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10. Structuring the discourse

The main purpose of the present chapter is to describe the structuring of the discourse by the multifunctional use and the cohesive function of the particle *ś*. Before embarking upon the description, I like to emphasize that I observed the language usage in the narrative discourse of the stories of the corpus. I analysed the occurrence of the particle *ś* in the same stories that I used to analyse the pattern of pauses: ‘The sadist co-wife’ (AC 2 and A 5), ‘The day to thresh the millet’ (AC 4 and A 4), and the three ‘Cat and leopard’-stories (Ay 5, AC 16 and A 7).

The use of the particle *ś* in the stories of the corpus is without doubt a fine example to show the difference between actual usage and observation based on elicitation. One of the main features of the particle is to convey that it connects old information with new information that is imminent. I define new information as an item that moves the story forward to a new development that does not result from the preceding part of the story.

The use of the particle is multifunctional, for the performers use it to topicalize clauses, nouns and noun phrases. I will describe the occurrence of the particle as a clause-final topic in tail-head constructions that indicate the transition to a new paragraph in the story. I will also describe the occurrence of the particle at the end of conditional and relative clauses. I will also discuss the use of the particle after the noun that denotes the central participant. Here, the particle is a definite marker that tracks and traces the central participant throughout the story. I will discuss the use of the particle after a noun phrase denoting an agent in the story to topicalize it. I will end this chapter with the topicalization of adjuncts that convey a change in scene. I will also make some additional comments on and corrections of existing grammars.

10.1. Tail-head constructions: the clause-final topic *ś*

This section analyses the function of the co-occurrence of the clause-final topic *ś* and a pause. The particle is structuring the discourse by a tail-head construction that separates two paragraphs and marks the transition to a new paragraph. The performer places the topic marker at the end of the clause that is the head of the new paragraph, and adds an extensive pause. The particle topicalizes the preceding clause. The function of the clause-final topic is to signal that the next utterances convey new information that moves the story forward. The tail-head construction marks the definite completion of a set of actions. Tail-head constructions occur in the following two ways: either they repeat the final clause(s) of a paragraph ‘tail’ in the first clause of the new paragraph ‘head’, or they summarize the complete preceding paragraph in the first clause of the new paragraph.

The head of a tail-head construction of a new paragraph is a subordinate clause that ends with the clause-final topic **ɔ́**, which is followed by a pause. Actually, the clause grammatically is originally an embedded relative clause that has the noun ‘time’ as its antecedent (Guillet 1973 a: 68ff.):

hwènù dǽe
 time REL_O
 ‘the time that’

In narrative discourse, the clause is interpreted as a WHEN-clause. The narrative discourse often shows the following clause introducer whose antecedent is empty:

ø ée
 ø CI
 ‘when’ or ‘after’

The performers sometimes use the following relative pronouns as clause introducer: **ée**, **dǽe** and **è** ‘when’. Performers often omit the clause introducer, but they always use the final particle **ɔ́** to topicalize the utterance. The WHEN-clause conveys the end of an action, and hence the next utterance, the main clause, conveys the beginning of a new action. Guillet mentions that the clause introducer is often used in speech. This is clearly distinct from narrative discourse in which the performers often leave out the clause introducer, and only use the clause-final particle (Guillet 1973 a: 68).

I will describe three examples of the tail-head construction that occur in the corpus. The first example is a tail-head construction that repeats the last clause of the preceding paragraph. The second example shows a tail that consists of two clauses. The last example shows a head that summarizes the preceding paragraph.

The Abomey-Calavi version of ‘Cat and leopard’ starts with a scoop on the agents, the two stepsisters, the leopard and the cat (AC 16). The leopard asks the cat to teach her to go hunting with both paws, for she herself is only capable of catching with her left paw. The cat agrees to show her how she goes hunting herself. She does not know that the leopard plans to attack her. The paragraph ends with the clause that the leopard suddenly hides from the cat. After the pause, the new paragraph starts with the clause introducer **ée**, and repeats the preceding clause ending it with the clause-final topic **ɔ́**. The example shows that the end of a paragraph coincides with the end of an action; after an extensive pause a new paragraph follows that conveys a new action:

o kpɔ towɛ yĩ wu nú awũ [1.46] ‘Tail’
 IJ leopard POS₂ go hide LOC cat
 ‘your leopard hid from the cat’

