CHAPTER 5
SIMPLE SENTENCES

5.0 Introduction

The relationship of a clause and its proposition which is a conceptual notion is stated by Payne (1997:71) as follows.

> *"A significant portion of cognition and reasoning in mature human being is propositional. That is, people mentally combine and manipulate concepts in chunks involving one or two conceptual entities and a relation, activity, or property concerning them. Communication tends to be multipropositional, consisting of groups of conceptual "chunks," each contributing some bit of information to the message to be communicated. The clause (or sometime "sentence") is the linguistic expression of a proposition; a proposition is a conceptual notion, whereas a clause is its formal morphosyntactic instantiation."*

Clauses or sentences in Geba consist of noun phrase arguments and predicates such as adjectives, nouns, or verbs.

The typical sentence construction type is SVO, but, in some cases, the structure changes to VSO. There is no grammatical case but there is some oblique marking of arguments.

This chapter will focus on verbal and non-verbal clauses, clausal constituents, negation and illocutionary force.

5.1 Verbal clauses

Verbal clauses in Geba consist of intransitive clauses, which are the combination of a subject and a verb phrase; semitransitive clauses, which combine subject, verb phrase, and location; transitive clauses, which consist of subject, verb phrase, and object; and, finally, ditransitive clauses, which include subject, verb phrase, object, and location.

5.1.1 Intransitive verb clause

An intransitive clause consists of a subject noun phrase followed by the predicate. The predicate can be an intransitive verb, an adjective, or a complex verb phrase. A variable order of subject with emotive predicates is possible. If there is a preverbal subject, it functions similarly to an ACTOR, and as a postverbal subject, it functions similarly to an 'EXPERIENCER'. In Kayah Li, Solnit also noted that there is a class of verbs signifying bodily sensations or emotion where the experiencer of the state can be found post-verbally. (Solnit 1997: 147-164). These are discussed in section 5.2.

Example (209) shows an intransitive clause that consists of a preverbal subject and a verb as the predicate.

(209) (Elicitation)
maὺŋ swɛ̀
Maung run
PROP V

Maung runs.

In example (210), the intransitive verb is followed by the completive particle *gɛ́*.

(210) (Elicitation)
t^{h}í k^{h}lò gɛ́
water freeze COMP
N V PRT

The water has frozen.

In example (211), the intransitive verb is followed by a directional.

(211) (Elicitation)
tʰí kəlà tʰà
water boil ascend
N V DIR

The water boils.
As shown in examples (212) to (214), the intransitive verbs occurs not only by itself, but followed by another modifier, completive word, or directional verbs.

Another kind of intransitive clause is formed by the dummy subject *dɛ̀.* There are no specific participants in this type of intransitive clause. Mostly, this type of intransitive clause refers to the weather or the temperature of the environment.

Examples (212) and (213) show the intransitive clause with the dummy subject *dɛ̀* with obligatory verb *ʔɔ̀* 'have' in Geba. In this case, *gò* 'hot' is primarily a verb of experience.

(212) (Elicitation)
dɛ̀ gò ʔɔ̀
thing hot have
N ADJ V

It's very hot.

(213) (Elicitation)
dɛ̀ gò jɛ̀
thing hot 1S
N ADJ PRN

I feel hot.

Example (214) shows the intransitive clause with the subject in front

(214) (Elicitation)
jə̄ θètʰɛ̀ʔ
1S angry
PRN ADJ

I am angry.

It is ungrammatical to use predicate fronting with predicates of intentional emotion *θètʰɛ̀ʔ* as in example (215).

(215) (Elicitation)
*dɛ̀ θètʰɛ̀ʔ jɛ̀
thing angry 1S
N ADJ PRN

I am angry.

5.1.2 Semitransitive clauses

A semitransitive clause consists of a subject, predicate, and an obligatory locative. The order is invariable. This type of clause normally describes motion or static location. The predicate can be complex. Semitransitive clauses are usually formed by verbs which take energy.

A motion or semitransitive clause in Geba consists of a motion verb and a distinctive location element. The motion clause structure would be S V OBL. Example (216) shows the motion clause structure.

(216) (Elicitation)
písə̄pʰò lódɔ̀ lè dɔ́ tʃaúŋ nò
child all go to school FP
N ADJ V PREP N FP

All the children go to school.

