The syntax of Dagbani ex-situ wh-questions

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In this talk, I discuss the syntax of Dagbani wh-questions focusing on ex-situ questions. I show that the formation of ex-situ wh-question is characterised by two main features including: (i) the dislocation of the *wh*-phrase from the canonical base position to the left periphery of the clause, a syntactic destination I propose is the specifier of the focus phrase, SpecFoc and (ii) the obligatory requirement for the introduction of the particles **ká** and **ń**, which appear to the immediate right of the extracted wh-phrase and are argued to be focus markers. Offering an analysis that is couched within the theoretical framework of Minimalism, Chomsky (1995), I assume that the movement of the wh-phrases is triggered by strong uninterpretable focus feature which they carry and which needs to be checked by overt syntactic operation. I also contend that the proposed focus markers are analysable as focus heads, which create the needed Spec-Head configuration required to license feature checking. Commenting on the distribution of the focus heads, I review earlier proposal in the literature that it is governed by the grammatical function of the extracted wh-phrase (the so called subject vs non-subject asymmetry) and propose an alternative analysis according to which the selection of one focus head in favour of another is motivated by the position of the extracted constituent, that is whether from SpecTP or elsewhere. I further demonstrate that while extraction of wh-phrase from matrix subject position licenses gaps, that of embedded subject position obligatorily requires resumption. In accounting for the requirement for gaps versus resumption following movement of the wh-phrases, we propose that it could be accounted for using the Highest Subject Restriction of (McCloskey 1990, 2002) and Extended Projection Principle proposed by Chomsky (1981, 1982). The syntactic incompatibility of ex-situ wh-phrases and fronted focused constituents is interpreted to mean that the two compete for the same syntactic position motivating an analysis according to which wh-movement in Dagbani is an instance of focus movement.