



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

A grammar of Nchane: A Bantoid (Beboid) language of Cameroon
Boutwell, R.L.

Citation

Boutwell, R. L. (2020, June 30). *A grammar of Nchane: A Bantoid (Beboid) language of Cameroon*. LOT dissertation series. LOT, Amsterdam. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/123113>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/123113>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/123113> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Boutwell, R.L.

Title: A grammar of Nchane: A Bantoid (Beboid) language of Cameroon

Issue Date: 2020-06-30

Chapter 16

Information structure

This chapter is concerned with how information is presented and organized within a discourse and, at a simpler level, the sentences of a discourse. As pointed out in §11.4, information structure plays a key role in the alignment of constituents in a clause. There is an apparent preference for Topics to appear to the left of the verb and focused constituents to the right of the verb, a general tendency observable in many of Nchane's topic and focus construction types, as will be seen in the sections below.

Information structure is an area of study involving many factors, but I limit the discussion here to four primary issues: Thetic expressions, Topic, Focus, and Givenness. Because these terms, especially topic and focus, can be used in different ways and have different scopes of expression, I begin here in the introduction with some definitions.

Thetic expressions are those presented as one piece of information, generally considered as lacking topical and focused elements. Furthermore, they often contain all new information. For the most part, this type of expression in Nchane offers little in the way of unique structures or markers and may be helpful as a kind of backdrop for viewing the various information packaging structures. Thus, §16.1 offers a brief description of two different kinds of thetic expressions appearing in the text corpus.

Topic, according to Lambrecht, is “the thing which the proposition...is ABOUT” (1996: 118). Nchane Topics are usually expressed by agents appearing in the preverbal position, agents being particularly suited for the topic role. Various marking strategies are employed to indicate the topical status of referents, especially when the intended Topic might otherwise be unclear. Much of §16.2 is dedicated to describing these different strategies.

I follow Krifka and Musan (who cite Rooth 1985) in defining *focus* as indicating “the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of linguistic expression” (2012: 7). Different types of focus represent specific salient characteristics of the relationship between the members of the set of alternatives. For example, *contrastive* focus denotes one member of a restricted set, where the alternative member(s) does not result in a true proposition. *Scalar* focus, on the other hand, denotes one member of a set, which is presupposed to be the least likely to result in a true proposition.

Postverbal referents in canonical sentences are often construed as focused and could be thought of as having been selected from among numerous other plausible referents. These postverbal referents also most often represent new information, which aligns well with Lambrecht’s observation that “focus has to do with the conveying of new information” (1996: 206). Therefore, §16.3 begins with a brief description of sentences with no “special” focus marking, followed by separate presentations of the various structures expressing focus in Nchane.

Givenness has to do with the activation status of a referent within a discourse setting. A referent may be new or old. Or a referent can be old, but inactive, and therefore in need of reactivation. While the concept of givenness applies to clausal expressions as well as nominal expressions, its realization in participant tracking in Nchane is particularly notable and will receive most of the attention in the description given in §16.4.

16.1 Thetic expressions

Sentences for which there is no discourse context are comparable to canonical sentences. Both have SAuxVO word order and no special marking. So-called “out of the blue” statements, referred to as “annuntiative” by Sasse (2011: 281), are illustrated by examples (16.1) and (16.2).

- (16.1) *jāŋ* *tó-ó* *lò*
 c9.rain come-PROG FOC

‘Rain is coming.’

- (16.2) mē m̄-fē kwē yī Ø-kī
 1SG.PRO 1SG-make c9.death c9REL c4-month

lé yúfè j̄chò yī-fé:
 COP ten plus c4-two

'I am having a death celebration in December.' (lit. *death that month is twelve*)

Presentational utterances, which are commonly observed as the first sentence of stories, also closely follow the canonical pattern. As described in §6.4.4, this type of construction often includes a nominal subject modified by the specific indefinite determiner **mū** 'some', as in (16.3) and (16.4).

- (16.3) Ø-jwēnsé wū-mū gē bé yú, wū kēmè
 c1-man c1-some P3 ^PCOP on.it c1REL have

bī-kēsé bā-fédè
 c2-woman c2-two

'There was a man who had two wives.'

Two Wives.1.1

- (16.4) kī-nfê:
 c7-blind.man kī-mú gē jēŋ-í, kī lēg-è mw-ê:
 c7-some P3 walk-PROG c7 beg-PROG c18a-thing

'A certain blind man was walking around and begging.'

What-goes-around.1.1

16.2 Topic

As mentioned in the chapter's introduction, Topic is defined as the referent which the proposition is about. Nchane Topics may occur in the preverbal position or in the postverbal position as in (16.5) and (16.6) respectively, although the language appears to prefer preverbal Topics. The discourse contexts are given in (16.5)a and (16.6)a, which show that the referent that functions as Topic often appears in the postverbal position of the preceding sentence, although it is also possible for it to appear in the preverbal position. Note that Topics in this section appear in brackets.

- (16.5) a. kī-lūŋ kí-mí, gē bé Ø-jwènsè wū-mū bé
 c7-year c7-some P3 ^PCOP c1-man c1-some with
 Ø-kwē wú-mū, bō kōŋ-ē yē bá:ŋ
 c1-wife c1-some 3PL.REL love-PROG c10.body much
'Some years [ago], there was a man and wife, who loved each other very much.' Jealous Husband.1.1
- b. [bó] ché-é kī-ŋ-ché kí jōŋē wēsè
 3PL stay-PROG c7-NMZR-stay c7REL good very
'They were living a life that was very good.' Jealous Husband.1.2
- (16.6) a. mē gē n-tō bé bī-gē, n-tō j'ché
 1SG.PRO P3 1SG-come with c8-teeth 1SG-come 1SG-stay
'I brought some money and slept.' Fire.1.4
- b. bvū-CHFū yū, ŋ-jò [bī-gè by-ē:]
 c14-day brighten(?) 1SG-take c8-teeth c8-ANA1
 n-lē ŋ-gè: yē
 1SG-enter 1SG-put c9.house
'The next morning, I took that money and put [it] in [my] house.' Fire.1.5

More could be said about the Nchane Topic as a notional expression. But the current work is mostly concerned with describing particular constructions and grammatical elements involved with identifying Topics. As such, the remainder of this section describes the various topic-marking strategies utilized by Nchane. These strategies are: Left dislocation, Left detachment and DP-internal word order changes. The section ends with a brief treatment of right dislocation, although its function as a Topic-marking device is dubious. Note that, in addition to Topics appearing in brackets, the symbol ↑ precedes elements enclosed in parentheses to indicate tone realization at higher tonal register, which is often associated with special topic-marking strategies.

16.2.1 Left dislocation

PATIENTS and Locative Obliques have been observed in left dislocations, where the topic-marked referent occurs in sentence-initial position and realized at a higher tone

register, maintained across a portion of or the entire dislocated phrase.¹⁰⁵ The need for special topic marking such as left dislocation arises in several situations, such as when a referent has inactive status due to a relatively long gap between mentions or no previous mention at all, or in some cases of topic shift. Furthermore, non-agent referents usually require special topic marking.

