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**PREPOSED CONSTITUENTS AND DISCONTINUITIES
IN MAKAA DISCOURSE**

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Abstract

The paper describes how preposed constituents in Makaa discourse mark discontinuities, and looks specifically at the devices of topicalization and focus. Both complex noun phrases and simple noun phrases, as well as prepositional phrases and verbal phrases, are frequently preposed for topicalization. A complex noun phrase, consisting of a head noun modified by a relative clause, may express the time, manner, or reference of the following propositions. The study of topicalized phrases shows how each preposed constituent marks discontinuity of action, situation, or reference. Focus in Makaa involves preposing the focused constituent. However, it marks a different kind of discontinuity, an interruption of the argument, in order to highlight a main assertion.

Résumé

Le présent article décrit comment les constituants placés au début d'une phrase servent à marquer les discontinuités au sein du texte en mekaa. On examine plus particulièrement la topicalisation et la focalisation. Les syntagmes nominaux complexes et simples, tout comme les syntagmes prépositionnels et verbaux, sont souvent placés au début de la phrase à des fins de topicalisation. Un syntagme nominal complexe, qui se compose d'un nom modifié par une proposition relative, peut exprimer le temps, la manière ou la référence de la proposition ou des propositions qui suivent. L'étude des syntagmes topicalisés montre comment chaque constituant placé au début d'une phrase permet de marquer des discontinuités d'action, de situation ou de référence. En mekaa, la focalisation se fait également en plaçant le constituant focalisé au début de la phrase. Toutefois, ce même constituant marque aussi une autre sorte de discontinuité, à savoir, une interruption de l'argument en cours, permettant ainsi à l'argument principal de se dégager.

1. Preposed constituents in Makaa

Coherent discourses contain discontinuities of action, situation, and reference, which are marked by various devices to maintain coherence. This paper¹ looks at preposed constituents in Makaa² and shows that such devices signal discontinuities in discourse, thus supporting Levinsohn's claim to this effect in the introductory article of this section.

The term *preposed* in this paper refers to any constituent of the sentence that occurs before the nuclear constituents of the main clause. A number of constituents can occur in this position, including vocatives, conjunctions, subordinate clauses, noun phrases, and other phrases. A preposed vocative is illustrated in (1):³

(1) a. *okóól bâm!*

sisters my

My sisters!

b. *osóngú óshé bwó á byá shé.*

fathers our they P2 beget us

Our fathers begot us.

Vocatives, as in (1), differ from other preposed noun phrases in that they are used by the speaker to address the audience and are not usually part of the rest of the clause syntactically.

The following examples illustrate a conjunction, in (2), and a subordinate clause, in (3), occurring before the main clause:

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²The Makaa language is spoken in southeast Cameroun, Africa. It is a Bantu language classified by Guthrie (1971:33) as A.83. The dialect used in this paper is the Mbwaanz dialect spoken along the Ndjoung Nkol road, approximately 50 km. from Abong Mbang. Though the name of the language is *makaá*, the English spelling of this language will be used throughout this paper.

³The following abbreviations are used in this paper:

AM	Associative Marker	LOC	Locative
EMP	Emphasis	NEG	negative
F1	Near future	P1	Recent Past
F2	Remote future	P2	Remote Past
F-P	Focus-presupposition construction	PERF	Perfect
FOC	Focus marker	PL	Plural
HORT	Hortative mood	PR	Present
IMPER	Imperative mood	PROG	Progressive Aspect
ITER	Iterative/Habitual	REL	Relative Article
INF	Infinitive	SG	Singular

(2) *Nji, mə ji nə mpimbə nə bwán wā budúm.*
 but I am with anger with children AM male
 But, I am angry with the sons.

(3) a. *ŋkí ijîm í du dúg,*
 if spirits they ITER see
 If the spirits are watching,

b. *mə e bá ɛ kə shílə mpwálá a cínong.*
 I F1 F2 him go ask debt AM place
 I will ask him for that debt (hold him accountable for his actions).

