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Mùwe Ké focus structures

Jon Archer

Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University

ABSTRACT

The present study is an investigation of the information-structural notion of focus through the morphosyntax of focus structures in Mùwe Ké (Tibeto-Burman, Mugu, Nepal). The focus structures mainly involve the obligatory marking of actors with the otherwise-optional ergative marker *-gane/-gadi:* and a preferred immediately preverbal position, both of which are shown to correlate with the notion of focus. The research and analyses are based on a corpus of field data collected over three years in Nepal, including the Questionnaire on Information Structure (Skopeteas et al. 2006). The paper is intended as a partner for and precursor to Archer (2023a), which questions the notion of focus as a category and subsequently reanalyses the data presented here.

KEYWORDS

Information structure, focus, topic, Mùwe Ké, Tibeto-Burman, Mugu, Nepal, differential argument marking, differential ergative marking, word order, preverbal position.

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1 Introduction

The Tibeto-Burman language of Mùwe Ké (aka Mugom, Mugali) is spoken in the Karnali Zone of Mid-Western Nepal, originally in Mugu village (29°43'40.81"N, 82°30'53.10"E) in the north of Mugu District. The village's long-standing status as a trading post between Tibet to the north and Nepali districts to the south gave rise to the name *Yul Mugum Tshongdui* 'Mugu Village Trading Post', which remains to this day, along with the shorter and more common *Mùm*. There are also communities of Mùwe Ké speakers in Jumla, the district to the south; in the Kathmandu valley; and in Manali, Himachal Pradesh, India. Estimates of total number of speakers range from 3,600 to 7,000. The language is classified as South-Western Tibetic after Tournadre (2014).

Mùwe Ké is certainly endangered. Many younger Mùwa live in Jumla or Kathmandu for work or education and the economic advantage that the yartsagunbu harvest has given the community means that most families have a second home in Jumla, the district to the south, or Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, and almost everyone leaves the highlands of Mugu during the five coldest months of the year. While Nepali is always used for official and governmental functions, there is wide range of use of Mùwe Ké in the village; although, use is logically reduced when living outside. This integration into the wider Nepali society is driving a rapid language shift, especially in the new generation, who speak either a Nepali-Mùwe Ké hybrid in places like Jumla or precious little Mùwe Ké in Kathmandu.

This paper looks at information structure (IS) in Mùwe Ké, specifically at the notion of focus, and describes the morphosyntax of two main focus structures: the obligatory ergative marking on focussed actors and a preferred immediately preverbal position for focussed terms. This is a common finding for Tibeto-Burman languages and the expression of IS in the language family has previously been associated with differential case marking (see DeLancey 2011; Tournadre 1991; Saxena 1990 for Tibetan; and LaPolla 1995; Chelliah & Hyslop 2011 for Tibeto-Burman as a whole) and word order and positioning (LaPolla & Huang 2003; Michaud & Brunelle 2016; Lidz 2010; Bickel 2003).

(1)   A: *námḍul-la*   *sú-i-gane*   *tá-i-or-a*
           aeroplane-DAT   who-ERG-ERG   look-IPFV-ASSERT-Q
           'Who looks at the aeroplane?'

        B: *námḍul-la*   *ṭáʃì-gane (*ṭáʃì-Ø)*   *tá-i-ot*
           aeroplane-DAT   Tashi-ERG   look-IPFV-ASSERT
           '[Tashi]$_F$ looks at the aeroplane.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-45)

(2)   A: *ʈáʃi-gane*   *tʃí:-la*   *tá-i-or-a*
            Tashi-ERG   what-DAT   look-IPFV-ASSERT-Q
            'What does Tashi look at?'

      B: *ʈáʃi(-gane)*   *námɖul-la*   *tá-i-ot*
            Tashi-ERG   aeroplane-DAT   look-IPFV-ASSERT
            'Tashi looks at [the aeroplane]F.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-53)

In (1), focussed *ʈáʃi* 'Tashi' receives obligatory ergative marking and is found in the preverbal position, which may be compared to (2), where ERG is optional and positioning free. In (2), focussed *námɖul* 'plane' is not an actor so is unable to receive ergative marking (the dative is non-differential in Mùwe Ké) but does appear in the immediately preverbal position.

Further to these two main structures, an interesting *-min-duk* construction, which appears to highlight 'hot news' and emphatically direct interlocutors' attention, is discussed with all-new sentence-focus constructions (§4.5), extra prosodic stress is presented with reference to verum (§4.6) and contrast (§4.7) utterances, and repetition of the verb string and a special *V-na V* construction are also shown with respect to verum.

The paper is structured as follows: §2 presents methods of data collection, §3 introduces the terminology and key notions used and discussed throughout, §4 provides an overview of basic information structuring in the language before describing in detail the focus structures found, and §5 summarises the paper.

2   Methods of data collection

Data for the paper comes from fieldwork conducted in Nepal in Mugu, Jumla, and Kathmandu for the calendar year of 2015 and the academic year 2017-18 as well as the 15 months spent teaching at the Mùwa school in Jumla during 2011-12, where I learned the basics of the language.

For the investigation into IS, the *Questionnaire on Information Structure* (QUIS) (Skopeteas et al. 2006) was performed in full with multiple participants, of which the interviews with four individuals and four pairs were transcribed in full, corresponding to the experiments for one or two participants. The QUIS consists of translation tasks for IS notions such as topic and focus and twenty-nine experimental tasks, all with visual stimuli in the form of pictures or videos, about which single participants answer questions, provide descriptions, etc., and in which pairs of participants are instructed to discuss, argue, solve tasks, or provide instruction, each with the goal of bringing about IS-related utterances. Further to the QUIS, a large amount of direct elicitation, translations, and judgement tasks were conducted and since there is no QUIS task specific to the existence of a preverbal focus position, I designed tasks involving the translation of question-answer pairs, felicity judgements, and moveable single-word flashcards.

Similarly, for the investigation of contrast, I designed a naturalistic task after Breen et al. (2010), who conducted experiments with pictures to investigate acoustic correlates of IS in English. Pairs of participants are given questions and pictures respectively with the picture designed to yield a contrastive (corrective) answer, e.g. 'Did Damon bake an omelette this morning?' 'No, he *fried* an omelette this morning.' These Q/A pairs are then compared to non-contrastive pairs with wh-

questions eliciting sentence, predicate, and term focus. The problem with this, however, was that while the experiments yielded results that showed a clear prosodic difference between the two, they conflated corrections of an explicit alternative with non-contrastive question/answers with an implicit alternative set (*ExplAlt*-[CORR(ii)] and *ImplAltSet*-[Q/A(n)] (explained here in §3). This means that the results could be due to either contrast based on type of alternative or contrast based on discourse relations, which is also noted in Repp (2016: 286). Therefore, I designed picture tasks that show 'full sentences' rather than a single picture with questions asked to elicit constative structures.

In the task, participants were given training on the sets of pictures, what they represent, and how a set represents a sentence. This posed no difficulty and utterances came naturally. The sets consisted of 6 people, all members of the local community, and three verbs. The people were all real photos and the verbs where all black-and-white clip art. Figure 1 yields the utterance 'Toma hit Urgen'.

