

Animacy distinction in Kaakye

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Abstract

This paper investigates the nature of animacy distinction in Kaakye (Kwa, Niger–Congo). It describes the various grammatical manifestations of the animacy

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concept in Kaakye. The data presented shows that animacy is a crucial determinant in the choice of forms and behaviours of nominal prefixes, pronouns, nominal modifiers, and concord subject marking. The study concludes that Kaakye is sensitive to the notion of animacy-based distinction, and similar to other Kwa languages, Kaakye shows a higher preference for animate versus inanimate distinction than human versus non-human distinction. However, unlike related languages such as Akan and Nkami, Kaakye consistently maintains animacy distinctions in object position, regardless of topicality or verb transitivity. This contrasts with the tendency in Akan and Nkami to compromise such distinctions in similar contexts. The description provided in the paper aims to contribute to the cross-linguistic study of the role of animacy in the grammar of languages.

Keywords: Kaakye (Krachi), animacy distinction, object pronominalisation, topicality, verb transitivity

Résumé

Distinction de l'animation en Kaakye

Cet article étudie la nature de la distinction d'animalité en kaakye (kwa, Niger-Congo). Il décrit les diverses manifestations grammaticales du concept d'animalité en kaakye. Les données présentées montrent que l'animalité est un déterminant crucial dans le choix des formes et des comportements des préfixes nominaux, des pronoms, des modificateurs nominaux et du marquage du sujet de concordance. L'étude conclut que le kaakye est sensible à la notion de distinction basée sur l'animalité, et comme d'autres langues kwa, le kaakye montre une

plus grande préférence pour la distinction animé/inanimé que pour la distinction humain/non-humain. Cependant, contrairement à des langues apparentées telles que l'akan et le nkami, le kaakye maintient systématiquement les distinctions d'animalité en position d'objet, indépendamment des tendances actuelles ou de la transitivité du verbe. Cela contraste avec la tendance de l'akan et du nkami à compromettre ces distinctions dans des contextes similaires. La description fournie dans cet article vise à contribuer à l'étude interlinguistique du rôle de l'animalité dans la grammaire des langues.

Mots clés: Kaakye (Krachi), distinction d'animalité, pronominalisation de l'objet, tendances actuelles, transitivité du verbe

Introduction¹

The notion of animacy, which spans a continuum from humans to animals and then to inanimate entities, has long been a subject of interest for linguists, particularly those working in functional typology² (cf. Silverstein, 1976; Givón, 1984; Comrie, 1989; Corbett, 1991; Dahl & Fraurud, 1996; Yamamoto, 1999; Dahl, 2000, 2008; Iemmolo, 2014; among others). In many of these studies, animacy is regarded as an inherent semantic

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² Other studies have focussed on the cognitive processing and cognitive effects of animacy (Yamamoto 1999).

property of noun referents that influences a range of grammatical phenomena across languages³. Within the functional typological literature, animacy is often characterised as a three-step hierarchy:

human > animals (animate) > inanimate, where animacy is conceptualised as an extra-linguistic property reflected in linguistic structures (Comrie, 1989). This classification is assumed to emanate from the speaker's view of objects in the universe where humans are considered more interesting and valuable than animals, and animals more so than inanimate objects (Ransom, 1977).

Animacy, though a universal linguistic phenomenon, is not grammatically manifested in the same way across all languages (Dahl & Fraurud, 1996; Comrie, 1989; Yamamoto, 1999). As Yamamoto (1999, p.1) points out, “the linguistic manifestation of animacy is somehow complicated since languages vary in the way they manifest animacy; whether it is associated with certain particular formal constructions depends on the grammar of individual languages”. Cross-linguistic studies have shown that the sensitivity to the notion of animacy distinction may be expressed through the use of morphological affixes, referential expressions (pronouns), and in the expression and interpretation of core syntactic arguments (Comrie, 1989; Dahl & Fraurud, 1996).

Animacy plays a role in Kaakye grammar (Snider, 1988; Korboe, 2001; Dundaa, 2005; Agbedor & Adonae, 2005; Abunya, 2010, 2018; Abunya & Osam, 2022) just as it does in other Kwa languages (see Boadi, 1976; Saah, 1995, 2017; Osam, 1994, 1996 on Akan; Akrofi Ansah, 2009 on Leteh; Asante & Akanlig-Pare,

³ Examples of such grammatical phenomena are differential object marking (Aissen, 2003; Iemmolo 2014), passive construction (Dingare, 2001), and dative alternation (Bresnan et al., 2005)

2015; Asante, 2016 on Nkami; Dorvlo, 2009 on Logba; Korsah, 2017 on Ga). This paper builds on these works by providing a more comprehensive account of the nature of animacy distinction in Kaakye, a North Guan Tano language in the Kwa sub-group of the Niger-Congo family (Williamson & Blench, 2000; Simons & Fennig, 2018). It examines the various structural or grammatical manifestations of the animacy concept in Kaakye grammar by focusing on the choice of forms and behaviours of nominal prefixes, pronouns, nominal modifiers, and concord subject marking. It also discusses some animacy constraints in the language and offers some functional explanations to these constraints.

The findings of this paper enhance our understanding of animacy distinctions in Guan-Kwa languages specifically and contribute to the broader cross-linguistic study of animacy. Additionally, they reinforce and add depth to the observation that animacy is a prominent areal-typological feature of Kwa languages, particularly within the Potou-Tano subgroup, which has not received the scholarly attention it deserves (cf. Osam, 1996; Asante & Akanlig-Pare, 2015). Although this is not a comparative study, many of the observations in Kaakye discussed are related to other regional languages, particularly, Nkami and Akan, in order to highlight their similarities and differences.

The rest of the paper is organised as follows: the next section provides information on the Kaakye language and the data sources. The subsequent sections examine the linguistic ways in which the notion of animacy manifests itself in Kaakye grammar, with particular focus on the animate/inanimate distinction and human/non-human distinction in Kaakye.

Kaakye language and data sources

Kaakye ⁴, a North Guan (Kwa, Niger–Congo) language, is predominantly spoken in the Krachi West District and parts of the Krachi East District in the Oti Region of Ghana. It is classified into two main dialect groups: Le-ka Kaakye and Oti-ka Kaakye (Adonae, 2005). This study focuses on the Le-ka dialect, which has a larger speaker base and serves as the foundation for literacy efforts in the language. Kaakye is a tonal language with two basic level tones—high (´) and low (`)—that perform both lexical and grammatical functions (Adonae, 2005; Snider, 1990).

Kaakye has a nine (9) vowel system /i, e, o, u, a, ɪ, ɛ, ɔ, ʊ/ ⁵ (Korboe, 2001). The vowels are distinguished by an Advanced Tongue Root (ATR) ⁶ feature. They are [+ATR] set: /i, e, o, u/ and [–ATR] set: /ɪ, ɛ, ɔ, ʊ/ as shown in (1a) ⁷. The low vowel /a/ can co-occur with vowels of both sets, as in (1b).

⁴ This term, interestingly, has many alternatives, such as Krachi, Kraachi, Kaakyi, Krache, and Krakye; however, in this study, the term Kaakye is used in the restrictive sense to mean the native speakers of the language and the language itself.

