

Chapter 18

TOPIC in Lisu

1. *Introduction*

Lisu is a member of “the Lolo-ish group of Tibeto-Burman languages” (Hope 1974.1) spoken in “at least five major dialects” by 200,000+ inhabitants of southwestern China, eastern Burma and Thailand. Citing Bradley (1994 & 2003), Yu (2007.1) raises the number of speakers to “approximately 900,000 people”, and the number of major dialects is reduced to four (Yu 2007.8): Southern Lisu, Western Lisu, Northern Lisu, and Central Lisu. The first named variety is the one presented here; and although it shows heavy Chinese influence in its vocabulary, it is otherwise generally similar to the others.

Li & Thompson’s (1976) article “Subject and Topic: A typology of language” has inspired a reconsideration of the notion ‘topic’ that continues even though their specific typological hypothesis must be (and has been) abandoned. In that article, Li & Thompson present a taxonomy of languages that depends upon the idea of “prominence”, with a language being possibly “Subject prominent” (Sp), “Topic prominent” (Tp), or both “Topic and Subject prominent”, or neither. There were five languages identified as being Topic prominent: Mandarin Chinese (Tp), Japanese (both Tp and Sp), Korean (both Tp and Sp), Lahu (Tp), and Lisu (Tp). Mandarin Chinese, Korean, and Japanese have been heavily studied from this perspective, but Lahu and Lisu less so.¹ And Lisu, the least. As far as I can determine, D. Haigh Roop’s (1970) Yale University dissertation, Edward Hope’s (1974) dissertation at Australian National University, and Bradley’s (2003) collaborative dictionary remain the sole sources of data on Southern Lisu. Roop’s fieldwork spanned two years from 1965 to 1967, yet his dissertation has not figured in the discussion of Lisu.² Durrenberger 1978 is a folklorist’s interpretation of a Lisu

¹ For Lahu, see all the bibliography associated with James A.. Matisoff.

² There may be several reasons for this in addition to the dissertation never having been published. Roop’s analysis is more in the tradition of American structuralism, and the

text, and it derives from Durrenberger's own fieldwork during 1968-1970. Durrenberger's article, however, contains no examples cited in Lisu. In the last decade, additional work has been done on Lisu: Bradley 1994, 2003, 2006 and Yu 2007. With the exception of Bradley 2003 — a dictionary — and 2006 — an overview, the dialects studied differ from the southern one of Hope 1974. Bradley 2003 is a dictionary of Northern Lisu, and Yu 2007 studies Northern Lisu.³ Hope 1974 contains one brief Lisu text, and that affords us an opportunity to search for grammatical patterns that may implement TOPIC in a language whose grammar is supposedly given over to the expression of TOPIC.

2. *Brief Sketch of Lisu Grammar*⁴

Lisu is a V final language and the so-called S and O vary freely in their syntactic positioning, so that one cannot say that the language is either SOV or OSV. Lisu appears to distinguish sharply between a grammatical class of Verbs and a class of Nouns. The Lisu treatment of this difference allies Verbs with what we might recognize as Adjectives, thereby isolating the Nouns. Where a Verb appears finally, it requires a Declarative marker, e.g. -ǵ (The subscript “̂” indicates a laryngealized vowel; / ˊ / marks a high tone, / ˋ /, a low tone; / ˊ ˋ /, a mid-rise; / ˋ ˊ /, a high-fall; and midtone is unmarked (Hope 1974.vi). For example (Hope 1974.7):

- (1) làma nya ánà khù-ǵ
 [tiger TOP dog bite-Dec]
 ‘The tiger bit the dog’

And where — from our English perspective — an Adjective occurs finally, so does the Declarative marker (Hope 1974.30):

description is analytic, ending with the recognition of an inventory of grammatical morphemes. There is little of the synthesis that is present in Hope (1974). The examples are presented in phonemic transcription with no indication of grammatical boundaries within words. Hope's examples are presented in a more grammatically transparent transcription. Roop's dissertation contains a short precedural text of 22 utterances that concerns singing and songs. It does not lend itself to analysis in the way that the text in Hope (1974) does. In short, the fact that Roop's dissertation has not figured in the discussion of Lisu may come from the perception of little additional return for the effort required to work with it.

³ The bibliography of Yu 2007 contains reference several more works on Lisu, but they are all in Mandarin and published in Kunming or Beijing, China.

Like this chapter, Manaster-Ramer 1988 is based on Hope 1974. Manaster-Ramer takes exception with the classification of Lisu as Topic prominent, and ultimately with Li & Thompson's typological frame. The typology is clearly inadequate for various reasons. Manaster-Ramer cites the one text included in Hope (1974), but does not examine it.

⁴ In Chapter 31, we return to Southern Lisu in the context of a discussion of VOICE.

- (2) ása nya tshì-ǵ
 [Asa TOP fat-Dec]
 ‘Asa is fat’

The assertion of *na* ‘sick’, *the* ‘clever’, *dywŋ* ‘withered’, *zi* ‘spinning’, etc. all require a Declarative marker; but where, from our perspective a Noun appears finally, that marker is absent (Hope 1974.58):

- (3) (a) ása phwu gè-ǵ ma nya alě
 [Asa money give-Dec one TOP Ale]
 ‘The one Asa gave money to is Ale’
- (b) *ása phwu gè-ǵ nya alě-ǵ

Simultaneously, we see in (3) what happens when a Verb, e.g. *gè* ‘give’, appears non-finally. Like Nouns, it accepts the TOPIC marker *nya*, in the same manner that Yogad *mabúttut* ‘is greedy [with EXECUTOR VOICE]’ accepts *yu* to produce *yu mabutut* ‘the one who is greedy’, and in the same way Bella Coola *łikm* ‘run’ accepts *ti* — *tx* to yield *ti-łikm-tx* ‘the one who is running’. But unlike the Lisu Nouns, e.g. *làma nya* ‘tiger’ and *ása nya* ‘Asa’, the Verb requires the additional element *ma* ‘one’ (Hope 1974.12, 85ff.). Hence (Hope (1974.12):

- (4) (a) dye-a ma nya ása
 [go-Dec one TOP Asa]
 ‘The one who is going is Asa’
- (b) *dye-a nya ása

and (Hope 1974.81-82):

- (5) (a) láthyu the-ǵ ma nya ása
 [person clever-Dec one TOP Asa]
 ‘The clever person is Asa’
- (b) *làthyu the-ǵ nya ása

As Verbs and Adjectives require *ma* in their designation of PARTICIPANTS, so do Nouns reject it:

- (6) *làma ma nya the-ǵ

This asymmetry can be understood if we assume that certain semantic DOMAINS, e.g. *ása* ‘Asa’, *làma* ‘tiger’, *ána* ‘dog’, etc. appear to be inherently characterized as PARTICIPANTS independently of their relation to PROPOSITIONAL organization. For example, *phwu* ‘money’ is the DOMAIN of past, KNOWN, and also future, to-be-recognized individuals. The DOMAIN of *phwu* is not the more neutral ‘moneyness’ — as is *tāla* ‘money’ in Bella Coola — that acquires the increment of PARTICULAR-PARTICIPANT or EVENT in the manifestation of a PROPOSITION. These Lisu DOMAINS contain PARTICIPANT as a characterizing property and the expectation that they will be used in the designation of PARTICULARS. It is the opposition of these DOMAINS to those that are not so understood that underlies the Noun versus Verb/Adjective schism in Lisu. The latter then require some additional mark when they designate a PARTICULAR-PARTICIPANT to signal precisely that, i.e., the content of PARTICULAR-PARTICIPANT, a content that *nya* ‘Topic’ does not by itself convey; and this is why Verbs and Adjectives occur with *ma* in (3) - (5), or with some equivalent mark, a so-called Classifier dependent upon the semantics of the DOMAIN (Cf. Hope 1974.88ff.).

