A theory of (c)overt object pronouns in Kwa: Evidence from Gã

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INTRODUCTION

This talk

- Overt versus null object pronouns in Gã

(1) a. Kofi na (***lɛ**).
K see 3SG.OBJ
'Kofi saw **it**'.

b. Kofi na *(**lɛ**).
K see 3SG.OBJ
'Kofi saw **him/her**'.

Goal & Claim

GOAL: To show

- why certain object pronouns in Gã are pronounced while others are not
- how the relevant insight can be extended to sister languages
- the implication for linguistic theory

CLAIM:

- the overt-covert asymmetry in the realization of object pronouns can be reduced to syntactic structure
  - overt pronouns are pronounced in a specifier position -due to movement or base-generation
  - null pronouns occupy a complement position

Outline

PERSONAL PRONOUNS

Personal Pronouns

- They refer to or hold the place of nominal elements.

(2) a. Mary cooked [the food]$_1$ before Jane ate **it**$_1$.
b. **We**$_1$ know [each other]$_1$.

(3) a. Ask Mary$_1$
b. Ask **her**$_1$

Realization of pronouns across languages

- Some languages permit null pronouns
  - Null subjects: Greek, Irish, Italian, Romanian, Russian, etc.

    (4) Irish (Camacho 2013:21)

    Chuirfidis isteach ar an phost sin.
    put.3PL.COND in on that job
    'They would put in on that job'.

  - Null objects: Chinese, Italian, Kinande, Portuguese, etc.

    (5) Kinande (Authier 1988:21)

    na-ibiri-anza [e].
    SM-TNS-love
    'I have come to love (him/her/them)'.

Existing proposals

- Rich Agreement Hypothesis (see, e.g. Rizzi 1982, 1986; Koeneman 2000, a.o.): pro-drop is compensated for by rich inflectional morphology typically on the verb
- Radical Pro-drop Generalization (Neeleman and Szendroi 2007): pro-drop is due to agglutinating morphology of pronominal system

THE PROBLEM

The Kwa-specific problem

- Above solutions do not work for object drop in Gã (Kwa).
  - Pro-drop constructions show no agreement morphology on verbs
  - Pronominal systems show no agglutinating morphology

(6) *Object pronouns in Gã*

PER	1	2	3
SG	mi 'me'	bo 'you'	**lɛ** 'she/he/it'
PL	wɔ 'us'	nyɛ 'you'	amɛ 'them'

Realizing object pronouns

(7) *1st and 2nd persons*

a. Kofi na *(**mi**/**wɔ**).
K see 1SG/1PL
'Kofi saw me/us.'

b. Taki na *(**bo**/**nyɛ**).
K see 2SG/2PL
'Kofi saw you.'

(8) *3rd person animate*

Kofi na *(**lɛ**).
K see 3SG
'Kofi saw him/her.'

Realizing object pronouns

(9) *3rd person inanimate*
Kofii na (***lɛ**).
K see 3SG
'Kofii saw it.'

(10) Hypothesis I

+ANIM	-ANIM
lɛ	∅

- However, –AOP MUST be overt in the following context.
  1. before 'clause-final' adverbials
  2. arguments of a depictive secondary predicate (DSP)
  3. object of a change of state predicate

Overt –AOP: Preceding adverbs

(11) Kofi na (***lɛ**).
K see 3SG
'Kofi saw **it**.'

(12) Kofi na *(**lɛ**) mŕá.
K see 3SG early
'Kofi saw **it** early.'

- The presence of *mŕá* seems to make the difference.

(13) Hypothesis II

–CLAUSE-FINAL	+CLAUSE-FINAL
lɛ	∅

- This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the following:

Overt –AOP: Argument of a DSP

(14) Depictive Secondary Predicate (DSP) construction:
John ate [**the food <u>cold</u>**].

(15) Kofi ye [akwaadu lɛ́ **e-ŋmlikiti**].
K eat banana DEF NMZ-unripe
'Kofi ate **the banana unripe**.'

