

The Verb Phrase in Shupamem

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Abstract

This paper analyses the structure of the verb phrase in Shupamem; a Grassfields Eastern Bantu language spoken in the West region of Cameroon. More importantly, this study identifies the different components of the verb phrase in Shupamem in one hand and the order of these various elements in the other hand. I propose that Shupamem is a satellite-framed language; in this language motion events are described by attaching a particular particle to the verb. Most interestingly, it is shown that in Shupamem, the structure of the VP is not rigid. Hence, in this language, the various components of the VP that is the adjective, the adverb, the preposition and the noun can be freely combined and thus giving us twelve different structures of the VP.

Keywords: Verb phrase, structure of the VP, satellite-framed structure, Shupamem.

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INTRODUCTION

The place of the verb within the sentence is instrumental. It is obviously for this reason that the verb is considered as the most important element in a sentence. This is surely the reason why Rodríguez-Navarro (2004:260) states that:

“Of the obligatory elements in a sentence, the main verb is the one that wholly or largely determines what form the rest of the structure will take. This means that, in technical terms, a sentence is a verbal expansion, and the VP is its head, with all the other phrases somehow subordinate to it.”

It is undoubtedly in this line that Kim and Sells (2008) consider the VP as the major phrase type.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the verb phrase in Shupamem from a structural point of view. For this reason, special emphasis will be laid on the different constituents of the VP in this language. Moreover, the order the verb and its different components will be scrutinized.

This paper is structured as follow: section 1 presents the language. Section 2 looks at the subcategorization frame. Section 3 deals with the verb-framed and satellite-framed structures and Section 4 looks at the various elements of the verb phrase in Shupamem.

1. The language

The language under study is Shupamem; a Grassfields Eastern Bantu language spoken in the West region of Cameroon and particularly in the Noun division, by the Bamun ethnic group.

2. The subcategorization frame

Cross linguistically, verbs select the words that they co-occur with. This is what is referred to as the selectional features. It is under this account that verbs are commonly classified with respect to the number of arguments they select; this is what is generally referred to as the syntactic classification of verbs. In this line, there are two types of verbs; verbs that select arguments (internal arguments), and verbs that do not select arguments. Verbs can furthermore be subcategorized into verbs that select direct and indirect object and verbs that have both direct and indirect object at the same time. These verbs are called transitive verbs. There are also some verbs that do not have objects; this is referred to intransitive verbs. This classification of verbs with respect to the number of arguments they have, is known as the subcategorization frame. Following Schulte im Walde (2008) “The potential of verbs to choose their complements is referred to as ‘verb subcategorisation’ or ‘verb valency’, and a combination of functional complements that are evoked by a verb is often called a ‘verb subcategorisation frame’, or simply a ‘verb frame’.”

In Shupamem, the verb frame is typically identical to that of English and French. In this language, verbs are classified into transitive and intransitive ones. Let us observe the following sentences:

- (1) a. wǎ jún mátwa.
father buy car
“The father has bought a car”
- b. má zon ndap.
1sg want house
“I want a house.”
- c. í two.
3sg come
“He has come.”
- d. Ali té.
Ali run
“Ali has run away.”

In (1a & b), *jún* (buy) and *zon* (want) are transitive verbs while in (1c & d), *two* (come) and *té* (run) are intransitive verbs.

- (2) a. English (S-language) The man **ran out** of the house.
[Manner + Motion] [Path] [Ground]
- b. Spanish (V-language) El hombre **salió** de la casa **corriendo**.
The man **went out** of the house **running**
[Path + Motion] [Manner]

Noguchi (2011: 31). Ex 1a & b

According to Ameka and Essegbey (2013:2) satellite framed languages have this structure: MANNER VERB + PATH SATELLITE while verb-framed languages have the following structure: PATH VERB + SUBORDINATE MANNER VERB.

Shupamem is a satellite-framed language; in this language motion events are described by attaching a particular particle to the verb. Let us observe these sentences below:

- (3) a. í túm kúju.
3sg go out
“He has gone out.”
- b. wǎ ñì mántum.
father enter inside
“The father has entered.”
- b. món ñgwo gútùtù.
child climb up
“The child has climbed up.”

