

# On replication and polarity in Gã

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In this paper, I provide a detailed description of the facts about negative polarity items (NPIs) which are derived by reduplicating indefinite DPs in Gã (Niger-Congo: Ghana), and propose two ways of dealing with it. One way is to explain it in terms of polarity feature checking. The alternative approach adapts a NEG-Raising analysis of NPIs to Gã.

Reduplicating indefinite DPs to form NPIs is a productive morpho-semantic process in Gã. In (1) for instance, such NPIs, similar to the *any* series in English, are derived by totally reduplicating indefinite DPs that are headed by the D head *ko* which has taken various generic meaning N heads i.e. person, thing, place, time, day, as complements.

(1)

INDEF DP		NPI	
a. mɔ ko	‘a person/someone’	<b>mɔko-mɔko</b>	‘anybody/ nobody’
b. nɔ ko	‘a thing/ something’	<b>nɔko-nɔko</b>	‘anything/ nothing’
c. hé kó	‘a place/ somewhere’	<b>hékó-hékó</b>	‘anywhere/ nowhere’
d. bee ko	‘a time/ sometime’	<b>beeko-beeko</b>	‘anytime/ notime’
e. gbi ko	‘a day/ someday’	<b>gbiko-gbiko</b>	‘anyday/ noday’

Interestingly, all other NPs even with specific meaning N heads which can occur as complements of *ko* can participate in this derivational process, as (2a-b) show. It is significant to note that what is reduplicated is an XP, a phenomenon which may be described as ‘syntactic copying’ (Kimper 2008). Thus in (2c), the N head is modified by an adjective *agbo* ‘big’, and the reduplication affects the entire DP (copying only a part is not allowed). (2d) shows that definite DPs do not permit this NPI formation strategy, and when *ko* selects a plural NP complement (in which case it agrees with the noun in number), the NPI formation process is again blocked (2e). The latter situation may be attributable to the presence of the plural marker, given that many languages form their NPIs with an indefinite DP headed by a form related to the numeral one. Here, it is insightful to note that the form *ko* may be morphologically related to how Gã expresses the numeral ‘one’ i.e. *e – ko*.

(2)

INDEF DP		NPI	
a. shía ko	‘a house’	<b>shía ko-shia ko</b>	‘no house’
b. dátrefónyo ko	‘a doctor’	<b>dátrefónyo ko-dátrefónyo ko</b>	‘no doctor’
c. shía agbo ko	‘a big house’	<b>shía agbo ko-shía agbo ko</b>	‘no big house’
d. shía le	‘the house’	<b>*shía-le-shia-le</b>	
e. shía-i ko-mɛi	‘some houses’	<b>*shíai komɛi-shíai komɛi</b>	

An unreduplicated indefinite DPs may freely occur with (3-a) or without (3-b) negation. But their reduplicated (NPI) forms are only possible in the context of negation as shown in (4), supporting a view in the literature e.g. Zeijlstra (2013), that though NPIs do not induce semantic negation by themselves, they are only licensed in the context of negation. (4) and (5) also show that unlike languages like English, Gã NPIs can freely occur in both subject and object positions in the clause, just like Hindi (Lahiri 1998), Japanese, Korean, Tamil, and Basque.

- (3) a. Kwei é-ná-áá **shía ko** .  
 K. SBJ-see-NEG house INDEF  
 ‘Kwei did not see a house.’  
 b. Kwei na **shía ko** .  
 K. see house INDEF  
 ‘Kofi saw a house.’
- (4) a. Kwei é-ná-áá **shíako-shíako** .  
 K. SBJ-see-NEG house-RED  
 ‘Kwei did not see any house.’  
 b. \*Kwei na **shíako-shíako** .  
 K. SBJ.see house-RED
- (5) **Moko-moko** é-ná-áá shía ko.  
 someone-RED SBJ-see-NEG house INDEF  
 ‘Nobody saw a house.’

Furthermore, the data seem to suggest that these reduplicated indefinite DPs exhibit properties of both strict NPIs. For instance, the NPI is required to be in the same immediate clause as the negation, as in (6), and such NPIs have a distribution that is comparable to other strong NPIs in Gã. For instance they can occur with NEG-Raising verbs, as in (7).

- (6) Kwei é-ná-áá [<sub>CP</sub> ákɛ **shía ko** (\***shía ko**) yɛ jɛmɛ ]  
 K. SBJ-see-NEG COMP house INDEF house INDEF at there  
 ‘Kwei didn’t see that there is any house lying there.’
- (7) Dede sú-sú-úú [<sub>CP</sub> áké Kwei na **shía ko shía ko** ]  
 D. imagine-NEG COMP K. see house INDEF book INDEF  
 ‘Dede didn’t imagine that Kwei saw any house.’

Given that the semantics of the NPIs created via reduplication is non-compositional, we could assume that we get a reduplicated indefinite DP as an NPI when the D head of the indefinite DP which (I assume) also carries a polarity feature is valued by a c-commanding NEG head. Giannakidou (2000, 2007), among others, have proposed this feature to obtain for NPIs. If we went this way, a negatively valued POL feature is overtly realized reduplication at PF i.e. PF interprets this as an instruction to totally copy the DP e.g. Frampton (2009). This could explain why non-reduplicated indefinite DPs are never NPIs in Gã. If this proposal is on the right track, then we address the key questions about NPIs postulated by Ladusaw(1996): the licenser is NEG, the licensee is (indefinite) D which needs to value its POL feature, the licensing relation requires NEG to c-command indefinite D, and an unlicensed D results in a non-reduplicated indefinite DP at PF, and hence no NPI.

Alternatively, if we pursued the idea of Collins and Postal (2014) for Gã, i.e. that the the NEG of NPIs originates with the indefinite DP, then we could claim that the reduplication is as a result of copying one indefinite DP to a higher position and not deleting the lower copy.

## References:

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