

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**QUESTION MARKERS IN SISAALI**

**IRENE BASIMAGA DUMAH**

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

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**IRENE BASIMAGA DUMAH**

**(8150080009)**

**A THESIS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, FACULTY  
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## DECLARATION

### STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Dumah, Basimaga Irene, duly declare that this work is wholly my own original work with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works and existing texts written in Sisaalt which have been duly acknowledged. This work has not been submitted in part or whole for any other degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....

### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR AGBEDOR PAUL

SIGNATURE.....

DATE: .....

NAME OF SUPERVISOR: DR KWAKU OFORI

SIGNATURE.....

DATE: .....

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This work is dedicated with lots of love to my DAD, JAMES BADOUNG DUMA.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

**DEF** Definite

**DET** Determiner

**FOC** Focus

**FUT** Future

**IP** Interrogative particle

**INT** Intonation

**QP** Question Particle

**QUP** Question particle

**NEG** Negative

**PERF/IMPERF** Perfective/imperfective

**PST** Past

**PL** Plural Marker

**PROG** Progressive

**SG** Singular

**1** 1<sup>st</sup> Person

**2** 2<sup>nd</sup> Person

**3** 3<sup>rd</sup> Person

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines question formation in Sisaali, a member of the Grusi sub-group of the Gur languages (Naden 1988) spoken in the Upper West Region of Ghana and some parts of Burkina Faso. I discuss the syntax of polar, alternative and content questions. Two strategies for the formation of polar questions are identified which are the phonological and syntactic strategies. While the former involves the phonological strategy of falling intonation, the latter uses the question particles occurring either at clause initially or clause finally. The question particles are **kóó** and **dún** which are added to declarative sentences to make them polar interrogatives. Syntactically, while **kóó** can occur either sentence initially or finally, **dún** occurs only sentence finally. These question particles analyzed as question operators never co-occur with the intonation strategy of falling intonation. Alternative questions are also formed using the disjunctive **kóó** which occurs in-between the alternative in question. I thus propose that polar questions are truncated alternative questions. The formation of content questions involves both in-situ and ex-situ strategies. In the former the question words are in their base positions while in the latter, they are moved to the pre-sentential position together with the introduction of focus markers **né**, and **ré** suggesting that movement of question words is really a case of focus movement. Using the Minimalist Theory I propose that in-situ strategy literally means that the uninterpretable features are weak while the ex-situ indicates that they are strong. Data was gathered from five speech communities of Paasaal.

*Key words:* questions, focus markers, feature checking, Gur, Sisaali.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Overview**

This chapter highlights the various issues that underpin the study by giving a general background to the study, discussing the research problems for which reason the study is conducted, the purpose of the study, the research questions as well as the objectives which the study seeks to achieve. The significance of the study, and the theoretical framework within which the data is analysed are equally discussed. The organization of the thesis is also included in this chapter.

#### **1.1 General Background to the Study**

This research investigates the various means by which Sisaali, a Gur language, forms questions with focus on their formation strategies. Though questions come in different forms, this study centres on three forms of questions in the language which include: polar questions, content questions and alternative questions. In this work, the researcher concentrates on the syntax of each of these questions especially the question particles that are employed in forming them. In current analysis, there has been the need to revisit the analysis of questions; polar, alternative and content questions in terms of what especially triggers the movement of question words in their formation following Sabel's (2000) [+wh] and [+focus] features checking. Sabel (2000) proposes that movement of question words in content questions in languages can better be analysed by suggesting that their movement is universally triggered by [+wh] and [+focus] features both of which are [+interpretable] and can be as [±strong]. Accordingly, focus markers are seen as functional projections when they

appear in content questions. This has further led to the argument that focus constructions and content questions are identical both syntactically and semantically. Also, the particles employed in the formation of polar and alternative questions are seen as a result of the presence of a question phrase which gives a functional projection of question phrase. This research employs this proposal of Sabel (2000) to the analysis of data from a relatively unknown Gur language, Sisaalt. This dissertation investigates the strategies used in forming content questions in this Gur language and then the function of the focus markers that occur in the formation of content questions. Also, the various strategies employed in the formation of polar and alternative questions would be analysed. Considering the fact that there is relatively little work on the syntax of Sisaalt, the syntactic patterns discovered on these question types would have the potential of shedding light on recent theoretical developments in the study of questions in general. This work would also contribute greatly towards the documentation of this less researched language.

### **Location of Speakers**

Sisaalt is a Gur Language, and a member of the Grusi sub-group of the Gur languages (Naden, 1988). The native speakers of Sisaalt are called Sisaala while the geographical area that is occupied by the Sisaala is called Sissala Land. The Sisaala are located mostly in the Tumu district of North Western Ghana, though some speakers are also found in Burkina Faso. According to Luri (2011), Sisaalt has been argued to have seven major dialects: Bosillu (North Western dialect), Buwaale (Western dialect), Gbieni (central dialect), Gelbagli (southeastern dialect), Kpatolie (southwestern dialect), Pasaali (southern dialect) and Tumuluŋ (eastern dialect) in Ghana with Buunii (northern dialect), a variety in Burkina Faso which is very closely related to

Bosillu in terms of mutual intelligibility. Variations among the various dialects are obvious at the phonological, morphological and phonetic levels with relatively few dialectal variations at the syntactic level. This work would use data from the Paasaal dialect since that is the dialect spoken by the researcher. In this study, I seek to focus on the strategies that are employed in the formation of questions of this lesser known language aimed at contributing to the current discussion on polar, alternative and content/WH questions.

### **Social and Political Structure**

Politically, the Sisaala are ruled by Chiefs who have control only over their Paramountcies. The power of each Paramount Chief is just over his traditional area and does not extend to other traditional areas. There is generally no Overlord of the entire Sisaala Land. The issue of lordship does not exist in the Upper West Region of Ghana unlike some other ethnic groups such as the Gonjas and Dagombas in the Northern part of Ghana. The Sisaala have traditional areas and each traditional area has its paramount chief, with limited powers over just the villages under him. The Sisaala land is divided into seven Paramountcies including (Tumu, Gwollu, Zini, Pulima, Wallembelle, Langbusie, and Funsu). This then leads to the conclusion that traditional authority does not extend beyond the traditional area. The power head of the village is called the **jangtina** or **Beetina/Totinna**. He is not only the custodian of the village shrine, but also is in charge of the “Land God” called *pogo*. He helps to settle intra-village land disputes within the communities. There are however, also Government arms, which are mainly the District Assemblies. The political authority of Government over-shadows that of the traditional authority in contemporary times.

The Sisaala are basically farmers and some of the crops they grow include maize, cassava, yams, millet, groundnuts, beans, bambara beans, guinea corn and, recently, soya beans. They also rear animals which include sheep, cattle, goats, and domestic birds like guinea fowls and fowls. Sisaala are also very religious and believe in the existence of a Supreme Being called **Wiisi/Wia** or **Joribanga Bako**. They also believe in the existence of Ancestral Spirits, land Spirits, and River spirits. They believe God Almighty is too great to be approached directly. So they approach God through these Spirits. The main religion that is practiced by them is the Traditional African Religion or Worship through the Ancestral Spirits. However, of late, there has been an influx of Christianity and Islam into the Sisaala land. Notwithstanding this, a majority of the Sisaala still maintains their indigenous religious practices and continues to maintain a union with their ancestors.

The basic sentence structure of Sisaalt is subject verb object (SVO). Sisaalt, compared with other Gur languages such as Dagaare, Gurene and Buli, Dagbani, Kusaal, Safaleba and Mampruli, has not actually been given any systematic linguistic investigation. Works that are available in Sisaalt are mainly literacy materials published by the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) and the Sisaalt Literacy and Development Programme. Some other known works that describe some linguistics of Sisaalt include some phonetics and phonological issues as in Luri (2011), pragmatics by Blass (1990), Sisaalt- English dictionary also by Blass (1975, 2002), the need for standardisation of Sisaalt by Luri (2003) and some works on noun class systems by Rowland (1966). This therefore creates a gap between Sisaalt and other Gur languages such as Dagaare which has received adequate attention in terms of linguistic documentation compared to Sisaalt.

There is therefore an urgent need for people to research into Sisaalt to see how different it is from other Gur languages and also to give a correct description of how questions are formed in the language. This research would also fill the gap by paying attention to how questions are formed in Sisaalt. There is, therefore, justification in investigating question formation in Sisaalt to find out how the data of Sisaalt will contribute to the general understanding of question formation in general.

### **Question Formation**

In the study of language, questions are conventionally used as a speech act to request information. Questions are broadly put into different groups depending on their structure and meaning; polar interrogatives and content/WH questions (König & Siemund, 2007: 291). In the literature, what is called content questions are generally termed as *wh*-questions because such questions are mostly signalled by *wh*-words such as *which*, *what*, *where*, *who*, *what* in the English language. In this work, I do not intend to use the Anglo-centric terminology *wh*-questions to refer to this kind of questions in Sisaalt because such words are not signalled by *wh* words as is the case in English. The term content questions would, therefore, be adopted to refer to such questions in the language. Different languages have different positions for their question words. In forming content questions, the question words may be obligatorily put in the beginning of the sentence or be left at the end of the sentence. Thus, there are question word-fronting languages and then in-situ languages. Also, polar questions may be formed by the use of particles which occur in the sentence final positions or sentence initial positions, or both and in some languages they are formed using intonation, which may be falling or rising. I would try to establish these formation strategies in Sisaalt. The last form of questions that I discuss is called



alternative questions. This type of questions is usually made up of conjoints where different alternatives are given. In English, for instance, they are formed using *or* as in the sentence *Mary bought a book or a pen?* The structure of alternative questions would therefore be discussed too.

This research has two main goals; which are: i) to provide a description of the strategies that Sisaali uses to form questions and ii) to investigate the meanings of the different formation strategies in Sisaali.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The need for language documentation and description especially for minority languages has of late been seen to be very crucial. This is because; documentation of these languages also means documentation of culture, which helps in preserving the philosophical ideas of a people. Sisaali remains one of the languages within the Gur language family that is yet to get systematic linguistic description and documentation. This is to suggest that Sisaali is one of the unknown languages in terms of linguistic investigation and so can be best described as being among the under-described languages within the Gur languages family, which are spoken mainly in Northern Ghana and some parts of the Northern Volta. Though a number of literary works have been produced including the English- Sisaali dictionary by Blass (1975, 2002) and some religious texts, including the New and Old Testaments that have been translated by the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation, (GILLBT), translations on basic health issues and communicable diseases, the language is yet to receive any systematic linguistic analysis in the context of modern linguistic theories.

With the emergence of the Minimalist Program (MP) which deals with feature checking of some features that trigger the movement of linguistic expression, a lot of scholars such as Aboh (2004) for Gungbe, Muriungi (2003) for Kitharaka among others have used it (MP) to account for the syntactic properties of the various ways in which questions are formed. Sabel (2000) has related the concept of content questions to the phenomenon of focus and also projects the particles used in the formation of polar and alternative questions as question phrase which gives a functional projection of the question phrase. Data (1) and (2) in Sisaalt seem to fit into the Minimalist Program which project the presence of particles used in the formation of polar and alternative questions as a result of a question phrase which gives a functional projection of the question phrase. With regard to content questions, the theory relates their formation to the concept of focus as illustrated in (3). The following data (1) shows that in forming polar questions, Sisaalt requires the particles **kóó** and **dún** either at the beginning of the sentence or at the end, but never both.

1. a. **ú b. è kyè kídíliyè kóó?**  
 3SG NEG want food INT  
 ‘Doesn’t he or she want food?’
- b. **kóó ú bèè kyè kídíliyè?**  
 INT 3SG NEG want food  
 ‘Doesnt she want food?’
- c. **\*kóó ú bèè kyè kídíliyè kóó?**  
 INT s/he NEG want food INT  
 ‘Doesn’t s/he want food?’
- d. **ú bì kyó píí dúŋ ?**  
 3SG NEG love yam QP  
 ‘Doesn’t s/he like/love yam?’

Also in forming alternative questions, the same **kóó** particle occurs though its syntactic position differs from what has been observed in (1). Let us consider the data in (2) below.

- (2) a. **í sí mú Tamale kóó Wa?**  
 2SG will go Tamale or Wa  
 ‘Will you go to Tamale or Wa?’
- b. **ó sí dí mílí kóó kúú?**  
 3SG FUT eat rice or T.Z  
 ‘Will s/he eat rice or T.Z?’
- c. **Tèḡ né Ida yóḃ̀ kóó pèḡ?**  
 Book FOC Ida buy or pen  
 ‘Did Ida buy a book or pen?’

The morpheme **kóó** is observed to be used in both polar and alternative questions as seen in (1) and (2). It would be therefore, interesting not only to investigate the function of this morpheme, but also the relationship between the two types of questions that motivate their using the same particle in question formation.

Also, in the formation of content questions, we observe that there are two ways: either the question word is moved to the beginning of the sentence and followed by **né /ré** or it is left in-situ. These particles **né/ré** are argued to be focus markers; when a question word is fronted without which the sentence would be ungrammatical as illustrated in (3b) and (4b).

- (3) a. **Békìḡ; né Lúrí yóḃ̀?**  
 What FOC Luri buy  
 ‘What did Luri buy?’

b. \* **Békìṅ**<sub>i</sub> **Lúrí** **yób̀**?  
 What Luri buy

(4) a. **ánnè** **ré** **yób̀** **tèṅ**?  
 Who FOC buy book  
 ‘Who bought a book?’

b. \* **ánnè** **yób̀** **tèṅ**?  
 Who buy book

It would be interesting to find out why the focus markers are so obligatory in the formation of content questions such that without them, when a question word is fronted, the resulting structure is ungrammatical. The two focus markers are also not in complementary distribution and their distribution is regulated by the phonological environment of the question words or the focused constituent; **ré** focus marks vowels while **nɛ**, consonants.

As mentioned earlier, one could optionally leave out the question at the base position without moving it to the sentence initial position. In such a situation, there is no need for focus markers, **né** / **ré**. This claim is exemplified in (5).

(5) a. **Lúrí** **yób̀** **békìṅ**?  
 Luri buy what  
 ‘What has Luri bought?’

b. **ú** **yób̀** **lóòrì** **hu** **léé**?  
 3SG buy car DET where  
 ‘Where did he buy the car from?’

We see that in (5) the question words are not fronted as it is the case in examples (3) and (4) above. It would therefore, be important to find out the possible differences in terms of meaning and also possible context in which users of the language may opt for any of the two available strategies in the formation of content questions.

The language has benefited from basic linguistic descriptions especially in the area of phonology from Luri (2011, 2003). Pragmatics from Blass (1990). However, notwithstanding the attempts that have been made by largely expatriate Linguists and of late a native Linguist as in Luri (2011), there are still aspects of the grammar of Sisaalt, especially in the domain of syntax that remain uninvestigated. For instance, while research into the syntax and semantics of polar, alternative and content questions continue to be of interest in other languages, there exists little research on this area in Sisaalt linguistics. Thus my research is intended to fill this gap by concentrating on an aspect of the formation of questions in Sisaalt. This would help bring new data from this language that is not widely researched and help with the knowledge that we have about polar, alternative and content questions in languages in general.

### **1.3 The purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the formation of questions in Sisaalt. The focus of the study is on the syntactic properties of the various strategies employed in the formation of these questions as well as different semantic interpretations of the strategies. The study also briefly relates the study of content questions to the notion of focus marking, a phenomenon that seems to have gained a lot of prominence in most natural languages, both within the Gur affinity and other genetically unrelated languages.

#### 1.4 Research Objectives

Based on the descriptive issues raised above of which the research work intends to find answers to, the following objectives shall be the focus of the work. I therefore, intend to do the following:

1. give a systematic description of strategies of forming questions in Sisaalt .
2. investigate the functions of the particles **né**, **ré**, **kóó** and **dún** in Sisaalt questions.
3. argue that the movement of question words in Sisaalt is an instance of focus movement.

#### 1.5 Research Questions

Below are the research questions that shall underpin the study:

1. What are the strategies that Sisaalt employs in forming questions?
2. What are the roles of **né**, **ré**, **kóó** and **dún** in the formation of Sisaalt questions?
3. What triggers movement of question words in the formation of Sisaalt content questions?

#### 1.6 Theoretical Framework

This section discusses briefly the theoretical framework within which the data was analysed. The analysis was done within the theoretical claims of Sabel (2000). Sabel gives a cross linguistic approach to the study of content questions according to which there is a close syntactic and semantic relationship between the marking of focus in language and the formation of content questions. This is done within the theoretical framework of Feature Checking Approach of the Minimalist Program. Applying this

framework to the study of content questions, Sabel pays attention to the abstract features that trigger movement of interrogatives and also the locus of these features. She proposes in this approach that movement of interrogatives can better be understood by suggesting that they are universally triggered by [+wh] and [+focus] features both of which are [+interpretable] and can be as [ $\pm$ strong]. For the case of Sisaalt, the assertion is that it is the need for checking of focus features that trigger movement and that explains why the mandatory introduction of focus markers **né**, and **ré** to the immediate right of moved question words. Also, the particles used in the formation of polar and alternative questions are analysed as functional projections of the question phrase in the language.

The choice to use this theory is borne out of the fact that it has been used in the analysis of several other languages to address similar patterns of questions. For instance, there are several other African languages in which research has suggested that there is some kind of relationship between the nature of focus elements and that of content questions. Check, for instance, such works as Harold Torrence and Jason Kandybowicz (2014) for Krachi, Marfo & Bodomo (2005) for Akan, Saah (1998) for Akan, Muriungi (2004) for Kitharaka, Aboh (2004) for Gungbe among several others and also the particles employed in the formation of polar and alternative questions are seen as functional projections of the question phrase. The argument has been that for all these languages, there are pieces of evidence to show that all question words and focused elements have same syntactic positions and even semantics in the case of content questions. The syntactic position is argued to be the specifier position of the focus phrase SpecFoc (Aboh 2004). The data was analysed within this theoretical background suggesting that Sisaalt question words also target the same positions as

focused elements and that the movement of question words in Sisaalt is motivated by the need to check focus features.

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study are significant in a number of ways. First, there is barely any linguistic works available in Sisaalt. Because this language is a minority language which is being assimilated by major language like Dagaare, the research would be a further contribution towards the documentation of the language. It would therefore, help in fighting against the possibility of losing Sisaalt. The study will therefore be important towards the linguistic documentation of the language. Also new findings could come from the findings of this research, which can contribute to the understanding of linguistics.

Furthermore, the study will also provide more literature on the language to enhance possibility of introducing Sisaalt into the school Curriculum. This work is coming at a time when Sisaala are calling for the need for the introduction of their language into the schools. When the work is completed, it would be useful in the teaching of some aspects of the grammar of Sisaalt in our Junior High Schools, Senior High Schools, the Colleges of Education and the Universities in Ghana.

Finally, the result of the research will be a contribution to linguistic knowledge on question formation since findings from an under-described and minority language like Sisaalt can provide useful insights and new data that can support or question existing claims about polar, alternative and content questions in general.



### **1.8 The Organisation of the Thesis**

This research work consists of five chapters. Chapter one deals with the general introduction to the study, covering such issues like the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the theoretical framework within which the data was analyzed, the objectives of the study, research questions that the research intends to address, the significance of the study and then finally, the organization of the study.

The second chapter of the research discusses the literature review that is a review of literature that is relevant to the topic. Literature from both Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian languages has been discussed. This is relevant because it helped the researcher to place her analysis in the context of current findings on the topic. This aided in the projection of how Sisaalt differs or shares similarities with other languages in the realm of question formation.

The methodology, which revolves around the processes used in gathering data for the study is discussed in chapter three. This section describes the various steps taken to gather data for the research.

Chapter Four is devoted to the analysis of data collected. It involves examining the strategies that are employed in the formation of questions in Sisaalt. The study discusses both the in-situ and ex-situ strategies of question formation and the possible difference(s) in their interpretations. The work further relates the findings to the concept of focus. Other question types that is alternative and polar questions are also discussed in this chapter paying attention to the various strategies; syntactic and phonological that are adopted in their formation.

Chapter five deals with the conclusion and findings of the study, the recommendations and also considers suggestions for further research relating to the strategies that are employed in the formation of questions in Sɔsaali.



## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to give a critical literature review of works that are related to the formation of questions. Literature review forms a very crucial component in every research not only because it unravels potential research gaps that need to be filled, but also, it shows the potential differences and similarities that are likely to exist between the findings of existing literature (works) and the current one that is being undertaken. I therefore intend in this chapter, to give systematic literature review of the topic, paying attention to where there is likely to be difference between what is in the literature now and my potential findings. I consider languages of different families and discussed the literature in the context of content questions, alternative and polar questions in Ghanaian languages, both Gur and non-Gur languages, African languages in general and the related phenomenon of focus.