(16) Kofi ye [*(**lɛ**) e-ŋmlikiti].
K eat 3SG NMZ-unripe
'Kofi ate **it** unripe.'

- (16) seems to support Hypothesis II; the –AOP does not occur utterance-final.
- But consider the following:

Overt –AOP: Object of a CoS predicate

(17) Change of State (CoS) predicate construction

a. Jake **broke the chair**. (*unbroken* → *broken*)
b. The smith **flattened the metal**. (*non-flat* → *flat*)

- Consider the following from Gã

(18) a. Kofi tsé **woló lɛ́**.
K tear book DEF
'Kofi **tore the book**. (*untorn* → *torn* book)

b. Kofi tsé *(**lɛ**).
K see 3SG
'Kofi tore **it**.'

- –AOP is utterance final, yet overt.

Summary of issues & matters arising

(19) *Distribution of object pronouns in Gã*

CONTEXT	+ANIM	-ANIM
a. Clause-final	lɛ	∅
b. Before adverbs	lɛ	lɛ
c. Arg. of DSP	lɛ	lɛ
d. Arg. of CoS pred	lɛ	lɛ

QUESTION:

- What single feature accounts for (19)?

☞ Not so obvious; the parameters are too varied.

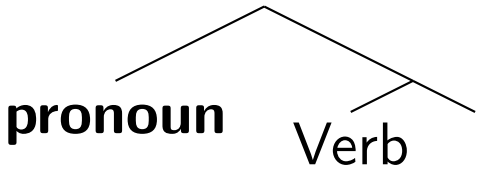
☞ However, we can appeal to syntactic structure to explain this.

ANALYSIS

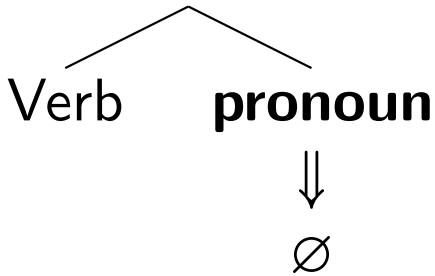
Upshot

- All overt object pronouns are in a specifier position (20).
- All null object pronouns are in a complement position (21).

(20) *Overt*



(21) *Null*



- Independently-motivation assumptions support this.

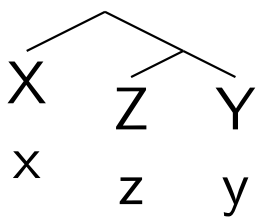
Assumptions: The LCA

- Suppose linearization follows the Linear Correspondence Axiom (LCA)

(22) *The Linear Correspondence Axiom* (Kayne 1994:33)
Let X, Y be non-terminals and x, y terminals such that X dominates x and Y dominates y. Then if X asymmetrically c-commands Y, x precedes y.

- The LCA maps c-command relations to surface word order: high = left, low = right

(23)



- Symmetrical c-command relations, as in between Z and Y in (23), imply that no linear precedence is possible

Repairs for symmetrical relations

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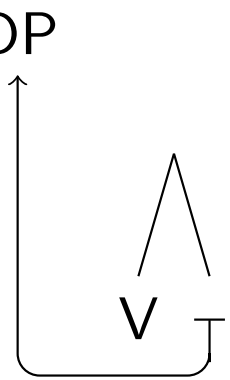
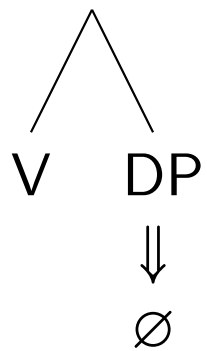
- See Chomsky (1995:335ff)

(24) *Move*



(25) *Delete*



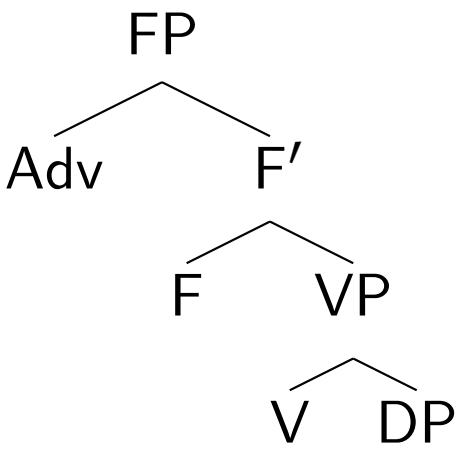
- Implication for overt/null pronouns in Gã
  - ☞ Pronouns in complement positions will be deleted.
  - ☞ Overt pronouns are in non-complement, i.e. specifier, position.

