Topic
in Ama Discourse

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Table of Contents

Introduction

1. The enclitic mo occurs in a wide range of constructions in Ama, a language spoken in Papua New Guinea. It has both syntactic and pragmatic functions. The aim of this paper[1] is to suggest that mo in all its occurrences, even in its syntactic ones, functions as a topic marker in Ama. In its most obvious syntactic function it marks the subject in a topic-comment clause. In its most obvious pragmatic functions it marks topics that are relevant for interpreting the whole discourse.

The organization of the paper is as follows. In section 2 I will present some of the definitions of topic found in the relevant literature. I will also give the definition adopted for this paper. In section 3 I will give some facts about the Ama language and the data on which this paper is based as well as the orthography used. Section 4 is the bulk of the paper, where the use of mo as topic marker is described. 4.2 presents the syntactic uses of mo and 4.3 presents its pragmatic functions. 4.4 is a short section about how topics are expressed in questions.

The discourse pragmatic functions of mo described in this paper are most fully realised in narrative discourse styles. Where pertinent I will point out differences noted between oral and written style.

Topic Defined

2. As a general definition of the term 'topic' the following might do: Topic is the most talked about NP in a

particular discourse. Givón (1990) follows this definition. To quote him,

"Topicality is a property of the **nominal participants** [emphasis provided in origin] ('referents') - most commonly subjects or objects - of clauses. Propositional information, coded in state or event clauses, tends to be *about* some topical participant(s) in the state/event. Such topical participants are most commonly the subjects, direct-objects or indirect-objects of the clause. Typically, they are thus noun or noun phrases ('entities'), rather than verbs ('events') or adjectives ('states'). When whole events or states are made topical, they are almost always *nominalized*. That is, they are made morphologically and syntactically noun-like.

In spite of being grammatically manifest at the clausal level, topicality is *not* a clause-dependent property of referents, but rather a discourse-dependent one" (Givón 1990:740).

Definitions along these lines seem, however, to be too narrow to explain the functions of the enclitic mo in the Ama language. Especially Givón's emphasis on topicality as a nominal property, makes it impossible to call mo a topic marker, using his definition, a point, which will be demonstrated in section 4.1.

In the literature there are several names for topic-like discourse pragmatic functions. Some linguists, including Halliday & Hasan (1976:325), talk about theme versus rheme. theme being the given or already known information and rheme being the new information or what is said about the theme.

Theme versus rheme in this definition seems to correspond well to what other linguists, such as Comrie, have called topic versus focus (see below). Halliday (1985:36) defines theme as "what the message is concerned with: The point of departure for what the speaker is going to say." In order to reserve the term 'theme' for the global theme of the discourse, as in Grimes (1975:363), I will follow Comrie (1981:57-58), and call this "point of departure", which could also be called given or known information, topic contrasting with new information then called focus. Comrie states that topic is X in the context of an answer to a question: 'and what about X?', followed by an answer, 'X is ......'. Focus is "the essential piece of new information that is carried by a sentence." As a starting point for a definition of topic for this paper then, I would say that topic is that entity that Comrie calls "X" in "X is...".

As will be shown later in this paper topic so defined is a sentence, paragraph or episode level entity. The terms paragraph and episode as used in Ama will be defined later in 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.1.3. Topic will then contrast not only with focus, as stated above, but also with global theme, which then, as the name suggests, is a discourse level entity.

Two other definitions of topic, which I have found helpful to explain the use of mo in Ama are those of Lyons and Dik. Lyons' definition is similar to Comrie's. He states that topic is often that element which is given in the general situation or in an explicit question to which the speaker is replying (Lyons 1968:335). Dik says that the topic

"presents the entity about which the predication predicates"
(Dik 1978:19).

As mentioned above, however, I will not limit the term
'topic' to stand for only nominal or nominalized entities,
but rather I will follow Chafe (1976:50), who gives a much
wider interpretation: "Typically.... the topic sets a
spatial, temporal or individual framework within which the
main predication holds." Seen from this point of view,
topic in Ama is as discource dependent as Givón's definition
of topic states, because it encodes the whole framework for
the discourse: spatial, temporal and individual.

The definition of topic adopted for this paper, then, is
partly the same as Chafe's: The topic sets a spatial,
temporal or individual framework within which the main
predication holds. It is known, given or shared
information, the point of departure for that, which is going
to be said. This definition will be further commented upon
in 4.1 after some examples from the Ama language have been
given.

The Ama Language

3. Ama, also called Sawiyanu, is spoken by the Sawiyanu
people living in the Ambunti district of the East Sepik
Province of Papua New Guinea on the island of New Guinea,
north of Australia. The Ama language is a verb final
language with a relatively free word order. According to
Wurm (1982:247) and Laycock (1973), Ama is one of six
languages comprising the Left May Family, also called the
Arai Family. Laycock set it up as a phylum[2] level isolate

family. Conrad and Dye (1975) agreed with this classification. On the highest level, the Left May languages may be called Papuan languages. However, this term does not imply any more than that they are spoken on or close to the island of New Guinea and that they are non-Austronesian (Foley 1986:1-3).

3.1. The Data. The data for this paper were collected between 1973-1991 by my husband Soren and myself mainly in the small village of Kawiya, where our family lived intermittendly, but also in other villages. The data consist of about 70 transcribed texts and written stories, innumerable informal conversations, and tens of thousands of expressions written down during daily translation sessions over many years.[a]

3.2. The Orthography. The orthography developed and used for all Sawiyanu publications is as follows. The first column provides orthographic symbol and the second column provides the phonetic sounds that each of the symbols represents.

a	representing [a],[ɑ][a]	o	representing	[ʋ],[ɔ],[ʌ],[ɤ]
f	[ɸ],[ʍ]	p		[p]
h	[h]	s		[s̠]
i	[ɪ],[e]	t		[t]
k	[k]	u		[u],[o]
l	[ɭ],[r]	w		[w]
m	[m]	y		[j]
n	[n]			

The following punctuation is used:

. statement
? question
; rising intonation indicating time passing and/or
  sequence
, non-final pause

The enclitic mo is in most places written as a separate word in the Ama orthography.