éɛ kpɔ yĩ wú nú awũ ɔ́ [1.18] ‘Head’
 CI leopard go hide LOC cat TOP_{CL}
 ‘when the leopard hid from the cat’ (AC 16 :41, 42)

The Abomey version of ‘The day to thresh the millet’ provides us with the next example (A 4). This tail-head construction shows the repetition of two clauses that indicate the transition to the new paragraph. The third utterance repeats the first two clauses of this example, and ends with the clause-final topic ɔ́:

é dà yɔkpɔ ɔ́ [2.72] ‘Tail’
 3SG marry virgin DEF
 ‘he married the young girl’

b’é wá yĩ xwé [1.24] ‘Tail’
 CJss.CL₃ come get house
 ‘and he returned home’

é dà yɔkpɔ ɔ́ wá yĩ xwé é ɔ́ [2.71]
 CL₃ marry virgin DEF come.to go household RES TOP_{CL}
 ‘after he married the young girl, he brought her back home’ ‘Head’

asi tòn [2.58]
 wife GEN
 ‘his wife’

wá kan byɔ ɖɔ ji lé [0.33]
 come.to question ask say CP like
 ‘asked a lot of questions, such as’

‘He married the teenager, and returned home. He took her home with him after the marriage. His first wife asked a lot of questions, such as ...’ (A 4: 21-25)

The third utterance of the above example is the head of the new paragraph. It confirms the accomplishment of the two actions stated in the last two clauses of the previous paragraph: the marriage is a fact. The first wife is upset.

The third example is from the Abomey-Calavi edition of ‘The day to thresh the millet’ (AC 4). The example shows the peak of the story, and a tail-head summary construction in the second utterance of this fragment, that summarizes the reported speech of agent B in the preceding paragraph. The clause-final particle ɔ́ is used as a

topic marker in the head of the paragraph and summarizes the previous paragraph: **dǎ mǎ**, ‘to say thus’. The resumptive pronoun **é** in the second utterance of the example is the object of the clause that summarizes the content of the preceding paragraph. Performers in Abomey often use this combination.

ně dǎ dǎ dè ná kpé wè [4.39] ‘Peak’
 penis INDF AUX SPEC IRM meet pFOC
 ‘a man would marry another one’ [laughter]

é dǎ mǎ é ǎ [1.76] ‘Tail-head summary’
 3SG say thus RES TOP_{CL}
 ‘when she said so’

yè wá dǎ
 3PL come.to arrange
 ‘they arranged’

o li só-’zán [0.98]
 IJ millet thresh-GEN.day
 ‘oh the day to thresh the millet’

‘The King would marry another man! Ha, ha! When she said this now, they arranged the day to thresh the millet.’ (AC 4: 89-92)

The performers in Ayou often summarize the previous paragraph in the head of the new paragraph by the following clause that uses the remote demonstrative pronoun **ené**:

ené ǎ
 DEM_R TOP_{CL}
 ‘after that happened’, ‘in that case’

Let us finally consider the tone of the clause-final topic **ǎ**, which has an inherent high pitch that it is influenced by the immediately preceding tone. The two following changes occur: the high tone of the clause-final topic **ǎ** is slightly falling after another high tone; the tone remains high when it follows a low tone, but the low tone is rising to a mid-tone. The adaptation of tone of the clause-final topic **ǎ** is exceptional in the Fongbe tonal system where the clause-final particles have fixed tones, for example the question particle **à**, or the negation particles **ǎ** and **ó**.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ The performers of the corpus rarely nasalize the particle in a nasal context (see 10.6.).

10.2. Extensive information in conditional and relative clauses

Conditional and recurrent relative clauses that provide us with new information also use the clause-final topic. These clauses are rather rare in narrative discourse. However, for the sake of completeness I will give a few examples.