–AOP Before adverbs

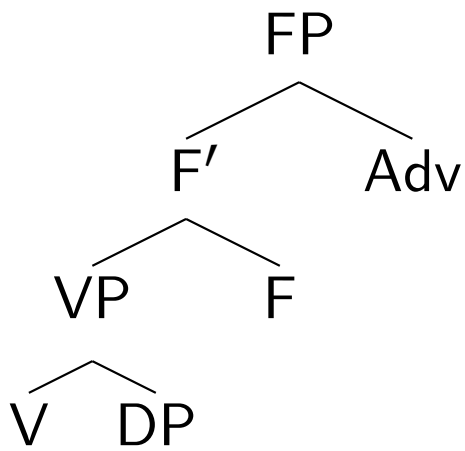
(26) Kofi na *(**lɛ**) mŕá.
K see 3SG early
'Kofi saw **it** early.'

- There are two possible base-positions for the adverb.

(27) *Left-specifier*



(28) *Right-specifier*



- Insight from Cinque (1999) points to (27) as the right

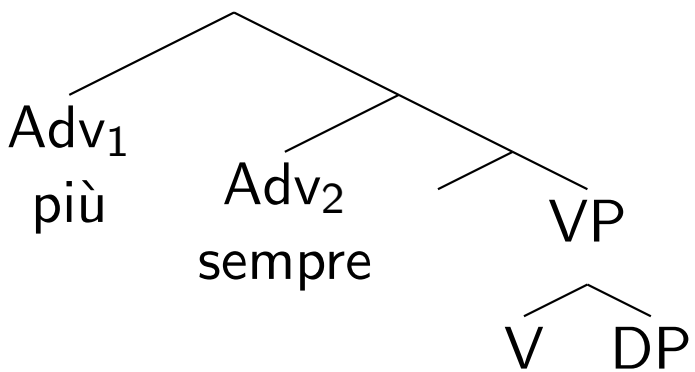
–AOP Before adverbs

(29) *Italian* (Cinque 1999:14)

a. Gianni non vince le sue partite **più$_1$ sempre$_2$**.

b. *Gianni non vince le sue partite **sempre$_2$ più$_1$** .
'Gianni does not win his matches any longer always.'

(30)

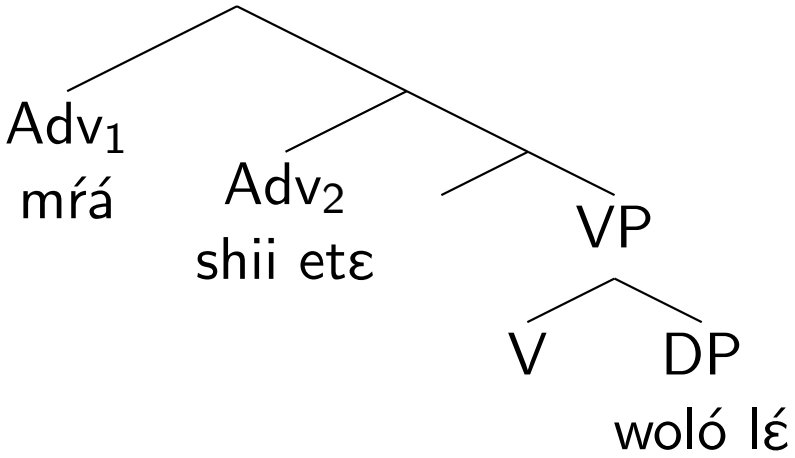


–AOP Before adverbs

(31) a. Kofi káne woló lɛ́ **mŕá**$_1$ [**shii étɛ́**]$_2$.
K read book DEF early times three

b. *Kofi káne woló lɛ́ [**shii étɛ́**]$_2$ **mŕá**$_1$.
K read book DEF times three early
Kofi read the book early three times.'