Left dislocation usually involves relativized nominals as in (16.7), in which the PATIENT is Topic. This referent is mentioned five sentences earlier, but becomes inactive, as there are three different Topics between mentions. The Topic of the previous sentence is ‘the first four’, referring to those who earned the award of a helicopter ride. The *in situ* Object pronoun likely occurs because the antecedent is human. This is suggested by the observation made in §11.1.1 that human Objects are subject to special syntactic requirements such as being restricted from Object ellipsis.

(16.7) [↑(mē wú chīlā) j̄jì ɪnòk], Ø-j̄n̄ gē fí [mè],
1SG.PRO c1REL Ch. N. E. c1-god P3 help 1SG.PRO

bā bá: mē à bā-mī bá bā-nē ñtēnē:
they choose 1SG.PRO in c2-person c2REL four middle

‘I, myself, Chila¹⁰⁶ Nji Enock, was blessed to have been chosen among the four persons.’ (lit. God helped me and they chose me) Training.1.11

Example (16.8) shows another topicalized PATIENT. This sentence is part of the conclusion to the text, with previous sentences talking about how the speaker was able to overcome the destruction of his house and belongings. These ‘events’ in his life are consolidated into one reference and flagged as Topic by the left dislocation construction.

(16.8) [↑(mw-ē: mú bā-mí yéŋ ki-jché k-àŋ
c18a-thing c18aREL c2-person see c7-stay c7-1SG.POSS

lē)] lé Ø-dē yī-bō yí lé yí sé:
APPL COP c4-mouth c4-3PL.POSS c4REL COP c4.FUT tell

‘The things that people saw in my life, only their mouths will say (lit. it is their mouths that will tell).’ Fire.62

¹⁰⁵ Left dislocations of simple noun phrases are presumed to be allowed, but no instances are observed in the text data, nor have they been tested for acceptability through elicitation studies. However, example (16.10) hints at its possibility, along with the possibility of left-dislocated agents.

¹⁰⁶ This is a compound word consisting of **chī** (c1) + **lā** (c5) ‘father + compound’ and is used as a title of respect for the leader of a family living in a compound.

The examples of left dislocation so far have dealt with reactivating a previously active referent. Example (16.9) illustrates a previously unmentioned referent marked as Topic through left dislocation. Lambrecht observes that “brand-new referents”, which have low acceptability as topics because they are unidentifiable (or cognitively inaccessible), are made more acceptable through anchoring to an identifiable referent (Lambrecht 1996: 167). Thus, in this example, the brand-new referent “things” is linked to the addressee through the second-person pronoun to make it more identifiable and acceptable as a topic.

- (16.9) [↑(mw-ē: mù wō bú-d-é wó) gēn-è
 c18a-thing c18aREL 2SG exit-PROG 2SG.FUT go-PROG
 Ø-ŋwā yú] lé ŋ-gù wá mùŋ-chì
 c1-book on.it COP 1SG-buy already c18a-all

‘All the things you are to go to school with, I have already bought.’

School.3

The complex sentence in example (16.10) begins with a left-dislocated relativized noun phrase which is coreferential with the PATIENT and AGENT in contrasting consecutive clauses. The Topic “things” refers to a sum of money that was mentioned more than twenty sentences earlier, as well as other things in the house such as furniture and clothes, which are cognitively accessible through cultural association (i.e., certain items are commonly found in Nchane houses and assumed to be present). As with the previous example, the new information (“things”) is anchored to old information (“home”) to mitigate its low accessibility.

- (16.10) [↑(mw-ē: mú yē kwè)], [mú-mú] bā būsè,
 c18a-thing c18aREL on home c18a-some they remove
 mú-mú fyē
 c18a-some burn

‘The things in the house, some was removed, others burned.’ Fire.5.1

Note that the PATIENT Topic in the first main clause is expressed twice, first through the left-dislocated noun phrase “things in the house”, and second through a left-dislocated demonstrative pronoun. This is the clearest example in the data of PATIENT-AGENT-verb (PAV) word order. (Compare with examples (16.7), which has an *in situ* PATIENT pronoun, and (16.8), which has no PATIENT pronoun, neither *in situ* nor left-dislocated.) I assume that the clause would be grammatical without the demonstrative pronoun, but it occurs in order to establish a contrastive frame consisting of two instances of the demonstrative pronoun as described in §6.4.4.

This example also shows that, while unmarked Topics most often occur in the immediately-before-verb position, specially marked Topics occur as the leftmost constituent. The second main clause has a second instance of the demonstrative pronoun as Topic. But in this case, it is an *in situ* AGENT and its relationship with the sentence-initial phrase is more correctly analyzed as representing a left-detached Topic, which is described in §16.2.2.

16.2.2 Left detachment

While AGENTS are often sentence Topics, appearing with no special topic marking and in the immediately-before-verb position, some AGENT Topics require more encoding to indicate their topic status. This is the case for at least some contrastive AGENT Topics and unpredictable switch Topics. The topic-marking strategy for such AGENTS is what Lambrecht calls “left detachment” (1996: 177). In this topic-marking strategy, a noun phrase is “detached” from the main clause, being separated by a breath pause and followed by a pronoun, and usually realized with a raised tonal register. The “unmarked” AGENT Topic is differentiated from the left-detached Topic by having no breath pause between it and the main clause, lacking a following subject pronoun, and realized with a non-raised tonal register.

A left-detached Topic is illustrated in example (16.11). In this case, “Kibbo” is contrasted with “Nfume”, the Topic of the previous sentence, which reported where he settled when he and his four brothers first came to the Nchane area.

- (16.11) ↑([kībó, wù] bé) wù bē: fwé,
K. 3SG ^PCOP 3SG ascend front

‘Kibbo, he had gone ahead...’

History.3.3

The left-detached Topic in example (16.12) follows example (16.10) in the text and represents an unexpected, abrupt topic switch. Topics usually remain as topic for several sentences at a time. Therefore, the switch of topic from “things in the house” to “my house” after just one sentence is unexpected and requires special encoding.

- (16.12) [↑(yē yì mē gè j̄-ché-é yè lē),
c9.house c9REL 1SG.PRO P3 1SG-stay-PROG on APPL

yì j̄ y-āŋ, yì mē gè
c9REL COP(N) c9-1SG.POSS c9REL 1SG.PRO P3

j̄-ché-é yè lé kībè, yī] gē fyé yì-chī
1SG-stay-PROG on APPL actually c9 P3 burn c9-all

‘The house in which I was staying, which was mine and in which I was currently staying, it completely burned.’

Fire.5.2

16.2.3 DP-internal word order change

Section 6.4.2 showed that the canonical word order for demonstrative phrases is noun-demonstrative. The opposite order is rarely observed in the text data and appears to mark the referent as a Topic, while also expressing some emotion such as surprise or exasperation. The raised tonal register associated with the other topic-marking strategies is again observed. There is no pause between the Topic and the main clause, nor does a subject pronoun follow the Topic. A possible analysis is that the non-canonical word order expresses a contrastive reading of the demonstrative. In other words, “this X” as opposed to “that X”. Future research is needed to reach clear conclusions. Examples (16.13) and (16.14) are given to illustrate.

