

# Chapter 19

## A Rizzian analysis of the left periphery in Sewama Mende

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Rizzi (1997, 2001) proposes a universal structure for the left periphery. In this paper I show that data from Mende, a Mande language spoken in Sierra Leone, supports Rizzi's analysis. I show that the Mende left periphery is bracketed by Force and Finite Phrases, with Focus, and Topic constructions between. I further propose that all the functional heads in the left periphery in Mende are head-initial with surface variations resulting from movement of focused and topicalized constituents into the specifier positions of their respective heads.

### 1 Introduction

Rizzi (1997, 2001) argues that Larson's (1988) theory of an articulated VP and Pollock's (1989) work leading to an expanded inflectional level should likewise be extended to the complementizer layer. He proposes that the complementizer system looks upward, expressing force, that is whether the sentence is a question, exclamation, statement, etc., while also looking downward, expressing finiteness, which interacts with the expression of tense, mood, agreement, etc. in the TP. In this paper I show that the CP structure of Mende, a Mande language spoken in Sierra Leone, supports Rizzi's analysis. While there is a small body of research on the syntactic structure of Mande languages (c.f. Mahou: Koopman 1984, Bambara: Koopman (1992), Kpelle: Travis (1989), Dafing: Sande et al. (2019)), this work is the first generative syntax analysis of the left periphery of a language in the Mande family. As such it provides an important contribution to the understanding of the left periphery and provides a baseline for future research on Mande languages.



Adamou et al. (2018) note that Information Structure categories, including focus and topic, have been assumed to be universal, being expressed through a variety of language-specific means. In light of this, a more detailed description and analysis of African languages, and even more specifically Mande languages, is warranted.

It has been claimed that the Mande languages have a strict SOVX word order (Creissels 2005, Nikitina 2009).<sup>1</sup> Mende is canonically SOVX with the subject and object preceding the verb, and with adjuncts surfacing post-verbally. In (1) the subject *Mary* and direct object *nikeisia* ‘the cows’ precede the verb *gbɛ* ‘chase,’ while the locative phrase *kpaa hun* ‘on the farm’ and temporal phrase *gboi* ‘yesterday’ follow the verb.

- (1)    S            O                    V                    X  
       Mary nike-i-sia    gbɛ-nga    kpaa hun gboi  
       Mary cow-DEF-PL chase-PFV farm on    yesterday  
       ‘Mary chased the cows on the farm yesterday.’

Focus in Mende can be marked either in-situ or via movement to the left periphery. In-situ focus (glossed as FOC.I) is indicated by the morphological marker *lɔ*, which follows the entity that it focuses. Left peripheral focus (glossed as FOC.L) is characterized by movement of the focused constituent to the left periphery, where it is focused by *mia*, which I argue is a syntactic head. I discuss this in more detail in §4.2. In cases of left peripheral focus, when a lexically appropriate pronoun is available, a resumptive pronoun is found in the focused constituent’s canonical position. Both arguments (2) and adjuncts (3–4) can be focused.

(2) Argument Focus

- a. Mary *nike-i-sia*    **lɔ**    gbɛ-nga    kpaa hun gboi  
       Mary cow-DEF-PL FOC.I chase-PFV farm on    yesterday  
       ‘Mary chased THE COWS on the farm yesterday.’  
       b. *nike-i-sia*    **mia** Mary ti    gbɛ-nga    kpaa hun gboi  
       cow-DEF-PL FOC.L Mary 3PL chase-PFV farm on    yesterday  
       ‘Mary chased THE COWS on the farm yesterday.’

<sup>1</sup>The argument that Mande languages are **strictly** SOVX (Creissels 2005, Nikitina 2009) does not hold for Mende. In addition to the presence of adverbs in pre-verbal positions (see (9) below), in Smith (2022) I show a variety of contexts in which direct objects appear in post-verbal positions in Mende. I propose, instead, that Mende is **canonically** SOVX.

In (2a) the direct object *nikeisia* ‘the cows’ is focused in-situ, while in (2b) it is focused in the left periphery. Note the third person resumptive pronoun *ti* in the object’s pre-movement position.

(3) Adjunct Focus with Resumption

- a. Mary nike-i-sia gbɛ-nga kpaa hun lɔ  
 Mary COW-DEF-PL chase-PFV farm on FOC.I  
 ‘Mary chased the cows ON THE FARM.’
- b. kpaa hun {*mia*} / {*\*lɔ*} Mary nike-i-sia lɔ-nga na  
 farm on FOC.L/FOC.I Mary COW-DEF-PL see-PFV LOC  
 ‘It is on the farm that Mary chased the cows.’

(4) Adjunct Focus without Resumption

- gboi mia* Mary nike-i-sia gbɛ-nga kpaa hun  
 yesterday FOC.L Mary COW-DEF-PL chase-PFV farm on  
 ‘It is yesterday that Mary chased the cows on the farm.’

In (3a) the locative phrase *kpaa hun* ‘on the farm’ is focused in-situ by *lɔ*, while in (3b), it appears in the left periphery where it is followed by *mia*. The locative resumptive pronoun *na* ‘there’ surfaces in the phrase’s canonical position. In (4) the temporal phrase *gboi* ‘yesterday’ appears in the left periphery, and there is no resumptive pronoun in its pre-movement position.

Focus fronting, like that found in Mende, is likewise found in many Kwa, Bantu, and Chadic languages (Aboh et al. 2007). The focus markers *lɔ* and *mia* in Mende resemble the particle *ne* used in Kikuyu to mark focus in ex-situ constructions, as detailed by Schwarz (2007). He further argues for a focus-phrase analysis in which *ne* either is the head of the focus-phrase or the spell-out of a focus feature, an analysis that likewise seems plausible for Mende.