If one were to ask the question (Hope 1974.56):

- (7) *ása nya phwu àma lǎ gè-â*
 [Asa TOP money who to give-Question]
 ‘Who did Asa give the money to?’

the answer must be as follows:

- (8) *ása nya phwu nya **alě** lǎ gè-ǵ*
 [Asa TOP money TOP Ale to give-Dec]
 ‘Asa gave the money to Alé’

with the answering information in penultimate (bold and italicized) position before the Verb and **not** followed by *nya*:

- (9) %*ása nya phwu nya alě lǎ nya gè-ǵ*
 ‘Asa gáve the money to Ale’

Sentence (9), although correct Lisu grammatically, is not a response to (7). The answer of (8) is also appropriate to another question (Hope 1974.56):

- (10) ása nya phwu ali yǝ-â
 [Asa TOP money how do-Question]
 ‘What did Asa do with the money?’

Recall that English sentence can be ambiguous in that

- (11) Asa ate the cáke.

is answer to both questions of (12):

- (12) (a) What did Asa eat?
 (b) What did Asa do?

The extent of FOCUS is potentially ambiguous in (8) as it is in (11), for example, when cited outside the context of its performance. In both English and Lisu, FOCUS can coincide with one item of a PROPOSITION or more than one. (Recall here Bemba *-â-* vs. *-âlá-*.) In English, sentence final accent is the mark that enables the greater extent of FOCUS; any alternative identifies a single term as FOCUS. In Lisu, the greater extent is possible when a PARTICIPANT is not marked for TOPIC, i.e., with *nya* as in (8), in which case the PARTICIPANT must also occur immediately before the Verb (Hope 1974.12). Hope calls this non-Topic marked PARTICIPANT the “Focus” and declares that it is the “semantic crux of the sentence. It is always ‘new information’, never in any sense ‘given’” (Hope 1974.10). Notice, however, that *alě* in (8) is obviously ‘given’. Where a PARTICIPANT is not marked for TOPIC, FOCUS will encompass it and potentially the Verb as well. The grammar fails in that case to provide sufficient information; and what the speaker and listener know, their common experience of the conversation, will determine which alternative of Figure 1 is operative.

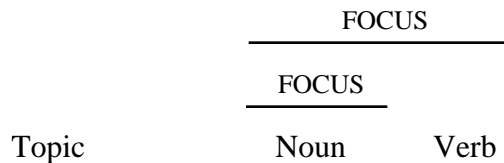


Figure 1: *Alternative extents of FOCUS in Lisu.*

Depending upon what is being questioned, possible permutations of the question of (7) are:

- (13) alě lǎ nya phwu àma gè-â
 [Ale to TOP money who give-Question]
 ‘Who gave the money to Ale?’
- (14) ása nya alě lǎ ásyì gè-â
 [Asa TOP Ale to what give-Question]
 ‘What did Asa give to Ale?’

Lisu uses the Interrogative *athà* ‘when’ and *ala* ‘where’ as the other question words (Hope 1974.159), placing them in penultimate position. There is, however, a second pattern available to the expression of questions, one that in surface appearance is more akin to Tagalog and Bella Coola. Parallel to the Tagalog

- (15) Sino ba ang gumawa noon
 [who question do that]
 ‘Who did that?’

Lisu has (Hope 1974.158):

- (16) ása lǎ dè-ǵ ma nya àma-â
 [Asa to hit-Dec one TOP who-Question]
 ‘Who is the one who hit Asa?’
- (17) alě lǎ phwugè-ǵ ma nya àma-â
 [Ale to money give-Dec one TOP who-Question]
 ‘Who is the one who gave the money to Ale?’

The responses to these require that they parallel the question (cf. sentence [4]):

- (18) ása lǎ dè-ǵ ma nya alě
 ‘The one who hit Asa is Alé’
- (19) alě lǎ phwu gè-ǵ ma nya ása
 ‘The one who gave the money to Ale is Ása’

This is because the questioned — and answering — PARTICULAR is the only non-Topic in the sentence. Everything else in the PROPOSITION, including the Verbs *dè* ‘hit’ and *gè* ‘give’, is within the TOPIC, that is, everything lies to the

left of *nya*, and, therefore, cannot be FOCUS.

It is, of course, possible to question the Verb, i.e., to construct questions that require yes-no responses. In Tagalog, this is done by using the familiar *ba* Question with no *wh*-word, e.g. *sino* ‘who’ (Schachter & Otnes 1972.502):

- (20) B=um=ili ba ng karne ang Nanay
 ‘Did Mother buy some meat?’

In Bella Coola, this is accomplished by using a different marker *a*, i.e., one that does not appear in *wh*-questions:

- (21) ’ak^wat-is-a ci-stan-cx ti-sx^wpanił-tx
 [buy-she.it-Question -mother- -deer-]
 ‘Did the mother buy the deer?’

In Lisu, the yes-no question is marked by *â* or *û*; *â* is the “tenseless” Declarative marked glossed, for example, with *dye* ‘go’ as ‘going, ‘goes’, ‘will go’ or ‘went’; and *û* is the “tensed” Declarative marker, that with *dye* produces the glosses ‘has gone’ or ‘went’ (Cf. Hope 1974.156). In each case, the question is indicated by altering the tone on the Declarative from mid to high-fall, much in the way English may convert a statement ²You’re ³góing¹T into a question ²You’re ³góing¹U. Thus (Hope 1974.157):

- (22) ása nya dye-â
 ‘Is Asa going?’

- (23) ása nya dye-û
 ‘Has Asa gone?’

The answers to questions of this type place the answering, i.e. ‘focussed’ or FOCUS information in final position. The response to (22) is then

- (24) ása nya dye-â
 ‘Asa is going’

Lisu appears **not** to closely associate FOCUS ≡ EVENT as West Greenlandic Eskimo did in its exploitation of sentence final position. It is the variable extent of the PROPOSITION that is also FOCUS, which is in contrast with WGE and which suggests this conclusion. FOCUS is not always sentence-final — as in (8) in response to (7) shows — nor is it always penultimate — as (18)

shows. This variation is summarized in Figure 1. But other questions and their answers demonstrate a still greater extent in the compass of FOCUS (Hope 1974.71):

- (25) ása nya ásyì yɛ-a
 [Asa TOP what do-Question]
 ‘What is Asa doing?’