Topic in Ama

4.   Topic in Ama, as stated above, is known, given or shared information, the point of departure for that which is going to be said. In its discourse pragmatic functions it sets a spatial, temporal and/or individual framework within which the main predication holds. Topic in Ama is encoded by mo. I will now give some examples that show the spread of parts of speech that mo marks. I will first comment on possible functions of mo, if you did not consider the whole speech situation in which it occurs.

4.1.   The Enclitic mo. When we first started working on the Ama language, we were frustrated by the the ever occuring enclitic mo, as illustrated in the examples[5] given below. Looking at these examples, without considering their wider contexts, one might conclude that the enclitic mo functions as a copula in a topic-comment clause (example (1)); as subject/object or case marker (examples (2) and (3)); as temporal or locative marker (examples (4-5) and (6)); as a conditional conjunction (examples (7-10)); as a temporal conjunction (examples (11) and (12)); or as part of a result or summing up conjunction (example (13)).

It will, however, be argued in this paper that mo encodes topic at every instance of its occurrences in both its syntactic and pragmatic functions.

        (1) Noko mo[6] yau.
            man   dead
            A/The man is dead.

(2) Noko **mo** tumoki.
man   came
The man came.

(3) Fu **mo** noko-yo   unuki.
pig   man-agent shot
The man shot the pig.

(4) Nosai   no **mo**;   koi **mo** atotalimokinoki.
that.from that   we   waited.for.him.we
Then we waited for him.

(5) Yo **mo** lolai **mo** a   louwa   to-fu
I   today   tree frust.int. pr.t.-be.downriver

ikai tolo.
plant stand.

I wanted to plant a tree downriver today.

(6) Nu **mo** tikinoki, Alai **mo**.
house came.we   Alai
We came to the house in Alai.

(7) Sawiyanu nukonu **mo** muwoliwoimai   mamo no **mo**,
Sawiyanu woman   heavy.with.at salt eat

alu **mo** yau.
child dead.

If a Sawiyanu woman eats salt when she is
pregnant, the child will die.

(8) Kotoni moloso aluwai-yaki-koni**mo**,
God's   road.to follow-if-we

moi **mo** noko ititouni na   si monoi.
we   men good   focus sit we.fut.t.

If we follow God's way, we will be good people.

(9) Sa   tumo somiso **mo**, ya manoimo.
rain come without   I go.fut.t.
If it does not rain, I will go.

(10) Po -fasisoni **mo**,   tiya-yo   pa po-kaloso.
irr-helped.her.you hunger-instr. not irr-die.her
If you had helped her, she wouldn't have starved.

(11) Kiyapo-yo   tola   tumoki **mo**;
government.officer-agent stand.to came

moi **mo** waliyo na   si-koni.
we   alright focus sit-we

Since the government officer came to live,we are
OK.

(12) Solosai __mo__ na   tiyousi.
laugh.from focus sits.he
Having (learnt to) laugh, he sits.

(13) No   monoi   no __mo__, a   na
that concern.   that   tree focus

ufosikokaiki.
blow.on.plur.stay.he

So he blew the trees into being.

I will now argue that __mo__ functions as a topic marker in the
entire range of its occurrences.

The entity marked by __mo__ encodes the "spatial, temporal or
individual framework" that Chafe writes about.

It encodes "the point of departure", that Halliday calls
'theme'.

It encodes the given or known information refered to by
Halliday & Hasan, Comrie, Dik and Lyons (see section 2).

Topic in Ama is then partly defined as the spatial, temporal
or individual framework around which the main predication
is told. It is always the point of departure for what the
speaker wants to say. In other words, it is the known or
the given information that the speaker assumes or wants the
hearer to __share__ with him. Shared information may be shared
in at least four different ways:

-previously mentioned in the discourse at hand

-shared cultural information

-part of the overall speech situation

-information the speaker __wants__ the hearer to share with him.

I will now describe how the topic marker __mo__ is used in Ama

to encode different syntactic and pragmatic functions, starting with the topic-comment clause.

4.2. Syntactic Functions.

The enclitic _mo_ has a syntactic function in the topic-comment clause (4.2.1), where it obligatory marks the subject. It also has a weak syntactic function in a sentence containing a dependent clause (4.2.2), where it optionally follows the dependent clause making it dependent. There is no other way in the language to encode dependency between clauses. The third syntactic function of _mo_ is in different kinds of conditionals (4.2.3), where it, in most cases obligatory, follows the conditioning clause. This is, of course, also a dependency construction, but the syntactic strength of _mo_ is here a lot stronger. Of the four different kinds of conditionals in Ama, _mo_ is obligatory in three of them.

The syntactic use of _mo_ in the dependent clause co-occur with its discourse pragmatic use in certain kinds of temporal settings as well as in the use of dependent clauses for further explanations or summeries (see 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.3).

4.2.1. Topic-Comment Clause.

The enclitic _mo_ is grammatically obligatory when it marks the subject in the topic-comment clause (example (14)). If it is omitted the construction is no longer a topic-comment clause but a nominal phrase (example (15)). It is very possible to view this construction in a pragmatic way. Part of the definition of topic in Ama is that topic is known, given or shared information, the point of departure for what the

speaker is going to say. The subject in a topic-comment
clause fits the definition perfectly. The grammatical
subject in a topic-comment clause is in pragmatic terms the
topic of that clause/sentence.

(14) Noko mo   yau.
     man topic dead
     A/The man is dead.

(15) Noko yau.
     man dead
     A/The dead man

(16) Yo mo   Sawiyanu nukonu.
     I topic Sawiyanu woman
     I am a Sawiyanu woman.

(17) Alu mo   nuku-yo.
     child topic knife-instr.
     The child (has been cut) by a knife.

4.2.2. Dependent Clause. The only way in Ama to mark
dependency between clauses is to mark the dependent clause
with mo.   This means in pragmatic terms that the dependent
clause, if followed by mo, is seen as given information   to
which the main clause is added as new information.

Context alone will, however, sometimes be the only clue as
to the relationship between clauses.