In section 2.1, I discuss the notion of questions in general focusing on content questions, and the suggested relationship between content and focus marking in the literature of syntax. Section 2.2 reviews some works on polar and alternative questions. Section 2.3 examines some works on content questions in some African (non-Ghanaian) languages. The nature of content questions in Ghanaian linguistics focusing on both Gur and non-Gur languages are also discussed under section 2.4 and section 2.5 summarizes the chapter.

## 2.1 The Notion of Questions

Questions constitute an important aspect of speech acts that exist in all natural languages. They generally contrast with declaratives. The difference between questions and declaratives has to do with the functions that speakers use each to perform in languages. However, these functions they perform can also affect their syntax in languages. It is the view of (König and Siemund, 2007; Siemund, 2001) that in terms of function, while declaratives are generally known to be used in languages for such purposes as making promises, statements, claims, assertions, criticisms, accusations, and guaranteeing, questions are known to be used in the context of seeking information.

It should be noted that questions are universal. This is because every language has some form of structures that it uses to create a distinction between questions and declaratives. Based on this assertion that questions are universal in human languages, one can assert that it constitutes an important aspect of our daily interaction as language users. It is important at this stage, to point out that questions are grouped into various types. The main determinant for the grouping of questions is based on the answers that they may require. Based on this criterion, questions are sub classified into alternative questions, content questions and polar or yes or no questions. Alternative questions would generally give a list of options for one to choose from. The list is usually context driven and one has to choose only from the list given in a given context. Polar questions, which are also called yes/no, simply demand a yes or no answer.

According to Dakubu (2003:59) ‘a speaker utters a question to elicit information needed to complete an expression, to an interlocutor who is expected to provide that information’. It is this reason that makes her to see questions to be driven by context of conversation and so her conclusion that the use of "interrogative mood" is generally a pragmatic thing when people are talking. König and Siemund (2007: 291) are also of the view that questions are “conventionally associated with the speech act of requesting information”. The focus of this review shall be on content questions, the thesis of this dissertation though the researcher will look at polar and alternative questions.

Content questions make use of question words and would demand some more specific information. The name WH question is used to refer to such questions in English probably due to the fact that morphologically, the interrogative pronoun that signals these questions in English is mostly signalled by wh-words. Owing to my observation in Sisaalt, the question words in content questions are really not morphologically signaled by WH, hence I would not be using the expression WH questions. However, I shall follow African scholars such as Aboh (2007), Boadi (1990) and Saah (1994), Ameka (1992, 2010) who refer to this type of questions as content questions. Also, the term interrogative pronouns shall be used in place of what has often been called WH words. Accordingly, the expressions, interrogative pronouns are synonymous with what have been called WH words while content questions are synonymous with WH questions. Boadi (1990) also uses the expression *question word/question phrase* to refer to this group of words in Akan.

Though it appears that questions occur in every language, there are different ways in which languages indicate them. Focusing on content questions, I am of the view that

languages can have different positions for their interrogative pronouns or question words. It has been established in the literature that question words (QWs) occupy different positions in different languages. In some languages, the interrogative words are put obligatorily at the clause-initial positions of sentences, other languages allow their interrogative words to be put at clause final positions while in some other languages they can occupy either of these two positions, in which case the language accepts both the clause final and clause initial positions as syntactic slots that can be occupied by content interrogatives. According to Siemund (2001), based on this positions that interrogative words occupy, languages are grouped into fronting, in-situ and optional fronting languages respectively.

I would later demonstrate in this work that in the formation of content questions in Sisaalt, the interrogative pronouns (question word) must occur at the beginning of the sentence and are followed by the particles **né** and **ré**.

Another factor that will be considered in the analysis of content questions in Sisaalt is the claim that there are some similarities between the structure and semantics of content questions and focus constructions. We can therefore find in the literature where many writers propose that the focus constructions and content questions make use of the same markers. Also, it is common to see that both focused things and question words occur in positions where they are followed by focus markers. That is why most syntacticians would say that the licensing head is a functional head and in this case focus head since focus is checked. This concept would be very essential to the analysis of content questions in Sisaalt since data from chapter four will prove that the particles **né** and **ré** which are obligatory in focus constructions are also required in

content question formation. They seem to be doing the same work in both types of constructions and so perform the same function. Therefore, the structure of the two constructions and the meaning would be seen as being the same in the language. This would mean that all the question words are focused since they can only occur with focus constructions and never without them. They would also be seen as having the same meaning, by focusing the item that they immediately follow. Though the analysis is not going to be very theoretical, sometimes, I would make reference to the issue of focus checking.

Because of the argument that focus constructions and content constructions are related, researchers say they are in complementary distribution, meaning wherever one of them is, the other cannot be there. This is because, like allophones, they are seen as being different variants of the same thing. For instance, in languages such as Akan, Saah (1988), Marfo and Bodomo (2005), Krachi, Harold and Kandybowicz (2014), Saanchi (2005) for Dagaare, and Dakubu (2003) for Farefare, have shown similar findings where the focus markers are always used in both content questions and focus constructions. Research has therefore shown this in many different languages such as Gungbe (Aboh, 2004), Kitharaka (Muriungi, 2003). I would later make similar proposals for Sisaalt since there are same observations in which question words and focus occur with focus markers. The question words of Sisaalt, just like focused constructions occur in the sentence initial position and are followed by the focus markers.

It continues to be a debate among scholars who research into questions on the exact reason for the placement of question words at the beginning of sentence in most

languages of the world. In the same vein, it is interesting as researchers try to find out why some languages keep their WH words at the in situ positions. In an attempt to explain this observation in languages, several accounts have been given. For instance, in the thinking of Lasnik and Saito (1992) movement of question words is caused by a wh-feature which attracts the question words/wh-words to the sentence-initial positions in languages of the world. They further express the view that this feature is one that exists in all human languages and should also be checked through the process of movement of the question word or wh-word to a particular position in the sentence, they propose the Spec CP.

It can also be argued that since question words are usually focused and since focusing in many languages involves movement of the focused element to initial position, this explains why question phrases are fronted.

In another development, Stockwell (1977) expresses the view that these wh-phrases/question words are attracted by auxiliary verbs. Stockwell (1977) holds the view that anytime a wh-phrase undergoes transformation from its deep-structure position to the sentence initial position in a language like the English language, there is an obligatory introduction of an auxiliary verb to its immediate right position, and base on this evidence, he proposed what he calls the wh-aux-attraction. This is evident for instance in the English sentence *where did Faith hide the pen?* Where the wh word *where* attracts the auxiliary *did* to itself when it is moved to the (left periphery) of the clause. This claim by Stockwell (wh-aux-attraction) can not be used to account for content questions in Sisaalt, since the question words in this language do not enter



into any relationship with auxiliaries when they are dislocated to the sentence initial positions.

One other famous approach to the study of content questions is the proposal of Sabel (2000). Sabel gives a cross linguistic approach to the study of content questions according to which there is a close syntactic and semantic relationship between the marking of focus in language and the formation of content questions. This is done within the theoretical framework of Feature Checking Approach of the Minimalist Program. Within this framework to the study of content questions, Sabel pays attention to the abstract features that trigger movement of interrogative and also the locus of these features. She proposes in this approach that movement of interrogatives can better be understood by suggesting that they are universally triggered by [+wh] and [+focus] features both of which are [+interpretable] and can be as [ $\pm$ strong]. The position in which the question word occurs is therefore seen to be the projection of focus phrase (FocP). The constituent in focus is also immediately followed by the Foc, which appears in the form of the focus markers. She holds the view that the Foc specifically appears at the head position of the projected FocP. The same was argued for the Question words as well. The claims of Sabel as pointed out in chapter one (theoretical framework) would be very crucial for my analysis

Aboh (2007: 279) makes a distinction between focused and non-focused question words and argues that focused question words are question words that occupy focus positions and so would always occur with focus markers, while non-focused interrogative words are the question words that occur in positions other than focused positions, and so do not require any focus markers Thus, while the former kind of

question words occur with focus markers, the latter kind of interrogative words do not. Accordingly, the proposal is made that interrogative words in Sisaali target different syntactic positions within the clause depending on whether they are focused or non-focused.

## **2.2 Polar and Alternative Questions**

Considering the fact that this study covers polar and alternative questions as well as content questions, this section discusses some research works that have been carried out on polar and alternative questions. The works reviewed in this section cover a typological discussion on polar and alternative questions as in the work of: Siemund (2001) and language specific discussions as in Gurene, Dakubu (2003) and Dagbani Issah (2015) both genetically related Gur languages.

### **2.2.1 Review of literature on polar interrogatives**

Siemund (2001) contends that one thing common to all types of interrogatives is the fact that the speaker uses them to elicit information from the addressee. The kind of information requested determines the kind or type of interrogative thus polar, alternative and constituent interrogatives. The required response in the case of polar constructions as he argues is either a 'yes' or 'no'. Alternatively, polar questions can be referred to as 'closed' or Yes/No interrogatives. He is of the view that through the use of the right interrogative clause, the speaker is able to determine the truth or otherwise of an expression. He points out that polar interrogative can be positive or negative. Speakers in the impartial state are expected to have no expectations with regard to the answer. He however notes that in most instances, the speakers' expectations are often partial mostly in favor of either a positive or negative answer.

He indicates that positive polar interrogatives are paired with negative “conduciveness” whereas positive “conduciveness” is linked with negative polar interrogatives.

Siemund further posits that various methods are adopted for marking interrogatives in languages and this range from the use of special intonation patterns, interrogative particles, the use of tags, disjunction structures, a change in the order of constituents and particular verbal inflection. A study conducted by Ultan (1978) as quoted in Siemund (2001), reveals that intonation is by far the most widely used strategy in forming polar questions and can be found in most languages, if not all. This suggests that almost all languages easily mark polar interrogative solely with the use of intonation. He claims that the use of interrogative particles and tags are less common as compared to intonation. It is also very uncommon to use disjunctive construction to construct polar questions. It is however not uncommon to combine intonation with any one of the strategies.

On the use of intonation, Siemund argues that the rising tone is most frequently used for polar interrogatives in most of the world’s languages. Greenberg (1966:80) as quoted in Siemund (2001:1012) also contends that the marking of intonation on interrogatives is typically found in clause final position. However, the unique nature of languages has made the use of intonation to vary among languages though he argues that many languages employ the rising intonation at the end of a declarative sentence to make it a polar question. He advances that the rising intonation is usually used for interrogatives because it reflects an iconic principle which reveals that a rising intonation expresses doubt and uncertainty due to the open nature of the rising

tone in relation to pitch or frequency. The falling intonation, on the other hand, is typically used in declaratives or in very certain terms. He again expresses the fact that although the rising intonation is widely used in polar interrogatives, in some languages of the world, if not all; there are some variations in its usage. Ultan (1978) as quoted in Siemund (2001:1012), also opines that higher ultima, higher penult, higher pitch on last stressed vowel, and rising toward last stressed vowel are the various ways of placing the rise towards the end of the contour.

Sɪsaalt just like most Gur languages such as Dagbani (Issah, 2015), form polar questions phonologically by lowering the pitch, that is the use of falling intonation, I will, in subsequent discussions, contend that the falling intonation is the most common phonological strategy in the formation of polar questions in Sɪsaalt. Examples (1a & b) are Dagbani data taken from Issah (2015:52) to buttress the point that Dagbani uses falling intonation as asserted by Issah (2015).

1. a. **Mikashini**            **wari-ti**            **dari.**  
Mikashini            split.IMPERF            firewood  
'Mikashini splits firewood.'
- b. **Mikashini**            **wari-ti**            **dari.**  
Mikashini            split.IMPERF            firewood.INTO  
'Mikashini splits firewood?'

The second widely used strategy in the formation of polar interrogatives is the use of interrogative particles. Though these particles may be used in constituent interrogatives in some languages, they are more associated with polar interrogatives. Some languages, according to Ultan (1978:226) as quoted in Siemund (2001:1012), would use interrogative affixes or clitics together with some words to construct polar interrogatives. According to Siemund (2001), there exist languages that may use more

than one particle in the formation of polar questions such as Korea. The placement of interrogative particle(s) differs from one language to another. He argues that these particles are placed at either clause initial position in some languages and in others; they are positioned at the clause final position. Siemund illustrates his claims with data from Japanese.

2. a. **yamada-san wa ginkoo de hataraitte-imasu.**  
Yamada-Mr. TOP bank at working  
'Mr. Yamada works at the bank'.

b. **Yamada-san wa ginkoo de hataraitte-imasu ka?**  
Yamada-Mr. TOP bank at working IP  
'Does Mr. Yamada work at the bank?'

I will later argue that in Sisaah the use of particles in forming polar questions is also available as an option. However, the use of the particle will be proposed to be incompatible with the phonological strategy of falling intonation.

Another scholarly work of interest and closely related to the topic under discussion is Dakubu (2003). Dakubu discusses the formation of alternative and polar questions in Farefare, a Gur language spoken in the Upper East region of Ghana. She posits that questions generally are used by speakers to complete an expression or utterance to a listener who is supposed to give the required information. She noted that though interrogatives are essential in human languages, languages differ in the strategies that they adopt in the formation of interrogatives. Typologically, these strategies may be phonological, syntactic or lexical. She identified three types of question markers in Farefare which are; the use of intonation, an interrogative particle, and an anaphor which may be specific but not definite but however indicates the sort of information needed to complete a proposition.

Her assertion on polar interrogatives in Farefare is that, they can be marked in two ways: solely by intonation or through the use of interrogative particles which may have a high tone. She identifies **yó**, **kóo** and **bée** or **bii** as particles that can be used to code polar interrogatives. She claims that the particle **yo** is used at the end of a clause when intonation is employed as highlighted in (3). She posits that the particles **kóo** and **bée** or **bii** though conjunctive particles can equally be used to mark polar interrogatives if only the alternative is not provided; however, if the alternatives are provided, it becomes an alternative question. This establishes some kind of relationship that exists between polar and alternative questions in Farefare. She backs her claims with the data in (4).

3. a. **àdòŋɔ zààm wá?àm yó**  
 yesterday come INT  
 ‘Did Adongo come yesterday?’
4. a. **bòdáasi lá dāa síŋè tà yó mé dée yése yétòga lá bée**  
 men DEF PST go PURP pay prt and leave case DEF or  
 ‘Did the men go to pay before withdrawing the case?’
- b. **fù n yètée waiwai lá zé lá pòbàgà pòà kóo**  
 2S FOC said pump DEF stand ASS P. in or  
 ‘You said the pump at Pobaga?’

She advances that the high-low tone contour is the most prevalent question marker in Farefare. This form of contour she claims often falls on the last syllable of the phrase that is from high to low which is followed by “non-contrastive” lengthening of the vowel. This lengthening she states may spread over many other syllables. I will demonstrate later in this work that Sisaalt does seem to use two main strategies. That is, the use of intonation, specifically the falling intonation, and the use of special particles.

In sum, the similarities that are most likely to exist between Farefare and Sisaalt are; both languages employ the falling intonation as a phonological strategy in the formation of polar questions specifically the use of falling intonation with the high-low contour which falls on the last syllable and followed by a “non-contrastive” lengthening of the vowel that is likely to spread over other syllables, both use question particles as a synthetic method when forming polar questions, as it is my contention that Sisaalt marks polar questions syntactically thus through the use of question particles just like Farefare.

Another work worth discussing is Issah (2015) who argues that Dagbani, a Gur language spoken in the Northern Region of Ghana, uses two main methods to mark polar interrogatives - the use of interrogative particles which he refers to as the syntactic strategy, and the use of falling intonation, a phonological strategy.

Syntactically, he identifies two question particles **bee** and **yɔyɔ** which are used to form polar interrogatives in Dagbani. He posits that the distributional properties of these two particles differ; **bee** occurs at both clause initial and final positions while **yɔyɔ** occurs only at the clause final position. He contends that when **bee** occurs at clause final position, it is as a result of deletion arguing that **bee** is analyzed as truncated alternative questions establishing a link between alternative and polar questions. Though **bee** has two syntactic slots, he argues that it cannot occur at both slots within the same sentence. He illustrated these claims with the following data.

- (5) a. **O**                    **chaŋ-Ø**        **shikuru**  
      3SG. NOM        go.PERF        school  
      ‘S/he has gone to school’

b. **Bee o chaŋ-Ø shikuru**  
 INT 3SG.NOM go.PERF school  
 ‘Has s/he gone to school?’

c. **O chaŋ-Ø shikuru bee**  
 3SG. NOM go.PERF school INT  
 ‘Has s/he gone to school?’

d.\* **Bee o chaŋ-Ø shikuru bee**  
 INT 3SG.NOM go.PERF school INT

(6) a. **O bi bɔ-ri bia maa**  
 3SG.NOM NEG want.IMPERF child DEF  
 ‘S/he does not want the child.’

b. **O bi bɔ-ri bia maa yɔyɔ**  
 3SG.NOM NEG want.IMPERF child DEF INT  
 ‘Does s/he not want the child?’

c. **\*Yɔyɔ o bi bɔ-ri bia maa**  
 INT 3SG.NOM NEG want. IMPERF child DEF

In subsequent sections I would show how similar or different Sɔsaalt is likely to be from Dagbani when it comes to the formation of polar questions. The areas of likely similarities include; (i) both languages mark polar interrogatives using syntactic and phonological strategies, (ii) phonologically, both languages make use of the falling intonation to mark polar questions (iii) syntactically, both make use of question particles to code polar interrogatives, (iii) the distributional functions and slots of these particles differ that is they can occur at different positions within the sentence.

Saah (1994) discusses yes-no question formation in Akan, a Kwa language spoken in the Southern part of Ghana. Saah (1994) argues that Akan forms Yes/No questions using two strategies either by employing a question intonation or by the use of question particles. He posits that regardless of the strategy that one adopts to form this



type of question, the word order remains intact for the formation as would for the declarative sentences. This means that there is “no reordering of constituents such as subject/ Auxiliary Inversion”. Although Saah (1994) does not give the precise nature of the intonational contour; he follows the assertion of scholars such as Boadi (1990) and Saah (1983). He indicates that though there exists slight difference between Boadi (1990) and Saah (1983) on the intonational contour of Akan, they both agree on the fact that there is a drop in the pitch of the final phonological segment. Saah (1994) contends that there is a clear difference between the intonational contour of Yes-No questions and their declarative counterparts. The most obvious difference between declaratives and Yes/No questions according to him, is the presence of a question intonation or intonation contour in the latter and its absence in the former. Example (7) is taken from Saah (1994:60) to illustrate his claims; where (7a) is a declarative and (7b) a Yes/No question.

7. a. **Kòfi**      **bɛdá**              **há**  
       K.        will:sleep            here  
       ‘Kofi will sleep here’
- b. **Kòfi**      **b’ɛdá**              **há?**  
       K.        will:sleep            here  
       ‘Will Kofi sleep here?’

I will later argue in this work that (chapter 4) Sisaalt just like Akan also uses both phonological and syntactic strategies in the formation of polar questions. The assertion of Saah (1994) that in Akan, the word order for both declarative and polar interrogative is the same, will also be argued to hold for Sisaalt. Phonologically, Sisaalt just like Akan also makes use of falling intonation in the formation of polar questions as would be evident with data in later discussions.

Akan, apart from the phonological strategy also makes use of question particles in the formation of Yes-No questions. Saah (1994: 61) is of the view that there are question particles that can occur only at sentence initial position or sentence final position. These particles are highlighted in Table 2.1 below. It should be noted that these particles are dialect specific as he argues.

**Table 2.1: Yes-No particles in Akan**

Sentence initial particles	Sentence final particles
sò (Ak)	á
àsó (Fa)	ànáà / ànéè (Fa)
ànà (Fa)	àná (Ak)
nky'ε	'ε

Saah (1994: 62) indicates that these question particles at the pre-sentential or sentence final position can be optional in Akan. He postulates that when these question particles are omitted, the question intonation is enough to make the sentence an interrogative one. He posits that there is no semantic difference between questions with initial question particle and those with final question particles as demonstrated in (8a & b) and (8c & d) respectively. He again contends that it is possible in Akan to have both sentence final and sentence initial question particles occur within the same sentence. Data (9a) and (9b) illustrate his claim.

8. a. **(So)** wɔgye ahɔho wɔ saa sukuu yi mu? **(Akan)**  
 QuP 3pl: admit foreigners at this school this in  
 ‘Are foreigners admitted into this school?’

b. **Ana** nɛɛsfo yɛ edwuma kwesida? **(Fante)**  
 QuP nurses do work (on) Sunday  
 ‘Do nurses work on Sundays?’

c. **woretwɛn**            **Kofi (ana)?**            **(Akan)**  
You: are waiting    K    QuP  
'Are you waiting for Kofi?'

d. **wɔbɛsɛsa**                            **ama me a?**                            **(Fante)**  
3pl:will change (it)    give me    QuP  
'Will they change it for me?'

9.a. **So**            **wobɛkɔ**            **ana?**            **(Akan)**  
QuP    you:will go    QuP  
'Will you go?'

b. **Ana**            **hom adeda a?**            **(Fante)**  
QuP    2pl    asleep    QuP  
'Are you asleep or sleeping?'