A first response takes the shape:

- (26) ása nya ávɛ lɛ nɛtshì ká-ɔ
 [Asa TOP pig to medicine prick-Dec]
 ‘Asa is giving the pig an injection’

Here, everything to the right of *ása nya* is the FOCUS, i.e., ‘focussed’. And notice that in contradiction to Hope’s (1974.10) claim that “focussed” information is “never in any sense ‘given’” that the gloss for *ávɛ lɛ* in (26) is ‘the pig’, not ‘a pig’. Not only that, but answers such as

- (27) %ása nya ávɛ lɛ nya nɛtshì (nya) ká-ɔ

are inappropriate to (25). What is in fact FOCUS in (27), i.e., *ávɛ lɛ*, is marked as non-FOCUS. The schema of Figure 1 is, more generally, that of Figure 2; and the non-TOPIC may contain one or more members. One will **never**,

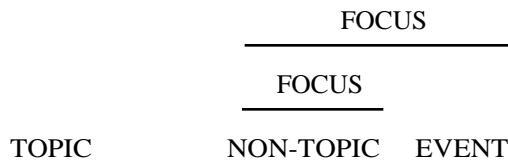


Figure 2: *Propositional organization in Lisu.*

however, encounter the schema of Figure 3, so that Hope’s (1974.13)

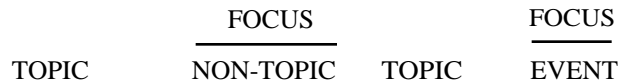


Figure 3: *A non-configuration in Lisu.*

assertion that there is but one ‘focus’/FOCUS per utterance must be altered to say that there is but one contiguously expressed FOCUS per PROPOSITION. The question of (25) has the equally possible answer of (28) (Hope 1974.71):

- (28) ása nya ávɛ̃ lǎ nǎtshì ká yɛ-ɔ̃
 [Asa TOP pig to medicine prick do-Dec]
 ‘Asa is (doing) giving the pig an injection’

in which the FOCUS continues to be *ávɛ̃ lǎ nǎtshì ká*; it is penultimate with *yɛ* being the non-FOCUS Verb of Figure 2, whereas in (26) the same sequence constitutes an utterance final expression of FOCUS.

Notice that the two responses of (26) and (28) each contain a Declarative mark *ɔ̃*, but differ in that the first has it on *ká* ‘prick’ while in the second it occurs with *yɛ* ‘do’. Verb-final languages — whether Amerindian (e.g. Navajo, Mojave, Yavapai, etc.) or other (e.g. Japanese, Korean, etc.) — frequently (but still not without exception, e.g. WGE and Eastern Armenian) possess a well developed Auxiliary system. And that is what we’ve found here with *yɛ* “attracting” the Declarative marker, leaving the Verb *ká* with a bare stem. In Lisu, the inflection includes, as well, a value for Aspect that usually occurs between the Verb and the Declarative. Lisu auxiliaries range semantically from specification of direction of motion “towards [some] presupposed point of reference” (Hope 1974.134), e.g. *dwà* ‘enter’, *du* ‘exit’, *dæ* ‘climb’, *yǎ* ‘descend’, *ye* ‘go’, and *la* ‘come’ as in (Hope 1974.134):

- (29) ása nya hipyɛ̃ wa tǎ la-ɔ̃
 [Asa TOP shack to run come-Dec]
 ‘Asa came running to the shack’

to modal-like specifications (e.g. *thyí* ‘weakly expedient’, *wa* ‘obligatory’, *tyǔ* ‘needful’, *thyǎ* ‘common, usual’, *tyú* ‘unprecedented’, and *tyè* ‘free from taboo/safe’), as in (Hope 1974.122):

- (30) ása nya ami khwa thyí-ɔ̃
 [Asa TOP field hoe expedient-Dec]
 ‘Asa may as well hoe the field’

to adjectival-like elaborations (e.g. *xǎ* ‘good’, *dyu* ‘fearsome’, *ŋa* ‘factual’, *sátu* ‘shameful’, *mà* ‘genuine’, etc.) as in (Hope 1974.130):

- (31) ása nya ami khwa xǎ-ɔ̃

[Asa TOP field hoe good-Dec]
 ‘It is good that Asa hoes the fields’

to more state-aspectual-like meanings (e.g. *tyɛ* ‘cause’, *kɔle* ‘happen, and *le* ‘become’) as in (Hope 1974.144):

(32) ása nya zànwɛ læ thùvə su tyɛ-ɔ
 [Asa TOP child to book study cause-Dec]
 ‘Asa made the children study [go to school]’

and finally to more verb/action-like modals (e.g. *və* ‘give’, *dze* ‘eat’, *dzwa* ‘help’, *dè* ‘beg’, *khwu* ‘call’, *syă* ‘fix/make’, *xù* ‘lead’, *mæ* ‘carry’, and *nayɪ* ‘ask’) as in (Hope 1974.141):

(33) ása nya alě læ ávɔ vwu dzà-ɔ
 [Asa TOP Ale to fowl sell eat-Dec]
 ‘Asa sold a chicken to Ale’

(34) ása nya alě læ hi gə syă-ɔ
 [Asa TOP Ale to house give make-Dec]
 ‘Asa allowed Ale to build a house’

These do not exhaust the specific Auxiliaries, nor their types, but it is sufficient to illustrate their grammar.

Our remarks on Lisu sentences have centered upon the expression of FOCUS; and we now turn to discussion of what —as in Bella Coola, Chatino, and Yogad— is called “Topic”

3. TOPIC

In discussing TOPIC in Lisu, we shall concentrate on the one available Lisu text, presented below in the Appendix. Since Hope (1974.8 et passim) and Li & Thompson (1976.472 et passim), following Hope, associate the sense of ‘topic’ with the presence of *nya*, a natural beginning point is to identify those places in the text where *nya* appears. If it is indeed the mark of TOPIC, we should expect a usage that is compatible with the grammars of TOPIC found in Bella Coola, Chatino, and Yogad. Initially, we may suppose that if *nya* is the mark of TOPIC, that it should be present in all but the initial utterance (or perhaps, the first few). If it is otherwise absent, we might expect a change in the TOPIC. If it doesn’t pattern like this, it may not be TOPIC at all.

3.1 *Variation and dimensions in Lisu TOPIC*

Let us begin then by inspecting the text for the occurrence of *nya*. The first four numbered utterances in “The Orphan and the Buffalo” are without *nya*. An absence of the grammar of TOPIC at the beginning of a narrative has not been uncommon. We found that the first two utterances in the Bella Coola text failed to partake in the grammatical pattern of TOPIC, using them to intro-

	Sentence Number															
With <i>nya</i>	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	15	17							
Without <i>nya</i>	1	2	3	4	9	10	14	16	18	19	20	21	22	23		
With <i>nya</i>	24	25	26	27	30	31	32	33	34	35	37	38	40	42	43	
Without <i>nya</i>					28	29						36	39	41		

Figure 4: *Occurrences of nya in a Lisu text.*

duce the story and the speaker’s relation to it; the Chatino story took ten sentences to establish the narrative thread; and the Yogad text employed its first five utterances to ground the story. In the Lisu text, the speaker uses the first four sentences to introduce the story in **(1)** and to set the characters in **(2)** - **(4)**: initially, two brothers and the miniature buffalo. It is only in **(5)** that some action occurs ... and the first *nya* is used. Having said this, we have to acknowledge that the distribution of *nya* in Figure 1 looks spotty. In the 39 utterances following the introduction, *nya* is present only in 24 of them. That is, *nya* is absent 38% of the time we would expect it to be present. This is not much of a pattern. But let us also note that in the 15 sentences in which *nya* is absent, 13 of them are quoting the direct speech of the characters.