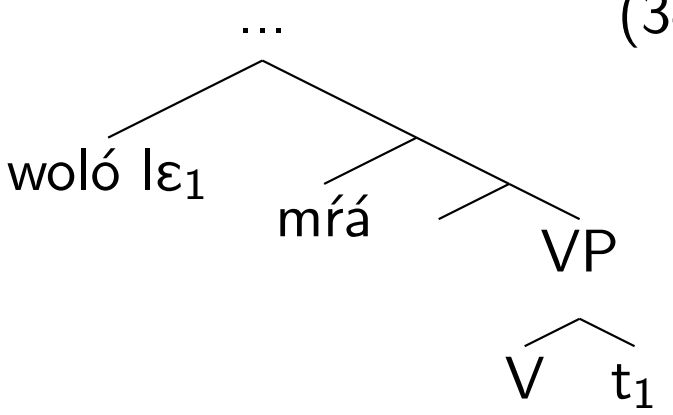
(32) Adverb vis internal argument



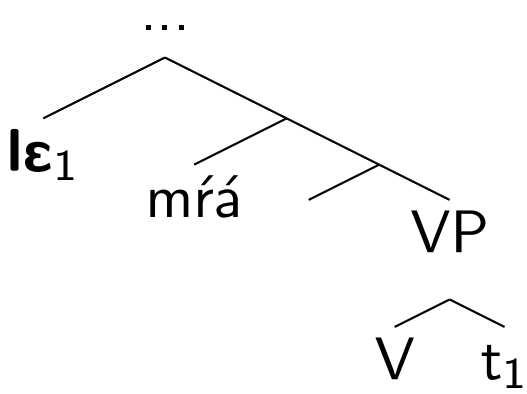
–AOP Before adverbs

- Why do object pronouns precede adverbs then?
- ☞ They move higher (34)

(33)



(34)



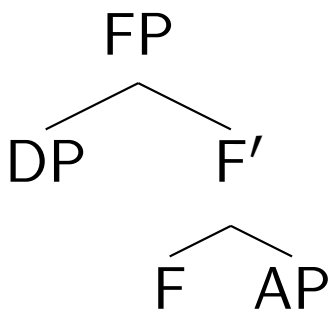
- Therefore, *lɛ* is pronounced in an *ex-situ* specifier position.

–AOP Argument of a DSP

(35) Kofi ye [akwaadu lɛ́ **e-ŋmlikiti**].
K eat banana DEF NML-unripe
'Kofi ate **the banana unripe**.'

- The following structures have been proposed for DSP constructions, i.e. as small clauses. (See, e.g. Citko 2011)

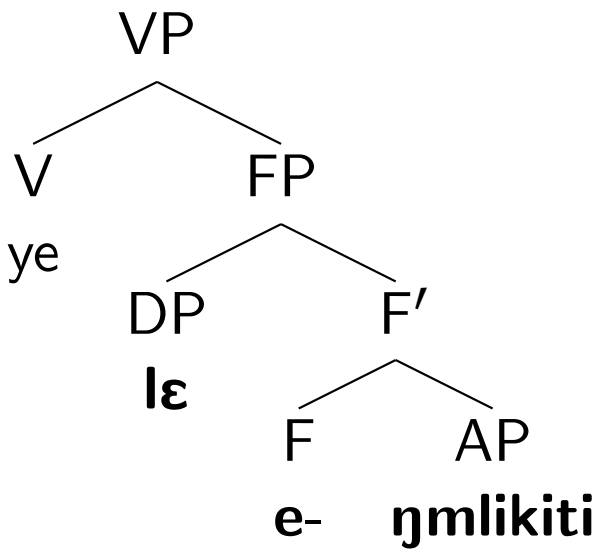
(36)



–AOP Argument of a DSP

- The pronominal argument of a DSP is never up for deletion; it is base-merged in a specifier position.

