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**Language in Context:
Essays for
Robert E. Longacre**

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Topics in Mofu-Gudur

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Mofu-Gudur has one of the most flexible topic constructions ever described.¹ Topics can vary in length from a word or two to scores of words. They can function in discourse as cohesion devices or they can be used to announce or reannounce a discourse topic or they can be used to set the stage for a question word (or phrase) or for a new statement.

In this paper we describe the wide variety of topic constructions in §1 and then some of the variety of the pragmatic uses of topics in §2.

The marker for topic is *ná* (sometimes phonetically *ní*). It occurs at the end of the topical construction. There may be more than one topic in a sentence, which will be shown below.

1. The shapes and relationships of topic constructions

Topics occur in a variety of forms and relate semantically to the remainder of the sentence in which they occur in a variety of ways. This section presents a number of these variations.

¹Mofu-Gudur is a Chadic language spoken in northern Cameroon (Dieu and Renaud 1983). The data for this paper were collected by Kenneth and Judy Hollingsworth, working with the Société Internationale de Linguistique in Cameroon, under the auspices of the Centre for Anthropological Research and Studies and the Institute of Human Sciences in the Ministry of Higher Education, Computer Services, and Scientific Research of the Republic of Cameroon. Barreteau (1983a,b) has analyzed the Mofu-Gudur language and we have used his material in our analysis. Haller and Watters (1984) and Wolff (1983) have discussed topics in the related languages Zulgo and Lamang. Mofu is an svo language.

1.1. A topic may be coreferential with a constituent of the following clause. The topic is coreferential with the subject of the following clause in (1), with the object in (2), with a time adverb in (3), and is vocative with the imperative clause in (4).²

- (1) *ngwas káa ná a sərə́ ála áyaŋ*
 woman there TOP 3S know³⁰ BE squirrel

majá á wúdey ndér kaláh
 because 3S like peanut too^{much}

As for the woman, she knew it was the squirrel because he liked peanuts very much.

- (2) *gwágwar ná hánda ngáda kah*
 chicken TOP take³⁰ for 2
 As for the chicken, take it for yourself.

- (3) *tasána ná ya səkwakwá lá də́bá mádə́ngwas*
 today TOP IS wait^{INCL} CMPL now old^{woman}
 As for today, we will wait now, old lady.

- (4) *kah ná daw ta pə́rey a də́bá mánjárav katáy*
 2 TOP go and wash at back *manjarav* there
 As for you, go and wash behind that *manjarav* tree (*Acacia albida*) there.

²Noun and noun phrase objects occur more often than noun or noun phrase subjects. Pronouns, such as *-á* (third-person subject), are enclitic, and belong to the verb phrase rather than functioning as subject at the level of the clause. Examples are presented in phonemic orthography. Most of the letters have straightforward values, but the following symbols require explanation: ^ˈ represents high tone on vowels, ^ʔ represents glottal stop, ^ɰ represents a nasalized *a*, *b* and *d* represent voiced glottalic ingressive stops, *c* and *j* represent voiceless and voiced palato-alveolar affricates, and *s/* and *z/* represent voiceless and voiced alveolar lateral fricatives. Abbreviations used in glosses are 1 first person, 2 second person, 3 third person, ADJ adjectivizer, ANA anaphoric, BE existential or equational, CAUS causative, CMPL completive, DEI deictic, DIR directional, DM deictic marker, FUT future, IDEO ideophone, INCL inclusive, INJ interjection, INTERROG question marker, LOC locative, NEG negative, O object, P personal, PRF perfect, PROG progressive/habitual, PL plural, PST past, REF backreference, REL relative marker, s subject, TAG tag question, TOP topic.

1.2. A short topic may be noncoreferential with a constituent of the following clause. Topics may be only additions to the main part of a sentence and not otherwise be a part of the sentence. The topic in (5) is an evaluation of the following clause.

- (5) *maayá ná sésárey nga daw*
 good TOP spin for me
 Spin for me, that would be better.

In (6), the topic is a locative or a deictic uttered by the speaker who has just figured out who killed the chief's wife and daughter.

- (6) *káa ná ya wúlkey táa mbadmátákáwa sém*
 there TOP is think PST^{3S} transform^{PL^{3O}PL²DIR} PRF
 As for that there, I think they have (killed them (your family) and) turned them (into drums).

The topic in (7) is a general statement that has no specific referent in the following clause, but is further specified and elaborated.

