

## Definiteness in Amwi : grammaticalization and syntax

Anne Daladier

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### Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rlv/378>  
DOI : 10.4000/rlv.378  
ISSN : 1958-9239

### Éditeur

Presses universitaires de Vincennes

### Édition imprimée

Date de publication : 1 juin 2002  
Pagination : 61-78  
ISBN : 2-84292-119-4  
ISSN : 0986-6124

### Référence électronique

Anne Daladier, « Definiteness in Amwi : grammaticalization and syntax », *Recherches linguistiques de Vincennes* [En ligne], 31 | 2002, mis en ligne le 06 juin 2005, consulté le 02 mai 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/rlv/378> ; DOI : 10.4000/rlv.378

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**Anne DALADIER**  
**CNRS, UMR 7023 Paris-8**

**DEFINITENESS IN AMWI<sup>1</sup>:  
GRAMMATICALIZATION AND SYNTAX**

**RÉSUMÉ**

L'amwi, langue non flexionnelle du groupe mon-khmer, a une 'accentuation syntaxique' qui peut s'appliquer à un sujet et un ou plusieurs objets et avec laquelle s'appliquent différentes formes de détermination pour exprimer des valeurs de définitude: a) pronoms clitiques de troisième personne réutilisés comme déterminants-clitiques, b) déterminants-clitiques associés à des pronoms indéfinis ou à des ordinaux-classificateurs, c) éléments aspectuels associés à des emplois 'verbaux' et déictiques de noms de temps. Un sujet ou un objet lexical accentué syntaxiquement est obligatoirement défini. Différentes valeurs de définitude font intervenir de plusieurs façons l'ensemble de la construction syntaxique d'une phrase.

**MOTS-CLÉS**

Accentuation syntaxique, langue non flexionnelle, oppositions déictiques 'distales', déictiques aspectuels, pronom de troisième personne-clitique-déterminant, définitude d'indéfinis, schéma corrélatif.

## 1. Introduction

Definiteness in Amwi and its forms of expression are linked to another phenomenon I call ‘syntactic stress’ a phenomenon referred to as ‘actor, object, goal, locative or benefactive focusing’ by Ferrell (1970), ‘argument focusing’ by Aikhenvald & Dixon (1997), or ‘thematisation d’actants’ by Ozane-Rivierre (1998), Moyses-Faurie (1983), for different Austronesian languages and ‘topicalization’ of objects by Creissels (2002) for Tswana. I depart from current semantic terminologies for reasons I shall try to make precise in this paper.

Although it might appear rather provocative to make such a claim in this journal, I wonder whether the assumption of a basic universal syntactic asymmetry between the subject and the other arguments of the verb is grounded. I don’t think that this representation is grounded even for modern Indo-European (I.E.) languages although this asymmetry is correlated with obvious empirical properties such as a univocal morphological agreement dependency between the subject and the verb which seem to correlate with various asymmetrical semantic properties within the sentence. I claim that this asymmetry is in fact the result of a peculiar instance of ‘syntactic stress’. Syntactic stress seems to be a universal syntactic process which takes different forms and values in different languages, and which relates in various ways to other syntactic phenomena such as word order and to different kinds of semantic values such as definiteness and scope properties. Definiteness involves not only the structure of noun phrases but also basically all the chapters of grammar, from assertion to aspect, especially space/time elements referring to the assertion by the speaker of the utterance. In many languages, definiteness is related to the morphology of third person pronouns. When they are grammaticalized as such, pronouns rephrased as ‘definite determiners’ result quite often, but not always, as can be shown for Amwi, from the grammaticalization of previous ‘distal’ (spatial, eventually aspectual or even social) oppositions (close or distant from the speaker) of deictic pronouns. These pronouns have produced the correlative pronouns leading to the main grammatical elements and their insertion structures in the diachrony of different families of languages, see for example Renou (1952), Ernout et Thomas (1953), Chantraine (1953). In Daladier (1998), I have attempted to describe the syntax and semantics of appositive and restrictive relativization, complementation and indefinites, in French, by means of the correlative scheme of ancient I.E. languages. I gave a syntactic interpretation of this correlative scheme, in terms of a basic identification mechanism that applies on stable insertion structures in the course of language evolution (on which occur various stratifications of zeroings, grammaticalization processes and other morphological changes).

Syntactic stress is grammaticalized by means of pronominal affixation in the verb in various languages or by means of association of free personal pronouns referring to argument(s) in some other languages. Syntactic stress applies only to the subject argument of a verb in most modern I.E. languages. But split ergative languages, such as Hindi, have two syntactic stresses according to

my terminology. In different Austronesian, African, American, Tibeto-Birman, Austroasiatic languages, pronominal affixes in the verb may refer (depending on distributional features) and sometimes must refer, to various arguments of the verb, which may have the value of a subject, a patient, an agent, a dative or a locative.