In the above sentence, the agent *písəpʰò* and the goal *tʃaúŋ* have an argument structure where they are subject and OBL in grammatical relations.

5.1.3 Transitive clauses

A transitive clause consists of a subject, predicate, and object and the order is invariable. A transitive clause involves two participants. Semantically, the subject normally functions as the agent and the object functions as the patient. In example (217), the transitive clause structure of this language is shown. The sentence structure is S V O.

(217) (Elicitation)
zɔ̀ dè maùŋ
Zaw hit Maung
PROP V PROP

Zaw hit Maung.

It is impossible to change the sentence structure to SOV as in example (218).

(218) (Elicitation)
*zɔ̀ maùŋ dè
Zaw Maung hit
PROP PROP V

Zaw Maung hit.

It is also impossible to change the sentence structure to VSO as in example (219).

(219) (Elicitation)
*dè zɔ̀ maùŋ
hit Zaw Maung
V PROP PROP

Zaw hit Maung.(or) Maung was hit by Zaw.

This change of order is impossible even with transitive verbs of emotion as in example (220).

(220) (Elicitation)

*ʃìʃá	maòŋ	t^hwì
afraid of	Maung	dog
V	PROP	N

Maung is afraid of dog.

5.1.4 Ditransitive clauses

Ditransitive clauses involve three participants, one of which is usually inanimate. (Peck1984:121). Example (221) shows a locative transitive clause with an obligatory location following the ditransitive verb phrase.

(221) (Elicitation)

maòŋ	ɓè	là	əsɛ́ʔ	tə̄	ɓɛ̀	ɗó	səbwɛ́	k^hò
Maung	put	decend	his-book	one	CLF	to	table	CLF
PROP	V	DIR	POS-N	NUM	CLF	PREP	N	CLF

Maung put a book on the table.

It is impossible to move the object after the locative phrase as in example (222).

(222) (Elicitation)

*maòŋ	ɓè	là	ɗó	səbwɛ́	k^hò	əsɛ́ʔ	tə̄	ɓɛ̀
Maung	put	decend	to	table	on	his-book	one	CLF
PROP	V	DIR	PREP	N	LOCN	POS-N	NUM	CLF

Maung put a book on the table.

Usually, the indirect object in a ditransitive clause follows the verb phrase but sometimes the word order changes. Example (223) shows the indirect object preceding the direct object which is followed by a benefactive phrase.

(223) GB 14.3(1)

jə	ʔì	maʊŋ	séʔ	dó	sə	pàʔ	ənìkʰí
1S	give	Maung	book	for	3S	father	for
PRN	V	PROP	N	PREP	PRN	N	BENF

I gave Maung a book for his father.

5.2 Non-verbal clauses

Clauses which are built around nominal predicates or adjectives are known as non-verbal clauses. Descriptive clauses, equative clauses, possession clauses, existential clauses, and locative clauses are all kinds of non-verbal clauses. These kinds of non-verbal clauses are found in Geba.

A descriptive clause modifies the nouns with an adjective. Geba doesn't need the copula verb 'be' for descriptive clauses. The sentence structure is NP ADJ. Example (224) shows a descriptive sentence which is an intransitive clause that has a noun phrase and an adjective as predicate. There is no subject-verb agreement in Geba.

(224) (Elicitation)

sə	θàʔgənàʔì
3S	happy
PRN	ADJ

He is happy.

If the sentence structure is VS, then the subject is patient-like and affected by the agent. Example (225) shows a descriptive sentence that denotes a changeable state.

(225) (Elicitation)

θàʔgənàʔì	sè
happy	3S
ADJ	PRN

He feels happy.

Example (226) shows two pronouns appearing before and after the adjective.

(226) (Elicitation)

sə	θàʔgənàʔì	sɛ̀	lɔ̄
3S	happy	3S	FP
PRN	ADJ	PRN	FP

He is happy.

5.2.1 Equative clauses

Equative clauses in Geba identify some nominal with the subject. Equative clauses mean that two referential objects are identical. In Geba, the copula *mī* functions as a predicate to join the two noun phrases denoting referential objects. The sentence structure of an equative clause is [S *mī* O]. Example (227) shows an equative clause.