- (7) *ya kakwa ná yám dáha káa kwáslamará mey*
 1s do^{INCL} TOP water BE 2s rinse^{PL^{3O}} mouth
 As for how we do (judgment), there is water, you rinse out your mouths.

1.3. A topic may be much larger than the remainder of the sentence. This is especially true for the WH-question, where everything preceding the interrogative word or phrase must obligatorily be topicalized. Examples (8)–(13) are WH-questions.

- (8) *ká lávey sí yá vǎlká tǎbǎŋ máaya ná majá me*
 2s say must is give^{2O} sheep good TOP because which?
 As for your saying that I must give you a good sheep, why? or
 Why do you say that I have to give you a good sheep?
- (9) *á yawa ná kwára*
 3s born^{DIR} TOP how?
 How did he get to be born?
- (10) *ma cáfǎa bégóney ná wa*
 one ask^{3O} elephant TOP who?
 Who asks Elephant?

- (11) *máatázlakáya ray ná ka hway dábá bá ná bay*
 bald head TOP 2S run back NEG TOP chief

mahurá fa hándáya lá da wará ma dá
 big PROG carry¹⁰ CMPL afterward one FUT

cáhkwará váv ná wa³ ná
 stripe²⁰ PL body TOP who? TOP

You bald heads! Don't run away. The big chief (the elephant) is carrying me (to my death), after which whom will you find to cut the stripes on your body?

- (12) *mekey máaya ná wura*
 make good TOP which?
 Which one did good?

- (13) *tákwaw cek hay tábiyá kah má cáhtará váv*
 Takwaw thing PL all 2 to carve³⁰ PL body

táa ngá ná ta me
 with it TOP with what?

Takwaw, with what things do you carve a body?

A yes-no question does not usually require topicalization, as illustrated in (14); but in a yes-no question with a tag, the whole sentence before the tag is topicalized, as in (15).

- (14) *ká záy ngá áyaŋ á daw*
 there excrement of squirrel this INTERROG
 Is that the excrement of Squirrel there?

- (15) *káa sárey gágámay á ná ngá daw bá díyá*
 2S spin cotton this TOP of me NEG TAG
 As for this cotton you spin, it's mine, isn't it?

Sentence (16) ends in a short accusation, with everything before it being topicalized.

³The question word 'who?' is sometimes *wa ná*, which appears to emphasize the uncertainty of the reference.

- (16) *málgámá anja má nása hwáyak ná ala kah*
 Məlgama when one destroy³⁰ country TOP BE 2
 Məlgama, when someone destroys the country, it will be you.

1.4. A topic may be closely related to the main part of the sentence.
 It may be the first part of a sentence as a condition clause, in which case it must be topicalized, as in (17), where an exclamatory word precedes the condition clause.

- (17) *yaw da ká wudiyá ná ya daw*
 well if 2S want¹⁰ TOP IS go
 Well! if you want me, I'll go.

The topic may be a time clause, as in (18) and (19), or a reason clause, as in (20) and (21). A conjunction (LINK WORD, Longacre 1968b:1), if there is one, may be found either in the topic or in the rest of the sentence.

- (18) *anjá ka tákwáram ná bəzá daw hay ánga má*
 when 2S burn^{PL} TOP child my PL 3 PST^{REL}

zákadáta sém
 throw^{CAUS³⁰PL} PRF

When you burned my children, it destroyed them.

- (19) *a da sawa dāa mādāla ná cek áha áa dāha cōnga*
 3S FUT come in hunt TOP thing ANA 3P BE even^{so}
 Even before he comes from the hunt, the thing is still there.

- (20) *da masa kah ta layáwa lá ná ka lawa gwágwar*
 in that 2 PST take^{10DIR} CMPL TOP 2S take^{DIR} chicken

mábará dá ray ketkel dāha a hár
 white on head refuse^{pile} BE at hand

In that you have stolen something for me, you can take a white chicken that is on top of the refuse pile.

- (21) *majá tábān máaya ná ya fá dá valdá dāa bá*
 because sheep good TOP IS FUT give^{CAUS} BE NEG
 Because the sheep is a good one, I am not about to give it to you.

Linked closely to *bá* (negative), *ná* (topic) forms a kind of negative condition that is translatable by 'otherwise', as in (22).

- (22) *máaya ngá ndaw dáa bá bá ná ya bádákáwa*
 good for man BE NEG otherwise IS exit^{CAUS}20^{DIR}
 There is no good in man, otherwise I would pull you out (of the pit).