⁵ Snider's (1989) observation suggests that the nasal vowels /ɪ̃/, /ɛ̃/, /ɔ̃/, /ũ/, /ẽ/, /õ/, and /ã/ exist in North Guan languages.

⁶ There are, however, a few exceptions to this rule.

⁷ The abbreviations used in this paper are as follows: 1= first person; 2=second person; 3=third-person; ANM= Animate; ATR=Advanced tongue root; CD=Clause determiner; DDD= Distal demonstrative determiner; DDP=Distal demonstrative pronoun, DET=Determiner, FM= Focus marker; FST=Folk story; FUT=Future; HAB= Habitual; INANM=Inanimate; INDEF=Indefinite; NEG=Negative; OBJ=Object; PDD= Proximal demonstrative determiner; PDP=Proximal demonstrative pronoun; PERF=Perfect; PL=Plural; POSS=Possessive; PRES=Present; PST=Past tense; PT=Procedural Text; REL=Relative marker; SG=Singular; STAT=Stative; SUBJ=Subject.

‘Ama drank the water.’

b. *o é-nu nkyu wó* ➡ [*ó-nu nkyu wó*]
3SG.SUBJ PST-drink water DET
‘She drank the water.’

c. *mɪ é-nu nkyu wó* ➡ [*mé-nu nkyu wó*]
1SG.SUBJ PST-drink water DET
‘I drank the water.’

The third-person singular subject prefix in Kaakye is *ò-*/*ǝ-*. In the past tense construction in (2b), the subject prefix *ò-* assimilates the high tone of the past tense marker, causing the segmental past tense marker *é-* to be deleted. In (2c), the first-person singular subject prefix, fully realised as *mɪ-*, similarly assimilates the past tense marker *é-*.

The database for this paper comprises both verbal and written sources. The verbal data include spontaneous speech and elicited texts collected from native speakers in Kete Krachi, one of the major Kaakye-speaking towns. Recordings were made of spontaneous conversations on specific topics, folk stories, and narrations, which were subsequently transcribed. Language consultants, including staff members of the Ghana Institute of Linguistics and Literacy Translation (GILLBT) Kaakye Project, along with other native speakers, assisted in verifying and interpreting the data. Additionally, the study draws on data from some of the previously mentioned papers and theses.

Animate and inanimate distinctions

This section discusses animate and inanimate distinctions in Kaakye based on the pronominal system and concord subject marking.

Pronominal system

Pronouns convey information about their referents, though the

amount of information may vary across languages. Like other Kwa languages, Kaakye has a pronominal system that distinguishes number for all persons. Additionally, the system incorporates an animacy-based opposition. This section examines the forms and behaviours of subject pronouns, object pronouns, possessive pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, indefinite pronouns, and definite pronouns in relation to animacy distinctions.

Subject pronouns

Example (3) is a list of subject pronouns in Kaakye. The distribution shows that Kaakye makes animacy distinctions based on the forms of the third-person subject pronouns.

(3)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1st	<i>mì-/mì-</i> ‘I’	<i>arì-/arì-</i> ‘we’
	2nd	<i>fù-/fù-</i> ‘you’	<i>bèrí/bèrí</i> ‘you’
	3rd animate	<i>ò-/ò-</i>	‘she/he’ <i>bè/bè-</i> ‘they’
	3rd inanimate	<i>ì-/ì-</i> ‘it’	<i>ì-/ì-</i> ‘they’

As illustrated in (3), the third-person singular subject pronominal prefix for animate nouns (including human nouns) is *ò-/ò-*, whereas for inanimate nouns, it is *ì-/ì-*. In (4b) and (5b), the animal noun subject *kwàtá* ‘tortoise’ and the human noun subject *òkyí* ‘woman’ are replaced by *ò-* because both are animate nouns. Examples (4c) and (5c) are ungrammatical because the animate nouns are incorrectly replaced with *ì-*.

- (4)
- | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| a. | <i>Kwàtá</i> | <i>wú</i> | <i>é-tà</i> | <i>òkòtó</i> | <i>wú.</i> |
| | tortoise | DET | PST-take | sack | DET |
| | ‘The tortoise took the sack.’ | | | | |
| b. | <i>ó-tà</i> | | | <i>òkòtó</i> | <i>wú.</i> |
| | 3SG.SUBJ.PST-take | | | sack | DET |
| | ‘It took the sack.’ (FST.5) | | | | |
| c. | <i>*ì -tà</i> | | | <i>òkòtó</i> | <i>wú</i> |

3SG.SUBJ.PST–take sack DET
'It took the sack.'

- (5) a. *Ōkyì wó é-ηésé kèkìnyí wó.*
woman DET PST–smoke fish DET
'The woman smoked the fish.'
- b. *ó-ηésé kèkìnyí wó.*
3SG.SUBJ.PST–smoke fish DET
'She smoked the fish.'
- c. **ì-ηésé kèkìnyí wó.*
3SG.SUBJ.PST–smoke fish DET
'She smoked the fish.'

In (6b), however, *ì-* replaces *yàbrá* 'millet' because its referent is inanimate. Example (6c) is ungrammatical as the inanimate noun is incorrectly replaced with *ó-*.

- (5) a. *Yábrà wó ké-kwè kpààtí.*
millet DET FUT–germinate small
'The millet will germinate small.'
- b. *ì-ké-kwè kpààtí*
3SG.SUBJ-FUT–germinate small
'It will germinate a little.' (PT2)
- c. **ó-ké-kwè kpààtí.*
3SG.SUBJ-FUT–germinate small
'It will germinate a little.'

Object pronoun

Kaakye also distinguishes between animate and inanimate nouns through the forms of the third-person object pronouns, as seen in (7).

(7)	Person	Singular	Plural
	1st	<i>wí</i> ‘me’	<i>àrí</i> ‘us’
	2 nd	<i>fù</i> ‘you’	<i>bèrí</i> ‘you’
	3rd animate	<i>wú</i> ‘him/her’	<i>búð</i> ‘them’
	3rd inanimate	<i>-Ø</i> ‘it’	<i>Ø</i> ‘them’

When a pronoun substitutes for a singular animate (human and animal) noun/NP in the object position, the pronominal form *wú*⁹ ‘him/her’ is used, as shown in (8) and (9). In contrast, inanimate referents are represented by zero, as in (10).