(227) (Elicitation)

sə	mī	ɗópʰákʰònè
3S	be	village chief
PRN	COP	N

He is a village chief.

To negate *mī*, negative discontinuous morphemes appear before the verb and after the object.

The negative construction shows that *mī* is a copula and not a topic marker on the noun phrase because it can be negated as in example (228).

(228) (Elicitation)

sə	tə	mī	ɗópʰákʰònè	nɔ̀ʔ
3S	not	be	village chief	not
PRN	NEG	COP	N	NEG

He is not a village chief.

Equative clauses can also be used to attribute a name to the subject. Example (229) shows an equative clause which attributes a name to the subject.

(229) (Elicitation)

sə̄	mī	maὺŋ	lɔ̄
3S	be	Maung	FP
PRN	COP	PROP	FP

He is Maung.

5.2.2 Possessive clause

A possessive clause expresses that the subject has possession which is denoted by the object noun phrase. In Geba, the possession clause can be denoted by the possessive verb *ʔɔ̀* the same word as copula for existential *ʔɔ̀*. The following examples show possessive clause structure in Geba.

In example (230), the regular possessive clause structure is found without a possessive prefix on the possessed noun or a possessive marking anywhere in the noun phrases.

(230) (Elicitation)

sə̄	ʃì	ʔɔ́	θó	wà
3S	house	have	three	CLF
PRN	N	V	NUM	CLF

He has three houses.

In examples (231) and (232) nominal possessive marking is found in a possessive clause. The first example uses the possessive word *ʔɛ́* and in the second example the possessive prefix *ə-* precedes the property.

(231) (Elicitation)

maùŋ	ʔé	θərèʔ	ʔɔ	θó	ɗó
Maung	of	horse	have	three	CLF
PROP	POS	N	V	NUM	CLF

Maung has three horses.

(232) (Elicitation)

maùŋ	ə-θərèʔ	ʔɔ	θó	ɗó
Maung	his-horse	have	three	CLF
PROP	POS-N	V	NUM	CLF

Maung has three horses.

5.3 Clausal constituents

Clause constituents presented in this section are subject, object, indirect and oblique object position, benefactive, time, location, instrument, accompaniment and topic.

5.3.1 Subject

In Geba, the subject is almost always obligatory and it comes at the beginning of the sentence. The noun phrase precedes the verb phrase and it can be any type of noun phrase. In example (233), the clause initial subject is followed by the verb phrase.

(233) (Elicitation)

əpísəp^{h}ò	lè	tʃaúŋ	
child	go	school	
N	V	N	

The child goes to school.

5.3.2 Object

Object constituents are commonly found in transitive and ditransitive clauses. Like the subject, the object can have different kinds of nominal constituents. Example (234) shows a proper noun as an object constituent.

(234) (Elicitation)
zɔ̀ dè maʊ̀ŋ
Zaw hit Maung
PROP V PROP

Zaw hit Maung.

Some verbs have two or more objects. Example (235) shows that there are multiple object-like arguments. When the benefactive argument is moved between the recipient and the theme objects, then the preposition *dǒ* that normally marks a benefactive is not used.

(235) GB 14.3(2)
jə̄ ʔì maʊ̀ŋ sə̄ pàʔ ənìtʃʰí sɛ́ʔ tə̄ ɓè
1S give Maung 3S father for book one CLF
PRN V PROP PRN N BENF N NUM CLF

I gave Maung for his father a book.

5.3.3 Indirect and oblique object positions

In this thesis, an indirect object is any argument that follows a direct object. The oblique argument is a type of indirect object. Indirect objects can follow or precede the direct object, and they can be nouns, pronouns, or proper nouns. Usually, the indirect objects are inanimate (e.g., arrow), and the direct object is animate. Obliques are sometimes marked by *dǒ* prepositional phrases.

In example (236), the direct object appears after the main verb and is followed by an oblique (S V DO OBL).

(236) GB 8.4 (1)

sə	ʔì	blè	tə	ɓɔ́	ɗó[7]	bjà	də	bwɛ̀
3S	give	arrow	one	CLF	to	person	one	CLF
PRN	V	N	NUM	CLF	PREP	N	NUM	CLF

He gives an arrow to the man.