- (16.13) wù dú bó lé lē,
 3SG say 3PL APPL COMP
- ↑([fī-nē fy-ē:] lé) fī ghā wá mē
 c19-PROX c19-thing COP c19 surpass already 1SG.PRO
- ‘...he said to them, “This thing is beyond me.”’ (i.e., this problem is too difficult for me to solve)* Inheritance.6

- (16.14) lē, [↑(wū-nè Ø-kwèsē wū nùmē nàŋ),
 COMP c1-PROX c1-woman c1REL COP(N) c9.animal
- wù ká nùmè Ø-mù wū wùŋ] lé
 c1REL ITER COP(N) c1-person c1AM c3.village COP
- Ø-kwèsē wū nè lè
 c1-woman c1AM how APPL
- ‘[He said], “This woman who is an animal and again a human is what kind of woman?”’* Two Wives.7.3

16.2.4 Right dislocation

Right dislocations involve a detached referent, which appears in sentence-final position. Evidence for this structure as a topic-marking strategy is relatively weak, with (16.15) the clearest example in the text corpus. Note that the right-dislocated phrases in the below examples are bolded.

(16.15) mē lé jí-ńá bèn bvū-ńgá,
1SG.PRO COP 1SG.FUT-GIVE 2PL c14-power

Ø-mū wú lé wú yú ńàń yí-ńē
c1-person c1REL COP 3SG.FUT kill c9.animal c9-PROX

'I will give power to you all, to the person who will kill this animal...'

Inheritance.7

Example (16.16) demonstrates that right dislocations often provide further clarifying information regarding the referent. The right dislocation in this example (and in the previous one) might be analyzed as what Lambrecht calls an “antitopic”, which has limited functionality as a topic-marking device (e.g., it cannot be used to mark new topics). Indeed, right dislocations in Nchane are not characterized by the raised tonal register associated with the other topic-marking strategies, just as antitopics are observed as always being unaccented. See Lambrecht (1996: 202–205) for more on antitopics. Note that the phrase appearing in all caps in the translation is a focus-marked constituent. See §16.3.4 for a description of this focus strategy.

(16.16) b̄: bā-ā lē, b̄ bē jí ńù m̄ń-kàlà
c2.child c2-ANA1 COMP 3PL ^PCOP eat COP(N) c6a-cassava.puff

má-mù mà k̄-ńf̄ k̄-mí bē ńá b̄ lē,
c6a-some c6a.REL c7-blind.man c7-some ^PCOP give 3PL APPL

k̄-ńf̄ k̄-ā k̄ t̄ k̄ j̄m̄ lē,
c7-blind.man c7-ANA1 c7REL HAB c7 talk COMP

w̄ gé bvū-j̄ńē, tū w̄ gé yē y-̄ lē,
2SG do.COND c14-good then 2SG do on c9-2SG.POSS APPL

w̄ gé bvū-bēfē, tū w̄ gé yē y-̄ lē
2SG do.COND c14-bad then 2SG do on c9-2SG.POSS APPL

'Those children [said] that they had eaten SOME CASSAVA PUFF WHICH A CERTAIN BLINDMAN HAD GIVEN THEM, that blindman who always says that you do good, you do for yourself; you do bad, you do for yourself.'

What-goes-around.9.9

Slightly more common in the text data is the right-dislocated vocative, illustrated in example (16.17), in which the vocative is enclosed in brackets.¹⁰⁷

(16.17) kì-nfĕ: kē-ē bē:ŋ, ñ-fūf-é wá shēŋ,
 c7-blindman c7-ANA1 agree 1SG-rest-PROG already c9.liver

[bō: b-āŋ]
 c2.child c2-1SG.POSS

'The blindman agreed, "I am already resting, my children."'

What-goes-around.7.4

Rather than marking Topics, these are probably best described simply as “addressing structures”, exhibiting a function of vocatives that Sonnenhauser and Noel Aziz Hanna observe as one of the few clearly defining characteristics of the phenomenon (2013: 17). While this type of right dislocation is not associated with topic marking, it is presented here for easy comparison with examples (16.15) and (16.16) and to illustrate the rightward position’s weaker association with topic expression, since right dislocation is not a dedicated topic-marking strategy, and even when used to mark topic, it is limited in that capacity.

16.3 Focus

As stated in the introduction, *focus* establishes the focused element as being selected from among alternatives. Focused referents tend to appear in the immediately after verb position, where PATIENTS routinely occur. Thus, postverbal PATIENTS are otherwise unmarked, as illustrated in (16.18), a response to the question, “What did Tada buy?”.

(16.18) Tádà gú jì
 T. buy c9.hoe

'Tada bought a hoe.'

While it is true that there are many alternative items which Tada could have bought in the above example, these alternatives are not necessarily active in the common ground of the communicative act. This observation leads Krifka and Musan to restrict the definition of focus further to mean that it “especially stresses and points out the existence of *particular* alternatives” (2012: 7, emphasis my own). Thus, the remainder of this section describes focus constructions with this more restricted definition in mind.

¹⁰⁷ Left edge vocatives are also observed in the data. As vocatives have not yet been formally investigated, I have no hypothesis at this time regarding the function or pragmatics of leftward versus rightward varieties.

Nchane uses several different strategies for different kinds of focus. These strategies include word order changes, clefting and the use of focusing words or particles. Generally, the various strategies are associated with the expression of specific types of focus, although there is some limited overlap. Furthermore, with the exception of word order change, these strategies are not limited to focus of just one constituent type. These details are summarized in Table 16.1.

Focus device	Type of focus	Scope of focus
non-canonical word order	exhaustive/contrastive	agent
cleft	exhaustive/identification	any clausal term
m̄ 'RES'	scalar	any clausal term
ɲ̄ 'COP(N)'	counter-expectation	non-agents/clause/VP
l̄ 'FOC'	assertive	verbs

Table 16.1 Nchane focus strategies.

The remainder of this section presents the different focus strategies observed, organized according to the form of the focusing structure. Non-canonical word order is described in §16.3.1 and clefts in §16.3.2. The focus markers **m̄**, **ɲ̄**, and **l̄** are presented in §§16.3.3-16.3.5. In the examples below, focusing words are bolded while the target of the focus appears in brackets.

16.3.1 Non-canonical word order focus

This section describes focus constructions where the AGENT appears in the immediately-after-verb position, which may be characterized as the in-focus position. Along with the post-posing of the AGENT, the PATIENT, if present, is usually pre-posed. The strategy is only rarely observed in the data and is limited to agent focus, the same as observed for Noni (Hyman 1981: 108). Meanwhile, the immediately-after-verb position is also identified as a focus position in Naki, Mundabli and Mungbam, but allows for the focus of presumably any constituent (Good 2010: 49; Voll 2017: 318 ; and Lovegren 2013: 343 respectively).

Example (16.19) illustrates an AGENT-PATIENT inversion, which marks the AGENT as being in focus.