(37)



Objects of CoS predicates

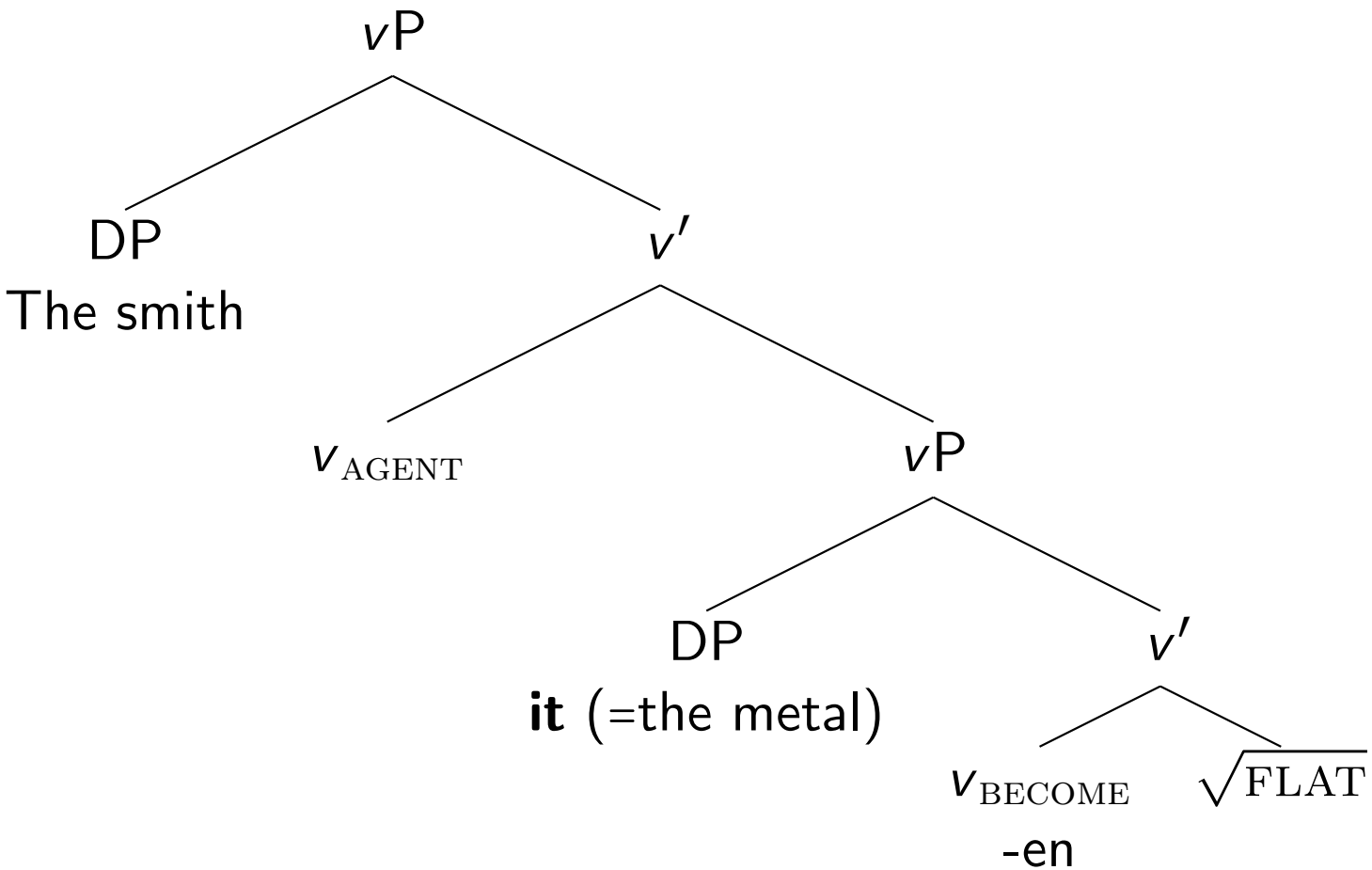
- The following structure has been proposed for CoS predication constructions (see e.g. Shaefer 2009):
- A 'stative' root combines with a 'become' head, and are together applied to an affected argument.