Example (23) is a contrast sentence with the conjunction *amá* 'but', in which the second part of the sentence is a negative existential clause.

- (23) *manjákáya ámbá ndaw ngá hándáwa yám amá*
 sitting that person to bring^{DIR} water but

ndaw ná dáa bá
 person TOP BE NEG

He was sitting in order that someone would bring him water, but there was no one (who came).

Quotation formulas are not usually topicalized; but, in the exchange in (24), both quotation introducers are. Both speakers are already on stage and are preparing for battle. The first quotation introducer does not contain the verb 'say', but the second one does:

- (24) a. *ndaw kaa dábá tá jáhka sálay ná vǎǎvǎ vǎǎvǎ vǎǎvǎ*
 person there now with spread foot TOP toot toot toot
 (The ram) now spreads his feet apart (and blows on a horn), "toot, toot, toot."

- b. *bégáney á lávey ná ngama ná nákwá*
 elephant 3S says TOP good TOP go^{INCL}

hárpatákwa ta hárpey gwáy
 stamp³⁰PL^{INCL} with stamp only

The elephant says, "That's good. Let's just go stamp on them."

The following three examples each show an activity that is topicalized and related to a following clause by a linking word—*ala* 'be' in (25), *tá* 'then' in (26), and *ta* 'with' in (27).

- (25) *meféy slalam ná ala wása ngá mámálkey*
 blow flute TOP BE game for joy
 Playing the flute has become a game of joy.

- (26) *mabár a sawa ná tá' a tuway a tuway*
 lion 3S come TOP then 3S cry 3S cry
 The lioness comes, then she cries and cries.
- (27) *a samáwa ná ta mekey wálay*
 3S come^{PL}DIR TOP with do song
 They came, making music.

1.5. A topicalized element may lack overt marking of its logical relation to the remainder of the sentence. When such a topic announces the over-all topic, the main sentence may give an antithesis, an amplification, a reason, or a result. The topic in (28) is an unmarked protasis in an antithetical sentence; that in (29) is in a quotation and is amplified by the main clause; and that in (30) is the ground for action referenced in the main clause.

- (28) *a sápta ná a hátátár babá*
 3S looked^{for}30^{PL} TOP 3S found³⁰PL NEG
 He looked for them (but) he didn't find them.
- (29) *a lávey ahá zəngwáw dāw a key ná á tádey áa yam*
 3S says ah donkey my 3S does TOP 3S fall into water
 He said, "Ah, as for my donkey's doings, he has fallen into the water."
- (30) *ka ma hatátiwa tábán dāw hay káa ná ehé*
 2S REL find¹⁰DIR sheep my PL there TOP behold
- yá valká tábán ngá máaya*
 1S give²⁰ sheep for good
 As for you finding my sheep for me, behold, I give you a sheep for free.

1.6. A topic may itself be grammatically complex. Topics are usually grammatically simple, but may also be compound or complex. The most frequent grammatically complex topic construction is a noun phrase containing a relative clause, such as the transitive WH-question in (31), which has an object noun phrase that contains a relative clause, or the WH-question in (32), which entails a relative clause within an existential clause and a quotation sentence.

- (31) *ya da kadá ndaw mesémédey máa wuriwa léy*
 1s will kill person sorcerer REL burn¹⁰ DIR field

daw káa ná kwára
 my at TOP how?

How will I kill the sorcerer who burned my field?

- (32) *á lóvam díyán ngá papáy ma zléy wálay dáha*
 3s say^{PL} bird of my^{father} REL begin song BE

ná ánga dáma
 TOP 3 where?

Where is Father's bird that they say sings?

1.7. Two or more topics may occur in a single sentence. When this happens each topic adds information that leads to the main declaration, as in (33)–(35), the last of which has six topics.

- (33) *kwakway ngá léy kah há ná masa kah má*
 boundary of field your ANA TOP that 2 PST

hávey ná tá ama
 cultivate TOP with where?

As for the boundary of your field that you cultivate, where is it?

- (34) *ma pá cek fá waw kedě ná ala waawa*
 one put³⁰ thing on fire there TOP BE whoever

ná fá ndáley lá
 TOP PROG consume CMPL

Whoever put something on the fire here, whoever it was, it is getting burned up.

