A grammar of Nchane: A Bantoid (Beboid) language of Cameroon
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Chapter 11

Clause structure

The specifics of Nchane clause structure are described in this chapter. The discussion is limited to clauses with verbs, although many of the characteristics of clauses with verbal predicates are present in those with non-verbal predicates. Clauses with non-verbal predicates and copulas are treated in Chapter 10.

There are five categories of clausal constituents identified by formal distinctions: Subject, Object, Applied Object, Comitative Oblique, Locative Oblique. These formal distinctions are discussed in §11.1. Conventional labels have been used in part out of convenience, since they offer an easily recognizable starting point for describing how the various constituents are realized and how they function. However, as pointed out by Haspelmath, the use of conventional categories as a means of describing clausal constituents is highly problematic since "the categories of language structure are language-particular" (Haspelmath 2007b: 121).

Therefore, these terms should be understood as attempts at recognizing common characteristics shared between a constituent associated with a traditional term and Nchane's version of that constituent. For example, the Nchane Subject may be more like a traditional object in certain respects, but the label "subject" represents a closer approximation as compared to the label "object". In order to avoid unintended claims regarding the assignment of labels, I will be describing the Nchane variety of constituents utilizing the proper noun form of the constituent label (e.g., Subject,

Object, etc.). However, as will be seen below, while these designations are useful in capturing formal characteristics of the various constituent types, they are of limited use in describing how these constituents are organized into clauses.

Certain verbs are noted to usually appear with certain types of constituents and in certain syntactic configurations. This characteristic of verbs is often treated in grammars through the notion of *transitivity*, along with the identification of *arguments* (i.e., constituents required by the verb for grammaticality). However, assessing Nchane clausal constituents for argumenthood is challenging. First, some of these constituents may be omitted from the clause whenever they are inferable. The phenomenon of clauses lacking certain argument-like constituents is particularly clear for objects, but is true of even subjects, as discussed in §11.1.1. Second, some verbs have multiple "argument frames", appearing with different constituents, with different shades of meaning in each frame.

Consequently, rather than attempting to establish the transitivity of verbs, I will subscribe to the notion of clausal valency, categorizing clauses according to the number of constituents present. Descriptions of the different clause types are given in §11.2. In many cases, these constituents may be argued for as obligatory elements for grammaticality, in other words, as conventional arguments. But in other cases, the degree of obligation is not so clear.

I treat all of the constituent types as Nchane Arguments and make no attempt at distinguishing among them between Arguments and Adjuncts, because each of them, as will be further shown, can be seen as obligatory in particular clauses (though not necessarily in every one of those from the examples). Although such a distinction can certainly be made in semantic terms, it does not appear to have any bearing on formal expression in Nchane and is ignored for the moment.

An additional important observation is that the various constituent types have a tendency to appear in a particular order and in particular clausal "positions" or "slots". I infer this tendency into an assumed canonical word order as presented in §11.3. Non-canonical word orders are observed which bring into question how Nchane organizes and governs clause syntax. There is some evidence to suggest that Nchane clause structure is oriented around semantic roles and information structure elements like Topic and Focus, in addition to grammatical relations. This issue is taken up in §11.4.

11.1   Syntactic constituent types

Nchane distinguishes two categories of clausal constituents in terms of phrasal elements: those that are formally marked and those that are formally unmarked. Altogether, five distinct types of constituents are observed: Subject, Object, Applied Object, Comitative Oblique, Locative Oblique. Subjects and Objects are unmarked constituents, most frequently differentiated by clause position, with Subjects occurring before the verb and Objects occurring after the verb. Applied Objects occur with the postposition applicative marker **lē** 'APPL' and follow the Object, if present.

The two oblique constituents also follow any co-occurring Objects and are both introduced by prepositions (which serves as a partial defining characteristic). Comitative Obliques are introduced by the preposition **bɛ́** 'with' and encode accompaniment constituents as well as instrumentals.[74] Locative Obliques are usually marked by one of several prepositions and the applicative marker **lē** 'APPL'.

These different clausal constituents are summarized in Table 11.1, with a detailed description of each given in subsections 11.1.1 and 11.1.2, where the constituent being described appears in brackets. The Applicative analysis presented here is somewhat unconventional and not undisputable. Therefore, a discussion regarding this postposition and choice of analysis is provided in subsection 11.1.3.

Constituent	Syntactic form
S	NP
O	NP
O$_{APPL}$	NP + **lē**
OBL$_{COM}$	**bɛ́** + NP
OBL$_{LOC}$	prep + NP + **lē**

Table 11.1 Summary of Nchane clausal constituent types.

11.1.1 Formally unmarked constituents

Subject and Object are formally unmarked constituents and differentiated by clause position and agreement patterning. Descriptions of both are given in this section, beginning with the Subject, followed by the Object.

Subject

The formal characteristics of the Nchane Subject are as follows: 1) Subjects are unmarked, 2) Subjects occur to the left of the verb, the position associated with sentence topics, 3) Subjects generate subject agreement in certain cases. Note that this is the only constituent type that generates agreement on verbs. These characteristics are exemplified in (11.1) and (11.2), both of which also illustrate the tendency of Subjects to encode semantic AGENTS.

(11.1) [kì-nfɛ̀: kí-mú] gɛ̄ jɛ̄ŋ-í
        c7-blind.man c7-some P3 walk-PROG[75]

    'A certain blind man was walking around.'   What-goes-around.1.1

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[74] The word **bɛ́** actually functions as a conjunction as well as a preposition. See §8.2 for a fuller description.

[75] In addition to simply 'walking', the verb **jɛ̄nɛ́** expresses the notion of 'strolling' or 'walking around', without a particular destination in mind. It can also mean 'visit' and 'travel'. Context is necessary to determine which shade of meaning is intended.

(11.2)   [mɛ̄]   gɛ̄   ɲ̄-jā   ŋ̄-gɛ̀ɛ̄:   Ø-ǹ-jɛ̀ɲɛ̀
          1SG.PRO P3   1SG-leave 1SG-go   c1-NMZR-walk

          'I left and went on a journey…'   Fire.1.2

Referents of Subjects are usually animate, but it is possible to have an
inanimate Subject, as in (11.3). Inanimate Subjects are rare and might be limited to
INSTRUMENTS in constructions which serve to suppress agentivity.

