

Topic in Gamo

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1. General Information on the Language

1.1. Classification

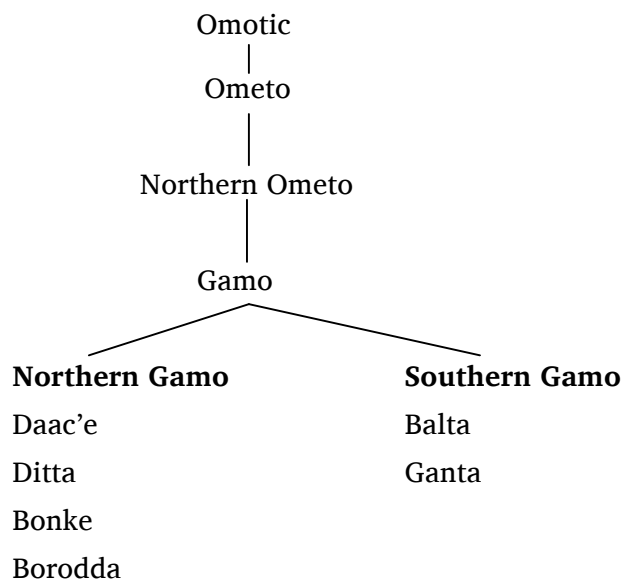
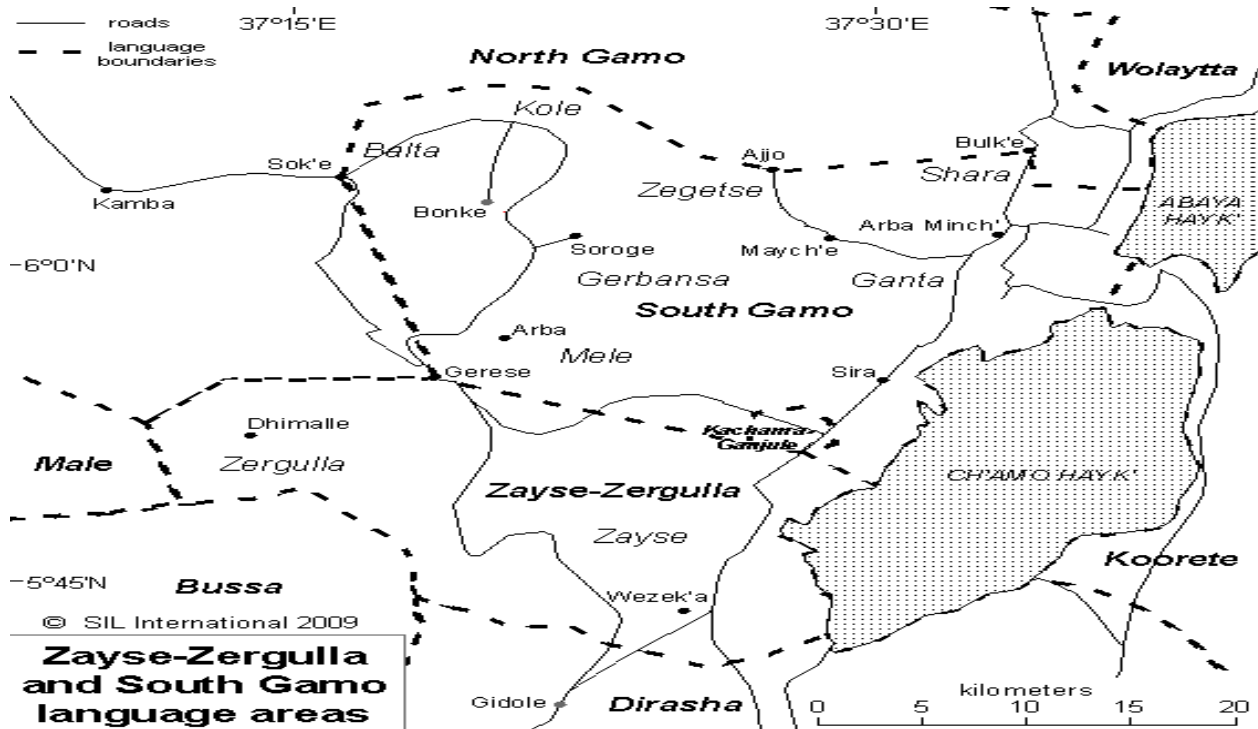