- (8) a. *Kòfí ké-sùð gyòòró wú.*
 Kofi FUT-buy dog DET
 ‘Kofi will buy the dog.’
- b. *Kòfí ké-sùð wú.*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.ANM.OBJ
 ‘Kofi will buy it.’
- c. **Kòfí ké-sùð Ø*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ
 ‘Kofi will buy it.’
- (9) a. *Kòfí ké-gyè kiyàfón wú .*
 Kofi FUT- chase boy DET
 ‘Kofi will chase the boy.’
- b. *Kòfí ké-gyè wú.*
 Kofi FUT- chase 3SG.ANM.OBJ

⁹ It is worth mentioning that the form *wú* is multi-functional in Kaakye. It functions as a definite determiner, a third-person singular object pronoun, a clause final determiner, and a distal demonstrative determiner (Abunya & Osam, 2022, p. 8)

- ‘Kofi will chase him.’
- c. **Kofi* *ké-gyè* \emptyset
Kofi FUT– chase 3SG.INANM.OBJ
‘Kofi will chase him.’
- (10) a. *Kòfi* *ké-sù ò* *kùgyò wú.*
Kofi FUT–buy yam DET
‘Kofi will buy the yam.’
- b. *Kòfi* *ké-sù ò* \emptyset
Kofi FUT–buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ
‘Kofi will buy it.’
- c. **Kòfi* *ké-sù ò* *wù.*
Kofi FUT–buy 3SG.ANM.OBJ
‘Kofi will buy it.’ (Elicited)

It is noticed that, in (8b) and (9b), the referents of *wù* are the animal noun *gyòòrò wù* ‘the dog’ and the human noun *kìyàfòrò wù* ‘the boy’, respectively. However, the inanimate object *kùgyò wù* ‘the yam’ in (10a) is covertly coded in (10b). This demonstrates that while animate entities are overtly pronominalised in the object position, inanimate entities are pronominalised covertly in the same position. Animacy, therefore, influences the choice of pronoun forms.

The behaviour of the third-person singular object pronoun in relation to animacy is not unique to Kaakye; it follows a similar pattern in other Kwa languages such as Akan¹⁰ and Nkami, as shown in (11–12) and (13), respectively.

- (11) Akan (Osam, 1996, p.160)
- a. *Kofi bɔ-tɔn abofra no.*

¹⁰ According to Saah (2017), this phenomenon which he refers to as “the null third-person object” in Akan, is regulated by three conditions: i) the Animacy Condition; ii) the Clause-final/Right Edge Condition; and iii) the Lexical Condition.

- Kofi FUT-buy child DET
 ‘Kofi will sell the child.’
 b. *Kofi bɔ-tɔn no.*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.
 ‘Kofi will sell him/her.’
- (12) a. *Kofi bɔ-tɔn dua no.*
 Kofi FUT-buy tree DET
 ‘Kofi will sell the tree.’
 b. *Kofi bɔ-tɔn Ø.*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG
 ‘Kofi will sell it.’
- (13) Nkami (Asante & Akanlig-Pare, 2015, p. 73)
 a. *Kofi bɛ-sɔ ɔkplɪ amɔ. → Kofi bɛ-sɔ mɔ.*
 Kofi FUT-buy dog DET
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.ANIM.OBJ
 ‘Kofi will buy the dog.’ → ‘Kofi will buy it.’
 b. *Kofi bɛ-sɔ ɔfɔdʒɪ amɔ. → Kofi bɛ-sɔ Ø.*
 Kofi FUT-buy broom DET → Kofi FUT-buy
 ‘Kofi will buy the broom.’ → ‘Kofi will buy it.’

In the next sub-sections, we examine instances where these Kwa languages differ in terms of how they realise the object pronoun in certain contexts.

Animacy neutralisation of the 3SG object pronoun in Kwa languages

There are two instances where Kwa languages appear to differ in the covert realisation of the 3SG inanimate object pronoun (cf. Osam, 1996; Asante & Akanlig-Pare, 2015). First, according to Osam (1996, p. 160), in Akan “when an inanimate direct object is directly followed by a temporal adverb the animacy distinction is compromised” as (14) illustrates.

- (14) a. *Kofi bɔ-tɔn dua no ɔkyena.*
Kofi FUT-buy tree DET tomorrow
‘Kofi will sell the tree tomorrow.’
b. *Kofi bɔ-tɔn no ɔkyena.*
Kofi FUT-buy 3SG tomorrow
‘Kofi will sell it tomorrow.’ (Osam, 1996, p. 161)

In (14b) the inanimate object *dua no* ‘the tree’ in (14a) is replaced by the direct object pronoun *no* when the direct object is followed by the temporal adverb *ɔkyena* ‘tomorrow’. What this suggests is that the referent of *no* ‘3SG.OBJ’ could be an animate object as illustrated in (11b) or an inanimate as shown in (14b). In other words, in Akan, the construction *Kofi bɔ-tɔn no ɔkyena* ‘Kofi will sell it tomorrow’ is equivocal when it is used out of context.

Providing a functional explanation for the overt realisation of an inanimate object pronoun, Osam appeals to Givón’s (1984) pragmatic notion of topicality and remarks:

The reason the presence of an adverbial element in the post object position ... triggers the presence of the inanimate object pronoun is that since the direct object is more topical than an adverbial item, and since the immediate postverbal position defines direct objecthood in Akan, if the pronoun is not overtly present it would create the impression that the adverbial element is more topical than the direct object NP. It is as if the

inanimate object pronoun finds its topicality status threatened and so it has to make a physical appearance in order to assert its status (Osam, 1996, p. 162).

Osam's functional explanation for this phenomenon in Akan also applies to Kaakye. In Kaakye, the occurrence of an adverbial element similarly triggers the presence of an inanimate object pronoun, as (15–16) shows.

- (15) a. *Kòfi ké-sùò kùgyò wú.*
 Kofi FUT-buy yam DET
 ‘Kofi will buy the yam.’
 b. *Kòfi ké-sùò Ø*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ
 ‘Kofi will buy it.’
- (16) a. *Kòfi ké-sùò kùgyò wú òké/ké ké kùmánù*
 Kofi FUT-buy yam DET tomorrow/everyday
 ‘Kofi will buy the yam tomorrow/everyday.’
 b. *Kòfi ké-sùò yú òké/ké ké kùmánù*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ tomorrow/everyday
 ‘Kofi will buy it tomorrow/everyday.’
 c. **Kòfi ké-sùò wú òké/ké ké kùmánù*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.ANM.OBJ tomorrow/everyday
 ‘Kofi will buy it tomorrow/everyday.’
 d. **Kòfi ké-sùò Ø òké/ké ké kùmánù*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ tomorrow/everyday
 ‘Kofi will buy it tomorrow/everyday.’

In (15b) the inanimate direct object pronoun is covertly expressed. In (16b), however, the inanimate direct object pronoun *yú* is overtly expressed when it occurs immediately before the temporal adverb *òké* ‘tomorrow’. Notably, unlike Akan, Kaakye uses the form *yú*, which differs from the animate object pronoun *wú*, as shown in (16b). This distinction accounts for the ill-formedness of (16c). Additionally, example (16d) is ungrammatical because the inanimate direct object pronoun is

not realised in the presence of an adverbial element.

Here, it should also be noted that the overt realisation of the inanimate object pronoun is not limited to being conditioned by temporal adverbials such as *ɔ́ké* ‘tomorrow’, *kéké kùmánìj* ‘everyday’, and *ndiye* ‘yesterday,’ as is the case in Akan and Nkami. It also appears when followed by other adverbial elements like *kɛnɪɲɔ* ‘like that/anyway’ (17) and *bire ɲ* ‘quickly’ (18).