But before we consider, the ‘exceptions’ in detail, let us look at the 24 utterances where *nya* is present. The first occurrence of *nya* is in **(5)**, where it follows a longer sequence:⁵

(5) áŋà-bùlu-à thì ma dyu-à bæ-à nya
 [buffalo-ant-DIM one one have-DEC say-DEC TOP
 ‘And so the younger brother was made to look after it daily’

⁵ Examples from the text will be cited using their textual numbers, and they will be placed in boldface to differentiate them from other examples of Lisu.

yí	nyizà	lú	tyɛ-ǵ	thì	nyi	thì
WH	Y.Bro.	watch	cause-DEC	one	day	one
nyi	lè					
day	ADV]					

The free gloss of the Lisu preceding *nya* in (5) is ‘it’, but a closer gloss might be ‘And so the younger brother was made to look after the miniature buffalo they had, day after day’. The Lisu material *áŋǵ-bùlu-ǵ thì ma dyu-ǵ* is an exact repetition of the Lisu content in (4). This grammar of repetition immediately recalls the Yogad grammar of using the position before *ay* to reach into the preceding utterance and identify some portion that would constitute the connection with the current one. The second appearance of *nya* in (6) is analogous to (5). The Lisu phrase *lú tyɛ ŋu bǵ-ǵ nya*, that begins (6), repeats material that was used in (5), *lú tyɛ* ‘made to look after’. The same occurs in (7), where the verbal link to (6) is *pùxwá thywè ɽə-ǵ* ‘said’. In (8), the sequence *áŋǵ-bùlu-ǵ nya* ‘the buffalo’ has to reach back to (6) to establish a connection, but it does so. In (32), *khwù sǵtyi-ǵ ŋu bǵ-ǵ nya* ‘after he had hidden it’, repeats the last clause of (31), *khwù sǵtyi-ǵ*.⁶

These uses do not exhaust the use of *nya* in at least two ways. First, there is additional material that may accompany and precede *nya*, and this material is not part of the topicalized content itself, but modifies the way the content is topicalized. Second, more than one *nya* may appear in the same utterance. We will consider the presence of the modification of *nya* first. In (5), *nya* is accompanied by *bǵ-ǵ*, and in (6) by *ŋu bǵ-ǵ*. We thus have three expressions to consider:⁷

nya *bǵ-ǵ nya* *ŋu bǵ-ǵ nya*

Figure 5: *Alternate expressions using nya.*

Nya alone occurs 13 times in (8), (11), (17), (24), (25), (32), (33), (34), (35), (37), (38), (40), and (42). The *bǵ-ǵ nya* implementation appears 6 times in (5), (7), (15) twice, (30), and (31), while the *ŋu bǵ-ǵ nya* expression is present 11 times in (6) twice, (7), (12), (13), (17) twice, (26), (27), (32), and (43). We

⁶ Although Hope glosses (32) as ‘And then the people all went home, the friends that is, but she stayed’, I think that one which better reflects the Lisu would be ‘When he had hidden it, her friends [the sisters of the one with the green goat] returned home’.

⁷The reasons for listing the forms in this order will become clear below.

may begin to get a sense of the difference by noticing some of the glosses that associate with the three:

‘If’	<i>nya</i> in (34), (37), (40), (42)
‘If’	<i>bɣə-ɔ̄ nya</i> in (30)
‘And then after’	<i>ŋu bɣə-ɔ̄ nya</i> in (6), (13), (27), (32)
‘When in fact’	<i>ŋu bɣə-ɔ̄ nya</i> in (12), (17)
‘Being so’	<i>ŋu bɣə-ɔ̄ nya</i> in (26), (43)

The *if*'s in (34), (37), (40), and (42) seem to be different from that in (30). In (30), the miniature buffalo is speaking to the orphan. The miniature buffalo knows that the orphan wants a wife. This has become apparent from their conversation in (18) - (23). And in the sentence immediately preceding (30), the orphan identifies the girl he wants. The piece of information being established, it might even be possible to see a ‘since you want her’ in (30) as easily as a ‘if you want her’. The *if*'s in (34), (37), (40), and (42) are of a different sort. In (34), the orphan and the girl are talking after he has stolen and hidden her coat. She says *nwu sɔ̄tyi-ɔ̄ nya* ‘if you stole it’ twice, once in (34) and again in (37):

(34) zàthyì-ŋ̄ nwu sɔ̄tyi-ɔ̄ nya átí lí v̄ə-ə̄
 orphan-VOC you hide-DEC TOP little return give-IMP
 “Orphan, if you have hidden it, please give it back”

(35) ɲwa nya mà sɔ̄tyi
 I TOP not hide
 “I didn’t hide it”

(36) nwu sɔ̄tyi-ɔ̄ ɲu phá
 you hide-DEC fact EXPECT
 “I expect you really did.”

(37) nwu sɔ̄tyi-ɔ̄ nya átí lí v̄ə mà
 you hide-DEC TOP little return give PLEAD
 If you hid it please give it back to me, I beg you”

The difference between this *if* and the one in (30) is certainty. The activity is not only not a reality in (34) and (37); it is only a suspicion. The *if*'s in (40) and (42) are of the same sort. The orphan is explaining the conditions for the return of the coat, and they depend upon the girl loving him:

- (40) *nwu* *ɪwɑ* *nwe-ɑ* *nya* *ɪwɑ* *nwu* *lé lí*
 you me want-DEC TOP I you to return
 ‘‘If you will love me I’ll give it back’’
- ɤ̀-ɑ*
 give-DEC
- (41) *zàthyì-ù* *nwe-ɑ* *ɪju*
 orphan-VOC want-DEC fact
 ‘‘Orphan, I will love you’’
- (42) *á* *nwe-ɑ* *nya* *sɑ* *khù* *pɛ* *ye-ɑ* *nwu* *lé*
 ah want-DEC TOP three years reach go-DEC you to
 ‘‘O.K., if you will love me, in three years time I will give it back’’
- lí* *ɤ̀-ɑ*
 return give-DEC
 to you’’

It is only a possibility that the girl will love him in (40). She declares that she will, but it will take three years to make it certain. So in (42), the orphan continues to say ‘if’ and to use *nya* alone. This contrast in status — <not realized, but certain> in (30) vs. <not realized, but less certain> in (34), (37), (40), and (42) — contrasts in turn with a third *if*. In (21), the miniature buffalo and the orphan are talking, and the buffalo wants to know why the boy rides him so much. He conjectures:

- (21) *nwu* *zàmə* *nwe-ɑ*, *ɪwɑ* *bɛ* *ɤ̀-ɑ*
 you wife want-DEC me say give-IMP
 ‘‘If you want a wife, tell me’’

Here, the *if* is one of pure supposition and is the least certain of the three *if*’s. In this context, we can look at (7) from the text and comment reasonably on the two expressions, *ɪju bɛ-ɑ nya* and *bɛ-ɑ nya*:

- (7) *pùxwá* *thywè* *ɤ̀-ɑ* *ɪju* *bɛ-ɑ* *nya*, *há*
 speech speak give-DEC fact say-DEC TOP soon
 and said’,
- mèkhè* *bɛ-ɑ* *nya* *nwu* *kúku* *nwu*

evening say-DEC TOP you E.Bro. you
 “This evening your elder brother and his wife will give you

málə̀, nwu lə́ hi bwe ʋə̀-ə̀
 E.Bro.Wi. you to house apportion give-DEC
 your share of the household goods”.

