximally salient (which seems plausible).

The data in this section have shown that pronominal *nù* is always familiar (hearer-old), and also carries the stronger requirement that its referent be salient within the discourse. Following a suggestion by Florian Schwarz (p.c.), we postulate that the core semantics of pronominal and determiner *nù* is merely familiarity/hearer-oldness, and the salience requirement can at least in part be attributed to the lack of an overt NP which can help pick out the referent. The fact that pronominal *nù* often appears with, but does not require, an overt prior antecedent follows because an antecedent also helps boost salience.

Before we attempt to unify the determiner and pronominal uses of *nù*, we will briefly show that the third use of *nù*, as a dependent clause marker, also requires familiarity. We leave a full analysis of the DCM use for future research.

### 3.2. *Nù as a dependent clause marker is familiar*

As has been pointed out by Amfo (2006), the Akan DCM appears on temporal clauses, relative clauses and clauses where two options are given and one is chosen over the other. (Amfo terms this last case a 'substitutive clause'.) This *nù* is preceded by the dependent clause, whose role is to give more information on the main clause. In (82), (a), (b), (c) are temporal, relative and substitutive clauses, respectively.

- (82) a. *Ñsú tó-ì nù, nnà má-àdà*  
water fall-PAST DCM and 1SG.SUBJ-sleep  
'I was asleep when it rained.'
- b. *Mpòbùwá nù àà mù-tó-ì nù á-yìw*  
shoe FAM REL 1SG.SUBJ-buy-PAST DCM PFV-miss  
'The shoe I bought is missing.'
- c. *Yé-bé-bísà mà wò-áhám nù, yé-nká hén ánù nítúm*  
1PL.SUBJ-FUT-ask COMP 3SG.SUBJ-quarrel DCM 1PL-say our mouth close  
'Instead of asking her to upset her, let's keep quiet.'

(Arkoh, 2011:89–90)

In the DCM use of *nù*, it marks the information presented in its clause as familiar to the interlocutors. That is, the hearer would be assumed to know that it had rained, that the speaker had bought a shoe, or that asking her is an option that would upset her, respectively. The familiarity effect of DCM *nù* has been argued for by Saah (1994), at least for the temporal uses. Saah explicitly argues that temporal clauses marked by *nù* are assumed to present old information (1994:159).

## 4. Towards a unification of the uses of *nù*

So far we have argued that all three uses of *nù* encode familiarity. Assuming that the familiarity generalization is correct, the obvious question is whether the various uses can be unified as (being derived from) one underlying morpheme. In this section we take some initial steps towards such a unification. The first step requires us to deal with the tonal differences between the different uses of *nù*.

### 4.1. *Tonal realizations of nù*

In this section we begin by presenting the generalizations about tonal realization. Starting with pronominal *nù*, we observe that in many cases (e.g., (5a,b) above), this morpheme appears with a low tone. Amfo (2006) in fact argues that pronominal *nù* is specified as having a low tone; we argue here that it is underlyingly toneless. The surface tone of

pronominal *nu* is dependent on a number of factors, including the phonological environment, the type of structure in which it occurs, and its position in the sentence.

First we look at ordinary sentences, where no A'-movement has taken place. Here, there is tone spreading from the preceding tone to the pronominal *nu* in object position. Thus the phonology determines the tone of the pronominal *nu* in this sentence type. In (83a), where the final tone on the verb is high, pronominal *nu* bears a high tone, while in (83b), pronominal *nu* bears a low tone due to the preceding low tone.

- (83) a. *Kòfí bɛ-frɛ nú*  
Kofi FUT-call 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Kofi will call her.'
- b. *Kòfí frɛ-ɛ nù*  
Kofi call-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Kofi called her.'

(84) confirms that it is the preceding tone which determines the tone of pronominal *nu* in this type of sentence. In (84a), the tone on the preceding tone-bearing unit *hu* 'see' is low, thus the tone on the pronoun is also low. However in (84b) the preceding word *hu* 'see' bears a high tone, therefore the pronoun gets a high tone.<sup>39</sup> Thus, in the same position in the same sentence type, there is a tonal alternation (low or high) for the morpheme; its tone is determined by the preceding tone.

- (84) a. *Kòfí nù-kò-hù nù*  
Kofi PROG-go-see 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Kofi is going to see her.'
- b. *Kòfí nù-kó-hú nú*  
Kofi PROG-go-see 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Kofi is going to see her.'