- (16.19) *bv̄-ŋgá* *bw-ē:* *bv̄-chí:* *gē* *ɲá* [*Ø-ɲò*]
 c14-power c14-ANA1 c14-all p3 give c1-god

'GOD gave all that power.'

Fire.57

The sentence in example (16.19) follows the report of the speaker's house being destroyed by fire, along with a large sum of money and all of his carpenter's tools. The loss of the money was a great hardship, since he had to provide food and

drinks for the people who came to condole with him. After a long while, he was able to repair his house. In this sentence he expresses that his ability to overcome all these difficulties was a result God's intervention, and no one else's. Thus, this example illustrates exhaustive focus.

While the AGENT appears in the postverbal position, the PATIENT usually appears in the preverbal position in what may be referred to as "defocalization" of the PATIENT. This term is used to reflect the occurrence of the PATIENT in the out-of-focus position, rather than in the in-focus position, where PATIENTS occur canonically. While the text corpus contains no examples of a defocalized PATIENT which clearly does not serve as Topic, I consider defocalization to be a byproduct of the agent focus strategy rather than topicalization.

Defocalization differs from the topic-marking strategies presented in §16.2 in two important ways. First, it does not involve a raised tonal register. Second, it only occurs in cases of postverbal agent focus. Therefore, while such defocalized PATIENTS, occupy the preverbal position associated with canonical topics, they are not considered to be de facto topics themselves.

The notion of "defocalization" of the PATIENT is supported externally by evidence from the language Aghem (West Ring-Grassfields), spoken about 70 kilometers west of the Nchane-speaking area. The object noun (cf. PATIENT) in Aghem is observed to take a prefix when occurring in "focus neutral" constructions, where the noun immediately follows the verb. This prefixed noun structure is the expected Bantu noun structure. However, when any element other than the object is focused, the object takes a suffix, appearing in the "out of focus" form (Hyman & Watters 1984). This defocalized form of the object noun (i.e., suffixed rather than prefixed) is therefore comparable to the Nchane defocalized PATIENT (i.e., preverbal rather than postverbal).

The example set in (16.20) shows word order focus expressing contrast. The sentence in (16.20)a is given to show the normal, non-focused sentence structure, which is contrasted with the structure in (16.20)b, which has an AGENT-PATIENT inversion. The parallel protases displaying the focus alternation are bolded for the reader's convenience.

- (16.20) a. wō wũ Ø-jwēnsé, **né wō lé wō gè jálè.**
 2SG c1REL c1-man if 2SG COP 2SG do wrong
- wō légè lē Ø-kwō: fōsē wò
 2SG beg.IMP COMP c1-wife.2SG.POSS forgive 2SG

'You who are the man, if you did wrong, ask that your wife forgive you.' Marriage.4.5

b. **nē jálè gē [wò] wū Ø-kwēsé, wò léǵè**
 if wrong do 2SG c1REL c1-woman 2SG beg.IMP

lē Ø-jwǝ: lē wú fǝsē wò
 COMP c1-husband.2SG.POSS COMP 3SG.FUT forgive 2SG

'[Or] if YOU who are the woman did wrong, ask that your husband will forgive you.' Marriage.4.6

Defocalization of a postverbal constituent in word order focus constructions does not occur in certain contexts. One such situation is when the PATIENT is first person. Thus, the example set in (16.21) demonstrates that first-person PATIENTS may not be defocalized.

(16.21) a. **chí sūŋ [ŋjì] mē**
 P2 beat N. 1SG.PRO

'NJI beat me.'

b. ***mē chí sūŋ [ŋjì]**
 1SG.PRO P2 beat N.

Intended: *'NJI beat me.'*

Note that the post-posed, focused AGENT, along with a first-person PATIENT, results in a clause with an empty preverbal slot. Note also that there is no subject agreement; in clauses with canonical word order and with a P2 marker, subject agreement is required. The fact that it does not appear in this example, indicates that there is no grammatical subject relation present in the clause.

Likewise, Applied Objects appearing in clauses with a focused postverbal AGENT remain in their canonical position following the postposed AGENT, as illustrated in (16.22). Applied Objects can precede the verb in certain negation constructions. Thus, the restriction of Applied Object defocalization might be limited to word order focus constructions as seen here.

(16.22) **chí yéŋ [tādà] wù lē**
 P2 see T. 3SG APPL

'TADA saw him.'

In three-term clauses, the PATIENT is defocalized, just as they are in the two-term (AGENT-PATIENT) clauses presented above, and the Applied Object again remains in its canonical position, as demonstrated in (16.23).

- (16.23) mū̀p-chṑnē ná [tádà] ñ̀jì lē
 c18a-groundnut give T. N. APPL

'TADA gave groundnuts to Nji.'

As mentioned earlier, some nearby languages (although, not Noni) allow for non-subject constituents to be focused by appearing in the immediately after verb position and with the PATIENT defocalized. Example (16.24) shows that this is not possible for the Nchane Applied Object, which requires a different focus strategy.

- (16.24) *tádà mù̀p-chṑnē ná [ñ̀jì lē]
 T. c18a-groundnut give N. APPL

Intended: *'Tada gave groundnuts to NJI.'*

Negative, non-canonical word order focus operates much the same as its affirmative counterpart, with the focused agent following the verb and the PATIENT preceding it. Example (16.25) is a response to the question "Did Nji give the chicken fufu?". The question asserts that it was Nji who gave, while the response contrasts this assertion, expressing that while someone did give, that someone was not Nji.

- (16.25) ñ̀gáŋ, á bvú-lē: bé ná [wù]
 no NEG1 c14-fufu pl give 3SG

shī lé gè
 c9.chicken APPL NEG2

'No, HE did not give the chicken fufu.' (someone else did)

This example appears to indicate that focused constituents may not be concurrently negated, since a clause negation strategy is utilized rather than one for constituent negation. (See §16.3.5 for further discussion on this matter.) As noted in §15.2, the *á*-strategy is employed in negative constructions involving formal focus marking, as is observed here.

In some cases, word order focus is constrained by semantics and social hierarchy concerns. Example (16.26) has two possible interpretations, with the focused interpretation having questionable acceptability. Given the right context, my language consultants agreed this could have the second interpretation. However, an adult man has a higher social status than a child. Therefore, the non-focused interpretation is the default one.

- (16.26) Ø-bā wū-nē sūŋ [bɔ̃:]
 c1-pa c1-PROX beat c2.child

'This pa beat the children.'

(?) 'The CHILDREN beat this pa.'

Example (16.27) has only one possible interpretation, since the agent and PATIENT are of equal social status. Therefore, a different focus strategy is needed to obtain an unambiguous focused reading.

- (16.27) tádà sùŋ ɲ̀jì
 T. beat N.

'Tada beat Nji.'

**'NJI beat Tada.'*

16.3.2 Cleft constructions

Clefts consist of a clause-initial copula followed by an object noun phrase¹⁰⁸ (the *ex situ* focused constituent) modified by a relative clause. In contrast to nearby languages such as Noni (Hyman 1981), Mundabli (Voll 2017) and Mungbam (Lovegren 2013), there is no dummy subject present. Presumably, any nominal constituent may be focused through a cleft construction, which identifies the denotation. In other words, the focused constituent answers the question of “who”, “what”, “when” or “where”.