In (3), a father on his deathbed reminds his sons that he will hold them responsible for their actions after his death, if indeed the spirits of dead people watch what goes on in the world of the living.

Of the several types of preposed constituents that exist, vocatives, conjunctions, and subordinate clauses are excluded from further consideration here. This paper is limited to the discussion of phrases and how they function in discourse, since phrases are the most common constituents occurring before the main clause in the texts studied.

Preposed phrases occur in two different constructions: topicalization, as described in §2, and the focus-presupposition construction, as described in §3. The study of these preposed phrases, as they occur in these two constructions, shows how preposed phrases mark discontinuities in Makaa discourse.⁴

2. Topicalization

Topicalization as used in this paper involves a phrasal constituent that is preposed before the main clause of the sentence and has a bidirectional function. Givón (1990:846-47) claims that the topicalized element plays a bidirectional role: it serves both as a point of departure for what follows, and also as the primary basis for linking what follows to its preceding context. The primary basis may link what follows to the preceding context in two ways: by repeating information from a previous clause, or by switching from a constituent in a previous clause to show a new or contrasting element, such as time or place (Levinsohn 1992:16). In this way the topicalized constituent provides linkage, contributing to the coherence of a discourse.

At the same time topicalized constituents also indicate discontinuities. Three types of discontinuities have been distinguished by Givón (1990:896-97): change of action, change of situation, and change of reference. Change of situation can be further subdivided into change of time and location. Change of reference can also be further subdivided into change of participants and topic. In discussing preposed constituents, each is described in terms of what kind of discontinuity is being marked.

Topicalized constituents are marked in Makaa only by their position at the beginning of the sentence, as illustrated in (4). There is no marker associated with topicalization:

⁴The texts used in this paper are oral texts given by Mr. Zok Ntah Rigobert, from the village of Beul.

(4) a. *Sá jongú,*
 thing this.mentioned
 For this reason,

b. *sógá mimbií myêsh ná bi bág byá bwân.*
 look.IMPER ways every that you.PLF2.HORT bear children
 search out all ways that you will bear children.

The phrase *sá jongú* 'for this reason' in (4a) is topicalized, occurring before the main clause. This preposed phrase is not marked in any way except by its initial position. In oral speech, the intonation shows that it is associated with the following clause, in that the topicalized constituent ends with suspended intonation (a high tone) rather than phrase-final intonation (a falling tone). This is indicated by a comma in our transcription.

Example (5) shows that more than one constituent may be topicalized:

(5) a. *Nji sá ngúdu,*
 but thing one
 But one thing,

b. *ja shémá zá béégya yí,*
 time we come separate REL
 as we are about to separate,

c. *mə ji nə mpimbə nə bwān wā budúm.*
 I be with anger with children AM male
 I am angry with my sons.

In this example, there are two topicalized constituents at the beginning of the sentence: a simple noun phrase, *sá ngúdu*, 'one thing' (5a), and a complex noun phrase, 'time we are about to separate' (5b), both fronted before the main clause (5c).

This section discusses four types of phrases that may be topicalized: complex noun phrases, simple noun phrases, prepositional phrases, and a verbal phrase, *kə jé kúl*. Complex noun phrases consist of a head noun modified by a relative clause and are the type of noun phrase most frequently topicalized; simple noun phrases consist of a noun or pronoun that may be modified by an adjective.

2.1 Complex Noun Phrases

Complex noun phrases that are topicalized in Makaa consist of a head noun modified by a following relative clause (described in Heath 1984). Consider the following example, wherein we find a complex noun phrase headed by *ja* 'time' in (6b):

(6) a. *Mudá nyə ji mudá*
 womanshe is woman
 A woman is a woman

- b. *ja bímá ká mábá dí yí.*
 time you.PL go marriages LOC REL
 when she gets married.

