

Noun Phrase Constructions in Musgum (Chadic Language)

Brahim Adam

Department of African Languages, Literatures and Cultures

University of Maroua

Maroua, Far-North Region, Cameroon

docteurbrahim89@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper tackles the Noun Phrase constructions in Musgum, a Chadic language spoken in Cameroon and Chad. It is particular to the generative grammar developed since the fifties by Chomsky. We question the structure of the Noun Phrase. At the end of the analysis, we found that the Noun Phrase can be made up of a noun, a possessive pronoun, a demonstrative pronoun, an indefinite pronoun and numerals. We brought out several Noun Phrase structures: single Noun; Noun and possessive determiner; Noun and demonstrative determiner; Noun, Possessive marker and Noun; Noun, *nà* (connective) and Noun. Noun Phrase (NP) can be considered as Determiner Phrase (DP). The determiner follows the noun. But in the underlying structure, it occupies a higher position: Spec-DP.

Keywords: Noun Phrase, Musgum, Generative Grammar, Determiner Phrase.

Introduction

A phrase is the combination, on the spoken chain, of two or several unities back-to-back (Saussure, 1916). It is a combination of elements for forming a grammatical unity (Jarvis, 1989). It can also be defined as a group of words that follow each other and form a functional and semantic unity in a sentence. In generative grammar, we distinguish several types of phrases according to the role and the function of elements which constitute each phrase. We have noun, adjective, verb, preposition, and adverb phrases... Musgum language

has all this phrases (Brahim Adam, 2018). We precisely analyse the Noun Phrase. In fact, a Noun Phrase is a phrase formed by a noun and all its modifiers and determiners broadly. As for Dubois and al. (1973: 340), Noun Phrase is formed by noun and eventually preceded by determiner (article, demonstrative...). However, Abney (1987) stated that the Noun Phrase (NP) is a Determiner Phrase (DP) which selects Noun Phrase (NP) as complement. What is the structure of Noun Phrase (NP) in Musgum? As a hypothesis, we can note that the structure of the Noun Phrase is made of a determiner and a noun. In this work, we set ourselves three objectives: the identification of the constituents of Noun Phrase, the kinds of Noun Phrase structures, and the analysis of the Noun Phrase (NP) as Determiner Phrase (DP). Our methodology is based on two steps: first, we collect data from native speakers in Maga, in Musgum country; then we analyze them. In this paper, we have five sections which are respectively interested in Musgum classification and words order, Noun Phrase constituents, Noun Phrase structures, Noun Phrase formula and Determiner Phrase (DP).

1. Musgum Classification and Words Order

Musgum is a Chadic language from afro-asiatic family (Lukas, 1936; Greenberg, 1963; Newman, 1977; Jungraithmair and Shimizu, 1981; Barreteau and al., 1984). It is mainly spoken in Cameroon and Chad.

Its words order is SVO:

(1)

Á múdá jámán.

3sg speak + pres. German

“He speaks German.”

In this structure, we have the subject *á* (he), the verb *múdã* (speaks) and the object *jámán* (German).

2. Noun Phrase Constituents

In exploring Noun Phrase (NP), we bring out several categories of words. Certain categories function autonomously. These are nouns and nouns substitutes (pronouns, indefinites and demonstratives).

2.1. Noun

Noun Phrase (NP) is constituted by nouns. (2)

- a. *Gawla a hala kái*
 young SM go + perf neg.
 “The young boy did not go.”

- b. *Tə məníy.*
 Foc (it is) woman
 “It is a woman.”

In the first structure (2a), we have respectively the subject *gawla* (young boy), the subject marker *a*, the verb *hala* (go + perf.) and the negation marker *kái*. In the other structure (2b), we have the focus marker *tə* (it is) and the focused noun *məníy* (woman). Both *gawla* (young boy) and *məníy* (woman) are Noun Phrases (NP).

2.2. Possessive Pronoun

Possessive pronoun can be considered as Noun Phrases (NP). (3)

- a. *Na wíyá á tálá*
 rel. mine SM see + pres
 “The mine sees.”
- b. *Na wí:dagai a hala kai*
 rel. theirs SM walk + pres. neg
 “Theirs do not walk.”