A closer gloss than the one Hope gives to this might be ‘[He] spoke [to him thus], “When it is evening, your ...”’ The first expression contains *ŋu bɛ-ə nya* because the previous sentence (6) establishes that after three years the miniature buffalo spoke up. Sentence (7) begins with that now established fact. The second expression contains *bɛ-ə nya* because evening is certain, but not realized. It has the same combination of properties as that in (30).

The most established in this sequence are those pieces of content marked by *ŋu bɛ-ə nya*. The ‘after X’ and ‘having Xed’ and ‘being X’ glosses all reflect the combination of <realized, certain>. Notice that both the ‘when’ glosses given to *ŋu bɛ-ə nya* in (12) and (17) are not the kind that can have ‘if’ substituted. In each instance, the event is realized: ‘When in fact they did return home’ in (12) and ‘When they had finished the building’ in (17). All eleven usages of *ŋu bɛ-ə nya* in the text are of this sort. Something contingent, an event, is made not contingent, and established.

We may observe now that everyone of the simple participant-like contents (i.e., nouns and pronouns) that precedes some expression containing *nya* appears with *nya* alone, and never with the other two expressions of TOPIC. It is as if there are two opposed semantics in Figure 5. First, there are the established, extant realities on the left extreme and the unestablished, non-extant contingencies on the right: things-that-are and things-that-can-happen. Each piece of content qualified by TOPIC brings its own contribution to the complex, and what is lacking is completed by selecting from the choices in Figure 5. If little is lacking, i.e., if it is a noun like *zəthy-ə nya* ‘orphan’ in (25) or pronoun like *ŋwa nya* ‘I’ in (24), only *nya* is needed to set them forth as <realized, certain> in that context. So *nya* contributes the least to this complex. Because *nya* contributes the least of the three expressions to the establishment of <realization> and <certainty>, combining it with clausal, i.e. not-already-real content, produces a result that has the weakest status of the three choices *nya*, *bɛ-ə nya*, and *ŋu bɛ-ə nya*, and we get a sense of ‘if’ of the speculative kind. Using *bɛ-ə nya* reduces the uncertainty, and using *ŋu bɛ-ə nya* removes it completely. Figure 6 summarizes the relevant discussion so far.

3.2 *The absence of TOPIC in Lisu*

With this background, we can now look at the instances in which some form of *nya* is absent in the course of the narrative. Although all instances in which *nya* is absent occur in quoted speech,⁸ not all quoted speech fails to have *nya*. Sentences (24), (30), (34), (37), (38), (40), and (42) are the instances which are quoted speech and which contain *nya*. In discussing (34), (37), (40), and (42), we have provided the basis for allowing expression in quoted material. But what is the motivation for confining its absence to quoted material? The examples from the internal portion of the text in which *nya* is absent are these:

Commands:	(9), (10), (18), (21)
Yes/no Questions:	(19), (20), (23), (28)
Retorts:	(22), (29), (41)
Contradictions:	(36), (39)
Repetitions:	(14), (16)

First, let us dispose of (14) and (16), the two cases of non-*nya* sentences that are not directly quoted speech. Each one repeats the end of the preceding sentence, duplicating the non-TOPIC, FOCUS content.

(13) ... the leḷ nwe-ḷ
 this only want-DEC]
 ... he took only this'

(14) the leḷ nwe-ḷ
 [this only want-DEC]
 'He only took this'

and

(15) ... hi syă-ḷ
 house make-DEC]
 ... they built a house'

(16) lūkhwa hi syă-ḷ
 [lavender house make-DEC]

⁸ Except, of course, for the initial introductory portion. The two exceptions to this "all" are (14) and (16), which will be discussed immediately below.

‘They built a lavender-bush house’⁹

Both (13) and (15) contain *nya*, as we might expect, and (14) and (16) simply are FOCUS tags conjoined to the preceding content to amplify by repetition in (14) or by adding a piece of content, *lǎkhwa* ‘lavender’, in (16).

It is interesting that the remaining instances fall into such a small number of well-defined rhetorical usages: commands, yes/no questions, retorts, and contradictions. It must mean something that this is so. If we follow the emerging semantic character of TOPIC in Lisu, we may suppose that these speech types are of the sort that may lack, contextually, the properties of <realization> and <certainty>. Providing no support for the semantics of *nya*, TOPIC is absent from them.¹⁰ Plausibly, commands, yes/no questions, and contradictions share a sense of out-of-left-field unexpectedness and a corresponding lack of <realization> and <certainty>. That is, commands, yes/no questions, and contradictions may lack contextual motivation and constitute isolated irruptions into the text. Retorts to questions and commands as (22) and (29) or retorts to a proposition as in (41) share something with the repetitions. They merge their content with their verbal context, and depending upon it rhetorically, they are all FOCUS. Note these parallels:

(20) *nwu zàmə nwe-ǎ*
 [you wife want-QUEST]
 “Do you want a wife?”

(21) *nwu zàmə nwe-ǎ, ɿwa bǣ ʋə-ǎ*
 [you wife want-DEC me say give-IMP]
 “If you want a wife, tell me”

(22) *nwe-ǎ*
 [want-DEC]
 “I do.”

Sentence (22) repeats *nwe-ǎ* ‘want-DEC’ from the preceding two utterances as response. And a similar relation holds for (29):

⁹ I have modified Hope’s gloss of (16) to highlight the purpose of the repetition.

¹⁰ Note that this does not claim that all examples of commands, yes/no questions, retorts, and contradictions will contextually lack <realization> and <certainty>, just that these are types of language use that may ... and in this text do ... not share in <realization> and <certainty>.

- (28) kǎnyá la-ǵ bæ-ǵ zàthyì-ù nwu ali thǐ
 [pool come say-DEC orphan-VOC you which one
 So, “Orphan, which one do you want?”

ma nwe-ǵ
 one want-QUEST]

- (29) gwe bæthyì nyǐthyì thi ma nwe-ǵ
 [there coat green one one want-DEC]
 “There, the one with the green coat”

The pairing here is almost identical with the repetition between (15) and (16) cited above: *house built* and then *lavender-bush house built*. Here, we first have ‘which one want’ and then ‘green coat one want’. Sentences (40) and (41) share a repeated *nwe-ǵ* ‘want’.

4. Conclusion

Assuming that the grammar we have discussed in fact constitutes the implementation of TOPIC in Lisu, we can draw several conclusions.¹¹ First,

¹¹ Hope (1974:58-62) discusses an additional form *xə* that he (Hope 1974:54) designates “secondary topicalization”. “One of the major differences between the two kinds of ‘topic’ is that the *nya* topics are presupposed and the *xə* topics are entailed” (Hope 1974:58).

