Topic in Ama Discourse*

Britten Årsjö
Summer Institute of Linguistics

1   Introduction

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 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. Section 4 is the bulk of the paper, where the use of *mo* as topic marker is described. Section 4.2 presents the syntactic uses of *mo* and section 4.3 presents its pragmatic functions. Section 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 realized in narrative discourse styles. Where pertinent I will point out differences noted between oral and written style.

2   Topic Defined

As a general definition of the term 'topic' the following might do: Topic is the most talked about NP in a particular discourse. Givón (1990:740) follows this definition. To quote him:

> Topicality is a property of the nominal participants ('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. (emphasis in original)

Definitions along these lines seem, however, to be too narrow to explain the functions of the enclitic *mo* in the Ama language. In section 4.1 it will be demonstrated that it is impossible to use Givón's definition of topic in the case of *mo*, especially due to his emphasis on topicality as a nominal property.

In the literature there are several names for topic-like discourse pragmatic functions. Some linguists, including Halliday and Hasan (1976:325), talk about theme versus rheme, theme being the given or already known information ánd rheme being the new information or what is said about the theme. Halliday (1985:36) defines theme as "what the message is concerned with: The point of departure for what the speaker is going to say." Theme versus rheme in this definition seems to correspond well to what other linguists, such as Comrie, have called topic versus focus. 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 in sections 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.1.3. Topic, then, contrasts not only with focus, as stated above, but also with global theme, which, as the name suggests, is a discourse level entity.

Two other definitions of topic which I have found helpful in explaining 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 discourse **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 commented upon further in section 4.1 after some examples from the Ama language have been given.

3   The Ama Language

Ama, also called Sawiyanu, is spoken by the Sawiyanu people living in the Ambunti district of the East Sepik Province of Papua New Guinea. 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 classifies it as a phylum-level isolate family.[1] Conrad and Dye (1975) agree with this classification. The Left May languages may be further classified as Papuan languages, although 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).

The data for this paper were collected between 1973-1991 by my husband Sören and myself mainly in the small village of Kawiya, where our family lived intermittently, 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.[2]

4   Topic in Ama

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*. In section 4.1 I give some examples that show the range of

[1] Wurm (1982:70) defines a phylum-level isolate family as a language family that shares less than 5% of basic vocabulary with other languages.
[2] For more information on Ama grammar see B. Årsjö (1978a,b), S. Årsjö (1978a,b), and Årsjö and Årsjö (1975, 1978).

parts of speech marked by *mo* after commenting on possible functions of *mo*, if one **did not** consider the whole speech situation in which it occurs.

4.1   The Enclitic *mo*

When we first started working and analysing the Ama language, we were frustrated by the ever occurring enclitic *mo*, as illustrated in the examples[3] 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 (as in (1)); as a subject marker (as in (2-3)); as temporal (as in (4-5) or locative marker (as in 6)); as a conditional conjunction (as in (7-10)); as a temporal conjunction (as in (11-12)); or as part of a result or summing up conjunction (as in (13)). It will, however, be argued that every occurrence of *mo*, whether functioning syntactically or pragmatically, encodes topic.

1)   *Noko mo[4] yau.*
     man   dead
     'A/The man is dead.'

2)   *Noko mo tumoki.*
     man   come:PST
     'The man came.'

3)   *Fu mo noko-yo   unuki.*
     pig   man-AGNT shoot:PST
     'The man shot the pig.'

4)   *Nosai   no   mo; koi mo atotalimokinoki.*
     that:from that   1p   wait.for:3smU:PST:1pA
     'Then we waited for him.'

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[3]   The orthography used in the examples is as follows: *a* ([a ɑ]), *f* ([ɸ ʍ]), h, i ([ɪ e]), k, l ([ɭ ɾ]), m, n, o ([ɒ ɔ ʌ ə]), p, s, t, u ([u o]), w, y [j]. For more information regarding Ama phonology and orthography see Årsjö (1980), Årsjö and Årsjö (1974b, 1976, 1981), Clifton (1988), Till5tson (1987). The enclitic *mo* is in most places written as a separate word in the Ama orthography. The semicolon marks rising intonation indicating time passing and/or sequence.