Contrasting with intonation languages which use stress to indicate focus, it has been proposed that some tone languages instead use syntactic transformations. The suggestion is that the presence of tone mitigates the effectiveness of intonation and stress in marking focus (Aboh et al. 2007). In my investigation of Sewama Mende, I am currently still researching the role of tone in the language. To the extent that there appears to be lexical tone, it does not mirror the results reported in the literature.<sup>2</sup> Regardless of the prominence of tone in

<sup>2</sup>Innes (1967) and Spears (1967) both documented tone in the language, and their work was used by Leben (1973) and Goldsmith (1976) in establishing autosegmental phonology. Innes’s (1969) dictionary uses Kɔɔ Mende, while it is unclear which dialect Spears uses. Given my ongoing research, I do not mark tone in this paper. It should also be noted that Mende orthography does not mark tone.

Sewama Mende, it does seem that it patterns like tonal languages in utilizing syntactic transformations above phonological processes in marking focus.

Using data from two native speakers in Bo, Sierra Leone, in this paper I lay out the structure of the left periphery in Sewama Mende, arguing that it aligns with Rizzi's proposed analysis for a universal hierarchy. The structure of the paper is as follows. §2 is a brief introduction to the language, while §3 introduces Rizzi's analysis. In §4 I lay out the structure of the left periphery in Mende, making a correlated argument that focused and topicalized constituents move (that is they are not base-generated) into the left periphery. §5 is a brief conclusion.

## 2 Background

Mende (ISO 639-2 *men*) is spoken by about two million speakers in the southern and eastern parts of Sierra Leone and Liberia (Eberhard et al. 2020). Williamson & Blench (2000) argue that the Mande languages are an early offshoot of the Niger-Congo family. There are 4 major dialects: *Kɔɔ* (eastern Sierra Leone), *Kpa* (southwestern Sierra Leone), *Sewama* (south-central Sierra Leone), and *Waanjama* (southeastern Sierra Leone and Liberia). While most previous research has focused on *Kɔɔ* (c.f. Innes 1967), this research examines *Sewama* Mende, spoken in and around Bo, the largest city in the Mende area of Sierra Leone. I am not aware of any research that focuses exclusively on the Sewama dialect. Innes (1961) proposes that the dialects differ little lexically, and while I have noticed distinctions, they are not relevant to the present discussion of the left periphery.

To this point there has been very little syntactic research on the language, with most previous work focused on tone and Consonant Mutation (Dwyer 1969, Conteh et al. 1986, Tateishi 1990). Descriptive grammars include Aginsky (1935), Crosby (1944), Spears (1967), and the substantial work of Innes (1961, 1967, 1969). Sengova (1981) is a dissertation by a native speaker considering tense and aspect in the language. Nearly all previous analyses of tone and consonant mutation are based on data from Spears and Innes.

## 3 Rizzi's Analysis

Much has been written in response to the analysis set out in Rizzi (1997, 2001) (c.f. É. Kiss 1998, Benincà & Poletto 2004, Cinque & Rizzi 2008), though data from the Mande language family has not yet been considered under this framework. In this section I briefly introduce his analysis of focus and topic within the articulated complementizer system before turning to the Mende data.

Rizzi observes that topicalized and focused constituents both appear to the left of a canonical clause in Italian. He also observes that there is a consistency in how these constructions surface. He argues that a topic construction consists of the topic itself, which is preposed and expresses old information. Typically, it is set off by a comma intonation. The part of the sentence that is not the topic is the *comment*, which expresses new information.

Rooth (1985, 1992) describes the focus semantic value of a sentence as contrasting with its ordinary semantic value. He further suggests that the focus value of a sentence is the set of alternatives from which the actual semantic value is selected. While Rizzi argues that a focused constituent is preposed and receives focal stress, the part of the clause that is not focused is called the *presupposition*, and it is information presumably shared by the interlocutors (Jackendoff 1972).

Subsequent research has shown that focus constructions need not be preposed, nor receive focal stress. This is particularly germane to African languages. While information structure categories (including focus) have been assumed to be universal, much of what is known comes from well-described languages, with lesser known languages at times challenging previously held assumptions (Adamou et al. 2018). This is, in fact, the case with Mende, where focus is indicated via morphology and syntax without any focal stress.

Rizzi argues that topic and focus interact with a number of other functional heads in the left periphery, and, crucially, that the left periphery is structured the same cross linguistically. His proposal for the universal structure of the left periphery is shown in (5). The force head connects the clause to supraordinate material and precedes the focus head. The focus head precedes the finiteness phrase. The finiteness phrase connects the CP with the lower TP. Topic phrases can surface between the various other functional heads in the articulated CP. In the remainder of this paper, I show how the Mende data supports this analysis.

- (5) Force {Top\*} Foc {Top\*} Fin IP/TP

## 4 The left periphery of Mende

### 4.1 Finiteness Phrase (FinP)

In this section I describe Mende's left periphery, working from the bottom upwards, looking first at the finiteness phrase.

In Mende plural subjects are obligatorily followed by a *subject marker*. Before discussing the position of the subject, I first consider subject markers, as they

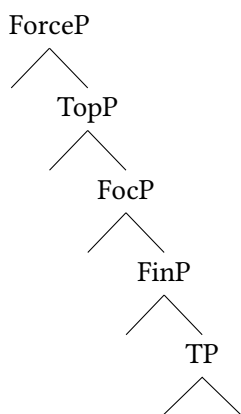


Figure 1: Rizzi's Proposed Left Periphery

offer crucial insight into the position of the clausal subject. In (6a) the 3rd person plural subject marker *ti* follows the subject *ndupuisia kpele* ‘all the children.’ By using a quantified subject, we can rule out that the subject is really a topic (Rizzi 1997). In (6b) the subject marker remains for the plural subject, even without the quantifier. In (6c) the sentence is ungrammatical with the expected 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular subject marker *ngi*.<sup>3</sup> The data in (6d) and (6e) show that subject markers also surface for non-human and non-living plural subjects.