(38) The smith flattened the metal.

(39) a. [x CAUSE [BECOME [y <STATE>]]] (Transitive)
b. [The Smith CAUSE [BECOME [the metal <FLAT>]]]

Structure of CoS (Embick 2004:366)

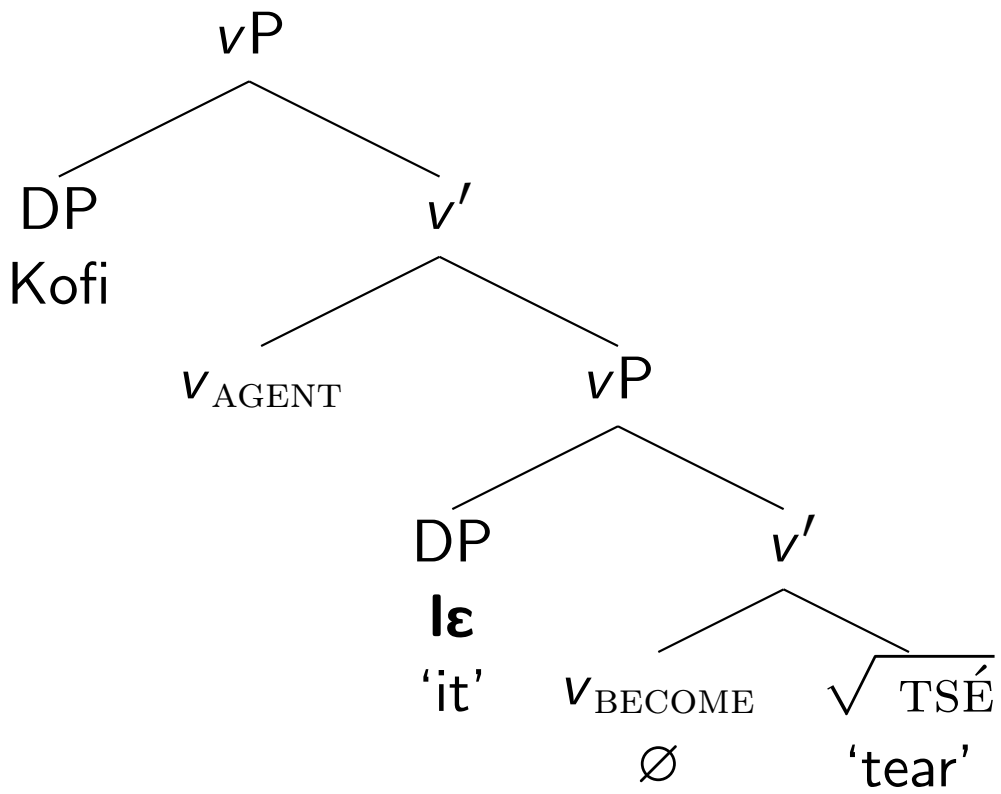
(40) The smith flattened the metal.=The smith flattened **it**.



Structure CoS construction in Gã

(41) Kofi tsé *(**lɛ**).
K see 3SG
'Kofi tore **it**.'

(42)



- The object pronoun is pronounced in a specifier position.

Interim summary

- Following independently-motivated proposals,
  - pre-adverb pronouns move to a higher specifier position.
  - pronominal arguments of DSPs are base-merged in a specifier position.
  - pronominal arguments of CoS predicates are base-merged in a specifier position.
  - The above object pronouns are never susceptible to deletion, because they end up in a specifier.
  - In accordance with the LCA - they independently create the asymmetry needed for linearization.

QUESTION: How does the distribution of animate pronouns in general compare with these contexts?

Clause-final ±animate pronouns

(43) a. Kofi na *(**lɛ**).
K see 3SG
'Kofi saw **him/her**.'

b. Kofi na (***lɛ**).
K see 3SG
'Kofi saw **it**.'