Grammatical abbreviations used are as follows:

AGNT	agent	GEN	genetive	PL	plural
ANA	anaphoric referent	GL	goal	PR	present tense
COND	conditional	INST	instrumental	PST	past tense
CONT	continuous aspect	IRR	irrealis mood	Q	question
FOC	focus	LOC	locative	SRC	source
FRUS	frustrated intention	NEG	negative	TOP	topic
FUT	future tense				

Pronouns and verbal agreement markers are indicated by a number indicating person followed by s, d, or p for singular, dual or plural, followed by m or f for masculine or feminine (for 3s pronouns only); verbal agreement markers are followed by A for actor or U for undergoer.

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

5) *Yo mo lolai mo a   louwa to-ʃu   ikai tolo.*
   1s   today   tree FRUS PR-be.downriver plant stand
   'I wanted to plant a tree down river today.'

6) *Nu   mo tikinoki,   Alai mo.*
   house   come:PST:1pA Alai
   'We came to the house in Alai.'

7) *Sawiyanu nukonu mo muwoliwoimai   mamo no mo, alu   mo yau.*
   Sawiyanu woman   heavy.with.LOC salt   eat   child   dead.
   'If a Sawiyanu woman eats salt when she is pregnant, the child will die.'

8) *Kotoni moloso   aluwai-yaki-konimo, moi   mo noko ititouni na   si*
   God's   road.GL follow-COND-1pA 1p   men good   FOC sit
   monoi.
   1pA:FUT
   'If we follow God's way, we will be good people.'

9) *Sa   tumo somiso mo, ya manoimo.*
   rain come without   1s go:FUT
   'If it does not rain, I will go.'

10) *Po-fasisoni   mo, tiya-yo   pa   po-kaloso.*
    IRR-help:PST:3sʃU:2sA   hunger-INST NEG IRR-die:3sʃU
    'If you had helped her, she wouldn't have starved.'

11) *Kiyapo-yo   tola   tumoki   mo; moi mo waliyo na   si-koni.*
    officer-AGNT stand:GL come:PST   1p   alright FOC sit-1pA
    'Since the government officer came to live,we are OK.'

12) *Solosai   mo na   tiyousi.*
    laugh.SRC   FOC sit.PR:3smA
    'Having (learnt to)   laugh, he sits.'

13) *No monoi no mo, a   na   uʃosikokaiki.*
    that concern that   tree FOC blow.on:PL:stay:3sA
    '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 referred to by Halliday and 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 three constructions. First is the topic-comment clause where it obligatory marks the subject. Second is a sentence containing a dependent clause where it has a weak syntactic function since it only optionally follows the dependent clause marking it as dependent. There is no other way in the language to encode dependency between clauses. The third syntactic function of *mo* is in conditionals where it follows the conditioning clause. This is, of course, also a dependency construction, but the syntactic strength of *mo* is greater in these constructions than in non-conditional dependent clauses since, of the four different types of conditionals in Ama, *mo* is obligatory in three of them. The syntactic use of *mo* in dependent clauses co-occurs with its discourse pragmatic use in certain kinds of temporal settings as well as in the use of dependent clauses for further explanations or summaries (see sections 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.3). I discuss the use of *mo* in topic-comment clauses, non-conditional dependent clauses, and conditional dependent clauses in the following sections.

4.2.1 Topic-Comment Clause. The enclitic *mo* is grammatically obligatory when it marks the subject in the topic-comment clause as illustrated in (14-16).

14)   *Noko **mo**   yau.*
      man   TOP dead
      'A/The man is dead.'

15) *Yo **mo** Sawiyanu nukonu.*
    1s TOP Sawiyanu woman
    'I am a Sawiyanu woman.'

16) *Alu **mo** nuku-yo.*
    child TOP knife-INST
    'The child (has been cut) by a knife.'

If *mo* is omitted the construction is no longer a topic-comment clause but a nominal phrase as can be seen by comparing (14) with (17).

15) *noko yau*
    man dead
    'a/the dead man'

It is 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. In pragmatic terms, the grammatical subject in a topic-comment clause is the topic of that clause/sentence.

4.2.2 Dependent Clause. Dependent clauses are sometimes unmarked. When dependent clauses are unmarked, context is the clue as to the relationship between clauses. The only way in Ama to mark dependency between clauses is to mark the dependent clause with *mo*. In pragmatic terms this means that the dependent clause, if followed by *mo*, is seen as given information to which the main clause is added as new information. When the dependent clause is marked by *mo* it usually precedes the independent clause, though it can also follow the independent clause. In the latter case the speaker is trying to clear up some ambiguous 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 as in (18).