In the first structure (3a), *na wíya* (the mine) is the possessive pronoun. It is followed by the

subject marker *á* and the verb *tálá* (sees). The possessive pronoun must occupy the Noun Phrase (NP) Head. In the second construction (3b), we have the possessive pronoun *na wi:dágái* (theirs), the subject marker *a*, the verb *hala* (walks) and the negation marker *kái*. The possessive pronoun must also occupy the Noun Phrase (NP) Head.

2.3. Demonstrative Pronoun

The demonstrative pronoun can be considered as Noun Phrase (NP). Let us observe the following structures:

(4)

a. *Mu tala hánná ba*

1sg voir + perf. Dem. ideo.

“I saw this one.”

b. *Hánná dā.*

Dem. Top.

“This one.”

In the first structure (4a), we have the subject *mu* (I), the verb *tala* (saw), the demonstrative *hánná* (this one) and the ideophone *ba*. The demonstrative *ba* must be considered as Noun Phrase (NP). In the second structure (4b), we have the demonstrative *hánná* (this one) and the topic marker *dā*. The demonstrative *hánná* (this one) is also a Noun Phrase (NP).

2.4. Indefinite pronoun

The indefinite pronoun can be considered as Noun Phrase (NP). Let us observe the following structures:

(5)

a. *Mámát a yəma zamai kái.*

Mamat SM catch + perf. other ideo.

“Mamat caught another.”/ “Mamat caught others.”

b. *Zamai á ná.*

Other SM be + pres.

“There are others.”

In the first structure (5a), we have the subject *Mámát*, the subject marker *a*, the verb *yəma* (caught), the indefinite pronoun *zamai* (other) and the ideophone *kái*. The indefinite pronoun *zamai* (other-s) must be considered as Noun Phrase (NP). In the second structure (5b), we have the indefinite pronoun *zamai* (other), the subject marker *á* and the verb *ná* (are). The indefinite pronoun *zamai* (other) is also a Noun Phrase (NP).

2.5. Numbers

Numbers can work as circumstantial object of quantity or predicative object:

(6)

a. *á múlá súlú* (COD)

3sgm take + perf. two

“He took two.”

b. *Tə lúvá kətái.*

3sgf buy + perf. one

“She bought one.”

In the first structure (6a), we have the subject marker of third person *á* (he), the verb *múlá* (took) and the numeral *súlú* (two). The numeral *súlú* (two) can be considered as Noun Phrase (NP). In the second structure (6b), we have the subject marker *tə* (she), the verb *lúvá* (bought) and the numeral *kətái* (one). The numeral *kətái* (one) is also a Noun Phrase (NP).

The numerals can function as predicative object. Let us observe the following data:

(7)

a. *Táwálkái ní hú.*

brothers his three

“His brothers are three.”

b. *Bázá dí dóógó.*

years her ten

“She is ten years old.”

In the first structure (7a), we have the noun *táwálkái* (brothers), the possessive *ní* (his) and the numeral *hú* (three). The numeral *hú* (three) can be considered as Noun Phrase (NP). In the second structure (7b), we have the noun *bázá* (years), the possessive *dí* (her) and the numeral *dóógó* (ten). The numeral *dóógó* (ten) is also a Noun Phrase (NP).

3. Noun Phrase Structures

In Musgum, the Noun Phrase has several structures.

3.1. Noun

A single noun can be a Noun Phrase (NP). Let us observe the Musgum following constructions:

(8)

a. *Sali a sádá*

Sali SM know + pres.

“Sali knows.”

b. *Á wús.*

Foc boy

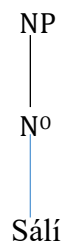
“It is a boy.”

In the first structure (8a), we have the noun *Sali*, the subject marker *a* and the verb *sádá*

(knows). The single noun *Sali* is the Noun Phrase (NP). In the second structure (8b), we have the focus marker *á* (it is) and the noun *wús* (boy). This latter is the Noun Phrase (NP).