As we can observe, in Shupamem, there is a distinct particle that is used to encode motion events. In (3a, b and c), *kúju* (out), *mántum* (inside) and *gútùtù* (up) are respectively used to express motion in the various structures in which they appear. It should also be noted that, in (3a, b and c), the various verbs viz.

3. Verb-framed and satellite-framed structures

The world languages can be classified with respect to the way the verb describe the motion event. Following Talmy (1985), the motion of a verb are described in terms of the path of motion or the manner of motion. In line with this dual descriptions, Herweg (2000), Talmy (1985, 2000a, 2000b), Ameka and Essegbey (2013) and Vázquez (2015) observed that they are verb-framed and satellite-framed languages. It is important to point out that verb-framed languages are romance languages (French, Spanish...), Semitic, Japanese, Korean, Turkish, Tamil, Polynesian, as indicated by Vázquez (2015). Satellite-framed languages are most of the Indo-European languages like English for instance. According to Talmy (2000a), verb framed-languages encode direction in verbs and manner in the complement of the verb while satellite framed languages encode path in the satellite and manner in the verb as indicated in the following examples from Cadierno (2008a: 266) cited by Noguchi (2011: 31):

túm (go), *ñì* (enter) and *ñgwo* (climb) indicate path of motion correspondingly. From these observations, we can conclude that in this kind of VP in Shupamem, the verb and the particle that is attached to it are very instrumental in their semantic interpretation.

4. The various elements of the verb phrase

Within the transformational approach of language analysis, the VP is considered as an association of two components. Hence, for Rodríguez-Navarro (2004), the elements that come after the verb and that are part of it are referred to as its complementation. In this perspective, the VP is considered as a conflation of many constituents. In the course of this investigation, we will identify the different structures of the verb phrase in Shupamem.

4.1 VP-adverbs

Following Jackendoff (1972), adverbs are classified into two groups; those that modify the verbs and those that modify the whole sentence. Adverbs that modify the verb are VP-adverbs while the ones that modify the whole sentence are S-adverbs or CP-adverbs as Njike (2009) cited by Ngoungou (2016) indicates. As Jackendoff (1972) indicates, S-adverbs are positioned in clause initial position viz. immediately after the subject or to the immediate right of a modal or finite auxiliary, Postdam (1998) and the VP-adverbs

appear in two distinct position; in sentence final position or in pre-verbal position as the following sentences indicate:

S-adverbs

- (4) a. *Probably*, Sam has been called.
 b. *Often* Max is climbing the walls of the garden.
- (5) a. Sam *probably* has been called.
 b. Max *often* is climbing the walls of the garden.
- (6) a. Sam has *probably* been called.
 b. George will *certainly* show up.

Postdam (1998:398)

As we can notice, the various S-adverbs in the sentences above occupy different positions as we have said earlier.

The following sentences contain VP-adverbs.

VP-adverbs

- (7) a. George won't be reading that book *quickly*.
 b. The mouse went through the maze *easily*.
- (8) a. George won't be *quickly* reading that book.
 b. The mouse *easily* went through the maze.

Potsdam (1998:398 & 399)

In (7a & b) and (8a & b), we have VP-adverbs as we have indicated above, they appear either in sentence final position or in preverbal position.

4.1.1 Verb

In Shupamem, the VP can be made up of a verb only as indicated in the following structures:

- (9) a. já!
 come
 Come.
- b. swó!
 put
 Put.
- c. lú!
 go
 Go.

(9a, b & c) are made up of one constituent; this constituent is the verb. These sentences attest that in Shupamem, the VP can be made up of the verb alone.

4.1.2 Verb + adverb

This VP is made up of two constituents; the verb and the adverb. Let us consider the followings:

- (10) a. matwa ná twó mɔχɛt.
 car SM come slowly
 "The car is coming slowly."
- b. í ná ɲi nəku.
 3sg SM walk fast

“He is walking fast.”

- c. pó two nkúró.
3pl come yesterday
“They came yesterday.”

In (10a, b & c), the VP is made up of two constituents: the verb and the adverb.

