

CHAPTER 4

PHRASE

4.0 Introduction

A phrase is typically composed of two or more words to form a unit, but does not have the propositional characteristics of a sentence. Usually, phrases function as elements of sentences. Sentences normally have subjects, predicates, objects, etc., while phrases typically have a head word with different types of modifiers. They can also function as a unit of one of the constituents of a sentence (Elson& Pickett 1988:73).

Healey (1995:45) states that,

"A phrase is typically a small cluster of words forming a unit which functions as a component of a clause. Unlike a clause, a phrase does not have its own subject and predicate"

In this chapter, different kinds of phrases, such as noun phrase, classifier phrase, prepositional phrase, and verb phrases, are discussed.

4.1 Noun phrase

In Geba, the noun phrase, generally the initial element, is a head noun followed by the other parts of speech. The following is the general structure for noun phrases:

$$NP \rightarrow (\text{PossNP}) N_{\text{Head}} (\text{ADJ.P}) \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{CLF.P} \\ \text{QNT.P} \end{array} \right\} (\text{DEIC})$$

The following example shows the noun phrase structure in Geba.

(165) (Elicitation)

jə t^hwì əθípaʔ θó dó ənò
 1S dog black three CLF that
 PRN N ADJ NUM CLF DEM

'my three black dogs'

According to this phrase structure rule, the head noun can be preceded by the optional possessive noun phrase (POS NP) and followed by an optional adjective phrase (ADJ P). The last part of the noun phrase would be either a quantifier (QNT.P) or classifier phrase (CLF.P) followed by an optional deictic (DEIC).

Semantically, nouns are modified by qualifiers (also known as adjectives) to give more detail about the objects they denote qualifiers follow the noun.

Example (166a) shows an adjective (with the optional prefix ə) which modifies the head noun. It follows the noun to form a noun phrase.

(166a) (Elicitation)

ʃì (ə)dò
 house big
 N ADJ

'big house'

The prefix ə, which is an optional prefix, attaches to adjectives and verbs to form a modified noun phrases as in example (166b).

(166b) (Elicitation)

ʃì (ə)θé
 house new
 N ADJ

'new house'

Classifier phrases modify nouns in a noun phrase. Classifier phrases use a number and a specific sortal classifier based on the semantic properties (shape, size, humanness, etc.) of the head noun as in example (167). Classifier phrases can also use measure classifiers to show quantities of a mass noun.

(167) BH 007

tʰé t̃á d̃ó
tiger one CLF
N NUM CLF

'one tiger'

In Geba, *d̃āl̃à* 'many' and *t̃ás̃ò?* 'some' function grammatically as quantifier phrases. Some evidence is that these are not classifier phrase can be seen from the fact that no other number can substitute for *t̃á*. They look like classifier phrases but they function as quantifiers. Examples (168) and (169) show these quantifiers in noun phrases.

(168) (Elicitation)

tʰé t̃ás̃ò?
tiger some
N QNT

'some tigers'

(169) (Elicitation)

tʰé d̃āl̃à
tiger many
N QNT

'many tiger'

In examples (170) and (171), the number and classifier cannot appear together with the quantifier.

(170) (Elicitation)

*t^hwì tāsòʔ əθípà θó dó
dog some black three CLF
N QNT ADJ NUM CLF

'some three black dogs'

(171) (Elicitation)

*t^hwì tāsòʔ əθípà θó dó
dog some black three CLF
N QNT ADJ NUM CLF

'some three black dogs'

Geba nouns are unmarked for number. If the number needs to be specified, a classifier phrase is always used as in example (172). The use of "one+CLF" is used to specify a new noun phrase referent as a non-specific referent (i.e. 'a person'). It is usually found in the object noun phrase because subject noun phrases are often "given" information. Example (172) expresses the simple number with classifier phrase.

(172) (Elicitation)

jā sàt^hì bjà dā wè
1S see person one CLF
PRO V N NUM CLF

I saw one person/the person.

In this sentence, *dā wè* not only shows the number and classifier, it also shows the semantic meaning of the definiteness. Without *dā wè* there could be two meanings: 'I saw many men', or 'I saw one man'.

Deictic modifiers of nouns are used to point out, or focus on, the head noun. This class consists of *jō* 'this' and *nó* 'that'. The position of this type of modifier is at the end of the noun phrase. The double demonstratives construction has been discussed in section 3.2.2.

In example (173), the demonstrative *nò* appears after adjective *əθípà* which is unnatural.

(173) (Elicitation)

#t^hwì əθípà nò θó dǒ
 dog black that three CLF
 N ADJ DEM NUM CLF

'that three black dogs '

Possessors are commonly seen as (1) possessive pronouns, (2) possessive prefix *ə-* morphemes, or (3) nouns which precede the head noun in addition to *ə* on the head noun.