In Amwi, the morphology and the syntax of definiteness cannot be dissociated from syntactic stress. Syntactic stress can apply to various semantic types of arguments described in section 5. Syntactic stress rarely applies to more than two arguments but it may apply to three arguments. The subject or another argument of the verb is syntactically stressed if definite but additional conditions such as animacy may be required when there are several definite objects (see below).

In Kherwari, the northern group of Munda languages, syntactic stress applies to the different arguments of the verb by means of pronominal affixation in the verb and is also submitted to animacy constraints on these arguments. Syntactic stress is expressed in the same way for all arguments. This feature happens to be very much similar to what happens in most poly-syntactic-stress languages described so far. Contrastively, Amwi expresses syntactic stress differently for the subject and for the other arguments. This might be linked to the fact that Amwi has no voice opposition and that diathesis variations are still expressed by means of productive lexical elements prefixed to appropriate lexical predicates (*e. g.* causative *p@n-* ‘make’ or intransitive *sā-* ‘feel’).

In addition to this situation, the morphology of definite determiners in War-Khasic is a result of different grammaticalization processes, both coalescent with and divergent from the two grammaticalization processes which produced definite determiners in modern I.E. languages such as French and English, that is distal oppositions in former deictic elements and the renewal of the correlative scheme. Amwi grammaticalized pronouns include not only spatial specifications such as close to the speaker, in view, not visible, only imaginable, yonder but also social specification (see *ja* below). Amwi has grammaticalized a secondary use of third person clitics as definite determiners and correlative pronouns. These third person pronouns might be grammaticalized from three ‘classifiers’ (elements assigning a lexical class to a word) in *k(V)*- of “animate” beings found in different MK and Munda languages, Daladier (2002a and to appear). War-Khasi “animate” classifiers in *k(V)*- appear with nouns denoting mainly: clan relationships, animals, plants, vital liquids (water, sap, blood), rocks. These classifiers of “animate beings”, in a very peculiar religious sense, might themselves be traced back as grammaticalizations of three basic generators in a clan representation of the world.

## 2. Syntactic Stress and definiteness

I define the notion of syntactic stress rather than argument topicalization, or thematization as it involves basic non optional syntactic characteristics of

languages and quite often strong distributional constraints, contrary to what happens for optional thematization, or topicalisation, which apply not only to arguments but to any kind of circumstantial elements in a rather free semantic way :

- (1) It is John who ate an apple/ John, he ate an apple
- (2) It is an apple that John ate/ an apple, John ate one
- (3) It is (in the tree/with pleasure) that John ate an apple

Beyond terminology, this paper addresses previous descriptive issues regarding languages where several arguments of the verb, and not only the subject, have a co-referring mark (of pronominal origin) which must be associated with the verb, eventually depending on constraints such as the animate or definite character of an argument, and where those arguments are interpreted as topicalized or stressed or thematized, see especially Ozane-Rivierre (1998), Creissels (2002). Thematisation of an object in an active sentence in English or French requires an additional syntactic process such as extraction under clefting or duplication of an anaphoric personal or indefinite pronoun in the case of argument topicalization, as in (2).

When a grammatical subject is extracted in a thematic position, as in (1), this kind of topicalisation further involves another level of syntactic description and is semantically stronger than the ordinary weakly thematic interpretation of the subject in a plain sentence, *e. g.* : *John ate an apple*, which I call syntactic stress. This property is marked in a language such as French by a three-way opposition in the morphology of personal pronouns. This can be exemplified for the masculine gender as follows : thematic **lui**, syntactically stressed **il**, unstressed **le** (*i. e.* clitic), that is : **il le voit/ lui, il le voit**. It is this atone or clitic morphology of the third personal pronoun, itself renewed from a Latin deictic of ‘remoteness’ *ille*, which has been renewed as the French definite determiner *le*.

In English or in French, there is no way of stressing syntactically an object in a transitive active construction. Instead, voice, either passive or middle, is both a means of stressing syntactically the argument which has the value of an object in the active sentence, and a means of ‘distressing’ or even of omitting the element which is stressed in the active construction.

In written modern French, syntactic stress on a grammatical subject has a weak thematization value as compared to its value in Medieval French where the OVS word order was used when the object was stressed and the subject unstressed. Intonation in Modern French or English is a means of giving a stronger thematic value to the subject or of giving a thematic value to any element in a sentence.