18) *... ifou no louwa manoki mo, ulai wamoso na koka tumoki.*
    back that FRUS go:PST TOP but bee FOC see:GL come:PST
    '...when I wanted to go back, I came upon some bees.'

The type of temporal relationship is often ambiguous, but it is possible to signal sequential action by rising intonation at the end of the dependent clause, marked in the orthography by a semicolon. In this case the dependent clause must precede the independent clause. In head-tail[5] constructions like (19), the rising intonation is especially marked.

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 [5] A head-tail construction is used to signal sequence of actions. Example (19) is an example of a head-tail construction.

19) i.   ... *molo somu na tosolu,*   *noni*   *mo.*
        vine   meat FOC twine.PR woman TOP
        '...the woman twines the fibres.'

    ii.   *Molo somu tosolukaiyou*   *mo; na*   *tomanoso,*
        vine   meat twine:PR:put.up TOP FOC go:PR:3sfA
        'Having twined and put away the fibres, she goes...'

For the pragmatic use of this construction, see section 4.3.1.2.

    The relationship between dependent and independent clauses can also be one of explanation or elaboration as in (20).

20)   *Isi*   *isiko aino imofa,*   *Sawiyanu noko tisiko manono*   *mo.*
        garden cut   ANA talk:little Sawiyanu men cut.PR CONT:3pA TOP
        'A little story about making a garden, about how Sawiyanu men make it.'

For the pragmatic use of this construction see section 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 (1978) claim that the antecedent in a conditional may very well be looked upon pragmatically as a topic. That is just the way in which the Sawiyanu people express themselves when they add *mo* at the end of the condition in their conditionals.

    In the simple conditional, *mo* is the only feature marking the construction as a 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 distinction comparable to the *if...* and *when...* 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 sections 4.2, 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.3). The dependent clause in a conditional is the topic of the **sentence**, not the discourse, in which it occurs.

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

21)   *Molo itouniyaimoso aluwai* *mo* *waliyo.*
        road   good.GL   follow TOP alright
        'If/When you follow a good road that is good.'

Sentences like (21) could alternatively be analysed as topic-comment clauses where the subject is an embedded clause.

Simple conditional constructions can also be used in other contexts as in (22).

22) *Alu   ai   uwo   **mo**, atino-yo .*   *kau   na,   hausiso.*
    child sick afflicted TOP mother:3GEN-AGNT take:3smU FOC hospital:GL
    'If/When a child is sick, his mother must take him to the hospital.'

The verbs in both the antecedent and consequent clauses 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. The most common conditional construction is the future conditional. It is widely used in all types of conversations and texts to encode background information.

23) *Woli   tum-aki-mo,   ya fasiyoimo.*
    friend:1GEN come-FUT.COND-TOP 1s help:3smU:FUT
    'If/When my friend comes, I will help him.'

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

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

24) *Fu mo p-unu   mo, fona p-aniyo   tumonoki.*
    pig TOP IRR-shoot:1sA TOP leg   IRR-bring come:2sU:1sA
    '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 clause.[6] The verb in the antecedent clause is then uninflected. The verb of the

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[6] 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 NEG   dry
   'It didn't rain, it was dry.'
2) *Sa   pa   tumokiso.*
   rain NEG come:PST:NEG
   '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 (Årsjö and Årsjö 1975:21) as shown in (3).

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   na.*
     orderly stand without TOP Wewak.GL take:3smU FOC
     'If the medical orderly isn't there, he (the patient) must be taken to Wewak.'

26) *Kotoni moloso aluwai somiso mo, kumokiso pa   nu monoiso.*
     God's road:GL follow without TOP heaven:GL NEG go 1pA:FUT.NEG
     '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 TOP 1s TOP FOC 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 listener 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 are discussed in section 4.3.1, in the context of which the term 'deictic centre' is used and defined. Participant identification is discussed in section 4.3.2. In section 4.3.3 I discuss the function of *mo* in summing up or explaining.

4.3.1 Temporal and Spatial Deictic Centre. By deictic centre I mean a point of reference in time or space. Another term used for this is deictic anchorage, proposed by 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 and Keenan (1985:277) speak of "anchoring of deictic notions by reference to the speaker..."

