

## Association with focus in Ngamo (West Chadic)

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My talk discusses the meaning contributions of two focus-sensitive particles, *yak('i)* (= ‘only’) and *ke('e)* (= ‘also/too’), in Ngamo, a West-Chadic language spoken in the North-East of Nigeria. Like their English counterparts, these particles have the function of excluding or including other salient alternatives. For example, the use of *yak* in (1) leads to the exclusion of the alternative that Kule built a granary last year. The particle *ke*, in contrast, is additive, indicating that another alternative is true as well. In (2), it links the current utterance to its previously uttered alternative that Kule built a school.

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| <p>(1) (Kule wanted to build a house &amp; a granary last year)(2)<br/>         Kule <i>yak</i> salko <b>bano</b> mano.<br/>         Kule only build.PFV house last.year<br/>         “Kule only built A HOUSE last year.”</p> | <p>(Kule built a school last year)<br/>         Kule <i>ke</i> salko <b>bano</b> mano.<br/>         Kule also build.PFV house last.year<br/>         “Kule also built a HOUSE last year.”</p> |
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In some other respects, however, the particles differ in behaviour from their English counterparts, and also from each other. First, while both *yak('i)* and *ke('e)* can associate with non-subjects in canonical SVO sentences, cf. (1)-(2), only *ke('e)* can associate with subjects in such sentences, cf. (3-a) and (4-a). In order for *yak('i)* to associate with it, the subject must be inverted, and the background marked with a particle =*i/ye* (4-c). Preverbal subjects thus seem to have a special status. Second, *ke('e)* may never associate with focus in =*i/ye* constructions, cf. e.g. (3-b), independent of subjecthood or non-subjecthood, i.e. =*i/ye* marking and association with *ke('e)* seem to be incompatible.

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| <p>(3) (Shuwa built a house last year)<br/>         a. <i>Ke</i> <b>Kule</b> salko bano mano.<br/>         also Kule build.PFV house last.year<br/>         “KULE also built a house last year.”<br/>         b. #Salko bano mano=i <i>ke</i> <b>Kule</b><br/>         build.PFV house last.year=BM also Kule<br/>         “KULE also built a house last year.”</p> | <p>(4) (Kule and Shuwa wanted to build a house)<br/>         a. #<i>Yak</i> <b>Kule</b> salko bano mano.<br/>         only Kule build.PFV house last.year<br/>         b. Salko bano mano=i <i>yak</i> <b>Kule</b><br/>         build.PFV house last.year=BM only Kule<br/>         “Only KULE built a house last year.”</p> |
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Third, the particle *ke('e)*, unlike *also/too*, can link utterances that are not parallel in any way, cf. (5).

- (5) Hawwa kaja mato, Kule *ke* salko bano.  
 Hawwa buy.PFV car Kule also build.PFV house  
 “Hawwa bought a car, and Kule built a house (# too).”

These generalizations are explained as follows: That *yak('i)* cannot associate with preverbal subjects, I argue, is due to the fact that these subjects are not in focus, and that *yak('i)*, like *only* in English, needs to associate with a focus in its scope. It is shown that *ke('e)*, in contrast, can associate with constituents which are out of focus, which explains its association with preverbal subjects.

This however does not explain why *ke('e)* may not associate with focus in =*i/ye*-constructions. This is argued to be due to the semantics of *ke('e)*, on the one hand, which requires the topic situation of the sentence it occurs in to be different from that of its antecedent. On the other hand, =*i/ye*-marked backgrounds are default anaphoric: if they can refer back to a previously introduced topic situation of the same kind, they do. For this reason, the combination of =*i/ye* and *ke('e)* leads to a clash.

The fact that *ke('e)* can link utterances that are not parallel in any way is also due to the semantics of *ke('e)*: in contrast to *also/even*, *ke('e)* does not require backgrounds to be parallel and foci to be distinct. Instead, it can be shown that it requires backgrounds to be distinct, and places no restrictions on foci.