- (35) *dá ndaw masa má wudyá ná waawa ná nga*
 if man that REL wants¹⁰ TOP whoever TOP for

dəzliyə ŋgwa kásl a gázlávay ámba ya
 construct¹⁰ tower all to sky that is

təldáta áta mamaŋ ŋgá zél daw
 take^{up}³⁰^{PL} them mother of husband my

ta gədəy ŋgá zél daw kede lá á vād
 and dog of husband my there CMPL to high

ná yá kəzluwa ná da ma sluyá ná
 TOP IS drop^{DIR} TOP if one takes¹⁰ TOP

waawa ná yah ŋgá ndaw áhá
 whoever TOP IS for man that

If a man wants me, whoever it is, (I wish that) he construct a tower all the way to heaven so that I can carry up there the mother of my (murdered) husband and the dog of my husband. I will throw myself off there, if one catches me, whoever it is, I will be his (wife).

1.8. A topic may lack a semantic connection with the rest of the sentence. Sometimes a topic encodes information that is extraneous to the rest of the sentence, its occurrence being governed by discourse considerations, as in (36).

- (36) *magwádakw zây ta sawa lá dəbá káfcám káfcám*
 bird^{of}^{prey} PST come CMPL now whoosh whoosh

káfcám ná dam ká a kar méy húsa húsa
 whoosh TOP girl there 3S make³⁰ voice shoo shoo

húsa ánga káfcám káfcám a méy lá
 shoo 3 whoosh whoosh 3S take^{off} CMPL

As for the bird of prey having come now, (he sits there flapping his wings) whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, the girl yells, shoo, shoo, shoo. He took off (flapping his wings) whoosh, whoosh.

1.9. A topic may occur independently of a following main clause. In running text, when a series of topics that are not closely related semantically occurs, one cannot be sure whether the topics are separate sentences or

should be connected to the next one. To get around that problem, we have taken the following examples from quoted (planned) conversations, where we can be sure that when the speech of one speaker ends there is a sentence break and that the speech of the next speaker begins a new sentence.

- (37) *ndáw málak á záma dáf wúré káa ná ya*
 man stranger 3S ate³ food now there TOP 1S

fəcárwa ver lá bá ná
 sweep³^{DIR} chamber CMPL NEG TOP

As for a stranger eating the food there, I had not yet swept the chamber.

- (38) *máaláhwa ray bágáney a ná anjá a sákwiya*
 bald head elephant this TOP when 3S wait¹

bá ba ya kadámará ná
 not that 1S fight^{PL}³⁰ TOP

That bald headed Elephant! Why didn't he wait for me so that we could argue about it?

This completes our survey of the types of topics. The topicalization for WH-questions and of condition clauses is obligatory for all speakers. The rest of the topics are optionally topicalized. Some speakers of the language simply leave out *ná* (topic) and give the same constructions, sometimes marking them off with a phonological break. Other speakers put in *ná* (or its *ní* variant) whenever they can. Most people fall between these two extremes.

This topic system seems even more flexible than the topic system in Lisu, as described by Manaster-Ramer (1988), and far more flexible than the topic systems of Japanese, Korean, and Mandarin described by Li and Thompson (1976). There might even be some question about considering this phenomenon as TOPICALIZATION in Mofu-Gudur, but we have no better term for it so far.

Now we look at the pragmatics of how topics are used.

2. The pragmatic uses of topics

The topic construction can be used on different grammatical levels. In §1, we illustrated topics in different sentences, such as in WH-questions or condition clauses, where they must be made into topics. In this section we illustrate

the uses of topics on various grammatical levels, showing how they contribute to sentence-level, paragraph-level, and discourse-level functions.

2.1. A topic may summarize the preceding sentence within a paragraph. Within a paragraph, a topic can serve as a cohesion device by summarizing or repeating what has been previously said. This usage of topic is especially seen in introductory material in stories or in the dramatic peak of a story. Example (39) is the closing summary of an expository text. The topic in the second sentence repeats the idea of 'raising chickens' to give coherence to the paragraph which summarizes the points expounded in the text.

- (39) a. *á gáltá gwágwár ngá hay ná ánda kéde*
 3S raise³⁰ PL chicken her PL TOP like this
 As for her raising chickens, it is like this.

- b. *gwágwár háy fá mey ngá ná kwakwadba da*
 chicken PL at mouth her TOP many if

fá sápa ta méy a ánda káde
 PROG seek³ with word 3 like this

As for her having chickens, there will be many if she does like we have said.