When the dependency is marked by mo, the dependent clause
with a final mo usually precedes the independent clause,
though it can also follow it. In the latter case the
speaker is trying to clear up some ambigious point by adding
an afterthought or an amplification. The most common
relationship between a dependent and an independent clause
is a temporal one, either a simultaneous or sequential
action (18). The type of temporal relationship is often

ambigious, but if it is important to signal sequential
action, the sequential relationship is marked by rising
intonation at the end of the dependent clause. In this case
the dependent clause has to precede the independent clause.
A sequential temporal relationship is signaled in the
orthography by a semi-colon. In head-tail[7] constructions,
the rising intonation is especially marked as in example
(19).

```
(18) ..... ifou no    louwa      manoki mo,   ulai
     ..... back that frust.int. went   topic but

     wamoso na    koka   tumoki.
     bees   focus see.to came

     ..... when I wanted to go back, I came upon some
     bees.

(19)
  i. ..... molo somu na    tosolu, noni  mo.
     ..... vine meat focus twine   woman topic
     ..... the woman twines the fibres.

  ii. Molo somu tosolukaiyou mo:    na      tomanoso, ....
      vine meat twine.put.up topic focus goes.she ....
      Having twined and put away the fibres, she goes..
```

For the pragmatic use of the above construction, see
4.3.1.2.

The relationship between dependent and independent clauses
can also be one of explanation or elaboration.

```
(20) Isi    isiko aino        imofa,      Sawiyanu noko
     garden cut   anaph.ref. talk.little Sawiyanu men

     tisiko manono     mo.
     cut    cont.they topic

     A little story about making a garden, about how
     Sawiyanu men make it.
```

For the pragmatic use of this construction see 4.3.3.

4.2.3. Conditionals. There are four types of conditionals: simple, future, contrary-to-fact and negative. The antecedent in the simple type is optionally marked with _mo_. In the other three types the occurrence of _mo_ is obligatory. This is similar to Haiman's claim (1978). As he claimed in Conditionals are Topics, the antecedent in a conditional may very well be looked upon in a pragmatic way, calling it a topic. That is just the way in which the Sawiyanu people express themselves, when they add a _mo_ at the end of the condition in their conditionals.

In the simple conditional, _mo_ is the only feature marking the constructon as conditional. In the other three types of conditionals _mo_ occurs along with other markers to encode different kinds of conditions.

In simple and future conditionals there is often no difference between the if.... and wher.... distinction in English.

There is no discourse pragmatic meaning attached to _mo_ in the conditional constructions in contrast with the use of _mo_ in other dependency constructions (see 4.2, 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.3). The dependent clause in a conditional is the topic of the sentence, where it occurs.

4.2.3.1. Simple Conditional. Simple conditionals occur mostly in hortatory texts, often encoding a judgement, good or bad, about something.

(21) Molo itouniyaimoso aluwai mo   waliyo.
     road good.to   follow topic alright
     If/When you follow a good road that is good.

Sentences like this could alternatively be analyzed as topic-comment clauses, where the subject is an embedded clause.

Simple conditional constructions can also be used in other contexts:

(22) Alu   ai   uwo   mo, atino-yo
     child sick afflicted topic mother.his-agent

     kau   na,   hausiso.
     take.him focus hospital.to

     If/When a child is sick, his mother must take him to the hospital.

Both verbs, antecedent and consequent are uninflected.

A simple conditional may in rare cases occur without mo, when the relationship between the antecedent and the consequent is clear from the context.

4.2.3.2. Future Conditional. This is the most common conditional construction. It is widely used in all types of conversations and texts to encode background information.

(23) Woli   tum- aki-   mo, ya fasiyoimo.
     my.friend come-fut.cond.-topic I help.him.fut.t.
     If/When my friend comes, I will help him.

The verb of the consequent clause is always in future tense.

4.2.3.3. Contrary-to-Fact Conditional. In the contrary-to-fact construction the verbs of both antecedent and consequent are in the irrealis mood.

(24) Fu mo   p-unu   mo, fona p-aniyo
     pig topic irr-shoot.I topic leg irr-bring

     tumonoki.
     come.I.you

     If I had shot the pig, I would have brought you a leg.

4.2.3.4. Negative Conditionals. All three of the previous conditional constructions could be transformed into a negative conditional by adding the form somiso 'without' before mo in the antecedent*.

The verb in the antecedent clause is then uninflected. The verb of the consequent clause is in the same form as the verb in the consequent clause of the corresponding positive sentence.

(25) Tokota   tolo somiso mo, Wewakoso kau
     med.orderly stand without topic Wewak.to take.him

     na.
     focus

     If the medical orderly isn't there, he (the patient) must be taken to Wewak.

(26) Kotoni moloso   aluwai somiso mo,
     God's road.to   follow without topic

     kumokiso pa nu monoiso.
     heaven.to not go we.fut.t.not

     If we don't follow God's way, we won't go to heaven.

(27) Sa   tumo somiso mo, yo mo na   po-tumo.
     rain come without topic I topic focus irr-come
     If it hadn't rained, I would have come.

4.3. Pragmatic Functions. The topic marker _mo_ has a clear discourse pragmatic function as it, in Chafe's terms, "sets a spatial, temporal or individual framework within which the main predication holds." I believe that setting the spatial and temporal framework is self-explanatory, namely that the speaker orients the listner regarding the time and the space in his speech. But what might 'individual framework' mean? In Ama I have applied it to the identification of the participants within the discourse or the speech situation. The reason is that the same enclitic _mo_ that gives the clues as to time and space in the speech/discourse also orients the hearer as to who is doing what and to whom. Temporal and spatial setting will be discussed in 4.3.1. In this connection the term 'deictic centre' will be used and defined. Participant identification will be discussed in 4.3.2. In 4.3.3 I will discuss the function of _mo_ in summing up or explaining.

4.3.1. Temporal and Spatial Deictic Centre. By deictic centre is meant a point of reference in time or space. Another term used for this is deictic anchorage, first proposed by Ragnar Rommetveit (1972:35), to refer to how a sentence is used, the conditions for speaker usage and the role the sentence plays in broader discourse and in the life situation.