### 3. Syntactic stress and definiteness in Amwi

Third person pronouns are used again as definite determiners in War-Khasic. Personal pronouns may have a morphologically strong or unmarked

(clitic) form. For the third person, Amwi has two double series of morphological forms of personal pronouns, strong or unmarked and in presence or not in presence of the speaker. In Amwi, *ja* is associated with ordinary weak forms of personal pronouns to produce strong forms having a thematic value, like *k@/jak@* ‘she’, *N@/njE* ‘I’ (see annex). *Ja* is also found as an old Mon-Khmer emphatic element prefixed to a personal pronoun, it was first grammaticalized as a polite (distant) term of address from a primary common lexical use of *ja* ‘grandmother, ancestor’<sup>2</sup>. Amwi complementation is expressed by means of the distal pronominal/prepositional element *ha*. Modern Khasi uses *ja* instead of *ha* as a kind of emphatic element to express syntactic stress associated with definiteness of non subject arguments. In addition, second and third person singular pronouns have gender and ‘polite’ forms, see annex. The pronouns used as definite determiners are the three gender unmarked forms corresponding to the case where the person is not in sight of the speaker. In other words, definite determiners have the morphology of the weak third person remote forms in the three genders. Gender <sup>?</sup>*i* is described in section 7.

The subject and the objects (in a sense made precise in section 5) may be syntactically stressed or not. They are stressed only if they have a definite determiner or a morphologically strong personal pronoun. But we shall see that a definite object is not necessarily stressed, though its stressing is usual. If there are two objects, one of which animate, the animate one gets stressed and not the other one. Two definite objects may both be stressed.

A lexical subject may be syntactically stressed and definite, in that case the definite determiner/pronoun is duplicated as in (4). A pronominal subject may be stressed as in (5) and (6), the first pronoun is a strong form, also used in thematic expressions. The morphology of a pronominal subject also depends on whether it refers to someone or something in sight of the speaker or not. In (4), <sup>?</sup>*u hun* may be either a deictic use or refer to a child already mentioned, who is not in sight of the speaker.

A definite lexical element may also be an element associated with a definite determiner under a specific interpretation, either with an additional numeral ‘indefinite’ determiner or with a relative clause or with a nominal argument, see section 8. A pronominal subject is not necessarily stressed as witnessed by (7) a and b.

When a personal pronoun refers to a person **in sight of the speaker**, (especially the first and second person but also the third person since the second person is used as an inclusive form for the third person for politeness reasons) this personal subject can be syntactically unstressed. Its corresponding strong form is then replaced by an assertion element @ (probably a reduction form from *t@* ‘here, in view’) while the clitic remains in place. A syntactically unstressed subject does not imply that the object must be stressed, as in (7) a which can be opposed to (8) where the object is stressed:

- (4) <sup>?</sup>u            hun    bç    tSi    <sup>?</sup>u  
 he/the<sub>clitic</sub>    child    eat    rice    he<sub>clitic</sub>  
 the boy is eating rice (tense is never expressed but understood from the context)
- (5) **jem**    bO    tSi    **m**  
 he<sub>strong</sub>    eat    rice    he<sub>clitic</sub>  
 he is eating rice (he is in presence of the speaker)
- (6) **jao**        bO        tSi        <sup>?</sup>u  
 he<sub>strong</sub>        eat        rice        he<sub>clitic</sub>  
 he is eating rice (he is not in presence of the speaker)
- (7) a        @                    d@    d<sup>~</sup>p>    bO    tSi    N@  
 assertion part.    perf.    finish    eat    rice    I<sub>clitic</sub>  
 I have finished eating
- (7) b        @                    tSRa#j    m@    tSRa#j<sup>?</sup>i        **me**#        <sup>?</sup>i    pā    k@  
 assertion    angry        angry    the mother    the father    she/her  
 her parents got very angry

A definite object, that is a deictic or referential or specified object, may be syntactically stressed with the grammaticalized element *ha*, which is used with a lexical locative meaning in Khasi, and which may be considered as a kind of locative pronoun with internal reference to the assertion (see below). This element *ha* gets an agreement mark – *j* when the object has the determiner <sup>?</sup>*i* either as a gender or as a plural determiner. This morphological agreement is of special interest as it only applies to *ha* and *b@* ‘and’ and those are the only agreement situations in Amwi. In (10) *s@ la?* has an indefinite plural or partitive or generic interpretation according to the context:

- (8)        @    bç    N@    ha                    k@        s@ h?  
 ass    eat    I    stress obj.    she/the    potatoe  
 I am eating the potatoe
- (9)        @    bç    N@    ha<sup>j</sup>    <sup>?</sup>i        s@ h?  
 I am eating the potatoes
- (10)        @    bç        s@ h?    N@  
 I am eating potatoes

Zero, one, two or three arguments may be syntactically stressed and clausal arguments may also be stressed with *ha*. They may themselves contain stressed arguments, see section 8.