- (6) a. ndupu-i-sia kpele *\*(ti)* mangu-i-sia mɛ-i lɔ  
       child-DEF-PL all 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PST NM  
       ‘All the children ate the mangoes.’  
    b. ndupu-i-sia *\*(ti)* mangu-i-sia mɛ-i lɔ  
       child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PST NM  
       ‘The children ate the mangoes.’  
    c. ndupu-i *\*(ngi)* mangu-i-sia mɛ-i lɔ  
       child-DEF.SG 3SG mango-DEF-PL eat-PST NM  
       ‘The child ate the mangoes.’

<sup>3</sup>In the following data set and future sets, note the presence of the particle *lɔ* in a post-verbal position. I am uncertain of the precise role that *lɔ* plays in these construction, and, as such, I gloss it as a neutral marker (NM), as its presence indicates that there is no other focused constituent in the clause. This *lɔ* particle can also surface as a lengthening of certain vowels, including *a*, as in (7).

- d. nɪke-i-sia \*(ti) mangu-i-sia mɛ-i lɔ  
 COW-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PST NM  
 ‘The cows ate the mangoes.’
- e. windo-i-sia \*(ti) wɔ-ngo  
 window-DEF-PL 3PL break-STAT  
 ‘The windows are broken.’

The same subject markers are used for simple future tense constructions.

- (7) a. ndupu-i-sia \*(ti) mangu-i-sia mɛ-ma a  
 child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-FUT NM  
 ‘The children will eat the mangoes.’
- b. ndupu-i (\*ngi) mangu-i-sia mɛ-ma a  
 child-DEF.SG 3SG mango-DEF-PL eat-FUT NM  
 ‘The child will eat the mangoes.’

Interestingly, a different subject marker surfaces for habitual / present constructions. In this construction, the third person plural subject marker is *ta* while the singular subject marker is *a*.

- (8) a. nyapu-i-sia \*(ta) mahe-i male lɔ tatovo gbi ma  
 girl-DEF-PL 3PL chief-DEF meet NM Monday all on  
 ‘The girls meet the chief every Monday.’
- b. nyapu-i \*(a) mahe-i male lɔ tatovo gbi ma  
 girl-DEF.SG 3SG chief-DEF meet NM Monday all on  
 ‘The girl meets the chief every Monday.’

In light of the data in (6) through (8), I propose that these subject markers are polymorphemic, consisting of a series of syntactic heads. In each of the previous data sets, it is [t] that marks 3rd person plural, and I propose that there is a null morpheme [∅] that marks 3rd person singular. This morpheme surfaces as the head of a Subject Phrase (SubjP), agreeing with the subject in person and number. In (8) habitual aspect is marked by [a], and, therefore, *t-a* marks 3rd person plural – habitual aspect. Given this analysis, the subject marker *a* in (8b) is really ∅-a, signifying 3rd person singular – habitual tense. The [a] surfaces as the head of a Hab(itual)P. Since in both the simple past and future the subject marker surfaces

as *ti*, it cannot be the case that [i] marks tense.<sup>4</sup> Instead, I suggest that since it is not possible for [t] to surface as a string by itself, [i] surfaces as a default vowel.

Even though they have traditionally been written as a single orthographic unit, I propose that the subject markers have an articulated structure similar to that shown in Figure 2 for the 3rd person plural habitual subject marker *ta*.

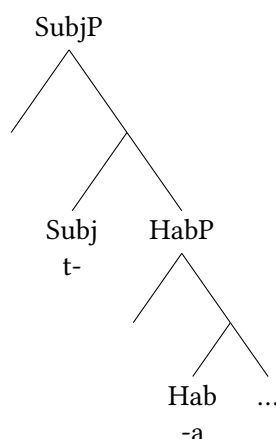


Figure 2: Mende Subject Marker

Turning now to the position of the subject, a crucial component of the previous analysis of subject markers is that they agree in person and number with the subject. This would point to some type of agreement relationship, however, the subject and subject marker do not form a constituent. This can be seen when an adverb intervenes between the two, as in (9) in which the modal adverb *gbolenhunwe* ‘clearly’ intervenes between the subject *ndupuisia* ‘the children’ and the 3rd person plural subject marker *ti*.

- (9) *ndupu-i-sia {\*ti} gbolenhunwe {ti} nike-i huma-nga*  
 child-DEF-PL 3PL clearly 3PL COW-DEF steal-PFV  
 ‘The children have clearly stolen the cow.’

<sup>4</sup>The subject marker *ti* is also used in a variety of other tense/aspect constructions, such as the perfective.

- (i) *ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mε-nga*  
 child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV  
 ‘the children ate the mangoes’



In light of this, I suggest that the subject moves through SpecSubjP, triggering agreement before moving to a higher position. The most obvious candidate for a landing spot is the specifier of FinP, which I would argue has a null head. In this position it connects the left periphery with the lower portion of the clause (Rizzi 1997, 2001), in this case via an agreement relationship between the subject and subject marker. It also aligns with Cardinaletti's (1997) proposal that SpecFinP is filled with the 'subject of predication.'

Figure 3 shows what the structure including the FinP subject marker of the sentence in (10) looks like under this analysis.<sup>5</sup>

- (10) ndupu-i-sia \*(ta) mangu-i-sia mɛ lo folo gbi  
 child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat NM day all  
 'The children eat the mangoes every day'

## 4.2 Focus Phrase (FocP)

As noted in (2), focus in Mende can be marked either in-situ or via movement to the left periphery. In the left periphery examples, the subject (11b), object (11c), and locative phrase (11d) can all be focused. Note the subject-object asymmetry – when the subject moves into the left periphery there is no resumptive pronoun, while movement of the object utilizes a resumptive.