(11.3)   [fī-ɲɔ̄]   mɔ̄   fī   sɛ̄:   wù   fɛ̀-bwé,   wù   mɔ̄
          c19-knife   RES   c19   cut   3SG   c16-neck   3SG   RES

          wù   gwɛ̄   wù   kwɛ̄
          3SG   fall   3SG   die

          'The knife then cut him at his neck, he then fell and died.'
                                                          Greedy Friends.1.21

While the preverbal position usually is filled by a Subject, there are a number
of circumstances in which this is not the case. One such situation is when the subject
of the sentence is first-person singular. At times, no subject pronoun is used, leaving
this position empty. However, the verb is usually marked with subject agreement as
in (11.4). This is quite common in the text data.

(11.4)   **ɲ̄**-já   **ŋ̄**-gɛ̀ɛ̄:   Ø-sùkū,
          1SG-leave   1SG-go   c1-school

          'I left and went to school…'   Fire.1.6

So-called *agent focus* constructions also may leave the preverbal position
empty, as in (11.5).

(11.5)   chí   yɛ́ŋ   tādà   wù   lē
          P2   see   T.   3SG   APPL

          'TADA saw him.'

In agent focus constructions, the logical subject (i.e., the AGENT constituent which
canonically is expressed by a Subject) appears in the postverbal position, the position
associated with Focus. But as this example shows, the postverbal constituent does not
generate the expected subject agreement, taking on the properties of an Object and
analyzed as such. So, although this clause has a logical subject, no syntactic subject
is present.

This observation is important when viewing a clause like that in (11.6), where the preverbal and postverbal constituents of a neutral-focus clause have switched positions. This is the usual outcome of agent focalization in clauses with a PATIENT (at least those which are non-human); the PATIENT is said to be *defocalized* and moved to the preverbal position.

(11.6) bvū-ŋgá   bw-ɛ̂:   bvù-chí: gɛ̄   ɲá   Ø-ɲɔ̀
        c14-power c14-ANA1 c14-all   P3   give c1-god

    'GOD gave all that power.'   Fire.57

Note that in this case—agent focalization of clauses with a Subject (AGENT) and Object (PATIENT)—the language apparently prefers having a constituent in the preverbal position. This preference is observed in neighboring Noni (Hyman 1981: 107), where the preverbal position is filled by either a dummy subject or a preposed object, as well as Naki (Good 2010: 11). See §16.3.1 for a fuller description of word order focus constructions.

The temptation to call the defocalized PATIENT the new Subject must be abandoned because this preverbal constituent does not generate subject agreement. This fact is illustrated in (11.7), which is grammatically acceptable, but where a semantically infelicitous reading is dictated when the semantic PATIENT in preverbal position generates subject agreement.

(11.7) #mūɲ-chɔ̄nē   chí   mū   jí   bā-nā̄
         c18a-groundnut P2   c18a eat c2-cow

    'Groundnuts ate the cows.'

    *'The COWS ate the groundnuts.'

Cleft constructions, a second focus strategy, also routinely result in an empty preverbal position. In other words, these constructions have no syntactic subject, as illustrated in (11.8). (See §16.3.2 for more details regarding cleft constructions.)

(11.8) lé   Ø-ɲɔ̀   wú   gɛ̀   ɲā̄   jè   yɛ̄-ɛ̀
        COP c1-god c1REL P3   give c9.path c9-ANA1

    'It is GOD who gave that way.'   Fire.50.2

An argument could be made that in constructions like those in (11.5) and (11.8), where the preverbal position is empty, there is a null subject. However, there is no subject agreement in either example. And while other nearby languages make use of expletive subjects in these kinds of constructions, the occurrence of an expletive subject in Nchane is not attested. See §7.5 for further discussion of dummy subjects.

Object

Objects show the following characteristics: 1) Objects are unmarked, and 2) Objects do not generate agreement on verbs. Furthermore, they usually immediately follow the verb, the position generally associated with focus, although this is only a strong tendency. Examples (11.9) and (11.10) illustrate the typical Object, which is usually associated with semantic PATIENTS.

(11.9)   bā   lé   bā   yú   [ɲàŋ   yɛ̄-ɛ̀]
         c2   COP   c2   kill c9.animal c9-ANA1

         '...they have killed that animal.'   Inheritance.25

(11.10) bɔ́   kɛ̄   bɔ̄   jīŋs-è   [ŋ̀gú]
         3PL   begin 3PL   extinguish-PROG   c3.fire

         'They started quenching the fire.'   Fire.3.4

Frawley (1992) distinguishes PATIENTS as undergoers of an action with a resulting change of state (as in the above examples) and THEMES as undergoers of an action with no change of state. Examples (11.11) and (11.12) have Objects encoding semantic THEMES, illustrating that Nchane makes no formal distinction between the two semantic roles. Therefore, while both terms are utilized in this description, they may often be considered as interchangeable.

(11.11) Ø-kwὲsē   wɛ̄-ɛ̀   būsɛ̄   [shĩ],
         c1-woman   c1-ANA1   remove   c9.chicken

         '...that woman took the chicken out...'   Jealous Husband.12

(11.12) bɔ́   ká   bɔ̌   kɛ̄m-è   [Ø-ǹ-téfɛ́]
         3PL   ITER   3PL.FUT   have-PROG   c1-NMZR-advise

         'They again will be having advice...'   Marriage.4.2

As mentioned above, agent focus constructions where the AGENT and PATIENT switch clausal positions have no Subject. Rather, the AGENT and PATIENT of these clauses are both Objects (see example (11.6) above). Another context which allows for clauses with two Objects is when a THEME and a RECIPIENT appear in the same clause. These constituents are usually expressed as Objects, with the RECIPIENT immediately following the verb and the THEME coming next. Examples (11.13) and (11.14) illustrate such double-object clauses. Both Objects appear in brackets and the RECIPIENT Object is bolded as well.

(11.13) wú   ɲá   **[bɔ̄]**   [kì-m-bɔ̄nɛ́]
        3SG.HORT give   3PL   c7-NMZR-pray

        '...he will bless them...' (lit. *give them prayers*)   Marriage.3.7

(11.14) ɲū   bɔ̰̄:   bá   Ø-kwɛ́sɛ̋   wɛ̄-ɛ̀,   wū   bé
        COP(N) c2.child c2AM   c1-woman c1-ANA1 c1REL   P1

        ɲā   **[kì-nfɛ̰̀:**   **kɛ̄-ɛ̀]**   [màŋ-kàlà   mā-ā]
        give   c7-blind.man c7-ANA1   c6a-cassava.puff c6a-ANA1

        '...being the children of that woman who gave that blindman that cassava puff.'   What-goes-around.8.2

Note that RECIPIENTS may also be expressed through Applied Objects, as described in §11.1.2. In this case, the order of the two constituents is reversed, with the THEME-Object preceding the RECIPIENT-Applied Object.