Though I will argue later that Sisaalt makes use of question particles, it is unlike Akan in terms of the distribution. For instance, in Sisaalt the particles used in coding polar questions only occur either sentence initially or finally within a sentence but never both, contrary to what happens in Akan. Similar to Akan is the fact that there is no different semantic interpretation of question particles that occur at sentence initial or final position. With the right intonation, a sentence can still be an interrogative one in Sisaalt even though the question particles are omitted.

### 2.2.2 Alternative questions

From a typological perspective, Siemund (2001) argues that an alternative interrogative offers the listener with a list of choices or possibilities to choose from. He posits that alternative questions are classified under polar interrogatives but are analyzed as two or more coordinated polar questions which have been merged due to ellipsis. Alternative interrogatives however differ from polar constructions for the simple reason that they cannot be replied or responded to by a yes or no but must be

answered by choosing from the options provided by the speaker. He concludes that an alternative question with the right intonation can become a polar question.

Another piece of work that is of relevance in the analysis of alternative questions and needs a review is Dakubu (2003) who is of the view that there are some similarities between alternative and polar interrogatives in Farefare. She claims that the particles that are used to mark polar interrogatives that is **yó**, **kóo** and **bée** or **bii** are the same particles employed in the formation of alternative questions in Faarefare, suggesting that in alternative constructions, these particles are used to coordinate two clauses or provide alternatives to choose from. If no alternatives are provided, then it only requires a simple yes or no which makes it a polar question. She also contends that when **bée** is used to coordinate two clauses that are lexically and grammatically related, the second clause mostly is in the negative. In the analysis of alternative questions in Sisaalt, it would be very important to establish the relationship between polar and alternative questions since I will prove with data in chapter four (4) of this thesis that the same particle is used to construct both polar and alternative questions in Sisaalt just as Dakubu (2003) argues for Farefare.

Issah (2015) advances an argument that an alternative question is generally asked with the presupposition that one of the given options is true and valid. He argues that in Dagbani, the particle **bee** which is used to code polar questions is the same particle employed in the formation of alternative questions. He posits that polar questions in Dagbani are actually truncated alternative questions. In alternative questions, **bee** occurs between two coordinated clauses hence the absence of deletion or truncation. He notes that while intonation can easily change a declarative statement into a polar question, in the formation of alternative questions, intonation plays no role contrary to

what is known in the English language. In Dagbani only the particle **bee** is enough to change a declarative statement into an alternative question that is no phonological strategy is adopted or needed. Also, semantically, while **bee** in polar questions requires a yes or no response, in alternative questions it requires that one chooses between the alternatives provided. He therefore contends that alternative questions are conjoined polar questions in Dagbani. He concludes that the use of **bee** in the construction of both polar and alternative questions cannot be used to request new information in the language. The data in (11) taken from Issah (2015) demonstrates the claims made above.

11. a. **Adam bee Abu ni zi nyu-ya maa**  
 Adam INT Abu FUT carry yam-PL DEF  
 ‘Is it Adam or Abu who will carry the yams?’

b. **M b̄hi-Ø la bia maa ni shinkaafa ka**  
 1SG ask-PERF FOC child DEF that rice FOC  
**o b̄ri bee sakoro**  
 3SG.NOM want INT fufu  
 ‘I asked the child whether s/he wants rice or fufu.’

Sisaalt is argued to follow a similar trend when it comes to the formation of alternative questions. Sisaalt also uses the syntactic strategy in the formation of alternative questions. It is possible in the language to have the same particle coding both polar and alternative questions without giving out any new information. Intonation, most likely, will not play any role in the formation of alternative questions in the language just like Dagbani. Polar interrogatives will however be argued to be better analyzed as truncated alternative questions in the language.

### 2.3 Content Questions in African (Non-Ghanaian) Languages

This section of the literature review takes a look at some research works that have been carried out on content questions in non-Ghanaian languages. Some of such works that would be seen to be very important to the topic include Aboh (2004) for Gungbe and Muriungi (2004) Kitharaka.

Aboh (2007) discusses *wh*-movement in Gungbe, a language of Niger Gbe, spoken in parts of south-eastern Ghana, southern Togo and Benin, and southwestern Nigeria. The Gbe languages were traditionally classified as part of the Kwa branch of the Niger-Congo languages, but in recent times, it has been classified as belonging to the Volta-Niger Congo group of languages. In discussing *wh*-questions, Aboh (2004) argues that in the formation of *wh*-questions in Gungbe, there is generally a mandatory requirement for the *wh*-word to occur in the sentence initial position. He further states that apart from the *wh*-word occurrence in the sentence initial position, there is also a requirement for the introduction of the focus marker **wé**. This focus marker, he argues occurs in the immediate left of the *wh*-word. The *wh*-word is the same as what I call question word in the thesis. The data below, taken from Aboh (2004:279-280) illustrate these claims made above about the formation of *wh*-questions in Gungbe.

12. a. **Séná**                      **xíá**                      **wémà**                      **lǐ**  
       Sena                      read.perf                      book                      Spf (+def)  
       ‘Sena read the specific book’

b. **été<sub>i</sub>**                      **\*(wé)**                      **Séná**                      **xíá t<sub>i</sub>**  
       what                      foc                      Sena                      read.perf  
       ‘What did Sena read?’

c. **Ménú** \*(wé) ti xiá wémà ló  
 Who foc read.perf book Spf (+def)  
 ‘Who read the specific book?’

d. **Wémà** téi \*(wé) Séná xiá ti  
 book which foc Sena read.perf  
 ‘Which book did Sena read?’

Aboh contends that when the *wh* word is not placed in the sentence initial position, then the sentence becomes ungrammatical. This is seen to mean that, only *wh* word fronting can be used as a way to form *wh* questions since, when they are left in the in situ position, the sentence becomes ungrammatical. He also, however, goes on to point out that, although the *wh* word cannot be left in the in situ position, when forming *wh* questions, there are some contexts aside the forming of the *wh* questions in which *wh* words can be left in the in situ position. This means that the rule that WH words do not occur in in situ position is only valid when we are forming *wh* questions and not in all context. For instance, the data in (13) taken from Aboh (2004:280) indicates that we can have the *wh* words in the in situ positions when we are forming echo questions. An echo question is a question that is asked by a listener with the aim of clearing some doubts on what has been said by the speaker. In most languages, an echo question would normally replace the unclear part of the sentence with a question word that is stressed.

13 a. **Séná** xiá été?  
 Sena read.perf what  
 ‘Sena read what?’

b. **Ménú** xiá wémà ló  
 who read.perf book Spf (+def)  
 ‘Who read the specific book?’

Apart from this issue on the occurrence of the *wh* words in Gungbe, Aboh (2004) also proposes that there is a relationship between the *wh* questions and focus constructions in Gungbe, and that this relationship is observed in two aspects. One of the similarities is that both focused items and *wh* words occur in the sentence initial positions of sentences, and secondly both constructions would require the mandatory presence of the focus marker **wé** which must always occur in the immediate left position of the focus item or the *wh* word. It will later be shown in this work that Gungbe and Sisaalt have some common things on the behaviour of *wh* constructions. The things that are similar for the two languages are (i) in the formation of *wh* questions, there is mandatory placement of question word at the beginning of the sentence (ii) when the question words occur at the beginning of the sentence, there is also the need for focus markers to be introduced which must occur to the left of the question word and (iii) both focus constructions and content questions demand the presence of focus markers. It is however noted that Sisaalt differs from Gungbe in the sense that the former has two focus markers **né** and **ré** which are in complementary distribution unlike Gungbe which has only one, **wé**.

Aboh (2007) further discusses the nature of focus constructions; especially the correlation between focus and *wh*-questions remains a central component in the study of information structure in natural languages. One question that has been crucial is the kind of information that is coded in *wh*-words, also termed as question/interrogative words. Aboh, (2007) contributes significantly to the debate of the relationship between focus constructions and question words by arguing that there is a need to create a distinction between focus and non-focused *wh*-words/question words in the study of the information structure of *wh*-questions/constituent questions. Aboh (2007:



279) argues that while focused *wh*-words would occur with particles called focused markers, non-focused *wh*-words occur in non-focused positions. Thus, though it is good a point to make that there are focused *wh*-/question words, there is also the need to suggest that it is not always the case that all question words are focused.

This is very relevant since in all the languages investigated in this review, the researchers make such a distinction, mainly based on the position of the question word and also the interpretation it gets, that is, the syntax and the meaning are important before we say a question word is focused or not focused. In this study, it would be important to distinguish between the focused and non-focused *wh*/question words in the language.

This work is equally important because of the claim that when the *wh* words are placed sentence initially, it is for purposes of focus marking. This interesting phenomenon in the literature of questions, particularly content questions, where there is a proposal that there is a morpho-syntactic similarity with focus elements and content questions is very common in the languages of the world. This proposal has been made for most other African languages as would be shown soon in this thesis. Dakubu (2003), for instance, argues that there is this similarity between the two types of constructions in Farefare, also a Gur language that is spoken in the Upper East of Ghana. She identifies that the focus marker **tí** is also identified to be very mandatory whenever a content question is formed, though it also occurs in focus constructions always.

Another piece of linguistic study that is relevant for this study is Muriungi (2003, 2004) Kitharaka. Muriungi (2003) investigates the strategies that are used in the formation of *wh* questions in Kitharaka, an SVO Bantu language, which is spoken in

Kenya. In his analysis, Muriungi (2004) identifies that there is an obligatory need for the presence of focus markers in forming *wh* questions in Kitharaka. Just as observed above for the Gungbe language, Muriungi shows that there is a need for these focus markers only in cases where the *wh* words are not found in the in situ position. When the *wh* word occurs in the in situ position and the focus markers are introduced, the resulting sentences would be ungrammatical in the language.

Muriungi (2004) states that Kitharaka has two different focus markers *n-* and *i-* and he suggests that the use of one and not the other is about the phonological environment in which it occurs. While the former focus marker *n-* occurs when the fronted *wh*-phrase starts with a vowel, the latter focus marker *i-* is chosen when the fronted *wh*-phrase starts with a consonant. The sentence (14), which has been taken from Muriungi (2003:20) confirms the fact that all *wh* words in the ex situ position need focus markers.

14. a. **I-mbi** Kathere a-tem-ir-e t?  
 F-what Kathere SP-cut-T-FV  
 ‘What did Kathere cut?’
- b. **N-ibuku ririku Nancy a-gur-ir-e t?**  
 F-book which Nancy SP-buy-T-FV  
 ‘Which book did Nancy buy?’
- c. **N-uu t a-ring-ir-e Samueli?**  
 F-who SP-beat-T-FV Samuel  
 ‘Who beat Samuel?’
- d. **I-muntu uriku t a-ring-ir-e Samueli?**  
 F-person which SP-beat-T-FV Samuel  
 ‘Which person beat Samuel?’

Apart from the data as we have in (14) where the *wh* words are found at the beginning of the sentence, in which case we need to introduce focus markers, there is also a strategy in Kitharaka where the *wh* words can be left in the in situ position. Muriungi (2003) posits that when we have the *wh* word in the in situ position, then there is no need for any focus marker to be introduced. He also adds to our knowledge that while the in situ strategy of forming questions is available for object *wh* questions, (15a) it is not available for subject *wh* questions, as seen in the ungrammatical sentence in (15b). He posits that this observation (where in situ position of *wh* words is available for only object *wh* questions, and not subject *wh* questions), is not peculiar only in Kitharaka since ‘similar subject-object asymmetries in question formation are observed to occur in the Nguni languages’.

This work is relevant to the topic under discussion because of the need for focus markers when *wh* words are moved to the sentence initial position. Also, the question words of Sisaal can be left in the in situ position in which case no focus markers are required. Also, just like Sisaal, Kitharaka also has two different focus markers and the use of these focus are equally similar, that is their usage is influenced by the phonological environment of the question words. The only difference however is that, while the focus markers in Kitharaka are used to focus mark question words that begin with either a vowel or consonant that of Sisaal is used when the question words either end in a vowel or consonant. I illustrate this with data taken from Muriungi (2003:22).

- 15 a. **Kathere a-ring- ir-e (g)uu?**  
 Kathere SP-beat-T-FV who  
 ‘Who did Kathere beat?’
- b. \***Uu a-ring- ir-e Samueli?**  
 who SP-beat-T-FV Samuel  
 ‘Who beat Samuel?’

Using the same theory of need to check features, Muriungi (2004) tries to give a theoretical account of the difference between the *ex situ* and *in situ wh* questions in Kitharaka. He bases his theoretical account on the claims of Sabel (2000). Sabel’s main theoretical claim is that *wh*-movement cross linguistically is motivated by two types of features: [+wh] and [+focus] features. Sabel further holds the view that [+focus] and [+wh] features are [+interpretable], and within the basic tenets of the Minimalist Programme, (MP), Sabel suggests that these features have to be checked through overt movement only when they are *strong*. For weak [-interpretable] features, Sabel claims that they do not need to be checked at any level in the syntax. Languages that simultaneously allow *wh-ex situ* and *wh-/ situ* are argued to have a weak and a strong variant of the *wh*- or focus feature in the lexicon.

The *wh* questions therefore have a specific position in which they occur. The syntactic position is argued to be the specifier position of the focus phrase SpecFoc. In Sisaali, the question words are placed by focus markers for purposes of checking their strong interpretable [+focus] features. This explains why sentences are ungrammatical in *wh* questions that lack these focus markers. However, when they are left in the *in situ* position, then it means that the features are weak and so do not need to be checked.

## 2.4 Content Questions in Ghanaian Linguistics

This sub section takes a review of some works in Ghanaian linguistics that are relevant for the study. To make the work a bit appealing, I discuss both Gur and non-Gur languages in which the topic has been examined. I start the discussion here with a discussion on non-Gur languages.

### 2.4.1 Content questions in non-Gur languages

One of the works on non-Gur languages that I find very relevant to the research topic is the work of Harold and Kandybowicz (2014). In this article, they give an account of the formation of content questions. The authors investigated the strategies that are employed in the formation of *wh*-/content questions in Krakye and concluded that the language employs a variety of *wh*- question formation strategies, including *wh*-movement, *wh*-in-situ, and partial *wh* movement, a prevalent phenomenon in Kwa.

They further argue that while the focus marker *yi* is obligatory in partial *wh* movement and ex-situ *wh*- movement, it is not obligatory in *in-situ wh*-questions. The authors demonstrate that in Krakye in-situ and ex-situ *wh*- constructions are permissible in non-subject interrogative expressions, while subject interrogative only allow ex-situ. Harold and Kandybowicz (2014:6) identified the *wh* - expressions in Krakye as *nse* 'who', *ne* 'what', *nfire* 'where', *kemuke* 'when', *nenε* 'how', *nam* 'why', *ne kumus v* 'why', *ne sv* 'why', *mumv* 'which' *afire* 'how many'. Krakye employs a variety of *wh*- question formation strategies, including the regionally and genetically prevalent *wh*- ex-situ focus (16a) and *wh*- in-situ (16b) strategies, as well as partial *wh*- ex-situ focus (16c). They illustrated the in-situ questions with the data in (16)

arguing that they do not involve movement and no need for focus markers. This is illustrated in (16a-e) below taken from Harold and Kandybowicz (2014:6-7).

16. a. **ɔ-kyɪ wɔ ɛ-mɔ nɛ ndiye?**  
 CL-woman the PST-kill what yesterday  
 ‘What did the woman slaughter yesterday?’
- b. **ɔ-kyɪ wɔ ɛ-mɔ bwatɛ wɔ mumu ndiye?**  
 CL-woman the PST-kill chicken the which yesterday  
 ‘Which chicken did the woman slaughter yesterday?’
- c. **ɔ-kyɪ wɔ ɛ-mɔ bwatɛ wɔ nfuɛ bireŋ?**  
 CL-woman the PST-kill chicken the where quickly  
 ‘Where did the woman slaughter the chicken quickly?’
- d. **ɔ-kyɪ wɔ ɛ-mɔ bwatɛ wɔ kɛmukɛ bireŋ?**  
 CL-woman the PST-kill chicken the when quickly  
 ‘When did the woman slaughter the chicken quickly?’
- e. **ɔ-kyɪ wɔ ɛ-mɔ bwatɛ wɔ nɛnɛ kɛ-nyɛsɔ?**  
 CL-woman the PST-kill chicken the how CL-night  
 ‘How did the woman slaughter the chicken at night?’

They argue that in the data that run through (16), the focus marker *ɪ* is absent because the question words occur in the in-situ positions suggesting that when the question words are left in the in-situ position, then there is no focus features to check and so no need for the presence of the focus markers. In the data that follow in (17) I illustrate the ex-situ question strategy, taking data from same Harold and Kandybowicz (2014). They also suggest that non-subject interrogative expressions may also appear ex-situ in left peripheral focus positions, as illustrated in (17). They are however, not able to give any possible semantic interpretative differences between the in-situ questions as in (16) and the ex-situ as in (17). This is exemplified in (17a-e) taken from Harold and Kandybowicz (2014:7).

- (17) a. **Nɛ**      **yɪ**      **ɔ-kyɪ**      **wɔ**      **ɛ-mɔ**      **ndiye?**  
 What      FOC      CL-woman      the      PST-kill      yesterday  
 ‘What did the woman slaughter yesterday?’
- b. **Bwatɛ**   **wɔ**   **mɔmɔ**   **yɪ**   **ɔ-kyɪ**      **wɔ**   **ɛ-mɔ**   **ndiye?**  
 chicken the   which      FOC      CL-woman      the      PST-kill yesterday  
 ‘Which chicken did the woman slaughter yesterday?’
- c. **Nfirɛ** **yɪ**      **ɔ-kyɪ**      **wɔ**      **ɛ-mɔ**   **bwatɛ**      **wɔ**      **bireŋ?**  
 where FOC      CL-woman      the      PST-kill chicken      the      quickly  
 ‘Where did the woman slaughter the chicken quickly?’
- d. **Kɛmɪkɛ** **yɪ**      **ɔ-kyɪ**      **wɔ**      **ɛ-mɔ**   **bwatɛ**      **wɔ**      **bireŋ?**  
 when      FOC      CL-woman      the      PST-kill chicken      the      quickly  
 ‘When did the woman slaughter the chicken quickly?’
- e. **Nɛnɛ** **yɪ**      **ɔ-kyɪ**      **wɔ**      **ɛ-mɔ**   **bwatɛ**      **wɔ**      **kɛ-nyɛsɔ?**  
 how      FOC      CL-woman      the      PST-kill chicken      the      CL-night  
 ‘How did the woman slaughter the chicken at night?’

I would later show with data that what happens in Krachi with regard to ex situ and in situ *wh* questions shares some similarities with Sisaalt since in Sisaalt, there is the option of using focus markers in forming content questions when the question words are brought to the sentence initial position or without focus markers when the question words occur in the in-situ position. This would then mean that a *wh*-word or a question word occurring clause/sentence initially without the focus marker *yɪ* would yield ungrammatical sentence while a *wh* word/question word also occurring in an in-situ position with the focus marker would also yield an ungrammatical sentence.

Another work on a non-Gur language that I find relevant to the topic and would attempt a critical review of it is Saah (1988). Saah (1988) also discusses *wh*-questions in Akan and claims that there are two different positions for *wh* words in Akan. He contends that an Akan *wh* word can either be dislocated to the sentence initial position

or be kept at the sentence final position. As typologically argued for most African Languages, Saah argues that when the *wh* word is placed sentence initially, then there is an obligatory need for the focus marker **na**, while the clause final *wh* word demands no focus. He concludes that the two *wh* constructions have different syntactic patterns and different semantic interpretations. According to Saah (1988), while the *wh* questions with **na** would have focus interpretation, those without **na** lack any focus interpretation. The claim on the different distribution of the *wh*-word is exemplified in the data below, taken from Saah (1988:18-19).

18. a. **Kofi**      **kɔɔ**      **he?**  
 Kofi      go+PST      where  
 ‘Where did Kofi go?’
- b. **ε he**      **na**      **Kofi**      **kɔɔε?**  
 where      FOC      Kofi      go+PST  
 ‘Where was it that Kofi went?’
- c. **Da**      **bɛn**      **na**      **wohuu**      **Kofi**  
 Day      which      FOC      you+see+PST      kofi  
 ‘On what day did you see Kofi?’
- b. **Wohuu**      **hena**      **wɔ**      **fiε**      **hɔ?**  
 you+see+PST      whom      LOC      house      the  
 ‘Whom did you see in the house?’

Saah (1988) proposes that the different distribution of the question words/*wh* words resulted in different meanings of the sentences, claiming that those with the **na** have focus readings while those without the **na** lack focus reading. He further argues that whenever there is movement of the question words to the sentence initial position, then there is also a requirement that the focus marker be introduced, while when it is left in the in-situ position, then there is no need for the introduction of the focus



marker. Saah (1988) therefore holds the view that the placement of *wh* words in Akan in the sentence initial position is for the purpose of marking focus and not *wh* movement. This then suggests that the **na** that occurs in Akan is a head of a functional projection which can be analysed as Focus Phrase in the literature of generative linguistics, as Carnie (2013) suggests. However, he says that when *wh* words are left in the in situ position, then it means that they lack focus since the focus marker **na** is not required in that context.