Verbal complements and sentence modifiers are normally found after the verb, since Makaa is an SVO language. In its position after the main clause, the *ja* phrase functions purely as a temporal adverbial, adding information to the main clause. The temporal phrase in (6b) specifies the time when the main clause will be true, when a woman is really a woman.

However, when such phrases occur before the main clause, they do more than situate the time of the main clause. They are topicalized, contributing to the coherence of the discourse, while indicating a discontinuity of action, reference, or situation, as stated in section 2. In other words, they have added functions above the sentence level. These added discourse functions may be referred to as added implicatures, following Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Blass (1990:67ff). This is parallel to the way English 'when'-clauses function, according to Ramsey (1987:385). An example of such a topicalized phrase is found in (7):

- (7) a. *Ja bwó má byél yí,*
 when they PERF born REL
 When they were born,
- b. *cúúmbá ká dū ndény máláámb.*
 elder go ITER set traps
 the elder (brother) set traps.

The sentence previous to (7) introduces the two brothers who are the major participants of this folk tale. The topicalized phrase of (7a) not only situates the main clause (7b) in time, but also marks the beginning of a new section, giving more description of the two brothers.

Further examples of such topicalized phrases are given in the following sections. For purposes of discussion, these complex noun phrases have been divided into three groups, according to their function: temporal, manner, and reference.

2.1.1 Temporal noun phrases

The noun *ja* 'time,' as exemplified above in (6) and (7), is the most frequently used head noun in topicalized complex noun phrases with a temporal function. Consider also (8):

- (8) a. *Ja bwó má ka tééd ná bwó zó dā kíwo yí,*
 time they PERF then start that they come eat chicken REL
 When they started eating the chicken,

- b. *Kumkoonz a mú dúg múdá*
 Ant she then see woman
 Ant then saw that the all of the woman's

tádúgá yé wēsh dū bul kə Mpyá dí.
 thoughts her all ITER lot go Dog LOC
 thoughts were going to Dog.

The phrase in (8a) occurs at a major change of action. This sentence is found in a narrative concerning Ant and Dog, who together go to ask for the hand of marriage of a woman in another village. Immediately prior to this sentence, Ant and Dog have been received by the woman and invited to eat. With this temporal phrase, the action switches from the preliminaries to the actual events which trigger the woman choosing to marry one of them. *Ja* phrases are frequently used in Makaa narratives to signal such a major change in action, as discussed in Heath and Heath (1990).

Other nouns that function as the head of temporal complex noun phrases are *jwów* 'day' and *té* 'time' as in (9):

- (9) a. *Té njówbúud íshé í má cugə yí,*
 time family our it PERF live REL
 Since the time our family has existed,

- b. *ngwólúga múud nyə afwé bə nə məga mə ká kyab mánəgule.*
 certain person he not.yet be with luck he go pass exams
 no person has yet had the luck to pass the exams.

This sentence is taken from a text where a father counsels his son, who is about to join the military. Preceding this sentence, the father has described what it means for a family in a village to have a relative in such a position. (9) summarizes or applies the preceding, by saying that their own family has never had anyone succeed in obtaining such a post. The topicalized noun phrase (9a) marks discontinuity, indicating the end of a section. In the following sentence in the text, the father changes the topic, to describe the difficulties that the son will encounter in the military. Thus, the topicalized noun phrase helps mark the change of topic.

The marking of this discontinuity in (9) is unusual, since topicalization usually follows a discontinuity, as in (8). In (9), the topicalized phrase comes in the summary at the end of a section. It also signals the discontinuity that follows, i.e., the beginning of a new section, describing the difficulties that the son will encounter.