A cleft construction focusing an agent is illustrated in (16.28). The focused agent is *identified* as the answer to the previous sentence’s seemingly rhetorical question, where the speaker asked himself how he is going to accomplish a certain task that appeared impossible.

- (16.28) lé [Ø-ɲ̀] wú gè ɲ̀ā jè yē-è
 COP c1-god c1REL P3 give c9.path c9-ANA1

'It is GOD who gave that way.'

Fire.49.2

Note that the cleft construction places the focused term to the right of the copula, which serves as the main verbal element of the sentence. Therefore, this strategy supports the notion of the immediately-after-verb position as associated with focus.

¹⁰⁸ According to the definitions given in §11.1, the noun phrase following the copula has the grammatical form of an Object, even though this Object may express any of the various semantic roles, such as AGENT or RECIPIENT.

Example (16.29) involves a focused PATIENT. This example comes from a story in which some children are sick and a doctor is asked to discover what is the cause of their sickness. Because the children are having stomach pain, one can suppose that they have eaten “something”. That “something” is identified as poison.

- (16.29) lē Ø-mù-ŋché wé-é gē: wú jīŋē, wù yéŋ
 SET c1-person-medicine c1-ANA1 go 3SG watch 3SG see
- lē lé [Ø-nlò] wù bō: bā-ā jí
 COMP COP c1-poison c1REL c2.child c2-ANA1 eat

‘When the doctor looked, he saw that it was POISON that those children ate.’ What-goes-around.9.7

As stated in §11.1.1, inferable PATIENTS are routinely omitted. This is the case in example (16.30), representing an unusual instance where focus is obtained for a null expression. The prior sentence explicitly mentions the “cassava puff” being referenced here. Thus, the cleft construction involves a headless relative clause, where the omitted PATIENT is the focused constituent, which is identified as the “cassava puff” that the children have eaten. Here, the focus is exhaustive, since the poisoned cassava puff is the only entity that results in a true proposition.

- (16.30) lé mó [-] mà mē bé nà kǐ-ŋfē:
 COP RES cassava.puff c6aREL 1SG.PRO P1 give c7-blind.man
- kè-è lē, kí gē: kí nā bō: bà-nè
 c7-ANA1 APPL c7REL go c7 give c2.child c2-PROX
- lē bó jí fè à-shéŋ kī á yù bō
 SET 3PL eat make c18-liver COMP(K) c18 kill 3PL

‘[That] is [the very CASSAVA PUFF] that I gave to the blind man, who went and gave [it] to these children to eat, making [their] stomachs to hurt them.’ What-goes-around.9.15

RECIPIENTS may also be focused through cleft constructions, as illustrated in (16.31).¹⁰⁹ However, as the noun phrase following the copula is not marked with the applicative postposition lē, the example suggests that the focus construction is based on a clause with RECIPIENT-THEME word order, where both postverbal

¹⁰⁹ This example shows a third-person-singular pronoun between the AGENT and the verb in the relative clause. Unfortunately, it is unknown if this pronoun is coreferential with the AGENT or with the focused RECIPIENT. If coreferential with the AGENT, then the full noun AGENT would appear to be left-detached; if coreferential with the RECIPIENT, then the pronoun is resumptive, which has only been observed in coreference with prepositional phrases.

constituents are Objects. Focus of Applied Objects through clefting is apparently not possible.

- (16.31) lé [ńjì] wū tādá wū ńā mùŋ-chōnē
 COP N. c1REL T. 3SG give c18a-groundnut

'It is NJI to whom Tada gave groundnuts.'

A focused time adverbial in a cleft construction is shown in example (16.32). In the preceding sentence, five brothers consider where each will go to do farming. This temporal context is identified as the time that the first brother makes his decision.

- (16.32) lé [kī-fē kī-nē lé] kī chūŋgè gè ńā
 COP c7-time c7-PROX APPL c7REL Ch. P3 leave
- wú bènē kī-mbè kī Ø-jú sà-n-é yó lé,
 3SG ascend c7-side c7REL c5-sun rise-PROG inside APPL
- wū gē dàŋ jō yì kīŋkēŋī wū shí chūŋgè-kō
 3SG P3 cross c9.water c9AM K. 3SG sit Ch.-forest

'It is at THIS TIME that Chunge moved toward the east and crossed the Kikenyeh River and settled in Chunge-Ko (Chunge Forest).'

History.3.1

Questions often are formed utilizing cleft constructions, as illustrated in (16.33) (AGENT focus) and (16.34) (PATIENT focus).¹¹⁰

- (16.33) lé [Ø-mwā wú-lá] wú jí bvù-lè:
 COP c1-child c1-Q c1REL eat c14-fufu

'It is which child who ate fufu?'

¹¹⁰ There are no examples in the text data of word order focus in question constructions. However, this strategy is observed in examples from the Nchane New Testament. For example, *Nya yeeŋ bvunŋa bvuyu wo le?* [give who c14.power c14.this 2SG APPL] 'Who gave this power to you?' (Matthew 21:23).

(16.34) wù bí: bǔ: bā-ā lé là:
 3SG ask c2.child c2-ANA2 APPL Q.COMP

lé [lá:] fī bēŋ bé ji
 COP Q c19REL 2PL P1 eat

'...he asked those children, "What is it that you ate?">' (lit. it is what that you ate) What-goes-around.9.8

No examples of negative clauses involving cleft constructions are present in the text data. But example (16.35) shows that it involves the n-copula rather than *lé*.

(16.35) ŋgáŋ, á nū [wù]
 no NEG1 COP(N) 3SG

wú bé nā shī bvū-lē: gē
 c1REL P1 give c9.chicken c14-fufu NEG2

'No, it was not HIM who gave the chicken fufu. (It was someone else.)'

Furthermore, no examples of a focused prepositional phrase in a cleft construction are observed in the text data. However, this has not been ruled out as a possibility.

16.3.3 The scalar focus particle *m̄*

The Resultative marker *m̄* 'RES', in its primary function, occurs in the preverbal slot and establishes a resultative relationship between two clauses (see §9.3.5). In its secondary function, it precedes a focused clausal constituent. The focused constituent is interpreted as being selected from a group of one or more "similar" alternatives, and often might be assumed to be excluded from this group or to be the extreme member of the group. For example, "snakes" in the sentence, "I like all animals, even *snakes*," is considered an extreme member of the group "animals", perhaps because they are dangerous or hard to care for. Thus, "snakes" are measured along a desirability scale and identified as the least likely member of the group "animals" to be liked.

Scalar focused constituents are somewhat rare in the data and are apparently always right-dislocated. This is illustrated in (16.36), which has a focused PATIENT. The context for this sentence is a husband sending his wife away after he discovers she is doing witchcraft. He orders her to take all her things with her, including the smallest article, her 'rags', which are used in a variety of mundane tasks such as serving as a cushion when carrying objects on the head.