Anderson & Keenan (1985:277) speak of "anchoring of deictic notions by reference to the speaker..."

Cindi Farr, Summer Institute of Linguistics, in lectures

from grammar seminars in 1988 and 1989 noted the following "possible locations of centre of speech event.

1. Coding place - location where speech was uttered.
    a. encoding place - speaker's location at time of
                        speech utterance.
    b. decoding place - hearer's location at time of
                        speech utterance.
2. Reference place   - location of event or participant
                        mentioned in utterance.
3. Moving centre expression - "We are going to the fair."
4. Moving world expression - speaker is in motion but
                        acts as if his world were."

In a Sawiyanu narrative* discourse, the deictic centre is usually the reference place, the location and temporal setting of the event or participant mentioned.

In section 4.3.1.1. I will discuss how the initial deirtic centre in time and space of a narrative discourse is established.   Then in 4.3.1.2. and 4.3.1.3. I will show how the topic marker mo is used to establish further deictic centres as the discourse proceeds.

4.3.1.1. Setting the Stage. At the start of a discourse the deictic centre can be that of the speaker. This is especially true with regard to the temporal setting. This is done by using words such as today, yesterday, or more commonly 'a long time ago'. Other expressions such as 'at a certain time' or 'then' are not speaker oriented. Tense marking on the verb, which is obligatory through the whole

discourse, is, of course, speaker oriented. The temporal phrases used at the beginning of a discourse may or may not be marked with <u>mo</u>, but they usually are, conveying shared information, that is the speaker is establishing a time with the hearer, which they both can relate to. It is more common in written narrative texts to establish the temporal setting by use of temporal phrases and not to depend on tense alone, which is more common in oral narrative discourse.

The spatial deictic centre is rarely established by reference to the speaker. Even at the beginning of a discourse this centre is usually the reference place, the location of the event or participant mentioned. In written narratives it is more common to establish the original location by a locative phrase.

(28) Noko mɔ   ai uwoki   mo,   <u>hausi-sɔ</u>
     man topic ill afflicted topic   clinic-to

     kaukino.
     took.him.they

     When the man was ill , they took him to the
     clinic.

(29) Ulo siya mɔ[10] ...aino   lukolo i   monoi na
     sun one topic   pandana pick get to   focus

     manokino, <u>aino</u>   <u>folo-sɔ</u>.
     went.they pandana stump-to

     One day...they went to the pandana groove to pick
     pandanas.

In oral narratives the verbs themselves play a major role in encoding location: Come, go, stay plus a variety of locative suffixes indicate movement in different directions. There is also a series of locative prefixes that indicates a

stationary location, upriver, downriver, on the other side of the river, high elevation, low elevation, etc.

    (30) ... a   louwa   to-_fu_   ikai
        ... tree frust.int. pr.t.-be.downriver plant

    stand.
    tolo.

    ... I was downriver wanting to plant a tree.

The spatial deictic centre at the start of a discourse can, however, be established by reference to the speaker. That happens, if what is told has occured far away from where the story is told and if the place is well known to the hearer. In that case the locative phrase occurs with _mo_.

    (31) Nu   _mo_   tikinoki,
        house topic come.we

    Alai   _mo_.
    Alai (a remote village) topic
    We came to the house in Alai.

This sentence is from a story where they are chasing a criminal. He is known to be in hiding with people living in the house in Alai. This is _the_ house.

Example (31) may be contrasted with example (32), where _mo_ does not occur with the locative phrase.

    (32) Nu-so   tikinoki.
        house-to come.we
        We came to the house/home/any house.

Another story, actually a letter, was written in the town of Madang, but the story starts off in Kawiya village in the East Sepik Province, i.e. far off from the place of the speech utterance. It is the home village of the people

receiving the letter, so it is well known among the
interlocuters.

(33) <u>Kawiya-sai</u> **mo**   7no kolukomai na
Kawiya-from topic 7   o'clock.at focus

auwonoulukinoki.
arose.we

We left Kawiya at 7 o'clock.

4.3.1.2. Temporal Deictic Centre. The enclitic <u>mo</u> occurs
more frequently on temporals and time related words than on
locatives. It also occurs frequently at the end of a
dependent clause to encode a temporal setting for the
following paragraph (see also 4.2). These strategies are
used to establish temporal deictic centres as the story
proceeds.

Each new temporal setting could be said to start a new
paragraph. In fact in narrative discourse, a paragraph is
defined as a stretch of speech that has the same temporal
setting (S. Arsjo 1978b:2). Three examples from different
parts of the same narrative will now be presented (examples
(34), (35) and (36)) to illustrate three different ways in
which temporal deictic centres can be established in Ama.

(34) Yo mo   lolai <u>mo</u>   a   louwa
     I topic today topic tree frust.int.

     to-fu   ikai tolo.
     pr.t-be.downriver   plant stand

     I was downriver wanting to plant a tree today.

This is the first sentence of the discourse. In it, the
speaker establishes the time when the action began, <u>lolai</u>
'today'. <u>Lolai</u> is marked as a topic. Since he is telling

the story to us, who initiated what took place, the time is known to us. He could have omitted to mention the time altogether, but he could not have spoken of it as new information, when telling it to us.

Example (35) illustrates the transition from this paragraph to the next. (35i) is the end of one paragraph. (35ii) starts a new paragraph.

```
(35)
    i. ....na      tokausimona fu-no,
       ....focus get.me.to   go.downriver-they

       Solono noko tiyo.
       Soren  men  two.agent

       ....Soren and the other man came downriver to get
       me.

   ii. Tokausimona kono-no   mo;    na      imonokino, ....
       get.me.to    down-they topic  focus  said.to.me.they

       Having come down to get me, they said to me, ....
```