Farr (1988) notes the following "possible locations of centre of speech event.

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

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 Sawiyanu narrative[7] 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 discuss how the initial deictic centre in time and space is established in a narrative discourse. Then in sections 4.3.1.2 and 4.3.1.3 I 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 *mo*, 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 using temporal phrases, while it is more common in oral narrative discourse to establish the temporal setting by depending on tense alone.

28)   *Noko mo ai uwoki mo, hausi-so kaukino.*
      man   TOP ill afflicted TOP clinic-GL take:PST:3smU:3pA
      'When the man was ill , they took him to the clinic.'

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, that is, the location of the event or participant mentioned. It is more common in written narratives than in oral narratives to establish the original location by a locative phrase.

29)   *Ulo siya mo[8] ...aino   lukolo i   monoi na   manokino, **aino***
      sun one TOP pandanas pick   get GL   FOC   go:PST:3pA pandanas
      folo-so.
      stump-GL
      'One day...they went to the pandana groove to pick pandanas.'

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[7] Narrative here includes traditional cultural stories, i.e. legends.
[8] Note also how the time frame is set by using *mo*.

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 indicate a stationary location, upriver, downriver, on the other side of the river, high elevation, low elevation, etc. An example is given in (30).

30) ... *a   louwa   to-fu   ikai   tolo.*
     tree FRUS   PR-be.downriver plant stand.
     '...I was down river wanting to plant a tree.'

The spatial deictic centre at the start of a discourse can, however, be established by reference to the speaker if what is told has occurred 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,   Alai mo.*
     house TOP come:PST:1pA Alai TOP
     'We came to the house in Alai.'

This sentence is from a story where a criminal is being chased. He is known to be in hiding with people living in the house in Alai, a remote villaage. 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-PL come:PST:1pA
     'We came to the house/home/any house.'

Another story, actually a letter, was written in the town of Madang, but the story begins in Kawiya village in the East Sepik Province, that is, far from the place where the letter was written. Since Kawiya is the home village of the people receiving the letter, it is well known among the interlocutors and so the locative phrase occurs with *mo*.

33) *Kawiya-sai   mo   7no kolukomai   na   auwonoulukinoki.*
     Kawiya-SRC TOP 7   o'clock:LOC FOC arise:PST:1pA
     'We left Kawiya at 7 o'clock.'

4.3.1.2 Temporal Deictic Centre. The enclitic *mo* 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 section 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. Årsjö 1978b:2). Three examples from different parts of the same narrative will now be

presented (examples (34, 35, 36)) to illustrate three different ways in which temporal deictic centres can be established in Ama. The first sentence of the discourse is (34).

34) *Yo mo lolai **mo** a   louwa to-fu   ikai tolo.*
     1s TOP today TOP tree FRUS PR-be.downriver plant stand
     'I was down river wanting to plant a tree today.'

In (34) the speaker establishes the time when the action began, *lolai* 'today'. *Lolai* is marked as a topic. Since the speaker is telling the story to my husband and me, and we initiated what took place later in the story, the time is known to us. The speaker could have omitted the time altogether, but he could not have spoken of it as new information when telling the story to us.

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

35) i.   *... na   tokausimona fu-no,   Solono noko tiyo.*
          FOC get:1sU   go.downriver-3pA Sören men two:AGNT
          '...Sören and the other man came down river to get me.'
    ii. *Tokausimona kono-no   mo; na   imonokino...*
          get:1sU   down-3pA TOP FOC tell:1sU:3pA
          '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 recapitulates 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 use of head-tail linkage 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 TOP back FOC PR:go.up-1pA
     'Then we went back up.'

Using the conjunction *nosai no mo* 'that:from that TOP'/'then' is the other common way of advancing a narrative. Without stating exactly what happened last, the speaker makes a fresh start, that is starts 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. It is more common to relate sequential events, however, by simple juxtaposition.

In (34-36) we have looked at three ways to establish a temporal deictic centre, all using the topic marker *mo*. The time word *lolai mo* 'today' in (34) is anchored in real time, that is, it refers to the actual time of the speech situation. The head-tail linkage in (35) and the conjunction *nosai no mo* 'then' in (36) expresses relative time, that is, 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 section 4.3.1.1, it is speaker oriented.