- (16.36) j́ó mw-ē: mw-ōŋ mū-chī, m̄ [fī-chájā
 take.IMP c18a-thing c18a-2SG.POSS c18a-all RES c19-rag
 fī njū], wō gē: wō tú fē Ø-chíjò lē
 c19AM c9.cloth 2SG go 2SG return at c1-father.2SG.POSS APPL
 ‘Take all your things, even [YOUR] RAGS, and return to your parents
 (lit. your father).’ Two Wives. 7.2

The focus in (16.37) is very similar to that in the above example. The focused PATIENT appears as the ultimate member of a group of activities.

- (16.37) j̄chānē gè jèm-é jē yí-mímyā, b́ó gè-è
 N. P3 talk-PROG c9.language c9-one 3PL do-PROG
 mw-ē: nōmà, m̄ [mw-ē: mū wōŋ]
 c18a-thing same RES c18a-thing c18aAM c3.village
 ‘The Nchane people spoke the same language and did the same things,
 even their traditional activities.’ History.4.2

A scalar focused Comitative Oblique appears in (16.38), which is the last sentence of a hortatory text giving advice to young married couples. The final admonition is to love not only themselves, but also the families of the husband and wife, which is presumably harder to do or less likely to be considered.

- (16.38) b́éŋ gè-è lē kì-ŋ-kòŋē ñùmè
 2PL.HORT do-PROG COMP c7-NMZR-desire COP(N)
 ā-bèŋ-nténé sēgē chí: m̄ [bé Ø-kfū chí-nā]
 c18-2PL-middle when all RES with c5-family c5-2PL.POSS
 ‘You should be showing love among yourselves and even YOUR
 FAMILY.’ Marriage.7

The scalar focus marker occurs twice in example (16.39). The first occurrence involves a complex agent, with the focused member appearing at the right edge of the sequence and being marked as the most important or surprising of the agent members. The second occurrence is found at the end of the sentence forming an ellipsis, and represents a final addition to the list of agents.

(16.39) bā-mī b́é bā-édà bā bēsābó gè b́é bā-chī,
 c2-person with c2-elder c2AM 1PL.3PL P3 ^PCOP c2-all

m̄ [Ø-bástò], b̄ b̄ gē b́é b̄ já-á
 RES c1-pastor 3PL P3 ^PCOP 3PL leave-PROG

b̄ lé-g-è b́ó gēn-è, **m̄** m̄ t̄
 3PL run-PROG 3PL go-PROG RES 1SG.PRO also

'All the people, with our elders, and even THE PASTOR, they were running and going, and even I also.' Fire.3.1-2

It is assumed that any clausal constituent could be focused using the scalar focus marker, although no examples are observed in the data of applied objects or locative obliques in such constructions. However, example (16.40) shows that propositions can also be focused through **m̄**. The focused proposition represents the extreme act of raising someone from the dead to preach to a man's living brothers, who are not accepting the preaching of Moses.

(16.40) mò bā bú-sè Ø-mù à-jēŋ,
 RES they remove.COND c1-person c18-grave

b̄ ǵé yù g̀è
 3PL NEG2.FUT hear NEG2

'...even if they remove someone from the grave, they (your brothers) will not hear.' Rich man.1.21

16.3.4 The n-copula (n̄) as a focus marker

The copular verb **n̄** 'COP(N)' (presented in §10.1.2) has a secondary function as a focus marker. The copula precedes the focused constituent, contrasting it with some alternative, and with an additional expression of emotion such as surprise or counter-expectation. The data show PATIENT focus is obtained often via this strategy, as well as focus on locatives. AGENTS, however, are never focused with the copula. The focused constituent most often appears immediately after the verb, although there is some evidence to indicate that the focused constituent remains *in situ*.

Example (16.41) illustrates PATIENT focus with **ɲù**. The focused denotation contrasts **bvùlɛ̃**:¹¹¹ ‘fufu’ with **bɪfũnɛ̃** ‘corn(pl)’, that is mentioned in the previous sentence.

- (16.41) wù jó ɲù [bvù-lɛ̃: bw-ɛ̃:], wù chú wáà, à
 3SG take COP(N) c14-fufu c14-ANA1 3SG pour IDEO in
 jò lɛ̃, wū tú wū kɛ̃nɛ̃ wū kɛ̃nɛ̃ wū kɛ̃nɛ̃
 c9.water APPL 3SG then 3SG stir 3SG stir 3SG stir
 ‘She took the FLOUR, poured [it], pssss, into the water, and stirred
 and stirred.’ Disobedient Child.1.10

The discourse context suggests that this contrast is expressing a counter expectation. In the story, before leaving for work on the farm, a mother left corn with her daughter with the instruction to take it to the mill to be ground into flour so that it would be available to cook for the evening meal. The daughter did not do as her mother demanded. So, when the mother returned home, she found the unground corn and, without her daughter’s knowledge, took other corn to the mill to be ground. Later in the evening, she asked her daughter to bring her the corn. However, instead of using the unground corn, she took the flour and put it in the water to cook.

The intention of killing an annoying, blind beggar is the context for example (16.42), another instance of PATIENT focus with **ɲù**.

- (16.42) bɔ̃: bā-ā, lɛ̃ bɔ̃ bé jí ɲù
 c2.child c2-ANA1 COMP 3PL ^PCOP eat COP(N)
 [màŋ-kàlà má-mù mà
 c6a-cassava.puff c6a-some c6aREL
 kɪ-ŋfɛ̃ kɪ-mí bé ɲá bɔ̃ lɛ̃]
 c7-blind.man c7-some P1 give 3PL APPL
 ‘Those children [said] that they had eaten SOME CASSAVA PUFF,
 WHICH A CERTAIN BLINDMAN GAVE THEM...’
 What-goes-around.9.9

In the previous sentences, the cassava puffs are poisoned and given to the blind beggar. However, he did not eat them, but later gave them to the woman’s own children, who then ate the poisoned cassava puffs. Focusing this Object emphasizes

¹¹¹ This word is the generic word for ‘food’, but more specifically denotes ‘fufu’, made from boiled corn flour and formed into a ball. The way it is used here suggests that it can also refer to the flour before it is cooked.

this surprising turn of events, that they are the same “cassava puffs” that were intended for the blindman to kill him.

In example (16.43), **ɲù** is used to underline the importance and surprise of the location of the fire, expressed through an Applied Object. The speaker was alarmed to discover the fire was occurring near his house. Therefore, a contrast is established between the actual location of the fire and the assumed location of the fire.

- (16.43) lē bē yéŋ ńgú bēn-è, ńgú bēn-ē
 SET 1PL see c10.fire ascend-PROG c10.fire ascend-PROG
- kī-mbè kī Ø-gómé Ø-sùkú lē,
 c7-side¹¹² c7AM c1-government c1-school APPL
- ɲù** [kī-mbè kī ɲ-ché-é kī lē]
 COP(N) c7-side¹¹² c7REL 1SG-stay-PROG c7 APPL

‘As we saw fire burning, fire was burning in the side of government school, being WHERE I WAS LIVING.’ Fire.2.3

The example set in (16.44) illustrates how **ɲù** can be used to focus a prepositional phrase. The two examples are parallel sentences, with (16.44)a appearing early in the text and the “song” utilized as the name of a major participant. The same set of phrases occurs in (16.44)b, serving as the moral of the story. This time, however, the focusing copula appears. The moral is emphasizing the false belief that a person can treat others poorly and not experience negative effects from that treatment. It also highlights the surprise experienced by the woman who ended up killing her own children with poison intended for the blind beggar.