The particle is used as a clausal topic at the end of conditional clauses. The following example is from one of ‘The day to thresh the millet’ stories (AC 4). The newly wedded bride of the ‘Great Spirit’ god **Dada Ségbó** is a boy who wants to change into a girl, before the ceremony of threshing the millet. He and his husband go to see the diviner who tells them to prepare a sacrifice when they make sure that the waterlamp continues to burn. The sacrifice consists of 41 pieces of porridge topped with red palmoil **wǎ** ‘porridge’ and white chicken meat. The first utterance starts with **ényi** meaning the conditional ‘if’ and ends with the clausal topic **ś** in the following example:

ényi ta sin-myɔgbén ś cí ś
 IF light water-GEN.fire.clay.jar DEF go.out TOP_{CL}
 ‘if the light of the waterlamp did not continue to burn’

é kún ná wá xwé o [1.34]
 CL₃ NEG IRM come.to house NEG
 ‘he should not come to the house’

bo ná ta ami-myɔgbén ɖokpó
 CJ_{ss} IRM light oil-GEN.fire.clay.jar one
 ‘and he should light an oil lamp’

ami-myɔgbén ś ci ś é kún wà nù
 oil-GEN.fire.clay.jar DEF go.out TOP_{CL} CL₃ NEG do thing
ɖé ó
 INDF NEG
 ‘if the oil lamp did not continue to burn, it did not matter’

sin-myɔgbén ś ná ɖò-tè
 water-fire.clay.jar DEF IRM stand
 ‘as long as the waterlamp would continue to burn’ [AC 4: 129 – 133]

Performers rarely use relative clauses in their performance, except for the accumulation of a number of recurrent relative clauses that provide us with new information. I give an example of four successive relative clauses of which the fourth one finally gives new information: the bride in question is a man (AC 4). Notice the rhetorical effects of the recurrence in the following example:

yè wá yì Daá-gón bó dḵ ji lé dḵ [0.81]
 3PL come.to go Dada-GEN.dwelling CJss say CP like INDF
 ‘they arrived at Dada’s palace and said that this here’

nǔ dḵe [0.33]
 thing REL
 ‘that poor thing’

asì dḵe é dá wá xwé gbé ḵ [0.45]
 wife REL CL₃ marry come.to house PURP TOP_{CL}
 ‘this wife to whom he got married’

dḵ nyḵnú ḵ [0.21]
 REL woman TOP_N
 ‘that this woman, you know’

dḵ nè-nó wé me’ji [0.62]
 REL penis-GEN.owner aFOC sorry-IQ
 ‘that she was a man, do you mind me saying this?’

Daá dḵ émi kún tuun ó [0.81]
 Dada say LOG NEG know NEG
 ‘Dada said that he did not know’

‘They arrived at Dada’s palace, and said that this here, that poor thing, this wife to whom he got married, that this woman, you know, that she was a man, do you mind me saying this? Dada said that he didn’t know.’ [AC 4: 94-99]⁷⁶

⁷⁶ The examples show the usage of the performers that differs from the description for example by Lefebvre. Lefebvre remarks that **dḵ** or **dḵ-è** is the combination of a nominal operator and a resumptive pronoun (Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002: 118 f., 170 f.). However, the reported tonality does not occur in the corpus that shows the relative pronoun **dḵe** to convey the function of an object. Other correct forms are **dḵe** and **é**; these are used when the relative pronoun refers to **hwe**: **hweḵḵenu** and **hweénu** that are WHEN-clauses.

10.3. The central participant: the definite marker ǎ

In the first two sections of this chapter, I discussed the function of the particle ǎ as a clause-final topic marker. The performers place the marker at the end of the clause that is the head in the tail-head construction, which characterizes the transition to a new paragraph in the story. Besides being the topic marker of clauses, the particle is also the marker that indicates the definiteness of nouns. Note that the particle has a multifunctional usage, for it features in clauses as well as in noun phrases.

In this section, I will discuss the use of the particle as definite marker of nouns and noun phrases. Performers place the particle after the noun that indicates the central participant in the story. Here, the particle is a definite marker that tracks and traces the central participant, his paraphernalia and aliases throughout the story, until the denouement. This usage facilitates the audience to recognize the central participant.⁷⁷ The function of the definite marker ǎ is similar to that of the clause-final topic, in so far that it also refers to old information and conveys that new information is imminent.