Real time, encoded by words like *lolai* 'today' and *amuwoi* 'tomorrow', can occur with or without the topic marker, depending on whether the time is given or new information. In (37) *mo* occurs since the new information is that I'm going.

37)   *Amuwoi*   **mo**   *na*   *manoimo.*
       tomorrow TOP FOC go:1sA:FUT
       'I'm going tomorrow.'

In (38) *mo* does not occur since the new information is the time.

38)   *Amuwoi-so*   *manoimo.*
       tomorrow-GL go:1sA:FUT
       'I'm going tomorrow.'

In (37) the main stress is on *na* 'FOC', a particle modifying the verb, while in (38) the main stress is on *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 temporal deictic centre as discussed in section 4.3.1.2. Several of those paragraphs form a larger unit, which we have called episode (S. Årsjö 1978b:2). An episode in a narrative discourse is defined as a stretch of text or speech where the action is occurring in the same spatial setting. These episodes can be established independently of location as we will see 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 like *fu-* 'to be downriver' as in (34), or expressed by a locative word, which is usually not topicalized (see section 4.3.1.1). With the rich locative affix system it is easy to indicate the movements of participants. This can continue 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, exemplified above by (34-36), the only spatial deictic centre, *fu-* 'to be downriver', is established in (34), the first clause of the discourse. 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' in (35), and *ifou* 'back' and (-)*you*(-) 'go up' in (36). Another person 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 one wants to encode the meaning 'arrive at the place you have been going to', a 'come'-verb is used, but a new spatial deictic centre must be established by stating the place and topicalising it as illustrated in (39).

39) ... *Nosai kosalo   manoki,   ainoso   ainoso   isi   ;*
          then   go:look.for:3sfU CONT:PST like.that like.that garden until
          Isi   mo   kosa   tumoki,   nu   mo,
          garden TOP see:3sfU:GL come:PST house TOP
          '...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.'

If a new spatial deictic centre is not established, 'come' will be taken to mean that the person returned to the place he came from. The 'go'-verbs signal movement **away from** the spatial deictic centre as illustrated in (40).

40) *Amaki   aumoifaso mo   Tuti iyali   mo   ifou   nuki.*
      Ama.field close:GL   TOP Tuti group TOP back go:PST
      '(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 traveling from the village of Kawiya to the town of Madang illustrates how movement is described in Ama. The writer refers to ten locations in this letter, using nine spatial deictic centres. This is more complex than in most texts, but it nicely illustrates the system. The title of the letter is given in (41).

41) *Kawiya-sai   Madango nokonu-so tumo aino imo*
      Kawiya-SRC Madang town-GL   come ANA talk
      'A story about coming to Madang from Kawiya.'

Nothing in a title can be topicalized since everything in a title is considered new information. The first sentence in the same discourse is given in (42).

42) *Kawiya-sai* **mo** *7no kolukomai   na   auwonoulukinoki.*
Kawiya-SRC TOP 7   o'clock:LOC FOC arise:PST:1pA
'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 section 4.3.1.1). Another possible reason is 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 place known to the readers of the letter, thus it is shared information.

In (43), *Amaki aumoifaso mo* '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   ifou   nuki.*
Ama.field close-GL   TOP Tuti group TOP back go:PST
'Coming close to Ama Tuti and family went back.'

The next centre is Ama itself in (44).

44) *Ulai Amaki   mo   na   tumokinoki.*
but Ama.field TOP FOC come:PST:1pA
'But we arrived at Ama.'

Palulo poi mo 'inside the airplane' is the next spatial deictic centre.

45) *Palulo poi   mo   na   yousa yokinoki...*
plane   inside TOP FOC sit:GL up:PST:1pA
'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 in (46). They sat down in the hangar, waiting for a car to take them to their final destination.

46) *Madango palulo nu   mo   na   foumokinoki.*
Madang   plane   house TOP FOC wait:PST:3smU:1pA
'We waited for him in the hangar.'

Finally they arrived at their destination, *nu mo* 'house', which is also the final spatial deictic centre. Since the writer has established a new deictic centre using *mo*, *ti* 'come' can be used in (47).

47) *Ulai nu   mo   na   tikinoki.*
    but   house TOP FOC come:PST:1pA
    'But finally we arrived at the house.'

4.3.2 Participant Identification. Another important use of the topic marker *mo* is for participant identification in narrative discourse (including legends and dialogues).