Figure 1. Example picture set for contrast task

For 'similar' utterances (*ImplAltSet*-[SIMILAR(n)]) such as '[Dolma] hit [Tashi], [Wangmo] hit [Tsering]' two sets were included, as seen in Figure 2, which yields the utterance 'Toma saw Urgen (and) Wangmo saw Karma'.
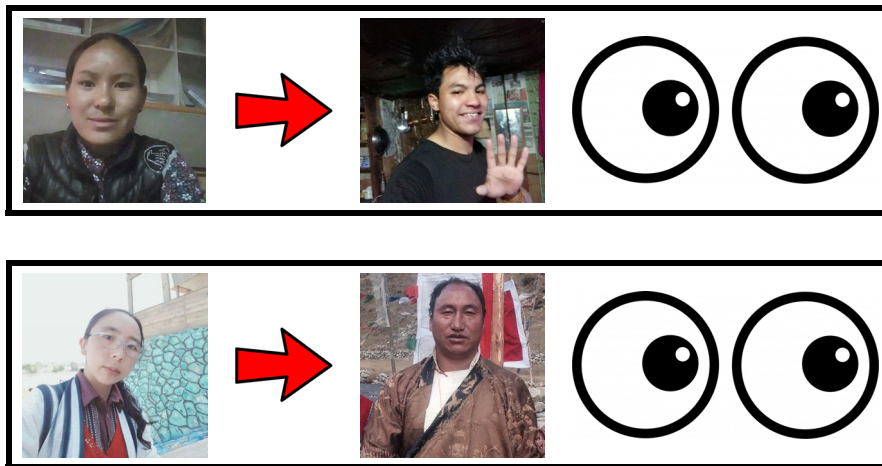

Figure 2. Example picture sets for contrast task

11

The participant was then asked questions to bring about the required contrast type, e.g. 'Did Wangmo hit Urgen?' 'No, *Toma* hit Urgen,' through either the showing of a single picture or a part or complete set, according to the focus type.

To further investigate the difference in contrastive sentences, the recorded second sentences from this task where played back in isolation to other participants who were asked to judge the 'better' preceding sentence.

Results of all tasks were then corroborated in more naturalistic data from simple personal monologues and histories, controlled narratives like the "Frog Story" (Mayer 1969), where participants tell a story from a series of pictures, as well as free full narratives of traditional stories, and natural conversation when, with permission, the recorder was left running after a task. The resulting data, therefore, covered a range of communicative events with respect to 'naturalness' after Himmelmann (2002: 28).

Total hours of data collected and transcribed may be seen in Table 1. Data from the QUIS refers to elicitation tasks (Eli.), and tasks for a single participant (1) and pairs of participants (2).

Elicitation	Staged	Observed	QUIS (Eli.)	QUIS (1)	QUIS (2)	**Total**
11 hr	4.5 hr	0.5 hr	4 hr	4.5 hr	3 hr	**27.5 hr**

Table 1. Mùwe Ké corpus

All examples follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules and each is seen with a unique identifier aligned to the right margin. All data was analysed using FieldWorks Language Explorer; therefore, that which appears before the final hyphen in the identifier is the FLEx Interlinear Text Title with the number after referring to the line. 'First Sessions-4', for example, is line 4 of the interlinear text 'First Sessions'.

3 Terminology

Due to the need for a uniform clarity in approaches, notions, and definitions in the field of IS research, this paper follows those presented in the *Oxford Handbook of Information Structure* (OHIS) (Féry & Ishihara 2016). Relevant here are the notions of common ground, givenness, topic, focus (all after Krifka 2008), verum focus, the notion of contrast, and differential argument marking (DAM).

IS is essentially information packaging, a term first introduced by Chafe (1976), who looked at exactly how a message is packaged and sent between interlocutors, according to the content of the message itself. Information is structured in accordance with the knowledge assumed to be shared between interlocutors and this shared knowledge is the **common ground** (CG). **Givenness** indicates the presence of a denotation in the immediate CG content.

Topic may be thought of as the psychological subject; we may say that a speaker identifies a topic, about which information is then provided. Krifka's definition of **focus** (Krifka 2007; 2008; Féry & Krifka 2008; Krifka & Musan 2012) is based upon Rooth's (1985; 1992; 2016) theory of Alternative Semantics, which puts forward that when a linguistic expression α is assigned focus, there are alternatives to α relevant to the current discourse. For example, focus on *pizza* in *Jon ate PIZza*

indicates the alternatives of things that may have been eaten. Conducted fieldwork originally investigated the morphosyntax of the three focus structures laid out by Lambrecht (1994: §5.2.1): predicate, argument, and sentence focus.

Accounts of **verum focus** have traditionally been used to refer to the focus on the truth value of a sentence (see Lohnstein 2016), e.g. 'It turned out that David DID finish his assignment on time'.

Repp (2016) addresses the question of whether **contrast** has a role in the grammar of individual languages. Three hypotheses are presented that specify details for identifying contrasting constituents (*C-Const*), contrastive discourse relations (*C-DRel*), and the grammatical manifestations of contrast (*C-Gram*).

For **contrasting constituents**, three semantic relations are defined between the constituents of a sentence pair that may become contrastive: (a) the explicit alternative (*ExplAlt*), where, for example, in a context regarding 'that which David bought at the market', one might utter *David bought carrots* followed by *Then he bought [apples]*$_F$; (b) the explicit alternative set (*ExplAltSet*), where there exists in the context various explicit elements which make up a set to which the contrastive constituent may belong: *David served a lunch of meat, fish, and vegetables – I ate the [vegetables]*$_F$; and (c) the implicit alternative set (*ImplAltSet*), which is found in cases where the contrastive constituent's focus-semantic value may correspond to the preceding constituent's ordinary semantic value but not vice versa: *David was wondering which fish to buy – He decided on [salmon]*$_F$.

Contrastive discourse relations consider the idea of contrast being a gradable phenomenon, which is possibly at its most intuitive for discourse relations rather than contrastiveness viewed as alternatives. Higher degrees of contrast, therefore, may lead to stronger prosodic marking, for example. Repp's hypothesis increases from [Q-A$_{(n)}$], non-contrastive Q/A discourse relations; through [OPPOSE$_{(i)}$], opposing contributions of the type *Did Jon and Pete mow the lawn together? – Jon was mowing the lawn but Pete was [pruning roses]*; to [CORR$_{(ii)}$], corrections or rejections of the type *Did [Jon] sing last night? – (No), [Pete]*$_{cont}$ *sang last night*.

Putting together these observations in (**C-Gram**), Repp proposes the notion of contrast to be grammatically relevant in a language if a second discourse segment is marked by grammatical means based either on type of alternative (*C-Const*) or discourse relations (*C-DRel*). Contrast based on type of alternative sees a contrastive constituent marked differently from non-contrastive constituents as well as constituents in another class of *C-Const* (a)-(c); furthermore, if all constituent types in *C-Const* are marked the same in all discourse types in *C-DRel*, 'contrast' is focus in the language. Contrast based on discourse relations sees *C-Const* constituents being marked differently in the increasing *C-DRel*s; differences between the marking of *C-DRel*s therefore shows contrast as a gradable notion.

DAM is presented here following Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant (2018), who give a narrow definition of DAM as "Any kind of situation where an argument of a predicate bearing the same generalized semantic role may be coded in different ways, depending on factors other than the argument role itself and/or the clausal properties of the predicate such as polarity, TAM, embeddedness, etc." (2018:17)

4 Focus structures in Mùwe Ké

This section presents focus structures in Mùwe Ké. The first two sections provide general background information. §4.1 presents a general overview of the interaction between IS, word order,

and morphological marking in Mùwe Ké, discussing the notions of givenness, topic, and focus to provide a background for the rest of the chapter. The two main focal reflexes found in the language are a preferred immediately preverbal position for focussed terms and obligatory ergative marking on focussed actors. The description provided here is primarily based on these two expressions. In §4.2, therefore, DAM in the language is discussed with reference to an initial investigation into whether it is indeed dependent on pragmatic/information-structural functions. The following sections investigate these two reflexes in more depth relative to focus domains. They present the focus domains of predicate (§4.3), term (§4.4), sentence (§4.5), and verum (§4.6) focus, plus the notion of contrast (§4.7), ending with a summary (§5) of the IS patterns found in the language.