The central participant in hwènùxó

This section discusses the use of the definite marker to identify the central participant in the dramatic **hwènùxó**. The performers introduce the central participant by adding the definite marker ǎ to the end of a noun phrase that indicates the central participant. The definite marker ǎ is used, whether the central participant is an object or a god from the supernatural world. The central participant in ‘The sadist co-wife’ for example, is the sauce and the saucepot in which the sauce is cooked. The following noun phrases occur:

nùsúnnú ’né ǎ
sauce DEM_R DEF
‘that sauce’

nùsúnnú ǎ fé-wǔ
sauce DEF dust-body
‘the sauce was delicious’

nùsúnnú-zén ’né ǎ
sauce-GEN.pot DEM_R DEF
‘that saucepot’ [AC 2]

⁷⁷ I will discuss the tracking function in 11.2., when I will describe the use of the flashback to introduce the central participant.

The following example again stems from the story ‘The day to thresh the millet’ (AC 4). In this story, the Great Spirit god **Dada Ségbó** marries a boy, whereupon the first wife starts slanderous talking. At the same time, she proposes to arrange the day of the ceremony to thresh the millet. This ceremony obliges the participants to be naked. The story refers to **Sakpata**, the deity of fertility and smallpox. The metaphor of smallpox and millet is obvious; for smallpox causes a skin rash and blisters on the face that very much resemble the small millet grains. Malignant smallpox often was a fatal disease in the past. The Fon thought that **Sakpata** was responsible for both the illness and the growth of cereal crops. The use of the definite marker **ǎ** shows that the millet is an alias of the central participant in the following example:

o mě wè e nǎ nǎ bo nǎ dó só
 INTERJ nakedness aFOC CL₃ RM stay CJss RM put grind
 ‘oh! One took off one’s clothes and was always naked for threshing’

só li ǎ ná
 grind millet DEF LOC
 ‘for threshing the millet’

‘One had to take off all one’s clothes for the ceremony you see, one was always naked for the threshing ceremony, for threshing the millet.’ [AC 4: 112, 113]

Let us consider how the definite marker indicates the successive aliases and paraphernalia of the central participant ‘the old man who is surrounded by a bushfire’ (AC 6). The following example stems from a story about the orphan and two kings, the king of the country of his father and the king of the country of his mother:

caki ǎ
 bag DEF
 ‘the bag’

zunkan éné ǎ
 forest DEM_R DEF
 ‘that bush’

dàwé ’né ǎ
 old.man DEM_R DEF
 ‘that old man’

alǎké ǎ
 ring DEF
 ‘the ring’

In the beginning of the story, the orphan is rewarded a bag filled with sand, after he worked a year in the fields of the king of his father's country. He leaves on a journey to his mother's country, and he encounters the old man who is in the midst of a bushfire. The orphan puts out the fire by throwing the sand. The old man rewards him by giving him a ring that fulfils all his wishes; and so the orphan becomes a rich man (AC 6).

The central participant in the comic *yèxó*

The definite marker *ǎ* also tracks and traces the trickster *Yǎgbó* as the central participant in the comic *yèxó* stories. The Fon people believe that *Yǎgbó* is neither human nor divine, though he is the only central participant who travels between the earth and the sky.

The following example is from 'The first story', the story about the Great Spirit god *Dada Ségbó* and his three daughters (Ay 2; see 6.5.). *Yǎgbó* is introduced, but without the definite particle *ǎ*. When the performer tells that he secretly watches the king who hides three objects, the performer adds the definite marker to his name. From then on, the trickster is the central participant who wants his stepbrother *Ahwansoblenǎ* to win the contest. Note that the language is *Ayizogbe*; it slightly differs from Fongbe:

adǎ-nǎ yɛ-gbó éyé ǎ wi yǎ
 web-GEN.owner Yɛ-big AP₃ TOP_N darkness TOP_{CL}
 'when the voracious big Yogbo himself hid'⁷⁸

The following example is from the story in which *Yǎgbó* plans to make a fortune by exporting salt to the House of Rain that is situated in the Land of Sky (Ay 3). The trickster and all his paraphernalia and aliases are marked by the definite marker *ǎ*. The performer uses the definite marker before the trickster starts his flight to the Land of Sky, and continued to use it until the trickster is exiled from Sky for stealing food that was meant as an offering to the gods. Anyone who browses through this story will find amongst others the following examples that refer to the aliases and paraphernalia of the trickster:

adǎ-nǎ yǎ-gbo towɛ-yǎ
 web-GEN.owner Yo-big POS₂-TOP_N
 'your voracious big Yogbo' (the beginning of the story)

⁷⁸ I will discuss the specific meaning of the epithet *adǎnǎ* in section 14.1. Here I give the translation that the Segurola and Rassinoux dictionary proposes.