Example (40) is the peak of a narrative tale. The topic repeats the action of one character in order to relate his action to the action of other characters also named in the paragraph, to create a very tight paragraph cohesion.

- (40) a. *a da lálawa pápárákw héyey*
 3S fut take^{DIR} hoof ANA
 He was going to take the hoof (of the roasted goat).

- b. *a lálaráwa pápárákw a hámbáda dábá ná*
 3S take³⁰ DIR hoof 3S chew³⁰ now TOP

zel pak ngwas káa héyey pák dá wáyam
 husband IDEO wife there ANA IDEO from river

As for him taking the hoof and chewing on it, the husband suddenly returned (and) the aforementioned wife suddenly returned from the river.

- (41) a. ... *a daw a gurbá slám áhá*
 3S goes 3S clear^30 place first
 ... he goes and clears this place.
- b. *ta gurbá cáy ná tá' a wáwúra ta áwaw*
 PST clear^30 CMPL TOP then 3S burn^30 with fire
 Having cleared it, he then burns it off with fire.

Example (41) is from an activity text that uses a topicalized recapitulation to create cohesion within the paragraph.

2.2. A topic may introduce a paragraph by reflecting material from the preceding paragraph. It may be used to call attention to paragraph boundaries, especially in activity texts. Few are found in narrative paragraphs except as EPISODE beginnings (§2.3).

A topic which serves in the initial sentence of a paragraph creates cohesion by either TAIL-HEAD LINKAGE (Longacre 1976:204) which recapitulates a previously mentioned thematic word or phrase, or by TEMPORAL LINKAGE, which is perhaps expected but newly mentioned.

Example (42) is taken from an activity text about how women collect termites to feed their chickens. It is an introductory sentence in a paragraph about the best type of termites to feed chickens. The word 'termite' was introduced in the sentence that precedes the paragraph.

- (42) *máacah hay káa ná mékelé mékelé dáha*
 termite PL DEI TOP other other BE
 As for these termites, there are many different kinds.

Example (43) recounts an actual event, with the first topic indicating a new paragraph by marking a time sequence between what preceded and what follows. The second topic binds two closely related events together.

- (43) *pás hakwád ná gúmiya ma hawá ngáda way*
 day evening TOP Gumiya REL return^DIR to home
- a wuswa ná barre táp a ver*
 3S enter^DIR TOP IDEO IDEO to bedroom
- At evening, Gumiya having returned home, went directly to his bedroom, (he didn't speak to a soul).

2.3. An episode may begin with a topic reflecting material from a preceding episode. Just as a topic can mark new paragraphs and at the same time provide tail-head cohesion or temporal cohesion from one paragraph to another, so may they function between episodes in narratives or between new POINTS in nonnarrative texts. In Mofu, the topic-created cohesion may be in the form of a resumptive bringing back of some earlier part of the story for further development or simply a reintroduction of a previously named character, character trait, or topic.

Example (44) is from a narrative where previous episodes have been concerned with the actions of a certain protagonist after a hunt. At the beginning of this new episode, the topic provides cohesion by restating an action of that person reported in a preceding episode.

- (44) a. *ndəhay a samáwa dāa mádála ndaw kedé a*
 men 3S come^{DIR} from hunt man this 3S

daw a way ná dam kede mánakáya dá ver
 go to home TOP girl this lying in chamber
 The men return from the hunt and this man goes home
 and this girl was lying in her chamber.

- b. *manjákáya ámbá ndaw ngá hándáwa yám daw*
 staying that person to carry^{DIR} water 10

ná dāa bá
 TOP BE NEG
 She stayed (there) so there was no one to carry him water.

Example (45) is the beginning of a third episode of a narrative text. It reintroduces the main character of episode one, *bay* 'chief', and the main character of episode two, *cék* 'thing' (bird). The second clause marked by *ná* (topic) sets up a contrast with the main part of the sentence.

- (45) *bay a sawa dá léy ná ba cék ngá zlar*
 chief 3S come from field TOP that thing to begin

wálay ánda máamándaw daw ná dāa sabá
 song like days^{before} going TOP BE no^{longer}
 The chief came from the field (to hear) the bird sing for him as was
 his custom in days past, (but) it no longer existed.

2.4. A topic may set the stage as preamble to the introduction of new material. It may present new information which contributes to the setting of the stage of a narrative⁴—a new situation (45), a new character (46), or a new point (47). Example (46) begins an episode by introducing monkeys as new characters; (47) introduces an activity text on how to plant a field with the first point, choosing a place to plant.