4.1 Basics of information structuring in Mùwe Ké

This section presents a brief introduction to the morphosyntax of IS in Mùwe Ké. Information status (given vs. new), focus, and topic are discussed in turn.

In terms of **information status**, syntactically, Mùwe Ké prefers a given-before-new constituent order, save for the hard requirement of a sentence-final verb; morphologically, given and new information may be marked as definite and indefinite, respectively, and both given and new actors may optionally receive ergative case marking, most likely with a pragmatic distinction (while it is obligatory for focal actors as discussed in the next subsection on DAM in Mùwe Ké along with the subsequent sections that discuss its use in focus structures); and ellipsis is a common occurrence on given items.

Mùwe Ké constituent order exhibits a preference for given before new in most utterances. Whether this preference is due more to given/topical items appearing first or the preference for new/focussed information appearing in immediately-preverbal position is discussed later; however, the classic Q/A test nearly always returns the preferred word order seen in the following examples with the given 'woman' preceding the new 'beans' in the first and vice versa in the second:

(3) A: *kérmen-gane*   *tʃǐ:*   *dzè:-s-a*
         woman-ERG   what   ate-PST.TES-Q
         'What did the woman eat?'

     B: *kérmen-gane*   *kʰjàsen*   *dzè:-s*
         woman-ERG   bean   ate-PST.TES
         'The woman ate beans.'

(4) A: *kʰjàsen*   *sú-i-gane*   *dzè:-s-a*
         bean   who-ERG-ERG   ate-PST.TES-Q
         'Who ate beans?'

     B: *kʰjàsen*   *kérmen-gane*   *dzè:-s*
         bean   woman-ERG   ate-PST.TES
         'The woman ate beans.'   (elicited)

All-new sentences enjoy freedom from word order restrictions with terms appearing in any sequence with reportedly no effect on the overall meaning. The four terms, 'yesterday, house, Tashi, Dolma', in the following example may felicitously appear in any of their 24 possible orders.

(5) *dàŋ*   *kháŋba-ru*   *ʈáʃi-gane*   *ɖòlma-la*   *thóŋ-soŋ*
     yesterday   house-LOC   Tashi-ERG   Dolma-DAT   saw-PST.TES
     'Tashi saw Dolma yesterday at the house.'   (elicited)

Morphologically, no markers are found on given/new items save for the requirement of ergative marking on focal elements, which is shown in detail in the subsequent sections presented here.

As a side note, it is worth mentioning the apparent double-ergative marking 'who-ERG-ERG' seen in (4) and elsewhere. Modern Mùwe Ké uses *-gane* and *-gadi:* (see (8) for the latter) to indicate both ergative and instrumental functions. The difference in the use of *-gane* and *-gadi:* appears to be one of language variety with the latter being noted only with speakers from Kathmandu, Nepal and Manali, India, that is, the diaspora outside of the Karnali Zone. Speakers consistently use either one or the other and all aspects of their case functions appear to be identical.

Synchronically, *-gane* and *-gadi:* function as single suffixes. Historically, however, the suffixes originate from *-ga*, a particle of specificity, and the Ablative *-ne* and the demonstrative/definite article *dì:*, respectively. Evidence for the synchronic functioning as single ergative suffixes is seen in the attachment to the right edge of the noun phrase and also in *-ga-ne* being unable to indicate ablative function or *-ga-di:* definiteness. Furthermore, ergative *-gadi:* may be found attached to demonstrative *dì:* when functioning as the definite article.

The particle *-ga* would appear to relate to the particle *ka* found in classical literary Tibetan (Hahn 2005: 31–2), based on the independent nominal stem *kha* 'part', which, important to the discussion here, possesses "indicative and intensifying functions" after pronouns and numerals: 'this one here', 'those two over there', etc. In Mùwe Ké, *-ga* precisely indicates pronouns, nouns, numerals, demonstratives, adverbs of time, etc: *dùru-ga* 'right here', *tʰìriŋ-ga* 'exactly/just today'. It also occurs in the verb string to intensify aspectual meaning, seen in (10).

As seen in (4), pronouns marked as ergative take a different form to personal pronouns that are marked for other cases, except the genitive. The form is syncretic with genitive/possessive pronouns (*mù-i* 'she-GEN', *khú-i* 'he-GEN', etc.) due to *-gi/-i* historically marking both ergative and genitive as in Classical and Lhasa Tibetan (DeLancey 2003b: 258; and 2003a: 273–4, respectively) and other related languages: Lende (Huber 2005), Sherpa (Kelly 2004), and Yolmo (Gawne 2016). Filimonova (2005) points out that pronouns belong to those parts of the lexicon that are most archaic, more stable, and therefore resistant to both morphological and phonological change when compared to common nouns, thereby preserving older case markers for longer. This would certainly account for pronouns being the only thing that still sees the obligatory use of the older *-gi* to mark ergativity as *-gane/-gadi:* entered as replacements. I put forward, therefore, that what is found here is not any kind of double case marking, case stacking, double case array, or similar, but rather a conventionalised phonological fusing of old and new to form a unit with no change in function.

Focus in Mùwe Ké is discussed in length in the remainder of this paper. To summarise in a nutshell, it may be said that there is a preferred immediately preverbal focus position, utilised for both new-information focus, seen in (3) and (4), as well as contrastive focus (6), and while no

morphological focus marker is found in the language, ergative case marking is required on focussed terms in ergative-dative constructions, exemplified in (1) and (2) in the introduction.

(6)   A: *dzòn*   *kára*   *dzè:-s*
             Jon   candy   ate-PST.TES
             'Jon ate candy.'

        B: *màn*   *khú-i-gane*   *kék*   *dzè:-s*
             be.ASSERT.NEG   he-ERG-ERG   cake ate-PST.TES
             'No! He ate [*cake*]_{contrast}.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-Contrast-CORR(ii)-5)

The discussion so far has highlighted the given-before-new preference found in Mùwe Ké as well as a preferred immediately preverbal position for focussed terms. Logically, therefore, **topics**, that to which the comment adds information in the CG, should have a strong preference for initial position and this is exactly what is found. In the following example, the psychological subject about which information is given is clearly Tashi. Speaker A identifies Tashi as a potential topic and asks B for information about him. B keeps the topic in initial position and provides the requested information about Tashi – that he is looking at Dolma – in the comment.

(7)   A: *ṭáʃi-gane*   *tʃi:*   *kʰì-gi-du-a*
             Tashi-ERG   what   do-IPFV-TES-Q
             'What is Tashi doing?'

        B: *ṭáʃi-gane*   *ḍòlma-la*   *tá-i-duk*
             Tashi-ERG   Dolma-DAT   look-IPFV-TES
             'Tashi is looking at Dolma.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-35)

Morphologically, actor topics may optionally exhibit ergative *-gane* marking with no reported change in meaning, and also a topic marker *-ni*, which has a central 'as for…' meaning akin to the English 'As for me, I just love beetroot.' To provide a short description of *-ni*, Büring's (2016: 83) questions[1] on the exact properties of such topic marking are followed.