'ne ɔ́ gangan ɔ́
 DEM_R DEF harrier-hawk DEF
 'that one there, that harrier hawk'⁷⁹

adɔ-vlɔ 'né ɔ́
 white.beans-puree DEM_R DEF
 'that far away white beans puree' (the cement of the houses in the Land of Sky)

atácíci ené ɔ́
 fritters DEM_R DEF
 'those yummy peppery fritters' (the food in the Land of Sky)

me-ɖaxó ɔ́
 person-big DEF
 'Mr Big' (the start of the denouement)

Notice, there is no difference between the use of the particle to indicate the central participant and its properties in dramatic and comic stories.

10.4. Topicalization: the presentation of the agents

This section covers the use of the particle as the topic marker of a noun phrase. The performers also use the particle after a noun phrase denoting an agent in the story to topicalize it. The performers topicalize a noun in a single utterance that ends with a pause. The following utterance conveys referential identity, for it starts with a clitic personal pronoun that refers to the same agent. Topicalization is an indication that one of the agents is about to take an action that moves the story forward. The utterance that follows the topicalization always starts with the subject personal pronoun *é*, in the following example 'she'.

é wá jè gbe ɖokpó b̀ [0.76]
 CL₃ come.to fall day one CJdd
 'until one day and'

nỳɖnú ɔ́ [0.93]
 woman TOP_N
 'this woman, you know'

⁷⁹ The bird is the huge African harrier hawk that does not know that he carries the trickster to the Land of Sky.

é sɔ́ axi-nú [0.62]
 CL₃ take market-GEN-thing
 ‘she prepared her goods’

bó ɖɛ́dó axĩ [1.38]
 CJss set.forth market
 ‘and she was on her way to the market’

‘Until a day came and this woman, you know, she prepared her goods, and she was on her way to the market.’ (AC 2: 11-14)

The performers in Ayou use the particle **ɔ́** as a topic marker that identifies the pair of agents in the first utterance at the beginning of the story. The second utterance indicates a property of the agents.

awĩ ɔ́ kpɔ́ ɔ́ [0.84]
 cat DEF leopard DEF
 ‘this is about the cat and the leopard’

nɔ̀-vi nɔ̀-ví wè na ɖé [3.44]
 mother-GEN.child mother-GEN.child aFOC give AUX
 ‘they were sisters’

‘This is a story about the cat and the leopard, they were sisters.’ [Ay 5: 1, 2]

The introduction of the agents in Ayou resembles the opening credits of a movie picture: Starring A and B.

10.5. Topicalization of adjuncts: change in scene

Performers topicalize a change of circumstances by using an adjunct followed by the topic marker **ɔ́**. The adjunct is a circumstantial marker that makes a change in scene and sets the frame for a new development. Here the pauses become intermittent and are sporadic. The formula is the following: {**AJ** + **ɔ́**}. The following adjuncts are used in the corpus: **din ɔ́** ‘now’, **tróló ɔ́** ‘immediately’, ‘as soon as’; **tegbɛ ɔ́** ‘always’; **kpóun ɔ́** ‘simply’.

In one of the ‘Cat and leopard’ stories, the leopard kills all her children but one. She finds out that the cat hides her children, and asks her for an explanation. The cat is nervous, and fabricates a story (AC 16). The following example shows how **kpóun ɔ́** is used to introduce a new scene:

é ma gbɔ́jé ajĩ [0.35]
 CL₃ OPT relax IQ
 ‘that she wanted to take a nap’

que [0.32]

CP (French)

‘that’

émí ná ɖ'áɓ vǐ lé wú kpóun ɔ yě bǐ nó
 LOG IRM put-hand child PL GEN-body simply TOP_{ΔJ} 3PL QF RM
hɔn yǐ aza jǐ [0.34]
 flee go ceiling LOC

‘when she simply tried to catch the children, they all escaped on the ceiling’

émí kún nó mò vǐ ɖé ó [0.55]

LOG NEG RM find child INDF NEG

‘that she did not find a child’

‘That she wanted to take a nap, that, when she simply tried to catch the children, they all escaped upon the ceiling, that she did not find a child.’ [AC 16: 168-171]