#### 4. Semantic diversity of ‘stressable objects’

One could use the distributional option of stressing a definite lexical element with *ha*, as a criterion to know whether this element can be considered as an argument of the lexical predicate rather than a ‘circumstantial element’ or

argument of an additional predicate. Object stressing applies to direct objects, datives as in (11) or objects indicating the source of the action, as in (12), but it also applies to elements that would not be considered as arguments in the English or French corresponding glosses such as locatives or more abstractly, types of objects indicating a mental direction as in (13). When indefinite, locative objects are integrated to the lexical predicate just like direct objects, as in (14), but when they are definite, various deictics for close or remote or yonder positions are used instead of *ha*, as in (15), (16):

- (11) jah@ d@ E? kçt h@ ha njE  
 you perf give book you stress obj. I<sub>strong</sub>  
 you gave me a book
- (12) njE t@ d@ sa) kmin diEm N@ ha jEm  
 I so perf feel please very I stress obj you<sub>strong</sub>  
 I am very pleased with you
- (13) njE man N@ haj bha? k@ dZiNsuk  
 I be I stress obj plur share she/the peace  
 I am for peace
- (14) jao l@ wan (s~/ tSnoN) ?u  
 he next go (house/village) he  
 he went home a little while ago
- (15) jao l@ wan ?u S@ k@ s^ h@  
 he next go he not so near she/the house you<sub>tem</sub>  
 he went to your place
- (16) jao l@ wan ?u S@ k@ l@ s^  
 he next go he not so near she/the next house  
 he went to a neighbouring house

## 5. Scope properties of a stressed subject over stressed and unstressed objects

The second unmarked occurrence of a stressed pronominal subject or the duplicated occurrence of the determiner of a lexical subject is not a mere variant of the personal agreement mark suffixed to inflected verbs in English. It has scope properties: it has scope over indefinite objects, as in (4), (5), (6), (7), (10), (14) but not on definite objects, as in (8), (9), (11), (12), (13), (15), (16). A striking use of a pronominal subject, stressed both as a subject and, in its duplicated unmarked form, as an object, expresses a double time concordance, see (37), (38).

Syntactic stress does not apply to a definite object in a free thematic position. Free thematization of an object has a stronger value than syntactic stress and it occurs with an unstressed pronominal subject, whose scope does not extend over the object:



- (17) <sup>ʔ</sup>i mi:ja mi:ja nat <sup>ʔ</sup>i la:di:ja @ bɔʔ? <sup>ʔ</sup>u  
 the/they big big bunche the/they banana ass. eat he  
 it is the big and many bunches together with their banana, that he ate

## 6. The three gender pronouns/determiners: *k@*, <sup>ʔ</sup>*u/ o*, <sup>ʔ</sup>*i*. Class abstraction made available in everyday use

In addition to *k@* ‘she/the’, <sup>ʔ</sup>*u* (or its allophone <sup>ʔ</sup>*o*) ‘he/the’, Amwi has <sup>ʔ</sup>*i* for precious, intimate beings or things like the house, a child, a mother, the parents, for abstract things like time, language, the description of something, for mass terms such as salt, powder sugar. <sup>ʔ</sup>*i* is also used as a plural, probably as an extension of its peculiar use as a kind of gender. More precisely, <sup>ʔ</sup>*i* as a ‘gender’ may best be described as an operator of class abstraction in the technical sense of the class operator in lambda-calculus, a gender indicating a property, like the property of being my house or my child, the property of being a description. Nouns like child may also be used with *k@*, <sup>ʔ</sup>*u* in contexts where one wishes to specify sex gender, house is used with *k@* when it has a definite concrete meaning. <sup>ʔ</sup>*u* *ʔ*hija indicates a reference to rice seed but <sup>ʔ</sup>*i* *ʔ*hija sija indicates a reference to the yellow variety of rice seed. See also the use of <sup>ʔ</sup>*i* as an operator of class abstraction over the class of indefinite things: in <sup>ʔ</sup>*i* <sup>ʔ</sup>*e* re <sup>ʔ</sup>*i* <sup>ʔ</sup>*e* ‘anything’, in (22), as compared to <sup>ʔ</sup>*u* <sup>ʔ</sup>*e* re <sup>ʔ</sup>*u* <sup>ʔ</sup>*e* ‘someone’.

## 7. Definite determiners/pronouns as correlative/relative pronouns, used again in combination with ‘indefinite’ pronouns and numerals. Stressed sentential objects

Definite determiners/pro <sup>ʔ</sup>*u*, *k@*, <sup>ʔ</sup>*i* are further used in combination with two classifiers translating ‘one’ (e. g. *Si* for measure nouns, *mi* for anything else) to express what we call indefinites, under a specific interpretation, which may be syntactically stressed as a subject, as in (19), or as an object as in (18):

- (18) jaɔ bɔʔ <sup>ʔ</sup>u ha **k@** **mi** k@ s@ h?  
 he eat he stress obj she/the 1/a she/the potato  
 he is eating a potato
- (19) **k@** **mi** k@ pɔʔR...  
 she/the one she/the time  
 once upon a time... [or ‘there was a time’...]