     The object is often inferable, and thus open to ellipsis, which is very common in the data. The omitted object in (11.15), indicated by a minus, is inferred from the full noun referent appearing in the previous clause.

(11.15) bɔ̄   báɲè   mw-ɛ̀:   mw-ɛ̀:,   bɔ̄   tɔ́ŋ   [-]
        3PL   gather c18a-thing c18a-ANA1 3PL   burn   c18a

        '...they gathered those things and burned [them].'   Inheritance.6

     In (11.16), the full noun referent **ŋ̄gwè** 'fishing pole' appears in the first sentence of the example, and corresponds to the omitted object in the setting clause of the second sentence. Note that the use of the class 1 pronoun in the main clause of the second sentence might serve to make clear that the thing thrown into the water is the baited hook rather than just the termites.

(11.16) bē   sū: ŋgɔ̄   yē   Ø-ŋgwè   lē
        1PL   string   c10.termite on   c1-fishing.pole APPL

        lɛ̄   bé   sū: [-],   bē   nɔ̰̄   wù   à-jɔ̄
        SET   1PL   string   c10   1PL   throw   c1   c18-water

        'We put termites on the hook. After putting [them on the hook], we threw it (the baited hook) in the stream.'   Fishing.1.4-5

Ellipsis of human objects is unattested in the data. Referential human Objects typically appear as pronouns, as illustrated in (11.17).

(11.17) bɔ́   túŋ   Ø-nà   wɛ̄-ɛ̀,   lɛ̄   kī-ɲchɔ̂   kī   Ø-nà
         3PL   shoot   c1-cow c1-ANA1 SET   c7-horn   c7AM   c1-cow

         mɔ̄   kī   bɔ̰̂   [wù],   wù   kwé
         RES   c7   pierce 3SG   3SG   die

         'They sent that cow (on top of him) so that the cow's horn then pierced him and he died.'   Greedy Friends.1.6

Locative nouns (described in §5.2.3) are derived from prepositional phrases and represent another type of Object—those which express semantic LOCATIONS.[76] They are observed as exhibiting distribution patterns comparable to their Locative Oblique counterparts (described later in this section), as seen in the examples below. Example (11.18) shows a LOCATION-Object following a PATIENT-Object, while in example (11.19) it follows a Comitative Oblique.[77]

(11.18) bá   m̄bʉ́:   bá   mɛ̄sɛ̄,   bá   dɛ̄:   m̄-mɛ̄:   [fɛ̀-tāŋ]
         they foam   c2   finish c2   cook   c6a-oil c16-fireplace(c7)

         'After finishing foaming, they cook the on the fireplace.' (lit. *at the fireplace*)   Making Palm Oil.1.8

(11.19) wū   bū   bɛ́   kī-chídè   [à-bɔ̄]
         3SG   arrive with   c7-food.mat c18-hand(c7)

         'She appeared with a food-mat in [her] hand.'   Two Wives.3.4

Examples (11.20)-(11.22) are other instances of LOCATION constituents without a preposition. The verb **gɛ̰̄:** 'go', illustrated in (11.20) and (11.21), usually does not have a prepositional phrase as complement, although it is possible. Likewise, locations expressed through proper nouns as in (11.22) typically are not introduced by a preposition.

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[76] There is no reason to think that a locative noun could not also serve as a Subject, although the locational semantics severely limit the possible contexts in which it could be Subject. The most likely candidates for a locative noun Subject are those which are lexicalized, such as certain body parts.

[77] The fact that the LOCATION-Object follows the THEME-Comitative Object supports the analysis that clause syntax is organized by semantic roles rather than grammatical roles, at least to a degree. This asymmetry between semantic and grammatical roles is discussed in detail in §11.4.

(11.20) mɔ̄   ñ-lé   ŋ́-gɛ̰̄:   [yē]
         RES   1SG-enter 1SG-go   c9.house

        '...so, I just entered the house.'   Fire.7.1

(11.21) lɛ́   ŋ́-gɛ̰̄:   [Ø-sùkū]   ā-ntānā,
         SET   1SG-go   c1-school   c18-morning

        'As I went to school in the morning...'   Fire.1.7

(11.22) bɔ̄   gɛ̄   jā   [tíkālì],
         3PL P3   leave   T.

        'They left Tikari,...'   History.2.1

11.1.2 Formally marked constituents

The remaining clausal constituents are described in this section. Each of them appears with some kind of formal marking and usually follows the verb. The Applied Object is marked with the postposition applicative marker. The Comitative Oblique is introduced by a preposition, while the Locative Oblique is marked with a preposition and the postposition applicative marker.

        The designations "Object" for Applied Object and "Oblique" for the two preposition-marked constituents, should not be considered as conventionally applied terms. They are simply reflections of the fact that Applied Objects may often be considered as obligatory constituents, while the two Oblique constituents often appear to have Adjunct status. Furthermore, the designation "Oblique" provides a means to recognize the formal similarities of the two different constituent types, both of which are marked by prepositions.

Applied Object

Applied Objects are marked with the phrase-final applicative postposition **lē** 'APPL' and usually occur immediately after the verb, unless an Object is present, then they follow the Object. They are less common than Objects, but are often seen with certain verbs like 'see', 'tell' and 'touch', as seen in (11.23)-(11.25) respectively. The semantic roles encoded are usually THEME, ADDRESSEE or BENEFACTIVE/ RECIPIENT.

(11.23) mɛ̄   ŋ̄-gɛ̄   ɲ̄-yɛ̄n-é   [bà-mì   lē]   fɛ̀-kū,
         1SG.PRO 1SG-P3 1SG-see-PROG c2-person APPL   c16-down

        'I was seeing people on the earth...'   Training.1.16

(11.24) wù   gɛ̄   tī   [wù   lē]   lɛ̄   wù   mɔ̀n-é   sɛ̄ŋ   kì
         3SG   P3   tell 3SG   APPL   COMP   3SG   feel-PROG pain   COMP(K)

         wū   yɛ̄n-ē   lɛ̄   wū   gɔ̄n-é   Ø-ń-fī:
         3SG   breathe-PROG   SET   3SG   want-PROG   c1-NMZR-help

         *'He told her that he was feeling pain when breathing so that he wanted
         help.'*   Lake.4.6

(11.25) ŋ̄-gɛ̄:   kī-bɔ́   à-kfūŋ,   lɛ̄   fī: yé   lēs-è
         1SG-put c7-arm   c18-outside   SET   c9.air c9REL   enter-PROG

         yè   kɔ̀n-è   [mɛ̄   lē]
         c9   touch-PROG   1SG.PRO   APPL

         *'...I put my hand outside so as to receive fresh air.' (lit. so that the air
         that is entering touches me)*   Training.1.14

(11.26) tádà   ɲā   mùɲ-chɔ̄nē   [ɲ̀jì   lē]
         T.   give   c18a-ground.nut   N.   APPL

         'Tada gave groundnuts to Nji.'