(Arkoh, 2011:56)

In sentences containing an A'-configuration, where *nu* is used as a resumptive pronoun, the phonology does not determine the tone born by the pronoun; different factors come into play. We see in (85a) that the tone on the pronoun is high (just like the preceding tone). However in (85b), *nu* bears a high tone in sentence-final position, even though the preceding tone is low (see also (73b), (80b) above).

- (85) a. *Wóáná nà Kòfí bé-hyíá nú*  
who FOC Kofi FUT-meet 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Who is it that Kofi will meet?'
- b. *Wóáná nà Kòfí hú-ù nú*  
who FOC Kofi see-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ  
'Who was it that Kofi saw?'

(Arkoh, 2011:57)

However in the examples in (86), where the modifiers *ndídà* 'yesterday' and *òkyíná* 'tomorrow' are sentence final, the pronoun gets a low tone, regardless of the tone of the preceding vowel.

- (86) a. *Wóáná nà Kòfí hú-ù nù ndídà*  
who FOC Kofi see-PAST 3SG.ANIM.OBJ yesterday  
'Who was it that Kofi saw yesterday?'
- b. *Wóáná nà Kòfí bé-hyíá nù òkyíná*  
who FOC Kofi FUT-meet 3SG.ANIM.OBJ tomorrow  
'Who is it that Kofi will meet tomorrow?'

(Arkoh, 2011:57)

This shows that in an A'-movement construction, the preceding tone does not determine the tone of the pronoun; rather the position of the pronoun in the structure determines it. When the pronoun occurs in sentence-final position in an A'-movement construction, it receives a high tone irrespective of the tone preceding it, but when something else follows, it receives a low tone irrespective of the tone preceding it.

<sup>39</sup> Speakers have the choice between the two forms of *hu* 'see'. It is not clear why this is so.

It is beyond the bounds of this paper to provide an analysis of the factors that influence the tonal realization of the Akan pronominal *nu*. However the evidence given here suggests that pronominal *nu* is lexically unspecified for tone, since its surface tone depends on factors such as the preceding tone, and position in the sentence. Items with unstable tone can be assumed to be underlyingly toneless (Déchaine, 2001).<sup>40</sup>

Turning to the tonal realizations of the determiner *nú*, we see that unlike pronominal *nu*, the determiner always bears a high tone. This is irrespective of the preceding tone, the position, or the type of sentence the morpheme occurs in. In (87), *nú* occurs after a low tone in (a), and a high tone in (b); in each case, the determiner bears a high tone.

- (87) a. *Fà pàpà nú*  
take fan FAM  
'Take the fan.'
- b. *Frè pàpá nú*  
call man FAM  
'Call the man.'
- (Arkoh, 2011:58)

The sentences in (88) and (89) involve A'-constructions. The determiner *nú* has a high tone, whether it is sentence final or not, and this is irrespective of the tone of the preceding vowel.

- (88) a. *Kwèsí nà ɔ́-fá-à pàpà nú*  
Kwesi FOC 3SG.SUBJ-call-PAST fan FAM  
'It was Kwesi who took the fan.'
- b. *Kwèsí nà ɔ́-fá-à pàpà nú rídídà*  
Kwesi FOC 3SG.SUBJ-call-PAST fan FAM yesterday  
'It was Kwesi who took the fan  
yesterday.'
- (Arkoh, 2011:58–59)

- (89) a. *Ónú nà ɔ́-fré-è pàpá nú*  
3SG FOC 3SG.SUBJ-call-PAST man FAM  
'It was him who called the man.'
- b. *Ónú nà ɔ́-fré-è pàpá nú rídídà*  
3SG FOC 3SG.SUBJ-call-PAST man FAM yesterday  
'It was him who called the man yesterday.'
- (Arkoh, 2011:59)

Like the determiner use of *nu*, the dependent clause marker also surfaces with a high tone, regardless of whether it follows a low tone or a high tone. This is illustrated in (90).

- (90) a. *Kwèsí bé-fá pàpà nú ɔ́-fá-à mǐná mbóm*  
Kwesi FUT-take fan dcm 3SG.SUBJ-take-PAST broom instead  
'Instead of Kwesi taking the/a fan, he took a broom.'
- b. *Óbɔ́zǐ bé-fré pàpá nú ɔ́-fré-è Kòfí mbóm*  
3SG.SUBJ-take FUT-call man dcm 3SG.SUBJ-call-PAST Kofi instead  
'Instead of her/him calling the man, s/he called Kofi.'