This is a head-tail linkage, in which the first part of the second sentence recapulates the last part of the first sentence. The second sentence starts a new paragraph according to the definition of paragraph, given above. The speaker has told what happened first. Now he is going on to the next event. When doing that he sets a new time, so to speak, marking it as topic with mo, with the meaning something like this: "They having come to get me, alright, here is the next bit." There are other ways to do this also, but the above is fairly frequent in a narrative discourse. Later in the discourse we find the following:

```
(36) Nosai     no  mo;   ifou na     ti-you-noki.
     that.from that topic back focus t-went.up-we
     Then we went back up.
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Using the conjunction nosai no mo 'that.from that topic'//'then', is the other common way of advancing a narrative. Without stating exactly what happened last, he makes a fresh start, that is starting a new paragraph by saying, "Going on from there (you know all about that), this happened." In such a context the occurrence of mo is obligatory. However, nosai no 'then', can occur without mo, relating two events which occur in sequence. The more common way to do this, however, is by simple juxtaposition.

In examples (34-36) we have looked at three ways to establish a temporal deictic centre, all using the topic marker mo. The first one lolai mo 'today' (example (34)), is anchored in real time, that is, refering to the actual time of the speech situation. The head-tail linkage (example (35)), and the conjunction (example (36)), express relative time, relative to the time of completion of the event encoded by the preceding verb phrase. Lolai 'today', is the global temporal deictic anchor for this discourse, or as previously mentioned in 4.3.1.1., it is speaker oriented.

Real time, encoded by loloi 'today', amuwoi 'tomorrow', etc. can occur with or without the topic marker, depending on whether the time is given or new information.

   (37) Amuwoi   mo   'na   manoimo.
       tomorrow topic focus go.I.fut.t.
       I'm going tomorrow.
       (The new information is that I'm going.)

   (38) Amu'woi-so   manoimo.
       tomorrow-at go.I.fut.t.
       I'm going tomorrow.
       (The new information is the time.)

In (37) the main stress is on _na_ 'focus', a particle modifying the verb. In (38) the main stress is within the word _amuwoiso_ 'tomorrow'.

4.3.1.3. Spatial Deictic Centre. To establish the spatial deictic centre in a narrative discourse is a little more complicated. Each paragraph has its own deictic temporal centre per definition (see 4.3.1.2). Several of those paragraphs form a larger unit, which we have called episode (S. Arsjo 1978b:2). An episode in a narrative discourse is defined as a stretch of text/speech where the action is occuring in the same spatial setting. These episodes can be established independently of location as we will see later in section 4.3.2.3. However, these settings cannot be called spatial deictic centres as will be shown below.

The first spatial deictic centre in a discourse is the one at the very beginning. It may be assumed from the context, in which nothing is said about it, indicated by a locative prefix as in example (34), -_fu_- 'to be downriver', or expressed by a locative word, which is usually not topicalized (see 4.3.1.1). With the rich locative affix system it is easy to indicate the movements of participants. This can go on for several episodes. When the speaker feels that the main action is too far removed from the original spatial deictic centre, he establishes a new one. This centre is then marked as the spatial topic with _mo_.

In the brief discourse, examplified above in examples (34), (35) and (36), there is only one spatial deictic centre, -_fu_- 'to be downriver', which is established in the first

clause (34). There are, however, six different locations in the discourse. These are all indicated relative to the one centre by words or affixes such as (-)kono(-) 'down' (35), ifou 'back', (-)you(-) 'go up' (36).

Another man telling the same story had three spatial deictic centres covering seven different locations.

This matter of spatial deictic centre is crucial for interpreting verbs having the meaning of 'come'. Movement with 'come'-verbs is always towards the spatial deictic centre. If you want to encode the meaning 'arrive at the place you have been going to', you use a 'come'-verb, but you have to establish a new spatial deictic centre by stating the place and topicalizing it. If not, 'come' will be taken to mean that the one coming, returned to where he came from.

```
(39) Nosai  kosalo              manoki,
     then   go.to.look.for.her  cont.pt.t.

     ...ainoso    ainoso    isi    ;
        like.that like.that garden until

     Isi    mo    kosa        tumoki,
     garden topic see.her.to  came,

     nu    mo, ...
     house topic, ...

     Then he went looking for her. He looked and
     looked until he came to a garden. He came to
     the garden and saw her at the house.
```

The 'go'-verbs signal movement away from the spatial deictic centre (example (40)).

(40) Amaki   aumoifaso **mo**   Tuti iyali mo   ifou
     Ama.field close.to topic Tuti group topic back

nuki.
went

(When we came) close to Ama, Tuti and family
went back.
(i.e. we met Tuti and family, who were coming back
from Ama).

A letter about travelling from the village of Kawiya to the
town of Madang will illustrate how movement is described in
Ama. In this letter, ten locations are refered to, using
nine spatial deictic centres. This is more complex than in
most texts, but it serves well to illustrate the system.

The letter has the following title (example (41)).

(41) Kawiya-sai Madango   nokonu-so   tumo aino
     Kawiya-from Madang   town-to   come anaph.ref.

imo.
talk

A story about coming to Madang from Kawiya.

No argument in a title can be topicalized. Everything in a
title is considered new information.

The first sentence in the same discourse:

(42) Kawiya-sai   **mo**   7no kolukomai na
     Kawiya-from topic   7 o'clock.at   focus

auwonoulukinoki.
arose.we

We left Kawiya at 7 o'clock.

Kawiya is the first spatial deictic centre. Since it is the
starting point of the discourse it would not need to be
marked for topic with _mo_. But as seen in example (42) it is

so marked. One plausible reason for this is that the letter
is written far away from the initial spatial centre (see
4.3.1.1). Another reason may be that it refers back to the
title, which has the village name in it. The third and most
obvious reason is that Kawiya is a known place to the
readers of the letter, thus it is shared information.

'Close to Ama' is the next deictic centre, Ama being the
place they were first heading for.

```
(43) Amaki        aumoifa-so mo    Tuti iyali mo
     Ama.field    close-to   topic Tuti group topic

     ifou nuki.
     back went
```

Coming close to Ama Tuti and family went back.

The next centre is Ama.

```
(44) Ulai Amaki        mo    na    tumokinoki.
     conj. Ama.field   topic focus came.we
     But we arrived at Ama.
```

'Inside the airplane' is the next spatial deictic centre.

