

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)

maùŋ swè

Maung run

PROP V

Maung runs.

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

(210) (Elicitation)

t^hi k^hlò gé

water freeze COMP

N V PRT

The water has frozen.

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

(211) (Elicitation)

t^hí kǎlà t^hà
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, completeive word, or directional verbs.

Another kind of intransitive clause is formed by the dummy subject *dè*. 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 *dè* with obligatory verb *ʔò* 'have' in Geba. In this case, *gò* 'hot' is primarily a verb of experience.

(212) (Elicitation)

dè gò ʔò
thing hot have
N ADJ V

It's very hot.

(213) (Elicitation)

dè gò jè
thing hot 1S
N ADJ PRN

I feel hot.

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

(214) (Elicitation)

jə θətʰɛʔ

1S angry

PRN ADJ

I am angry.

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

(215) (Elicitation)

*də θətʰɛʔ jè

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)

písəpʰò lóðò lè ðó tʃaúnj 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 *písēpʰò* and the goal *tfaúŋ* 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)

zò 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)

*zò 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 zò 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)

*ʃiʃá maùŋ tʰwì
 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)

maùŋ ʃè là ǎsɛʔ tǎ ʃè ɔ́ sǎbwé kʰò
 Maung put descend 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)

*maùŋ ʃè là ɔ́ sǎbwé kʰò ǎsɛʔ tǎ ʃè
 Maung put descend 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)

jā ʔi maʊŋ sɛʔ dɔ sɔ pàʔ ənikʰi
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)

sɔ θàʔgɔnàʔi
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)

θàʔgɔnàʔi sɛ
happy 3S
ADJ PRN

He feels happy.

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

(226) (Elicitation)

sā θàŋgənàŋi sè l̄
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)

sā mī dóp^hák^hònè
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)

sā t̄ mī dóp^hák^hònè n̄?
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)

sā mī maùŋ lō
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 ʔə the same word as copula for existential ʔə. 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)

sā ʃi ʔə 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 ʔé and in the second example the possessive prefix ə- precedes the property.

(231) (Elicitation)

maùŋ ʔé θā̀rèʔ ʔð θó dó
Maung of horse have three CLF
PROP POS N V NUM CLF

Maung has three horses.

(232) (Elicitation)

maùŋ ɛ-θā̀rèʔ ʔð θó dó
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)

ə́písə̀p^hò lè tʃáúŋ
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)

zò dè maùŋ
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 *dó* that normally marks a benefactive is not used.

(235) GB 14.3(2)

jə ʔi maùŋ sə pàʔ ənìtʃʰí séʔ tə ʔè
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 *dó* 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)

sā ʔi · blè tō bós dɔʔ bjà dā bwè
 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 *dɔ* and with the beneficiary marker *ənik^{hɪ}* as in example (237).

(237) GB 14.3(3)

jā ʔi maʊŋ séʔ dɔ sō pàʔ ənik^{hɪ}
 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 *dɔ*. In this paper, *dɔ* 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 *dɔ* are listed in the following table.

semantic feature	preposition	Post semantic marking
location	<i>dɔ</i>	<i>bú/lèʔ</i>
beneficiary	<i>dɔ</i>	<i>ənik^{hɪ}</i>
goal	<i>dɔ</i>	
instrument	<i>dɔ</i>	
time	<i>dɔ</i>	<i>əgədànù</i>
adverb (quickly)	<i>dɔ</i>	
relative clause	<i>dɔ</i>	

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)

màbédānì jǎ kǎ lé dǒ jàngòŋ
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 fè là ǎsé? tǎ fè dǒ sǎbwé kʰò
Maung put descend 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)

dǒ jàngòŋ nò sǎ sʰòmí dǒ ʃi 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 s^həmí dó ʃi bù dó 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)

maùŋ dɛp^hà? ʔóθí dó dā?
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 *kɪdʒ?* followed by the accompanier. Example (243) shows accompaniment in Geba.

(243) (Elicitation)

sə lè dó mɪlèklé kɪdʒ? sə písəp^hò
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)

mìjós tǎ dǒ ǒǒʔà 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 tǎ dǒ mìjós ǒǒʔà
 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)

jǎ mìjós tǎ dǒ nù tʰwì ʔà gé
 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 *l̩* at the end of the sentence. Example (247) shows the declarative construction.

(247) BH 006

s̩ l̩ʔm̩ʔt̩^{h̩} l̩w̩á d̩ó kl̩ʔ bù l̩
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 *f̩àʔ* occurs at the end of the clause to signal a yes-no question. Example (248) shows the interrogative yes-no structure.

(248) (Elicitation)

maʔn̩ k̩ā l̩è d̩ó s̩ā l̩è bú f̩à
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

bāwè	'who'
ḡālè	'where'
dà	'what'

(2) Question particles

wè	this particle is usually seen with 'who' question word
nè/nò	these particles are usually seen with 'why' question word
nè	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 *bāwè* 'who' occurs with the question particle *wè*.

(249) GB 18.4(1)

bāwè	lè	ḡó	sā	lè	bú	wè
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, *nè* and *nò*, are used with the same question word *bè-dànè* 'why'.

(250) (Elicitation)

bèdànè sã lè dó sã lè 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 maũŋ lè má lè 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 *nè* appear together at the end of the sentence.

(252) GB 18.6 (3)

sã lè dó sã lè bú nò dā ɔtʰì nè
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)

maùŋ lé lè bú sàdè
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 *bèdǎbènǎ* 'or'. The answer could be 'one of them' or 'both of them' or 'neither of them' will go to the field.

(254) (Elicitation)

maùŋ bédǎbènǎ zǎ kǎ lé húklé fià
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)

maùŋ kǎ lé húklé fià mī zǎ kǎ lé fià
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 dó nā lè bú maùŋ
go to 2S field in Maung
V PREP PRN N LOCN PROP

Go to your field Maung.

(257) (Elicitation)

maùŋ lè dó nā lè 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, ?à in example (258) has only a verb to form an imperative clause.

(258) GA 17(1)

?à
eat
V

Eat!

In example (259), the final particle 6ð is a imperative softening particle. It expresses the imperative as a suggestion or opinion.

(259) (Elicitation)

nā-mò-nā-pà ?ð əlð nù ?ð 6ð
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-...-nó?* 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)

maùŋ tə ?à nó?
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 *mè?*. *mè?* means 'don't' which expresses a negative command regarding the verb.

(261) GA 16(1)

?à mè?
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.