We may examine briefly three illustrative sentences (Hope 1974:61):

- (i) ása nya thsibe thyě-ǵ / alě xə áthà dè-ǵ
 [Asa TOP banjo play-DEC / Ale TOP knife forge-DEC]
 ‘Asa was playing the banjo and Ale was forging a knife’
- (ii) ása nya thsibe thyě-ǵ / alě nya áthà dè-ǵ
 [Asa TOP banjo play-DEC / Ale TOP knife forge-DEC]
 ‘Asa was playing the banjo, but Ale was forging a knife’
- (iii) ása xə thsibe thyě-ǵ / alě xə áthà dè-ǵ
 [Asa TOP banjo play-DEC / Ale TOP knife forge-DEC]
 ‘(Both Asa and Ale were doing something) Asa was playing the banjo and Ale was forging a knife’

It is difficult to draw too much from these contrasts, but they suggest that *nya* may put forth its content as <realized & certain>; it **establishes** the condition, while *xə* simply **indexes** it as already there. This would be consistent with the descriptive information in parentheses in (iii) and with the gloss ‘and’ in (i) as opposed to ‘but’ in (ii). Sentence (33) — as well as (35) and (38) — add another illustration of the power to establish that *nya* has and the sense of contrast that can follow from it:

- (33) yí nya tyǎ-ǵ
 [he TOP be-DEC]
 but she stayed’

the semantic construction of TOPIC in Lisu —if we continue to believe that that is what we are encountering here — differs from Bella Coola, Chatino,

The text “The Orphan and the Buffalo” contains only four examples of *xə*:

- (13) bwe ɣə ɣə-ɰ ŋu bɣə-ɔ nya yí
 [apportion give COMF-DEC fact say-DEC TOP he
 ‘After they had given him his share, he took the buffalo’s
- xə* áŋà-bùlu-à ŋù zwu-ɔ hínyi
 ENT buffalo-miniature-DIM words take-DEC CAUSE
 advice, obeyed and thus took only three parcels of milled rice
- yí ŋù nanǎ-ɔ hínyi dza-phwu sɔ pà
 he words listen-DEC CAUSE rice-white three parcels
 and three of salt’
- tshàbu sɔ pà the leà nwe-ɔ
 salt three parcels this only want-DEC]
- (27) dye ɣə ŋu bɣə-ɔ nya wusa ámì xə
 [go COMF fact say-DEC TOP Wusa daughter ENT]
 ‘After they had done this, the daughters of Wusa came to play in the
- ɔdyɔ kǎnyá la-ɔ lwùbwɛ wa
 water play come-DEC pool at]
 water at the pool’
- (31) áŋà-bùlu-à the bɣə ɣə-ɔ bɣə-ɔ nya,
 [buffalo-ant-DIM this say give-DEC say-DEC TOP
 ‘The miniature buffalo said this, and so the orphan boy went and
- zàthyì-à xə yí bəthyì dye khwù sɔtyì-ɔ
 orphan-DIM ENT he coat go steal hide-DEC]
 stole he coat to hide it’
- (43) áthe ŋu bɣə-ɔ nya wusa ámì xə
 [this fact say-DEC TOP Wusa daughter ENT
 ‘This being the case, Wusa’s daughter married the orphan boy’
- zàthyì-à lé fwudzà-ɔ ŋu
 orphan-DIM to marry-DEC fact]

One interesting observation is that (13), (31), and (43) all contain actions done in accord with earlier instructions. In (13), the orphan has previously — in (10) — been instructed to take only three parcels of milled rice and three of salt. He acts in accord with this in (13). In (31), the orphan has been previously advised by the buffalo — in (30) — to steal the girls coat. In (31), he does what he has been told. In (43), the green-coated girl follows up a previous promise to love the orphan and marries him. Sentence (27) is the only one that is not obviously in accord with this, but equally, it does not contradict the pattern. And the textual behavior of *xə* fits the suggestion about (i) - (iii), that *xə* indexes what has been established, is ‘in accord with’.

At this point no more can be said of *xə*.

and Yogad. Bella Coola is pointilistically concerned with the narrative connection of each utterance with the preceding through (usually) one PARTICIPANT. Chatino tracks a central PARTICIPANT through the narrative, identifying him/her grammatically by elision wherever he/she appears and the other PARTICIPANTS by *ne*⁷. This is a less compulsive take on the issue of TOPIC. It employs a two valued system of central and peripheral TOPICS that may also be present in Bella Coola if the deictic suffixes are included. The Bella Coola suffixes would be comparable to elision in Chatino, but still the essential pattern in Bella Coola is the one of micro-management of PARTICIPANT tracking. Yogad reaches back to the preceding utterance as does Bella Coola, but the concern is not confined to the particulars of PARTICIPANTS. Any commonality will suffice. Now, Lisu is clearly unlike Bella Coola and unlike Chatino, both of which focus on PARTICIPANTS. Lisu is more like Yogad in allowing connections to hold between larger pieces of organized content, whole propositions or whole circumstances, but also constraining it at times to a single PARTICIPANT.

Second, the semantics which these languages use to stitch narratives together differs. Lisu is concerned with the status of shared content as <realized> and <certain>. It uses this property to establish pieces of a PROPOSITION as TOPIC. Lisu differs in that, among the languages we have examined, it alone appears to have degrees of TOPIC.¹² Recall the ‘if’, ‘when’, ‘having Xed’, etc. uses of TOPIC grammar which do **not** recapitulate, but which **create** new positions from which to absorb forthcoming content.¹³ There is a second dimension of degrees to TOPIC when *xə* is added to the mix. While *nya*, *bæ-ḡ nya*, and *ŋu bæ-ḡ nya* grade the dimension of <realized & certain>, the contrast between *nya* and *xə* divvies the dimension of <establishment> vs. <acknowledgment>. The former *nya* acts to <establish> the content of <realized & certain>, while *xə* acts to <acknowledge> the presence of <realized & certain>. In all its occurrences, examples cited and textual, *xə* is constrained to following noun-like content. Unlike *nya*, it is confined to the <establishment> vs. <acknowledgment> dimension and does not partake in the gradation of <realization & certainty>. This complexity in the semantic organization of TOPIC is absent from the other languages we have looked at in detail.

Third, because Lisu TOPIC has a more global character, it permits multiple occurrences in the same utterance. The Lisu sentence (35) has **five** TOPICS

¹² I guess the TOPIC differences in Bella Coola and Chatino are different kinds and not different grades of the same thing. But that remains to be discussed.

¹³ Recall also the degrees of FOCUS that were found in Haida.

(*nime* ‘today’, *ngwa* ‘I’, *nwu-hi* ‘your house’, *ása* ‘Asa’, and *yí-nápu* ‘his ear’):¹⁴

- (35) *nime nya ngwa nya nwu hi basyia ása*
 [today TOP I TOP you house beside Asa
læ yí nápu bæ̀lætsha fwu ʔə̀-ɿ
 to he ear **slap** send give-Dec]
 ‘This morning beside your house I gave Asa **a slap** on his ear’

This is something that is beyond the grammars of Bella Coola and Chatino. Only Yogad uses its grammar of TOPIC to create multiple connections like Lisu. It is possible in Lisu and Yogad because TOPIC is not constrained to managing PARTICIPANTS, but deals as well with larger arrays of content.