From the data, only nominals are marked with *-ni* in its topic-marking function, that is N(P)s and nominalised verb forms. The extraposed topic may correspond to various grammatical relations within the clause, compare object in (8) and subject in (9), which may be either overt, as in the non-deletion of the second 'dog' in the former, or covert, as in the non-repeated 'I' in the latter.

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[1]   1. what items can be so marked (DPs only, definites only…);
       2. whether the marking can…
           (a) establish a new discourse referent as the aboutee for the following, or
           (b) establish an existing discourse referent as the new aboutee, or
           (c) refer to an established aboutee throughout its tenure as 'what the passage is about'?
           (d) …or do something altogether different;
       3. whether elements that meet that description have to be so marked, or merely may be;
       4. whether the same marking can serve other pragmatic functions;
       5. whether there are other tests (than occurrence with that marking) to establish the status marked by it.

(8) *kíː-ni*   *ràŋdzaŋ-do-gadiː*   *kíː-da*   *síːn*   *ŋóː-dʒi-ni* …
    dog-TOP   bee-PL-ERG   dog-EMPH   INTENS   chased-CONN-TOP
    'As for the dog, after the bees chased the dog … (it ran away).'   (bàlbi súŋ – Tenzi-30)

(9) A: *ŋà-la*   *ják*   *sérbu*   *ʃìː*   *dùk*
        I-DAT   yak   golden   four   exist.TES
        'I have four yellow yaks.'

     B: *ŋà-la-ni*   *ják*   *màrbu*   *ŋíː*   *dùk*
        I-DAT-TOP   yak   red   two   exist.TES
        'As for me, I have two red yaks.'   (QUIS-TwoInfs-3.1-232)

(10) *tʰèni*   *tshól*   *ɖò-a-ga-ni* …
     then   search   go-NMLS-SPEC-TOP
     'Then, as for when (they) were going to search (for the frog) …'   (bàlbi súŋ – Tsultim-16)

All items in the data that are marked with *-ni* are given and therefore the marking can be said to establish a new aboutee of an existing discourse referent. In narratives, therefore, *-ni* helps to locate the correct aboutee when many entities are immediately present in the CG, as is seen in (8) where potential actors/undergoers from preceding sentences may be the bees, a boy, an owl, a rat, etc. In discourse such as (9), the marking emphasises a sense of '*you may have* x but *as for me*, I have *y*', highlighting the speaker as the new aboutee. Similarly, in (10), the time when the boy and dog were searching for their frog is emphasised for further comment.

New aboutees certainly do not need to be marked as such in Mùwe Ké and the majority are not; however, the marking serves to emphasise a referent or else pick one out of a potential group to avoid confusion.

While no further pragmatic functions have been identified from the naturally-occurring examples in the data, *-ni* is also found on past verb strings with a connective function of 'after *x*, *y*'.

Establishing a new aboutee of an existing discourse referent may, of course, occur without the topic marker through word order, as discussed above, as well as emphatic prosody.

To summarise, syntactically, Mùwe Ké prefers a given-before-new constituent order, save for the verb-final requirement, focussed terms prefer the immediately preverbal position, and topics prefer to appear sentence-initially. Morphologically, ergative marking is optional on all but focussed actors, where it is required, and topics may be marked by *-ni* for an 'as for' effect. The ellipsis of given terms is also found to be a very common feature of the language.

4.2   Differential argument marking in Mùwe Ké

A major preliminary for the descriptions given here is the initial investigation into whether or not differential argument marking is found in Mùwe Ké with pragmatic/information-structural functions or whether there is a split along the lines of the properties listed in Table 2 after Witzlack-Makarevich and Seržant (2018).

		DAM Trigger	Example
Argument-triggered	Inherent properties	Person	conjunct, disjunct
		Animacy	1 2 3 pronouns, human, animal, inanimate
		Uniqueness	proper nouns, common nouns
		Number	singular, plural
	Non-inherent properties	Definiteness	definite, specific, non-specific
		IS	topic, focus, etc.
	Event semantics	Control, volition	control verbs, non-control verbs
Predicate-triggered		Clause type	matrix clause, subordinate clause
		TAM	tense, evidentiality
		Polarity	negative clause, positive clause
		IS	topical S, focal S

Table 2. Dimensions investigated in Mùwe Ké in reference to DAM

To begin, it was confirmed that no case marking is found on the S argument of intransitive sentences. This is true for IPFV, PFV, FUT, and PRF utterances, elicited with verbs that are [±CONTROL], [±VOLITIONAL], with CONJUNCT and DISJUNCT subjects, that are human, animal, inanimate, [±PRONOMINAL], and marked as [±EVIDENTIAL].

Looking at transitivity, the properties and triggers in Table 2 were investigated through elicitation to measure the extent to which they may account for the differential marking that is found in Mùwe Ké. Each of the three Mùwe Ké transitive verb types (ERG-ABS, ERG-DAT, DAT-ABS) were investigated. Absolutive marking is zero marking and the dative marker was established as non-differential; therefore, it is only ergative marking on ERG-ABS and ERG-DAT constructions that are of interest here, that is, differential *ergative* marking (DEM) on actor terms.

While the full investigation is given in Archer (2023b), in summary, splits may be found with ergative marking for inherent lexical argument properties such as conjunct and disjunct, properties dependent on event semantics such as ±control verbs (interacting with TAM and person), and predicate triggered DAM systems such as tense/aspect (interacting with control, person and evidentiality); however, as subsequent sections show, it is only the non-inherent discourse-based argument properties, i.e. IS, that appear to explain the differential marking patterns encountered in the elicitation tasks and summarised in §5.

DEM is discussed in relation to predicate focus, term focus, sentence focus, verum focus, and contrast in the following sections.

4.3   Predicate focus in Mùwe Ké

Predicate focus in Mùwe Ké with respect to word order and DEM are discussed here in turn. The overall pattern of a preferred preverbal focus position and the requirement of ergative marking on focussed actors is established.

Terms included in VP-predicate focus are strongly preferred to appear in **immediately preverbal position** alongside the obligatorily sentence-final verb. *Terms* refers mostly to argument NPs but may include locative expressions, adverbials, etc. V-focus and T-/A-/M-focus are discussed no further in this section due to the hard requirement for the verb to appear sentence-finally whether focussed or not. Focus on the VP returns the expected word order of focussed terms in preverbal position next to the focussed verb complex. Actor and undergoer, in the following pairs of sentences 'the grandmother' and 'the curry', respectively, are therefore found in preverbal position according to the phrasing of the question or preceding utterance:

(11) A: *khjú-i*   *ébi-gane*   *tʃǐ:*   *tʃʰè:-s-a*
          you.SG-GEN   grandmother-ERG   what   did-PST.TES-Q
          'What did your grandmother do?'

      B: *ŋè-i*   *ébi-gane*   *[lùk   ʃá   pá: dzùe-s]*ꜰ
          I-GEN   grandmother-ERG   goat   meat   curry   made-PST.TES
          'My grandmother [made goat meat curry]ꜰ.'   (QUIS-Trans-P3-Q1-Wangmo; Tashi)

(12) A: *lùk   ʃá   pá: kór-la   nùe*
          goat   meat   curry   about-LOC   say.IMP
          'Tell me about the goat meat curry.'

      B: *lùk   ʃá   pá: dì: [ŋè-i   ébi-gane   dzùe-s]*ꜰ
          goat   meat   curry   this   I-GEN   grandmother-ERG   made-PST.TES
          '[My grandmother made]ꜰ the goat meat curry.'   (QUIS-Trans-P3-Q2-Wangmo)

Note, however, that the preverbal positioning is a preference and not a requirement, as reported consistently by language assistants. In QUIS task 3 'Visibility', for example, participants are shown two pictures, one after the other, with either a new actor or undergoer plus a new action:

Figure 3. Picture pair from QUIS task 3 'Visibility' (Skopeteas et al. 2006: 39)

(13) *pʰìza   tʃǐk   kʰjùk-gi-du*
      son   a   run-IPFV-TES
      'A boy is running.'