- (17) a. *Kofi kɛ-sɔ kùgyò wó kɛnɪɲɔ.*
 Kofi FUT-buy yam DET like that
 ‘Kofi will buy the yam like that/anyway.’
 b. *Kofi kɛ-sɔ yu kɛnɪɲɔ.*
 Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ like that
 ‘Kofi will buy it like that/anyway.’
- (18) *Sɛ Kofi è-ɲu kugyo wɔ, ɔ-kɛ-sɔ yu bireɲ.*
 if Kofi PRES-see yam DET, he-FUT-buy it quickly
 ‘If Kofi sees this yam, he will buy it immediately/quickly.’

In fact, it also surfaces when followed by a verb or verbs in SVCs, as in (19):

- (19) a. *Kofi é-fɛ kugyo wɔ bɛ sɛ Ama*
 Kofi PST-sell yam DET come give Ama
 ‘Kofi has sold the yam for Ama.’
 b. *Kofi é-fɛ yu bɛ sɛ Ama*
 Kofi PST-sell 3SG.INANM.OBJ come give Ama
 ‘Kofi has sold it for Ama.’
- (20) a. *Kofi é-fɛ kugyo wɔ bu Kumasi.*
 Kofi PST-sell yam DET be.LOC Kumasi
 ‘Kofi sold the yam in Kumasi.’
 b. *Kofi é-fɛ yu bu Kumasi.*
 Kofi PST-sell 3SG.INANM.OBJ be.LOC Kumasi
 ‘Kofi sold it in Kumasi.’

Thus, it appears that the inanimate object pronoun *yú* always surfaces when followed by another element, but only fails to do so when it occurs in clause-final position. For instance, when the temporal adverb *ðké* ‘tomorrow’ in (16a) is fronted to sentence-initial position to express ex-situ focus in (21a), and the direct object occurs at sentence-final position, the inanimate object pronoun is covertly realised. That explains the ungrammaticality of (21b).

- (21) a. *ðké* *γί* *Kðfi* *ké-sùð* *Ø*
 tomorrow FM Kofi FUT-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ
 ‘It is tomorrow that Kofi will buy it.’
 b. **ðké* *γί* *Kðfi* *ké-sùð* *yú*
 tomorrow FM Kofi FUT-buy
 3SG.INANM.OBJ
 ‘It is tomorrow that Kofi will buy it.’

Thus, the overt realisation of the inanimate object pronoun *yú* is not solely conditioned by the presence of an adverbial (or any other) element in the construction. Rather, both the object pronoun and the adverbial element must occur contiguously, with the latter immediately following the former.

In the case of Nkami, Asante and Akanlig-Pare (2015, p. 74) observe that, unlike Akan (and Kaakye), the inanimate pronominal object is always covertly marked regardless of the direct occurrence of a temporal adverb. Thus, as shown in (22b), “the presence of the temporal adverb *ɔtʃɛ* ‘tomorrow’ does not trigger the presence of the inanimate object pronoun *mɔ*, with the view of entrenching the object’s position as more topical than the adverb’s position” (Asante & Akanlig-Pare, 2015, p. 74).

- (22) a. *Kofi bɛ-fɛ* *oyi* *amɔ* *ɔtʃɛ*.
 Kofi FUT-sell tree DET tomorrow
 ‘Kofi will sell the tree tomorrow.’
 b. *Kofi bɛ-fɛ* *Ø* *ɔtʃɛ* (**Kofi bɛ-fɛ mɔ ɔtʃɛ*).

Kofi FUT–sell tomorrow
'Kofi will sell it tomorrow.'

Thus, like Kaakye, Nkami consistently upholds the animacy distinction in object position, regardless of the presence of a temporal adverbial, unlike Akan.

Asante and Akanlig–Pare (2015, p. 75) explain the difference between Nkami and Akan by drawing on insights from constraint–based approaches, noting that:

[the] distinction is necessitated by the different rankings of two constraints by the languages: i. TOPICALITY– requires that the overt statement of constituents in a clause be based on topicality hierarchy. ii. ANIMACY – requires that the overt statement of constituents in a clause be based on animacy hierarchy. Thus, whereas Akan considers the constraint on TOPICITY to be 'very crucial' and therefore ranks it higher than the constraint on ANIMACY, Nkami considers the constraint on TOPICALITY to be 'less crucial' and thus ranks it lower than the 'more crucial' one on ANIMACY.

Similar to Nkami, but unlike Akan, the presence of an overt object pronoun before an adverbial element in Kaakye does not result in ambiguity as the two pronominal objects have different forms: *yú* for inanimate antecedents and *wú* for animate antecedents. This distinction demonstrates that, unlike Akan and Nkami, which prioritise one constraint over the other, Kaakye ranks both constraints equally. Thus, TOPICALITY and ANIMICAY are 'equally crucial' for the overt statement of constituents in a clause. The exclusive use of *yú* for inanimate entities and *wú* for animate referents in object position provides strong evidence that animacy distinction is a fundamental aspect of Kaakye grammar. Example (23) summarises the discussion thus far on the distribution of third–person singular

object pronouns in Kaakye and other Kwa languages with respect to animacy.

(23) The distribution of object pronouns in Kaakye and other Kwa languages I

Language	Clause-Final Object Position		Animacy distinction is upheld	Non-clause Final Object position		Animacy distinction is upheld
	Anim ate	Inani mate		Anim ate	Inani mate	
Akan	no	Ø	YES	no	no	NO
Nkami	mu	Ø	YES	mu	Ø	YES
Kaakye	wu	Ø	YES	wu	yu	YES
Other Kwa languages	?? ¹¹	??	??	??	??	??

Animacy neutralisation: 3SG object pronoun vs ambitransitive verbs

The second instance where these three Kwa languages appear to differ in terms of the covert realisation of the 3SG inanimate object pronoun is when the 3SG inanimate object occurs in a clause that is predicated by an ambitransitive verb such as *nyɔkr* ‘crumple/squeeze’, *kyɔyɛ* ‘burn’, *gya* ‘break’, *nyɛtɛ* ‘spoil’, *pɪra* ‘injure/wound’, *gyo* ‘go bad/rotten’, *yɪɪɪ* ‘become cold’, *wu* ‘blunt/die’, *tii* ‘close’ and *nyɛkr* ‘wake’ in Kaakye. Asante and Akanlig-Pare (2015) aptly illustrate this phenomenon in Nkami with the ambitransitive verb *fɪ* ‘lose/disappear’ in (24), where (24a) is the underlying sentence and (24b-c) derive from it.

¹¹ The double question marks are used here to indicate uncertainty and/or a lack of information regarding other Kwa languages.

(24) Nkami (Asante & Akanlig-Pare, 2015, p. 74, e.g., 64)

- a. *Kofi le-fɪ ɛdalo amɔ.*
Kofi PRF-lose money DET
'Kofi has lost the money.'
- b. **Kofi le-fɪ Ø.*
Kofi PRF-lose
'Kofi has lost it.'
- c. *Kofi le-fɪ mɔ.*
Kofi PRF-lose it/him
'Kofi has lost it/him.'
- d. *Kofi le-fɪ Ø.*
Kofi PRF-lose
'Kofi is lost/has disappeared.'