If they appear so different, how then are all these grammatical phenomena examined so far TOPIC? What they share, and what TOPIC accomplishes, is the creation of an orientation toward incoming content. The imperative that creates TOPIC is that speakers must know where they are in a narrative or conversation.¹⁵ Unknown experience (whether language or otherwise) is accommodated and made sense of by relating it to past experience. TOPIC is the language response to that demand. Nothing forces a prior prescription that the accommodation, TOPIC, should be implemented in a specific way, only that it will happen. And that is what creates and characterizes TOPIC.

Appendix

The following narrative text is from pages 169-172 of Hope, Edward. 1974. *The Deep Syntax of Lisu Sentences: A transformational case grammar* (= Pacific Linguistics, Series B, N° 34). Canberra: Australian National University. The abbreviations used in the second line of grammatical and lexical glosses are explained at the end. There is one important difference between the original printing of the text and its form here. The two versions differ in their total of numbered utterances. This one has 43, and Hope’s, 42. This is because the distribution of Lisu material into printed clauses differs.

¹⁴ “Where an NP is the focus an optional deletion of the topic marker *nya* can apply to topics” (Hope 1974.13). Where there are many TOPIC elements, as in (35), “the deletion is not applied to the first few ‘to the left’” (Hope 1974.13); and the PARTICIPANTS that are not followed by *nya*, but which remain TOPICS, nevertheless, are each marked “by a slight fall in pitch”.

¹⁵ TOPIC acts like a gyroscope to counter disorientation.

Hope makes use of a solidus, i.e. the symbol /, which is not used below. For example, the first three numbered utterances as printed in Hope (1974:169) are:

1. nó anyí thì ma dyu-ḡ / nyì syí / yíwà
 [there last-year one one have-DEC / two siblings/ they]
 There is a story of long ago. The two brothers.
2. nyì syí áṅḡ amyâ ma dyu-ḡ / áṅḡ-bùlu-ḡ
 [two siblings buffalo many ones have-DEC / buffalo-ant-DIM]
 ‘The two of them had many buffalo.’
3. thì ma dyu-ḡ / áṅḡ-bùlu-ḡ thì ma dyu-ḡ
 [they two siblings / buffalo-ant-DIM many ones have-DEC
 bḡ]
 say
 They had a miniature buffalo. And so

The use of “/” is not explained, but it seems apparent that the Arabic numerals used at the beginning of each line are placed for typological convenience, and the “/” are, in fact, marking the divisions between Lisu utterances. One clear indication of this is that the last item in 3. is *bḡ*. It is followed in 4. by *-ḡ*, its Declarative suffix attached to *bḡ*. The gloss of 3. is interrupted and is completed in 4. with “the younger brother was made to look after it daily.” In presenting the text here, I have segmented it again according to the use of “/”, so Hope has three numbered items for this piece of the text, whereas I have five.

The Lisu text also uses the comma as a mark of internal punctuation. It is not explained how this is manifest in the telling of the story, or whether it is significant. We may note here that where it appears, it always follows *nya*.

The Orphan and the Buffalo

- (1) nó anyí thì ma dyu-ḡ
 [there last-year one one have-DEC]
 ‘There is a story of long ago’
- (2) nyì syí
 [two siblings]
 ‘The two brothers’

(3) yíwà nyì syí áŋà amyâ ma dyu-ǵ
 [they two siblings buffalo many ones have-DEC]
 ‘The two of them had many buffalo’

(4) áŋà-bùlu-ǵ¹⁶ thì ma dyu-ǵ
 [buffalo-ant-DIM one one have-DEC]
 ‘They had a miniature buffalo’

(5) áŋà-bùlu-ǵ thì ma dyu-ǵ bǵ-ǵ nya
 [buffalo-ant-DIM one one have-DEC say-DEC TOP
 ‘And so the younger brother was made to look after it daily’

yí¹⁷ nyizà lú tyǵ-ǵ thì nyi thì
 WH Y.Bro. watch cause-DEC one day one

nyi lè]
 day ADV

(6) lú tyǵ iju bǵ-ǵ nya, sǵ khù lú
 [watch cause fact say-DEC TOP, three year watch
 ‘And then, after looking after it for three years, that miniature

ʋə-ǵ iju bǵ-ǵ nya, áŋà-bùlu-ǵ gu ma
 COMP-DEC fact say-DEC TOP, buffalo-ant-DIM that one
 buffalo spoke to the orphan boy

zàthyì-ǵ lé pùxwá thywè ʋə-ǵ
 orphan-DIM to speech speak give-DEC]

(7) pùxwá thywè ʋə-ǵ iju bǵ-ǵ nya, hǎ
 [speech speak give-DEC fact say-DEC TOP soon
 and said’,

¹⁶ Here and in (5) and in (6), the phrase *áŋà-bùlu-ǵ* is glossed grammatically by Hope as ‘buffalo-ant-DIM’. Thereafter, the same phrase is glossed as ‘miniature-buffalo-DIM’. Since *áŋà* appears alone in (3) as ‘buffalo’, the implication is that *bùlu* ‘ant’ is used to also mean ‘miniature’. The first gloss is the most grammatically literal.

¹⁷ The form *yí*, glossed here as ‘WH’, is elsewhere glossed as ‘he’ and ‘one’. Elsewhere, Hope (1974:107) comments on *yí* that it is “a general relative marker introduced by the pronominalization transformations”. Apparently, it has ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘one’, and ‘a’ among its English equivalents.

mèkhè bɛ-ɔ nya nwu kúku nwu
 evening say-DEC TOP you E.Bro. you
 ‘‘This evening your elder brother and his wife will give you

málà, nwu lé hi bwe ʋè-ɔ
 E.Bro.Wi. you to house apportion give-DEC]
 your share of the household goods’’.

- (8) áṅà-bùlu-à nya the pùxwá thywè ʋè-ɔ
 [miniature-buffalo-DIM TOP so speech speak give-DEC]
 ‘‘So said the miniature buffalo’’
- (9) zàthyù nwu ásyì-é thà nwe
 [orphan-VOC you what don’t want]
 ‘‘Orphan, don’t you take anything.’’
- (10) dza phwu sɔ pà tshàbu sɔ pà the
 [rice white three parcels salt three parcels this
 Three parcels of milled rice, and three parcels of salt — take only
 leà nwe’
 only want]
 this’’.
- (11) áṅà-bùlu-à nya the thywè ʋə ʋə-ɔ
 [miniature-buffalo-DIM TOP this speak give COMP-DEC]
 ‘‘The buffalo said this to him’’
- (12) atsítshi yìdye ʋə iju bɛ-ɔ nya yí kúku
 [actually return COMP fact say-DEC TOP he E.Bro.
 ‘‘And when in fact they did return home, his elder brother and his
 yí málà yí lé hi bwe ʋè-ɔ
 he E.Bro.Wi. he to house apportion give-DEC]
 wife gave him his share of the household goods’’
- (13) bwe ʋè ʋə-ɔ iju bɛ-ɔ nya yí
 [apportion give COMP-DEC fact say-DEC TOP he
 ‘‘After they had given him his share, he took the buffalo’s

xə áŋà-bùlu-à ɲù zwu-à hínyi
 ENT buffalo-miniature-DIM words take-DEC CAUSE
 advice, obeyed and thus took only three parcels of milled rice

yí ɲù nanǎ-à hínyi dza-phwu sǎ pà
 he words listen-DEC CAUSE rice-white three parcels
 and three of salt'

tshàbu sǎ pà the leà nwe-à
 salt three parcels this only want-DEC]