- (16.44) a. kī jèŋ-i kī yēn-è Ø-ńkè: lē, wō gé
 c7 walk-PROG c7 sing-PROG c1-song COMP 2SG do.COND
- bvū-jōŋè, tū wō gé yē y-ō lē, wō
 c14-good then 2SG do on c9-2SG.POSS APPL 2SG
- gé bvū-bēfè, tū wō gé yē y-ō lē
 do.COND c14-bad then 2SG do on c9-2SG.POSS APPL

‘...he was moving and singing a song, “You do good, you do for yourself; you do bad, you do for yourself.”’ What-goes-around.1.3

¹¹² The word **kimbè** ‘side’ here is expressing a general location that could be translated as “village quarter” or “area”.

- b. fi-mánjá fī-nē dūŋ-í lē,
 c19-story c19-PROX show-PROG COMP
- wō gé bvū-jōŋē, tū wò gé
 2SG do.COND c14-good then 2SG do
- ɲù** [yē y-ō lē], wō gé bvū-bēfè,
 COP(N) on c9-2SG.POSS APPL 2SG do.COND c14-bad
- tū wò gé **ɲù** [yē y-ō lē]
 then 2SG do COP(N) on c9-2SG.POSS APPL

'This story is teaching that, [if] you do good, you do FOR YOURSELF; if you do bad, you do FOR YOURSELF.'

What-goes-around.10.2

The scope of the n-copula is over whatever immediately follows. In the above examples, that has been a clause constituent. But example (16.45) demonstrates that **ɲù** can mark an entire clause for focus. Here, the focus copula follows a locative, which serves as the subject of the following focused clause. The fact that the house is already burnt upon the speaker's arrival is focused and contrasts with the possibility of the house being only partially burnt.

- (16.45) lē n-tó ŋ-fēsē fè yē lē, n-tó
 SET 1SG-come 1SG-arrive at c9.house APPL 1SG-come
- yē y-àŋ **ɲù** [yī fyē wá yī-chī]
 c9.house c9-1SG.POSS COP(N) c9 burn already c9-all

'As I arrived at the house, I came to my house when IT HAD ALREADY COMPLETELY BURNED.'

Fire.4.3

The focus copula may also precede a verb phrase, as in (16.46). The focus is on the act of a man's wife carrying fufu without soup, which is in contrast with the normal situation of soup accompanying the fufu. A short while later, the wife produces fufu *with* soup, which is a pivotal event in the story.

- (16.46) bēsá-Ø-kwâ: bē bé làd-é, wū **ɲù**
 1PL-c1-wife.1SG.POSS 1PL P1 go.goal-PROG 3SG COP(N)
- [tú: bvū-lē: nōnō]
 carry c14-food empty

"I and my wife were going (to the farm to do work) and she CARRIED FUFU WITHOUT SOUP."

Jealous Husband.19.1

In example (16.47), the focus copula follows the matrix verb and precedes the PATIENT, which would appear to be the focused constituent. However, it is not simply the PATIENT that is in focus. The example follows the husband asking where the wife will get soup, with this sentence offering an indirect answer to the question. The contrast expressed is between two activities, “worrying over where the soup will come from” and “preparing for eating”.

- (16.47) Ø-kwē chfú lē [chūgé **ɲù** chyā:],
 c1-wife reply COMP wash.IMP COP(N) c10.hand
- Ø-jwā:, Ø-jwē: mō wù chūgè chyā:
 c1-husband.1SG.POSS c1-husband RES 3SG wash c10.hand
- ‘The wife answered, “JUST WASH [YOUR] HANDS, my husband.”
 and the husband washed [his] hands.’* Jealous Husband.11

Perhaps the placement of the focus copula before the PATIENT in what is interpreted as verb phrase focus is dictated by the main verb appearing in its imperative form. This explanation would restrict the n-copula from preceding imperative verbs. Or it might be that the main verb of a clause with no preverbal nominal term cannot be preceded by the n-copula when functioning as a focus marker. Indeed, a clause with no subject elements and having an n-copula followed by a lexical verb might be confused with a type of cleft construction. However, these hypotheses remain untested for the moment.

The n-copula as a focus marker may appear in negative constructions, as illustrated in (16.48). As was observed in §15.2, focused clauses demand the use of the *á*-strategy for negation, which is also utilized for clauses with verbs that are not [+PAST] and [-PROG]. Additionally, the various constituents appear in their canonical order. This example also provides the clearest evidence in the data corpus that *ɲù*-focused constituents remain *in situ*, with the focused Applied Object following the Object.

- (16.48) á wù bé ɲā bvū-lē: **ɲù** [shī lē] gè
 NEG1 3SG P1 give c14-fufu COP(N) c9.chicken APPL NEG2
- ‘He did not give THE CHICKEN fufu.’* (e.g., *he gave to the dog*)

16.3.5 The verb focus particle *lō*

The focus marker *lō* ‘FOC’ is not clearly a focus marker, at least not entirely. In some cases, its occurrence is seemingly related to clause structure concerns. To better understand its function, I begin with a few comments regarding the marker as it appears in the neighboring language Noni.

A homophonous form is observed in Noni, where Hyman observes that it is required with sentences which have verbs that are minus future [-FUT], minus negative [-NEG], and minus focused [-FOC]. The [-FOC] designation indicates that the verb does not appear with the focus auxiliary **nɔ́**, which is somewhat analogous to Nchane's n-copula **ɲù**, and is often translated with the immediate past adverb "just" (Hyman 1981: 56, 60, 77). It is further observed that **lɔ́** is not required if a verb complement, such as an object, is present. Thus the "aspectual adverb...either completes the [-FUT, -FOC] verb, or, places additional focus on the verb itself" (Hyman 1981: 85).¹¹³

Nchane presents a similar pattern with **lɔ́**. As illustrated in (16.49)-(16.51), **lɔ́** is required with verbs that are [-FUT, -NEG, -FOC] when there is no verb complement. (As inferred above, the +FOC verb form for Nchane is the n-copula. Thus, **lɔ́** is not expected in clauses in which the n-copula serves as the main verb.) In addition, **lɔ́** is not permitted in negative constructions or in constructions with other focus marking. Note that Hyman and Watters convincingly argue that negation structures are "intrinsically focused", representing the marked polarity value (1984: 262). Thus, a language might disallow the presence of more than one focus feature (in this case, verb focus and negation). However, example (16.25) above demonstrated that, while term negation is incompatible with a focused agent, clausal negation and a focused agent are allowed to co-occur.

(16.49) wù gē ná Ø-ntāŋ lē wū [kwé-é] lɔ́
3SG P3 give c1-thought COMP 3SG die-PROG FOC

'He thought that he was dying.'