Topicalization occurs also to comment on the preceding fragment, for example, **nùgbó e**, or **nùgbó ɔ** ‘really’.⁸⁰

vǐ ɔ ɖò émí kún nó lè wǔ ɖò gba.wun.gba ó [0.12]
 child DEF say LOG NEG RM wash body be cover.look.cover NEG
 ‘the child said that he did not bath in public’

ɖé kózún-mè émí nó lè wǔ ɖè
 CP earthen.loft-LOC LOG RM wash body AUX
 ‘that he always bathed in the earthen loft’ [flash forward] [1.82]

a ɖò ɖǐdó wema-mɛ wɛ à ɖé kózún-mè émí
 2SG AUX set.off paper-LOC pFOC Q CP earthen.loft-LOC LOG
nɔ lè wǔ ɖè [0.76]
 RM wash body AUX

‘Did you write this down? That he always bathed in the earthen loft’

nùgbó ɔ [0.11]

truth TOP_{ΔJ}

‘and so it was’

‘The boy said that he did not bath in public, he always bathed in the earthen loft. Did you write this down? He always bathed in the earthen loft. And so it was.’

[AC 4: 65 -68]

⁸⁰ **nùgbó** is translated into ‘really’. It literally means ‘thing big’.

10.6. Further remarks

In this section, I will first give a summary of the use of the particle **ᓃ** in the corpus. I will discuss whether the descriptions in the available grammars match with my analyses of the use of **ᓃ** in the second part of this section.

Summary of the use of the particle **ᓃ**

The particle **ᓃ** has two distinct functions. The clause-final topic has the function of structuring the discourse. It indicates that a clause has the specific content of ‘action accomplished and there is a new action pending’. The definite marker **ᓃ** functions also as a marker of referential identity, for it is used to trace nouns and noun phrases. The marker connotes ‘Please note, here he is, the central participant’ or ‘Watch out! One of the agents is out for disaster’. It is noteworthy that the particle does not occur in songs. The table below summarizes the use of the clause-final topic.

Preposed WHEN-clauses		
	Clause Introducer	Clausal Topic
	ée ø ᑭé è	ᓃ

Preposed IF-clauses		
	Clause Introducer	Clausal Topic
	ényí nú	ᓃ

Embedded relative clauses in reported speech		
Antecedent	Relative	Clausal Topic
NP Object	ᑭée ée è	ᓃ

Figure 13: The clause-final topic

No show of the definite marker within narrative discourse

With the exception of the introduction of the agents at the beginning of a story, as well as introduction of the central participant and his paraphernalia, all other nouns in the performance go without a noun phrase-particle. This last practice is analogous to daily speech. Performers enumerate the stereotypical set of objects of wealth without using the definite particle **ɔ́**. The imaginary list sounds like a formula, for the list is similar in the stories where it occurs. Here one should expect the use of the phrase-final particle, because the listing consists of objects ‘we know of’, or, at least, ‘we long for’. This does not happen, as is shown by the following examples: the story of Abomey-Calavi 6 shows the following wishes of the central participant: **singbó** ‘a two-storey house’, **sika** ‘gold’, **kanlin** ‘animals’, **akwé** ‘cowries’ or ‘money’ and **dokun** ‘wealth’. In Abomey-Calavi 3 there is the following list: **akwé** ‘cowries’ or ‘money’, **avɔ** ‘large wrappers’, **sika** ‘gold’, and **Hwawé sɔ́** ‘a strong male horse from Hwawè’. ‘The day to thresh the millet’ story in the Abomey-Calavi edition shows the transformation from a boy into a girl. Before she goes to the palace to attend the ceremony to thresh the millet, she asks the king the following items: **avɔ** ‘large wrappers’, **nùsáwu** ‘smoothing balm’, **púdrù** ‘powder’, **palfen** ‘perfume’, **bebè** ‘a large waistband with beads’ (AC 4). Each of the performers draws up a similar list of desirable objects. Here, the definite marker does not occur. The performer emphasizes that these objects remain a wish for most people, and are thus indefinite.