The same argument will be made for Sisaalt where I will argue that the placement of interrogative words in the sentence initial position is for purposes of focus marking and that is what calls for the mandatory presence of focus markers **ne** and **re** anytime there is such a situation. This means that the focus phrase is projected. However, when the question words are left at the in situ position where focus markers are not required, then we have non-focused *wh* questions. The presence of the focus markers in constituent interrogatives will be argued to be indicating that constituent interrogatives are focused just like focused constituents. They could also optionally be left in the sentence final positions in which case there would be no need for any introduction of focus markers. This observation would lead to the conclusion that Sisaalt has both focused and non-focused question words.

Aboh (2007: 279) makes a distinction between focused and non-focused question words and argues that focused question words are question words that occupy focus positions and so would always occur with focus markers, while non-focused interrogative words are the question words that occur in positions other than focused positions, and so do not require any focus markers. Thus, while the former kind of

question words occur with focus markers, the latter kind of interrogative words do not. Accordingly, the proposal will be made that interrogative words in Sisaali target different syntactic positions within the clause depending on whether they are focused or non-focused. The distribution of the **né** and **ré** would also be shown to be regulated by whether the focused question word ends in a vowel or consonant.

Similar claims were made for the Krakye languages as observed earlier, which will also be valid for the phenomenon in Sisaali.

Saah however, opines that it is possible for a *wh*-word to appear in clause final positions in which it would not be interpreted as a *wh*/content question, but just a greeting. Thus, Saah (1988) makes an observation that in Akan, a Kwa language, interrogative words can be left in the in-situ position in the context of greetings. This means then that, not only in content/*wh* questions do we have non-focused question words, but also in greetings, that is possible. This falls in line with the proposal of Aboh (2007) who holds the view that though it is discovered in most languages of the world that question words (*wh*-phrases) typically are focused; these same claims shall be made of my analysis of Sisaali. I shall however, point out also, that notwithstanding the fact that there are some similarities between Akan content questions and that of Sisaali, there is also a striking difference in terms of the choice of the focus markers. While Akan has only **na**, that goes with both subject and non-subject question words, Sisaali differs in this regard; that is, while **ré** is chosen to focus mark question words that end in vowels, **né** is chosen for question words that end in consonants.

Not only the above, but also Marfo and Bodomo (2005) discuss similarities in linguistic properties between *wh* questions and focus constructions in Akan. This article investigates the structural and semantic relationship between Akan question word formation and focus constructions arguing that there are three structural similarities shared by Akan question word fronting constructions and focus constructions, which include: the fronting of a constituent, the introduction of a clitic morpheme (focus marker) after the fronted constituent, and finally the use of a resumptive pronoun in the canonical clause position. They compared these constructions to each other, concluding that one is confronted with the question whether the same discourse-contextual information is expressed in both constructions. They use the Lexical-Functional Grammar and Optimality Theory as analytical tools. Marfo and Bodomo (2005) start their discussion by giving an analysis of content questions in Akan before linking their observations with the properties of focus constructions in Akan. Their findings on the nature of content questions are not too far from what Saah (1988) observes. For instance, they argue that the Q-words are substitutes for the various syntactic categories, particularly the argument functions.

They further discover that there are two strategies that are used in the formation of the content questions in Akan, the *in situ strategy* in which these Q-words can remain in canonical clause; i.e., as substitutes for the constituents they question. They go on to indicate that aside the in-situ strategy, it is possible for a *wh*-construction in which there is a dislocation of the Q-word from the canonical position to the sentence initial position. It is their view that when there is dislocation, then there is an obligatory requirement for the introduction of the clitic morpheme, **na**, at the right edge of the

fronted question word, and that this particle has been referred to as a focus marker (Foc) as stipulated by earlier researchers such as (Boadi, 1974, 1990, Saah, 1988).

On their discussion of focus constructions, Marfo and Bodomo (2005) argue that a focus construction in Akan has a "point of prominence" within it as proposed by (Boadi 1974) where contrastive information (of exclusivity) is intentionally placed for the purpose of emphasis. To mark this focus property in Akan, the element that is to be focused must be fronted to the sentence initial position of the sentence and occupies a position that has been suggested to be the focus position. The position is therefore seen to be the projection of the focus phrase (FocP). The (fronted) constituent in focus is also immediately followed by the Foc, **na**. They hold the view that the *Foc* specifically appears at the head position of the projected FocP. The same was argued for the Q-word of Akan as well. They used two different theories to analyze their data showing the ranking of constraints in Optimality Theory (OT) and the need to Feature Checking Theory.

I will explore this possibility in this work to see how focus constructions in Sisaalt are related in terms of positions they occupy and even possible meanings they portray.

#### **2.4.2 Content questions in Gur languages**

In the previous sections, I reviewed some works done on questions in non-Ghanaian and non-Gur languages that are related to this thesis and would be necessary to be looked at. In this section, I would discuss some languages which are in the same language family with Sisaalt, that is the Gur languages and in which this topic is discussed. On the Gur languages, I discuss the findings of Issah (2013) on Dagbani, and his findings have some similar properties with what I will analyze in Sisaalt.

Issah (2013) claims that Dagbani uses question words which have specific positions in which they occur. He postulates that there are times that the question word of Dagbani is made up of a noun phrase NP plus a question word. He argues that when this happens, then it may be what, in syntax, people call pied-piping. According to him, Ross (1967) describes pied-piping as a phenomenon in which a structure larger than a single question word occurs in the fronted position in the formation of a constituent interrogative.

Issah, (2013) states that when content questions are formed in Dagbani, there is the need to place the question word at the beginning of the sentence. This is then followed by the introduction of a focus marker which immediately follows this question word. He again posits that Dagbani has two focus markers, **ka** and **n**. The choice of any one of these focus markers is determined by whether the question word is a subject or non-subject. He contends that bringing the question word to the beginning of the sentence without the presence of the appropriate focus marker **ka** and **n** also results in getting sentences that are not grammatical. According to him, when the question word is left at the in situ position, then the sentence becomes ungrammatical. Sentence (19a-c) taken from Issah (2013:48) illustrates this claim that the author makes.

19. a. **Bɔ̃<sub>i</sub> kà nàà kú-rì chùyù pùhìbù dālì t<sub>i</sub>?**  
What FM chief kill.IMPERF festival celebration day  
'What does a chief kill on the day of festival?'
- b. \***Bɔ̃<sub>i</sub> nàà kú-rì chùyù pùhìbù dālì t<sub>i</sub>?**  
What chief kill.IMPERF festival celebration day
- c. \***Chùyù pùhìbù dālì nàà kú-rì bɔ̃?**  
festival celebration day chief kill.IMPERF

He is of the view that (19a) is grammatical because of the fact that the question word in the beginning of the sentence is followed by the focus marker *kà*. He opines that there is the need for a focus marker apart from putting the question word in the beginning and this is evident in the ungrammatical sentence in (19b); while (19c) also means that we cannot have a question word in the in-situ position. The author also claims that the position that is occupied by interrogative words is the Spec-Foc, that is, specifier position of the focus phrase. This relationship, according to him, is to enable the focus features of the question word to be checked. He also says that interrogative words in Dagbani are specified for the features [+new, +prominent, +focus] just like focus constructions.

In his work, Issah indicates that though Dagbani has two focus markers, the two of them are in complementary distribution, meaning that where one occurs, the other cannot occur. He says *ka* occurs with non-subject question words, while *n* occurs with subject question words. This is similar to what Muriungi (2004) observed for Kitharaka where, there are two focus markers, but their distribution is phonologically governed. The sentence (20a-b) is taken from Issah (2013:52) to show the subject and non-subject difference.

20. a. \***ɲùní**      **kà** t<sub>1</sub>    **dá-Ø**      **lòòrí?**  
           Who            FM    buy.PERF    lorry

b. \***Bɔ**    **zúyù** t<sub>1</sub>    **n**    **kòm**    **màlí**    **ànfááni** t<sub>1</sub>?  
           What reason FM water has importance

This is very similar in Sisaalt where the choice of **né** or **ré** depends on the question word. When the question word ends in a vowel, **ré** must be chosen, while for consonants, **né** is the appropriate focus marker to be chosen. Issah (2013) also talks of

exceptions to the requirement that question words be focused, using data from greetings, in which question words can occur in the in-situ position and the sentence would still be grammatical. He posits that in greetings and echo questions, we can have them as seen in the data in (21) taken from his work. We see that these sentences are seeking the well-being of people and so the question words occur in the in situ positions since they are really not content questions.

21. a. **Yí bì-hí máá bé wúlà?**  
2PL child-PL DEF be how  
'How are your children?'

b. **á bá bé wúlà?**  
1SG father be at how  
'How is your father?' Issah (2013:57)

In this work, I will also later demonstrate that even in the formation of content questions, it is possible for the question words to occur in the in-situ only, in which case they would be interpreted as lacking focus.

Dakubu (2003) also discusses the properties of interrogative constructions in Farefare. In her discussion of content questions, she uses data to prove that there are two focus markers in Farefare which always occur with question words. Dakubu also holds the opinion that, the use of the two focus markers, **n** and **ti** is dependent on whether the question word is a subject interrogative or non-subject interrogative word. The focus marker **n** occurs with subject question words while **ti** occurs with non-subject question words. The same distinction of subject and non-subject question structure was observed in Dagbani too, meaning that it may be a common linguistic behavior in the languages that belong to the Gur family. Farefare forms its content questions, by either placing the question word at the beginning of a sentence and having a focus

marker by it or leaving the question word at the in situ position. She points out, illustrating with data, however, that the subject question word does not mandatorily require a focus marker. Dakubu contends that any time we have a focus marker by a question word, then that question word is there to mark focus on the question word. The sentence (22a-e) below is taken from Dakubu, (2003:4) to illustrate the nature of content questions in Farefare.

22. a. **á-nì ñmè ʔì**  
a-WH beat 3S.INT  
‘Who beat him?’
- b. **a-nì n zàa nyé bódáa lá**  
a-WH FOC yest. see man DEF  
‘Who saw the man yesterday?’
- c. **bá -nì tì fò nyé**  
ba-WH FOC 2S see  
‘Who (what group) did you see?’
- d. **lòg-kó-nì tì fò nyé**  
thing-ku-WH FOC 2S see  
‘Which thing did you see?’
- e. **kó-nì tì fò nyé**  
ku-WH FOC 2S see  
‘What did you see?’

According to Dakubu (2003), in (22d) the class prefix **kó-** shows agreement with the plural class of the compounded stem for 'thing' (**lòg -**), while in (22e) **kó-nì** is an anaphor for 'things'. In accordance with her assertion that subject questions can be asked without the presence of a focus marker, we see in (22a) a subject question in which the focus marker that occurs with the subject question words, **n** is absent, and yet the sentence is grammatical. Dakubu argues that in sentences (22c) and (22d) as well as in sentence (22e) the WH word represents the object and for that matter moves



to the sentence initial position with the focus particle **tì**, while in (22b) the WH word represents the subject and so the need for the subject wh word focus marker **n**. However, as we see in the examples in (23), we could optionally leave the question words in the in situ position in which case they would be said to be non-focused question words as illustrated by the examples below from Dakubu (2003:4).

23. a. **fò nyé lá á-nì**  
2S see ASS a-WH.INT  
Whom did you see?

- b. **bòliga nàaba tón lá á-nì**  
Bolga chief work AFF a-WH.INT  
Whom did the Bolga Naba send?

We see that there are some similarities between Farefare and what was earlier observed in some other Gur languages especially in Dagbani where the choice of focus markers **ka** and **n** was a matter of the word class that an interrogative word represents that is subject or non-subject. The content questions in Farefare will later be shown to be very similar to Sisaalt in the analysis section. The similarities are on the number of focus markers and the positions in which the question words can occur. However, Sisaalt will be shown to differ from Farefare in terms of the distribution of the focus markers; the distribution of the focus markers in Sisaalt is influenced by the phonological environment of the question words.

Bodomo (1996b) also discusses questions in his works on serial verb constructions in Dagaare. Following up with claims he made in Bodomo (1996a), he argues that Dagaare 'wh' or 'bong' questioning phenomena share some similarities with their English counterparts. Bodomo says that in forming 'wh' or 'bong' in Dagaare, there is

usually a 'wh' or a 'bong' word , such as **bong, boluu, ang, wolo** (Bodomo 1996). When this word is placed sentence initially, then it is followed by the factitive marker, **lá**, and the subsequent structure then varies depending on which part of the declarative construction we are questioning. The sentence (24a-c) below is taken from Bodomo (1996b:4) to illustrate the syntax of questions in Dagaare.

24. a. **Ang la loo-ø a bie?**  
wh- fact cause+fall-perf def. child  
'Who threw the child down?'
- b. **Bong la ka Ayuo e-ø a bie ?**  
wh- fact that Ayuo do-perf def. child  
"What did Ayuo do to the child"
- c. **Bong la ka Ayuo e-perf ?**  
wh- fact that Ayuo do-perf  
"What did Ayuo do?"

From the sentences in (24a, b, c) above, we would see that the particle **la** is always mandatory in its occurrence with the wh words. This particle **la** which has been analysed as a factitive marker has also been analyzed as focus marker by some Dagaare researchers such as Dakubu (1997) and Saanchi (2005), who analyze the same particle as a focus marker. We see that when the Dagaare question words occur in the sentence initial position, they are also followed by focus or factitive markers, as I will show for Sisaalt.

## 2.5 Summary of Chapter

This chapter reviewed some works that will be relevant to the data analysis both on descriptive grounds and on theoretical basis. It was seen that the link between focus and content questions or *wh* questions is established in many languages, including

African languages and Ghanaian languages. In the Ghanaian languages, we further see that the link exists in both Gur and non-Gur languages suggesting that what is presented in Sisaalt agree with what has been documented by earlier writers, though there are differences which may be seen as peculiar to individual languages. There are several other African languages in which research has suggested that there is some kind of relationship between the nature of focus elements and that of content questions. Check for instance such works as Torrence and Kandybowicz (2014) for Krachi, Marfo and Bodom (2005) for Akan, Muriungi (2004) for Kitharaka, Aboh (2004) for Gbe, and Issah (2013) for Dagbani among several others. The argument has been that for all these languages, there are pieces of evidence to show that all question words and focused elements have same syntactic positions and even semantics.

The syntactic position is argued to be the specifier position of the focus phrase SpecFoc. The data is analyzed within this theoretical background suggesting that Sisaalt question words also target the same positions as focused elements and that the movement of question words in Sisaalt is motivated by the need to check focus features. This is based on the preliminary observation that there is always a need for focus markers to be introduced immediately to the right of moved question words, as proposed for other African languages. There is no interaction between the question words in Sisaalt and auxiliaries. The claim that there is a relationship between focus and content question formation is also proposed for Àhàn (Akanbi, 2015), an endangered language spoken in Nigeria.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

The chapter describes the methodological procedures that were adopted by the researcher to gather data for the work.

The chapter discussed the fieldwork settings, the different sources of data which include native speaker intuition, textual data, data from elicitation, and natural data. The duties, roles and contribution of language consultants employed by the researcher are highlighted in this chapter. The method of analysis of the data as well as the summary of key issues is also discussed.

#### 3.1 Fieldwork Setting

Linguistic fieldwork, as defined by Chelliah and de Reuse (2011:7) “is the investigation of the structure of a language through the collection of primary data gathered through interaction with native speaking consultants.” Primary data in linguistic research constitute the core of language documentation (Himmelman 2006:1). This primary data, according to him, include; audio or video recordings of a communicative event, as well as the taking of notes during an elicitation session. He contends that a proper documentation of a language should “contain a large set of primary data which provides evidence for the language(s) used at a given time in a given community”. Accordingly, primary data are needed to adequately document how people communicate with each other which involve all kinds of communicative activities. The data presented in this thesis were collected over a period of two months in five speech communities of Pasaale; from November 2016 to January 2017. Some

communities that were chosen for the fieldwork include Funsu, Kundugu, Yaala, Buffiama and Jumo. The choice of these communities was influenced by the fact that Pasaale is predominantly spoken in these areas. Also, there is minimal linguistic interference from other languages like Dagaare, and Waali spoken around these geographical locations since these communities are large and are surrounded by other Pasaale speakers.

Though five (5) Pasaale communities were visited, a lot of the data were recorded in Funsu, the political capital - of the Wa East District. A digital recorder of high quality was used to record most of the data gathered, that is, from radio discussions in Pasaale to everyday conversation among native speakers (from songs, storytelling to political dispute between village elders among others).

The researcher also relied on elicitation that is, getting linguistic data by asking native speakers questions, to gather additional data for the topic under discussion.

### **3.2 Sources of Data**

Data for this research comprised four (4) different sources; natural data, textual, elicited, and data constructed based on native intuition. Each of these sources is further discussed below.

#### **3.2.1 Natural data**

Natural data, which include all kinds of communicative activities or events in a speech community, that is, from smaller conversations to bigger events such as discussions at group gatherings, as well as political, were recorded. This natural data also include recordings of folktales, songs, and radio discussions in the Pasaale dialect of Sisaali. Data for the spontaneous speech was gathered through observation of

communicative acts such as everyday interaction as well as recorded conversations. The recording of radio discussions in the Paasaale dialect of Sisaali was yet another way of gathering data for the study. Two radio programs in the Paasaale dialect of Sisaali were recorded at two radio stations (Radio Upper West and Radford FM) both located in the Upper West region of Ghana, —specifically in Wa and Tumu respectively. Two programs were selected from each of the two radio stations. **Ma sie** ‘good morning’ which is a panel discussion program on current happenings in the country and **haala dunia** ‘women’s world’ which is also a discussion program for women, were programmes recorded from Radford FM. At radio Upper West, **wafele** ‘next generation’ (also a programme that discusses issues related to the youth) and **mula gbiyel** ‘story telling’ (a story telling session) were also recorded. These programmes are aired on hourly basis every week at their respective stations. The researcher used digital audio recorder to obtain the data. A total of three hours per program was done and each program was recorded three consecutive times that is once every week. These two radio stations are well equipped with modern gadgets such as sound proof gadgets which made it possible for the recordings to be done devoid of noise and other obstructions. The recorded data was later transcribed and sentences that were directly linked to the topic under discussion (polar, alternative and content questions) were selected for the analysis. The recorded data was played repeatedly in order to get the right utterances for transcription. The transcribed data were later tested by six language consultants who have long years of service at GILLBT and are themselves native speakers. The researcher found it necessary to make use of the services of the language consultants in order to help minimize the possibility of certain biases. It was also to help check for the grammaticality of the

sentences. It has been argued by Himmelmann (2006:4) that native speakers have the tacit knowledge to provide interpretations and systematization for linguistic units and events in their language, hence the need to involve them in the data collection process.

### **3.2.2 Elicited data**

On elicitation, the researcher resorted to the schedule-controlled elicitation technique which Chelliah and de Reuse (2011:361) describe as the preparation of a schedule material or questionnaire to be used by the researcher. Questions are asked by going strictly according to the schedule. This technique is more useful when dealing with language specific issues than those that tackle non-specific issues of languages in general. The technique guided the researcher in the elicitation process which was used to gather data on the formation of questions in the Paasaale dialect of Sisaalt.

Another elicitation technique adopted by the researcher is the corrective elicitation method. This method, according to Chelliah and de Reuse (2011:373), requires the fieldworker or researcher to deliberately construct or produce ungrammatical sentences in order to test a “hypothesis”. The incorrect form is produced by the researcher to see the reaction of the language consultants. These elicitation processes (schedule controlled and corrective elicitation) were used by the researcher to test the grammaticality or otherwise of some sentences and expressions in the language with the use of the Minimalist Program as a guiding theoretical framework. The researcher also asked the language consultants to translate the target language text and other expressions gathered during the elicitation sessions. The consultants were also asked to give the semantic implications as well as the grammaticality of the expressions in Sisaalt.

### 3.2.3 Textual data

The use of data from existing texts plays a fundamental role in the understanding of language structure (Chelliah & de Reuse) as it enables the researcher to compare and contrast what has already been documented in the language against current findings. This would help the researcher draw more concrete conclusions. Evans and Dench (2006:12) as quoted in Chelliah and de Reuse (2011:422) posit that “the text collection seeks to show the language as it really is, and, among other things, it provides a corpus against which the grammar’s claims can be tested, and which subsequent linguists may scrutinize for generalization overlooked by the original grammarian”. It has been the argument of Mosel (2006:53) that the collection of text may serve as an “evidence bank against which a linguist’s claims can be independently verified”.