Given our understanding thus far of the animacy constraint regarding the statement of the 3SG inanimate object pronoun in clause-final position in these languages, one would expect that *ɛdalo amɔ* 'the money', the clause-final, inanimate object NP in (24a) would be covertly realised when pronominalised, as (24b) illustrates. However, that is not the case as *ɛdalo amɔ* 'the money' must be overtly realised with *mɔ* '3SG.ANM', as in (24c). This, therefore, renders (24c) ambiguous as *mɔ*, out of context, could either refer to an inanimate referent, as in (24a), or any animate referent. So, *Kofi le-fɪ mɔ* could either index: 'Kofi has lost it (e.g. money: inanimate)' or 'Kofi has lost it (e.g. sheep: animate)' (Asante & Akanlig-Pare 2015, p. 89). Thus, the constraint on animacy in Nkami is compromised in such instances. An identical phenomenon appears to happen in Akan, as (25) illustrates.

(25) Akan

- a. *Kofi a-yera sika no.*
Kofi PRF-lose money DET
'Kofi has lost the money.'

- b. **Kofi a-yera* \emptyset .
'Kofi has lost it.'
- c. *Kofi a-yera no*.
'Kofi has lost it/him.'
- d. *Kofi a-yera* \emptyset .
'Kofi is lost/has disappeared.'

Thus, in both Nkami and Akan, the constraint on animacy is compromised since an inanimate object pronoun is overtly realised with the same form used to pronominalise animate antecedents when it occurs in a clause that is predicated by an ambitransitive verb. Kaakye also behaves in a similar way, as (26) shows.

- (26)
- a. *Kofi é-fwɪ atirenyi wu*.
Kofi PRF-lose money DET
'Kofi has lost the money.'
 - b. **Kofi é-fwɪ* \emptyset .
Kofi PRF-lose 3SG.OBJ.INANM
 - c. *Kofi é-fwɪ yu*.
Kofi PRF-lose 3SG.OBJ.INANM
'Kofi has lost it'.
 - d. *Kofi é-fwɪ* \emptyset .
Kofi PRF-lose 3SG.OBJ.INANM
'Kofi is lost/has disappeared.'

Just like Nkami and Akan, there is an overt statement of the inanimate object pronoun in (26c). Unlike, Nkami and Akan, however, the overt realisation of the pronoun does not render (26c) ambiguous. So, in (26c) *Kofi é-fwɪ yu* can only index 'Kofi has lost it' (money: inanimate)', but not 'Kofi has lost him/her (e.g., his son: animate)'. And this is made possible because Kaakye, unlike Akan and Nkami, has two distinct 3SG object pronouns: *wu* for animate antecedents and *yu* for inanimate antecedents. Example (27) summarises the discussion thus far on the distribution of 3SG object pronoun in

Kaakye and other Kwa languages in relation to animacy.

(27) The distribution of object pronouns in Kaakye and other Kwa languages II

Language	Clause-Final Object Position		Animacy distinction is upheld	After Ambitransitive Verbs		Animacy distinction is upheld
	Ani- mate	Inan- imate		Ani- mate	Inani- mate	
Akan	<i>no</i>	∅	YES	<i>no</i>	<i>no</i>	NO
Nkami	<i>mu</i>	∅	YES	<i>mu</i>	<i>mu</i>	NO
Kaakye	<i>wu</i>	∅	YES	<i>wu</i>	<i>yu</i>	YES
Other Kwa languages	??	??	??	??	??	??

Conclusively, we have observed that while the three (Potou–Tano) Kwa languages are similar in upholding animacy distinction of 3SG object pronouns in clause-final object position, they vary in non-clause-final object positions as well as in ambitransitive clauses, as (28) summarises.

(28) Summary: Animacy distinction of 3SG object pronouns

Language	Animacy distinction is upheld at clause-final object position	Animacy distinction is upheld at non-clause final object position	Animacy distinction is upheld after ambitransitive verbs
Akan	YES	NO	NO
Nkami	YES	YES	NO
Kaakye	YES	YES	YES
Other Kwa languages	??	??	??

Example (28) clearly shows that the constraint on animacy distinction of the 3SG object pronouns is higher ranked by Kaakye than Nkami and Akan: While Kaakye upholds animacy distinction in all three distinct environments, Nkami and Akan, respectively, uphold it in two and one environments only. Judging from these revealing findings from only three out of the tens of (Potou-Tano) Kwa languages, it may not be wrong to suggest that studies on the pronominalisation of object arguments, particularly, in relation to animacy distinction has just begun. There is the need for more studies in these and other (Potou-Tano) Kwa languages to reveal the remarkable resources they employ in expressing animacy distinctions as well as in contributing significantly, as a language family, to the cross-linguistic typological discussions on the topic.

Possessive Pronoun

The next related distinction concerns possessive pronouns. Example (29) shows the distribution of possessive pronouns in Kaakye.

(29) Person	Singular	Plural
1 st	<i>mì/mì</i> ‘my’	<i>àrí/àrí</i> ‘our’
2 nd	<i>fù/fù</i> ‘your’	<i>bèrí/bèrí</i> ‘your’
3rd animate	<i>mù/mù</i> ‘his/her/its’	<i>búò</i> ‘their’
3rd inanimate	<i>yù</i> ‘its’	<i>yù</i> ‘its’

This distinction is clearly seen in possessive constructions where the possessed noun indicates some kind of relation such as *k ò yírí* ‘body/skin/self’, *kémá* ‘back/behind’, *kèkèrí* ‘side’, *ànyí sí* ‘face/ front’, *tò* ‘inside’, *àsí* ‘under/beneath’. In such constructions, the possessive pronoun *mù* replaces the possessor noun to mark possession whenever the possessor noun is animate as shown in (30) and (31); and *yù* replaces the inanimate possessor noun as demonstrated in (32) below.

- (30)
- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|
| a. <i>Yaaka</i> | <i>kòyìrí</i> | <i>é-wà</i> | <i>ìnàsí</i> |
| Yaaka | body | PST-do | dirty |
| ‘Yaaka is dirty.’ | | | |
| b. <i>Mù</i> | <i>kòyìrí</i> | <i>é-wà</i> | <i>ìnàsí</i> |
| 3SG.ANM.POSS | body | PST-do | dirty |
| ‘She is dirty/her body is dirty.’ | | | |
| c. * <i>Yù</i> | <i>kòyìrí</i> | <i>é-wà</i> | <i>ìnàsí</i> |
| 3SG.INANM.POSS | body | PST-do | dirty |
| ‘She is dirty/her body is dirty.’ | | | |
- (31)
- | | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| a. <i>Gyòòró</i> | <i>wú</i> | <i>kòyìrí</i> | <i>é-wà</i> | <i>ìnàsí</i> |
| dog | DET | body | PST-do | dirty |
| ‘The dog is dirty.’ | | | | |
| b. <i>Mù</i> | <i>kòyìrí</i> | <i>é-wà</i> | <i>ìnàsí</i> | |
| 3SG.ANM.POSS | body | PST-do | dirty | |
| ‘It is dirty.’ | | | | |
| c. * <i>Yù</i> | <i>kòyìrí</i> | <i>é-wà</i> | <i>ìnàsí</i> | |
| 3SG.INANM.POSS | body | PST-do | dirty | |
| ‘It is dirty.’ | | | | |

- (32) a. *Asaawu wú kòyìrí é-wà ìnàsí*
net DET body PST-do dirty
'The net is dirty.'
- b. *Yù kòyìrí é-wà ìnàsí*
3SG.INANM.POSS body PST-do dirty
'It (the net) is dirty.'
- c. **Mù kòyìrí é-wà ìnàsí*
3SG.ANM.POSS body PST-do dirty
'It (the net) is dirty.' (Elicited)

Lack of number distinction in inanimate pronouns

Another animacy distinction in the pronominal system concerns the lack of number distinction in the inanimate pronouns. As shown in (3), (7), and (17) above (summarised in (33) below), all third-person animate pronouns have distinct singular and plural forms, while the inanimate pronouns do not. Instead, they share one form for both singular and plural.