Match with existing grammars

A survey of the available Fongbe grammars shows that they provide us with the rules of the use of the particle in embedded relative clauses, and in subordinate WHEN- and IF-clauses that precede the main clauses (Guillet 1973 a: 63-72; Anonymous 1982: 100-104; Höftmann 1993: 161-169; Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002: 161ff., 170ff.). Ameka described the use of discourse particles in Ewegbe (Ameka 1991).

However, I see a subtle divergence between the descriptions in the available grammars and the language usage of the performers. I will discuss the following items: the function of **ɔ́** as clause-final topic and the use as a definite marker of a noun. Finally, I will comment on and the nasalization of the particle **ɔ́**.

Let us return to the pattern of pauses. The performers end a WHEN-clause with the clause-final topic **ɔ́** that is followed by an extensive pause. The WHEN-clause is the head of a tail-head construction, which is one of the relevant features of the discourse. The grammar of Guillet is the only source that confirms the relation between the clause-final topic and the accompanying pause, ‘une pause de la voix’

that he transcribed by a comma (Guillet 1973 a: 62). The more recently published grammars do not mention the use of a pause after the clause-final topic. The performers also place the clause-final topic at the end of IF-clauses, as well as at the end of REL-clauses that frame a range of recurrent remarks. Previous grammars and textbooks showed that these clauses start with the clause introducer *éé* ‘when’ or *ényí* ‘if’ (Guillet 1973 a: 69ff., 72ff.). The performers of the corpus often omitted these clause introducers in their performance.

Performers also place *ǎ* after nouns and at the end of noun phrases as the definite marker that tracks and traces the central participant and his paraphernalia throughout the story until the denouement. They also use *ǎ* as a topic marker that may denote one of the agents. The noun as a topic constitutes one single utterance; the next utterance is a simple SVO-clause that starts with a clitic personal pronoun that has referential identity with the noun. Finally, performers use the particle after adjuncts that set the frame for a new development. Here, the occurrence of a pause is not obligatorily, it depends on the choice of the individual performer. Adjuncts indicate the transition to a new scene: ‘now’, ‘immediately’, ‘the day rose’, ‘the next morning’, ‘the next evening’, ‘I am speaking the truth’ and so forth.

The performers distinguish the clause-final topic *ǎ* from the definite marker *ǎ* by adding a pause to the clause-final topic. The data of the corpus are pertinent. The extensive pause after the clause-final topic in the head of a tail-head construction is required, and the rule applies obligatorily. These tail-head constructions function as the content markers of the story. However, the introduction of the central participant is an exception. The performers introduce the central participant in a flash back (see 11.2.). This utterance consists of two clauses: a subordinate clause that ends with the clause-final topic, which is followed by the main clause that introduces the central participant that is indicated with the definite marker *ǎ*. Performers sometimes add a pause. However, that individual choice depends on the individual performer.

The grammars by the missionaries also described the use of the particle that the performers place after nouns and at the end of noun phrases. Guillet compared this usage with a type of ‘definite article’ that he called ‘le déterminatif’ and translated into a definite article (Guillet and Dujarier 1973, *Déterminants*: 6). Anonymous copied the leaflets by Guillet and Dujarier, but he changed the translation into ‘in question’ (Anonymous 1982: 35). Höftmann copied the description by Guillet and Dujarier (Höftmann 1993: 116). Lefebvre copied Anonymous and called the particle ‘the definite determiner’, and translated it into ‘in question’ or ‘that we know of’ (Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002: 36).

Lefebvre stated that Fongbe has one single definite determiner. The clausal definite determiner is the same determiner that occurs in nominal structures, but the function is different. Lefebvre concluded that the determiner shares a number of properties in

all contexts where it appears (Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002: 501f.). Lefebvre underlined the gloss of the clausal definite determiner **ǎ** to distinguish it from the nominal definite determiner **ǎ**. Actually, the clause-final topic is a clause particle as my observations on the tail-head usage showed. The clause-final topic functions as a content marker. The same observations are to be found in Höftmann (Höftmann 1993: 167). The definite marker is a noun marker that functions as a referential marker.

Lefebvre also argued the double occurrence of the definite determiner in simple clauses (Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002: 481ff.). Lefebvre gives several examples of a double occurrence of **ǎ** in simple clauses that are spoken by three different types of Fongbe speakers. The corpus does not show any sample of this type of language usage at all.⁸¹ Therefore, I cannot discuss the argument.