### (11) Left Peripheral Focus

- a. ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga kpaa hun  
 child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV farm on  
 'The children ate the mangoes on the farm.'
- b. ndupu-i-sia mia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga kpaa hun  
 child-DEF-PL FOC.L 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV farm on  
 'It is the children that ate the mangoes on the farm.'
- c. mangui-i-sia mia ndupu-i-sia ti ti mɛ-nga kpaa hun  
 mango-DEF-PL FOC.L child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV farm on  
 'It is the mangoes that the children ate on the farm.'
- d. kpaa hun mia ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga na  
 farm on FOC.L child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV LOC  
 'It is on the farm that the children ate the mangoes.'

<sup>5</sup>Given the focus of this paper on the left periphery and space constraints, I do not make any particular claims about the clausal structure below the subject marker. Further research is necessary to flesh this out in sufficient detail.

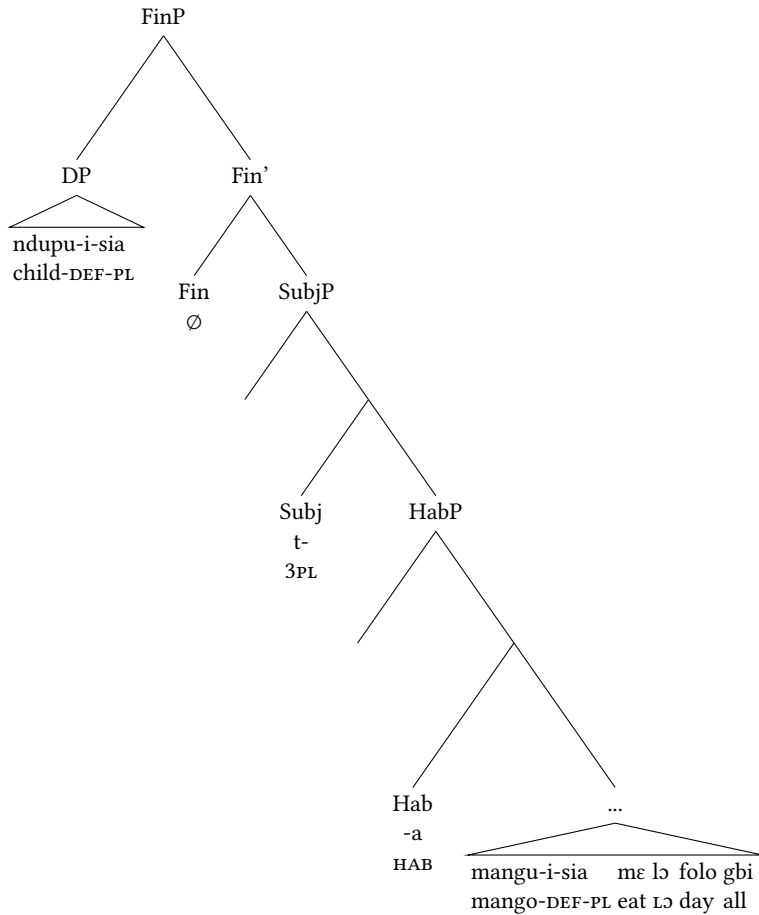


Figure 3: Mende Finite Phrase

The same subject (12a), object (12b), and locative phrase (12c) can also be focused in-situ.

(12) In-Situ Focus

- a. *ndupu-i-sia lɔ ti mangu-i-sia mε-nga kpaa hun*  
*child-DEF-PL FOC.I 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV farm on*  
 ‘THE CHILDREN ate the mangoes on the farm.’
- b. *ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia lɔ mε-nga kpaa hun*  
*child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL FOC.I eat-PFV farm on*  
 ‘The children ate THE MANGOES on the farm.’

- c. ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga kpaa hun lɔ  
 child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV farm on FOC.I  
 ‘The children ate the mangoes ON THE FARM.’

As seen in the following example, the focus marker *mia* cannot occur outside of the left periphery (13a), and the focus marker *lɔ* cannot occur within the left periphery (13b).

- (13) a. \*ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mia mɛ-nga kpaa hun  
 child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL FOC.L eat-PFV farm on  
 ‘The children ate THE MANGOES on the farm.’  
 b. \*mangui-i-sia lɔ ndupu-i-sia ti ti mɛ-nga kpaa hun  
 mango-DEF-PL FOC.I child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV farm on  
 ‘It is the mangoes that the children ate on the farm.’

It is ungrammatical to have two focus constructions within the same clause.

- (14) \*ndupu-i-sia mia ti mangu-i-sia lɔ mɛ-nga kpaa hun  
 child-DEF-PL FOC.L 3PL mango-DEF-PL FOC.I eat-PFV farm on  
 ‘It is the children that ate THE MANGOES on the farm.’

Turning to left peripheral focus, the focused constituent must appear before the clausal subject, which I have argued is in SpecFinP; it cannot follow the clausal subject, as in (15a). It is also ungrammatical to have two focused constituents in the left periphery, as in (15b)

- (15) a. FinP                      FocP                      TP  
 \*ndupu-i-sia kpaa hun mia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga na  
 child-DEF-PL farm on FOC.L 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV LOC  
 ‘It is on the farm that the children ate the mangoes.’  
 b. FocP<sub>1</sub>                      FocP<sub>2</sub>                      FinP                      TP  
 \*mangu-i-sia kpaa hun mia ndupu-i-sia ti ti mɛ-nga na  
 mango-DEF-PL farm on FOC.L child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV LOC  
 Intended: ‘It is the mangoes on the farm that the children ate.’

To this point I have asserted that focused constituents are not base generated in the left periphery, rather, that they move there. Using the following data, I argue for a movement analysis to explain how focused constituents surface in the left periphery. The evidence includes quantifier float and reconstruction effects.