In line with this, the researcher resorted to already existing documents in the Paasaale dialect of Sisaali as a way of gathering data for the study. The researcher sampled out texts and expressions in the texts that are directly linked to the topic under investigation. The basic grammar book of Sisaala-Paasaale, **ma leŋ a basi nasari** ‘let’s speak English’, **ma leŋ a gunni nasari** ‘let us learn English’, and **ma leŋ di a karimε Paasaale** ‘let us read Paasaale’ are the text corpus from which data was drawn for the study. These data taken from written texts are relevant as they supplemented other data by providing some of the linguistic structures that never emerged during the elicitation session. Chelliah & de Reuse (2011) contend that though written texts cannot replace spoken data in fieldwork corpus, they can never be ignored as they unravel things that the researcher might not have thought of. Also, it enables the researcher to account for linguistic issues that he or she may have



difficulty in explaining since this might be captured in earlier works of other researchers. It should be noted that data from the text corpus for this study were modified to fit into the current orthography.

### **3.2.4 Native intuition**

Some of the data for the study were constructed by the researcher, who herself is a native speaker. This comprised the formation of both simple and complex sentences that dealt with question formation in Sisaalɛ. A total of ninety sentences were constructed by the researcher. These sentences reflect the different question types that the study seeks to address. To check the grammaticality of the constructed sentences as well as avoid any form of bias on the part of the researcher, language consultants were employed. The researcher engaged the services of six (6) language consultants; three male, three female. Each of the consultants was tasked to verify the grammaticality or otherwise of the sentences constructed by the researcher. Dwyer (2006:52) considers language consultants as the most important and working with them allows the researcher to draw on each consultant's strengths especially dwelling on the fact that the consultants may belong to a different sociolinguistic background (sex, age, place of origin among others). Himmalmann (2006:4) contends that the active participation of native speakers in determining the contents of a document significantly increases the productivity of a documentation project.

### **3.3 Language Consultants**

Six (6) language consultants (3male, 3 female) were engaged by the researcher during the elicitation session. This was purposely done to help account for gender effects on language, if any. All the consultants were native speakers of the Paasaale dialect of

Sisaali. Each of the consultants had a separate elicitation session. All six consultants later met after the individual sessions to discuss the elicited data. The group's deliberation over the data gave the researcher a deep insight into the different ways a particular sentence can be expressed and the semantic implications of each expression. Chelliah and de Reuse (2011:211) are of the view that "field sessions should always involve note taking." They posit that digital recording should not be the sole method of gathering data. Following suit, the researcher took notes of certain valid suggestions that were put up by the consultants. The consultants also allowed the researcher to record certain portions of their explanations as and when she deemed it fit.

The language consultants are employees of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT), and hence have a great deal of knowledge about the language, coupled with the fact that they are native speakers. The ages of the consultants range from 29 to 62. The three males are aged 29, 40 and 62 and the females, 31, 43 and 56. The choice of consultants with different sociolinguistic backgrounds is influenced by the researcher's desire to get or elicit varied data thus, to see how age and sex may influence the choice of words or the structure of a sentence. The language consultants were also made up of both monolinguals and bilinguals bearing in mind the possible effect that bilingualism may have on the study. Two out of the six consultants were bilinguals while the remaining were monolinguals. Details of each of the consultants are indicated in table (1) below.

**Table 3.1: List of language consultants**

ID	NAME	SEX	AGE	TOWN	DIALECT	CONTRIBUTION
ML	Mark Luri	M	29	Yaala	Paasaale	Elicitation/grammaticality check
BY	Badoung Yakubu	M	40	Kundugu	Paasaale	Elicitation/grammaticality check
SA	Saaka Awuro	M	62	Funsi	Paasaale	Elicitation/grammaticality check
HB	Hayoung Braimah	F	31	Funsi	Paasaale	Elicitation/grammaticality check
LD	Laadi Dumah	F	43	Buffiama	Paasaale	Elicitation/grammaticality check
MD	Mary Diata	F	56	Jumo	Paasaale	Elicitation/grammaticality check

### 3.4 Method of Data Analysis

Data analysis in the words of Stake (1995:71) as quoted in Dornyei (2007:250) is a “matter of giving meaning to first impression as well as to final compilations. This means that data analysis deals with reading and proof-reading the transcripts, pondering over them and finally writing down one’s conclusions. The researcher resorted to the use of qualitative coding technique to analyze the data gathered. Coding according to Dornyei (2007:250) “involves highlighting extracts of the transcribed data and labeling these in a way that they can be easily identified, retrieved and grouped.” Coding as a method of analysis can be done in various ways which usually involves assigning a word, phrase, number or symbol to each coding category. The ideas as well as concepts and themes of the researcher were coded to fit into the various categories identified by the researcher. Coding as a method of analysis according to some scholars such as Dornyei facilitates the organization,

retrieval, and interpretation of data and leads to conclusions on the basis of that interpretation.

The researcher went through all the data in a systematic way and assigned the following codes to elicited data, recorded data, native intuition data and textual data. This was done in order to make the analysis of the data simpler, faster, and more accurate and secured.

- Elicited data (ED)
- Recorded data (RD)
- Textual data (TD)
- Native intuition (ND)

The above are the various sources from which data was gathered for the topic under investigation. The source of data is indicated against each of the sentences used in the analysis. The minimalist program is the theoretical framework within which the data was analyzed; see chapter one, page 12 for a discussion of the minimalist Program.

### **3.5 Summary**

The chapter described the various methods and techniques adopted by the researcher to gather data for the study. Natural data, which was one of the methods used by the researcher, saw the recording of different communicative events by the researcher that is from smaller conversations to bigger events. The schedule-controlled and corrective elicitation techniques were employed for the elicitation data. The researcher again drew data from already existing texts for the work; such data were however modified to fit the current unified Sisaali orthography. The use of native intuition was yet another source of data for the work. Sentences constructed using native intuition was

tested by language consultants in order to check their grammaticality and also eliminate all possible biases on the part of the researcher. The contributions of the language consultants towards the progress of this work were also discussed. The theoretical framework with which the data was analyzed is the Minimalist Program.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the various strategies that are employed in the formation of questions in Sisaalt. As already pointed out, the types of questions discussed include polar questions, alternative questions and content questions. I argue based on available data that in the formation of polar questions, both phonological and syntactic means are employed. On the alternative question, the same particle that occurs in polar question is used, which conjoins two alternatives out of which a listener is expected to choose one.

I also discuss the formation of content questions, and argue that in the language, the question words are either left at the in-situ position or brought to the sentence initial position, a position that Saah (1994) refers to as pre-sentential position.

The discussion in this chapter is as follows: Section 4.1 discusses polar questions while 4.2 deals with alternative questions, section 4.3 summarize both polar and alternative questions. Content questions come under section 4.4 and 4.5 summarizes the section.

#### 4.1 Polar Interrogatives in Sisaalt

This section focuses on the formation of polar questions in Sisaalt. Cross linguistically, questions are used to elicit or request information from another person who is being addressed and the addressee or speaker indicates the type of information that is needed or required. In polar interrogatives, the required answer or response is

either a *yes* or *no*. Therefore, questions are categorized based on the information needed. This gives us polar, alternative and content questions (König & Siemund, 2007). The polar questions are also referred to as *closed* or *yes or no* questions. Polar interrogatives can come in both negative and positive polarity. Different languages employ different strategies in the formation of polar interrogatives. König and Siemund (2007) identify six strategies which languages use in the marking of polar interrogatives typologically. These strategies include;

- (i) The use of interrogative particles,
- (ii) The use of special intonation patterns,
- (iii) A change in relative word order,
- (iv) The addition of special tags,
- (v) The use of disjunctive-negative structures and
- (vi) The use of particular verbal inflection.

Though there are languages which can use more than one strategy in the formation of polar questions, the most prevalent according to König and Siemund (2007) is the use of special intonation. Cahill (2012) argues that this special intonation could either be a rising or falling intonation which is added to a declarative sentence to make it an interrogative one. The formation of polar questions in Minimalist Program is of particular interest. Though there is no WH-phrase in polar questions, the presence of a question feature or morpheme Q can turn a declarative sentence into an interrogative one and these question features or particles are analyzed as functional projection of question phrases. I demonstrate in this work that Sisaalt adopts both syntactic and phonological strategies in the formation of polar interrogatives; that is the use of

interrogative particles as well as special intonation particles respectively. Regardless of the strategy or method chosen, the word order remains the same just like the declarative sentence(s).

#### 4.1.1 Phonological strategy of forming polar questions in Sisaalt

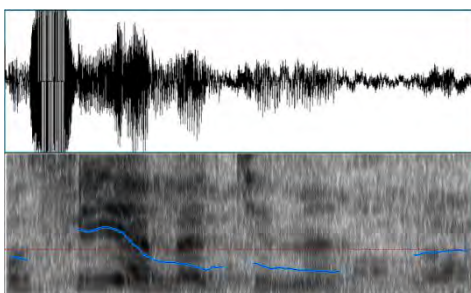
Although some languages construct polar questions by raising the pitch, that is, using rising intonation, the most consistent phonological strategy employed in coding polar interrogatives in Sisaalt is the high-low tone contour, accompanied by lengthening of the final sound. This pitch contour most often falls from a high to low on the final syllable of a phrase. Though some native speakers sometimes use the morpheme **rɛ** at the end of a clause when intonation is employed (for some sentences), its usage however is optional. Polar questions can still be formed in the language without it. The phonological strategy adopted in forming polar interrogatives is however incompatible with the syntactic strategy of forming polar interrogatives. Examples to support this claim are shown below:

1. a. **Bà sí pùlá binná nò** .  
 3PL FUT farm year this  
 ‘They will farm this year.’

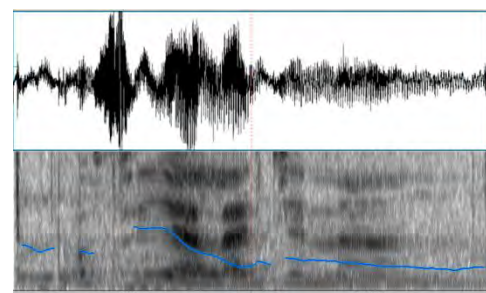
b. **Bà sí pùlá binná nò:?** .  
 3PL FUT farm year this  
 ‘Will they farm this year?’

(RD)

Sentence 1a



Sentence 1b

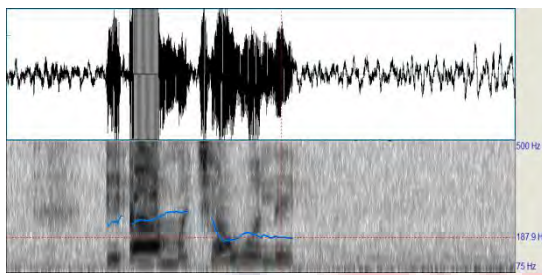




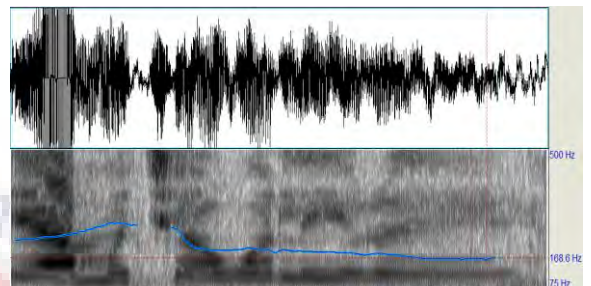
2. a. **í áá mú Kyàwùlí.**  
 2SG PROG go Kyawuli  
 You are going to Kyawuli.

b. **í áá mú Kyàwùlí rè: ?**  
 2SG PROG go Kyawuli QP  
 ‘Are you going to Kyawuli?’ (GILLBT 2000: 6)

Sentence 2a



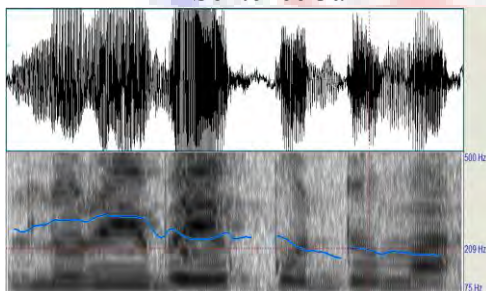
Sentence 2b



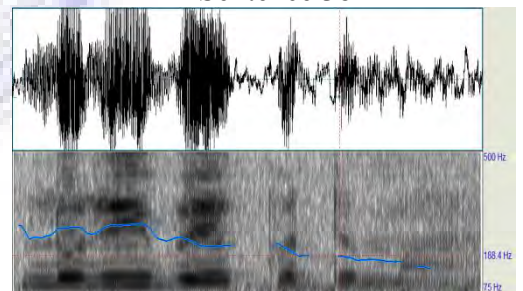
3. a. **Lúrí bèè kpú dúmmà.**  
 Lúrí NEG kill snakes  
 ‘Lúrí doesn’t kill snakes.’

b. **Lúrí bèè kpú dúmmà:?**  
 Lúrí NEG kill snakes  
 ‘Doesn’t Lúrí kill snakes?’ (NI)

Sentence 3a



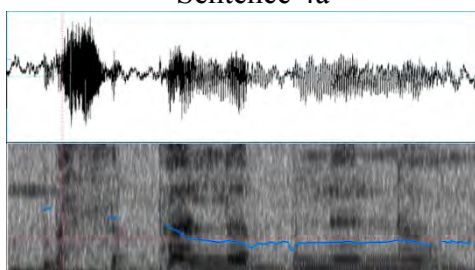
Sentence 3b



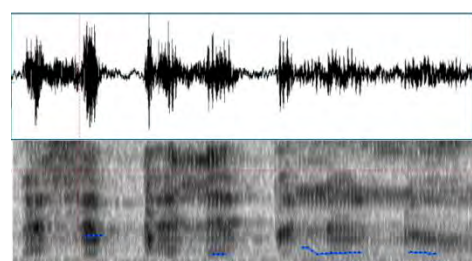
4. a. **ú sí yéllá gyínòη.**  
 3SG PROG marry today  
 ‘H/she has will marry today’.

b. **ú sí yéllá gyínòη:?**  
 3SG PROG marry today  
 ‘Will s/he marry today?’ (Fembeti, 2002: 66)

Sentence 4a



Sentence 4b



Sentences 1a, 2a, 3a & 4a are declaratives while 1b, 2b, 3b & 4b are the polar counterparts. The only contrast between the declarative sentences and polar interrogatives as indicated earlier is the intonation contour. Also, declaratives have shorter vowels or consonants at the end of the sentence while questions have a much longer final vowel or consonant. Though some native speakers may perceive it as a mere lengthening of the vowel, I contend that the final vowel lengthening is a phonetically motivated phonological process.

To further buttress the claim that the high-low tone contour is the most consistent phonological strategy used in forming polar questions, pitch contours of both the declaratives as well as the interrogatives are given in the illustrations above.

It can be seen from the speech contours of the above sentences that the entire pitch contours of the polar interrogatives in (1b, 2b, 3b & 4b) are lower than their corresponding declarative counterparts in (1a, 2a, 3a & 4a); that is to say that from the above illustration, it is realized that the formation of polar questions are similar to declaratives (considering the fact that the word order remains same) until towards the end of the right margin of the utterance where the pitch contours of the polar interrogatives are lower than the declaratives. Though both the declarative and interrogative involve a fall in the second or third syllable (depending on the word), that of the interrogatives are lower. The fall for instance in sentence (2a) which is a declarative starts from the second vowel (u) of the last word (**Kyàwùli**) with 187.9 Hz and finally ends on the last vowel (i) with approximately 156.3 Hz while with the interrogative, the fall starts from the first vowel (ε) of the last word with 168.6 Hz and ends with approximately 128.1 Hz. This shows that the latter is lower than the former.

The same claim can be made for sentence (3a) which started falling from the first vowel of the last word (**dúmmà**) with 250.6 Hz and a final fall on the last vowel with 209.6Hz. However, for the interrogative, the fall also starts from the first vowel of the last word with 229.2 Hz and ends on the last vowel with 188.4 Hz which shows a further decline for the interrogative as compared to the declarative. The same conclusions are drawn for the other sentences as shown above.

Also, though both the declarative and interrogative in sentence (4) involve a rise and subsequently a fall on the final syllable that of the interrogative is lower. In sentence 1, both the declarative as well as the interrogative are similar from the beginning until the end of the phrase where the pitch contours of the interrogative (1b) are low and that of the declarative (1a) relatively high.

I therefore postulate that generally, declaratives have a low boundary tone and interrogatives have a low, high-low boundary tone in the language

A similar observation has been made by Dakubu (2003) for Farefare, a Gur language spoken in the Upper East Region of Ghana which is exemplified in (5a, b, 6a & b).

5. a. **à baʔasɛ ní mé-è?**  
 3S finish PST Prt-INT  
 ‘Did he finish?’

b. **à baʔasɛ ní mé**  
 3S finish PST Prt-INT  
 ‘He finished.’

6. a. **fò nyé ʔí-i?**  
 2S see 3s-INT  
 ‘Did you see him?’

b. **fò n nyé ʔí**  
 2S Foc see 3s  
 ‘You saw him.’

From the Farefare data, it is obvious that the only element that might distinguish a question as in (5a & 6a) from a declarative as in (5b & 6b) is intonation. Dakubu (2003) posits that Farefare also uses the high low contour which falls on the last syllable and followed by a “non-contrastive” lengthening of the vowel that is likely to spread over other syllables, a scenario similar to Sisaalt.

#### 4.1.2 Syntactic strategy in forming polar question

The use of a syntactic strategy in forming polar questions also exists in Sisaalt aside the phonological strategy. The syntactic strategy involves the use of special particles; **kóó** and **dún** which are added to declaratives to form polar questions. The syntactic distribution of these particles varies; while **kóó** can occur either sentence initially or finally, **dún** occurs only sentence finally. It must be noted that the particle **kóó** also functions as a conjunction in the language aside being a question particle. I exemplify the use of **kóó** as a question particle in the formation of polar questions in (7-9).

7. a. **ú bèè kyè kidiíliyè kóó?**  
 3SG NEG want food QP  
 ‘Doesn’t he or she want food?’ (RD)
- b. **Kóó ú bèè kyè kidiíliyè?**  
 QP 3SG NEG want food  
 ‘Doesn’t she want food?’
- c. **\*kóó ú bèè kyè kidiíliyè kóó?**  
 QP s/he NEG want food QP  
 ‘Doesn’t s/he want food?’
8. a. **kóó ú mú sàkúúrí?**  
 QP 3SG go school  
 ‘Did he or she go to school?’ (RD)
- b. **ú mú sàkúúrí kóó?**  
 3SG go school QP  
 ‘Did he or she go to school?’

- c. \***kóó**    **ú**    **mú**    **sàkúúrí**    **kóó?**  
 QP    s/he    go    school    QP  
 ‘Did he or she go to school?’
9. a. **í**    **áá**    **kyè**    **kàpàlà**    **kóó?**  
 2SG    PROG    want    fufu    QP  
 ‘Do you want fufu?’ (Fembeti, 2002: 67)
- b. \***Kóó**    **í**    **áá**    **kyè**    **kàpàlà**    **kóó?**  
 QP    2SG    PROG    want    fufu    QP

The data in 7, 8, and 9 prove that Sisaalu forms polar questions using the interrogative particle **kóó** as indicated earlier. These polar questions are used to determine the truth or otherwise of an expression as posited by Siemund (2001). Though the particle **kóó** can occur at sentence initial or final position, it does not however have any different semantic interpretation. The meaning of the sentence remains the same whether the question particle occurs sentence initially or finally.

Dakubu, (2003) and Issah, (2015) for Farefare and Dagbani respectively have made similar assertions in their respective languages as demonstrated below.

- 10 a. **bòdáasi lá dáa síjè tà yó mé dée yése yétòga lá bée**  
 men DEF PST go PURP pay prt and leave case DEF or  
 ‘Did the men go to pay before withdrawing the case?’
- b. **fò n yètée waĩwaĩ lá zé lá pòbágà pòà kóo**  
 2S FOC said pump DEF stand ASS P. in or  
 ‘You said the pump at Pobaga?’ (Dakubu, 2003:3)

The Farefare data in (10a & b) taken from Dakubu (2003) indicates that the particles **kóo** and **bée** or **bii** ‘or’ are used to mark polar questions in Farefare although these same particles actually imply an alternative to the proposition. Dakubu (2003) contends that the sentence only becomes polar when the alternative is not given as

shown above. She notes that the particle **bée** in Farefare can also be preposed to the sentence initial position. The same analysis about the question particles in Farefare can be made of the question particles in Sisaalt as indicated early on.

Issah, (2015) demonstrates in (11) below that Dagbani has two question particles **bèè** and **yɔyɔ** which can change a declarative sentence into an interrogative one. He argues that the distribution of these particles varies; **bee** can occur both at sentence initial or final position while **yɔyɔ** occurs only at the clause final position. He further argues that when **bee** occurs at the clause final position, it is as a result of truncation as shown in (11b). He also contends that though the particle **bee** has two syntactic positions, it cannot however occur at both positions within the same sentence which makes sentence (11c) ungrammatical.