```
(45) Palulo poi    mo    na    yousa yokinoki, .....
     Plane  inside topic focus sit.to up.we
     Inside the plane we sat down (up on seats), .....
```

Skipping the intervening events, they arrived in Madang,
where the hangar is the next spatial deictic centre. There
they sat down waiting for a car to take them to their final
destination (example (46)).

(46) Madango palulo nu mo na foumokinoki.
     Madang plane house topic focus wait.him.we
     We waited for him in the hangar.

Finally they arrived at their destination which is also the final spatial deictic centre. _ti_ 'come', can be used as the writer has established a new deictic centre, 'house', using _mo_.

(47) Ulai nu mo na tikinoki.
     conj. house topic focus came.we
     But finally we arrived at the house.

4.3.2. Participant Identification. Another important use of the topic marker _mo_ is in participant identification in narrative discourse including legends and dialogues.

4.3.2.1. Main Participants versus Props. A prop in the context of participant identification in narrative discourse is a minor participant, usually occuring only once in a story (Grimes, 1975:43-45). In Ama main participants as well as props can be human, animate or inanimate. A main participant may be refered to by only a verbal suffix. A prop has to be refered to in a non-topicalized nominal phrase. Just a verbal suffix is not enough. An animate prop is marked by the agentive suffix -_yo_, when functioning as the actor. An inanimate prop is marked by -_yo_ only if it is in the instrumental case. A prop is not topicalized in any of its few occurrences within the discourse. That is the formal criteria distinguishing props from main participants, which are frequently occuring and sooner or later topicalized in a nominal phrase within the discourse. It is possible to re-activate a prop later in the story as will be seen in example (59).

The following example is part of sentences 5 and 6 in the legend used in 4.3.2.3. Aluwou 'dog', and fu 'pig', are two props in this story. They only occur here.

(48)
i. .... aluwou na¹¹ koliyonokino, akuso.
   .... dog   focus took.they   bush.to
   .... the two of them took their dog and went to the bush.

ii. .... fu na¹¹ omiki,   aluwou-yo.
    .... pig focus barked.at dog-agent
    .... the dog barked at the pig.

In (49) four main participants are introduced noni 'woman', noko 'man', atino wai 'grandmother' and alu 'child'. Noko and noni are introduced with mo, that is topicalized. They are so to speak "the point of departure" in this story. Atino wai and alu are introduced here without mo but topicalized later in the discourse (see 4.3.2.3, example (54)).

(49) Toku mo¹² noni-woi noko-woi mo
     First topic woman-and man-and topic

     na   manoki-no...
     focus went-they2

     First the man and his wife went...

     Atino wai saso na   sisa liyoumoki,
     mother old only focus sit around.t.

     alu   saso.
     child only

     Only grandma was babysitting that one child.

A main participant may also have the agentive suffix -yo (example (50)).

(50) Noni-yo   mo   fu ko-yo   waso-so
     woman-agent topic pig jaw-agent hit-her cont.pt.t.

     manoki,   yau kukou.
     cont.pt.t. dead partly

     The woman kept hitting her with the pig
     jaw, and she was almost unconcious.

In this example verb morphology is not enough to keep apart
two female participants, one functioning as object marked
only by -so 'female object'. The other, noni 'woman',
functions as subject and is marked by -yo 'agent', to show
that she is not the object.

Example (50) also shows an inanimate prop in the
instrumental case: fu ko-yo 'pig jaw-instr.'/'with a pig
jaw'. The suffix -yo is the marker of both the instrumental
and agentive cases.

4.3.2.2.   Introducing a Main Participant. As seen in (49) a
main participant may be introduced in a nominal phrase with
or without mo depending on if the speaker considers him
known (with mo) or unknown (without mo).   He may, however,
in many cases be introduced only in the form of a suffix on
the verb. This is true of very well known participants and
especially true if the discourse is in first person.
Examples (51i) and (52i), respectively, are both first
sentences of narrative discourses. There are no explicit
mention of participants. What is to show up later in the
discourse as main participants is here only occuring as
verbal suffixes, -noki 'we' (51i) and Ø 'he' (52i).   This
is typical of main participants. Props, on the other hand,
have to be stated in nominal phrases (without mo). Examples
(51ii)   and   (52ii)   are   the   sentences   where   the   main

participants refered to in (51i) and (52i), respectively, are first explicitly stated in nominal phrases, koi mo 'we' (51ii) and Solono mo 'Soren' (52ii). In (51) there are four sentences between the first mention of the main participant, where he is only occuring as a vebal suffix and the place, where he for the first time is refered to in a nominal phrase. The nominal phrase is marked with mo. In (52) there are thirty-eight sentences in between.

(51)
  i. Nosoi   no mo   7 kilo   yakomai
     that.from that topic 7 o'clock time.at

     na   auwonouluki-noki.
     focus stood.up-we

     We got up at 7 o'clock.

  ii. No   monoi   no koi mo
     that because.of that we topic

     na   omuwano-noki.
     focus cried-we

     So we cried.

(52)
  i. Fai   amoloki na   i-mono,...
     yesterday night focus said.he-me
     Last night he said to me,...
     ('He' is a zero morpheme.)

  ii. Solono mo ... na   usukuna.
     Soren topic focus fell
     Soren fell.

4.3.2.3. Tracking Main Participants. To illustrate how main participants are tracked and kept apart examples from a legend containing 106 sentences are presented below. To give a brief background to this legend the main participants are:

1 - a man (and his wife)
2 - their child, a girl

3 - the grandmother

4 - a spirit called "the waterman" or

"the owner of the garden"

The main story line of this legend is as follows: A man and his wife go to the bush, leaving their child with the grandmother. While they are away, the child escapes and gets killed by the waterman. The parents come back, find the child gone, and beat up the grandmother. She takes off to the waterman's garden, laying a trail of ashes for her son to follow. In the waterman's garden grandmother too, gets killed by the owner, the waterman. The son (the father of the child) comes along and follows the waterman, now called the owner of the garden, and in the end kills him.

Four main participants are introduced, the man and his wife with _mo_, and the grandmother and the child, both without _mo_. The man and his wife are the point of departure for this story, i.e. they are topicalized with _mo_.