      *tʰà   pʰìza   dì:-la   [mì: tʃǐk-ga   nám-la   ták-duk]*ꜰ
      now   son   this-DAT   person   a-SPEC   sky-LOC   lifted-PRF.TES
      'Now, [to the sky, a person has lifted]ꜰ the boy.'   (QUIS-TwoInfs-2.2-234-5)

The task returned 28 sentence pairs of which 21 followed the VP-focus pattern, which is exactly 75%. While many factors may be involved in the 7 sentences that were not as expected, it is mostly attributed to confusion over the strange visual material and not always making the temporal connection between the two pictures. This is evidenced by all-new presentation-style sentences found with indefinite articles even in the second utterance. However, 75% points to a strong tendency.

Translation and elicitation tasks; QUIS tasks 16, 9 and 3; and Q/A asked immediately after telling the Frog Story (Mayer 1969) all returned the sentence-final pattern, demonstrating a clear preference for terms included in a focussed VP to appear in preverbal position.

Similarly, **ergative case marking** is required on actor arguments that are part of VP predicate focus. This is consistently reported to be an obligation rather than a preference:

(14) A: *ʈáʃi-la   tʃĭ: tʃʰùŋ-s-a*
         Tashi-DAT   what   happened-PST.TES-Q
         'What happened to Tashi?'

      B: *ʈáʃi-la   [ɖòlma-gane / *ɖòlma   tʰù:]ꜰ*
         Tashi-DAT   Dolma-ERG/ Dolma   beat.PST
         '[Dolma hit]ꜰ Tashi.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-14)

It was reported at different times that ergative marking is required and not required on the actor term when it is not in focus, which speaks to the difficulty for language assistants in doing these strange tasks but also that ergative marking is optional when it is not in focus:

(15) A: *ɖòlma-gane   tʃĭ: tʃʰè:-s-a*
         Dolma-ERG   what   did-PST.TES-Q
         'What did Dolma do?'

      B: *ɖòlma-gane / ɖòlma   [ʈáʃi-la   tʰù:-soŋ]ꜰ*
         Dolma-ERG / Dolma   Tashi-DAT   beat.PST-PST.TES
         'Dolma [hit Tashi]ꜰ.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-22)

The QUIS task that returns this pattern is task 3 'Visibility', where participants are presented with two pictures sequentially. For conditions returning predicate focus that included the actor term, ergative marking was found on each of the 11 sentences. For the 11 utterances that returned predicate focus including the undergoer argument, 5 marked the actor as ergative and 6 did not.

From translation and QUIS tasks, therefore, it is seen that ergative marking is required on actor arguments included in focussed VPs and optional when not included in the focus domain.

4.4   Term focus in Mùwe Ké

This section presents term focus in Mùwe Ké with respect to word order and DEM in turn, continuing the presentation of the pattern of preferred preverbal position for terms included in a focus domain and the requirement of ergative marking on focussed actors.

The data evidences a **dedicated immediately preverbal focus position** for focussed NP-terms, adjunct terms and other non-verbal XP-categories such as adverbs. When terms are focussed, there is a very strong tendency for the focussed term to appear immediately pre-verbally in the utterance, whether it be subject, object, or adverbial. When conducting elicitation, language assistants consistently report that the 'best/most-correct/proper/most-natural' position for either a (wh-) question pronoun or the corresponding focussed answer term is in preverbal position. In natural speech and in elicited spontaneous speech from tasks found in activities like the QUIS, there is a strong almost-obligatory tendency to follow this pattern.

The examples seen in (3) and (4) exhibit the basis of the pattern being investigated. They show the preference for the (wh-) question word to appear in immediately preverbal position as well as the corresponding focussed term in the answer:

(16)   Source: Who ate the beans? [The woman]
  kʰjàsen sú-i-gane   dzèː-s-a
  bean   who-ERG-ERG ate-PST.TES-Q
  'Who ate the beans?'

  kʰjàsen [kérmen]ꜰ-gane dzèː-soŋ
  bean   woman-ERG   ate-PST.TES
  '[The woman]ꜰ ate the beans.'   (QUIS-Translation-2-Focus-Q41)

(17)   Source: What did the woman eat? [Beans]
  kérmen-gane tʃiː dzèː-s-a
  woman-ERG   what ate-PST.TES-Q
  'What did the woman eat?'

  kérmen-gane [kʰjàsen]ꜰ dzèː-soŋ
  woman-ERG   bean   ate-PST.TES
  'The woman ate [beans]ꜰ.'   (QUIS-Translation-2-Focus-Q48)

The requirement of preverbal focussed terms was confirmed through elicitation, several tasks from the QUIS, and questions on the Frog Story.

Elicitation with flashcards for four sentences representing the three classes of transitive verbs consistently exhibited preverbal question pronouns and focussed terms. Each sentence contained an actor, undergoer, and two adverbials: one of space and one of time:

(18)   *dàŋ   kháŋba-ru ʈáʃi-gane ɖòlma-la   thóŋ-soŋ*
  yesterday house-LOC Tashi-ERG Dolma-DAT saw-PST.TES
  'Tashi saw Dolma yesterday at the house.'   (elicited)

When each of these sentences was elicited, it was reported that any order was possible, with the exception of the sentence-final verb requirement. When question forms were elicited, the question pronoun was instinctively and consistently placed in immediately preverbal position:

(19) *dàŋ*   *kháŋba-ru*   *ḍòlma-la*   *sú-i-gane*   *thóŋ-s-a*
      yesterday   house-LOC   Dolma-DAT   who-ERG-ERG   saw-PST.TES-Q
      'Who saw Dolma in the house yesterday?'   (elicited)

When the question form had been elicited, the remaining three terms were moved around to test whether a particular order was preferred for the non-focussed items and it was consistently reported that any order was possible with no effect on meaning. However, when the question word was moved to any other position but preverbal, the utterance was considered 'not proper', 'wrong', or 'unnatural'.

Focussed terms as answers were consistently encountered in immediately preverbal position throughout the task. Attempts to put an unfocussed term between that which is focussed and the verb produce infelicitous utterances considered 'not natural':

(20) *dàŋ*   *kháŋba-ru*   *ḍòlma-la*   *[ṭáʃi]F-gane*   *thóŋ-soŋ*
      yesterday   house-LOC   Dolma-DAT   Tashi-ERG   saw-PST.TES
      '[Tashi]F saw Dolma in the house yesterday.'   (Focus, Term – Flashcards-37)

Interestingly, there also appears to be a requirement for the non-focussed items in the answer sentence to mimic that of the question as in (19) and (20). This information was volunteered by a language assistant during an elicitation session and is consistent throughout the data.