Nasalization

Let us consider the nasalization of vowels in the corpus. Notice a salient fact that I did not mention before: all performers pronounce the clause-final topic **ǎ** in the head of a tail-head construction as a clear vowel **ǎ**, even in a nasal environment.

A careful listener to the recordings of the corpus will hear a perceptible difference between grammar rules and the usage in the corpus, particularly in the field of nasalization. In Fongbe, the vowels **ɛ**, **i**, **ɔ**, **u**, and **a** mutate depending on their morphological environment. All vowels within the context of the nasal consonants **m** and **n** are nasalized with the exception of the inhibition marker **ma** (see 15.1.). Nasalization occurs within a single word. It also happens if the adjunct at the end of a clause is a single vowel. Native speakers and the performers of the corpus always nasalize for example, the interrogative adjunct at the end of a direct question: **à** like in **a fǎn à** ‘Hello. How are you?’. The last **à** is pronounced [àn]. The National Language Commission decided in favour of omitting the final consonant in the orthography of words with a nasal consonant (see p. 25). This pronunciation is obvious to Fongbe native speakers who, for example always say [myðn] for **myð** ‘fire’.

Nonetheless, there are a few exceptions to this rule. The performers of the corpus never nasalize the clause-final topic **ǎ**. They rarely nasalize the definite marker **ǎ** after a noun in a nasal context: **myð ǎ** is pronounced [myðn ǎ]. Notice also that the performers never nasalize the negative clause-final adjuncts **ma**, **ǎ** and **ó**, even in a nasal context. The corpus shows that nasalization of the definite marker **ǎ** is not a rule, but an individual choice that depends on the way of speaking of the performer.

⁸¹ Recall that the corpus consists of 57 000 words.

As a result, the performers of the corpus do not confirm Lefebvre's statement that the definite determiner *ɔ* is modified into *ɔn* when the preceding noun ends with a nasal vowel or in the context of a nasal consonant (Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002: 28, 37).

Concluding remarks on the particle *ɔ*

The role of the topic together with the pause is crucial in narrative discourse. The particle *ɔ* is the clause-final topic that transforms that clause into a temporal adverbial clause. At the same time, the particle is the last spoken item of a clause that ends with a pause that is a content marker, for the length of the pause depends on its position in the plot of the story. The length of the pause is extensive after the head of a new paragraph, and after rhetorical phenomena like the peak. Tail and head together form the transition to a new paragraph; they convey that the story moves forward. The content of the head clause conveys the end of the action in the previous paragraph. The clause-final topic marks the spot where new information is imminent. The corpus shows that the performers make a difference between the usage of the clause-final topic in subordinate clauses and that of the definite marker in a noun phrase. Moreover, the performers do not nasalize the clause-final topic at all. They rarely nasalize the definite marker. Finally, the corpus does not show any sample of the definite determiner in simple clauses (Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002: 481ff.).

On the other hand, the corpus shows that the performers sometimes omit markers and particles, for example the omission of the focus marker *wè* in the permuted form of the non-perfective marker, and the omission of the clause-final topic after the negative *ǎ*. A minority of the performers, especially those in Ayou, leave out *ɔ* when they use the negative particle *ǎ*. On the contrary, the performers in Abomey use the combination of {*ǎ* + *ɔ*}, that is [NEG + TOP_{CL}] at the end of an utterance, for example: *ǎ ɔ*.

The performers of the corpus use the particle in subordinate clauses and in noun phrases. The use of the particle *ɔ* in stories is without doubt a fine example of the difference between actual usage and observation based on elicitation. One of the main reasons is that the performer sets the decor by structuring the discourse. Here, *ɔ* obviously plays a major role in linking together information and framing the transition to a new development in a story. Grammars propose examples of independent and context free clauses and sentences to explain the categories and the construction of a language. In my experience, the descriptions until now are not complete for leaving out narrative discourse, or usage within a context. Therewith, the descriptions unfortunately neglected the crucial role of the particle, where it sees to the consistency of the discourse.

In general, the majority of the grammars that I discussed in chapter 1 are in line with my description of the multifunctional usage of the final particle **ǎ** in the corpus.

Lefebvre (Lefebvre and Brousseau 2002) made several observations that do not match with the usage in the corpus, and therefore requires some additions and corrections.