Quantifier float occurs when a DP raises into a higher position in the clause, stranding its quantifier. The surface position of the quantifier indicates a position through which the DP has transited (Sportiche 1988, Fitzpatrick 2006).

The examples in (16) illustrate quantifier float in Mende. (16a) is a canonical SOV sentence with *nikeisia* ‘the cows’ as the direct object. In (16b) the quantifier *kpele* ‘all’ quantifies the DP direct object. In (16c) the direct object *nikeisia* is fronted with the quantifier, while in (16d) the quantifier is stranded. If the DP object can be fronted and the quantifier can remain in the canonical direct object position, we need a story for how the two can be separated. The most natural story is that the DP object moved via  $\bar{A}$ -movement into the left periphery, stranding the quantifier.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, it is also possible for the quantifier to be stranded in a post-verbal position.<sup>7</sup>

- (16) a. Peter **nike-i-sia** ngeya-nga  
       Peter COW-DEF-PL buy-PFV  
       ‘Peter has bought the cows.’  
       b. Peter **nike-i-sia** *kpele* ngeya-nga  
       Peter COW-DEF-PL all buy-PFV  
       ‘Peter has bought all the cows.’  
       c. **nike-i-sia** *kpele* mia Peter { ti yeya-nga / ngeya-nga }  
       COW-DEF-PL all FOC.L Peter { 3PL buy-PFV / buy-PFV }  
       ‘It is all the cows that Peter has bought.’  
       d. **nike-i-sia** mia Peter *kpele* (\*ti) ngeya-nga  
       COW-DEF-PL FOC.L Peter all 3PL buy-PFV  
       ‘It is all the cows that Peter has bought.’  
       e. **nike-i-sia** mia Peter \*(ti) yeya-nga *kpele*  
       COW-DEF-PL FOC.L Peter 3PL buy-PFV all  
       ‘It is all the cows that Peter has bought.’

<sup>6</sup>Note that the resumptive pronoun is optional when the quantifier is pied-piped into the left periphery or surfaces in a pre-verbal position. It is ungrammatical for the resumptive pronoun to surface when the object has moved to the left periphery and the quantifier is stranded in a post-verbal position. Further research is necessary in order to better understand these discrepancies.

<sup>7</sup>This points to the direct object merging and/or moving via A-movement through a post-verbal position at some point in the derivation. In Smith (unpublished manuscript) I suggest (following Kayne 1994) that all Mende verb phrases are head-initial, with OV word order derived via leftward movement.

A second argument for movement utilizes reconstruction effects, that is a context in which a constituent is in one position on the surface but behaves as if it were in a lower position. For the sake of space, I introduce only one instance of reconstruction effects, namely ideophones. Ideophones, which have been described as vivid sensory words, are fairly common in African languages (Dingemanse 2018, Downing 2019). They are very similar to adverbs, and there is a very strong selectional relationship between the ideophone and the verb, and as such ideophones typically appear with just one, or at most a few verbs (Tamba et al. 2012, Torrence 2013).

Consider the example of the Mende ideophone *kpe*, meaning ‘clean through.’ While (17a) indicates that Kpana *ngulii lewenga* ‘has cut the branch,’ the presence of the ideophone *kpe* in (17b) specifies that he cut it ‘clean through’, as opposed to e.g. ‘cutting a notch into the branch’. In (17c) the verb *bɔ* ‘shoot’ is used instead. While in English the statement ‘I shot the arrow clean through the target’ is perfectly acceptable, (17d) indicates that in Mende *kpe* ‘clean through’ cannot be used with *bɔ*. Given this tight selectional relationship, the ideophone typically directly follows the verb.

- (17) a. Kpana nguli-i lewe-nga  
           Kpana tree-DEF cut-PFV  
           ‘Kpana has cut the branch.’  
       b. Kpana nguli-i lewe-nga **kpe**  
           Kpana tree-DEF cut-PFV clean.through  
           ‘Kpana has cut the branch clean through.’  
       c. Kpana kɔli-i bɔ-nga  
           Kpana leopard-DEF shoot-PFV  
           ‘Kpana has shot the leopard.’  
       d. \*Kpana kɔli-i bɔ-nga **kpe**  
           Kpana leopard-DEF shoot-PFV clean.through  
           ‘Kpana has shot the leopard clean through.’

(18b) introduces another ideophone that can go with *lewe* ‘cut,’ that is *fikifiki*, which describes cutting ‘with a sawing (or back and forth) motion’. Canonically, the ideophone *fikifiki* immediately follows the verb *lewe* ‘cut.’ (18c) is a left peripheral focus construction. Note that the ideophone can surface in the left periphery, separate from its verb, with the meaning, ‘It is with a sawing motion that Peter has cut the branch.’ In order to account for the separation between the ideophone and the verb, the most plausible explanation is that the ideophone merged adjacent to the verb, before moving to the focus position in the left periphery.

- (18) a. Peter nguli-i lewe-nga  
 Peter tree-DEF cut.PFV  
 'Peter has cut the branch.'
- b. Peter nguli-i lewe-nga **fiikifiiki**  
 Peter tree-DEF cut.PFV sawing.motion  
 'Peter has cut the branch with a sawing motion.'
- c. **fiikifiiki** mia Peter nguli-i lewe-nga  
 sawing.motion FOC.L Peter tree-DEF cut.PFV  
 'It is with a sawing motion that Peter has cut the branch.'

Having argued that quantifier float and reconstruction effects point to  $\bar{A}$ -movement to the left periphery, I now clarify into what position the focused constituents move. Recall from (15) that focused constituents must surface in a position to the left of the finite phrase and that *mia* is always used to indicate focus in the left periphery. I propose that *mia* is the head of FocP and it attracts a +Focus constituent to its specifier (Chomsky 1993). The structure and position of the focus construction is shown in (19)/Figure 4. The focused constituent *kpaa hun* 'on the farm' moves into the specifier position of the focus head *mia*, while the resumptive pronoun *na* remains in the locative's pre-movement position.