5.3.4 Benefactive

The benefactive constituent is a kind of indirect object constituent. It is oblique because it occurs with the preposition *ɗó* and with the beneficiary marker *ə̄nìkʰí* as in example (237).

(237) GB 14.3(3)

jə	ʔì	maʊ̀ŋ	sɛ́ʔ	ɗó	sə	pàʔ	ə̄nìkʰí
1S	give	Maung	book	to	3S	father	for
PRN	V	PROP	N	PREP	PRN	N	BENF

I give Maung a book for his father.

[7] One special feature of Geba is the word *ɗó.* In this paper, *ɗó* is glossed and treated as a preposition. However, as a preposition, it contributes little semantic content and is usually accompanied by a post position or locator noun. Other connective uses of *ɗó* are listed in the following table.

semantic feature	preposition	Post semantic marking
location	*ɗó*	*bú/lɛ̀ʔ*
beneficiary	*ɗó*	*ə̄nìkʰí*
goal	*ɗó*	
instrument	*ɗó*	
time	*ɗó*	*ə̄gə̄dànù*
adverb (quickly)	*ɗó*	
relative clause	*ɗó*	

5.3.5 Time

Time constituents also occur in Geba. The time constituent usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. Example (238) shows a time constituent.

(238) (Elicitation)

mɔ̀bédānì	jə̄	kə̄	lé	ɗó	jàŋgòŋ
tomorrow	1S	will	go	to	Yangon
N	PRN	AUX	V	PREP	PROP

Tomorrow, I will go to Yangon.

5.3.6 Location

When location constituents are oblique as arguments, they usually occur at the end of the sentence as in example (239).

(239) (Elicitation)

maùŋ	ɓè	là	əsɛ́ʔ	tə̄	ɓɛ̀	ɗó	səbwɛ́	$k^hò$
Maung	put	decend	his-book	one	CLF	at	table	on
PROP	V	DIR	POS-N	NUM	CLF	PREP	N	LOCN

Maung put a book on the table.

But as adjuncts, they typically appear in a clause initial position as in example (240).

(240) (Elicitation)

ɗó	jàŋgòŋ	nò	sə̄	$s^hɔ̀$mí	ɗó	ʃì	bú
at	Yangon	that	3S	sleep	at	house	in
PREP	PROP	DEM	PRN	V	PREP	N	LOCN

In Yangon, he sleeps in the house.

An ungrammatical sentence results if the adjunct is moved to the clause final position as in example (241).

(241) (Elicitation)

*sə	sʰɔ̀mí	ɗó	ʃì	bù	ɗó	jàŋgòŋ	nò
3S	sleep	at	house	in	at	Yangon	FP
PRN	V	PREP	N	PREP	PREP	PROP	FP

In Yangon, he sleeps in the house.

5.3.7 Instrument

Instrument constituents occur in transitive and ditransitive clauses but are very rare in intransitive and other kinds of clauses. In example (242), the instrument constituent follows the direct object. Unlike the beneficiary, there is no post-positional marker.

(242) (Elicitation)

maòŋ	ɗèpʰàʔ	ʔóθí	ɗó	ɗâʔ
Maung	cut	coconut	with	knife
PROP	V	N	CONJ	N

Maung cuts coconut with knife.

5.3.8 Accompaniment

The accompaniment constituent in Geba is expressed by *kɪɗɔ̃ʔ* followed by the accompanier. Example (243) shows accompaniment in Geba.

(243) (Elicitation)

sə	lè	ɗó	m̥ílèklé	kīɗɔ̃ʔ	sə	písəpʰò
3S	go	to	forest	and	3S	child
PRN	V	PREP	N	CONJ	PRN	N

He goes to the forest with his child.

5.3.9 Topic

Topic is defined as the argument of a sentence that occurs clause initial. In Geba, different types of topics occur in different sentence structures. The topic

always appears at the beginning of the sentence, but, depending on the meaning of the sentence, the object can change to clause initial. However, when they do so, they are logically understood as normally occurring in the object position.

In example (244), the topic is the subject that appears at the beginning of the sentence and the sentence follows the normal SVO word order.