In examples (174), (175) and (176), pronouns which are the same as subject pronouns are followed by head nouns to form a possessive noun phrase.

(174) (Elicitation)

jǎ mí
 1S name
 PRN N

'my name'

(175) (Elicitation)

ə hì
 3S house
 PRN N

'his/her house'

(176) (Elicitation)

maùŋ ə hì
 Maung 3S house
 PROP PRN N

'Maung's house'

Example (177) shows both an emphatic pronoun and a possessive pronoun preceding the head noun to form a possessive noun phrase.

(177) WL 001

jé jə̀ m̀ò
1S 1S mother
PRN PRN N

'my mother'

The possessive morpheme $\bar{\alpha}$ functions like -'s in English. It can occur between the possessor noun phrase and the possessed noun, or, if the possessed noun phrase is understood from the context, the possessed noun phrase can be left out. Unlike English this morpheme can also occur after possessor pronouns.

Example (178) shows the possessive prefix morpheme attached to the head noun in a complex noun phrase.

(178) (Elicitation)

màŋ̃ ə̀-pàʔ
Maung his-father
PROP POS-N

'the father of Maung' or 'Maung's father'

It is ungrammatical to have a possessive noun phrase without the prefix $\bar{\alpha}$ -

Example (179) shows an ungrammatical phrase without the possessive prefix $\bar{\alpha}$.

(179) (Elicitation)

*màŋ̃ hì
Maung house
PROP N

'Maung's house'

Example (180) shows the combination of both a possessive pronoun and the possessive prefix morpheme.

(180) (Elicitation)

sā mò ā-pàʔ
3S mother his-father
PRN N POS-N

'his mother's father'

In Geba, a possessive phrase can also use ʔé 'of' to show the possession.

Examples (181), (182), and (183) show the possessive meaning of ʔé.

(181) (Elicitation)

maùŋ ʔé hì θó wā
Maung of house three CLF
PROP POS N NUM CLF

'three houses of Maung'

(182) (Elicitation)

maùŋ ʔé θārèʔ θó dó
Maung of horse three CLF
PROP POS N NUM CLF

'three horses of Maung'

(183) (Elicitation)

bwè ʔé séʔ dǎlà nò wè
what of book many this INTER
QP POS N QNT DEM ILL.F

Whose books are these (bare pronouns)?

When possession is expressed clausally, an alternate analysis of ʔé is as a generic noun that substitutes for the possessed noun phrase. Example (184) shows the first person singular pronoun with the generic possessive noun.

(184) (Elicitation)

ʃɪ dɔ̃ wà mĩ jə ʔɛ
house one CLF be 1S of
N NUM CLF COP PRN POS

This house is mine.

4.1.1 Apposition Noun phrase

An apposition phrase in Geba consists of two phrases of the same category which are placed next to each other to make more definite or explicit the meaning of each other. In Geba, a specific noun phrase (NP_{Spec}) must be proper noun follows a general noun phrase (NP_{Gen}) to clarify the meaning; and both nouns have the same relationship to the whole sentence. The following is the structure of the apposition noun phrase in Geba.

Appos NP → NP_{Gen} NP_{Spec}

Specific nouns which expand or clarify the meaning of the generic nouns can usually have different structures such as elaborate expressions, descriptive noun phrases or possessive noun phrases. The following examples show apposition phrases in Geba.

In example (185), the first elaborate expression noun phrase is further specified by the proper name in the second noun phrase to form an apposition phrase.

(185) (Elicitation)

ɔ́ók^hòp^hàk^hò maùŋ ʔɛ ɔ́ʃɪ nù ɔ́θɛ
village chief Maung of his-house be new
N PROP POS POS-N COP ADJ

Maung, village chief's house is new.

In example (186), the first descriptive noun phrase is further specified by the following proper noun to form an appositional noun phrase.

(186) (Elicitation)

tʃaúŋθá	əθé	maùŋ	nù	múhèdēní	sə	lé tʰà	tʃaúŋ
school boy	new	Maung	this	yesterday	3S	go ascend	school
N	ADJ	PROP	DEM	ADV	PRN	V V	N

Maung a new student attended school yesterday.

In example (187), a possessive noun phrase is further specified by the following proper noun to form an appositional phrase.

(187) (Elicitation)

dòmàdə	ʔé	đókʰòpʰákʰò	maùŋ	nù	sə	làgèjà	đó	jè	ʔò	nù
Dormader	of	village chief	Maung	this	3S	visit	to	1S	have	FP
PROP	POS	N	PROP	DEM	PRN	V	PREP	PRN	V	FP

Maung the chief of Dormerder village came to visit me.

4.1.2 Co-ordinate noun phrase

A co-ordinate noun phrase usually consists of two similar head constituents joined by a conjunction: 'and' or 'or'. In examples (188) and (189), two head nouns are joined by a conjunction to form a co-ordinate noun phrase.