The Noun Phrase (NP) in (8a) can be represented as follows:

(9)



13.2. Noun + Possessive

In Musgum, the Noun Phrase (NP) can be constituted by a noun followed by a possessive determiner. Let us observe the following structures:

(10)

a. *áyí kú á túwá.*

son your SM cry + perf.

“Your son cried.”

b. *Mə tálá dálám ní kai.*

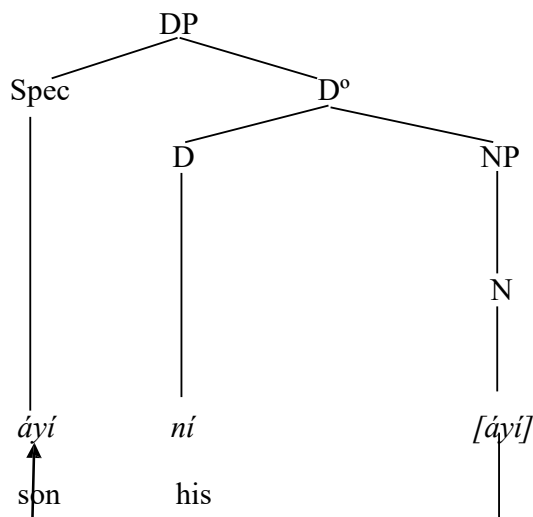
1sg see + perf. house his neg

“I did not see his house.”

In the first expression (10a), we have the noun *áyí* (son), the possessive determiner *kú* (your), the subject marker *á* and the verb *túwá* (cried). The noun *áyí* (son) is followed by the determiner *kú* (your). This group is a Noun Phrase (NP). In the second expression (10b), we have respectively the noun *dálám* (house), the possessive determiner *ní* (his) and the negation marker *kai*. The noun *dálám* (house) is followed by the determiner *ní* (his). The group is also a Noun Phrase (NP).

The Noun Phrase (NP) in (11a) can be represented as follows:

(12)



Since the possessive determiner occurs post-nominally, the noun moves from NP to Spec-DP.

3.3. Nom + Demonstrative

In Musgum, the Noun Phrase (NP) can be constituted by a noun followed by a demonstrative determiner. Let us observe the following structures:

(13)

a. *Wáη hánná mógó*

hole this deep

“This hole is deep.”

b. *Súgái hánná píďēm.*

sauce this good

“This sauce is good.”

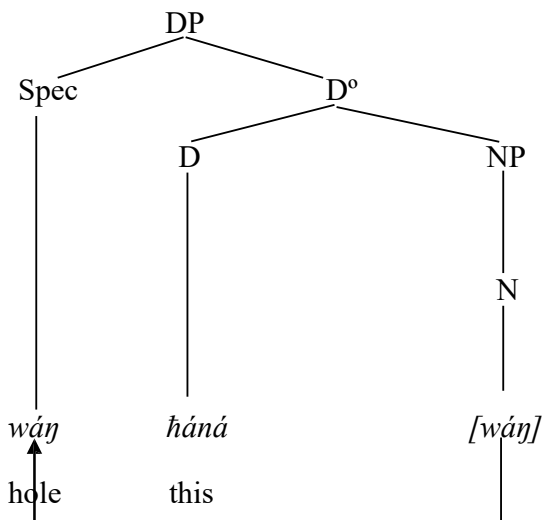
In the first locution (13a), we have the noun *wáη* (hole), the demonstrative determiner *hánná* (this) and the adjective *mógó* (deep). The noun *wáη* (son) is followed by the determiner *hánná* (this). This group is a Noun Phrase (NP). In the second locution (13b), we have respectively the noun *súgái* (sauce), the demonstrative determiner *hánná* (this) and the adjective *píďēm*

(good). The noun *súgáí* (sauce) is followed by the demonstrative determiner *hánná* (this).

The group is also a Noun Phrase (NP).

The Noun Phrase (NP) in (13a) can be represented as follows:

(14)



Since the possessive determiner also occurs post-nominally, the noun moves from NP to Spec-DP.