In addition to a temporal function, some temporal complex noun phrases are used pragmatically to imply reason, even though they have a time head noun. Observe (10), taken from a text recounting the farewell speech of a dying father to his family:

- (10)a. *Kag sám̄b mə mbwool kwaand,*
 go.IMPER cut me trunk plantain
 Go cut me a plantain trunk,
- b. *mə zág lúgə bí nə ocúncésh.*
 I come.HORT leave you.PL.with blessing
 so that I can give you a blessing.
- c. *Nji sá ngúdí,*
 but thing one
 But one thing,
- d. *ja shémá zá béégya yí,*
 time we come separate REL
 as we are about to separate,
- e. *mə ji nə mpimbə nə bwān wā budúm*
 I be with anger with children AM male
 I am angry with my sons
- kóomb zhíí á byá.*
 side path AM birth
 about giving birth.

In (10a-b), the father is preparing to give the blessing. Then, with (10d), he switches topics, from talking about the blessing, to talking about a matter that he needs to deal with before he can give the blessing (thus, a change from blessing to reproach). The topicalized phrase of (10d) occurs before the main clause (10e).

The topicalized clause of (10d) has more of a reason meaning, 'as/since we are about to separate,' than a temporal meaning, even though literally it means 'the time we are about to separate,' with the head noun *ja*. This use of a temporal head noun in a reason phrase is frequent in non-narrative discourse. This may be described again as an added implicature that a topicalized phrase has in certain contexts.

In addition, the *ja* phrase in (10d), more than phrases with other time head nouns, indicates a major discontinuity. It signals a major change of topic in this non-narrative discourse, just as it signalled a major change of action in a narrative in (8). The fact that (10) marks a major discontinuity is strengthened by the presence of a second topicalized constituent, the simple noun phrase of (10c).

2.1.2 Manner noun phrases

In addition to temporal noun phrases, manner noun phrases may also be topicalized. These are complex noun phrases with the head nouns such as *mbii* 'way,' or *nda* 'manner,' as in (11).

- (11)a. *Nda ósóngú bām bwó á lúgə mə nə mətále ná,*
 as fathers my they P2 leave me with blessing REL
 As my fathers left me with a blessing,

- b. *mɛ má ka námá nyĩngə lúgə bí nə matále.*
 I.EMPH PERF then also again leave you.PL with blessing
 I then also again leave you with blessing.

The phrase in (11b) indicates a point of discontinuity, signalling a change of action. Taken from the text of the *dying father*, the preceding sentences described the actual giving of the blessing, which included both the actions and the exact words. With (11a), a new section starts and the father now proceeds to explain what he has done. Thus, the topicalized manner phrase indicates a switch from the act of blessing to the explanation of the blessing.

2.1.3 Reference noun phrases

Other complex nouns are designated as reference noun phrases, because their function is to make reference to certain participants of the discourse. When preposed, these noun phrases are topicalized, usually indicating a change of participants, as in (12a):

- (12)a. *Bang bêsh bwó á shígé bə jwôw dongú dí wá,*
 those all they P2 NEG be day that LOC REL
 As for all those who were not present that day,
- b. *shíla yé nya ó bág ngə kə wá bwə matále.*
 daughter his she FOC F2.HORT PROG go put.on them blessing
 his daughter, she would be giving them the blessing.

This topicalized noun phrase, in (12a), is taken from the text of the father's farewell. The previous sentences in the text dealt with the blessing that was given to all those present the day the father spoke. With (12a), the narrator switches to talk about those who were not present, and how they would receive the blessing. It is logical, then, that he topicalize the noun phrase referring to the new participants in order to highlight a change of participants.

2.2 Simple Noun Phrases

As stated earlier, simple noun phrases consist of a noun or pronoun that may be modified by elements other than relative clauses. When these noun phrases are topicalized in Makaa, they usually function adverbially, as do most of the complex noun phrases. These noun phrases would be expected to occur after the main verb of the clause. Like the complex noun phrases, simple noun phrases also indicate points of discontinuity.

A common example of a topicalized noun phrase is a phrase with a temporal head noun, qualified by an adjective, as in (13):

- (13)a. *Mimbú myêsh,*
 years all
 Every year,

- b. *cúumbá nyə ó má ká ndény máláámb.*
 elder he FOC he go set traps
 the elder (brother) went and set traps.