(33) Third-person Pronouns

	3 rd Person Subject pronouns		3 rd person Object pronouns		3 rd person Possessive Pronouns associated with relational nouns	
	Animat e	inanim ate	animat e	Inanim ate	animate	inanima te
Singul ar	ò -/ò- 's/he'	ì-/ì- 'it'	wò 'her/him'	Ø (yυ) 'it'	mò 'her/his'	yυ 'its'
Plural	bè- /bè- 'they'	ì-/ì- 'they'	búò 'them'	Ø (yυ) 'them'	búò 'their'	y υ 'their'

In examples (34b) and (35b), *ɔ-* and *bɛ-* replace the subject animate NPs *kɛgyifɔri wó* ‘the child’ and *ɲgyifɔri wó* ‘the children,’ respectively. Similarly, *ì-* in (36b) and (37b) replaces the subject inanimate NPs *kútùṅ tùṅ wó* ‘the gourd’ and *ɲtùṅ tùṅ wó* ‘the gourds’.

- (34) a. *Kɛgyifɔri wó kɛ-ɲɛsé kɛkɪnyí wó.*
child DET FUT-smoke fish DET
‘The child will smoke the fish.’
b. *ɔ-kɛ-ɲɛsé kɛ-kɪnyí wó.*
3SG.SUBJ-FUT-smoke fish DET
‘She will smoke the fish.’
- (35) a. *ɲgyifɔri wó kɛ-ɲɛsé kɛkɪnyí wó.*
children DET FUT-smoke fish DET
‘The children will smoke the fish.’
b. *Bɛ-kɛ-ɲɛsé kɛkɪnyí wó.*
3PL.SUBJ-FUT-smoke fish DET
‘They will smoke the fish.’
- (36) a. *Kútùṅ tùṅ wó sɪká mú kúpwí sú.*
gourd DET STAT.hang 3SG.POSS stomach top
‘The gourd hangs on his stomach.’
b. *ì-sɪká mú kúpwí sú.*
3SG.SUBJ-STAT.hang 3SG.POSS stomach top
‘It hangs on his stomach.’
- (37) a. *Ntùṅ tùṅ wó sɪká mú kúpwí sú.*
gourds DET STAT.hang 3SG.POSS stomach top
‘The gourds hang on his stomach.’
b. *ì-sɪká mú kúpwí sú.*
3PL.SUBJ-STAT.hang 3SG.POSS stomach top
‘They hang on his stomach.’

In object positions, the pronouns *wó* ‘his/her/it’ substitutes for singular animate nouns, and *búó* ‘them’ replaces plural animate nouns as shown in example (38).

- (38) a. *Sé kɪ-fàà wú gyì ò-lèlè n̄tɛ*
 if SG-tilapia DET COP.be SG-big then
n̄-ké-nyòŋ wú
 1SG.SUBJ-FUT-bend 3SG.OBJ
n̄tɛ m̄l-bè n̄fòrí wá kòyùrí wú p̄éé.
 then 1SG.SUBJ.PRES-put salt do body DET all
 ‘If the tilapia is big then I will bend it then I put salt
 on all the body.’
- b. *Sé n̄-fàà wú gyì à-lèlè n̄tɛ*
 if PL-tilapias DET COP.be PL-big then
n̄-ké-nyòŋ
 1SG.SUBJ-FUT-bend
búò n̄tɛ m̄l-bè n̄fòrí wá
 3PL.ANM.OBJ then 1SG.SUBJ.PRES-put salt do
kòyùrí wú p̄éé.
 body DET all
 ‘If the tilapias are big then I will bend them and put
 salt on all the bodies.’ (PT1)

In (39 and 40), however, both the singular and plural inanimate nouns are covertly coded. When followed by an adverbial element, as in (41) and (42), both are overtly realised with the same form *yú* ‘3SG.INANM.OBJ’.

- (39) a. *Ama ké-sùò kikenkpe wú.*
 Ama FUT-buy basket DET
 ‘Ama will buy the basket.’
- b. *Ama ké-sùò Ø*
 Ama FUT-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ
 ‘Ama will buy it.’
- (40) a. *Àmá ké-sùò akenkpe wú*
 Ama FUT-buy baskets DET
 ‘Ama will buy the baskets.’
- b. *Àmá ké-sùò Ø*
 Ama FUT-buy 3PL.INANM.OBJ

‘Ama will buy them.’ (Elicited)

- (41) a. *Ama ké-sùḍ kikenkpe wú ḍké.*
Ama FUT-buy basket DET tomorrow
‘Ama will buy the basket tomorrow.’
b. *Ama ké-sùḍ yú ḍké.*
Ama FUT-buy 3SG.INANM.OBJ tomorrow
‘Ama will buy it tomorrow.’
- (42) a. *Àmá ké-sùḍ akenkpe wú ḍké.*
Ama FUT-buy baskets DET tomorrow
‘Ama will buy the baskets tomorrow.’
b. *Àmá ké-sùḍ yú ḍké.*
Ama FUT-buy 3PL.INANM.OBJ tomorrow
‘Ama will buy them tomorrow.’ (Elicited)

Demonstrative Pronouns

Kaakye makes a two-way distinction between demonstrative pronouns, with each set containing a pair of pronouns based on whether the referent is animate or inanimate. The proximal demonstrative pronouns (PDPs) are *ɔni/ini* ‘this’, and the distal demonstrative pronouns (DDPs) are *ɔmu/imu* ‘that’. Pronouns beginning with the prefix *ɔ-* are used for animate referents, while those with the *i-* prefix refer to inanimate entities. The proximal demonstrative pronouns *ɔni/ini* indicate some relative closeness of the object to the deictic centre or speaker while the distal demonstrative pronouns *ɔmu/imu* indicate objects that are further away from the deictic centre. In relation to the proximal demonstrative pronouns, it is observed that in (43b) and (44b), *ɔni* replaces the animate referents *gyoro ni* ‘this dog’ and *ɔkyi ni* ‘this woman’ in (43a) and (44a), respectively, whilst in (45b) *ini* replaces *kedike ni* ‘this pot’ in (45a).