3.4. Noun + Possessive Marker + Noun

In Musgum, the Noun Phrase (NP) can be constituted by a noun followed by a possessive marker and the genitive. Let us observe the following structures:

(15)

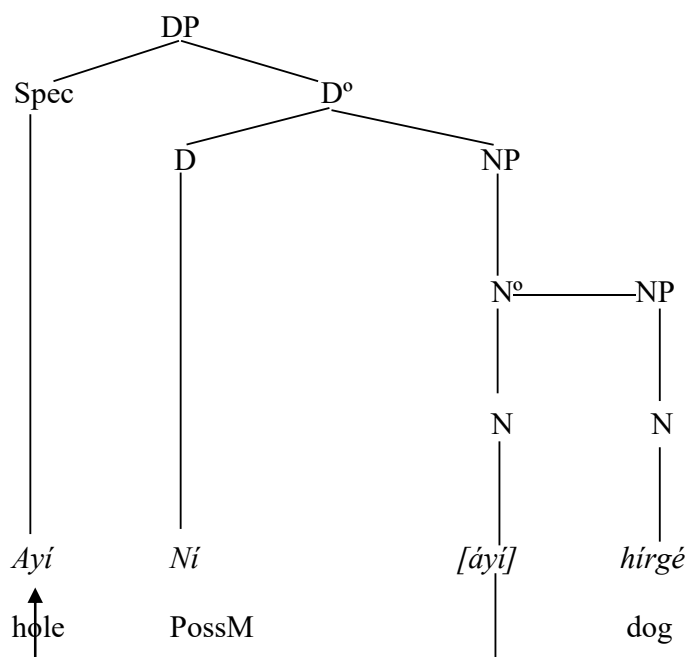
- a. *áyí ní hírgé á múrá sú.*
 son PossM. dog SM die + perf. ideo.
 “The pup died.”
- b. *á fún ní Zíglá.*
 Foc house Poss.M. Zíglá
 “It is Zíglá’s house.”

In the first structure (15a), we have the noun *áyí* (son), the possessive marker *ní*, the genitive

noun *hírgé* (dog), the subject marker *á*, the verb *múra* (died) and the ideophone *sú*. The subject noun group *áyí ní hírgé* (dog's child) is constituted by a noun, a possessive marker and a genitive noun. In the second structure (15b), we have respectively the focus marker *á*, the noun *fúḡ* (house), the possessive marker *ní* and the genitive noun *Ziglá* (good). The focused noun group *fúḡ ní Ziglá* (Zigla's house) is constituted by a noun, a possessive marker and a genitive noun.

The Noun Phrases (NP) in (15a) can be represented as follows:

(16)



3.5. Noun + *nà* (connective) + Noun

In Musgum, the Noun Phrase (NP) can be made up of a noun followed respectively by the connective *nà* and another noun. Let us observe the following structures:

(17)

a. *Sá lí ná Márwá á hálá kái.*

Sali con. Maroua SM leave + perf. nég.

“Sali of Maroua did not leave.”

b. *Á díf na há mú.*

Foc man con. house our

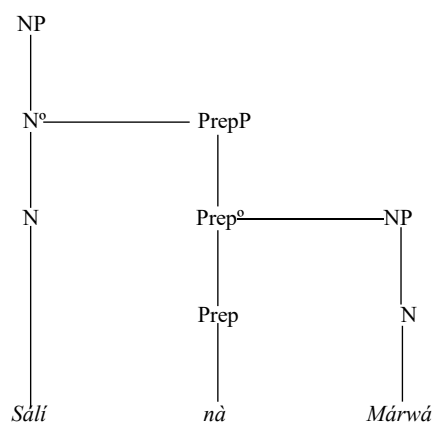
“It is our man.”

Litt.: “It is a man from our house.”