The noun phrase in (13a) functions as a temporal adverb, to indicate a change of time. The preceding clauses have introduced two brothers in a general way, saying that the elder was a hunter, while the younger had not even bothered to learn how to hunt. The phrase 'each year' situates the following discussion in a more specific time frame.

Noun phrases which are semantically associated with the main clause in some way can also be topicalized, as in (14a):

- (14) a. *Nji, bí bwán wā búdíím,*
 but you children AM male
 but, of you male children,

- b. *mə adúgé ónta má má lúgə wá.*
 I NEG.PR.see grandchildren I PERF leave REL
 I do not see grandchildren that I have left behind.

The noun phrase, *bí bwán wā búdíím*, though it has no direct syntactic relationship with the following clause, is semantically associated with *ónta* 'grandchildren.' The sentence as a whole thus has the meaning 'I do not see grandchildren of (coming from) you sons, that I have left behind.' For this reason, this phrase is still viewed as topicalized, though it is not clear that it has actually been fronted from some position within the main clause.

This topicalized noun phrase also indicates discontinuity of topic. The father has just said that he himself has begotten more than thirty children. Now, with example (14), he switches to his sons ('you sons') and talks about their failure to bear children, the discussion of which continues for several more sentences.

2.3 Prepositional Phrases

Although prepositional phrases normally occur after the verb in the main clause, just like adverbial noun phrases, these phrases may also be preposed. When preposed, the topicalized phrase often indicates a discontinuity of time or location. The category of prepositional phrases here includes phrases with postpositions as well as prepositions. The locative, for example, may be marked by a tonal preposition or by a postposition marker, as in (15):

- (15) *Wa jə bεεnd dí, mə má lúgə cúd.*
 here my family LOC I PERF left empty
 Here in my family, I have been left empty.

This sentence occurs in the dying father's farewell speech. In the preceding sentence, he has stated that the married daughters, who live in their husbands' villages, had borne children. In this sentence, with the topicalized locative phrase, he switches to talk about

his own village, where his sons live, and where there are no grandchildren because his sons have not produced children. Thus, this topicalized phrase marks a change of location.

2.4 Verbal phrase *kə jé kúl*

The phrase *kə jé kúl* has the form of a verb phrase, since the morphemes literally mean 'go arrive place.' It most often appears thus, as a fixed phrase, but in some cases it is used without the *kúl* 'place,' and in a few others, the *kúl* is replaced with *té* 'time.'

In its post-main clause position, the phrase *kə jé kúl*, here translated as 'until,' functions as a conjunction, as seen in (16):

(16)a. *Bimó jǎlá nə ji baagulə mún məbá,*
 you.PL must with exist conserve your.PL marriages
 You (daughters) must conserve your marriages,

b. *kə jé kúl jíná dām í bá bə kú jímb.*
 go arrive place name my it F2 be NEG disappear
 so that (until) my name will not disappear.

The phrase here introduces a kind of temporal or causal clause, adding information to the main clause. In this post-main clause position, it does not mark any discontinuity.

However, when this same phrase is preposed, it definitely marks a point of discontinuity, usually a change in participants. It often occurs in a text with reported speech, in order to signal a change in the addressee, as shown in (17):

(17)a. *Kə jé kúl, nyá á nyingə zə líina ókóól búsú dí yí,*
 go arrive place he P2 again come turn.to sisters our LOC REL
 Until he again crossed over to our sisters,

b. *nyə nə ókóól búsú ná...*
 he with sisters our that
 he said to our sisters...

In (17a), *kə jé kúl* occurs in the text of a father's farewell at the point where the father has finished speaking to the sons, and now addresses the women, including the daughters, sisters, and wives. Thus he switches to address a different group.

In the topicalized position, the phrase not only indicates discontinuity, but also contributes to the coherence of the action. The literal meaning of the morphemes of this phrase ('go arrive place') shows that this phrase links the previous clauses or actions to the subsequent clause. This explains why this phrase is sometimes translated as 'until,' even though it might equally well be translated 'and then.'