- | | | | | |
|------|----|----------------------|---------------|------------|
| (43) | a. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>gyoro</i> | <i>ni.</i> |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | dog | PDD |
| | | ‘I like this dog.’ | | |
| | b. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>ɔni.</i> | |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | ANM.PDP | |
| | | ‘I like this one.’ | | |
| (44) | a. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>ɔkyɪ</i> | <i>ni.</i> |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | woman | PDD |
| | | ‘I like this woman.’ | | |
| | b. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>ɔni.</i> | |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | ANM.PDP | |
| | | ‘I like this one.’ | | |
| (45) | a. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>kɛɖike</i> | <i>ni</i> |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | pot | PDD |
| | | ‘I like this pot.’ | | |
| | b. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>ɪni</i> | |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | INANM.PDP | |
| | | ‘I like this one.’ | | |

The distal demonstrative pronoun in Kaakye is typically realised by collocating the definite determiner *wu* with the pre-nominal demonstrative form *kɛniŋ* as illustrated in (46a), (47a) and (48a). In (46a) and (47a), animate nouns are substituted by *ɔmu*, while the inanimate noun *kɛɖike* ‘pot’ in (48a) is substituted by *ɪmu*.

- | | | | | | |
|------|----|----------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
| (46) | a. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>kɛniŋ</i> | <i>gyoro</i> | <i>wu.</i> |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | DEM | dog | DET |
| | | ‘I like that dog.’ | | | |
| | b. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>ɔmu</i> | | |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | ANM.DDP | | |
| | | ‘I like that one.’ | | | |
| (47) | a. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | <i>kɛniŋ</i> | <i>ɔkyɪ</i> | <i>wu.</i> |
| | | 1SG.SUB.PRES-like | DEM | woman | DET |
| | | ‘I like that woman.’ | | | |

- (48)
- | | | | | |
|----|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| b. | <i>Me-kiri</i> | | | <i>ɔmu.</i> |
| | 1 SG.SUB.PRES-like | | | ANM.DDP |
| | 'I like that one.' | | | |
| a. | <i>Mekiri</i> | <i>kenɪŋ</i> | <i>kedɪke</i> | <i>wu.</i> |
| | 1 SG.SUB.PRES-like | DEM | pot | DET |
| | 'I like that pot.' | | | |
| b. | <i>Mekiri</i> | <i>ɪmu.</i> | | |
| | 1 SG.SUB.PRES-like | INANM.DDP | | |
| | 'I like that one.' | | | |

Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns in Kaakye denote unspecified entities and exhibit an animate/inanimate distinction. The pronouns *ɔ́kú* and *àkú* refer to animate entities in singular and plural forms, respectively, while *ìkú* is used for inanimate referents. Consider the following examples:

- (49) a. *ðkyí kú é-bè ñfɪŋ.*
 woman some PST-come here
 'A (certain) woman came here.'
- b. *ðkú é-bè ñfɪŋ.*
 someone PST-come here
 'Someone came here.' (Elicited)
- (50) *Àkú bè-lèè ðdɔ wú wà*
 some 3PL.SUBJ-remove net DET do
ðkùrú wú tɔ
 canoe DET in
ànsàŋ yí bè-lèè ñkɪnyí wú.
 before FM 3PL.SUBJ-remove fishes DET
Àkú mè bàá-wà kénɪŋ.
 Some too 3PL.SUBJ.HAB.NEG-do that
 'Some (referring to fishermen) remove the net from
 the canoe before they remove the fishes. Some too do
 not do that.' (PT3)

- (51) *Ababio e-ŋu a-turi aku me aku*
 Ababio PST-see PL-goats some, but some
be-fw.
 3PL.SUBJ.PRES-miss
 ‘Ababio found some of the goats, but some are missing.’
- (52) a. *Kūgyò wó kú m-bùàré.*
 yam DET some NEG-be.good
 ‘Some of the yams are not good.’
- b. *ìkú m-bùàré.*
 some NEG-be.good
 ‘Some are not good.’ (Elicited)

In (49b), *òkú* refers to the singular animate noun *òkyí kú* ‘some woman’, while *àkú* in (50) and (51) refers to plural animate nouns *nkinyi akɛɛpu* ‘some fishermen’ and *aturi akú* ‘some goats’. The indefinite pronoun *ìkú* in (52b) replaces *kūgyò wó kú* ‘some yam’ in (52a). These three indefinite pronouns are derived from the indefinite determiner *kú* ‘some’, with their formal differences marked by the nominal prefixes *ò*-, *à*-, and *ì*-.

Definite pronouns

Another aspect of the animate/inanimate distinction in Kaakye is reflected in the forms of definite pronouns. Similar to indefinite pronouns, Kaakye definite pronouns have two forms: *òmú* ‘the one’ and *ìmú* ‘the one/thing’. *Òmú* refers to a specific animate entity, while *ìmú* is used for inanimate referents. Consider the following examples:

- (53) *kùsúnj kùmánìj ò-firá mì-wà*
 work every me-for 1SG.SUBJ.HAB-do...
àmá òkyí bìrísé,
 well woman old,

ìmú ké ì-bù lị́ wú
the one REL 3SG.INANM.SUBJ-be difficult CD
n-fùrá m-àá-diyé wà lsú
me-for 1SG.SUBJ-HAB.NEG-can do so
mì-wà
1SG.SUBJ.HAB-do
ìmú ké ì-mbù lị́.
the one REL 3SG.INANM.SUBJ-NEG.be difficult
'As for me, I do every work...but well, as an old lady, I
cannot do the difficult one; so I do the less difficult
one.' (PT2)

- (54) a. ðkyì wú ké ó-bè ñfị́ wú.
woman DET REL 3SG.SUBJ.PST-come here CD
'The woman who came here'
b. ðmú ké ó-bè ñfị́ wú.
the one REL 3SG.SUBJ.PST-come here CD
'The one who came here' (Elicited)
- (55) a. Gyoro wu ké ó-bè ñfị́ wu'
dog DET REL 3SG.SUBJ.PST-come here CD
'The dog that came here'
b. ðmú ké ó-bè ñfị́ wú.
the one REL 3SG.SUBJ.PST-come here CD
'The one that came here' (Elicited)

As observable in (53), the referent of *ìmú* is *kùsùń* *kùmánlị́* 'every work', while the referents of *ðmú* in (54) and (55) are *ðkyí wú* 'the woman' and *gyoro wú* 'the dog', respectively. It is worth noting that the forms used for definite pronouns are similar to those of distal demonstrative pronouns. Their function as either a definite pronoun or a demonstrative pronoun is determined by context.

Concord subject marking

Akin to some Guan languages, such as Nkami, the distinction between animate and inanimate nouns is reflected in subject agreement marking. When the subject is a full, plural, animate noun phrase (NP), the third-person plural subject pronoun *bè-* /*bè-* may be prefixed to the verb stem, as shown in examples (56–57). However, when the subject position is occupied by a full, plural, inanimate NP, no prefix is realised on the verb stem, as illustrated in (56).

- (56) *kiyàfóri wú mà kògyòdòró-gyí wú.*

young boy DET and dog-child DET

bé¹²-nù ìlàwú kú.

3PL.SUBJ.PST-hear sound some

‘The young boy and the puppy heard some sound.