Lake.4.4

(16.50) bē gōn-é wò lē Ø-ŋfōŋ wū-sè [ché-é] lɔ́
1PL want-PROG 2SG SET c1-chief c1-1PL.POSS sick-PROG FOC

'We want you because our chief is sick.'

Smart Monkey.1.10

(16.51) shā yī tōpē yī-nè [kùgè] lɔ́
c9.pot c9REL hot c9-PROX big FOC

'This hot pot is big.'

The above examples suggest that Nchane clauses, at least in some verb conjugations, require a verb complement, and **lɔ́** fulfills that requirement when no other complement is available. Good (2010: 66) suggests that such a phenomenon can be taken as evidence for the existence of a postverbal "field", which in some

¹¹³ A similar case is presented for the West Ring-Grassfields language Aghem, where **nɔ́** 'FOC' (cf. **lɔ́**) is observed as obligatory in sentences with no verbal complement and non-focus verb marking (Watters 1979: 166).

contexts must be filled. As we have seen with word order focus and cleft focus constructions, this postverbal field could be designated as a Focus field, as is argued for Naki.

While the analysis of **l̩** as a slot filler has some merit, it does not, however, account for its occurrence in certain other cases. For example, the minimal pair in (16.52) shows that it is not required with imperative verbs having no following constituent. But when it is present, it appears to have an intensifying or emphatic function. The focused version could be used, for example, after the speaker has already used the non-focused version, but with the command going unheeded.

- (16.52) a. gɛ́nɛ́
go.IMP
‘Go.’
- b. [gɛ́nɛ́] **l̩**
go.IMP FOC
‘Go!’

Example (16.53) is a natural text example of a similar construction. The command could occur without FOC, but its presence makes the command stronger.

- (16.53) [já] **l̩** chɛ́gɛ́, mɛ́ lé mé
leave.IMP FOC quickly 1SG.PRO COP 1SG.PRO.FUT
- ń-kó wò, mɛ́ n-sɛ́: né, fɛ́-bwɛ́
1SG-catch 2SG 1SG.PRO 1SG-cut GEST c16-neck
- ‘Leave quickly or I will catch you and cut you like this, at [your] neck!’
Greedy Friends.1.19

Examples (16.54) and (16.55) are somewhat ambiguous regarding focus. Example (16.54) occurs after a woman realizes that her husband suspects her of being unfaithful to him. The sentence here can be understood as her waiting until the right time to enact her plan to solve this problem.

- (16.54) wù tú wū [mān-ɛ́] gɛ́ **l̩**
3SG return 3SG watch-PROG EXCL FOC
- ‘She then was just watching...’ Jealous Husband.1.4

Example (16.55) is part of a response to the question of what the woman’s children had eaten to make them sick. It is possible that the verb is focused here in

order to emphasize that the blind beggar received it from that woman rather than buying it somewhere or preparing it himself.

(16.55) wù bé [légé] **l̩** à Ø-kwēsé wú-mù lē,
 3SG P1 beg FOC in c1-woman c1-certain APPL

wú tó wū kāŋ-è màn-kàlà
 c1REL HAB 3SG fry-PROG c6a-cassava.puff

'He asked for [cassava puff] from a certain woman who is always frying cassava puffs.' What-goes-around.9.10

The neighboring languages Mundabli and Mungbam apparently acquire similar verb focus through cognate deverbal noun constructions, which occur in the postverbal position instead of a focus particle like Nchane, Noni and Naki (Voll 2017: 320; and Lovegren 2013: 350 respectively). For example, while Nchane utilizes a structure like “The man drank **l̩**” to report that the man drank (something), Mundabli would likely use the structure “The man drank drink”, where the infinitivized form of the verb serves as the verb’s complement. Cognate deverbal nouns in Nchane are observed, but are quite rare and not used systematically with otherwise intransitive verbs, as they apparently are in Mundabli.

16.4 Givenness

Krifka and Musan state that *givenness* has to do with “the indication that the denotation of an expression is present in the immediate common ground content” (2012: 21). In other words, expressions may be denotations of *new* information, those which are absent from shared knowledge in communication, or they may be denotations of old or *given* information, those which are known by both speaker and addressee. Furthermore, Krifka and Musan indicate that the notion of givenness must accommodate degrees of givenness. This accounts for denotations of expressions that are no longer salient in common ground due to long absence.

Givenness in Nchane is largely expressed through its demonstrative system and is slightly different for minor versus major participants. In short, new participants in a discourse are most often introduced with the specific indefinite demonstrative **m̩** ‘some’, which in this context is usually translated as ‘certain’. Subsequent mentions, while the participant maintains active status, are generally made through personal pronouns. Participants may be reactivated following long absences through full nouns.

References to major participants follow a similar pattern. However, second mention often includes one of the anaphoric demonstratives presented in §6.4.2. Reactivation of major participants again includes one of the anaphoric demonstratives. The reader is encouraged to observe these patterns in the interlinearized texts provided in Chapter 17. The text excerpt in (16.56) also illustrates the above points. References to the major participant “woman” are bolded to make identification easier.

- (16.56) a. *kī-lūŋ* *kí-mí* *gè* *bé* *Ø-jwènsè* *wū-mū* *bé*
 c7-year c7-some P3 ^PCOP c1-man c1-some with

Ø-kwè: **wú-mū** *bō* *kōŋ-ē* *yé* *bá:ŋ*
 c1-woman c1-some 3PL.REL love-PROG c10.body much

'A certain year (ago), there was a man and wife who loved each other very much.'
 Jealous Husband.1.1 (Sentence 1)
- b. **Ø-kwésé** **wē-ē** *tó* **wù** *kē* *lē*
 c1-woman c1-ANA1 come 3SG know COMP

Ø-jwē: *bīŋ-é* **wù**
 c1-husband.3SG.POSS suspect-PROG 3SG

'That woman came to know that her husband was suspecting her (of unfaithfulness).'
 Jealous Husband.1.3 (Sentence 3)
- c. **wù** *tú* **wù** *mān-è* *gé* *lò*
 3SG return 3SG watch-PROG EXCL FOC

'She just kept watching...'
 Jealous Husband.1.4 (Sentence 4)

Following sentence 4, there are three sentences of dialogue. This results in the need for the “woman” to be reactivated in the mainline through a full nominal reference and accompanying anaphoric demonstrative.

- d. *lē* *nù* *fē-ŋfù,* **Ø-kwésé** **wē-ē** *gē* *bé*
 SET COP(N) c16-evening c1-woman c1-ANA1 P3 ^PCOP

wù *kē:* *bvū-lē:*
 3SG stir c14-food

'As it was evening, that woman cooked fufu.'
 Jealous Husband.2.3 (Sentence 8)

The following references are again made through a pronoun. This pattern is repeated several times throughout the text.

A summary of these patterns is given in Table 16.2.

Information status	Sequence	Minor participants	Major participants
new	first mention	N (+ m̄)	N (+ m̄)
	second mention	pronoun	N + ANA / pronoun
given	subsequent mention	pronoun	pronoun
	reactivation	N	N + ANA

Table 16.2 Summary of Nchane givenness strategies.