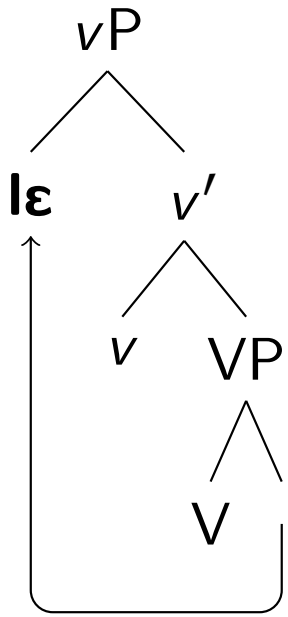
- Crosslinguistically, animate (but not inanimate) arguments tend to possess morpho-syntactic features that trigger certain syntactic processes. (See Kucerova 2017; Richards 2015; Lochbihler et al. 2015; Lopez 2012; Woodford 1999.)

☞ We can interprete this feature to be movement-trigger property on animate pronouns, in (43-a).

Animate pronouns

(44) Kofi na *(**lɛ**).
'Kofi saw **him/her**.'

(45) Kofi na *(**mi/bo**).
K see 1SG/2SG
'Kofii saw me/you.'



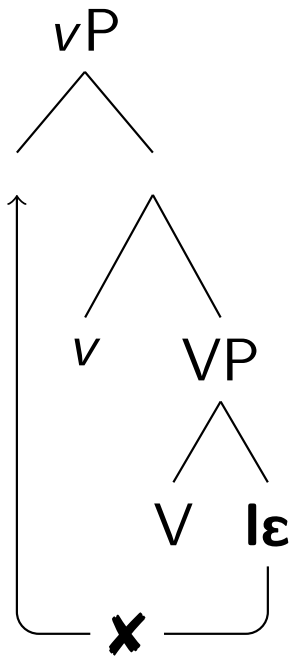
- Given (44), animate pronouns end up in a specifier position, and thus not susceptible to deletion.
- ☞ Also supports why 1/2 pronouns are always overt (45).

Null inanimate pronouns

- Unpronounced –AOPs, such as in (46), do not move from their base-positions. See (47).

(46) Kofi na.
'Kofi saw **it**.'

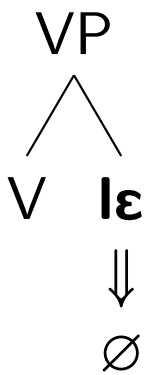
(47) *Inanimate*



Null inanimate pronouns

- Since they create symmetry, –AOPs are deleted *in-situ* in a structural configuration like (48).

(48) *Inanimate - deleted*



SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Summary/Conclusion/Predictions

(49) *Distribution of (c)overt object pronouns in Gã*

Context	Reason	Outcome
a. Before adverbs	Movement	Overt
b. Arg. of DSP	Merged in Spec	Overt
c. Arg. of CoS pred	Merged in Spec	Overt
d. +AOP	Movement	Overt
e. –AOP (+CF, -CoS)	*in-situ*	Null

Advantages and possible extensions

- Offers a novel way of accounting for the cross-linguistic distribution of null arguments
- Can be extended to several other Kwa languages like Akan, Baule, Dangme, Nzema, Nkami, Esahie (Sehwi), a.o., which behave like Gã vis object pronouns
- (Kwa) languages that have only overt object pronouns must have independent mechanism that avoids pronoun in complement of V. This is borne out in
  - Kwa languages that do not permit null object pronouns, e.g, Ewe, Gungbe (Cf. Aboh 2004) and Tuwuli (Cf. Harley 2008), where it has been argued that internal arguments always raise to a specifier position.
  - non-Kwa language like Dagaare (Gur, Niger-Congo), it has been proposed that object pronouns raise higher (Cf. Hiraiwa &Bodomo 2008).
  - Scandinavian languages, e.g. Danish and Icelandic - object shift is a well-known property (Cf. Vikner 2006).