- (19) kpaa hun mia ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga na  
 farm on FOC.L child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV LOC  
 'It is on the farm that the children have eaten the mangoes.'

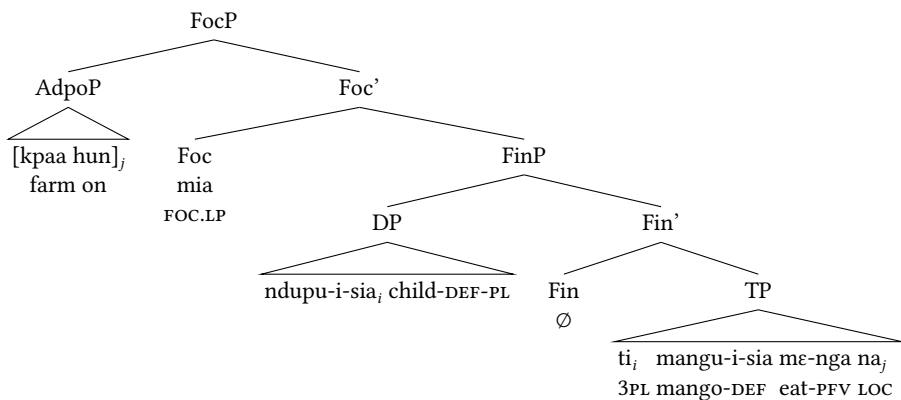


Figure 4: Mende Focus Phrase

Similar to focused constituents, wh-words in Mende can also surface in-situ or in the left periphery. In-situ they are marked with *l*, while in the left periphery, they immediately precede *mia*. As such, I argue that they move into the same position in the left periphery, that is the specifier of the focus head *mia*. In (20b) the locative phrase is moved into the focus position, while in (20c) the wh-word *mindo* ‘where’ moves into the same position. Note that the same resumptive pronoun *na* is also used in both examples.

- (20) a. ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga kpaa hun  
child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV farm on  
‘The children have eaten the mangoes on the farm.’  
b. kpaa hun mia ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga na  
farm on FOC.L child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV LOC  
‘It is on the farm that the children have eaten the mangoes.’  
c. mindo mia ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga na  
where FOC.L child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV LOC  
‘Where have the children eaten the mangoes?’

It is ungrammatical to have both a focused constituent and a wh-word in the left periphery, whether they each have their own focus head (21b) or both precede the focus head (21c). This indicates that the wh-word and focused constituent are in the same position.

- (21) a. ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga kpaa hun  
child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV farm on  
‘The children have eaten the mangoes on the farm.’  
b. \*kpaa hun mia gbɛ mia ndupu-i-sia ti ti mɛ-nga na  
farm on FOC.L what FOC child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV LOC  
‘It is on the farm that the children have eaten what?’  
c. \*kpaa hun gbɛ mia ndupu-i-sia ti ti mɛ-nga na  
farm on what FOC.L child-DEF-P 3PL 3PL eat-PFV LOC  
‘It is on the farm that the children have eaten what?’

The same syntactic structure is generated for questions (22)/Figure 5 as is generated for focus constructions (19). The *wh*-word *mindo* ‘where’ surfaces in the specifier of the focus head *mia*, with the resumptive pronoun *na* in the pre-movement position.

- (22) *mindo mia ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mɛ-nga na*  
 where FOC.LP child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV LOC  
 ‘Where have the children eaten the mangoes?’

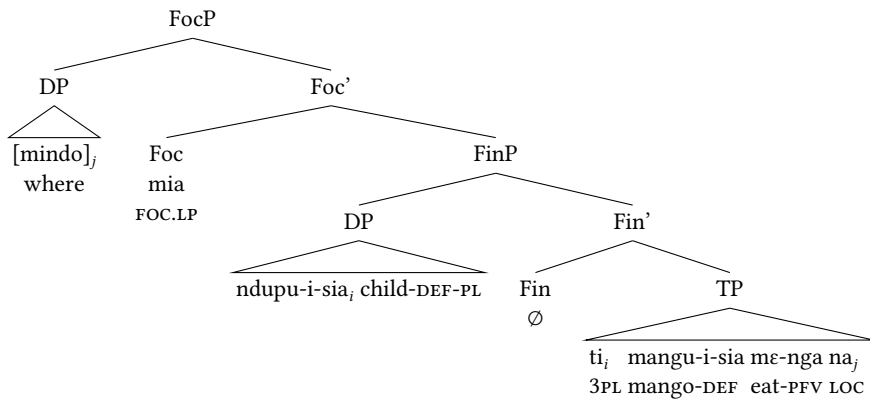


Figure 5: Mende Left-Peripheral *wh*-Phrase

### 4.3 Topic Phrase (TopP)

I now turn to topic phrases. There are four characteristics of topic phrases to highlight. First, topic phrases in Mende can appear in a variety of internal positions within the articulated left periphery. In (23a) the TopP *manguisia (va)* ‘(as for) the mangoes’ precedes the FinP *ndupuisia* ‘the children.’ In (23b) it follows the *wh*-phrase *mindo mia* ‘where is it’ in the FocP position, while in (23c), it precedes the same FocP. This lines up with Rizzi’s proposal that topic phrases can surface in various positions in the left periphery. Second, note that *va* ‘as for’ is optional in each of the examples. In discussions with my language consultants, the use of *va* ‘for’ seems quite arbitrary. Third, there is a comma intonation that sets apart topic phrases. When clause initial, as in (23a) and (23c), the comma follows the phrase, while in (23b) we see the comma intonation both precedes and



follows the topic phrase. Finally, we can see that the 3rd person plural resumptive pronoun *ti* remains in the topic's pre-movement position.<sup>8</sup>