From a morphological and syntactic point of view, this use bears all the characteristics of definite expression. From a semantic point of view, the specific interpretation of ‘indefinites’ indeed pertains to definiteness: it is referential though this kind of reference differs from pronominal or definite determiner reference. (18) means that there is a specific object, an object of potato kind, and that he is eating this object. While (8) means that there is a specific individual

potato already mentioned in the context and that he eats this potato. The kind of pronominal reference involved by single definite determiners in Amwi is similar to personal pronominal reference, exactly as in French or in English. The use in Amwi of definite determiners in combination with numeral ‘one’ or indefinite pronouns in order to express: someone, something, nobody, one or the other (see annex) is a reminder of the diachronic use of the correlative pronoun *\*kwe/i* in the formation of both definite and so called indefinite pronouns in ancient I.E. languages, like latin *quidam*, *quisquis* ‘someone anyone’ and *quis* ‘who?’ someone, something.

The use of definite determiners in combination with several ordinal classifiers ‘one’ to express ‘indefinite’ determiners or pronouns in Amwi is not surprising. In fact, from the point of view of the values expressed, it is not so different from what was expressed in the primary uses of numeral ‘one’ in early Latin<sup>3</sup>, Homeric Greek or in Vedic Sanskrit or even in Medieval French<sup>4</sup>, where it was used with a specific interpretation. The grammaticalization of the numeral one has roughly the same motivation wherever it occurred.

This kind of definiteness is not necessarily syntactically stressed. Animate nouns, especially if human, get priority:

- (20) Rwa k@ mi k@ Rwa ha nʃE  
 sing she/the a/one she/the song stress obj I  
 sing me a song strong

Amwi has twice three different words for ‘two’ and ‘more than two’ depending on what is counted: measure nouns, persons and animals or things. *si siar* ‘a/one kg’, *si k@ tsuʷa lit. I the-she week, ‘a/one week’*. Beyond two, the numbers are the same for everything but the classifier like *lē* for two or more when people are counted, is kept before numbering or referring to an indefinite number of people or things:

- (21) kan@ kal@ lē ʔi lɔk wan ʃə  
 this next amount of people two or more they/the friend come they  
 a few friends came.

- (22) kan@ kal@ klɔn ʔiʔe# Re ʔiʔe# d@ dʰp>  
 h@ RhEm ʃə  
 this next amount of things two or more anything perf. completely fall they  
 a few things have fallen

*kan@ kal@* is made up with the definite determiner *ka* ‘she/the’, combined with the deictics *n@* ‘here, in view’, *l@* ‘next’ and it has a deictic meaning which refers to the next word. It works as an “indefinite demonstrative” when it refers to a next element left somewhat indefinite. Other such indefinite demonstratives like: *ka t@ t@* ‘after that preceding action or event, then’ and other terms are similarly combined to refer to a next event with the meaning of ‘before’ (referring to the moment of utterance) or ‘before that’ with ‘that’ possibly having a partially

indefinite meaning. The indefinite character of such deictic elements is an interesting feature as it may be more or less indefinite, for instance in combination with words meaning ‘friend’ or ‘anything’ in the examples above or with predicative words meaning ‘anyhow, any event’ in other examples.

Third person pronouns may be used not only as definite determiners but in a complementary way as relative pronouns, as in (23), and in combination with other deictics of space and time to produce various kinds of correlative pronouns and a full range of conjunctions, comparative constructions etc. For example, *la* may be used as an aspectual element before a lexical predicate providing a past value to this predicate, but it may also be used in combination with deictic elements to provide conjunctions as in: *la ti t@* ‘this preceding thing being done’, *ka t@ la... t@ ...* ‘when... then...’.

- (23) jəɔ bɕ ʔu **ha** ʔi tsi ʔi tEN k@ mej ʔu  
 he eat he stress obj. the/it rice the/corel. prepare she/the aunty he  
 he is eating the rice that her aunty has prepared
- (24) njE m u? N@ **ha** k@ tʰa#o k@ skja ʔu  
 I know I stress obj. she/the place the/correl. stay he  
 I know the place where he lives

A clausal argument may be expressed as a syntactically stressed argument of the main lexical predicate, as in (25) and (26). There is no difference between the spell-out of clausal arguments glossed in English finite clauses and those glossed by English infinitival clauses, since there is no tense in Amwi in the sense of inflectional languages. Both what we call infinitival clauses and what we call complete tensed utterances are rendered in the same way through aspectual elements inserted before a lexical predicate. Tense interpretation, or more precisely interpretation of an utterance as something which happens prior or concomitantly to its assertion by the speaker, is commonly left to the context. As in the clausal argument of (25), lexical predicates in simple sentences are often used without an aspectual element and their reference to the moment of assertion is left indefinite in a sense that I shall relate very precisely to indefiniteness:

- (25) njE m u? N@ ha a? ʔu tin@  
 I know [for an action] I stress obj. be/have he here  
 I know that he is/was here
- (26) jaɔ d@ wan ʔu ha tSu p a m həj ɬ ʔi nat ʔot  
 he perf. go he stress obj. potential cut stress obj. plur these they branch tree  
 he went to cut the branches of trees
- (27) njE wan thiʒa N@  
 I go sleep I  
 I am going/went to sleep