4.3.2.1 Main Participants versus Props. In the context of participant identification in narrative discourse, a prop is a minor participant which usually occurs only once in a story (Grimes, 1975:43-45), while a main participant occurs frequently. In Ama, both main participants and props can be human, animate or inanimate. A main participant may be referred to by only a verbal suffix. A prop has to be referred to in a non-topicalized nominal phrase; a verbal suffix alone is not sufficient. 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 occurrences within the discourse. This lack of topicalisation is the formal criteria distinguishing props from main participants, which sooner or later are topicalised in a nominal phrase within the discourse.

The clauses in (48) are from a legend discussed in section 4.3.2.3. *Aluwou* 'dog' and *fu* 'pig', are two props in this story. They occur only in these clauses.

48) i.   ... *aluwou na*[9]   *koliyonokino, akuso.*
           dog   FOC take:PST:3pA bush:GL
          '... the two of them took their dog and went to the bush.'

    ii. ... *fu   na   omiki,   aluwou-yo.*
         pig FOC bark:PST dog-AGNT
         '... the dog barked at the pig.'

In (49), from the same legend, three of the main participants are introduced: *noko* 'man' (with his wife), *atino wai* 'grandmother' and *alu* 'child'. *Noko* and *noni* are introduced with *mo*, that is they are topicalised. They are, so to speak, "the point of departure" in this story. *Atino wai* and *alu* are introduced here without *mo* but they are topicalised later in the discourse (see (54) in section 4.3.2.3).

[9] 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.

49) *Toku mo*[10] *noni-woi   noko-woi   mo   na   manoki-no...*
    first TOP woman-and man-and TOP FOC go:PST-3dA
    'First the man and his wife went...'
    Atino   wai saso na   sisa liyoumoki,   alu   saso.
    mother old only FOC sit around:PST child only
    'Only grandma was baby-sitting that one child.'

A main participant may also have the agentive suffix *-yo* as illustrated in (50).

50) *Noni-yo   mo fu ko-yo   waso-so manoki,   yau kukou.*
    woman-AGNT TOP pig jaw-AGNT hit-3sfU CONT:PST dead partly
    'The woman kept hitting her with the pig jaw, and she was almost uncon-
    scious.'

In this example verbal morphology is not enough to distinguish two female participants. One functioning as the object and is 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.

An inanimate prop also occurs in (50) in the instrumental case: *fu ko-yo* '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 whether the speaker considers the participant to be known (with *mo*) or unknown (without *mo*). In many cases, however, the main participant may be introduced only as a suffix on the verb. This strategy is used for very well known participants and, especially, for first person participants.

Two sentences from a narrative discourse are given in (51). There is no explicit mention of participants in (51i), the first sentence of the discourse. Instead, the main participant is introduced with the verbal suffix *-noki* 'we'. In (51ii) the main participant referred to in (51i) is first explicitly stated in the nominal phrase *koi mo* 'we'.

51) i. *Nosai   no   mo   7 kilo   yakomai na   auwonouluki-noki.*
       that:from that TOP that 7 o'clock time:GL FOC stand.up:PST-1pA
       'We got up at 7 o'clock.'
   ii. *No   monoi   no   koi mo na   omuwano-noki.*
       that   because.of that 1p TOP FOC cry:PST:1pA
       'So we cried.'

In (51) there are four sentences between the first reference to the main participant as a verbal suffix and the first reference to the participant as a nominal phrase. The nominal phrase is

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

marked with *mo*. This is typical of main participants as opposed to props which have to be stated in nominal phrases (without *mo*).

Another example of introducing a main participant with a verbal suffix is given in (52). The main participant is introduced as the verbal suffix o 'he' in (52i), the first sentence of the discourse. There are **thirty-eight** sentences between (52i) and (52ii) where the main participant is first explicitly stated in the nominal phrase Solono mo 'Sören'.

52) i. *Fai   amoloki   na   i-mono-ʋ...*
      yesterday night   FOC say:PST:1sU:3sA
        'Last night he said to me...'

   ii. ***Solono mo*...** *na   usukuna.*
      Sören   TOP FOC fall:PST
        'Sören fell.'