- (23) a. **mangu-i-sia<sub>i</sub> (va)**, ndupu-i-sia<sub>j</sub> ti<sub>j</sub> ti<sub>i</sub> mɛ-nga  
mango-DEF-PL for, child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV  
'As for the mangoes, the children ate them.'
- b. mindo mia, **mangu-i-sia<sub>i</sub> (va)**, ndupu-i-sia<sub>j</sub> ti<sub>j</sub> ti<sub>i</sub> mɛ-nga na  
where FOC.L, mango-DEF-PL for, child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV LOC  
'Where is it, as for the mangoes, the children ate them?'
- c. **mangu-i-sia<sub>i</sub> (va)**, mindo mia ndupu-i-sia<sub>j</sub> ti<sub>j</sub> ti<sub>i</sub> mɛ-nga na  
mango-DEF-PL for, where FOC.L, child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV LOC  
'As for the mangoes, where is it that the children ate them?'

Unlike focus constructions (c.f. 15b), in Mende it is possible to have more than one topic phrase in a clause. In (24) there are two topics *manguisia* 'the mangoes' and *gboi* 'yesterday.' Both of them can be introduced by the topic head *va* 'for,' as in (24a), while it is also possible for neither to be introduced by *va* (24b). This lines up with Rizzi's (1997) argument that recursion of the topic-comment structure is possible. We can conclude that the topic head can optionally be expressed as *va* or be phonologically null.

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<sup>8</sup>In Mende, singular entities can be topicalized. When a subject is topicalized, a resumptive pronoun obligatorily surfaces, as in (i).

- (i) Peter va, mindo mia ngi nika-i lo-nga na  
Peter for, where FOC.L 3SG cow-DEF see-PFV LOC  
'As for Peter, where is it that he saw the cow?'

As is the case for object pronouns more broadly, topicalized singular objects utilize a resumptive pronoun when the subject is human (ii), while a phonologically null resumptive is used for non-human objects (iii). Note that the absence of a phonologically realized resumptive pronoun does not trigger consonant mutation on the verb.

- (ii) nyapu-i va, mindo mia Peter ngi lo-nga na  
girl-DEF for, where FOC.L Peter 3SG.HUM see-PFV LOC  
'As for the girl, where is that Peter saw her?'
- (iii) nika-i va, mindo mia Peter ∅ to-nga na  
cow-DEF for, where FOC.L Peter 3SG.NONHUM see-PFV LOC  
'As for the cow, where is that Peter saw it?'

- (24) a. mangu-i-sia va, mindo mia, gboi va ndupu-i-sia ti ti  
 mango-DEF-PL for where FOC.L yesterday for child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL  
 mε-nga na  
 eat-PFV LOC  
 ‘As for the mangoes, where is it, yesterday, the children ate them?’
- b. mangu-i-sia, mindo mia, gboi, ndupu-i-sia ti ti mε-nga  
 mango-DEF-PL where FOC.L yesterday child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV  
 na  
 LOC  
 ‘The mangoes, where is it, yesterday, the children ate them?’

Similar to focus phrases, when a pronoun is available, it surfaces in the canonical position of the topicalized constituent. This explains the presence of the resumptive pronoun *ti* (indicated in italics) in (24). Since there is no pronoun to represent a temporal phrase, there is no resumptive in the canonical position of *gboi* ‘yesterday.’

Concluding this section, the structure of the clause in (25) is shown in Figure 6. The topicalized phrase *manguisia* ‘the mangoes’ moves into the specifier position of the topic head *va* to check its [+topic] feature. In this example the topic phrase precedes the focus phrase, though as shown above, it can also follow it.

- (25) mangu-i-sia (va), mindo mia ndupu-i-sia ti ti mε-nga na  
 mango-DEF-PL for, where FOC.L, child-DEF-PL 3PL 3PL eat-PFV LOC  
 ‘As for the mangoes, where is it that the children ate them?’

#### 4.4 Force Phrase (ForceP)

The final phrase in the left periphery that I consider is the Force Phrase. The ForceP in Mende is headed by the declarative complementizer *kε* ‘that’ or the interrogative complementizer *ina* ‘if.’ The force head *kε* introduces embedded clausal complements (26a), while *ina* introduces embedded questions (26b).<sup>9</sup>

- (26) a. Peter hungε-nga [kε ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mε-nga]  
 Peter explain-PFV that child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV  
 ‘Peter explained that the children ate the mangoes’

<sup>9</sup>Note that even though Mende has canonical OV word order, CP complements never appear in a pre-verbal position. I argue in Smith (in press) that in canonical constructions the object raise for case. Since CPs do not need case (Stowell 1981), CP objects in Mende remain in a post-verbal position

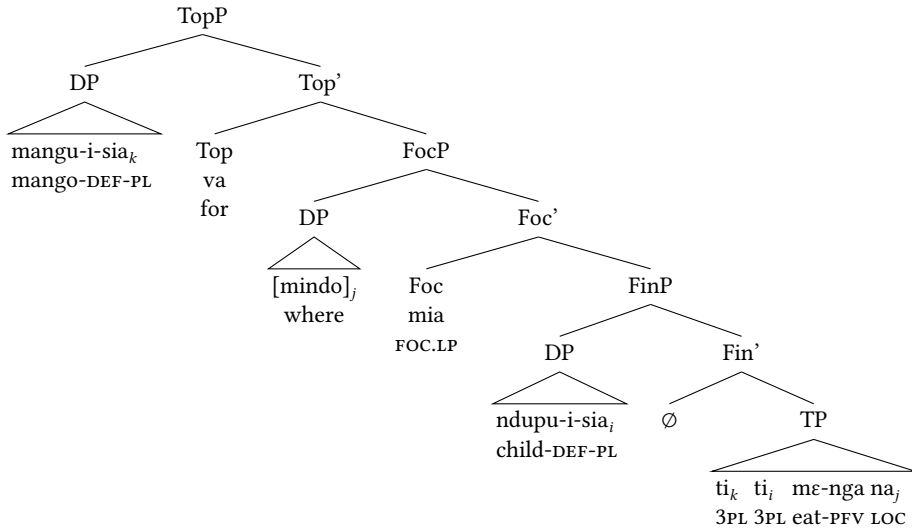


Figure 6: Mende Topic Phrase

- b. Peter moli-nga [ina ndupu-i-sia ti mangu-i-sia mε-nga]  
 Peter ask-PFV if child-DEF-PL 3PL mango-DEF-PL eat-PFV  
 ‘Peter asked if the children ate the mangoes’