- (46) *duwak hay a samáwa ngá séy yám ná*
 monkey PL 3S come[^]PL[^]DIR for drink water TOP

a hɔtfámará áa dá dâma
 3S find[^]LOC[^]PL[^]3O 3P in there

As for monkeys coming to drink water, they found him in there (a deep hole).

- (47) *yaw anda ndaw a wudey amba a da key ley ná*
 INJ as man 3S want to 3S FUT make field TOP

sí témé a daw á nɔkwa slam dá ley dágay
 must first 3S go 3S look[^]DIR place in field first

Well, when one wants to go make a field, he must first go check that field out.

2.5. A topic may mark the peak of a narrative or activity discourse. Topics often occur at narrative PEAKS or INCITING MOMENTS. They serve to call attention to the other surface structures that characterize such places in discourse, appearing to be a form of highlighting (Longacre 1983:86 and Wiesemann et al. 1983). The surface structure of the topic is usually different from the remaining part of the sentence. In the case of a narrative peak which is marked by ideophones instead of normal verbs, the topic portion of a sentence precedes the ideophones. In the case of an inciting moment marked by use of nonnarrative tense-aspect (usually future or progressive), the topic usually precedes the verb phrase that is so marked.

A topic found at the peak of a narrative is illustrated in (40), where the topic is marked for tense-aspect as expected in narrative. The topic restates

⁴In Mofu, stage setting material is often topicalized when the hearer may already know the material (it is UNUSED-NEW MATERIAL, Prince 1979) but it needs to be called to the hearer's attention. To the outsider, the material may be BRAND-NEW MATERIAL which needs some better introduction.

the anticipated action, thereby focusing attention on the action that will clash with that of the peak, which is expressed by ideophones.

A topic may also emphasize the action that marks an inciting moment. This is shown in (48), which is taken from an inciting moment of a narrative episode. The third topic in this example is part of the inciting moment which, in this case, is marked by progressive aspect.

- (48) *áta ma kádmara gaanga á ná ngá ray ngá ngwas*
 they REL hit^{PL}30 drum DEI TOP of head of wife

ngá bay ta dam ángá kedě héyey ná ánja
 of chief and daughter his DEI mention TOP when

ndaw dáha fá daw ná fá jákey slamay
 man BE PROG go TOP PROG hear ear

As for their (the monkeys') drumming the drums (made) of the heads of the chief's wife and daughter, there was a man who came and listened.

2.6. A topic may end a sentence. This situation, where the main part of the sentence does not follow the topic, is rare; and the meaning of ending a sentence with the topic marker is uncertain. In this context, the actual occurrence of *ná* (topic) is optional, depending on individual dialects. When used, it adds emphasis, either positive or negative. Illustrations (49) and (50) are chosen with care, from texts where we can be certain of sentence boundaries. Example (49) is a question boxed in by quotation formulas 'he says'; (50) is the last sentence of an explanatory text and is a summary of what that text is about.

- (49) *kah kutáf ná wewér kah kaláh ka da hándíwa*
 you turtle TOP tricky you too^{much} 2S FUT carry^{DIR}

áa yam ná
 to water TOP

(Squirrel says) "As for you, Turtle, you are very tricky; you will put it in the water." (Turtle says, "Please, Squirrel, no I won't.")

- (50) *ánda kedě ngusay gá á nasmatará caved'*
 like that woman^{PL} many 3S destroy^{PL} 3O^{PL} way

ngá mézǎle hay ná
 of husband PL TOP

As for how many women destroy the lives of their husbands, (it is like that).

3. Conclusion

The topic construction in Mofu-Gudur is a very flexible construction in its extent and in its function. It may or may not be coreferential with a constituent of clauses that follow, or it may be a restatement of preceding sentences. It functions not only on the sentence level, but can function simultaneously on one or more higher levels as well.

A topic may help mark important parts of a paragraph or discourse by serving as a device for scene setting, linking, or highlighting. A topic used for scene setting may introduce new material (§2.3) or recall previously mentioned material (§2.1–2). A topic that creates cohesion may do so in terms of tail-head linkage as in (42), temporal linkage as in (43), or logical linkage as in (42). A topic that calls attention to the appearance of a new structure may be a topicalized participant reference as in the second topic of (48), an event reference as in (40), a logical reference as in (42), or summary as in (50).

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