Figure 1: Gamo group (adapted from Linda 2009)

1.2. Grammatical information

- South Western Ethiopia
- More than one million speakers
- SOV, verb final language
- Head final language
- Modifier + noun
- noun + postposition
- nouns inflect for definiteness, gender, number and case
root-definite-gender-number-case

- (1) para-z-a-t-a
 horse-DEF-M-P-NOM
 'thehorses'



Map 1: Zayse-Zergulla and South Gamo language areas (adopted from Jordan 2009: 13)

	Masculine	Feminine
Absolutive	-a	-o
Nominative	-i	-a
Oblique	-a	-i
(Vocative)	-o(o)	-e(e)

Table1: The case system in Gamo

- Subjects trigger agreement on the verb.
- Gamo is a clause chaining language.

2. What is Topic?

2.1. Topic definition

- Topic: sentence topic is an entity in a sentence about which a predication is made (van Dijk 1977).

2.2. Topic marking strategies

- Morphological marking (Amharic example)

- (2) [betunimma]_{top} [gäzzahut.]_{comment}

house.DEF.TOP buy.1S.3MS.OBJ

As for the house, I bought it.

[What about the house?]

ii. Syntactic structures

a. **Sentence initial:** often sentence topics have a tendency to be encoded as subjects.

(3) [This talk]_{Top} [is rather speculative]_{Comment}. (Krifka 2006: 1)

b. **Left-dislocation:** with pronoun

(4) [The saturns]_i, you can get air bags in them_i. (Gregory and Michaelis 2001: 1667)

c. **Topicalization:**

(5) [Most rap]_i, I don't like \emptyset _i. (Gregory and Michaelis 2001: 1667)

d. **Right-dislocation**

(6) He's shrewd, [that one]. (Gundel 1988: 211)

iii. **Frame setters:** Frame setters specify an aspect under which a proposition is true.

(7) [Financially], he is doing well. [How is Peter doing?]
(Krifka 2006: 1)

3. Topic marking in Gamo

- The following strategies are found in the Gamo data at hand.
 - I. Morphological markers
 - II. Lexical element
 - III. Syntactic
 - a. Word order (sentence initial position)
 - b. Zero anaphora/topic deletion
 - c. Left-dislocation
 - d. Topicalization
 - e. Right-dislocation
 - IV. Frame setters

3.1. Morphological markers *-ka* (??)

- It is a polyfunctional morpheme.
- Semantically it is similar to the English words such as 'even, also, too'
- In narrations it serves as a means to promote an already introduced entity to a topic status.

(8) *beni wode iss kaatama-n de?-iza kawo-s hezzu na?a-t-a de?-ette-shin.*
earlier time one town-LOC exist-IPFV king-POP three child-P-ACC exist-3P-PST.CONT
In older times there was a king in one town who had three children.

etti-ka Mame Mimi Mammo.

they-TOP PN PN PN

and [they]_{top} [were called Mame, Mimi, and Mammo.]_{comment}

- Topic shift

(9) *ettika "hess-adey ha?i awa-n dizee?" gida.*
they-TOP this.M-man now where-LOC exist-Q say-3P-PERF-3P

izi-ka “ta ?erikke” g-i-d-ees.

3S-TOP 1S know-NEG-1S say-3MS-PERF-3MS

[They]_{TOP} [said “where is this man now?”] _{comment} and [he]_{TOP} [said “I do not know.”] _{comment}

[the above examples are taken from a longer discussion about a mysterious person who killed a lion.]