(188) RW 001

tʰòpʰé	kĩdʒʔ	pəʔí
paddy husk	and	sticky rice
N	CONJ	N

'Paddy husk and sticky rice'

This conjunction can also function similarly to a preposition as in example (189).

(189) WL 002

jè ʔò kī jǎ θébùwè əwè θáθòʔ nù lɔ̃
1S have and 1S sibling CLF six this FP
PRN V CONJ PRN N CLF NUM DEM FP

I and my siblings are six. (I have five siblings.)

In Geba, a serial phrase which includes three or more noun phrases can occur. The conjunction links only the last two noun phrases. Example (190) shows the serial noun phrase construction.

(190) (Elicitation)

kʰútə̀nì ə̀m̀ìkʰó ə̀m̀ìm̀ùʔ kīdɔ̃ʔ ə̀písə̀pʰò dǎ̀lǎ nù lè dǒ m̀ìlèklé
today man woman and child many this go to forest
N N N CONJ N QNT DEM V PREP N

Today men, women and the children go to the forest.

4.2 Classifier phrase

Classifiers function as particles which accompany nouns to mark a specific class of nouns. Sometimes the classes differentiate a semantic feature such as the physical shape of the noun or the difference between animacy and inanimacy. Classifiers are divided into two kinds. There are general classifiers which are based on the objects' shape or size and the specific classifiers which are only used for one particular. In some cases the specific classifier has the same form as the noun it classifies although the tone may differ. Typically, all classifiers (CLF) follow numbers (NUM) which come after head noun.

CLF.P → NUM CLF

In example (191), the classifier *mé* is used for round and thing like bottle houses. Because a house is regarded to have a round shape, this classifier is used in this phrase.

(191) GB 2.1(1)

ʃɪ dɔ̀ θó mé
house big three CLF
N ADJ NUM CLF

'three big houses'

In example (192), the classifier *wà* is particularly used for house.

(192) GB 2.1(2)

hì dɔ̀ θó wà
house big three CLF
N ADJ NUM CLF

'three big houses'

In example (193), the head noun and classifier has the same classifier with different tones.

(193) (Elicitation)

p^hɔ́ tɔ̃ p^hɔ́ʔ
flower one CLF
N NUM CLF

'one flower'

Usually, classifiers follow the head noun but they must precede the head noun when the number is a multiple of ten or the number six and eight (see section 3.2.4).

4.3 Prepositional phrase

In Geba, a word is related by a preposition to its role in the phrase.

Solnit (1997:170-177) suggests that prepositions are not nouns, since the Kayah Li prepositional phrase is almost the same as the noun phrase because it functions as a direct object. This analysis is partially followed here.

PP → PREP NP (LOCN)

Example (194) shows the GOAL oblique marker *dõ* which occurs between the verb phrase and the GOAL. The preposition (PREP) *dõ* is a general location marker which can have the meaning 'to', 'for', or 'at' followed by a noun or noun phrase. A locator noun (LOCN) following the main noun is optional.

Example (194) shows the typical prepositional phrase structure. In this case it is a goal or recipient.

(194) (Elicitation)

sã ʔi blè tã ɓó dõ bjà dã bwè
3S give arrow one CLF to person one CLF
PRN V N NUM CLF PREP N NUM CLF

He gave an arrow to the man.

The goal oblique in Geba occurs after the direct object. An example (195) shows the goal oblique structure.

(195) GB 9.3(1)

sã lè dõ mándǎlé
3S go to Mandalay
PRN V PREP PROP

He goes to Mandalay./ He went to Mandalay.

The source oblique also occurs after the main verb *ʔǎ*. Example (196) shows the source oblique structure. The preposition *dõ* is omitted.

(196) (Elicitation)

sã ʔǎ mándǎlé sã lè
3S stay Mandalay 3S go
PRN V PROP PRN V

He comes from Mandalay.

In addition, Geba has locative nouns phrase. In this kind of phrase, the preposition expresses the general place followed by the main noun while the locator noun further defines the location eg.'inside', 'beside' and 'in front of'. Examples (197) and (198) show the structure of preposition and the locator nouns in Geba.

In example (197), the preposition *dó* comes before the noun which is followed by the locator noun *bú* to clarify the specific place.

(197) GA 3(5)

maùŋ	lè-jò	písəp ^h ò	dó	tʃaúŋ	bú
Maung	go-take	child	to	school	in
PROP	V-V	N	PREP	N	LOCN

Maung took the child to school.

In example (198), the preposition *dó* comes before noun which is followed by a beneficiary marker. Possibly, a recipient (benefactee) is definable as a kind of metaphorical location thus it can be expressed by this construction.