11. a. **Bee**    **o**            **chaŋ-Ø**    **shikuru**  
 INT    3SG.NOM    go.PERF    school  
 ‘Has s/he gone to school?’
- b. **O**            **chaŋ-Ø**    **shikuru**    **bee**  
 3SG. NOM    go.PERF    school    INT  
 ‘Has s/he gone to school?’
- c. \***Bee**    **o**            **chaŋ-Ø**    **shikuru**    **bee**  
 INT    3SG.NOM    go.PERF    school    INT    (Issah, 2015:48)

From the Dagbani data, it is observed that the question particles **kóó** in Sisaalt exhibit similar characteristics just like the Dagbani question particle **bee**.

Unlike Akan (Saah, 1994) which has different question particles that can occur pre-sententially or clause final position at the same time within the same sentence as illustrated in (12a & b), the particles used in coding polar questions in Sisaalt only occur either clause initially or finally and never both as indicated earlier in (7, 8 & 9).

Even though **kóó** has two syntactic positions, it cannot occur at both positions within the same sentence which accounts for the ungrammaticality of sentences (8c) and (9c) above.

12. a. **So wobekɔ ana? (Akan)**  
 QUP you:will go QUP  
 ‘Will you go?’

b. **Ana hom adeda a? (Fante)**  
 QUP 2pl asleep QUP  
 ‘Are you asleep or sleeping?’

Also, there is no semantic difference between questions with initial question particle and those with final question particle in Sisaalt. This is not peculiar to only Sisaalt, as Saah (1994); Dakubu (2003) and Issah (2015) make similar claims for Akan, Farefare and Dagbani respectively.

As posited by König and Siemund (2007), polar interrogatives can either be positive or negative. It is therefore important to indicate that polar questions in Sisaalt can also be expressed in the negative as shown in (13) and (14).

13. a. **kóó ú bèè kyè bíyè hú?**  
 QP 3SG NEG want child DEF  
 ‘Doesn’t s/he want the child?’ (RD)

b. **ú bèè kyè bíyè hú kóó?**  
 3SG NEG want child DEF QP  
 ‘Doesn’t s/he want the child?’

c. **\*kóó ú bèè kyè bíyè hú kóó?**  
 QP 3SG NEG want child DET QP

14. a. **kóó bààl hú bì sí yɔ̀bò díyà dàhà?**  
 QP man DEF NEG FUT buy house here  
 ‘Won’t the man buy a house here?’ (RD)



b. **Bààl hú bì sí yòbò díyà dàhà kóó?**  
 Man DEF NEG will buy house here QP  
 ‘Won’t a man buy a house here?’

c. **\*kóó bààl hú bì sí yòbò díyà dàhà kóó?**  
 QP man DET NEG will buy house here QP

The negative construction version of polar interrogatives it must be noted is not different from the positive polar interrogatives as seen in the data. The question particle **kóó** can occur in both positive and negative polar constructions at either pre-sentential or sentence final position and would have the same semantic implication. Just like the positive polar interrogatives, the occurrence of the sentence particle **kóó** at both sentence initial and final positions is unacceptable in the language hence the ungrammaticality of sentences (13c & 14c).

The second question particle used to code polar interrogatives in Sisaalt is **dúnj**. **Kóó** and **dúnj**, as stated earlier, are polar interrogative particles which have the semantic function of changing a declarative into a polar question. The use of **dúnj** in forming polar interrogatives is shown in (15) and (16) below.

15. a. **ú bì kyó píí dúnj?**  
 3SG NEG love yam QP  
 ‘Doesn’t s/he like yam?’ (RD)

b. **\*Dúnj ú bì kyó píí?**  
 QP 3SG NEG want yam

c. **í bì gyímà píí yàà kídíwèlí dúnj?**  
 2SG NEG know yam is food:good QP  
 ‘Don’t you know yam is good food?’ (RD)

16. a. **Hààŋ hú bèè kyè bíyè hú dúnj?**  
 Woman DEF NEG want child DEF QP  
 ‘Doesn’t the woman want the child?’ (RD)

b. **\*Dúnj hààŋ hú bèè kyè bíyè hú?**  
 QP woman DEF NEG want child DEF



Though the question particle **dúŋ** is semantically the same as **kóó**, they differ in their syntactic distribution. While **kóó** can occur at both clause initial and final positions as highlighted earlier, **dúŋ** can only occur at the clause final position; placing it pre-sententially will only yield ungrammatical results as in (15b) and (16b).

The two question particles **kóó** and **dúŋ** used to construct polar interrogatives in Sisaalt are analyzed as functional projections of question phrases which serve only to transform a declarative sentence into an interrogative one. When these particles are deleted from a sentence, it simply becomes a declarative one.

#### 4.2 Alternative Questions in Sisaalt

This section considers the nature and semantics of alternative questions. Siemund (2001) contends that typologically, an alternative interrogative offers the listener with a list of possibilities to choose from. This type of question, he claims, falls under polar interrogatives but are analyzed as two coordinated polar questions which have been merged due to ellipsis. The main difference between polar and alternative questions is that the latter cannot be responded to with a simple yes-no as would in the former. Siemund (2001) indicates that with the right intonation, an alternative question can turn into a polar question. Similar claims have been made by Dakubu (2003) and Issah (2013) for Farefare and Dagbani respectively. The formation of alternative questions in Sisaalt also requires the use of the question particle **kóó** (which sometimes function as a conjunction as indicated earlier). An analysis of polar questions, as established in the literature, reveal that they (polar questions) are truncated alternative questions. In view of this, only one **kóó** is used in the formation of polar and alternative questions in Sisaalt. In alternative constructions, the question

particle **kóó** is used to coordinate two clauses or provide an alternative for the listener to choose. If no alternative is given or if the second option is deleted it becomes a polar question which only requires a yes-no answer. Polar questions formed with **kóó** are therefore as a result of truncated alternative questions, while in alternative questions, **kóó** occurs between two coordinated structures since there is no truncation. It is worth indicating that intonation plays no role in the formation of alternative questions in Stsaalt, contrary to what happens in polar questions. The presence or use of the question particle **kóó** plus an alternative phrase is enough to turn a declarative into an alternative question as shown below.

17. a. **í sí mú Tamale kóó Wa?**  
 2SG will go Tamale QP Wa?  
 ‘Will you go to Tamale or Wa?’ (RD)
- b. **í áá kyè kàpàlà kóó kúú?**  
 2SG PROG want fufu QP T.Z?  
 ‘Do you want fufu or T.Z?’ (Fembeti 2002:67)
- c. **Tèŋ né Ida yób̀ kóó pèŋ?**  
 Book FOC Ida buy QP pen  
 ‘Did Ida buy a book or pen?’ (NI)
- d. **Bíisì hú gáá kóó bà bì gáá?**  
 Child.PL DEF steal QP 3PL.PERF NEG steal  
 ‘Did the children steal or they didn’t steal?’ (RD)

It has also been observed that when the question particle **kóó** coordinates two clauses that are loosely and grammatically related, the second clause mostly is in the negative. This is exemplified in (18).

18. a. **ú sí dí kóó ú bèè dí?**  
 3SG FUT eat QP 3SG NEG eat  
 ‘Will s/he eat or not?’ (RD)

b. **bà sí kpà ú kóó bà bèè kpà ú?**  
 They FUT take 3SG QP they NEG take 3SG  
 ‘Will they pick her or not?’ (RD)

This is not observed only in Sisaalt, as Dakubu (2003) has made same claims for Farefare as highlighted below.

19. **Yà dái yóò fúo lá bíi yá kà yò**  
 2S PST pay cloth DEF or 2P NEG pay. INT  
 ‘Did you pay for the cloth or you didn't pay?’ (Dakubu 2003:3)

In Sisaalt, it is also possible for the particle **kóó** to coordinate two NPs and examples to demonstrate this are shown below.

20. a. **Maria kóó Duma ré sí kyùŋ píyà hú?**  
 Maria QP Duma FOC will carry yam.PL DEF  
 ‘Is it Maria or Duma who will carry the yam?’ (RD)

b. **ŋ piisa biya hu ré ði ó aa kyèè kuu kóó**  
 1SG ask child DEF FOC if 3SG PROG want T.Z QP  
**kapala?**  
 fufu  
 ‘I asked the child if s/he wants T.Z or fufu?’ (RD)

The particle **kóó** used in forming alternative questions gives a functional projection of the question phrases just like the polar questions. The only difference is that, the particle **kóó** in alternative questions gives the hearer options to choose from unlike polar questions which demand a yes or no answer.

### 4.3 Summary

This subsection has examined the various methods adopted in the formation of polar and alternative questions in Sisaali, a Gur language spoken in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Three major claims have been established on the analysis of polar questions which are: (i) polar questions can be formed by adopting a phonological strategy that is falling intonation to be specific (ii) polar questions can also be formed through a syntactic procedure which involves the use of interrogative particles **kóó** (which sometimes acts as a conjunction) and **dúŋ** and (iii) the use of these question particles **kóó** and **dúŋ** (syntactic method) cannot co-occur with the falling intonation which is the phonological strategy.

The formation of alternative questions is also done using the question particle **kóó**, the same question particle used in forming polar questions. This establishes some kind of relationship between polar and alternative questions that is, polar questions are actually truncated alternative questions hence their use of the same particle. In a nutshell, **kóó** in either alternative questions or polar questions cannot be used to elicit new information from the listener and they give a functional projection to the question phrases.

### 4.4 Content Questions in Sisaali

This section of the thesis focuses on the formation of content questions in Sisaali. It examines the strategies that Sisaali uses in the formation of content questions. I identify two strategies used in the formation of content questions which are the *in-situ* and the *ex-situ* strategies. In using the former strategy there is no fronting of the question word while the latter strategy involves fronting of the question word together

with the introduction of the focus markers **né** and **ré** which follows the question word. Determining the use of **né** or **ré** after the question word is dependent on whether the question word ends in a consonant or vowel that is, the phonological environment determines their usage. The particles **né** and **ré** will in the next sub-section be demonstrated to be focus markers in Sisaalt. I will conclude that the focus constructions in Sisaalt and ex-situ content questions share same morphosyntactic features. This sub-section is organized as follows section 4.4.1 briefly discusses ex-situ focus of Sisaalt while 4.4.2 addresses ex-situ content questions. The discussion of the in-situ content questions is discussed under 4.4.4. Section 4.5 summarizes the major issues raised in this section.

#### **4.4.1 Overview of the focus system in sisaalt**

This sub-section gives an account of focus marking in Sisaalt. It is relevant to discuss the focus system because focus marking is very crucial when discussing content questions in the language. The particles **né** and **ré** which occur with focus constituents also occur with question words in the ex-situ content questions. I therefore posit that focus feature checking is what triggers the movement of question words. This is done in line with the theory proposed by Sabel (2000, 2001, and 2003) which argues that movement of question words can be universally accounted for by assuming that they are triggered by focus or *wh* features. For the case of Sisaalt, I propose that it is focus features that cause the movement as exemplified in sentences (21, 22 & 23) below.

Focus has many different definitions from different authors. For instance, Amfo (2010:198) defines focus as “the highlighting of salient non-derivable information linked to ongoing discourse.” Also, Saskia van Putten (2014:4) defines focus as the

most informative part of the sentence. Saskia van Putten (2014) further states that when people are communicating, they try to increase their common ground that is the knowledge that they share. This suggests that focus has to do with a way of showing salient or most important aspect within a particular communication. In this work, the discussion of focus would be within the definition of Amfo (2010).

Focus also has different types. The type of focus may be about the things that are focused, when only a particular item is focused, it is referred to as constituent focus, and when an entire sentence is focused it is called sentence focus. Also, what focus does can determine its category. When it presents new information, it is known as the new information focus, and when it shows that only a particular thing is valid and true in a given discourse, it is termed contrastive focus, Saskia van Putten (2014:7). I would propose that **rɛ́** and **nɛ́** are like the Akan **na** as analyzed in Boadi (1974), and Saah (1988).

Amfo (2010) also posits that focus is a universal phenomenon in languages since all languages in the world have a way or a combination of different ways that they use to show that a particular part of the sentence is in focus. Ameka (1992) contends that some languages mark focus by prosodic prominence, since they make use of stress or pitch accent, and that other languages also make use of a combination of morphological and syntactic methods that is; the use of special morphemes as focus markers and also move the elements they want to focus to some particular positions within the sentence. Sisaalt uses the particles **rɛ́** and **nɛ́** and also moves the elements to be focused to sentence initial position; I would therefore conclude that the language uses morpho-syntactic method in marking focus. In the next section, I discuss how

Sisaali uses this method to mark focus. The focus in Sisaali can be marked on subjects, objects and adjuncts. It always requires the movement of the focused constituent to the pre-sentential position, a position that is termed as left periphery. I illustrate this with the data that follow.

21. a. **Lúrí yó̀b̀ò t̀ɛ̀ŋ neutral reading**  
 Lúrí buy book  
 ‘Lúrí has bought a book’
- b. **T̀ɛ̀ŋ; ǹé/\*r̀é Lúrí yó̀b̀ò t̀i**  
 Book FOC Luri buy  
 It is a book (and not any other thing) that Lúrí has bought. (ED)
- c. **\*T̀ɛ̀ŋ; Lúrí yó̀b̀ò t̀i**  
 Book Lúrí buy
22. a. **Daari yó̀b̀ò t̀ɛ̀ŋ neutral reading**  
 Daari buy book  
 ‘Daari bought a book.’
- b. **Daari; r̀é/\*ǹé t̀i yó̀b̀ò t̀ɛ̀ŋ**  
 Daari FOC buy book  
 ‘Daari (and not any other person) has bought a book.’ (ED)
- c. **\*Daari; t̀i yó̀b̀ò t̀ɛ̀ŋ**  
 Daari buy book
23. a. **D̀ù̀m̀à sí g̀ònní ẁó̀j̀ìŋ gyinaŋ neutral Reading**  
 D̀ù̀m̀à FUT learn lesson now  
 ‘D̀ù̀m̀à will learn a lesson now’ (ED)
- b. **Gyinaŋ ǹé/\*r̀é D̀ù̀m̀à sí g̀ònní ẁó̀j̀ìŋ t̀i**  
 Today FOC D̀ù̀m̀à FUT learn lesson  
 ‘TODAY (and not any other day) that D̀ù̀m̀à will learn a lesson’
- c. **\*Gyinaŋ D̀ù̀m̀à sí g̀ònní ẁó̀j̀ìŋ**  
 Today D̀ù̀m̀à FUT learn lesson

From the data in (21), (22) and (23), we observe that Sisaalt has two focus markers for the ex-situ focused elements. These focus markers are **rɛ́** and **nɛ́** and are required any time there is movement of a constituent from its base position to the left periphery position. I therefore see them as focus heads that are needed for a specifier-head configuration for purposes of checking the focus features of the movement constituent. In Minimalism, it will be suggested that the moved elements have focus features which are strong and need to be checked within the syntax to avoid a crash in the derivation. The focus markers therefore head the functional focus phrase in the left periphery. If they head the focus phrase as suggested, then it is clear why (21c, 22c, 23c) are ungrammatical since we do not have the focus markers that head focus phrase. I therefore give the outline of the structure of the ex-situ sentence as in (24)

24. SpecFoc<sub>i</sub> [Foc] [IP [ ..... t<sub>i</sub>]]

The focus markers are therefore obligatory for ex-situ focus marking. For similar arguments see Saah (1994) and Boadi (1974) for Akan where the particle **na** is compulsory in ex-situ focus marking. The proposal is that the use of one focus marker rather than the other is dependent on the phonological environment of the focused constituent. Thus I hold that **rɛ́** occurs with focused elements that end in vowels while **nɛ́** occurs with focused elements that end in consonants. This explains the appropriateness of **nɛ́** in (21b) and (23b) while in the context of (22b) **rɛ́** is selected since the focused element ends in a vowel. The observation that Sisaalt has two focus markers is not unknown in the Gur literature since, similar analyses of the presence of two focus markers are put across for Dagbani and Gurene as found in the works of Issah (2012, 2015), Hudu (2012) and Dakubu (2003) respectively. I therefore conclude that the ex-situ focusing in Sisaalt involves moving what is to be focused



from its base position to the specifier of the position of focus phrase and then introducing the compulsory focus markers **né** and **ré** depending on whether what is to be focused ends in a vowel or consonant. The fact that these two focus markers are not freely exchanged for each other means that there is really a structural asymmetry in their selection for purposes of focus marking.

#### **4.4.2 The formation of content questions in Sisaalt**

Now that I have given some background to the ex-situ focus marking in Sisaalt which is important to the discussion of aspects of Sisaalt content questions (ex-situ content questions), I will proceed to discuss the various ways in which content questions are formed in Sisaalt. I will show that Sisaalt has both ex-situ and in-situ content questions. While the question word in the former is moved from the base position to the pre-sentential position (left periphery), in the latter, the question words are left in their base positions, that is a theta-role position. I will also show that when question words are moved to the left periphery in the ex-situ content questions, there is also the need for the particles **né** and **ré** which have been discussed under section 4.4.1 to be focus markers in Sisaalt. I therefore posit that question words are moved for purposes of focus. Their occurrence in sentences in content questions is also same as shown above, that is depending on whether the focused constituent ends in a vowel or consonant, particular focus marker must be used suggesting an asymmetry as in some other Gur languages. I shall account for the two forms of content questions using the theory of Minimalism.

Content questions in Sisaalt basically are identified by any of the interrogative words or interrogative pronouns in Table 4.1. It is observed that these interrogative words

would normally occur in positions in which they substitute for subjects, objects and adjuncts within the sentence. I argue that these interrogative words occur at both the clause initial position and also at the base position.

**Table 4.1: Sisaalt interrogative words**

Interrogative word	Gloss
<b>ánnè</b>	who
<b>bée/ békìŋ/ bėwíyà</b>	what/for what reason
<b>báŋmé</b>	how much/how many
<b>léé</b>	where
<b>kyé bée /tán bée</b>	what day/what time
<b>bėwíyà</b>	why
<b>kíbée</b>	which
<b>èè</b>	how

It should also be noted that only **ánnè** ‘who’ and **békìŋ** ‘what’ differentiate between singular and plural forms. **Tábélé** or **ánnèma** ‘which people’ and **kiibeema** or **békínè** ‘which ones’ are the plural forms respectively. Some expressions which are used to ask of time such as **kyébée** ‘which day’ and **tánbée** ‘what time’ are not single lexical items but rather a compound structure. Issah (2013:46) also claims that though Dagbani has seven interrogative words, only two that is **ŋuni** ‘who’ and **dini** ‘what’ distinguish between plural and singular forms which is similar to the Sisaalt interrogative words **ánnè** ‘who’ and **békìŋ** ‘which’ as indicated earlier. He again indicates that **bondali** ‘what day’ and **saha dini** are made up of not only a single lexical item but either a compound or “piped structure” just as we have in Sisaalt.

These interrogative words, as already pointed out, can also occur at the base position in which case there is no movement, and hence no need for the introduction of the focus markers. These are called ex-situ and in-situ methods of forming questions respectively. In the discussion that follows, I discuss in details these two forms of content questions.

### 1. The ex-situ content questions

When forming ex-situ content questions in Sisaali, there are two things that are combined: moving the Q-phrase to the left periphery of the sentence, together with the mandatory use of the focus markers **né** or **ré**. Also, the choice between **ré** and **né** depends on the phonological environment of the interrogative word as shown below; **ré** would focus mark question words that end in vowels while **né** will focus mark consonants.

25. a. **ánnè** i    **ré** t<sub>i</sub>    **yób̀**    **lóórì**?  
 Who    FOC    buy    lorry  
 ‘Who bought a car?’ (NI)

b. \***ánnè**    **né**    **yób̀**    **lóórì**?  
 Who    FOC    buy    lorry  
 ‘Who bought a car?’

c. \***ánnè**    **yób̀**    **lóórì**  
 Who    buy    lorry

26. a. **bék̀** i    **né** t<sub>i</sub>    **kpú**    **bíyè**    **hù**?  
 What    FOC    kill    child    DEF  
 ‘What killed the child?’ (RD)

b. \* **bék̀**    **ré**    **kpú**    **bíyè**    **hù**?  
 What    FOC    kill    child    DEF  
 ‘What killed the child?’