(10) Harro ne bullachcha-s y-aana. Alamitu-ka gaak-aana.

PN your wedding-POP come-FUT PN-TOP arrive-FUT

[Haro]_{TOP} [will come for your wedding] _{comment}. [Alemitu also]_{TOP} [will be here.] _{comment}

(11) bishkilit-ka dentsidi ?ess-i-d-a.

bicycle-TOP pick.PERF.CONV lift-3P-PERF-3P

[Bicycle too]_{TOP}, [they lifted (it) up.] _{comment}

[A group of boys saw while their friend was falling and they run towards him and helped him by cleaning his cloth, etc. The above utterance is uttered as a part of the list with what they helped him]

- As an additive particle

(12) wonde-i tukkee-ka uy-ee-nna.

PN-NOM coffee-ADD drink-3MS-NEG-FUT

Wonde does not drink coffee too.

[While listing the things that Wonde does not drink]

- In some contexts its function is not clear.

(13) iz-i k’asse aggidi-ka mango mas’-aana keez-ees

PRO-NOM though(?) leave.PERF.CONV-TOP mango to.pick-FUT climb-3MS

[He, though]_{TOP}, [climbs up to pick a mango again.] _{comment}

[The man who was picking the fruit watched a man coming towards him, but he decided not to be concerned and climbed up on the tree to pick additional fruits]

(14) adde-y ha?i-ka maso bolla de?-ees mitsa ayffee

man-DEF now-ADD picking.GERU on exist-3MS tree eye

[The man]_{TOP} [is still picking, the fruits.] _{comment}

[What about the man? What is he doing now?]

(15) ha?i k’asse-ka togidi b-aan g-ees

now though-TOP sit.PERF.CONV go-FUT say-3MS

lit. Now, though, having sat on his bicycle, he is going to go.

After sitting on his bicycle, he is going to go now.

[(The boy is performing a series of activities) What is he going to do now?]

(16) ha?i b-ettes issippe-ka.

now go-3P together-ADD

Now they go, together.

[What about the boys? Are they here still?]

3.2. The word *k'asse*

- It's semantically closer to the English words 'though, but, however', to the German 'jedoch' and to the Amharic 'degmo' but not identical.
- Marks contrastive topics.
- The topic comes before this word.

(17) harra macca na?a k'asse bishkilit togada y-aus
another female child though(?) bicycle ride.CONV come-3FS
lit: Another girl, on the other hand, comes riding a bicycle.
Another girl comes riding a bicycle.

[The speaker was talking about an old topic but he sees a girl coming and indicates that there is a new person about whom he is going to make a statement]

(18) alicca-z-a aaya zo??o qasse Mery-kko oothth-i-d-a
alicca-DEF-ACC mother red though PN-IDEN do-3P-PERF-3P
[alicca]_{TOP} [mother cooked]_{comment} and [the red one]_{TOP} [Mary cooked.]_{comment}
[This one, you cooked it. What about the other dishes?]

3.3. Syntactic Marking

3.3.1. Sentence initial position

- Topical elements are placed in a sentence initial position
- In a neutral sentence often the subject is interpreted as the topic of the sentence.

(19) iz-a afile shamm-a-d-us
3-NOM cloth buy-3FS-PERF-3FS
[She]_{TOP} [bought a cloth.]_{comment}

3.3.2. Zero anaphora

- Object topics are often deleted

(20) ta michch-y-a shamm-a-d-us
1S sister-DEF-NOM buy-3FS-PERF-3FS
My sister bought (it). [Ok you bought the wallet. What about the cloth?]

3.3.3. Left-dislocation

- Only subjects can be left-dislocated.
- Left-dislocations are always accompanied by a prosodic break.
- The subject pronouns take the subject position in the main clause.
- (Comma indicates a small prosodic pause)

(21) Birhanu-y, iz-i soo-n ichch-i-d-ees
PN 3S-NOM home-LOC sleep-3MS-PERF-3MS
Birhanu, he slept in his house.
[You said that Kuku went to church. What about Birhanu? Have you seen him?]