3. Focus-presupposition construction

Another construction in Makaa involving a preposed constituent is the focus-presupposition construction (henceforth F-P)⁵. This section shows how it is used to interrupt the flow of an argument in order to give prominence to the assertion with which it is associated. Such interruptions constitute discontinuities of action, according to Givón.

The F-P is made up of a focused constituent followed by a presupposed statement. The focused constituent contains highlighted information, and the presupposition contains non-highlighted or background information. In this construction, the highlighted information appears at the beginning of the clause; less important (non-highlighted and usually old) information is found toward the end of the clause.

After showing briefly how the focused constituent is marked, this section describes how it interrupts the flow of an argument.

3.1 Marking

The focused constituent is marked by the morpheme *ó* which immediately follows it, thus separating the focused constituent from the rest of the clause. A noun phrase may be focused, as in (18), or an entire clause may be focused, as in (19):

- (18) *Shílə yé nyə ó bág ngə kə wá bwə matále.*
 daughter his she FOC F2.HORT PROG go put.on them blessing
 His daughter she's the one who would be giving them the blessing.

- (19) *Mə ngələ wóós ó ga.*
 I PROG.INF arrive FOC here
 It's my arrival here.

In these two examples, the item in focus is the subject of the main clause. In such cases, the particle *ó* that follows is the only marker of the focused constituent. Other constituents of the clause may be put into focus too, however, as seen in (20):

- (20) *Ja jongú ó cug bá jé,*
 time this.mentioned FOC life marriage his
 It's at that time his married life

í é bá kǎ bǎ mpwogé yí.
 it F1 F2 go be in.peace REL
 will go well.

The phrase *ja jongú* in (20) functions as an adverbial of time and normally occurs in nonfocus sentences in postverbal position. Here, in a F-P, the constituent in focus is fronted to the beginning of the clause, unless that constituent is already clause initial. In

⁵This paper uses the term focus-presupposition in the same way as Andrews (1985:77), who distinguishes three principal articulations of the sentence: topic-comment, focus-presupposition, and presentational.

either case, the focused constituent is considered to be preposed with respect to the (rest of the) main clause.

3.2 Interrupting the flow of an argument

Focus is used in connection with the main assertion of the argument in order to give it prominence. In so doing, it not only highlights the main assertion, but also stops the progression of the argument, and thus causes some sort of discontinuity in the expected flow of the discourse.

This is similar to the use of repetition in tail-head linkage as "a rhetorical device that slows the story down prior to a significant development," (Levinsohn 1992:169) in order to highlight that event. Jarvis (1991:222-23), for example, shows how backgrounded information repeated in tail-head linkage is actually placed in the focus position of the Podoko sentence. Using repetition to slow down is similar to using simultaneous actions in a narrative discourse to stop the flow of action, thereby creating a discontinuity.

Using an example from daily life, this phenomenon may be compared to a tour of a museum. The tour guide gives an explanation of the displays. When he comes to a more important item, he is apt to slow down the tour, underlining its importance by using different words, or by pointing out how it is different from other items, or simply by enunciating it more emphatically or more clearly.

The F-P construction can do three things with the main assertion. It can: 1) reiterate the main assertion; 2) state the contrastive item compared with the main assertion; or 3) identify a participant or topic in the main assertion.

Thus, in some cases, the F-P restates or reiterates the main assertion of the section in the text, in order to refocus on given information, as in (21):

- (21) *Má ó má ámə byá bí.*
 I FOC I P1 bear you.pl
 I'm the one who fathered you.

This sentence is part of the dying father's speech, where he is advising his sons how to live after his death. The main assertion of the speech is that he wants them to live worthy of being his offspring. In the sentence quoted here, the in focus is the father himself. The clause highlights the fact that the father is the one who begot 'you,' those he is addressing. This is restating a known fact, since the audience knows that the father is speaking to his own children and is thus refocusing on given information. In emphasizing the importance of this assertion, this clause *interrupts* the flow of the argument.