4.3.2.3 Tracking Main Participants. To illustrate how main participants are tracked and differentiated, I will discuss examples from a legend containing 106 sentences. The main participants in this legend are: 1) a man (and his wife), 2) their child, a girl, 3) the grandmother, and 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 is killed by the waterman. The parents come back, find the child gone, and beat up the grandmother. She goes to the waterman's garden, laying a trail of ashes for her son to follow. In the waterman's garden grandmother, too, is killed by the owner, the waterman. The grandmother's son (the father of the child) follows the waterman, now called the owner of the garden, and in the end kills him.

At the beginning of the story, three main participants are introduced. The man (and his wife) are topicalised with *mo* as they are introduced in (53i), showing they are the point of departure for this story. The grandmother and the child, on the other hand, are both introduced without *mo* in (53ii).

53)   Sentences 2 and 3 in the legend:
   i. *Toku mo   noni-woi   noko-woi   mo   na   manoki-no...*
      first TOP woman-and man-and   TOP FOC go:PST-3dA
        'First the man and his wife went...'

   ii. ***Atino*** *wai saso na   sisa liyoumoki,* ***alu   saso.***
      mother old only FOC sit   around:PST child only
        'Only grandma was baby-sitting that one child.'

The child and grandmother are topicalised in sentences 4 and 9, respectively.

54)   Sentences 4 and 9 in the legend:
    i.   *Alu mo atino waiwoi yousikainokino.*
      child TOP mother old.and stay:sit:PST:3dA
      'The child was staying with the grandmother.'
    ii. *Nosai   no   mo, atino   wai mo   numaiso   na*
      that.from that TOP mother old TOP house:LOC:GL FOC
      sisaliyoumoki.
      sit.around:PST
      'Then the grandmother sat around the house.'

Two props, *aluwou* 'dog' and *fu* 'pig', occur early in the story. They are explicitly stated in nominal phrases without *mo*. They are not heard of again in this story.

55)   Sentence 5 and 6 in the legend:
    i.   *... aluwou na   koliyonokino, akuso.*
      dog   FOC take:PST:3pA bush.GL
      '... the two of them took their dog and went to the bush.'
    ii. *... fu   na   omiki,   aluwou-yo.*
      pig FOC bark:PST dog-AGNT
      '... the dog barked at the pig.'

The waterman is introduced as a prop in sentence 14. He is later reintroduced as a main participant in sentence 44, given below as (59).

56)   Sentence 14 in the legend:
    Nosai   no   mo; na   namuwo-sa   yoki   iwo
    that.from that TOP FOC hold.in.mouth-3sfU stand.up:PST:3sA water
    nokota-yo, alu   mo.
    man-AGNT child TOP
    'Then the water man stood up holding the girl in his mouth.'

Two main participants *noni* 'woman' and *-so*, referring to 'grandmother', are differentiated by using the agentive suffix *-yo*.

57)   Sentence 27 in the legend:
    Noni-yo   mo fu ko-yo   waso-so manoki,   yau kukou.
    woman-AGNT TOP pig jaw-AGNT hit-3sfU CONT:PST dead partly
    'The woman kept hitting her with the pig jaw, and she was almost unconscious.'

Inanimate entities can occasionally also be main participants. The trail the grandmother leaves for her son to follow is one of ashes. *Tanofomu* 'ashes' becomes the topic for an episode.

58)   Sentences 33 and 34 in legend:
     i.   ... *tanofomu   ikoki   kusomi.*
          ashes   3pU:3sA:PST take
          '... she took ashes.'
     ii. *Toku folamo-siyo konoki,   kololiyaimai kokou, tanofomu mo.*
          first jump-3sfA down:PST ladder:LOC put   ashes   TOP
          'First she jumped down, and put (a little) ashes on (one) step.'

The waterman is reintroduced in sentence 44 (given below as (59i)) in the noun phrase *isi kiyo nokota* 'the owner of the garden' that functions as grammatical object. He is reactivated as a main participant marked by *mo*. He is then the understood subject for the next nine sentences as indicated by verb agreement marking (which in the case of the third person singular, as in sentence 47, is o).

59)   Sentences 44, 47 in the legend:
     i.   *Nosai   no   mo; tuwamo-yo na   tukoliyonanoki,*
          that.from that TOP bee-AGNT FOC sting:GL:go:PST:3smU:3sA
          isi   kiyo   nokota mo
          garden   owner man   TOP
          'Then a bee went to sting the owner of the garden.'
     47. *Nosai   no   mo; yasoi; toni tu, na   mano-ki.*
          that.from that TOP finish bow get FOC go:PST:3smA
          'Then he (the owner of the garden) set off, he got his bow and he went.'