In the first structure (17a), we have the noun *Sáli*, the connective *nà*, the noun *Márwá*, the subject marker (17a and b), the verb *há* (died) and the negation marker *kái*. The subject noun group *Sáli ná Márwá* (Sali of Maroua) is constituted by a noun, a connective word and a genitive noun. In the second structure (17b), we have respectively the focus marker *á*, the noun *díf* (man), the connective word *nà*, the genitive noun *há* (house) and the possessive determiner *mú* (our). The focused noun group *díf ná há mú* (our man/man from our house) is constituted by a noun, a connective word, a genitive noun and possessive determiner. The connective *nà* works as preposition.

The Noun Phrases (NP) in (17a) can be represented as follows:

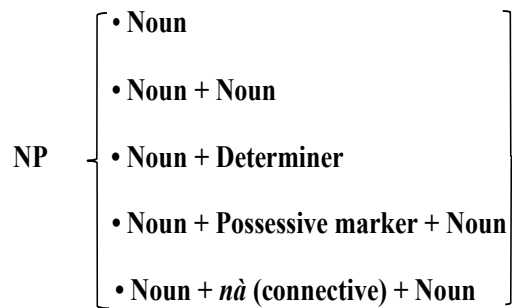
(18)



4. Noun Phrase formula

After observing several structures of Noun Phrases (NP) in Musgum, we can present the following formula:

(19)



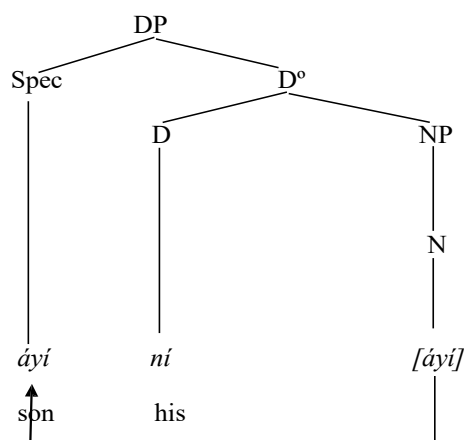
5. From Noun Phrase (NP) to Determiner Phrase (DP)

The description of Noun Phrase (NP) in Musgum is absolutely structural. Since Abney (1987), we don't talk more about Noun Phrase (NP). We rather talk about Determiner Phrase (DP) which selects Noun Phrase (NP) as complement.

After observing Musgum data, the determiners occur post-nominally. It is not particular to Musgum. Aboh (2010), for example, shows that the determiners in Kwa languages also occur post-nominally. In fact, according to Kayne (1994), normal order of Determiner Phrase is D-N. All other order is result of movement.

As seen in (12) tree representation for example, the derivation of Noun Phrase (NP) followed by a determiner is:

(20)



The rewriting rule is:

(21)

DP → Spec, D'

D' → D°, NP

Conclusion

This paper offers some elements of understanding the structure and the derivation of the Noun Phrase, by analyzing data from Musgum language. We found that the Noun Phrase can be made up of a noun, a possessive pronoun, a demonstrative pronoun, an indefinite pronoun and numerals. We brought out several Noun Phrase structures: single Noun; Noun and possessive determiner; Noun and demonstrative determiner; Noun, Possessive marker and Noun; Noun, *nà* (connective) and Noun. The Noun Phrase (NP) can be considered as Determiner Phrase (DP). The determiner follows the noun. But in the underlying structure, it occupies a higher position: Spec-DP. This analysis is rewarding and can lead us to explore others kinds of phrases in Musgum and Noun Phrase constructions in Chadic languages.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of second author, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Abbreviations

- **1sg:** First person of singular
- **3sg:** Third person of singular
- **3sgm:** masculine third person of singular
- **3sgf:** feminine third person of singular
- **Con:** connective
- **D:** Determiner
- **Dem:** Demonstrative
- **DP:** Determiner Phrase
- **Foc:** Focus
- **I:** inflection
- **IP:** Inflection Phrase
- **Ideo:** ideophone
- **N :** Noun Phrase
- **Neg:** negation
- **NP:** Noun Phrase
- **Perf:** perfective
- **PossM:** Possessive Marker
- **Prep:** Preposition
- **PrepP:** Preposition Phrase
- **Pres:** present
- **Rel:** relativizer