The aspectual element *tsu* expresses a kind of potential future (it is to be distinguished from *daj* which expresses another kind of potential future where the subject is intentionally involved) and it may be used either in simple sentences or

in sentences involving ‘subordination’. In (26) there is a direct definite causal relationship between his cutting of the branches and his coming to the place to clear as well as a definite succession in time between those two actions. Whereas in (27) there is no definite time location relating his coming and his sleeping as definite events because just as in English with the grammatical use of the verb *go*, Amwi *wan* is grammaticalized, aside its lexical use, as a kind of “auxiliary” for lexical predicates. For the same obvious reason, there is no definite direct causal relationship between my coming and my sleeping. This is why *wan* and *thija* are integrated as a single lexical predication, just the way an indefinite object is interpreted within its lexical predicate. I shall exemplify the use of aspectual elements as definite determiners for time nouns below.

*Ha* is also used to express an overall stress on two sub sentences, resulting in a conditional utterance. The conditional part of the sentence is expressed as a stressed object fronted at the beginning of the sentence before the part which expresses a conditional future with *daj* (it should be noticed that each of the two parts of the sentence contains a stressed deictic object and a stress subject so that this complex sentence contains five different syntactic stresses):

- (28) **ha**            m @ lija h@m l                    ha    kane,                    njE **daj**                    lija N @  
                   ha                    k@ le  
                   stress obj. you go you stress obj. this, I    cond. fut. go I stress obj. this next  
                   if you do this, I shall do that

## 8. Amwi definiteness in ‘actualized’ or nominal uses of predicates

In the two good grammars of Standard Khasi: Roberts (1883) and Rabel (1961), it is assumed that there are nouns and verbs, verbs being associated with auxiliaries rather than having a complete tense/aspect inflection. This view can be useful to describe some of the main features of Khasi sentences but it is also misleading. There is no noun/verb differentiation in the morphology of lexical predicates and many of them may be used either in a nominal or in a ‘verbal’ way. A clitic/determiner may be interpreted either as a possessive argument or as a personal pronoun argument (argument meaning either a subject or an object of any kind), like *my song* or *I sing*:

- (29)    k@            Rwa N@  
                   the/she song I  
                   my song
- (30)    @            Rwa N@  
                   ass. sing I  
                   I am singing

A ‘nominal expression’ may contain a syntactically stressed object argument. (31) and (32) may both translate as: *the true story of Bailon* or *here is the story of Bailon*, depending on the context. The object *Bailon* is syntactically stressed in

(31) and the whole expression may be used as a stressed object in (33), meaning: *listen to the story of Bailon*:

(31) ?i perçm ha ?u Bailon  
the story stress obj. he/the Bailon

(32) ?i perçm ?u Bailon

(33) Sa? ha ?i perçm ha ?u Bailon

A lexical predicate may be definite or not in both in its ‘verbal’ and ‘nominal’ use (or more precisely in its ‘assertive mode’ but I cannot make this precise here). In its verbal use, it may or may not be combined with an aspectual element. Without such an element, it is indefinite relatively to the time/aspect of the utterance of the sentence by the speaker. All over War-khasi languages, such utterances may be interpreted either as present or past, as in (30) or in previous examples translated with a present tense. Those aspectual elements may be considered as deictic elements which refer to the tense/aspect of the utterance and they may be used both in the verbal use of lexical predicates and in their nominal uses. For example, *daN* expresses a **concomitance** between an action and its assertion by the speaker. *daN* Q *oti* means this morning when it is still morning time for the speaker. *daN* *j@* (*j@* ‘they’) may mean either ‘to day’ or ‘now’ since it indicates the coincidence of time between the time of others and the time of the utterance. *daN* may then be interpreted as a past tense or as a present, depending on the context. For example it may be used as a narrative present when the speaker adopts the time of the story, as in (34):

(34) *daN* s@ *daN* mi k@ pçR...  
concomitant not so close concomitant I/a she/the time  
... [it] happens a certain time ago...

(35) *daN* Rçti diEm  
this early morning

(36) *njE* *daN* SiaR N@ ha jah@  
I concomitant speak I stress obj. you  
I am talking to you

These time/aspect/mode determiners have a definiteness value: they **refer** to the moment of assertion by the speaker and they may also be used with simple nouns as temporal demonstrative determiners. In this sense, they express a kind of definiteness either for both ‘actualized’ and ‘non actualized’ uses of predicates. In a complementary way, the space deictic *l@* ‘here, visible by the speaker but not so close, next’ may also be used as an aspectual element in combination with a lexical predicate involving the value of an action which has occurred nearly before the assertion of the utterance, see (14), (15), (16). In addition, a stressed subject may further be used as a kind of reference for a secondary aspectual localisation of the process with respect to the assertion, as in (37) where *ha* N@ indicates that my coming back from *Pnu* happened just before my reporting. In