(PD1)

- (57) *Ànyìnpúsà kúkyùkyó bí-dé kitiñpríñ*

people many 3PL.SUBJ.STAT-lie floor

wú sù.

DET top

‘There are many people lying on the floor.’ (Elicited)

- (58) *Àkyìkyé-yù kúkyùkyó ø-dé kitiñpríñ*

write-stick many 3PL.SUBJ.STAT-lie floor

wú sù.

DET top

‘There are many pens lying on the floor.’ (Elicited)

- (59) **Àkyìkyé-yù kúkyùkyó bí-dé kitiñpríñ*

write-stick many 3PL.SUBJ.STAT-lie floor

¹² The vowel /ε/ of the third-person plural pronoun *bε* is deleted and the past tense marker /e-/, which agrees with the verb in ATR, occupies the nucleus position of the third-person plural pronoun.

wú sù.
DET top

‘There are many pens lying on the floor.’

In (57) *bì*¹³ is prefixed to the verb *dě* ‘lie’ to co-reference the plural subject *kìyâfórì wú mà kò-gyòòró-gyí wú* ‘the young boy and the puppy’. However, as shown in (59), when the noun phrase (NP) is inanimate, subject agreement marking results in an ungrammatical sentence

Human and non-human distinction

In addition to the animate/inanimate distinction, Kaakye also differentiates between human and non-human entities, primarily through the use of plural nominal prefixes. While Kaakye has three plural prefixes *à-*, *ì-/í-*, and *N-* (homorganic nasal), only two *à-* and *N-* are used to pluralise human nouns, as illustrated in examples (60) and (61), respectively.

(60)	<i>à-bìrìsé</i>	‘elder/adult’	<i>à-bìrìsé</i>	‘elders/adults’
	<i>à-dà</i>	‘elder brother’	<i>à-dà</i>	‘elder brothers’
	<i>à-kùrí</i>	‘husband’	<i>à-kùrí</i>	‘husbands’
	<i>ò-kpàkpàfùrí</i>	‘whiteman’	<i>à-kpàkpàfùrí</i>	‘whitemen’
	<i>ø-wòfè</i>	‘mothers brother’	<i>à-wòfè</i>	‘mother brothers’
	<i>ø-nàná</i>	‘grandparent’	<i>à-nàná</i>	‘grandparents’
	<i>kù-mòhgyí</i>	‘orphan’	<i>à-mòhgyí</i>	‘orphans’
	<i>kì-nyà</i>	‘slave’	<i>à-nyá</i>	‘slaves’
(61)	<i>kè-kyìsé</i>	‘girl’	<i>hè-kyìsé</i>	‘girls’
	<i>kè-nyìhnsé</i>	‘boy’	<i>hè-nyìhnsé</i>	‘boys’
	<i>kè-bité</i>	‘adult life’	<i>mè-bité</i>	‘adult lives’
	<i>kè-gyìfòrì</i>	‘child’	<i>hè-gyìfòrì</i>	‘children’

However, all the three plural prefixes can be used for non-human nouns. Consider the following examples:

¹³ *Bè-* is realised *bì-* because it fuses with the stative marker *ì-*

(62)	<i>ò-bùsúsú</i>	‘roof’	<i>ì-bùsúsú</i>	‘roofs’
	<i>ò-dèṅ</i>	‘desert’	<i>ì-dèṅ</i>	‘deserts’
	<i>ò-fùfùrí</i>	‘lion’	<i>ì-fùfùrí</i>	‘lions’
	<i>ò-kwàré</i>	‘eagle’	<i>ì-kwàré</i>	‘eagles’
	<i>kù-fùrí</i>	‘flower’	<i>à-fùrí</i>	‘flowers’
	<i>kù-nòhókú</i>	‘heel’	<i>à-nòhókú</i>	‘heels’
	<i>kì-bèsí</i>	‘ant’	<i>m-bèsí</i>	‘ants’
	<i>kè-bwè</i>	‘animal’	<i>m-bwè</i>	‘animals’
	<i>kè-gyà</i>	‘stool’	<i>h-gyà</i>	‘stools’

As observed in examples (60–61), human nouns can only take the plural prefixes **à-** and **N-**, whereas non-human nouns can take all three plural prefixes, as shown in (62). This supports Abunya’s (2019) assertion that no human nouns belong to noun class 3, which is characterised by the **ì-/i-** plural prefix

A similar human/nonhuman distinction is observed in Nkami nominal prefixes¹⁴. Asante and Akanlig-Pare (2015, p. 80) observe that, generally, “whereas human nouns take **a-**, non-human animate nouns take homorganic nasal **N-** as plural nominal prefixes”, as (63a) and (63b) illustrate respectively.

(63) Nkami (Asante & Akanlig-Pare, 2015: 81)

a. Human nouns take **a-** plural prefix:

SG	PL	Gloss	SG	PL	Gloss
o-bi	a-bi	‘child’	o-kisi	a-kisi	‘deity’
ɔ-sa	a-sa	‘human being’	ɔ-fɔ	a-fɔ	‘visitor’
ɔ-ɲɪɲɪ	a-ɲɪɲɪ	‘man’	ɔ-tʃɪ	a-tʃɪ	‘woman’
ɔ-sia	a-sia	‘in-law’	ɔ-daamɔ	a-daamɔ	‘friend’
ɔ-kɔa	a-kɔa	‘co-wife’	ɔ-tabɔ	a-tabɔ	‘hunter’

b. Non-human animate nouns take **N-** plural prefix:

SG	PL	Gloss	SG	PL	Gloss
oboobi	m-boobi	‘bird’	ɔ-kɛɛɪ	ɲ-kɛɛɪ	‘cat’

¹⁴ The singular nominal prefixes in Nkami are /e-, ɛ-, o-, ɔ-/ , while the plural prefixes are /a-/ and /m-, mɲ-, ɲ-, ɲ-, n-/ (Asante & Akanlig-Pare 2015, Asante 2016).

ɔ-dabɔ	n-dabɔ	‘duiker’	ɔ-kplɪ	m-kplɪ	‘dog’
e-moli	m-moli	‘termite’	e-lu	n-lu	‘bush goat’
a-bɪɛ	m-bɪɛ	‘grasshopper’	a-hwɪa	n-hwɪa	‘a game’

Conclusion

This paper has examined the various ways in which animacy distinctions are made in Kaakye grammar. It has shown that Kaakye speakers make both animate/inanimate and human/nonhuman distinctions. The animate/inanimate distinction is particularly evident in the pronominal system, including demonstrative pronouns, definite and indefinite pronouns. Within this system, animacy strongly influences the choice of third-person singular object pronouns, with its realisation constrained by topicality and verb transitivity. Kaakye diverges from languages like Akan and Nkami in instances where an overt inanimate object pronoun is required, avoiding ambiguity by using a distinct form for the inanimate pronoun, unlike the animate pronoun used in these other languages. This highlights the sensitivity of Kaakye grammar to the animate/inanimate distinction. The human/non-human distinction, in contrast, is observed in the use of nominal prefixes. Overall, Kaakye shows a stronger preference for the animate/inanimate distinction than for the human/non-human distinction. The findings contribute to the cross-linguistic study of animacy and its role in grammar.

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