- c. \* **békìṅ**    **kpú**    **bíyè**    **hù?**  
 What    kill    child    DEF
- d. \* **kpú**       **bíyè**    **hù**    **békìṅ**    **né?**  
 Kill       child    DEF    what    FOC
27. a. **èèi**    **ré**    **í**    **yàà**    **gyímà**       **ó ti?**  
 How    FOC    2SG    PAST    know       3SG  
 ‘How did you know him?’    (Fembeti, 2002:67)
- b. \***èèi**    **né**    **í**    **yàà**    **gyímà**       **ó ti?**  
 How    FOC    2SG    PAST    know       3SG
- c. **èèi**       **í**    **yàà**    **gyímà**    **ó**       **ré**    **ti?**  
 How       3SG    PAST    know    3SG       FOC  
 ‘How did he enter the room?’
- d. \* **í**       **yàà**    **gyímà**    **ó**    **èè**    **ré?**  
 2SG       PAST    know    3SG    how    FOC
28. a. **Béé**       **ré**    **í**    **kí**       **kpú**    **gyímíí**       **hù ti?**  
 Why       FOC    2SG    PROG       kill    chicken    DEF  
 ‘Why are you killing the chicken?’    (GILLBT, 2000:19)
- b. \***Béé**       **né**    **í**    **kí**       **kpú**    **gyímíí**       **hù ti?**  
 Why       FOC    2SG    PROG    kill    chicken    DEF
- c. \* **Béé**       **í**    **kí**       **kpú**    **gyímíí**       **hù**    **ré ti?**  
 Why       2SG    PROG       kill    chicken    DEF    FOC
29. a. **Léé**       **ré**       **níídùwòribòrò**       **hù**    **wé ti?**  
 Where    FOC    boat       DEF    location  
 ‘Where is the boat?’    (GILLBT, 2000:39)
- b. \* **Léé**       **né**       **níídùwòribòrò**       **hù**    **wé ti?**  
 Where    FOC    boat       DEF    location
30. a. **Ánnè**       **ré**       **nà**       **Bàdàré**       **dàhà?**  
 Who       FOC    see    spider       here?  
 ‘Who saw spider here?’    (GILLBT, 2000:39)

b* <b>Ánnè</b>	<b>né</b>	<b>nà</b>	<b>Bàdàré</b>	<b>dàhà?</b>
Who	FOC	see	spider	here?
c.* <b>Ánnè</b>	<b>nà</b>	<b>Bàdàré</b>	<b>dàhà</b>	<b>ré?</b>
Who	see	spider	here	FOC

Based on the mandatory need for the focus markers in ex-situ content questions, I propose that the feature that triggers movement of question words is a focus feature. Within the feature strength claims of Minimalism (Chomsky 1995, Sabel 2000), I propose that focus features which are linked to the question words in Sisaalt are strong hence the need to be checked via overt syntactic movement of the interrogative word to the left periphery as demonstrated in (25a, 26a & 27a). This is immediately followed by the focus markers **né** (26) or **ré** (25 & 27) which focus mark question words that end in consonants and vowels respectively. This accounts for the ungrammaticality of sentence (25b & 27b) because the interrogative word which ends in a vowel has been focused with a focus marker meant for consonants, **né**. (26b) is also incorrect because **ré** is used to focus mark a question word that ends in a consonant. The absence of focus markers in (25c, 26c & 27c) makes those sentences unacceptable in the language because the focus marker which triggers movement of the interrogative word to the sentence initial position or the left periphery is missing. The ungrammaticality of sentence (25d, 26d, & 27d) is because Sisaalt does not permit focus marked question words to be left at the right periphery in the formation of content questions. The strong focus feature will trigger movement of the question words to the sentence initial position.

Semantically, focused question words or phrases show prominence and place much emphasis on what is being requested than those without the focus marker making

them (focused question words/ phrases) the focus of the sentence because they mostly request information that is new and unknown . Sabel (2000) posits that movement of interrogative words is motivated by the need to check some feature and he tries to give a formal analysis between focus marking and the movement of question words. He argues that typologically, two types of features are responsible for the movement of interrogative words which are; [+wh] and [+focus] features. Sabel (2000) claims that when these features [+wh] and [+focus] are [+interpretable] and are strong, they need to be checked by overt movement. However, weak [+interpretable] features need not be checked at any level of syntax hence involves no movement. He states that languages that allow for both wh-ex situ and wh-in situ are considered to have weak and strong variants of the wh- or focus feature in the lexicon. The [+wh] feature, as argued by Sabel (2000), is located in the position where the wh-phrase takes its scope ( $C^{\circ}$ ); and a [+focus] feature occurs in  $C^{\circ}$  and also in  $Foc^{\circ}$ , the head of a focus phrase, FocP, in some languages. He posits that typological variation with regard to content questions in languages are attributed to two main factors; i) of the two features that is, [+wh] or [+focus], which of them is strong and responsible for the movement of question words in a given language and ii) syntactically, which position is the moved interrogative phrase given in the language (Spec CP or Spec FocP) in order to check the features. The parameters are however closely related because the features responsible for the movement will determine which syntactic position the moved interrogative phrase will be given. It can be argued for Sisaalt that movement of question words is caused by strong focus feature located at  $Foc^{\circ}$ . This focus feature is represented morpho-syntactically in the language through the use of **né** or **ré** as focus markers. The use of these focus markers move the interrogative phrase to the Spec

Foc position where it gets involved in a Spec-head configuration with the functional head focus phrase for the checking of the focus features; that is, if the movement of the interrogative word is engineered by strong focus features.

The use of focus markers which trigger movement of the interrogative words as indicated above to the sentence initial position or ex-situ position when forming content questions, is similar to what has been observed in other languages such as Dagbani (Issah, 2013), Akan (Saah, 1988) and Kitharaka (Muriungi, 2003) as demonstrated in (31), (32), and (33) respectively.

31. a. **Bɔ̃<sub>i</sub> kà nàà kú-rì chùyù pùhibú dàlì t̃<sub>i</sub>?**  
 What FM chief kill.IMPERF festival celebration day  
 ‘What does a chief kill on the day of festival?’ (Issah 2013:48)
- b. **ɲùní n t̃<sub>1</sub> dá-Ø lòòrí?**  
 Who FM buy.PERF lorry  
 ‘Who bought a lorry?’ (Issah 2013:51)
- c. **\*ɲùní kà t̃<sub>1</sub> dá-Ø lòòrí?**  
 Who FM buy.PERF lorry (Issah 2013:52)

Issah (2013) argues that Dagbani, just like Sisaali, has two focus markers; **kà** and **n** and the choice of any of these focus markers is determined by whether the question word is a subject or non- subject. **Kà** focus marks non-subject while **n** focus marks subjects. This accounts for the ungrammaticality of sentence (31c) because the subject **ɲùní** ‘who’ is focus marked with **kà** which is meant for non-subjects. Sisaali, just like Dagbani, also has two focus markers; the difference however is that the focus markers of Sisaali does not discriminate against subject and non-subject but rather their usage is influenced by the phonological environment of the question words (that is question

words that end in consonants are focused with **né** and vowels with **ré**) which explains the ungrammaticality of sentences (25b), (26b) and (27b).

Saah argues for Akan that the *wh*-word in Akan can occur at the clause initial or final position. When the question word is at the sentence initial position there is an obligatory need for the focus marker **na** while at the clause final position, the focus marker is not needed. This is very similar in Sisaalt although in the case of Sisaalt there are two focus markers **né** and **ré** and Akan has only one focus marker which is a major difference between the two languages.

32. a. **ε he**                      **na**                      **Kofi**                      **kɔɔɛ?**  
           Where                      FOC                      Kofi                      go+PST  
           ‘Where was it that Kofi went?’                      (Saah, 1988:18)

b. **Da**                      **bɛn**                      **na**                      **wohuu**                      **Kofi**  
           Day                      which                      FOC                      you+see+PST                      kofi  
           ‘On what day did you see Kofi?’                      (Saah, 1988:19)

Kitharaka, an SVO Bantu language, according to Muriungi (2003), has a mandatory requirement of focus markers in the formation of *wh*-questions when the *wh*-word is not in-situ. He argues that the language has two focus markers; **i** and **n** which is similar to Sisaalt. Also, the distribution of the focus markers is similar to that of Sisaalt; the use of either **i-** or **n-** is determined by the phonological environment in which the focus marker occurs. **i-**, he claims, focus marks consonants, that is, when the *wh*-word begins with a consonant, while **n** goes with question words that start with vowels. In Sisaalt however, the focus markers are used depending on whether the interrogative word ends in a vowel or consonant which is different from that of Kitharaka. The data below is taken from Muriungi (2003) to illustrate his claims.



33. a. **I-mbi Kathere a-tem-ir-e t?**  
F-what Kathere SP-cut-T-FV  
'What did Kathere cut?'
- b. **N-ibuku ririku Nancy a-gur-ir-e t?**  
F-book which Nancy SP-buy-T-FV (Muriungi 2003:20)  
'Which book did Nancy buy?'

The following generalizations can be made about the fronted interrogative words from the above discussion: (i) when interrogative words are fronted, there is always a need for the use of focus markers. This is what accounts for the ungrammatical sentences that we have in sentences (25cb), (26c) and (27c). This is then just like the focus constructions discussed earlier where fronting focused elements also had a requirement that there should be a focus marker following the fronted constituent immediately. Thus, I argue that there is some syntactic similarity between the focused elements and fronted interrogative words. See Aboh (2004) for Gungbe, Muriungi (2003) for Kitharaka, Harold and Kandybowicz, (2014) for Krachi, and Marfo and Bodomo (2005) for Akan, where similar arguments of syntactic similarity are made. The other generalization that can be made is that (ii) the focus markers are influenced by the phonological environment in which question words find themselves; that is question words that end in vowels are focus marked with **ré** while consonants with **né**. This explains the ungrammatical sentences in (25b), (26b) (27b), (28b), (29b) and (30b). To explain the need for the focus markers in content questions, I take a position that it is possible that they are focused just like the focused elements discussed under section 4.4.1 of this thesis.

#### 4.4.4 The in-situ content questions

As mentioned earlier at the introductory stage of this chapter, it is possible for Sisaalt to have content words in which the interrogative word occurs at the sentence initial position. When the interrogative word(s) is fronted, then there is the need for **ré** or **né**; the focus markers. Apart from the fact that we can front Sisaalt interrogative words in the formation of content questions, it is also possible to leave the interrogative words at the in-situ position. When the question words are left at the in-situ position, they are not focused-marked though they substitute for something new within the sentence.

Consider illustration of the in-situ strategy in the following data presented.

34. a. **Lúrí yóbò békìŋ?**  
Lúrí buy what  
'What has Luri bought?' (RD)
- b.\* **Lúrí yóbò békìŋ né?**  
Lúrí buy what FOC
35. a. **Ida mú léé?**  
Ida go where  
'Where did Ida go?' (NI)
- b.\* **Ida mú léé ré?**  
Ida go where FOC
36. a. **Maria bàà béè?**  
Maria say what  
'What did Maria say?' (RD)
- b.\* **Maria bàà béè ré?**  
Mary say what FOC
37. a. **ú sí kpà tíyà ánnè?**  
3SG FUT take give who  
'Who will s/he give it to?' (RD)
- b.\* **ú sí kpà tíyà ánnè ré**  
3SG FUT take give who FOC

We observe from the examples in (34a-37a) that the interrogative words are not fronted and that the questions words have no focus markers in them; a major difference between the ex-situ and in-situ strategies of forming content questions. If the focus marker is added to the question word or phrase in the in-situ position, it only yields ungrammatical sentence(s) as seen in (33b, 34b, 35b & 37b). To account for this, I argue that they are not focused unlike their counterparts that are fronted and focus- marked. It can therefore be concluded that there is difference in something being new and something being focused in Sisaalt. Aboh (2007: 279) makes a distinction between focused and non-focused interrogative words and argues that focused question words are question words that occupy focus positions and so would always occur with focus markers, while non-focused interrogative words are the interrogative words that occur in positions other than focused positions, and so do not require any focus markers. That is, while the former kind of interrogative words occur with focus markers, the latter kind of interrogative words do not.

Accordingly, the proposal is made that interrogative words in Sisaalt target different syntactic positions within the clause, depending on whether they are focused or non-focused. I posit that, when interrogative words are in the in-situ position, then they are unfocussed and are less prominent and emphatic while those that are at the clause initial position are focused, more prominent and emphatic. Also, this type of content questions is mostly used in echo questions (in Sisaalt) where the speaker wants confirmation about information s/he received. With the feature checking in the Minimalist program (Sabel, 2000), the focus feature in the in-situ question words or phrases are argued to be weak and so do not need to be moved to the left periphery for features to be checked.

The claim that Sisaalt adopts the in-situ strategy in the formation of content questions is not something that happens only in Sisaalt, as Harold and Kandybowicz (2014) has made similar claims for Krachi as exemplified below. It is clear from the data which is taken from Harold and Kandybowicz (2014:6) that, it is possible to leave the question word or phrase at the in-situ position in Krachi, in which case there will be no focus marker.

36. a. **ɔ-kyɪ wɔ ɛ-mɔ nɛ ndiye?**  
 CL-woman the PST-kill what yesterday  
 ‘What did the woman slaughter yesterday?’

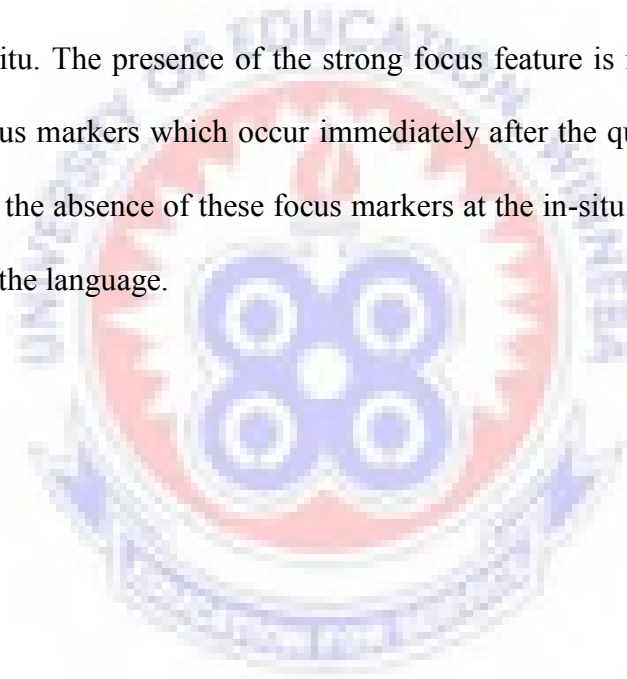
b. **ɔ-kyɪ wɔ ɛ-mɔ bwatɛ wɔ momɔ ndiye?**  
 CL-woman the PST-kill chicken the which yesterday  
 ‘Which chicken did the woman slaughter yesterday?’

#### 4.5 Summary

In this section, I analyze data from Sisaalt, an under researched Gur language spoken in the Upper West region of Ghana using the theoretical claims of Sabel (2000). I started by giving an overview of the nature of focus marking in the language since this thesis relates the formation of content questions to the notion of focus marking which occurs in fronted content questions, that is instances in which interrogative words are fronted.

The formation of content questions involves two strategies which are the in-situ and ex-situ strategies. The use of the ex-situ strategy requires the fronting of the question word(s) and following them with the focus markers **rɛ** or **nɛ**. The choice of **rɛ** or **nɛ** depends on the phonological environment of question words; vowels are focus marked with **rɛ** while consonants with **nɛ**. There is some syntactic similarity between focus elements and fronted interrogative words. The in-situ strategy does not involve

movement of the question words and therefore does not need the focus particles. The interrogative words often occur at the base position. Following Sabel's (2000) theoretical claims that movement of question words are triggered by a strong focus feature, it can then be analyzed that the wh-feature in Sisaalt is either strong or weak. With the fact that Sisaalt forms content questions by adopting two strategies that is; the ex-situ and the in-situ, it can be argued that the language has two focus feature specification; a strong focus feature as evident in the ex-situ strategy of forming content questions and a weak wh- feature which allows the formation of content questions in-situ. The presence of the strong focus feature is manifested through the use of the focus markers which occur immediately after the question word at the left periphery and the absence of these focus markers at the in-situ position reflect a weak wh-feature in the language.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I gave an account of the formation of content questions in Sisaalt paying attention to the various strategies that are used in the formation of questions. The forms of questions investigated included polar questions, alternatives and then content questions. I have examined the syntax of these kinds of questions within the theoretical framework of Minimalism. In this final chapter, I outline the summary of the major findings of the thesis, as well as recommendations on areas for future research within the domain of question formation. Section 5.1 presents a summary of the thesis, while section 5.2 outlines the major findings that are made concerning the formation of polar, alternative and content questions in Sisaalt. Finally section 5.3 presents the conclusion by spelling out some possible areas for future research.

#### 5.1 Summary of Thesis

The main objective of this thesis was to systematically investigate the strategies that are employed in the formation of questions in Sisaalt, an under-described Gur language spoken in the Upper West Region of Ghana, and in some parts of Burkina Faso. The research concentrated on polar, alternative and content questions. The research questions that underpinned this study were: (i) what are the strategies that Sisaalt employs in forming questions? (ii) what are the roles of **né**, **ré**, **kóó** and **dún** in the formation of questions in Sisaalt? and finally (iii) what accounts for the fact that

in forming content questions Sisaalt can optionally leave its question words in in-situ position?

Discussions in the preceding chapters have adequately addressed the above questions. A summary of the main issues in connection with these questions are highlighted in this chapter.

In chapter one, I gave a general outline of the thesis stating the genetic affiliation and sociolinguistic profile of Sisaalt. The chapter also dealt with such issues as the purpose of the study, the research questions and objectives, the theoretical framework and the statement of the problem. The chapter thus gave a general overview to the thesis.

Chapter two reviewed some literature that is considered relevant to the work. The literature reviewed was grouped into headings based on the language families of the works, that is, Gur, non-Gur Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian languages. Also, typological works such as Siemund (2001), and König & Siemund (2007) were reviewed. Some of the works reviewed on Gur languages include Dakubu (2003) and Issah (2015). On the non-Gur Ghanaian languages, the works of Saah (1988, 1994), and Harold and Kandybowicz were equally reviewed. Aboh (2004) and Muriungi (2004) were some of the non-Ghanaian works reviewed. This thematic classification was meant to help compare the findings of this thesis to both languages that are in the same language family and also those that are not genetically related. The possible similarities and differences between each of the languages reviewed and that of Sisaalt were also outlined.

I further reviewed works that discuss the relationship between ex-situ focus movement and movement of question words as in Akan, Saah (1988), Marfo and Bodomo (2005), Krachi Harold and Jason Kandybowicz (2014) Dagaare, Bodomo (1996b), Dakubu (2003), Gungbe (Aboh , 2004), Kitharaka (Muriungi, 2004, 2005) where it has been claimed that there is a relationship in terms of syntax between focus movement and question movement since this thesis establishes a relationship between focus and movement of question words.

In chapter three, the methodology used in gathering data for the study was discussed. The fieldwork setting, the sources of data for the study which comprised elicited, natural (recordings of radio discussions and storytelling sessions) and native intuition data were discussed. Also, the role of language consultants as well as the methods of analysis of the data using the Minimalist Program was explained. These varied sources of data, in my opinion, are crucial in avoiding any form of linguistic bias.

Chapter four concentrated on the theme of this thesis. I investigated the formation of questions with focus on alternative questions, polar and content questions. The data presented in this chapter were analysed using the theoretical tenets of Minimalism. . It was shown that different means are used to form the different questions, including phonological, and syntactic means.

## **5.2 A summary of Major Findings in the Work**

The thesis concentrated primarily on the strategies that are used in forming polar, alternative and content questions focusing on their syntactic properties. Though the language has about seven (7) distinct dialects, the research focused on the Paasali dialect spoken in Finsi and its surrounding communities. I focused on the various



means that the language employs in the formation of interrogatives. I proposed following the claims in the literature that questions are generally meant to fulfil certain communicative needs and that the categories of questions are based on the form of answers that they are expected to produce.

On the formation of polar questions, I identified two main strategies through which they are formed in Sisaalt. These strategies were broadly classified as the phonological and syntactic strategies. While it was observed that the former means of forming polar questions uses falling intonation, the latter type uses question particles (that is **kóó** and **dún**) which are added to declaratives to make them polar questions. Both strategies were argued to be very common ways of forming polar questions in the typology of polar questions. These two polar question particles (**kóó** and **dún**) were argued to differ in terms of their position in a sentence. For instance, I showed that it is the case that the particle **kóó** can occur both in the sentence initial and sentence final positions. In both positions it is able to change a declarative sentence into a polar question. Its counterpart **dún**, which also, on basis of semantics, can change a sentence from a declarative to a polar question, is however restrictive in its syntax; it occurs only in the sentence final position. These particles are however, mutually exclusive as one can have only one strategy at a time but never two within the same sentence at the same time. I also concluded that these question particles analysed as question operators never co-occur with the intonation strategy of falling intonation. I stipulated that one reason probably for the lack of co-occurrence between the two strategies is that they have the same function and so must not occur in same sentence, since only one is needed at any point in time for the purpose of forming a polar question. Putting the analysis on polar questions within the theoretical

framework of Minimalism as in Chomsky (1995), I opined that the question particles in polar questions are analysable as heads of interrogative phrases. These two strategies were argued to be available in the formation of polar questions in other Gur languages like Dagbani and Gurene as in the studies of Issah (2015) and Dakubu (2003) respectively, as well as other non-Gur languages such as Akan, Saah (1994).