(22) ta machcho, iz-a amaraththo tamaars-aus
 1S wife 3-NOM amharic teach-3FS
 My wife, she teaches Amharic. [Solomon you teach math, what about your wife?]

(23) lagge hezza-t-y, ett-y madidi simmida
 friends three-P-DEF they-NOM help.PERF.CONV return.PERF. CONV
 The three friends, after they helped (him), they returned.
 [The speaker describes a situation in which three boys helped another boy when he fall down]

3.3.4. Topicalization

- For object topics
- Without prosodic break

(24) oos-w-a asaa-t-i ott-o-s-ona.
 work-EP-ACC people-P-NOM work-3P -?-3P.FUT
 Lit: the work, the people will work.
 The work, the people will do (it).
 [Are you leaving? what about the work?]

(25) marabe-z-a ba k'ore-n k'ach-i-d-ees
 handkerchief-DEF-ACC his neck-loc tie-3MS-PERF-3MS
 The handkerchief, he tied (it) around his neck. [What about the handkerchief]

(26) he-yss-a ta michch-y-a shamm-a-d-us
 that-M-ACC 1S sister-DEF-NOM buy-3FS-PERF-3FS
 That one, my sister bought it.
 [Ok you bought the wallet. What about that (pointing)?]

3.3.5. Right-dislocation

- After thought
- Subjects NPs and object NPs can be right-dislocated.

(27) phitt-ees toh-w-a.
 clean-3MS leg-?-ACC
 He cleans, his feet. [After falling down, the boy is cleaning himself. What about his leg?]

- Both subject NP and object NP can also right-dislocated (double right-dislocation)

(28) gochchidi ?ekkidi b-i-d-ees deshsh-y-o adde-y
 pull.PERF.CONV take.PERF.CONV go-3MS-PERF-3MS goat-DEF-ACC man-DEF
 He pulled (it), took (it) and went, the goat, the man.
 [what did the man do to the goat?]

4. Frame setters

- With prosodic break

(29) giya-n, boora gata-i all-i-d-ees
market-LOC ox price-NOM get.expensive-3MS-PERF-3MS

Lit: market, the price of ox is booming.

As for market, the price of ox is raising.

[You bought the ox from a butcher. Why didn't you go to market?]

(30) bullachcha-s, y-aana

wedding-for come-FUT

As for wedding, I will come.

[So you are saying you will not be here for my graduation ceremony. What about the wedding?]

5. Summary

- Aboutness-topic is marked by promoting the topical element in to sentence initial position
- -ka, k'asse, mark contrastive topics in a sense of topic shift, topic change
- There is a functional split between left-dislocation and topicalization.
 - left-dislocation for subject topics,
 - topicalization is for object topics
- Both subject and object topics can be right-dislocation.
- In some cases, both subjects and object topics can also be right-dislocated in the same utterance.

6. Research questions

- What are the functions of dislocated constructions?
- In the language there is an interaction between definiteness and case marking. For instance, objects are case marked if only they are definite. Then the questions here to raise are to what level does the interaction goes and what kind of influence it has on topic marking?
- How is topic marked in clause chains?

Abbreviations

1	FIRST PERSON
2	SECOND PERSON
3	THRID PERSON
ACC	ACCUSATIVE
ABL	Ablative
ABS	Absolutive

ADD ADDITIVE
CAUS CAUSATIVE
CONT CONTINUOUS
CONV CONVERBS
DECL DECLARATIVE
DEF DEFINITE
F FEMININE
FUT FUTURE
IPFV IMPERFECTIVE
LOC LOCATIVE
M MASCULINE
NEG NEGATIVE
NOM NOMINATIVE
P PLURAL
PASS PASSIVE
PERF PERFECTIVE
PN PROPER NOUN
POP POSTPOSITIONS
Q QUESTION
RCL RELATIVE CLAUSE
TOP TOPIC

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