QUIS tasks 5 and 18 complement the elicitation data using picture and question/answer pairs, respectively, through returning all focussed terms in immediately preverbal position. When questioned later, language assistants reported that focussed terms in preverbal position formed better connections between utterances while the terms in any other position created two presentational sentences. Identical patterns were also found in QUIS tasks 16 and 11 and from the six questions that elicited term focus asked after the Frog Story, each of the ten participants gave answers that exhibit the focussed term in immediately preverbal position 100% of the time. Finally, the translation task also provided consistent examples of term focus on beneficiary, location, and time appearing in preverbal position:

(21) **Location**. Source: Where did the woman eat? [in a cheap restaurant]
      kérmen   *dìː-gane*   *kʰùnu*   *dzèː-s-a*
      woman   this-ERG   where   ate-PST.TES-Q
      'Where did the woman eat?'

      kérmen   *dìː-gane*   *[sàkhaŋ*   *kʰèu*   *nàŋ-du]F*   *dzèː-s*
      woman   this-ERG   restaurant   cheap   in-LOC   ate-PST.TES
      'The woman ate [in a cheap restaurant]F.'   (QUIS-Translation-2-Focus-130)

It is worth noting that with complex N+V predicates, common in Himalayan languages, the elements of the verb string stay together, making the immediately preverbal position the position immediately before the N of the N+V. Mùwe Ké verbalisers may also function as regular lexical verbs (or perhaps more correctly, lexical verbs may also have a verbalising function) and therefore when separated from the noun, change overall meaning. For example, one meaning of the verb *kʰjàː* is 'to hit/kick'. Combining with *só* 'tooth' – *só kʰjàː* – renders the meaning 'to bite'. If a person, Tashi, were

to be in focus, word order would be *ʈáʃi-la só kʰjàp* '[He] bit Tashi-DAT'. Moving *só* to any other position would give the meaning that someone hit/kicked Tashi (and leave an odd 'tooth' floating elsewhere in the utterance requiring explanation). Elicitation with flashcards for the utterance 'Tashi felt afraid of the bear in the jungle the day before yesterday' confirmed that *dʒìri* 'fear.N' is unable to appear in any other position than immediately preceding *kʰjà:* with focussed terms being placed immediately preceding the N+V combination:

(22)   A: *khónup   ʈáʃi   tʰòm-la   kʰònu   dʒìri   kʰjàp-s-a*
           day.before.yesterday   Tashi   bear-DAT   where   fear.N   VSR.PST-PST.TES-Q
           'Where did Tashi feel afraid of the bear the day before yesterday?'

       B: *khónup   ʈáʃi   tʰòm-la   [dzʌŋgel   nàŋ-ru]_F dʒìri   kʰjàp-soŋ*
           day.before.yesterday Tashi bear-DAT   jungle   in-LOC   fear.N VSR.PST-PST.TES
           'Tashi felt afraid of the bear [in the jungle]_F the day before yesterday.'
                                                    (Focus, Term - Flashcards)

Again, moving *dʒìri* would render a meaning of hitting the bear, since it is marked with DAT.
    As with predicate focus, **ergative case marking** is obligatory on focussed terms. Evidence comes once again from elicitation, seen in the next example, and QUIS tasks.

(23)   A: *ʈáʃi-la   sú-i-gane   tʰù:-s-a*
           Tashi-DAT   who-ERG-ERG   beat.PST-PST.TES-Q
           'Who hit Tashi?'

       B: *ʈáʃi-la   [ɖòlma-gane / *ɖòlma]_F   tʰù:-s*
           Tashi-DAT   Dolma-ERG / Dolma   beat.PST-PST.TES
           '[Dolma]_F hit Tashi.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-26)

Relevant QUIS tasks were 11, 16 and 19, all of which present films or picture sequences that participants recount and then answer questions about. All utterances that exhibit term focus on the actor appear with ergative marking.
    Focussed NP terms, i.e. the arguments of an utterance, non-verbal XP-categories such as adverbs, and other adjunct terms may therefore be seen as strongly preferring to appear in an immediately preverbal position while focussed actors require ergative marking, following the pattern discussed in the previous section in reference to predicate focus.

4.5   *Sentence focus in Mùwe Ké*

    This section presents sentence focus in Mùwe Ké with respect to word order and DEM before presenting the *-min-duk* construction that is found to (emphatically) point out something new or draw attention to a state of affairs. The sections show that freedom of word order and optional ergative marking is found in all-new sentences. Sentence-focus utterances, aka broad-focus, all-new, out-of-the-blue, or thetic, are established as such due to either being text/narrative starters, answers

to 'what happened'-type questions, or the initial description of a single picture or first picture of a sequence, found in QUIS tasks.

Any **constituent order** is possible in sentence-focus utterances with no effect on meaning apart from the hard requirement of a sentence-final verb. The freedom of non-verbal elements in all-new utterances is evidenced through elicitation, tasks from the QUIS, and opening sentences from the Frog Story.

As mentioned in regard to (18), moveable flashcards including a verb, two human arguments, plus a temporal and a spatial adverbial were consistently reported to be able to appear in any order if serving as a text starter or out-of-the-blue utterance, save for the sentence-final verb. Hypotheses of subject/object coming before adverbials, or vice versa, and actor preceding undergoer, etc. have been posited but correlate neither with the natural speech data nor felicity judgement tasks. In further elicitation with Q/A pairs containing the question "What happened?", it was also consistently reported that answers may be in any of the possible 24 orders as long as the verb appears finally:

(24)   Source: [I hit Tashi in the bazaar yesterday] What happened?
    A: *tʃi:*   *tʃʰùŋ-s-a*
         what   happened-PST.TES-Q
         'What happened?'

    B: *[ŋè-i-gane*   *dàŋ*   *ʈáʃi-la*   *bàdzar-la*   *tʰù:]$_F$*
         I-ERG-ERG   yesterday   Tashi-DAT   market-LOC   beat.PST
         '[I hit Tashi in the market yesterday]$_F$.'

    B': *[dàŋ*   *bàdzar-la*   *ŋè-i-gane*   *ʈáʃi-la*   *tʰù:]$_F$*
         yesterday   market-LOC   I-ERG-ERG   Tashi-DAT   beat.PST
         '[I hit Tashi in the market yesterday]$_F$.'   (elicited)

This freedom of word order is not affected by tense/aspect, conjunct/disjunct, [±CONTROL] verbs, pronominalisation, evidentiality, or the animacy of the undergoer.

Relevant QUIS tasks were 4, 5, 10 and 27, all of which involved a picture (sequence) or video and returned initial sentence-focus utterances of varying orders among participants, who confirmed in subsequent elicitation/judgement tasks that any order of arguments is possible without changing the overall meaning. Similarly, from initial utterances based on the first picture in the Frog Story, the boy, his dog, their frog, and the location of the boy's bedroom, were found in varying orders from the ten participants, who all later confirmed that all-new 'once upon a time' style sentences may appear in any order.

Similarly, **ergative marking** was shown to be optional for all-new sentence focus utterances from elicitation and QUIS tasks.

In elicitation tasks, it was reported that actors in all-new utterances may be optionally marked as ergative with no apparent change to the meaning:

(25)   A: *tʃi:*   *tʃʰùŋ-s-a*
         what   happened-PST.TES-Q
         'What happened?'

B: *dàŋ*   *ḓòlma-la*   **ŋà**   *làm-la*   *thóŋ*

     yesterday   Dolma-DAT   I   road-LOC   saw

     'I saw Dolma in the street yesterday.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-2)

B': **ŋè-i-gane**   *dàŋ*   *ḓòlma-la*   *làm-la*   *thóŋ*

     I-ERG-ERG   yesterday   Dolma-DAT   road-LOC   saw

     'I saw Dolma in the street yesterday.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-4)

Relevant from the QUIS were tasks 1, 5, 10, 12 and 18, all of which are picture tasks where all-new sentences are found with and without ergative marking on the actor term. From the tasks overall, optional ergative marking was found on actor terms in ERG-DAT constructions at a ratio of 1:4, indicating a strong tendency for the ergative to be 'dropped' in all-new presentational sentence-focus utterances.