(38), the repetition of the subject in association with potential *tsu* indicates that the potential time of my going is potentially close to my reporting:

- (37) **njE** d@ lɪja Pnu# **ha** N@  
 I perf. go Pnu stress obj. I<sub>weak</sub>  
 I just went to Pnu
- (38) **njE tsu** lɪja Pnu# N@ t̩ kane kane k@ si **tsu** N@  
 I pot. go Pnu I in these close the/she day pot. I<sub>weak</sub>  
 I shall go to Pnu one of these days

## Conclusion

Definiteness in Amwi nouns involves the entire syntactic structure of sentences as it involves syntactic stress. It also involves different kind of values. As opposed to indefinite ‘objects’, which are integrated into the lexical predicate, definite ‘objects’ both simple and clausal are abstractly located with respect to the process by means of a grammaticalized deictic. This ‘location’ may involve a hierarchy between animate/non animate objects or some kind of aspectual concordance. Under a ‘specific’ interpretation, which involves not only the interpretation of a noun but may involve the entire sentence (especially its aspect), so called ‘indefinite’ pronouns or determiners resort to definiteness as they require definite pro-clitic-determiners and are syntactically stressed under the same conditions as definite nouns. Definiteness may also involve aspectual elements in a more direct way since several of those elements which locate the aspect of the whole utterance with respect to the assertion are further used as definite determiners for time nouns, and trigger a referential understanding which locates them at the moment of assertion inside the aspectual frame of the utterance.

Syntactic stress may or may not apply to a subject and to various semantic kinds of ‘objects’. Syntactic stress in Amwi applies differently to a subject and to an object. It implies a subject’s having different scope interpretations with respect to definite vs. indefinite objects. This elaborated syntactic stress, which allows for a large number of syntactic and semantic combinations, is of special interest in Amwi, which has no voice oppositions and only produces diathesis variations by means of a few causative or intransitive grammaticalized prefixed elements (productive but lexically constrained).

## NOTES

1. Amwi is a conservative War language in the War-Khasi group. Standard Khasi has been described by Roberts (1883) and Rabel (1961) but no complete account of War has been given so far. The data presented here belong to the Amwi dialect spoken in Thangbuli village. My deepest thanks go to Mrs. Lily Dora Pohleng who introduced me to Amwi. War-Khasi languages are spoken in the state of Meghalaya in North-eastern India by about one

million speakers, Daladier (2002 b). War-Khasi is the westernmost Mon-Khmer group of Austroasiatic languages. The other branch of Austroasiatic is Munda. War-Khasi is geographically very close to Santali (the main language of the Munda group) spoken in Bihar and Bengal but typologically (phonology, morphology, lexicon, syntax) closer to eastern MK languages of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia such as Bahnaric languages.

2. *jā*, *ja?* the name of the grandmother in many MK languages, also the corresponding *za* in Munda languages (where *j* cannot stand in initial position) has been grammaticalized as different kinds of pronouns. As a lexical element, *za* is found under different forms and related meanings in different Munda languages (e. g. Ho, korku, Sora): Santali *zā*, *azi* ‘grandmother’, *aža* ‘grandfather’, *ZahEQ* ‘sacred grove’, Santali *Zagao* is a kind of blessing involved to make fruitful the cattle or some medicines in the course of ceremonies. Ho *Zai* *gunku* lit. children of the ancestor, ‘the descendants’.

*jā* ‘grand mother is found in Pnar, a War-Khasi language, and *jā/ ja?* is found in other War-Khasic languages in kinship terms for relatives elder than the speaker. War *jāobej* is the great grandmother of a clan. Old Khmer has *jā* ‘grand mother’, Jenner (1980). In katuic, *jā* is found in names of the relatives on the mother’s side: Bru *kə jā*, Pacoh *ku jā*. Katu has *jəjə* ‘mother in law’. *jā/ ja?* *jāo* related to grand mother, ancestor are also found in Kmuic and Bahnaric languages (for example *ja?* ‘grand mother’ in Stieng and *jāo* ‘ancestor’, ‘tiger’ in Chrau).

As a pronoun grammaticalizing the respect distance involved in the use of *jā*, also a term of address, *jā* is combined with gender/number personal pronouns in War languages to produce emphatic forms of personal pronouns, especially in Amwi, for example: *jākə* ‘she, her’ *ja#o* ‘he, him’, *ja#hem* ‘you’, *iba bən ja#* ‘you and me’. *za* is grammaticalized as an indefinite pronoun in Santali ‘whatever’, however’ and it can be associated with different elements to produce all kinds of indefinite pronouns like: *za#ha#te* ‘to whatever place’, *za#ha# taha#* ‘here and there’, *za#ha# tin* ‘at any time’.