Applied Objects encoding RECIPIENTS in clauses with a THEME-Object,
like in (11.26), are uncommon in the data corpus. Usually, the object is inferable and
thus, omitted as described in §11.1.1. In this case, the Applied Object occurs
immediately after the verb, as illustrated in (11.27).

(11.27) wù   mɔ̄   wù   búsɛ̄   m̄-bà: fɔ́,
         3SG   RES   3SG   remove   c6a-soup   there

         wù   ɲá   [Ø-jwɛ̀:   lē]
         3SG   give   c1-husband.3SG.POSS   APPL

         *'She just removed soup from there (the leaf) and gave [it] to her
         husband.'*   Jealous Husband.13

As a reminder, when the THEME-Object is retained, the RECIPIENT usually is
expressed through a second Object, which follows the verb and precedes the THEME
as in (11.13) and (11.14) above.

There are no convincing examples in the text corpus of an omitted Applied Object. However, (11.28) might illustrate such an omission. If there is an omitted Applied Object here, it would be encoding a RECIPIENT. But the RECIPIENT is apparently no one in particular.

(11.28) wù   ɲá   Ø-ŋgɛ̄   [-]   gɛ̄:   bú   kī-fɛ̄
         3SG   give   c1-trouble   the people(?)   go   reach   c7-time

         kī   Ø-mū   ŋgámū   wú-mù   gɛ̄   físɛ̀   yē,
         c7REL   c1-person   old   c1-some   P3   twist   c9.body

         wú   dú   wù   lē   lɛ̄
         3SG   say   3SG   APPL   COMP

         '...he gave trouble (was disruptive) to the point (lit. *going and
         reaching time*) that an elder turned and said to him...'   Lake.3.1

Example (11.29) shows that the predication 'give trouble' can have a RECIPIENT, although in this case it appears as an Object rather than an Applied Object. Therefore, because the RECIPIENT can be encoded as an Object or an Applied Object, it is not possible to know which one of these constituents is omitted in (11.28), if in fact the RECIPIENT has been omitted.

(11.29) wù   tɔ́   wù   ɲā-à   mɛ̄   Ø-ŋgɛ̄,
         3SG   HAB   3SG   give-PROG   1SG.PRO   c1-trouble

         ɲchɛ̣́:   ségé-chī   ségé-chī
         true   when-all   when-all

         '...he is always giving me trouble, truly all the time.'
                                                    What-goes-*around.2.3*

Constructions involving a speech verb, but with no ADDRESSEE, as in (11.30), are another possible source of evidence for an omitted Applied Object. Speech acts can sometimes have no specific addressee. But the "blind man" is clearly being addressed in this example, even though he does not appear in the sentence.

(11.30) wù   dú   [-],   kɔ̀   lä
         3SG   say   blind.man   catch   CE

         màŋ-kàlà   mā-nē,   wɔ́   jí
         c6a-cassava.puff   c6a-PROX   2SG.HORT   eat

         'She said (with irritation) [to the blindman], "Take this cassava puff,
         you should eat [it]."'   What-goes-around.4.9

Both of these examples with no grammatical applied object, along with the ellipsis of objects presented in §11.1.1, suggests that the notion of valency is of limited importance to Nchane. More discussion on this issue is provided in §11.2.

Example (11.31) is a rare example of a BENEFACTIVE in the text data. It is not surprising that it is expressed through an Applied Object, since RECIPIENTS often are as well.

(11.31) mɛ̄   ŋ̄-gɛ̄   ŋ̄-gūd-é   Ø-ŋ̄kāŋ   [bɔ̀   lē],
         1SG.PRO   1SG-P3   1SG-buy-PROG c1-sha[78]   3PL   APPL

         'I was buying sha (i.e., corn beer) for them....'   Fire.46

A few examples are observed in the text corpus that have Applied Objects expressing LOCATIONS. These could be prepositional phrases (i.e., Locational Obliques), but with the preposition omitted for some reason. Examples (11.32) and (11.33) are given to illustrate.

(11.32) Ø-mwā   wū   Ø-bwī   bɔ́   bɛ̀m   gɛ̄   jā
         c1-child   c1AM   c1-mother 3PL.POSS   B.   P3   leave

         [Ø-ñ-tásɛ́-jé   lé]
         c1-NMZR-cross-path   APPL

         'Their brother Bem left the junction...'   History.3.4

(11.33) bɔ̄   kɛ̄m-é   kì   bɔ̄   gɛ̄:
         3PL   have-PROG   COMP(K)   3PL   go

         [bvū-shí   bvū   Ø-mù   wù   Ø-ɲɔ̀   lē]
         c14-face   c14AM   c1-person c1AM   c1-god APPL

         *'...they have to go before the man of God.' (*lit. *go to the face of the
         person of God)*   Marriage.3.6

Comitative Obliques
Comitative Obliques are marked with the conjunction/preposition **bɛ́** 'with', which is described in detail in §8.2. These obliques immediately follow the verb in clauses with no object and express the semantic roles of ACCOMPANIMENT and INSTRUMENT, as seen in (11.34) and (11.35) respectively.

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[78] *Sha* is a regional term used for locally produced corn beer.

(11.34) kéfɛ̄   wɔ́   wā:d-è   [bɛ́   Ø-chíjī   Ø-jwɔ̰̀:]
         VET   2SG   quarrel-PROG with   c1-father   c1-husband.2SG.POSS

'*...don't quarrel with your father-in-law...*'   Marriage.6.6

(11.35) Ø-táŋ   wù   m̀-mɛ̄:   jɛ̄-dɛ̀   chúlē,
         c1-time c1REL c6a-oil cool-COMPL   well

         bā   kɛ̄   bā   kɔ̄l-è   [bɛ́   kì-ntī],
         they begin c2   catch-PROG   with   c7-bowl

'*When the oil is cool, they start collecting [it] with a bowl...*'
                                                    Making Palm Oil.1.11

Examples (11.36) and (11.37) show that Comitative Obliques follow Objects. Occurrences of Comitative Obliques and Objects in the same clause are somewhat rare in the data, likely due to the tendency to omit inferable objects.