In addition to the emerging pattern, Mùwe Ké exhibits an interesting construction found with all-new utterances, **V-min-duk**, ('V-NEG-PRF.TES'), which is an affirmative construction even though the negative *min-* is employed; negation in the language requires a prefix *ma-* or *min-* to appear before the verb. While utterances of this sort are not always all-new, the construction was encountered so frequently in a thetic out-of-the-blue capacity 'on the fly' during fieldwork that it warrants inclusion here in reference to the discussion of word order and DAM, of which it follows the emergent pattern of free word order and optional ergative marking.

The construction is used to (emphatically) point out something new or draw attention to a state of affairs. For example, when a guest was leaving the kitchen where I was sat one day with the family, they saw that a log had fallen out of the fire under the still in the adjoining room and announced:

(26)   *mé*   *thón-min-duk*

      fire   emerged-NEG-PRF.TES

      'Fire has come out!'   (Miscellaneous-14)

Upon which the mother of the family leapt into action and dealt with the problem.

While all of the attested examples were intransitive, from elicitation it was confirmed that order of terms is free and that ergative marking is optional in ERG-DAT constructions as seen in the following examples, which differ in word order and ergative marking on the actor 'Dolma':

(27)   *dàŋ*   *bàzar-ru*   *ḓòlma-gane*   *ṭáʃì-la*   *tʰù:-min-duk*

      yesterday   market-LOC   Dolma-ERG   Tashi-DAT   beat-NEG-PRF.TES

      'Yesterday in the market, Dolma hit Tashi.'   (Miscellaneous-26)

(28)   *ḓòlma*   *ṭáʃì-la*   *dàŋ*   *bàzar-ru*   *tʰù:-min-duk*

      Dolma   Tashi-DAT   yesterday   market-LOC   beat-NEG-PRF.TES

      'Dolma hit Tashi yesterday in the market.'   (Miscellaneous-27)

Since the *-min-duk* construction is not exclusively an all-new device, it is certainly possible that it is rather a kind of fully- or semi-grammaticalised mirative marker, i.e. representing new or unexpected information (e.g. DeLancey 1997; 2012). Evidence for this interpretation is its

compatibility with given subjects, for example, which certainly militates against its treatment as a pure "all-new" marker. In the next example, the participant is describing the pictures in sequence; in the second sentence, 'the girl' is given but her arrival near a house is new and perhaps unexpected:

(29)
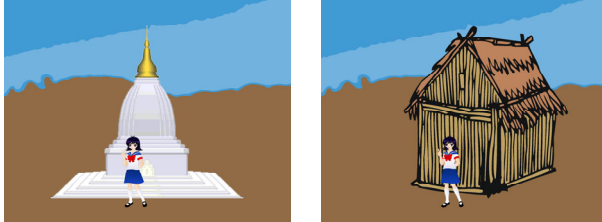
pʰòŋ	*tʃĭk*	*tʃhórten*	*tʰàsa-na*	*dùk*
daughter	a	stupa	near-LOC	exist.TES

'A girl is near the stupa.'

tʰà	*pʰòŋ-ni*	*kháŋba*	*tʃĭk*	*tʰàsa-ru*	*léb-min-duk*
now	daughter-TOP	house	a	near-LOC	arrived-NEG-PRF.TES

'Now, as for the girl, (she) has arrived near a house'   (QUIS-TwoInfs-2.2-264)

Another sign of grammaticalisation is that the construction operates outside the conjunct-disjunct distinction, having identical form for both.

To summarise, there are no word order preferences (save for the sentence-final verb) or ergative marking requirements on actors in thetic all-new sentence-focus utterances of the 'regular' kind as well as with the *-min-duk* construction.

4.6   Verum focus in Mùwe Ké

This section argues that verum is expressed in Mùwe Ké through prosodic stress, verb repetition, and a special *V-na V* construction. Word order of terms is free and ergative marking is optional on the actor term in transitive ERG-DAT constructions. Evidence comes mostly from elicitation tasks.

Extra prosodic stress was found for verum utterances in elicitation tasks both from affirmative to negative ('*x* did *y*' → '*x* **didn't** do *y*') and vice versa. The heavy stress, seen in bold in the following examples, is on the lexical verb in perfective, imperfective, and perfect verum utterances while in the future it falls on the auxiliary:

(30)   A:
dàŋ	*bàzar-ru*	*ḍòlma-gane*	*ʈáʃì-la*	*tʰù:-s*
yesterday	market-LOC	Dolma-ERG	Tashi-DAT	beat.PST-PST.TES

'Dolma hit Tashi in the bazaar yesterday.'

B:
dàŋ	*bàzar-ru*	*ḍòlma-gane*	*ʈáʃì-la*	*mà-tʰu:*
yesterday	market-LOC	Dolma-ERG	Tashi-DAT	NEG-beat.PST.NEG

'Dolma **didn't** hit Tashi in the bazaar yesterday.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-Verum-2)

(31) A: *ɲèrok   làm-la   ɖòlma-la   ʈáʃi   thóŋ-dʒi   màn*
          tomorrow   road-LOC   Dolma-DAT   Tashi   see-FUT   be.ASSERT.NEG
          'Tashi will not see Dolma in the street tomorrow.'

      B: *ɲèrok   làm-la   ʈáʃi-gane   ɖòlma-la   thóŋ-dʒi   **ìn***
          tomorrow   road-LOC   Tashi-ERG   Dolma-DAT   see-FUT   be.ASSERT
          'Tashi **will** see Dolma in the street tomorrow.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-Verum-102)

A separate strategy for future utterances is unsurprising in the context of focussing on a truth value since there is no 'truth' about the future as it has yet to pass and can therefore only be linked to intention, speculation, etc.

Repetition of the verb string is another strategy of focussing verum and is often combined with the other two strategies. Everything in the sentence is elided save for the verb string, which is repeated with prosodic stress on the lexical verb:

(32) A: *dàŋ   bàzar-ru   ɖòlma-gane   ʈáʃi-la   mà-thuː-s*
          yesterday   market-LOC   Dolma-ERG   Tashi-DAT   NEG-beat-PST.TES
          'Dolma didn't hit Tashi in the bazaar yesterday.'

      B: ***thùː-s   thùː-s***
          beat.PST-PST.TES beat.PST-PST.TES
          '(She) **did** hit (him). (She) **did** hit (him).'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-Verum-22)

The *V-na V* construction uses the connector *-na* and is deemed the most 'forceful' way of focussing verum or ending disputes, considered to be on the cusp of aggression. In the data, *-na* attaches to verbs for 'if/when' functions: 'If it rains…', 'When he looked in the bottle…'. The following example is an alternative response to the assertion in the previous.

(33) *dàŋ   bàzar-ru   ɖòlma-gane   ʈáʃi-la   **thùː-na**   thùː-s*
      yesterday   market-LOC   Dolma-ERG   Tashi-DAT   beat.PST-CONN   beat.PST-PST.TES
      'Dolma **did** hit Tashi in the bazaar yesterday.'   (Elicitation3-Q-A_Pairs-Verum-21)

The *V-na V* construction is found in positive verum utterances ('x didn't do y' → 'x did do y') only and the construction **NEG-V-na V* is deemed ungrammatical. Furthermore, the construction is reported to only appear in constructions of actions that happened before 'now', i.e. PFV and PRF but not IPFV or FUT.