Rizzi asserts that the Force head looks upward connecting the phrase with supraordinate structure. In these examples the matrix verb *hunge* ‘explain’ in (26a) can take a clausal complement, which is obligatorily headed by the declarative complementizer *kε*. In (26b) the matrix verb *moli* ‘ask’ takes an embedded question, headed by the complementizer *ina*. In both cases the Force head takes as its complement the remainder of the clause.

It has been argued previously that Mende is a head-final language (c.f. Rice & Cowper 1984 and Tateishi 1990 who indicate a series of complement-head constructions). As laid out in this paper, I would argue that Mende is a head-initial language. In previous work I have argued that Mende’s canonical OV word order is derived from an underlying head-initial verb phrase (Smith 2022). Here I extend this argument to the various functional heads in the left periphery, arguing that each of its functional heads is head-initial. The Finiteness Phrase has a null head and the sentential subject moves into its specifier. The Focus Phrase is headed by *mia*, with the focused constituent moving into its specifier. Topic Phrases are optionally headed by *va* with the topicalized constituent in the specifier. The Force Phrase headed by *kε* or *ina* takes the remainder of the clause as its complement.

This structure is shown in example (27). Each of the functional heads in Figure 7 is marked in **bold**, with the constituents that have moved into their specifier marked in *italics*. This analysis accounts for the proposed head-initial structure Mende in the left periphery.

- (27) Peter kabande-nga [ina mangu-i-sia va, mindo mia ndupu-i-sia ti  
 Peter wonder-PFV if mango-DEF-PL for where FOC child-DEF-PL 3PL  
 ti mε-nga na]  
 3PL eat-PFV LOC  
 ‘Peter wondered, if, as for the mangoes, where it is the children had eaten them.’

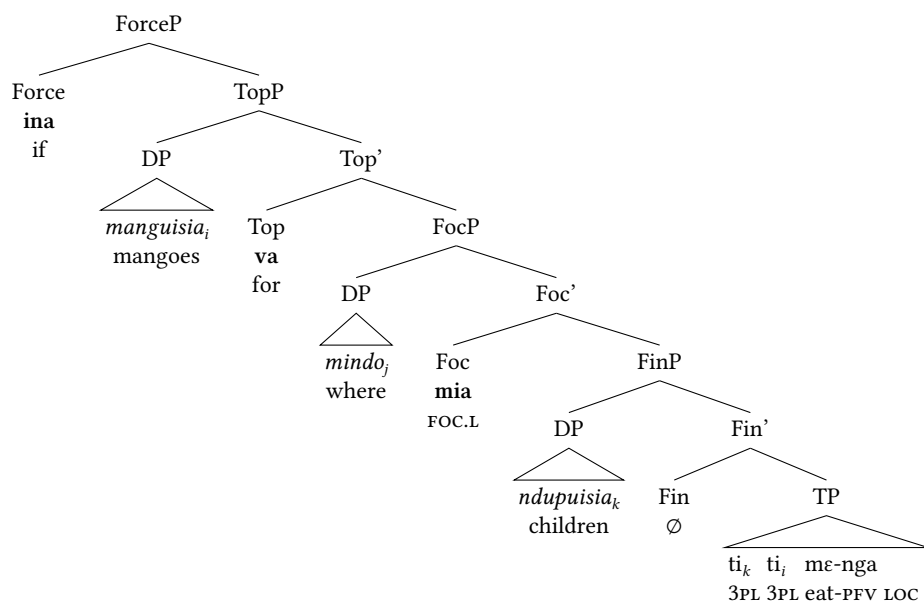


Figure 7: Mende Force Phrase

## 5 Conclusion

To this point there has been no analysis of the left periphery of a Mande language. In this paper I have shown that the structure of the left periphery in Mende provides cross-linguistic support for the argument in Rizzi (1997, 2001) for a universal hierarchy in the left periphery. This can be seen in comparing the tree in

Figure 7, showing the Mende left periphery, with the tree in Figure 8, showing Rizzi's proposed hierarchy, repeated from Figure 1.

(28) Force {Top\*} Foc {Top\*} Fin IP/TP

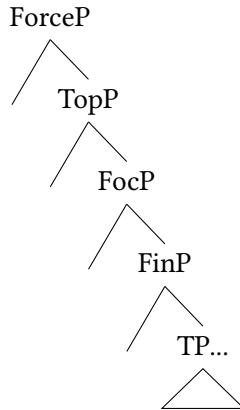


Figure 8: Rizzi's Proposed Left Periphery

From the bottom up, I show how the structure of the left periphery in Mende can be analyzed as being bracketed by a Force Head and Finite Head with Topic, and Focus heads within the articulated CP structure. I also argued for a movement analysis for focused and topicalized constituents, as opposed to a base-generation analysis of focused and topicalized constituents in the left periphery.

## Abbreviations

Abbreviations in this chapter follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules, with the following additions.

FIN	finite	NM	neutral marker
FOC.I	in-situ focus	STAT	stative
FOC.L	left peripheral focus	TP	tense phrase
IP	inflectional phrase		

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