It was further shown that the particle **kóó** that appears in polar questions is the same that occurs in alternative questions. Unlike in polar questions, where it occurs either clause finally or initially, in the case of alternative questions, the question particle occurs in the medial position in-between the two alternatives out of which the listener is expected to choose a response. It was also argued that the alternative questions can occur in both positive and negative polarity sentences. Considering the structure of polar questions, I draw a structural similarity between them and alternative questions by proposing that polar questions are truncated alternative questions. The question particle **kóó** which occurs in-between the alternatives in alternative questions is argued to be a disjunctive operator in the formation of alternative questions.

Finally, I gave a vivid account of the formation of content questions, which are also termed as *wh* questions. The formation of content questions in Sisaaltɔ was argued to involve both in-situ and ex-situ strategies. Based on the observation that two means are available, I proposed that in the realm of typology, Sisaaltɔ be described as an optional fronting language as proposed for languages which have the means of forming content questions in the works of Siemund (2001), König & Siemund (2007). These two different ways of forming the content questions were also shown to have different syntax. For instance the ex-situ means of forming content questions will

always have it that the question word be fronted to the sentence initial position (a position that Saah (1994) refers to as the pre-sentential position. This has also been referred to as the left periphery of the clause, Rizzi (1997). When the question word occurs in this position, there is also the need for a focus marker to immediately follow this question word. This focus marker is said to be a head of a focus phrase that is realised in the left periphery during the formation of ex-situ content question. In the theory of Minimalist framework, and following proposals of analysis of content questions, I argued that the movement of the question words to the sentence-initial position is as a result of some strong focus features that the question words carry that need to be checked before spell out. This is what makes it compulsory for focus markers which will go into configuration with the question words for the features to be checked, a phenomenon that is called Spec-Head relationship in syntax. When there is fronting of the question words without the focus markers, the sentence will always be ungrammatical.

I therefore postulate that the head position is always supposed to be filled with the focus marker. Thus I proposed that the structure of the content questions is [SpecFoc Q-word<sub>i</sub> [Foc' [IP..... t<sub>i</sub> ...]]]. It has been established in the literature that the head position of a functional projection must be filled, which accounts for the ungrammatical sentences that are formed when functional heads are missing in linguistic structures. Marfo and Bodomo (2005:201) adopt this same structural analysis to account for ungrammatical sentences in Akan where there is no overt morphological presence of the focus marker **na** following the extraction of Q-words from their base positions to the left periphery of the clause. They are also said to have the same structure of focus constructions since the movement is for focus checking.

Also in giving an account of the focus markers that occur in Sisaalt ex-situ content questions, I showed that there are two of them, each of them occurring in specific context. The focus markers were identified as **né**, and **ré** which are compulsory anytime a question word is fronted. This was seen not to be without precedent since focus and content questions have been argued to have the same structure in most natural languages of the world. There were observations that the two focus markers are not in free variation. This is because **ré** focus-marks question words that end in vowels while **né** focus-marks question words that end in consonants. Similar argument on asymmetry between vowels and consonants has been observed in Kitharaka as in Muriungi (2003). I therefore concluded, based on the data used for the analysis, that the fronting of question words in Sisaalt is triggered by focus. This analysis tallies with the claims of Sabel (2000) who opines that movement of question words in content questions in natural languages can be accounted for universally by suggesting that their movement is universally triggered by [+wh] and [+focus] features both of which are [+interpretable] and can be as [±strong]. Accordingly, focus markers which appear in content questions are seen as functional projections.

Finally I also showed that it is possible to form content questions in which there is no need for fronting of the question words. This class of content questions is referred to as in-situ content questions. They, unlike the fronted content questions, do not need any focus marker and so the question word occurs in its base position in the syntax. When interrogative words are in the in-situ position, they are less emphatic and prominent as compared to those in the ex-situ position (which are more prominent, emphatic and focussed). In addition to this, the in-situ type of content questions is mostly used in echo questions where the speaker wants confirmation or clarification

about information s/he received. The question that one is confronted with is: what accounts for this type of content questions? Using the Minimalist Theory I propose that in-situ strategy means that the uninterpretable focus features that the question word carries in this context are weak and so do not need to be checked by any form of movement. Once the features are weak, within Minimalist theory, they do not cause a crash in the syntax. I therefore concluded that Sisaalt is an optional fronting language and that the fronting or leaving of the question words in the base position is about the strength of the features that need to be checked within the syntax.

### **5.3 Conclusions and Potential Areas for Further Research Work**

It has been established in this thesis that, Sisaalt uses various means for purposes of forming questions. The means of forming questions have also been seen to be dependent on the type of question that is under consideration. The questions examined include polar, alternative and content questions. I demonstrated that the polar questions of Sisaalt are formed through the use of both syntactic and phonological means. The syntactic strategy of forming polar questions is by adding question particles to declarative sentences to change them to polar questions. These particles which I analysed as question operations occur either in the clause initial position or clause final position but never the two at the same time. The phonological strategy that is argued to be used in Sisaalt, aside the syntactic way of forming polar questions was observed to be the use of falling intonation. This method of forming polar questions was also shown to be incompatible with the syntactic means of forming the polar questions. Alternative questions are demonstrated to be formed by the use of a question particle which also occurs in-between the two alternatives.

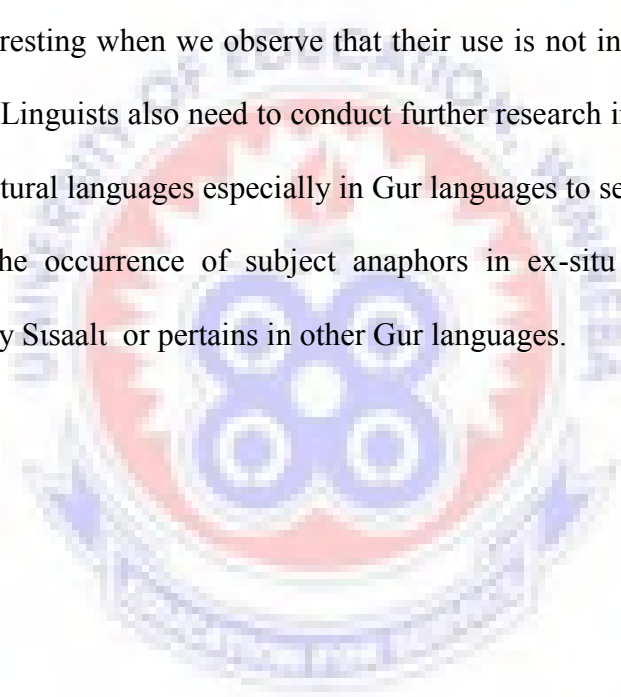
Finally content questions were also investigated. I demonstrated that there are two main strategies that are used in the formation of content questions: the ex-situ and in-situ type of content question. While the former requires the fronting of the question words together with the introduction of focus markers, the latter requires that the question word be left in its base position. Within the Minimalist framework of accounting for movement, the movement indicated that the focus features in the question word is strong while leaving it at the base position showed that it is weak. I further argued that the focus phrase which comprises the question phrase plus focus is base generated in-situ and then moved as a result of the strong focus feature and it is this focus phrase that is moved to the sentence initial position. It can be said that the question phrase occupies [Spec, Foc.P], with focus as its head. I concluded that the movement of question phrase in Sisaalt must best be seen as an instance of focus movement since it requires the need for a focus marker when it is fronted. This assumption is not unknown in the literature of African linguistics, in the context of Ghanaian linguistics (both Gur and non-Gur languages) as well as other African languages spoken outside Ghana. The fact that the language has two different focus markers is not also unknown in the Gur literature. Their occurrence was shown to be based on whether the fronted question word ends in a vowel or consonant.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

In line with the findings made in this work, I outline the following as potential areas for further research in the study of Sisaalt grammar. Firstly, cases of long distance movement of question words were not discussed in this work. Further research into this area could contribute to typological claims on the properties of question

movement and especially contribute to the theoretical foundations of movement in syntactic theory.

Also the observation that the language has two different focus markers is also an interesting area that will need further investigation to really get the syntactic basis for the two focus markers in the language. Though it is the case for other Gur languages, no detailed research has been conducted in any of these languages to see what may motivate the existence of two focus markers in a particular language. This is especially interesting when we observe that their use is not in free variation in focus constructions. Linguists also need to conduct further research into instances of subject anaphors in natural languages especially in Gur languages to see whether the syntactic distribution- the occurrence of subject anaphors in ex-situ focus constructions-is peculiar to only Sisaalt or pertains in other Gur languages.



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**APPENDIX A**

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS

RESEARCH TOPIC: QUESTION FORMATION IN SISAALI

**A. BIO-DATA**

1. SEX        Male                                [ ]

                  Female                                [ ]

2. AGE

25-30    [ ]

31-35    [ ]

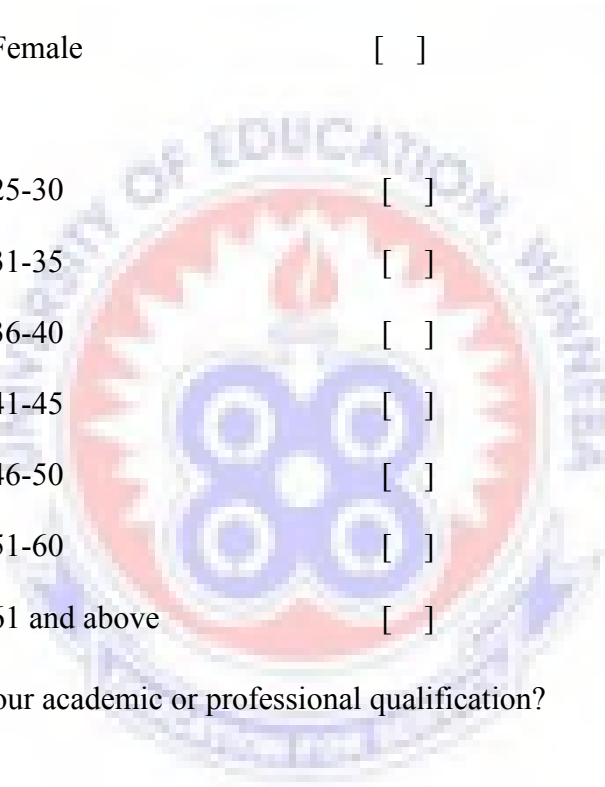
36-40    [ ]

41-45    [ ]

46-50    [ ]

51-60    [ ]

61 and above                                    [ ]



3. What is your academic or professional qualification?

DEGREE    [ ]

DIPLOMA     [ ]

Teacher CERT' "A"                           [ ]

O'LEVEL     [ ]

A'LEVEL     [ ]

SSSCE/WASSCE                                [ ]

Others, specify .....

4. How many years have you been working on Sisaali?

1-5 years [ ]

6-10 years [ ]

11- 15 years [ ]

16 -20 years [ ]

20 years and above [ ]

5. How long have you been working for GILLBT?

Yes [ ]

NO [ ]

6. Have you done any translation works in Sisaali/ part of translation team at GILLBT?

Yes [ ]

NO [ ]

7. If YES, for how long have you been translating?

1-3 [ ]

4-6 [ ]

7- 9 [ ]

10 and above [ ]

*Kindly translate the following sentences. Where there is likely to be different semantic implication/versions to a sentence please indicate (please show all possible interpretation).*

**B. POLAR QUESTIONS**

8. Will he come?

.....  
.....

9. Will they farm this year?

.....  
.....

10. Is their house far?

.....  
.....

11. Will Hajeri come today?

.....  
.....

12. Will her father pay for her?

.....  
.....

13. Will the visitors arrive today?

.....  
.....

14. Is her wedding today?

.....  
.....

**C. ALTERNATIVE QUESTIONS**

15. Will Ajara arrive today or tomorrow?

.....  
.....

16. Is the meeting on Monday or Tuesday?

.....  
.....

17. Do you like pito or mashed T.Z?

.....  
.....

18. Will Duma eat the rice or T.Z?

.....  
.....

19. Is Bawa going to Yaala or Kundugu?

.....  
.....

**D. FOCUS QUESTIONS/SENTENCES**

20. What did Luri buy?

.....  
.....

21. It is a book that Luri bought.

.....  
.....

22. Daari bought a car

.....  
.....

23. It is a car that Daari bought

.....  
.....

24. It is Daari who bought a car.

.....  
.....

25. Duma will learn a lesson today.

.....  
.....

26. It is today that Duma will learn a lesson

.....  
.....

27. What will Duma learn today?

.....  
.....

28. Maria will eat the food here.

.....  
.....

29. It is here that Maria will eat the food.

.....  
.....



30. What will Maria eat?

.....  
.....

E. CONTENT QUESTIONS (EX-SITU)

31. Who will Bawa give the money to?

.....  
.....

32. Where will the visitors sit?

.....  
.....

33. How did he come?

.....  
.....

34. Which one does she want?

.....  
.....

35. When is Christmas?

.....  
.....

36. When will your father return?

.....  
.....

37. What did you bring from Wa?

.....  
.....

F. CONTENT QUESTIONS (IN-SITU)

38. \*The children will sit where?

.....  
.....

39. \*They will send Ajara to who?

.....  
.....

40. \*Saaka is buying what?

.....  
.....

41. \*Awuro is going where?

.....  
.....

42. She wants which one?

.....  
.....

## APPENDIX B

### Sample of Recorded and Transcribed Texts

#### STORYTELLING

##### TITLE: THE SPIDER AND HIS KNOWLEDGE GOURD

Introduction Song: *ma leŋ di á baari jaŋ na*

*Bee wii ba kaŋ ko (2x)*

**Badari rɛ siye**, a baa di v sɪ ɔllɪ paa duntɪya wɪgyɔŋ buloŋ, dɪ v dɔŋ yaa wɪgyɔnnɪ duntɪya no buloŋ tɪyaŋ. Ɛɛ rɛ v sɪi kpa v ɔarɪɔɪya, a ɔllɪ duntɪya loŋɪŋ kɛ buloŋ, a paa wɪgyɔŋ buloŋ a we ɔarɪɔɪya hu tɪyaŋ, a yaŋ kpa kɪŋ nyɪra tɔ ɔarɪɔɪya hu nyuwa.

Ɛɛ rɛ v baa dɪ see v kyɛɛ tɪdɔlii lee, a kaŋ wɪgyɔŋ hu ɔyɪŋ faŋa dɪ nal buloŋ ta ko na v lee. Nyɛ rɛ v sɪi mu na kpul-dɔlii kɪdɪɔɪ. **Dɔŋ nɛ v** kaŋ ŋmaŋ vɔwa ɔarɪɔɪya hu baɔuna, a kpa laalt ɔɛɛ anu pɪntɪrɪ aŋ mu dɪ kpɔla hu. Ɛɛ rɛ ɔarɪɔɪya laa sɪya mu yɪ tɪya hu, v noɪ mɛ bee kyeme tɪya hu, v ɔyɪŋ ɔyɪŋ lɔlɔ aŋ kpa ta. A bɪl marɪ mu dɪ v ɔyɪŋ, dɪ ɔɛɛ tu. Ɛɛ rɛ Badari su buloŋ nɪma, v bɪ ɔyɪŋ u aa sɪ yaa ɔɛɛ a ɔyɪŋ tɪya hu v sɪŋ kɪ dɪ nanɪɔɪ ɔɛɛ rɛ, dɪ nanɪbaɔɪl mɛ

A spider one day decided to go round the world and gather all the knowledge in the world so that he can alone will be knowledgeable in the world. He picked his gourd and set off for the journey. He went round every loop and crump in the world gathering knowledge and depositing them in his gourd. After gathering all the knowledge, he covered it tightly and thought of a very safe place to keep it.

After pondering for a while, he decided to hung it on a very tall tree where people will not have access to. In his search for the most tall tree, he saw a coconut tree and decided to hung it on it. He used a rope to tie the gourd and hanged it around his neck like a drum. He then decided to climb the tree with the gourd in gourd in front of him. He tried to several times to climb the tree to no

gollo dho ko ban ki mu, a na u, a suh ki mu ma u. u leh Badari luga ko mu mo gae, ka u yan, “h bagyowa Badari, bee i lol gaa” Ee re Badari gal daasi. Nanbagil piyisi u di **bee re u ki yaa don?** Nyere re Badari baa di tiya hu re u ki kye di u gyi, ka garigya hu ki domo u. Ee re nanbagil basi tiya u di u kan garigya hu ban ta u hal dulan ka di u luga na. Nyere re Badari kan garigya viisi ban ta u hal, an mu sogisi tiya, di u ke gyi ki mu.

Don ne Badari hakila yan ko anu hakila bulon daa u kana gae. u tiya bulon kyogi, u na baan, a kpa garigya hu yaga kyeji. Ee re ti gyi lu gyaasi duniya bulon, nal nal bulon kan wigi gae.

avail because of the position of the gourd. He became frustrated, restless and dejected. In his state of frustration came a hunter who went out hunting. The hunter who had seen Spider, stood behind him laughing at his several failed attempts to climb the tree. After a while, hunter greeted spider and asked what the matter is. Spider responded saying he has tried time without number to climb this tree but failed. Hunter told him to push the gourd to his back and climb. Spider paid heed to the advice of Hunter, pushed the gourd to his back and easily, he climbed the tree.

It was there that Spider realised that it is not every knowledge that he had gathered. He became very angry that he threw the gourd which contained the knowledge to the ground. The gourd got broken and all the knowledge in it spread throughout the world once again.

## Story (2) The Poor Man's Hen

Baal kɔdɔgɛ rɛ gyɛ wɛ dɔŋ, a yaa nyaabu kpuŋkpɛlu U bi kaŋ haan, a bi kaŋ kyana mɛ, a bi kaŋ biye. U kɛn bulon v gyɛ a kana rɛ yaa gyinudigi dɔŋ. U wɛ dɔŋ gɛɛ, kyɛɛ kɔdɔgɛ v aa sii dɛ gyimii hu nyɛɛ hal. U mu kpa gyihal hu dɛ v aa tɔl gɛɛ nyulunyulu

U kpaa dɛ v dɛŋ dɛ hal hu yaa salɛn. Ka v ha bi laa dɛ. Ɛɛ rɛ v kaŋ salɛn hu mu salma bayaliya lee, ba laa yɔbɔ aŋ baa dɛ salɛn tu rɛ. Nyaabu laa molbiye hu, a mugi kpa dɛyɛst ko dɛya. Siya gballa, dɛ gyimii bil nyɛɛ hal, u yaa salɛn. Nyaabu mu kpa, aŋ baa, “Aɛ, nyaabu nyusun bee. kɛ tu rɛ kpɔv kyuwomo nyɛ?” aŋ bil kaŋ mu yallɛ. Muhu muhu, dɛ baal kɛ duwa kɛna kɛ su diya rɛ. ka kyɛɛ bee nyɔwa bulon, gyimii hu mɛ aa nyɛ salɛn nɛ. Nyaabu yaa gɛɛ rɛ a ko mu ki kyɛ v burum paalɔv hu bulon dɔwan. Ɛɛ rɛ kyɛɛ kɔdɔgɛ v hɔŋ bunt v tɛya tɛyan a baa, “v ku. Nu salma rɛ suu ŋ gyimii hu bulon. Ɛɛ wɛya, see dɛ ŋ Kaŋ kpɔ, a kuwoni salma hu bulon a yan yaa dɔwan dɔgɛ dɔŋ. Gyihadɔgɛ kyɔlu kyɔlu no aa kyɔlu siya rɛ.” Ɛɛ rɛ v sii kaŋ gyimii a kpɔ. U wara dɛ gyihamiil mɛ paalɛ tuwo gyimii hu tɛya tɛyan. Na gyimii hu dɛ suba.

Once there lived a very poor man, who had no wife, children or friend. The only thing he ever had was a hen. For a very long time the hen never laid an egg. One morning the poor man woke up to his surprise, the hen had laid an egg. He drew closer, picked the egg and saw that it was shiny. He looked at it again and to his surprise, it was gold. He quickly took it to those who deal in gold and sold it. He took the money and rejoiced home. The following day, the hen laid yet another egg which was also gold. The Poor said to himself “what kind of luck is this?” he picked it and sold again.

This continued and within a short period of time, the poor man became one of the richest men in the community. One day, the man thought to himself “it seems it is only gold that is inside this hen of mine. Instead of waiting for it to lay a piece each day, let me just kill it and remove all the gold and become the richest once and for all in the entire community. He then killed the hen, dissected it and to his shock, not even a zygote was found inside the hen. The worse was that his only source of income too was gone.

### Things to Reflect Upon

1. **bekiŋ nɛ yaa hiyemu koo tɔbal?**
2. **bee rɛ tɛn v bi maga dɛ a kɛ kyɛ gyinan dɛi dɔŋ?**

1. What is selfishness or greed?
2. Why must we not think of today alone?