Constructing A'-configurations is not possible for the dependent clause marker, since it never functions as a resumptive pronoun. However, there do not appear to be any counter-examples to the claim that the DCM always surfaces with a high tone (cf. also Amfo, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> An anonymous reviewer asks whether pronominal *nu* should be treated as underlyingly high-toned, given that the strong pronoun *ónú* is high-toned (see Table 2). We do not adopt this alternative analysis, for two reasons. First, there is no reason to assume that the strong and weak pronoun sets should bear the same tones. In Yorùbá, for example, strong pronouns have a LM tonal melody, while weak pronouns are M (argued by some to be toneless underlyingly), or H, depending on person and number (Doug Pulleyblank, p.c.). Second, a high-tone analysis of Akan pronominal *nu* would require an explanation of why pronominal *nu* undergoes tonal changes, while determiner *nu* always surfaces as high-toned (see immediately below in the text). The unlikelihood that pronominal *nu* is high-toned is supported by the fact that Amfo (2006) analyzes it as underlyingly low.

#### 4.2. Deriving the tonal differences from syntax

We have just seen that *nu* is inherently toneless in its pronominal use, but always bears high tone in its determiner and DCM uses. Should we assume that these are lexical differences? This would be an ambiguity analysis; it would mean that no unification of the different uses of *nu* was possible. Yet it is surely not an accident that *nu* in all its three uses contributes a unified semantics of familiarity: an analysis which involved ambiguity would surely be missing something. What we eventually need therefore, is a way to derive the different uses from a single underlying *nu*, while nevertheless accounting for the tonal effects.

We would like to suggest that the tonal changes reflect syntactic differences between the various uses of *nu*. This is not unexpected, since it is well-known that in Kwa languages, tonal changes encode grammatical as well as lexical information. For example, (91) shows that tonal changes derive nouns or adjectives from verbs in Akan.

- (91) a. *dùà* ‘plant’ (verb)      *dùá* ‘tree’ (noun)  
b. *tsintìn* ‘straighten’ (verb) *tsintín* ‘tall’ (adjective)

Grammatical effects of tone can be found across the Kwa family. Ajiboye (2005) argues that in Yorùbá, the word *ti* marks a relative clause when it bears high tone as in (92a), but functions as a genitive marker when it bears a mid (unmarked) tone as in (92b).

- (92) a. *Ère tí Kùnlé ní*  
statue c Kunle owns  
‘The statue that Kunle owns’ (Ajiboye, 2005:88)  
b. *Ère ti Kùnlé*  
statue c Kunle  
‘statue of Kunle’ (Ajiboye, 2005:88)

Déchainé (2001) also documents syntax-tone interactions in Yorùbá; she shows that low tones become mid in an environment which is both syntactically and prosodically defined (preceding an accusative case-marked phonological word).

Another Kwa language with similar phenomena is Ìgbo. Manfredi (2011:9) shows that the tonal change illustrated in (93) converts a construct state modifier from generic to referential.

- (93) a. *Úlò ézè*  
house chief  
‘a chiefly/lavish house’  
b. *Úlò èze<sup>41</sup>*  
house chief (specific)  
‘a house belonging to the chief/Mr.Ézè’ (Manfredi, 2011:9)

(93b) has no specificity marker, but a specific interpretation is encoded by the low tone on *èze*.

Returning to Akan *nu*, we derive the surface tonal effects by making use of Manfredi’s (2011) proposal (based on a range of Benue-Kwa and Chinese languages) that null D can be prosodically activated, including by tone. We propose that *nu* itself is always inherently toneless. In its determiner use, it is not actually located in D position, but is the head of a smaller, right-headed functional projection within the DP (perhaps *nP*). The high tone on the ‘determiner’ use is then a reflex of a null D position (also occurring at the right).<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, while Manfredi provides strong evidence from several languages that tone can be the sole indicator of referential or specific interpretations, in Akan the situation is slightly different. In this language, the definite (in the sense of familiar) semantics is common to all uses of *nu*, and it is merely syntactic configuration which is signalled by the tonal contrast, with high tone activating the D head. Nevertheless, Manfredi’s claim that tone alone can signal the presence of D is supported by the Akan facts.<sup>43</sup> As for pronominal *nu*,

<sup>41</sup> Manfredi does not overtly mark a tone if it is the same as the preceding tone.