Mod. Mon has *ja#* ‘mother, parents’ from *jaj* Old Mon, Shorto (1962 and 1971), early Middle Mon has *ju* ‘great grand mother’, Bauer (1984). *jā?* ‘grandmother’ is found in Monic: Danaw, Black and White Riang, Palaung and Wa, Luce (1965). *jā* is also grammaticalized as a relative and interrogative pronoun in Old Mon. Bauer (1993) analyses ‘*ja* as the third sing. personal pronoun of the Old Mon pronominal system, attested only in OM frescoes and having the values of ‘he, him’. ‘*ja* ‘he, him’ and *jā* ‘who’ are variants (Bauer p. c.). Car-Nicobarese has the grammaticalized pronoun: *ja?* ‘who?, which?’

3. *Unum uidi mortuum ecferrī foras* (Plaute) ‘I have seen someone, a dead one, who was being buried’ where the accusative *unum* is fronted in a thematic position.

4. In medieval French the use of *un* as an article has the strong thematic value of a referential selection operator, that is the value of a stressed noun as a specific member of a set of things or beings of the same kind already referred to in the context, as in:

*Uns clerics si pert se franchise par espouser en sainte eglise ø femme ki ot ø autre baron*  
‘A scholar, one of those in question here, would really loose his privileges if he were to marry religiously an already married woman’

Then this thematic value has weakened and came to express a weak focus, a membership to a lexical class. A preposition *de* subjacent to *un* is made explicit in the clitic *en* in:

Luc **en** a mangé un, **de** gâteau ‘he ate one thing of the kind cake’.

The fully undefined value of *un* does not have its common modern use before the end of

the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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## Annex : Pronouns and deictics

Gloss	Stand. Khasi	Amwi
I	Na#	njE, N' / ø
you fam. masc	mE #	ijEm, m1 / ø
you fam. fem	pha#	ih', h' / ø
you resp. fem	phi	jah', h' / ø
you resp. masc.	phi	ehi, hi / ø
he	ʼu	jem, m1 / ø (here) ja#o, ʼu (not here)
she	ka	ijah', h' / ø (here) ijak', k' (not here)
3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. non denum, precious/polite, abstract	(/j)	ehi, /i / ø
we	ni	ehi, /i ø
you plur.	phi	ehi, /i ø
they	ki	ehi, /i ø (here) ej', j' (not here)
stressed I	maNa#	njE
stressed you fam. masc.	mame#	ijEm
stressed you resp. masc.	mapha	ehi
stressed he	ma/u	jem/ jao
stressed she	maka	ijah' / ijak'
stressed we	maNi	ehi
stressed you plur.	maphi	ehi
stressed they	maki	ehi/ ej'
you and me	ma) Na ba maphi	iha bEn ja
this near	ʼu/ ka ni	ʼu/ ka n'
this rather near, in sight	ʼu/ ka tu	ʼu/ ka l'
that far but in sight	ʼu/ ka/ ki taj	ʼu/ ka tutun
that out of sight	ʼu/ ka/ ki ta	ʼu/ ka tSa tun
here	haN ni	tine
there in sight	haN ta	tutun
there out of sight	haN taj	tSa tun
that far down	ka thie	S' Sçn
that far up	ka tej	nunçn
that far at the same level	ka taj	tu tun
now	m'nta	kane
later on	daN hadiEn	la h'l'
somebody or something masc.	uno uno / mano mano, mano re mano	ki re /e# ʼu /e# / une une
somebody or something fem. kane	kano kano, mano mano, mano re mano	ki re /e# k' /e# / kane
nobody	ka ej ka ej	aj /a kao /a
one/a certain	ʼu/ ka wej	ʼu/ ka/ i+ mi/ s
one or the other, anyone	ʼu ej re ʼu ej	ʼu /e# re ʼu /e#
relative pro.	u/ ka/ ki + ba	ʼu/ k' / i
complementizer	ba	ha
stressed 'object'	ja	ha
corelative pro	ʼu/ ka/ ki	ʼu/ k' / i
interrogative pro	ʼu/ ka/ ki ro, ʼu/ ka/ ki ej	ʼu/ k' / i re, ʼu/ k' / i /e#
and	ba	b' / b'j (with plur.) / bEn (with emphatic pro.)
deictics Time/Aspect/Mode	daN, la, la/, ban	daN, la, la/, l', tSu

**ABSTRACT**

Amwi, a non-inflecting Mon-Khmer language, has a 'syntactic stress' mechanism which may apply to a subject or to one or several objects. Different morphological forms of determination construct with this mechanism in order to produce definiteness values: a) third person clitic pronouns used again as clitic-determiners, b) clitic-determiners associated with indefinite pronouns or ordinal-classifiers, c) aspectual elements associated with 'verbal'uses and aspectual deictics of time nouns. A syntactically stressed lexical subject or object is obligatorily definite. Definiteness values involve the syntax of the entire sentence in different ways.

**KEY-WORDS**

'Syntactic stress', non inflecting language, 'distal' deictic oppositions, aspectual deictics, third person pronoun-clitic-determiner, definiteness of 'indefinites', correlative scheme.