With regard to **word order restrictions** and **DEM** discussed previously in reference to term, predicate, and sentence focus, the order of terms here is free and ergative marking on actor terms is optional, which fits the general findings of preverbal-position preference for focussed items and ergative marking for focussed actors since the focus is on the verb (string) in verum-focus utterances.

Freer or more-natural evidence comes again from questions after the Frog Story, QUIS task 21, where two participants play the roles of thieves professing their innocence, and a natural conversation where a gentleman was discussing with his lama (spiritual teacher) when to perform a blessing ceremony. All exhibited the above expressions of verum.

Verum in Mùwe Ké comes about primarily through prosodic force on the lexical verb as well as repetition of the verb string and the unique *V-na V* construction. The terms of a verum utterance enjoy freedom of word order and actors are optionally ergative marked.

4.7   Contrast in Mùwe Ké

This section argues that contrast is a grammatically relevant notion in Mùwe Ké, based on discourse relations, after Repp (2016). Contrasted items are marked with extra prosodic stress so as to be distinguished from focussed terms and very occasionally relativisation is employed. Like focussed terms, those contrasted are preferred in the preverbal position and ergative marking is found to be obligatory.

Presented in §2, translation, elicitation, and picture tasks were designed to compare the utterance types seen in Repp (2016), questioning whether contrast is a grammatically relevant notion in the grammar of Mùwe Ké after Repp's *C-Gram* hypothesis.

From the first point, constituents that are candidates for being contrastive **are marked differently** from non-contrastive constituents in that the preverbal position is preferred and when the constituent is an actor, ergative marking is required; however, **there is no difference in marking** for each of the candidate contrastive constituents (*C-Const* (a)-(c)): each prefers preverbal position and requires ergative marking. Accordingly, therefore, contrast is not a grammatically relevant notion in Mùwe Ké based on type of alternative. Furthermore, the constituent **is not marked by the same means** for all discourse relations in *C-DRel*, exemplified in the discussion of contrast based on discourse relations below. This also means that **contrast is not focus** in Mùwe Ké since the language does not mark all the discourse types in *C-DRel* for all contrastive constituent types in *C-Const* by the same means.

Moving to the second point, Mùwe Ké constituents that are candidates for being contrastive constituents in *C-Const* (a)-(c) **are marked differently** when they occur in [OPPOSE$_{(i)}$] or [CORR$_{(ii)}$] in comparison to when they occur in other discourse relations, e.g. [Q-A$_{(n)}$] and [CORR$_{(ii)}$] in the following examples. The immediately apparent difference between the contrast comparisons based on type of alternatives and based on discourse relations is prosodic stress. The simple non-contrastive question/answer pair in (34) places the focussed term in preverbal position with no remarkable prosody although this is where the nuclear stress of the utterance falls. In (35), however, the contrasted term still falls into preverbal position and requires ergative marking but has an obviously higher pitch, a slightly longer duration, and a higher intensity compared to the focussed term in (34) and also appears to have a very short pause beforehand. This is quite clear to the ear and is corroborated by cursory Praat analyses.

(34)   *ImplAltSet*[Q-A$_{(n)}$]

A: *tshámu*   *tshádʒa*   *sú-i-gane*   *tú:-s-a*
      night   butter.tea   who-ERG-ERG   drank-PST.TES-Q
      'Who drank butter tea at night?'

B: *tshámu*   *tshádʒa*   *[kárma-gane]$_F$*   *tú:-s*
      night   butter.tea   Karma-ERG   drank-PST.TES
      '[Karma]$_F$ drank butter tea at night.'   (Contrast 2.0 - Chhorden 44-88: 40)

(35)   *ImplAltSet*[CORR(ii)]

A: *tshámu*   *tshádʒa*   *kʰàŋ*   *kérmen-gane*   *túː-s-a*
       night   butter.tea   which   woman-ERG   drank-PST.TES-Q
       'Which woman drank butter tea at night?'

B: *kérmen*   *màn*   *[kárma-gane]*   *túː-s*
       woman   be.ASSERT.NEG   Karma-ERG   drank-PST.TES
       '(It) wasn't a woman. [**Karma**] drank it.'   (Contrast 2.0 - Chhorden 44-88: 54)

Attempts to elicit [OPPOSE(i)] utterances to compare with [CORR(ii)] in Mùwe Ké did not yield workable results. Therefore, no answer is given here as to whether contrast is a gradable notion since no clear evidence may be put forward from the data. Instinctually, I tentatively posit that greater prosodic force is found with [CORR(ii)] utterances than with [OPPOSE(i)] but further research is required.

Data from the QUIS corroborates the claims made above. Prosodic force is the primary marker of contrastive elements but also the preverbal position is found to be consistently preferred (due typically to the fact that ellipsis is found on given elements), ergative marking appears to be required, and in a small handful of cases, relativisation is utilised as a means of marking contrast. Relevant QUIS tasks are 11, 14, 16, 17, 20, and 21.

In summary, contrasted items, like those focussed, follow the pattern of preferring the preverbal position and requiring ergative marking on actors but may be distinguished through prosodic force.

5   Summary

A summary of the patterns found in regard to word order and DEM in §4 is seen in Table 3, which appears to show a rather neat division. The preference of immediately **preverbal** position and **obligatory** requirement of ergative marking apply to items singled out for term focus, included in predicate focus and in contrast to a previous discourse segment. The **free**dom of word order and **optional**ity of ergative marking apply to all-new sentence focus and *-min-duk* constructions as well as verum utterances.

Word order	Preverbal	Term focus Predicate-focus terms Contrasted items
	Free	Sentence focus *-min-duk* constructions Verum
Ergative marking	Obligatory	Term-focussed actors Predicate-focus actors Contrasted actors
	Optional	Sentence focus *-min-duk* constructions Verum

Table 3. Focus structures found in Mùwe Ké

This table demonstrates that there is a preference/requirement for focussed terms which is not found on those outside of a focus domain or in thetic/sentence-focus utterances.

Further to word order and differential actor marking, other IS reflexes presented were prosodic stress, which was examined in relation to verum and contrast, plus the repetition of the verb string and the *V-na V* construction, used to express verum.

It could be said, therefore, by way of conclusion, the findings show that focus in Mùwe Ké can be expressed through a dedicated immediately preverbal sentence position and DEM on actor terms. However, there is no clear demonstrable one-to-one correlation between DAM, sentence position, and focus and for some of the focus structures, with reference to the preverbal focus position for example, it is only possible to talk about preferences rather than requirements, which in itself suggests that something else is occurring. This logically leads to the question of whether the data and descriptive results necessarily require the category of focus in the first place.

The very notion of focus as a stable cross-linguistic category has been seriously questioned since Matić and Wedgwood's (2013) seminal paper addressing the issue, which has serious ramifications for any conclusions that may be put forward from a paper that claims to provide a description of focus structure in any language. Furthermore, Ozerov (2018) argues that the methodology described above is circular and majorly problematic. These arguments are the starting point for the partner paper to this (Archer 2023b), which looks at the problems found with the study of focus and IS and goes on to suggest that the patterns seen in Table 3 be analysed through the lens of Langacker's (2008 inter alia) Cognitive Grammar to give a clearer overall picture.

ABBREVIATIONS

ASSERT	assertive evidential		NEG	negative
CONN	connective		PFV	perfective
DAT	dative		PRF	perfect

ERG	ergative		PST	past
FUT	future		Q	interrogative
GEN	genitive		SG	singular
IMP	imperative		SPEC	particle of specificity
IPFV	imperfective		TES	testimonial evidential
LOC	locative		TOP	topic marker

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Jon Archer
jarcher@pmu.edu.sa
jon.d.archer.76@gmail.com