The prop *tuwamo* 'bee' occurs only in sentence 44, marked with the agentive suffix *-yo*. It functions as the grammatical subject, while 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 basis of location. The other formal criterion for delineating episodes is the occurrence of the topicalised main participants. A topicalised participant, that is, one overtly stated in a noun phrase marked by *mo*, continues to be the participating[11] topic in that episode even while identified only by verb suffixes. As shown in (59), there is no need to topicalise a main participant when it occurs as a grammatical subject if it was previously topicalised while functioning as a grammatical object. Once a main participant is topicalised, verb suffixes are sufficient to indicate the relationship of the participant to the predicate. The notion of subject

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

versus object in the syntax[12] is therefore not a very meaningful one in Ama. Perhaps we should talk about pragmatic pivot instead following Foley and Van Valin (1984:142).

In summary, a new main participant, the owner of the garden, is introduced with *mo* in sentence 44 (given in (59)) of this legend. He was mentioned once before in sentence 14 (given in (56)) as a prop called the waterman, but is now reactivated in a noun phrase object marked with *mo*. That means that he is not unknown, but is now going to play a major role in the story. For the next nine sentences (two episodes) he is identified as the grammatical subject by verbal suffixes. In addition, the grammatical object in these episodes, the grandmother, is also only referred to by verbal suffixes. She was the next to last topicalised main participant in this story, occurring 21 sentences earlier in sentence 29, given in (60).

60)   Sentence 29 in legend:
       Atino   no   fu   somu no   moloi nisokino,
       (grand)mother Q.TOP pig meat Q.TOP how   give:PST:3sfU:3dA
       nokowoi muwoi,...
       eat:and   NEG
       '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 *no* (see section 4.4).

Although both the grandmother and the owner of the garden are referred to by verbal suffixes, there is no ambiguity since the verbal suffixes make clear who is doing what to whom. Both participants are referred to, for example, in sentence 50, given here as (61).

61)   Sentence 50 in legend:
       Motuwaso   mo   ko-sa-no-ki...
       true:reallyGL TOP see-3sfU:GL-go:3sA-PST
       'He (the owner of the garden) saw her (the grandmother) in real life...'

What we have then, is an interaction of previously topicalised participants being referred to only by verbal suffixes. One is the current participating topic, the owner of the garden in (61), which is identified by the last *mo* (marking a participant). The other participant is a previous participating topic, the grandmother in (61), identified previously by *mo*. Verb morphology clarifies this in most cases. If there are ambiguities, these are clarified by restating one or both

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[12] 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.
    Tokolikali-moko.
    die-1pU
    'We are dying.'

of the participants in noun phrases using the case markers -*yo* 'actor' and -*so* 'undergoer'. In certain cases free pronouns can also be used to clarify an ambiguity.

4.3.3 Using **mo** *when Summing Up or Explaining.* In non-narrative discourse and occasionally in narrative discourse, 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   na   ufosikokaiki.*
that concern that TOP tree FOC blow.on:PL:stay:3sA
'So he blew the trees into being.'

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

4.4   Topic in Questions

Topics also occur in questions. In Ama these topics are marked by the enclitic *no*. This enclitic has the same function as *mo* in statements. It is, however, not so widespread as *mo*, since questions are less common than statements. 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:PR:2sA
'How are you?'

65)   *A, alu   no   nonani?*
Q child Q.TOP 2s.GEN
'Is he/she your child?'

There is, however, a form of question that is very common in all forms of discourses, the rhetorical question. The opening sentence from a narrative discourse is given in (66).

66) *Tani aluwou koliyo kono no, ulai koi no sai?*
     3s.GEN dog take:3pU down Q.TOP but 1p Q.TOP know
     'How could we know (or: We did not know) that he took his dogs and went
     down.'

5   Summary

In this paper I have shown that the enclitic *mo* in Ama marks topic in both its syntactic and pragmatic functions. 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 used by the speaker to orient the hearer as to the time, space and participants in the speech.

The notion of topic is an intriguing subject. It would be interesting to compare the marking of topic in other Papuan languages with that in Ama to try to determine what similarities and differences there might be.

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SIL, Box 150
Ukarumpa via Lae
PAPUA NEW GUINEA