(11.36) lɛ̄   wú   mɛ̄sɛ̄   yɛ̄   yī   Ø-ɲɔ̀
         SET   3SG   finish   c9.word   c9AM   c1-god

         [bɛ́   Ø-bwē-yē   w-è]
         with   c1-mother-house c1-3SG.POSS

'*...after devotions with his host (*lit. *house-mother)...*'   Lake.4.2

(11.37) mɛ́   m̀-bɔ̰̀:   wɔ̀   [bɛ́   fī-ɲɔ̀   fī-nē]
         1SG.PRO   1SG-stab   2SG   with   c19-knife c19-PROX

'*...I will pierce you with this knife...*'   Greedy Friends.1.14

A formal distinction is made between Comitative Obliques which encode ACCOMPANIMENT and those which encode INSTRUMENT. The former are usually observed in the text corpus to use personal pronouns for referential entities, while maintaining the comitative preposition, as in (11.38). In contrast, referential INSTRUMENTS never appear with simple pronominal reference, but instead are modified by a relative clause and with the resumptive locative pronoun **yú** 'on.it', as illustrated in (11.39), where the locative pronoun is best translated as "with him". See §7.2 for a description of **yú** and its multiple antecedent types.

(11.38) lɛ̄   bɔ́   gū   Ø-nà   wɛ̄-ɛ̀,   bɔ̄   tɔ́   [bɛ́   wù]
         SET   3PL   buy   c1-cow   c1-ANA1   3PL   come   with   c1

'*When they bought the cow and came with it...*'   Greedy Friends.1.4

(11.39) bɔ́   kɔ̂:   bá   dāmūmɛ̀,
         3PL   catch   P.   D.

         wù   bɔ́   gɛ̄   jɔ̄   bɔ́   dā   jɔ̀   [yú]
         c1REL   3PL   P3   take   3PL   cross   c9.stream   on.it

         '...they captured Pa Damume, who they used in crossing the stream.'
         (lit. *who they crossed the stream with him)*   Land Dispute.2.3

These two examples are particularly striking since the ACCOMPANIMENT referent is -[human] and encoded with a personal pronoun, while the INSTRUMENT referent is +[human] but encoded with a locative pronoun, which would presumably require a referent with a lower animacy factor.

     Example (11.40) is a rare case of a clause with two Comitative Obliques. While the literal interpretation is problematic, it seems that both of these obliques are encoding ACCOMPANIMENT.[79]

(11.40) wɔ́   ká   wɔ́   chɛ̄ŋɛ̀   [bɛ́   kī-ɲ-ché   k-ūŋ]
         2SG   ITER   2SG   spoil   with   c7-NMZR-stay   c7-2SG.POSS

         [bɛ́   Ø-ɲɔ̄   w-ɔ̀]
         with   c1-god   c1-2SG.POSS

         'You have also spoiled your own life with your God.'   School.23

     The text corpus contains no examples of Applied Objects and Comitative Obliques in the same clause.

Locative Obliques
Locative Obliques are expressed through prepositional phrases consisting of one of several prepositions followed by a noun phrase and the phrase-final applicative postposition **lē**. These constituents usually express LOCATION and follow any Objects and/or Comitative Obliques that might be present. See §8.1 for a description of prepositions.

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[79] The verb in this example is semantically complex and poorly understood. In constructions which have no post-verbal complement, it can mean "become spoiled" and the pre-verbal complement appears to be a PATIENT. Post-verbal complements are always introduced by the comitative preposition and the meaning is "destroy" or "cause to be spoiled". The Comitative Oblique in such constructions appears to be affected by the action and therefore might be construed as a PATIENT rather than ACCOMPANIMENT. However, this would be the only known case of a Comitative Oblique encoding a semantic role other than ACCOMPANIMENT or INSTRUMENT.

Examples (11.41)-(11.43) demonstrate Locative Obliques expressed through prepositional phrases which are headed by the three primary prepositions, **fὲ** 'at', **à** 'in' and **yè** 'on', respectively.

(11.41) bɔ́   bú   [fὲ   kì-tē   ky-ɛ̄:   lē]
        3PL   arrive   at   c7-tree   c7-ANA1   APPL

        '...they arrived at that tree.'   Jealous Husband.3.6

(11.42) bā   dɛ̄:   [à   Ø-ká   lē]
        c2   cook   in   c1-barrel   APPL

        'They cook [the palm nuts] in a drum.'   Making Palm Oil.1.3

(11.43) wé,   mɛ̄   ŋ̄-gὲ   ǹ-yɛ̄n-é   lɛ̄
        up   1SG.PRO   1SG-P3   1SG-see-PROG   COMP

        Ø-àfyɔ́ŋ   sél-é   [yè   kì-ɲjá   lē]
        c1-airplane   skip-PROG   on   c7-cloud   APPL

        'Up (in the air), I felt (lit. saw) that the airplane was galloping on the clouds.'   Training.1.15

SOURCE constituents may be expressed through a Locative Oblique, as seen in (11.44). It may be that SOURCE is a subtype of LOCATION in Nchane.

(11.44) Ø-bā   wɛ̄-ὲ   lɛ̄   mɛ̄   lé   bέ
        c1-pa   c1-ANA1   COMP   1SG.PRO   COP   with

        màŋ-kàlà   yānē   à   kī-kɛ̄:   lē,   mà
        c6a-cassava.puff   here   in   c7-bag   APPL   c6aREL

        n-lɛ̄g-é   [à   Ø-kwɛ̄sé   wū-mù   lē]
        1SG-beg-PROG   in   c1-woman   c1-some   APPL

        'That pa [said], "I have some cassava puff here in [my] bag, which I was begging from some woman."'   What-goes-around.7.6

Locative Obliques follow Objects and Comitative Obliques, as shown in (11.45) and (11.46) respectively. Note that, while the Locative Obliques in the above examples are arguably adjuncts, example (11.45) illustrates a case where it is an obligatory constituent in this particular argument frame, since its absence would result in an alternative semantic reading of the verb (that he was set aside for some later use or purpose). Alternative argument frames are discussed in some detail in §11.2.4.

(11.45) bā-mĩ   bá-mù   gɛ̄   tɔ̀   bɔ̄   gɛ̃:   wù   [à   kì-ntā   lē]
       c2-person c2-some P3 come 3PL put 3SG in c7-chair APPL

       '...some people came, put him in a chair...'   Lake.5.1

(11.46) yé   gɛ́ bē   bɔ́,   bī-X́   kɔ̂:   láŋ-bɔ̄y,
       c10.sorrow P3 COP 3PL   c2-X   catch L.-B.

       bɔ̄   gɛ̀:   bɛ́   wù   [à   Ø-ǹtɔ̄   wù-bɔ́   lē]
       3PL go   with 3SG in c1-palace c1-3PL.POSS APPL

       'Unfortunately for them[80] *(lit. sorrows were them), the X people*
       captured Long-Boy and took him to their palace.'   Land *Dispute.2.1*

Although quite rare, topic-marked Locative Obliques occur clause-initially, which is illustrated in example (11.47).