4.1.3 Verb + adverb + preposition

Consider the followings:

- (11) a. món jáp nóku du tébe.
child put quickly on table
“The child has quickly put on the table.”
- b. í swo gurə tó pâm.
3sg put yesterday in bag
“He put yesterday in the bag.”
- c. Pam fáa nóku nó wă.
Pam give quickly to father
“Pam has quickly given to the father.”

The sentences above illustrate the following structure: Verb + adverb + preposition.

4.1.4 Verb + adjective + noun

Take the following sentences:

- (12) a. má zón tám matwa.
1sg want long car
“I want the long car.”
- b. Fadi jún gbóm ndap.
Fadi buy big house
“Fadi has bought a big house.”
- c. nă ná bijə mənon paju.
mother SM ask small food
“The mother is asking for the small food.”

The sentences above illustrate the VP in which there are three elements: the Verb + the adjective + the noun.

4.1.5 Verb + noun + adverb + preposition

Consider the sentences below:

- (13) a. món jáp paju nóku du tébe.
child put food quickly on table
“The child has quickly put food on the table.”
- b. í swo paju gurə tó pâm.
3sg put food yesterday in bag
“He put food yesterday in the bag.”
- c. Pam fáa paju nóku nó wă.
Pam give food quickly to father
“Pam has quickly given yesterday to the father.”

As we can note, in (13a, b & c), the structure of the VP is Verb + noun + adverb + preposition

4.1.6 Verb + adjective + noun + preposition

Take the following sentences:

- (14) a. zan swó gbúm metása tó pám.
 jean put big dish in bag
 “Jean has put a big dish in the bag.”
- b. Fad jap tām lápa dú rú.
 Fad put long shoes on chair
 “Fad has put long shoes on the chair.”
- c. í fáa mətə páju né ma.
 3sg give small food to me
 “He has given me small food.”

In (14a, b & c), we have the following structure Verb + adjective + noun + preposition in Shupamem.

4.1.7 Verb + adjective + noun + preposition + adverb

In Shupamem, the VP can be made up of a head word + adjective + noun + preposition + adverb as the following sentences show:

- (15) a. Matt jáp gbúm metása dú tébe ndia.
 Matt put big dish on table today
 “Matt has put a big dish on the table today.”
- b. *Matt jáp metása gbúm dú tébe ndia.
 Matt put dish big on table today
 “Matt has put a dish big on the table today.”
- c. *Matt jáp metása gbúm ndia dú tébe.
 Matt put dish big today on table
 “Matt has put a dish big today on the table.”
- d. *Matt jáp ndia gbúm metása dú tébe.
 Matt put today big dish on table
 “Matt has put today a big dish on the table.”
- (16) a. Ali fá tám matwa nə matio nkúrə.
 Ali give long car to Mathew yesterday
 “Ali has given a long car to Mathew yesterday.”
- b. *Ali fá matwa tám nə matio nkúrə.
 Ali give car long to Mathew yesterday
 “Ali has given a car long to Mathew yesterday.”
- c. *Ali fá matwa tám nkúrə nə matio
 Ali give car long yesterday to Mathew
 “Ali has given a car long yesterday to Mathew.”
- d. *Ali fá nkúrə tám matwa nə matio
 Ali give yesterday long car to Mathew
 “Ali has given yesterday a big car to Mathew.”

As we can notice from the examples above, in Shupamem, the linear order of the elements of the VP can be: Verb + adjective + noun + preposition + adverb as indicated in (15a & 16a).

The structure of the VP in (15b & 16b) is:

***Verb + noun + adjective + preposition + adverb.**

This structure is agrammatical. In (15c & 16c), the VP has the following structure:

***Verb + noun + adjective + adverb + preposition.**

This structure is illicit. The VP in (15d & 16d) has this structure:

***Verb + adverb + adjective + noun + preposition.**

It important to note that in English language this last structure is grammatical.

4.1.8 Verb + adjective + noun + adverb + preposition

We will use the same examples that are used in (15a & 16a) for the sake of analysis. Take the followings:

- (17) a. Matt jáp gbúm metása ndia dú tébe
 Matt put big dish today on table
 “Matt has put a big dish today on the table.”
- b. Ali fá tám matwa nə matio nkúrə.
 Ali give long car to Mathew yesterday
 “Ali has given a long car to Mathew yesterday.”