<sup>42</sup> Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this idea. We depart here from Arkoh (2011), who argues that determiner *nu* is lexically specified with a high tone.

<sup>43</sup> An anonymous reviewer suggests that one should refrain from importing categories from other languages, in the absence of language-internal evidence. S/he therefore questions our claim that the null element in Akan is a D. However, given the existence of D in other languages, including closely related ones, the burden of proof is on those who analyze Akan as lacking a D head.

further research into its syntax is required, but it could either occupy the D position itself, or lack a D projection altogether.<sup>44</sup> Further research is also required into the DCM use of *nu* and whether the null D analysis can apply there.

The claim that the high tone on *nu* is syntactically conditioned is supported by the fact that there is an identical tonal pattern with the Akan specific indefinite determiner *bi*. As shown by Arkoh (2011), *bi* is toneless when it functions as a pronoun, and bears a high tone when it functions as a determiner in conjunction with an overt noun phrase. This supports our claim that the tonal alternation between pronominal and determiner *nu* is not an idiosyncratic lexical difference, but rather results from surface syntactic position.

One interesting consequence of this proposal is that it provides an argument that bare nouns in Akan do not co-occur with a phonologically null D. If they did, we would incorrectly predict tonal changes on bare nouns, similar to what happens with *nu*.

#### 4.3. Towards unification

We have argued so far that all uses of *nu* share a common core semantics (familiarity), and that the tonal differences between the surface realizations of *nu* can be derived from surface syntax. A full unification of all the uses of *nu* would not only be desirable Akan-internally, it is also supported by data and analyses from other languages. For example, Lefebvre (1998) describes the [+definite] determiners in Fongbe (Kwa) and Haitian as being multifunctional heads. She argues that apart from the determiners' use in the nominal domain, they can function as assertive markers and event determiners in the clausal domain. In all these uses the determiners mark the things they scope over (be it a noun, an assertion or an event) as things that the interlocutors have knowledge about. This parallels the Akan case of determiner vs. clausal *nu*.

With respect to unifying determiners with pronouns, it has been argued that in English, definite determiners and third-person pronouns are the same element. This idea goes back to Postal (1966), and is fleshed out by Elbourne (2005). Elbourne analyzes third-person pronouns as definite articles, with a phonologically null NP argument. He observes that (94a) and (94b) are semantically equivalent, and argues that the Logical Form structure of both is as in (94c).

- (94) a. Every man who owns a donkey beats *it*.  
 b. Every man who owns a donkey beats *the donkey*.  
 c. Every man who owns a donkey beats *it donkey*. (Elbourne, 2005:42)

The same parallelism between a pronoun and a full definite description in donkey sentences appears in Akan, as shown in (95–96).

- (95) Ògwèdzinyí bíará àà ɔ-wó èfúpònkó nú ɔ-tsìná **nú** dú  
 trader every REL 3SG.SUBJ-have camel DCM 3SG.SUBJ-sit **3SG.ANIM.OBJ** on  
 'Every trader who owns a camel sits on it.'

- (96) Ògwèdzinyí bíará àà ɔ-wó èfúpònkó nú ɔ-tsìná **èfúpònkó nú** dú  
 trader every REL 3SG.SUBJ-have camel DCM 3SG.SUBJ-sit **camel** FAM ON  
 'Every trader who owns a camel sits on the camel.'

Elbourne analyzes *it* as identical to *the* not just for cases of donkey pronouns, but also for referential and bound readings of pronouns. The cross-linguistic recurrence of a pronoun-determiner parallel is striking, and Akan actually provides stronger support for the unification than English does, since in English the phonological relationship between the pronoun and the definite article is opaque.

In spite of these promising parallels, a full unification of the different uses of *nu* must be left for future research. Outstanding issues include the fact that only the pronoun use of *nu* is restricted to direct objects, and to animate referents. It may be relevant to note that the strong third person singular pronoun *ɔnú*, which can function as a subject and which can have either animate or inanimate referents, appears to contain *nu*. The restriction of the weak pronoun *nu* to animate objects may therefore be simply paradigmatic; Table 2 shows that animacy and grammatical function are pervasively distinguished in the Akan pronominal paradigm.