(11.47) [ā   kī-tē   lé],   nēŋgɛ́   yèŋ   shì   lē
       in c7-tree APPL N.   see   c9.chicken APPL

       'In the tree, Nengɛ saw a chicken.'

Prepositional phrases as Locative Obliques may be referenced via locative pronouns, which occur in the same clausal position as their non-pronominal counterparts. See §7.2 for specific details. While locative noun phrases (described as Objects in §11.1.1) have similar distribution and semantics of Locative Obliques, they are only rarely replaced with a pronoun, and pronominal reference might be limited to lexicalized locative nouns like "palm of hand", which might be more identifiable as PATIENTS/THEMES than as LOCATIONS.

11.1.3 The applicative postposition lē

The **lē** postposition does not present as a typical applicative marker, which is conventionally recognized as a verbal extension reconstructed for Proto-Bantu as ***-id-** (Meeussen 1967). Nevertheless, its occurrence with constituents encoding various types of semantic roles and of different syntactic types is suggestive of applicative-like function, with polysemy widely recognized as associated with applicatives (see for example Hyman 2018b: 179; and Jerro 2016a: 218). This section begins with a look at how the cognates of **lē** are treated in neighboring languages, followed by a brief presentation of some of the different contexts in which **lē** is observed and possible analyses. Language data contrasting clauses with and without **lē** is presented next, illustrating semantic alternation associated with **lē** and seeking

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[80] The analysis of this apparently conventionalized phrase is not certain.

evidence of a core function of the postposition. The section concludes with a brief summary of the relevant points presented and justification for an applicative analysis.

The Nchane applicative marker **lē** is cognate with Mundabli **lā** (Voll 2017) and Mungbam **=nV́** (Lovegren 2013), both of which are treated as marking dative case. However, it is also cognate with Noni **lé**, which has several proposed analyses, including "locative suffix" (Hyman 1981: 13), "in someone's stead" (cf. benefactive) and a marker of "indirect object" (cf. dative) (Hyman 1981: 80–81). The Mungong cognate **nɔ** is analyzed as a locative marker (Boutwell 2014). However, it appears to be much less productive and occurs with fewer types of constructions.

Nchane RECIPIENTS/BENEFACTIVES are often marked with **lē**, as well as the complements of certain verbs like 'see' and 'say'. (Examples of these are given in §11.1.2 above.) In the case of RECIPIENTS, a dative analysis as taken in Mundabli and Mungbam is supported. However, this analysis is less appropriate for the THEME complements of 'see' and 'touch', where the transfer of goods or services is not immediately evident.

It is possible that in each of these cases there is a sense of directionality involved in the predication. With RECIPIENTS, there is the movement of an object from one individual to another. Meanwhile, the act of "seeing" could be understood as the transfer of an image from the object to the eye/mind of the EXPERIENCER. Likewise, ADDRESSEES are the recipients of some kind of verbal message. Indeed, analyzing **lē** as a Locative postposition is well suited for its role in marking Locative Obliques. However, not all LOCATIONS are marked with **lē**. Note that I assume the postposition marking Applied Objects (e.g., RECIPIENTS) and Locative Obliques as representing a single morpheme.

De Kind and Bostoen (2012) argue that similar polysemy of the Ciluba (Bantu) applicative is best subsumed in the general term GOAL. An analysis of **lē** as a marker of GOAL seems plausible, but only infers its similarity to the applicative extension observed in other languages like Ciluba. Thus, an applicative analysis might be merited in order to capture similar function, even though **lē** is not a verbal extension.

Applicatives are also typically thought of as valency-changing operators, which would seem to make this analysis less appropriate for Nchane, since **lē** arguably does not affect the valency of the verb. However, recent attention has been given to the role that applicatives play in effecting semantic shifts in certain Bantu languages (see Jerro 2016b and; Marten & Mous 2017 for example), without an apparent change in valency. Semantic alternations can be observed in contrasting clauses with and without a **lē**-marked constituent, which is illustrated below.

In both of the clauses in (11.48) and (11.49), "Tada" is the THEME of the verb **chūɲɛ̀** 'show' and the 3SG pronoun **wū** is the BENEFACTIVE, or the one for whom something is being shown. The interpretation of (11.48), with the double-object construction, must be that "he" was looking for "Tada". While the same interpretation

is possible for (11.49), the clause with the Applied Object, it also could mean that "he" was altogether unaware of "Tada".

(11.48)　ǹjì　gɛ̄　chūɲɛ̀　wū　tádà
　　　　N.　　P3　show　3SG　T.

　　　　'Nji showed him Tada.' *("he" was looking for Tada)*

(11.49)　ǹjì　gɛ̄　chūɲɛ̀　tádà　wù　lē
　　　　N.　　P3　show　T.　　3SG　APPL

　　　　'Nji showed Tada to him.' or *'Nji introduced Tada to him.'*

One way to interpret the difference between the two clauses is in terms of specificity. The clause in (11.48) with the two Objects (i.e., without an Applied Object) has a narrower range of expression, where the action of the AGENT is motivated by the desire of the BENEFACTIVE. On the other hand, the clause in (11.49) with the Applied Object expresses a more general situation, where the predication possibly happened without any intentionality or forethought of any of the parties involved.

Examples (11.50) and (11.51) show a similar semantic alternation involving the seeing of a tree. Example (11.50) has an Object followed by a locative pronoun, which provides a locational setting for the "tree". This locative pronoun is also present in (11.51), but here it follows a prepositional phrase. In this second example, the reading is of seeing the *place* where the tree is rather than the tree itself.

(11.50)　nēŋgɛ́　yɛ̄ŋ　kī-tē　yɔ̄
　　　　N.　　　see　c7-tree　inside

　　　　'Nengɛ saw a tree there (in the forest).'

(11.51)　nēŋgɛ́　yɛ̄ŋ　ā　kī-tē　lē　yɔ̄
　　　　N.　　　see　in　c7-tree　APPL　inside

　　　　'Nengɛ saw the area of a tree there (in the forest).'

Again, the clause with the applicative postposition is used to express a predication with a broader or more general interpretation.