Secondly, a constituent may be focused in order to highlight a contrasting argument, when it states the opposite of the main assertion (a negative antonym) in order to underline the main assertion of the argument. This is illustrated in (22):

- (22) *Bwán wā bwábudá bwá ó bwó má byá bwân.*
 children AM girls they FOC they PERF bear children
 The daughters, they bore children.

This sentence occurs in a section where the father is rebuking the sons for not having produced any offspring. The focus is on 'daughters,' the subject of the clause. It is

temporarily highlighting the fact that the daughters did bear children. However, this sentence serves to contrast the stated assertion (i.e., about the daughters) with the main assertion of the section, the fact that the sons have not produced any children. Thus, this focused clause underlines the main assertion by making a contrast.

Thirdly, the F-P in Makaa may also be used to identify a participant in the main assertion. In this case, it also stops the flow of the argument in order to draw attention to what is important, as illustrated in (23b):

- (23) a. I must leave you with a blessing because it is very bad if I leave you without a blessing.
- b. And then he said to his wife that that banana trunk [used to give the blessing] must be kept. As for all those who were not there that day,
- c. *shíla yé nyə ó bág ngə kə wá bwə matále.*
 daughter his she FOC F2.HORT PROG go put.on them blessing
his daughter, she will be giving them the blessing.

This sentence, from the same text as (22), occurs after the father has given his blessing to the children present on that day, ending with (23a). This sentence is part of a section which explains the giving of the blessing to those who were absent, beginning with (23b). The narrator identifies who will give the blessing to those who were absent, referred to as *bwə* 'them' in (23c). The daughter, designated to carry on the blessing, is a new participant, not mentioned before in the text. So, rather than restating a main assertion, according to the first function above of focus, this F-P highlights a new participant who is relevant to the main assertion, the carrying on of the blessing. By adding the focus marker to the clause, it draws special attention to and interrupts the flow of the text.

In (24), a F-P is again used in the same text to identify an important point the father wants to make. The focused item of this example has the same general function as the one in (23), but this time it identifies a topic (rather than a participant) having to do with the main assertion:

- (24) *Ntúni ó cug jísá yé.*
 this FOC life is REL
It is like this that life is.

This clause occurs at the very beginning of the dying father's speech. The focus is on the cataphoric *ntúni* 'this,' and identifies that what is coming is an important point in the speech.

Similarly, the focus on an anaphoric noun phrase identifies that what was previously said was an important point as in (25):

- (25) *Ja jongú ó cug bá jé,*
 time that. aforementioned FOC life marriage his
It's at that time that his married life

í é bá kǎ bǎ mpwogé yí.
 it F1 F2 go be in.peace REL
 will go well.

This example, occurring in a text describing a marriage, comes after the family members have given their blessings to the daughter who is about to be married. The focused sentence summarizes or points out the importance of the previous blessings given.

Because the focus-presupposition construction reiterates, contrasts, or identifies the main assertion, it interrupts the flow of the argument, and thus constitutes a discontinuity. It is a more subtle kind of discontinuity than the discontinuity of change indicated by topicalization.

4. Conclusion

The study of preposed phrases, both simple and complex, has shown how they indicate discontinuities in Makaa discourse. Topicalized phrases mark discontinuities by indicating a change, whether of action, situation, or reference. This paper is limited to certain types of phrases, but its discussion suggests that other preposed constituents, such as vocatives, conjunctions, and conditional or other subordinate clauses, may be used to signal discontinuities in a manner similar to the pattern described in this paper.

Focused phrases signal discontinuity by interrupting the flow of the argument in order to highlight a main assertion. This type of discontinuity has not been discussed much in studies of discourse, which has dealt mostly with narrative discourse. This present study has made much use of non-narrative discourse, where the focus-presupposition construction and the discontinuity of interrupting the argument are more frequent than in narrative discourse.

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