- (14) the leà nwe-à
 [this only want-DEC]
 'He only took this'¹⁸

- (15) bæ-à bæ-à nya yíwà nyì zù bæ-à
 [say-DEC say-DEC TOP they two people say-DEC
 'Later they both built a house'

- nya hi syǎ-à
 TOP house make-DEC]
 (16) lǔkhwa hi syǎ-à
 [lavender house make-DEC]
 'They built a house out of a lavender bush'

- (17) syǎ ɤə iju bæ-à nya, syǎ dù
 [make COMP fact say-DEC TOP make appear
 'When they had finished the building, and the house was complete,

le-à iju bæ-à nya, áŋà-bùlu-à nya
 become-DEC fact say-DEC TOP buffalo-miniature-DIM TOP
 the miniature buffalo told him',

yí lé bæ ɤə-à]
 he to say give-DEC

- (18) dzwó dzwə yí kányá gǎ ye

¹⁸ In Hope's translation, there is no English gloss assigned to this Lisu portion of the Lisu text. The Lisu repeats a clause in the preceding utterance that seems to have the gloss I have given it here.

[there there he after follow go]

“Go down there and follow them.

- (19) zàthyî-û nwu thî nyi thî nyi ɪwɑ the
 [orphan-VOC you one day one day me this]
 Orphan, about your riding me this much day after day,

ké dzî-ɑ ma ásyì wúnyi dzî-à
 amount ride-DEC NOM what CAUSE ride-QUEST]
 why do you do it?

- (20) nwu zàmə nwe-â
 [you wife want-QUEST]
 Do you want a wife?

- (21) nwu zàmə nwe-ɑ, ɪwɑ bæ ʋə-à
 [you wife want-DEC me say give-IMP]
 If you want a wife, tell me”

- (22) nwe-ɑ
 [want-DEC]
 “I do.

- (23) haməsà ali ʋɛ-â
 [now which do-QUEST]
 But at the moment what can I do?

- (24) ɪwɑ nya ásyì-é mà dyu
 [me TOP what not have]
 I have nothing”

- (25) zàthyî-ɑ nya the bæ-ɑ
 [orphan-DIM TOP this say-DEC]
 ‘The orphan said this’

- (26) áthe ɪju bæ-ɑ nya gwé lwùbɛ yí khə-ɑ
 [this fact say-DEC TOP there pool WH edge-to]
 ‘This being so, “Let us both go over there to the edge of the pool”

dye-ɪ àzwù nyì zɪ]

- go-IMP we two person
- (27) dye ʋə iju bɛ-ɔ̄ nya wusa ámì xə
 [go COMP fact say-DEC TOP Wusa daughter ENT]
 ‘After they had done this, the daughters of Wusa came to play in the
 ɔ̄dyɔ̄ kǎnyá la-ɔ̄ lwùbwɛ wa
 water play come-DEC pool at]
 water at the pool’
- (28) kǎnyá la-ɔ̄ bɛ-ɔ̄ zàthyì-ù nwu ali thĩ
 [play come say-DEC orphan-VOC you which one
 So, “Orphan, which one do you want?”
- ma nwe-ɔ̄
 one want-QUEST]
- (29) gwe bəthyì nyĩthyì thi ma nwe-ɔ̄
 [there coat green one one want-DEC]
 “There, the one with the green coat”
- (30) zàthyì-ù nwe-ɔ̄ bɛ-ɔ̄ nya gwa yí bəthyì
 [orphan-VOC want say-DEC TOP there one coat
 “Orphan, if you want her, go there and steal her coat so that
 ámé dye khwù sɔ̄tyì
 quickly go steal hide]
 you can hide it”
- (31) áŋà-bùlu-ɔ̄ the bɛ ʋə-ɔ̄ bɛ-ɔ̄ nya,
 [buffalo-ant-DIM this say give-DEC say-DEC TOP
 ‘The miniature buffalo said this, and so the orphan boy went and
 zàthyì-à xə yí bəthyì dye khwù sɔ̄tyì-ɔ̄
 orphan-DIM ENT he coat go steal hide-DEC]
 stole he coat to hide it’
- (32) khwù sɔ̄tyì-ɔ̄ iju bɛ-ɔ̄ nya, swu nya
 [steal hide-DEC fact say-DEC TOP people TOP
 ‘And then the people all went home, the friends that is,

yìdye ʋə gwu-ɹ yí thywèphæ thè
return COMP all-DEC he friends sort]

- (33) yí nya tyǎ-ǻ
[he TOP be-DEC]
but she stayed'
- (34) zàthyì-ù nwu sɛtyi-ǻ nya átí lí ʋè-ǻ
[orphan-VOC you hide-DEC TOP little return give-IMP]
“Orphan, if you have hidden it, please give it back”
- (35) ɪwà nya mà sɛtyi
[I TOP not hide]
“I didn’t hide it”
- (36) nwu sɛtyi-ǻ ɪju phá
[you hide-DEC fact EXPECT]
“I expect you really did.
- (37) nwu sɛtyi-ǻ nya átí lí ʋè mà
[you hide-DEC TOP little return give PLEAD]
If you hid it please give it back to me, I beg you”
- (38) á ɪwà nya mà lí ʋè
[ah I TOP not return give]
“Oh, no, I won’t give it back.
- (39) sɛtyi-ǻ ɪwà sɛtyi-ǻ ɪju
[hide-DEC I hide-DEC fact]
I did hide it.
- (40) nwu ɪwà nwe-ǻ nya ɪwà nwu láé lí
[you me want-DEC TOP I you to return]
If you will love me I’ll give it back”
- ʋè-ǻ
give-DEC]
- (41) zàthyì-ù nwe-ǻ ɪju
[orphan-VOC want-DEC fact]
“Orphan, I will love you”

- (42) á nwe-ǵ nya sǵ khù pǵ ye-ǵ nwu láe
 [ah want-DEC TOP three years reach go-DEC you to
 “O.K., if you will love me, in three years time I will give it back

lí ʋə-ǵ
 return give-DEC]
 to you”

- (43) áthe ɿju bǵ-ǵ nya wusa ámi xə
 [this fact say-DEC TOP Wusa daughter ENT
 ‘This being the case, Wusa’s daughter married the orphan boy’

zàthyì-ǵ láe fwudzà-ǵ ɿju
 orphan-DIM to marry-DEC fact]

ABBREVIATIONS

ADV	Adverb marker	IMP	Imperative
CAUSE	Cause	NOM	?
COMP	Completive aspect	PLEAD	Plead
ENT	Entailment marker	QUEST	Question
EXPECT	Expect	TOP	Topic
DEC	Declarative	VOC	Vocative
DIM	Diminutive	WH	Relative PRO-article

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