The next two sets of examples contrast a locative noun with its corresponding prepositional phrase. A locative noun is seen in (11.52) and expresses a specific location, while a prepositional phrase, with accompanying applicative postposition, occurs in (11.53) and expresses an approximate location.

(11.52) bá   dɛ̄:   m̄-mɛ̃:   [fɛ̀-tāŋ]
         they   cook   c6a-oil   c16-fireplace

'*...they cook the oil on the fireside.*'   Making Palm Oil.1.8

(11.53) wū   gɛ̄:   m̄-mɛ̃:   [fɛ̀   kī-tānā   k-àŋ   lē]
         3SG   put   c6a-oil   at   c7-fireplace   c7-1SG.POSS   APPL

'*He put the oil near my fireplace.*'

The locative noun in (11.54) also expresses a specific location. The "market" refers to a specific one that the speaker has in mind. Reference to "market" in (11.55) is made through a prepositional phrase and applicative postposition and gives a generic reading—the market is either one that the speaker does not personally know (i.e., has never seen it or been to it) or the specificity of the market is unimportant.

(11.54) wū   gɛ̃̄:   [fɛ̀-wā:ŋ]
         3SG   go   c16-market

'*He went to the market.*' (one that is known)

(11.55) wū   gɛ̃̄:   [fɛ̀   wā:ŋ   lē]
         3SG   go   at   c3.market APPL

'*He went to a market.*' (market location is unknown)

In each of the example sets above, the clauses with the applicative postposition give a more general reading than do the clauses with an unmarked Object, suggesting that the marker is associated with some kind of semantic alternation. It is possible that this alternation is a reflection of what Jerro describes as the Applied Object making a "stronger pragmatic contribution" as compared to the non-applied variety (2016a: 218–19). Thus, the clauses with the Applied Object are pragmatically marked. For example, the sentence with the locative noun Object in example (11.54) is something commonly said, while the applicative example in (11.55) requires a more unusual context in order to be uttered.

To conclude, the **lē** postposition routinely occurs marking RECIPIENTS/BENEFACTIVES, ADDRESSEES, LOCATIVES, and the complement of certain verbs like 'see'. The wide range of semantic roles associated with the postposition is comparable to that observed with applicative constructions in other languages and indicates a similar function. In addition, the presence of **lē** is sometimes observed effecting a semantic alternation, although the nature of that alternation is somewhat obscure. Finally, the form is plausible as a reflex of the Proto-Bantu applicative *-**id-,** which often is realized as -**il**, with the form -**le** present

in the Bantu A40 language Bakoko (Kenmongne 2000: 52–3). Since the function and form of the Nchane postposition **lē** is similar to the applicative as described in other languages, the adoption of an applicative analysis for Nchane is justified and desirable.

11.2   Argument frames

This section is concerned with the different kinds of syntactic clauses available in Nchane. As noted in the chapter's introduction, identifying clausal constituents as "arguments" based on their obligatory presence in the clause is not easily accomplished. The data seems to indicate that all types of constituents may be omitted, even Subjects (see §11.1.1). Nor does there appear to be any formal recognition by the language of a distinction between "argument" and "adjunct". Therefore, the use of terms associated with *transitivity* would be somewhat misleading and of limited benefit.

In this section I will simply refer to clauses with differing numbers of constituents, where "constituent" refers more specifically to nominal constituents (i.e., the clause constituent "verb" is excluded). Thus, clauses with only one constituent (cf. intransitive) are described in §11.2.1, clauses with two constituents (cf. transitive) are presented in §11.2.2 and those with more than two constituents are discussed in §11.2.3. The final section (11.2.4) presents clauses with certain verbs which display multiple argument frames. In other words, they can appear with different kinds of constituents, resulting in different shades of meaning expressed by the verb.

None-constituent clauses are not attested in the text data. Intransitive imperatives are considered as having no nominal constituents. But these represent a special type of construction, while this section is limited to looking at declarative clauses. For illustration purposes, the clausal constituents of the examples in this section appear in brackets, along with constituent abbreviations.

11.2.1 One-constituent clauses

Some Nchane clauses have just one constituent—a Subject—which precedes the verb, as in (11.56) and (11.57). Note that while some languages differentiate between unergative and unaccusative clauses, these examples show no difference between the two. One-constituent clauses are relatively uncommon in the data corpus.

(11.56)   S   V
          [kì-nfɛ̀:   kí-mú]   [gɛ̄   jɛ̄ŋ-í]
          c7-blind.man   c7-some   P3   walk-PROG

          'A certain blind man was walking around.'   What-goes-around.1.1

(11.57)   S   V
           [Ø-mū-kwā   wú-nē]   [gɛ̄   kwē]
           c1-person-value   c1-PROX   P3   die

           'This rich man died.'   Richman.12

The most basic clause is illustrated in (11.58), where the first-person singular subject is expressed through a subject agreement prefix. An argument could be made that such clauses actually have no constituents at all. However, subject agreement markers for persons other than first-person singular are phonologically unbound and have the same function (see §9.1.1). Thus, I consider the agreement prefix as functioning like a nominal constituent.

(11.58)   (S) V   (S) V
           [ǹ-tɔ́]   [ǹ-ché]
           1SG-come   1SG-stay[81]

           'I came and slept.'   Fire.1.3

As shown in §11.1.1, agent focus constructions without a PATIENT Object have no preverbal constituent. Therefore, although no example is available to demonstrate this, an intransitive verb with a focused AGENT would consist of a verb followed by an AGENT Object. This observation suggests that grammatical roles are less influential in constituent alignment, which is discussed further in §11.4.

11.2.2 Two-constituent clauses

Clauses with two constituents usually have a Subject and a second constituent, which can be any of the other constituent types. Each of these different configurations is presented in this section.

Clauses may have an Object as well as a Subject. The Object follows the verb, as illustrated in examples (11.59) and (11.60).

(11.59)   S   V   O
           [Ø-jwɛ̰:]   [fí   wù   jí]   [bvū-lɛ̰:]
           c1-husband.3SG.POSS   receive   3SG   eat   c14-fufu

           'The husband received and ate the fufu...'   Jealous Husband.14

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[81] The word **ché** 'stay' expresses the idea of staying overnight at a location. It often may be interpreted as sleeping. In its extended meaning, it means to live somewhere.

(11.60)   S   V   O
           [bā]   [lé   bā   yú]   [ɲàŋ   yɛ̄-ɛ̀]
           they   COP   c2   kill   c9.animal c9-ANA1

           '...they have killed the animal.'   Inheritance.25

In place of an Object, the clause can have an Applied Object. This variety of clause occurs with a small number of verbs like **yɛ̄ŋ** 'see', as in (11.61).