(53) Sentences 2 and 3 in the legend:

    i. Toku mo <u>noni-woi</u> <u>noko-woi</u> <u>mo</u>
       First topic woman-and man-and topic

       na   manoki-no...
       focus went-they2

       First the man and his wife went...

    ii. <u>Atino</u> <u>wai</u> saso na   sisa liyoumoki,
        mother old only focus sit around.t.

       <u>alu</u> saso.
       child only

       Only grandma was babysitting that one child.

The child is topicalized in sentence 4, and the grandmother in sentence 9 in the legend.

(54) **Sentences 4 and 9 in the legend:**

    i. <u>Alu</u> <u>mo</u> atino waiwoi yousikainokino.
       child topic mother old.and stayed.sitting.they.2
       The child was staying with the grandmother.

    ii. Nosai no mo, <u>atino</u> <u>wai</u> <u>mo</u> numaiso
        that.from that topic mother old topic house.at.to

        na sisaliyoumoki.
        focus sat.around

        Then the grandmother sat around the house.

Two props occur early in the story. They are explicitly stated in nominal phrases without <u>mo</u>. They are not heard of any more in this story.

(55) **Sentence 5 and 6 in the legend:**

    i. .... <u>aluwou</u> na koliyonokino, akuso.
       .... dog focus took.they bush.to
       .... the two of them took their dog and went to
       the bush.

    ii. .... <u>fu</u> na omiki, <u>aluwou-yo</u>.
       .... pig focus barked.at dog-agent
       .... the dog barked at the pig.

A prop, the waterman is introduced. He is later reintroduced as a main participant, by using <u>mo</u>, "the owner of the garden" (example (59)).

(56) **Sentence 14 in the legend:**
    Nosai no mo; na namuwo-sa
    that.from that topic focus holding.in.mouth-her

    yoki <u>iwo</u> <u>nokota-yo</u>, alu mo.
    stood.up.he water man- agent child topic

    Then the water man stood up holding the
    girl in his mouth.

Two main participants <u>noni</u> 'woman' and -<u>so</u>, refering to

'grandmother', are being told apart by using the agentive suffix -yo.

(57) Sentence 27 in the legend:

Noni-yo   mo   fu   ko-yo   waso-so
woman-agent topic pig jaw-agent hit-her

manoki,   yau kukou.
cont.pt.t. dead partly

The woman kept hitting her with the pig
jaw, and she was almost unconcious.

Inanimate entities can occasionally also be main participants. The trail grandma leaves after her for her son to find is one of ashes. Tanofomu 'ashes', becomes the topic for an episode.

(58) Sentences 33 and 34 in legend:

i. .... tanofomu ikoki   kusomi.
   .... ashes   them.she.t. took

   .... she took ashes.

ii. Toku folamo-siyo konoki,   kololiyaimai kokou,
    first jump-she.to down.t.   ladder.at   put

    tanofomu mo.
    ashes   topic

    First she jumped down, and put (a little) ashes
    on (one) step.

The waterman was introduced early in the story as a prop (56). He is now activated as a main participant by mo but is now being called isi kiyo nokota 'the owner of the garden'. He is introduced in a noun phrase with mo functioning as grammatical object. He is then the understood subject for the next nine sentences as indicated by verb morphology that in the case of 3rd person singular

subject is zero. Sentence 45 is the first of these sentences.

(59) Sentences 44-47 in the legend.

Sentence 44:
Nosai   no   mo;   tuwamo-yo   na
that.from that topic bee-agent focus

tukoliyonanoki,
sting.to.went.him.he

isi   kiyo nokota mo.
garden owner man   topic

Then a bee went to sting the owner of
the garden.

Sentences 45 and 46 are quotes by the owner
of the garden. There are no introduction
to the quotes.

Sentence 47:
Nosai   no   mo;   yasoi; toni tu,
that.from that topic finish bow   got

na   mano-ki.
focus went.he-t

Then he (the owner of the garden) set off, he got
his bow and he went.

Note also the prop tuwamo 'bee', with the agentive suffix -yo occuring only here in the story. It is functioning as the grammatical subject in sentence 44, where the main participant "the owner of the garden" is the grammatical object.

It was noted in section 4.3.1.3 that a narrative discourse can be divided into episodes partly on the bases of location. The other formal criterion for delinating episodes is the occurrence of the topicalized main participants. A topicalized participant, one overtly stated in a noun phrase marked by mo, continues to be the participating[18] topic in that episode while identified only

by verb suffixes. If a main participant is topicalized in what in English would be a noun phrase object, he does not need a new topic marker when he occurs later on as the subject as seen in (59). A verb suffix indicates the relationship to the predicate. The notion of subject versus object in the syntax[19] is therefore not a very meaningful one in Ama. Perhaps we should talk about pragmatic pivot instead (Foley & Van Valin 1984:142).

So in the legend examplified above, we come to this point in the story, where a new main participant, the owner of the garden, is introduced with mo (example (59)). He occured once before in the beginning of the story as a prop called the waterman (56) but is now activated in a noun phrase object marked with mo. That means that he is not unknown, but he is now going to play a major role in the story. For the next nine sentences (two episodes) he is the grammatical subject being identified only by verbal suffixes, which in this case is zero. What is even more interesting is that the grammatical object in these episodes, the grandmother, is also only refered to by verbal suffixes. She was the next to last topicalized main participant in this story, occuring 21 sentences earlier in sentence 29. There is, however, no ambiguity as the verbal suffixes make it clear, who is doing what to whom.

Example (60) is the sentence, where the grandmother was topicalized earlier in the story.

(60) Sentence 29 in legend:

<u>Atino</u>   <u>no</u>   fu somu no   moloi
(grand)mother q.top. pig meat q.top. how

nisokino,   nokowoi muwoi,...
gave.her.they2 eat.and not

How could they give grandmother pig meat to eat?
She did not eat...

This sentence is partly in the form of a rhetorical
question, so the enclitic indicating topic is <u>no</u> (see 4.4).

The grandmother, topicalized in sentence 29 (example (60)
above), in a nominal phrase marked by <u>mo</u>, is then being
refered to only by a verbal suffix. The owner of the garden
is the other participant refered to only by a zero suffix
but topicalized earlier in sentence 44 (example (59)).

(61) Sentence 50 in legend:

Motuwaso   mo   ko-<u>sa</u>-no-ki, ...
true.really.to topic saw-<u>her</u>.to-went.<u>he</u>-t

He (the owner of the garden) saw her (the
grandmother) in real life, ...