These examples indicate that the order of the various constituents of the VP Shupamem is not rigid, the order of the elements of this structure is interchangeable, note that it is possible for the adverb phrase and the adjective to change their position within the VP as (17a & b) indicate.

4.1.9 Adverb + verb

In this section, identifies the structure in which the adverb appears before the verb. Take the following structures:

- (18) a. py tiè two.
 1pl Prog. come
 “We are coming.”
- b. í tèt lié.
 3sg Ant. slept
 “He has already slept.”
- c. món ká nɔ́.
 child Hab eat
 “The child always eat.”

In the three respective sentences, adverbs precede the verbs. Hence, the structure of these various sentences is Adverb + verb. In (18a), the verb is preceded by the progressive adverb *tiè* while in (18b), it is preceded by the anterior adverb *tèt* and to finish, in (18c), the verb is modified by habitual adverb *ká*. It is important to note that in Shupamem, adverbs that appear in preverbal position are VP-adverbs, Jackendoff (1972). These adverbs only modify the verb and not the whole sentence as it is the case with S-adverb that modify the whole sentence.

4.1.10 Adverb + verb+ adjective + noun

This section is centred on this structure: Adverb + verb+ adjective + noun. Consider the following sentences:

- (19) a. má tèt ɔun tám matwa.
 1sg Ant. buy long car
 “I have already bought a long car.”
- c. Ali tiè fáa gbóm ndap.
 Ali Prog. give big house
 “Ali is giving a big house.”
- d. u ká nɔ́ mətə pen.
 2sg Hab eat small fufu
 “You always eat small fufu.”

The VP in (19a, b & c) have the following structure the Adverb + verb+ adjective + noun.

4.1.11 Adverb + verb + adjective + noun + preposition

Let us observe the following sentences:

- (20) nă ná nkú swo mətə páju tu metása.
 mother SM Dur. put small food in dish
 “The mother is putting a big pot on the table.”
- (21) táta tiè jap gbúm tet du tébe.
 tata Prog. put big pot on table

“Tata is putting a big pot on the table.”

In (20) & (21), the adverbs are in preverbal position; only adverbs can be in preverbal position in Shupamem.

4.1.12 Adverb + verb + adjective + noun + preposition

Take the following structures:

- (22) a. í tiè bífə mətə móń má ndap.
3sg Prog. ask small child in house
“He has already the small child in the house.”
- b. polo ká nzáp gbóm metása du tébe.
Paul Hab put big dish on table
“Paul always puts the big dish on the table.”
- c. pə tèt swó tám sót tú pâm.
3pl Ant. put tall hoe in bag
“They have already put a long hoe in the bag.”

The sentences above are examples of VP that are made up of Adverb + verb + adjective + noun + preposition.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article was to analyse the verb phrase (VP) in Shupamem. Following Herweg (2000), Talmy (1985, 2000a, 2000b), Ameka and Essegbey (2013) and Vázquez (2015), it is shown that Shupamem is a satellite-framed language. In this language, motion events are described by attaching a particular particle to the verb. Moreover, it is discovered that the structure of the VP in Shupamem is not rigid. Thus, there are twelve possible structures of the VP in this language. These are the different structures of the VP in Shupamem:

- 1) Verb;
- 2) Verb + adverb;
- 3) Verb + adverb + preposition;
- 4) Verb + adjective + noun;
- 5) Verb + noun + adverb + preposition;
- 6) Verb + adjective + noun + preposition;
- 7) Verb + adjective + noun + preposition + adverb;
- 8) Verb + adjective + noun + adverb + preposition;
- 9) Adverb + verb;
- 10) Adverb + verb + adjective + noun;
- 11) Adverb + verb + adjective + noun + preposition;
- 12) Adverb + verb + adjective + noun + preposition.

List of abbreviations:

1pl:	1 st person plural
1sg:	1 st person singular
3sg:	3 rd person singular
Ant:	Anterior
Dur:	Durative
Hab:	Habitual
Poss:	Possessive
Prog:	Progressive
S-adverbs:	Sentence adverbs
SM:	Subject marker
VP:	Verb phrase
VP-adverbs:	Verb phrase adverbs

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