(244) (Elicitation)

mìjɔ́	tə̄	ɗó	ɓóʔà	jìpʰòʔ
cat	one	CLF	eat	rat
N	NUM	CLF	V	N

The cat ate the rat.

In example (245), the topic appears at the beginning of the sentence but the sentence has "object fronting" and the sentence structure occurs as (OSV).

(245) (Elicitation)

jìpʰòʔ	tə̄	ɗó	mìjɔ́	ɓóʔà
rat	one	CLF	cat	eat
N	NUM	CLF	N	V

The rat was eaten by the cat.

In example (246), the topic appears at the beginning of the sentence as a noun phrase. In this case, the phrase is followed by demonstrative *nù* and followed by the subject and verb. The sentence structure would be TOP Sub V (topicalization)

(246) (Elicitation)

jə̄	mìjɔ́	tə̄	ɗó	nù	tʰwì	ʔà	gɛ́
1S	cat	one	CLF	this	dog	eat	COMP
PRN	N	NUM	CLF	DEM	N	V	PRT

It was my cat the dog ate.

5.4 Illocutionary Force

Different types of illocutionary force, such as declarative, interrogative, imperative, are also found in Geba. The declarative is optionally marked by *lɔ̄* at the end of the sentence. Example (247) shows the declarative construction.

(247) BH 006

sə̄	làʔmèʔtʰì	lə̄wá	ɗó	klèʔ	bù	lɔ̄
3S	wrestle	each other	at	road	in	FP
PRN	V	RECP	PREP	N	PREP	FP

They wrestle each other in the road.

5.4.1 Interrogative

Three different types of interrogative sentence structures are found in Geba. The first is the yes-no question, the second is the information question, and the third expresses alternative questions.

5.4.1.1 Yes-No questions

In Geba, the interrogative particle *ɲàʔ* occurs at the end of the clause to signal a yes-no question. Example (248) shows the interrogative yes-no structure.

(248) (Elicitation)

maùŋ	kə̄	lè	ɗó	sə̄	lɛ̀	bú	ɲà
Maung	will	go	to	3S	field	in	INTER
PROP	AUX	V	PREP	PRN	N	LOCN	ILL.F

Will Maung go to his field?

This kind of question would have the answer "yes" or "no".

5.4.1.2 Information questions

Two parts are required to make an information question in Geba. The first part is a question proform and the second part is the question particle. They function as discontinuous morphemes.

(1)Question proforms

bəwɛ̀	'who'
ɓəlɛ̀	'where'
dà	'what'

(2)Question particles

wɛ̀	this particle is usually seen with 'who' question word
nɛ̀/nɔ̀	these particles are usually seen with 'why' question word
nɛ̀	this particle is usually seen with 'when'

Usually, the questions words are found at the beginning of the sentence and the question particles occur at the end of the sentence. Each question word has a specific function.

(a)Who

In example (249), question word *bəwɛ̀* 'who' occurs with the question particle *wɛ̀*.

(249) GB 18.4(1)

bəwɛ̀	lè	ɗó	sə̄	lɛ̀	bú	**wɛ̀**
who	go	to	3S	field	in	INTER
QP	V	PREP	PRN	N	LOCN	ILL.F

Who went to his field?

(b)Why

In examples (250) and (251), two different question particles, *nɛ̀* and *nò,* are used with the same question word *bɛ̀-dànɛ̀* 'why'.

(250) (Elicitation)

bèdànè	sə̄	lè	ɗó	sə̄	lɛ̀	bú	**nè**
why	3S	go	to	3S	field	in	INTER
QP	PRN	V	PREP	PRN	N	LOCN	ILL.F

Why did he go to his field?

(251) GB 18.5(3)

bèdànè	maùŋ	lè	má	lɛ̀	bú	**nò**
why	Maung	go	why	field	in	INTER
QP	PROP	V	QP	N	LOCN	ILL.F

Why did Maung goto his field?

(c)When

In example (252), the question word 'when' and the question particle *nɛ̀* appear together at the end of the sentence.

(252) GB 18.6 (3)

sə̄	lè	ɗó	sə̄	lɛ̀	bú	nò	**dā**	**ətʃʰì**	**nɛ̀**
3S	go	to	3S	field	in	that	what	time	INTER
PRN	V	PREP	PRN	N	LOCN	DEM	QP	N	ILL.F

When did he go to his field?