What we have here then, is an interaction of previouly
topicalized participants, being refered to only by verbal
suffixes. One is the current participating topic, in this
particular example (61), the owner of the garden, which is
identified by the last <u>mo</u> (on a participant). The other one
is the one previous or next previous to the current
participating topic identified by <u>mo</u>, the grandmother in
this particular example (61). Verb morphology clarifies
this in most cases. If there are ambiguities, these are
cleared up by restating one or both of the participants in
noun phrases using case markers, -<u>yo</u> 'actor', indicating

grammatical subject in many cases, and -so 'undergoer', indicating grammatical object in many cases. In certain cases free pronouns can also be used to clarify an ambiguity.

4.3.3. Using mo when Summing Up or Explaining. In a non-narrative discourse and occasionally in a narrative discourse too, the topic marker mo is used with the conjunction no monoi no 'that concerning that'//'therefore'//'in that way', to sum up a paragraph, and/or to start a new one, that is, it marks a paragraph boundary.

    (62) No   monoi   no   mo,   a
         that concern.   that topic tree

         na   ufosikokaiki.
         focus   blew.on.stay

         So he blew the trees into being.

This parallels the use of mo with the conjunction, nosai no 'then', where the conjunction, however, is one of sequence (see 4.3.1.2, example (36)). Both nosai no and no monoi no can appear without the topic marker.

4.4. Topic in Questions. Topics also occur in questions. These topics are in Ama marked by the enclitic no. This enclitic has the same function as mo in statements. It is, however, not so widespread as mo, as it is in the nature of languages to be more stating than questioning.

Questions occur mostly in dialogues or conversations.

(63) Ni no   hani?
     this q.top. what
     What is this?

(64) Nona no   moloi tuwoni?
     you q.top. how   feel.you
     How are you?

(65) A,   alu no   nonani?
     question child q.top. your
     Is he/she your child?

There is, however, a form of question that is very common in all forms of discourses, and that is rhetorical questions. The next example is the opening sentence in a narrative discourse.

(66) Tani aluwou koliyo   kono no,
     his dog   took.plur. down q.top.

     ulai koi no   sai?
     how we q.top. know

     How could we know (or: We did not know)
     that he took his dogs and went down.

Summary

5. In this paper I wanted to show that the enclitic mo in Ama in both its syntactic and pragmatic functions marks topic. In one of its syntactic functions mo marks the subject in the topic-comment clause. It also marks the dependent clause in different kinds of dependency constructions including conditionals. In all these syntactic uses of mo it is possible to view the marked part as pragmatic topic.

In its most typical pragmatic functions mo is what the speaker uses to orient his hearer as to the time, space and participants in his speech.

I find the notion of topic an intriguing subject. I know there are similar phenomena in other Papuan languages and I would find it an absorbing task to compare these languages with Ama to try to find out what the similarities and differences might be.

Endnotes

[1] Acknowledgements. I am indebted to all the Ama speakers for teaching my family and me to speak their language and together with us develop an alphabet and literature in their own language. I am also indebted to Robert Conrad and Robert Bugenhagen of the Summer Institute of Linguistics for valubable advice in the past. I am grateful to Anju Saxena of Uppsala University for valubable input into this paper.

[2] Wurm (1982:70) defines six different groupings of "communalects" based on shared basic vocabulary. They are dialect, language, sub-family, family, stock and phylum. The basic vocabulary is a list of about 200 items which is a version of the Swadesh list.
The terms 'family', 'phylum' and 'isolate' are used by Wurm as follows:
'family': Languages are members of the same family if the percentages of basic vocabulary items shared by them are rarely below 20%, and mostly above 28%.
'phylum': Languages are members of the same phylum if these figures are usually below 12%, but not lower than 5%.
'isolate': A language or language family is an isolate if it does not share enough basic vocabulary with other languages or language families respectively to be groped together with these into the next higher level in Wurm's classification system.

[3] My husband Soren and I have been working on the Ama language under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

[4] International Phonetic Alphabet

[5] **Abbreviations** are used as follows:

anaph. ref.	anaphoric reference
concern.	concerning
cond.	condition
conj.	conjunction
cont.	continous aspect
frust. int.	frustrated intention
fut.	future
instr.	instrumental case
irr.	irrealis mood
plur.	plural
pr.	present
pt.	past
q.top.	topic marker in questions
t.	tense

[6] mo is not glossed in examples (1-13).

[7] A head-tail construction is a construction where the main clause in the preceding sentence is repeated in the independent clause of the following sentence. The construction is used to signal sequence of actions. Example (19) is an example of a head-tail construction.

[8] Note that the type of negative used in a negative conditional, somiso, is not the same as the ones that are used to negate a statement.

(1) Sa   tumowoi muwoi, fumu.
    rain come.and not   dry
    It didn't rain, it was dry.
(2) Sa   pa tumokiso,
    rain not came.not
    It didn't rain.

It is, however, the same as the one that is used to negate
the attributive argument in a so-called noun group (S. & B.
Arsjo 1975:21).

(3) Sa   somiso asi.
    rain without ground
    A land where it doesn't rain.

* Narrative here includes traditional cultural stories, i.e.
legends.

[10] Note also how the time frame is set by using mo.

[11] In Ama the focus marker is a particle modifying the verb.
It has nothing to do with participant identification. Focus
in Ama will be described in a forthcoming paper. It is just
a coincident that it occurs here in the verbal phrases
following the nominal phrases containing these particular
props.

[12] Note also the temporal topic indicating the time frame.

[13] Apart from the participating topic there are also the
temporal and the spatial topics (see 4.3.1).

[14] In the morphology actor and undergoer are obligatory
marked by suffixes. Undergoer does not, however, always
correspond to what we think of as grammatical object.

(1) Tokolikali-moko.
    die-us
    We are dying.

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