<sup>44</sup> Thanks to Florian Schwarz (p.c.) for raising this issue. For prior proposals that pronouns can occupy D, see Abney (1987), among many others; for the proposal that pronouns can be smaller than DP, see for example Déchaine and Wiltschko (2002).

## 5. A brief comparison with other Kwa languages

In this final section we briefly compare the Akan system with those of two other Kwa languages, Yorùbá (Ajiboye, 2005) and Gungbe (Aboh, 2004). There are strong similarities between the three languages, in that all three allow bare nominal arguments, and have morphological means of encoding specificity and definiteness. However, there are also important differences between the languages, and there is clearly a need for more in-depth comparative work across Kwa.

In Yorùbá, Ajiboye (2005) argues that bare nouns can be interpreted as generic (97a), indefinite (97b) or definite (97c):

- (97) a. *Òyìnbó gbádùn sigá*  
European enjoy **cigarette**  
'Europeans enjoy cigarettes.'
- b. *Mo rí ajá*  
1<sub>SG</sub> see **dog**  
'I saw a dog.'
- c. *Ajá gbó mi*  
**dog** bark 1<sub>SG</sub>  
'The dog barked at me.' [in discourse context] (Ajiboye, 2005:137)

These data differentiate Yorùbá from Akan, since an Akan counterpart of (97c) with a bare noun could never be interpreted as definite, at least according to the judgments of the first author and our three Akan consultants.<sup>45</sup> However, Yorùbá parallels Akan in having an overt marker of specificity for indefinites, and also parallels it in having a means of overtly adding salience marking to definites. In Yorùbá, this is done by the salience marker *náá*, and in Akan it is done by the demonstratives, according to Arkoh (2011).

Turning to Gungbe, Aboh (2004) argues that this language possesses two specificity markers, one for indefinites and one for definites (where definiteness is defined as we define it here, namely requiring familiarity; Aboh, 2004:76). Interestingly, Gungbe seems to pattern with Akan in that bare nouns cannot be interpreted as familiar. This is illustrated in (98).

- (98) *Kókú m̀n t́ávò c̀è b̀ò d̀ò é̀mì ná x̀ò t́ávò*  
Koku see-PFV table 1<sub>SG</sub>-POSS and say-PFV 3<sub>SG</sub>-Log FUT buy table  
'Koku saw my table and then said he would buy a table.'  
\* 'Koku saw my table and then said he would buy that specific table.' (Aboh, 2004:76–77)

Further study is needed to reach a full understanding of the semantics of functional elements within the noun phrase in Kwa languages. The Kwa family clearly has the potential to shed interesting light on the typology of article systems in human language, and on the ways in which closely related languages can differ in this domain. See Manfredi (2011) for relevant discussion.

## 6. Conclusion

Our core proposal is that the Akan definite article *nu* encodes familiarity, and that it behaves in this respect like German strong articles as discussed by Schwarz (2009). We have provided evidence that *nu* requires that the hearer be familiar with the referent of the noun phrase, and not merely that there be a unique referent as argued by Amfo (2006, 2007). We systematically compared the Akan data with data from German, and showed that *nu* is almost identical to the German strong articles. We also argued that *nu* in its other uses as a third person pronoun and a dependent clause marker similarly encodes familiarity. We therefore argued that all three uses of *nu* share the same core semantics.

The data and analysis presented here are relevant not only for Akan, but for a broader cross-linguistic understanding of article systems and definiteness. We believe it is striking that in two genetically unrelated languages – Akan and German – a determiner arises with very similar semantics. Even though German possesses two distinct definite articles and Akan only possesses one, Akan provides support for Schwarz's claim that definite articles exist which encode pure familiarity (as opposed to uniqueness). The Akan-German comparison also sheds light on the subtle differences which arise when a familiar definite does, vs. does not, contrast with an alternate definite article encoding uniqueness.

<sup>45</sup> As pointed out in footnote 9, an anonymous reviewer reports different judgments for Akan bare nouns in some discourse contexts.

The strong/weak definite distinction extends even beyond German and Akan. Schwarz (2012) presents an overview of research in the literature on several languages – including Mauritian Creole, Lakhota and Hausa – which distinguish between familiar definites and uniqueness definites. Schwarz suggests (2012:9) that ‘the contrast between weak and strong articles corresponds to a general fault line along which languages can align their referential system.’ Although there are cross-linguistic differences in the semantics of noun phrases, there seems to be a restricted range of meanings for articles, which language after language draws upon.

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