(d)How

In example (253), the question word 'how' can be seen at the end of the sentence without a question particle.

(253) GB 18.8 (2)

maòŋ	lé	lɛ̀	bú	**sàdɛ̀**
Maung	go	field	in	how
PROP	V	N	LOCN	QP

How did Maung go to his field?

5.4.1.3 Alternative questions

Geba also has alternative questions. Example (254) shows an alternative question in Geba using *ɓɛ̀dəɓɛ̀nɔ̀ 'or'*. The answer could be 'one of them' or 'both of them' or 'neither of them' will go to the field.

(254) (Elicitation)

maòŋ	ɓɛ̀dəɓɛ̀nɔ̀	zɔ̀	kə̄	lé	húklɛ́	ɦà
Maung	or	Zaw	will	go	field	INTER
PROP	CONJ	PROP	AUX	V	N	ILL.F

Will Maung or Zaw go to the field?

In example (255), alternatives are juxtaposed. The answer will be 'yes' or 'no' and an indication of who will go to the forest.

(255) (Elicitation)

maòŋ	kə̄	lé	húklɛ́	ɦà	mī	zɔ̀	kə̄	lé	ɦà
Maung	will	go	field	INTER	or	Zaw	will	go	INTER
PROP	AUX	V	N	ILL.F	CONJ	PROP	AUX	V	ILL.F

Will Maung or Zaw go to the field?

5.4.2 Imperative

The imperative in Geba is typically used to express a command. To show the recipient of the command, a proper noun might be put at the beginning or at the end. The proper noun at the end is stronger than if the proper noun appears at the beginning of the sentence. Without any proper noun and only a verb, it will be the strongest command. Accordingly in examples (256) and (257), the

subject can be in the sentence initial or sentence final position. These are second person imperative clauses.

(256) (Elicitation)

lè	ɗó	nə̄	lɛ̀	bú	maòŋ
go	to	2S	field	in	Maung
V	PREP	PRN	N	LOCN	PROP

Go to your field Maung.

(257) (Elicitation)

maòŋ	lè	ɗó	nə̄	lɛ̀	bú
Maung	go	to	2S	field	in
PROP	V	PREP	PRN	N	LOCN

Maung go to your field.

A bare verb can form an imperative structure, also. For example, *ʔà* in example (258) has only a verb to form an imperative clause.

(258) GA 17(1)

ʔà
eat
V

Eat!

In example (259), the final particle *ɓɔ̀* is a imperative softening particle. It expresses the imperative as a suggestion or opinion.

(259) (Elicitation)

nə̄-mò-nə̄-pà	ʔɔ̀	ə̄lɔ̀	nù	ʔɔ̀	ɓɔ̀
2S-mother-2S-father	stay	place	this	stay	IMP
PRN-N-PRN-N	V	N	DEM	V	ILL.F

Stay where your parents live.

5.5 Negation

In Geba, negation is in the form of a discontinuous morpheme as in example (260). In this sentence, *tə-…-nɔ́ʔ* is a discontinuous morpheme that comes before the verb and at the end of the clause after the object if an object is present.

(260) GA 14(1)
maʊ̀ŋ tə̄ ʔà nɔ́ʔ
Maung not eat not
PROP NEG V NEG

Maung does not eat./Maung didn’t eat.

In example (261), imperative negation takes a different form. It is a single morpheme *mɛ̀ʔ. mɛ̀ʔ* means 'don't' which expresses a negative command regarding the verb.

(261) GA 16(1)
ʔà mɛ̀ʔ
eat PROHB
V ILL.F

Don't eat.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, intransitive, semitransitive, transitive and ditransitive verbal clauses were discussed. Nonverbal clauses consisting of equative clause and possession were also discussed. Clausal constituents including subjects, objects, topics, indirect objects, obliques and adjuncts, benefactives, times, locations, instruments, and accompaniments were described.

The indicatives, imperatives, and subjunctives as illocutionary types were presented. The interrogative forms for yes-no questions, information questions, and alternative questions were discussed. Negation was also presented in this chapter.