(198) GA 20(1)

maùŋ	bwé	lèp ^h èt ^h í	dó	zò	ənìtʃ ^h í
Maung	buy	tea	for	Zaw	for
PROP	V	N	PREP	PROP	BENF

Maung bought tea for Zaw.

4.4 Verb phrase

The verb phrase in Geba optionally starts with an auxiliary (AUX₁) which is followed by the head verb (V), an optional directional (DIR), an auxiliary (AUX₂), and lastly by an optional adverb (ADV).

The following is a typical verb phrase structure in Geba.

V P → (AUX₁) V (DIR) (AUX₂) (ADV)

Example (199) shows a typical verb phrase.

(199) (Elicitation)

(kə̃) lé (tʰà) (wátʰó) (θàdʒ)
will go ascend ASP slowly
AUX V V PRT ADV

'will go up slowly'

The verb phrase structure expresses various situations of an event according to the meaning of the head verb. In this kind of phrase, the main verb functions as the head of the verb phrase to show what event is happening at the present time. Example (200) shows a simple sentence in which the verb phrase uses the main verb *swè* 'run'.

(200) (Elicitation)

maùŋ swè
Maung run
PROP V

Maung runs.

The verb particle *kə̃* (AUX₁) expresses the future situation of an event. In this kind of verb phrase, *kə̃* functions as the auxiliary verb 'will' which precedes the main verb. It shows that the action will occur in the future. It can also imply an immanent action 'about to'. Example (201) shows a verb phrase expressing a future event. (See section 3.1.2.2.1 for more on preverbal auxiliaries.)

(201) (Elicitation)

maùŋ kə̃ ?à lō
Maung will eat FP
PROP AUX V FP

Maung will eat.

A directional verb particle directly follows the main verb and expresses the direction of the agent. The directional doesn't appear as an aspect maker for

non-motion events like in some other Southeast Asian languages. In example (202), the directional particle *là* comes immediately after the main verb to express the direction of the agent which is descending and forward.

(202) GB 10.2(4)

sā dō dō bjà dā wè sā lè là dō jàngòŋ nò
 3S say that person one CLF 3S go descend to Yangon FP
 PRN V REL N NUM CLF PRN V V PREP PROP FP

He said that the man went to Yangon.

In example (203), the directional verb particle *gè* follows the main verb to express the direction which is 'back'. It can be used with non-motion verbs to indicate a return to a previous state.

(203) RW 005

kā bēnì gè k^hó dō m̀wè bú
 1Pex put back follow to jar in
 PRN V V V PREP N LOCN

We put it back in a jar.

Post verbal auxiliaries in Geba have two forms. The first one, *mó*, shows the action was stopped and the second one *wá t^hó/wá gé* shows the action has been completed. Semiperfectivity is expressed by the particle *mó*, which follows the main verb in the verb phrase. The action or the event in this verb phrase is stopped and may be finished or not finished. Example (204) shows the form of completive verb phrase in Geba.

(204) (Elicitation)

maùŋ lè mó bálè
 Maung go AUX where
 PROP V PRT QW

Where did Maung go?

In examples (205) and (206), the action which was done or completed is expressed by *wá t^hó/wá gé*. They appear at the end of the sentence as the final particle of the sentence.

(205) (Elicitation)

maùŋ ʔà wát^hó

Maung eat ASP

PROP V PRT

Maung has eaten.

(206) (Elicitation)

maùŋ ʔà wágé

Maung eat ASP

PROP V PRT

Maung has eaten.

4.5 Adverb phrase

An adverb phrase in Geba does not require a conjunction to join two adverbs. Adverbs follow post-verb auxiliaries and objects and appear at the end of the sentence. In this case, the adverb occurs with the optional associative marker, *dó*, and *ə* appears prefixed to the adverb. Example (207) shows the adverb position in a transitive clause structure.

(207) (Elicitation)

maùŋ p^háʔ séʔ dó əθàdʒ lɔ

Maung read book with slowly FP

PROP V N CONJ ADV FP

Maung reads book slowly.

Example (208) shows a coordinate adverb phrase with reduplication.

(208) (Elicitation)

dó dā dósó nù ēmīmù dālā nù sē jìfè θàdʒθàdʒ θāròθārò
village one CLF this woman many this 3S speak slowly quietly
N NUM CLF DEM N QNT DEM PRN V ADV ADV

l̩

FP

FP

The women in that village speak slowly and quietly.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, different kinds of phrase were discussed. Noun phrases included modified noun phrases such as: qualifier or descriptive noun phrases, quantifiers, determiners and demonstratives. Apposition phrases and co-ordinate noun phrases were also discussed.

The verb phrase was shown to consist of the verb particles, auxiliary verbs, directional verbs and adverbs. Classifier and prepositional phrases were also presented. A brief discussion of the adverb phrase was also included in this presentation.