(11.61)   S   V   O~APPL~
           [wū]   yɛ̄ŋ]   [kī-chídè   kɛ̄-ɛ̀   lē]
           3SG   see   c7-food.mat   c7-ANA1   APPL

           '...she saw that food mat.' [82]   Two Wives.6.1

This configuration is also seen in clauses with a RECIPIENT when the THEME Object is omitted. Example (11.62) illustrates an omitted Object, where "cassava puff" in the final clause is inferable from the first clause of the sentence. The omitted Object often appears in an earlier sentence, or perhaps not at all, in the case of a universally known referent.

(11.62)   wù   jɔ́   màŋ-kàlà   mā-ā   mà
           3SG   take   c6a-cassava.puff c6a-ANA1   c6aREL

                                          S   V   O~APPL~
           wù   bé   yéfè   wū   gɛ̄:,   [wù]   [ɲá]   [wù   lē]
           3SG   ᴾCOP   rub   3SG   put   3SG   give   3SG   APPL

           'She took that cassava puff, which she had rubbed [with poison] and
           set aside, and gave [it] to him.'   What-goes-around.4.8

Two-constituent clauses may also have a Subject and a Comitative Oblique or a Locative Oblique. These are illustrated in (11.63) and (11.64). The obliques in these clauses are not obligatory, in the sense that leaving them out would not affect grammaticality. Nevertheless, that fact does not appear to have any consequences beyond the clause having only two constituents.

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[82] This word translated as "food mat" is usually a flat, circular mat made of woven strips of dried palm frond shavings. The food mat is used in food processing, such as separating beans from chaff.

(11.63)   S   V   OBL_COM
          mɛ̄   [gɛ̄   ń-tɔ̄]   [bɛ́   bī-gɛ̃]
          1SG.PRO   P3   1SG-come   with   c8-teeth

          'I brought some money.' (lit. *I came with teeth)*   Fire.1.4

(11.64)   S   V   OBL_LOC
          [bɔ́]   [fúnɛ̀]   [à   Ø-afyɔ̄ŋ   lē]
          3PL   fly   in   c1-airplane   APPL

          '...they flew in an airplane...'   Training.1.10

11.2.3 Three-constituent clauses

Some verbs are able to take a Subject, an Object and an Applied Object, resulting in clauses with three constituents. The Object follows the verb and expresses the THEME, while the Applied Object follows the Object and expresses the RECIPIENT. The text corpus contains no examples of such object-applicative clauses, but the elicited clauses in (11.65) and (11.66) are given to illustrate.

(11.65)   S   V   O   O_APPL
          [tádà]   [gɛ̄   ɲá]   [Ø-ǹgɔnē]   [chà: lē]
          T.   P3   give   c1-banana   c9.monkey   APPL

          'Tada gave a banana to the monkey.'

(11.66)   S   V   O   O_APPL
          [tádà]   [chíŋs-é]   [m̄-bvṳ̀:]   [ǹjì   lē]
          T.   send-PROG   c6a-wine   N.   APPL

          'Tada is sending wine to Nji.'

Clauses with a THEME and a RECIPIENT more commonly express these semantic arguments through two Objects, as seen in (11.67) and (11.68). The RECIPIENT immediately follows the verb and the applicative postposition is not present.

(11.67)   S   V   O_1   O_2
          [wū]   [ɲá]   [mɛ̄]   [Ø-ŋ̄gwɛ̀]
          3SG   give   1SG.PRO   c1-fishing.pole

          'He gave me a fishing pole.'   Fishing.1.2

(11.68)   S   V
         bɔ̰:   bā   Ø-kwɛ̄sé   wɛ̄-ɛ̀   [wū]   [bé   ɲā]
         c2.child c2AM   c1-woman   c1-ANA1 c1REL   ᴾCOP   give

         O₁   O₂
         [kì-fɛ̰̀:   kɛ̄-ɛ̀]   [màŋ-kàlà   ma-a]
         c7-blind.man c7-ANA1   c6a-cassava.puff   c6a-ANA1

         *'...the children of that woman who had given that blindman that
         cassava puff.'*   What-goes-around.8.2

It is possible that the preference for this configuration is the result of the higher rank
of recipients on the animacy scale as compared with typical themes, with animates
appearing closer to the verb and inanimates less close. (This observation is also
relevant to the notion of the postverbal position as associated with focused
constituents, as discussed in §§11.4 and 16.3.)

        Three-constituent clauses may also have a Subject, an Object or Applied
Object, and one of the oblique constituent types. (11.69) and (11.70) show clauses
with a Subject, an Object and a Comitative Oblique, the first example having an
INSTRUMENT constituent and the second example having an ACCOMPANIMENT
constituent. Meanwhile, (11.71) illustrates a clause with a Subject, an Object and a
Locative Oblique. In each case, the oblique follows the Object, which follows the
verb.

(11.69)   S   V   O   OBL_COM
          [mɛ́]   [ḿ-bɔ̰:]   [wɔ̀]   [bɛ́   fī-ɲɔ̄   fī-nē]
          1SG.PRO.FUT 1SG-stab   2SG   with   c19-knife c19-PROX

          '...I will pierce you with this knife...'   Greedy Friends.1.14

(11.70)   S   V   O   OBL_COM
          [ǹjì] [gɛ̄   là]   [wá̰:]   [bɛ́   bī]
          N.   P3   go.goal c3.market   with   c9.goat

          'Nji went to the market with a goat (e.g., to sell).'

(11.71) S   V   O

[kì-nfὲ:	ky-ɛ̄:]	[gɛ̄n-è	kī	lɛ̄g-è]	[màŋ-kàlà]
c7-blind.man	c7-ANA1	go-PROG	c7	beg-PROG	c6a-cassava.puff

OBL_{LOC}

[à	Ø-kwɛ̄sé	wɛ̄-ɛ̄	lē]	à-jū	à-chī	à-jū	à-chī
in	c1-woman	c1-ANA1	APPL	c18-day	c18-all	c18-day	c18-all

'...the blindman was coming and begging cassava puff from that
woman, day after day.'   What-goes-around.1.5

        Clauses with a Subject, an Applied Object and an oblique constituent, as in
(11.72), are rare. As indicated by the parentheses, the postposition applicative marker
is optional for the first postverbal constituent (i.e., "monkey"). Therefore, this clause
can appear with an Applied Object or an Object. It is unclear if there is an actual
semantic difference between the two versions (e.g., see vs. look at), although the
semantic role of "monkey" is THEME in both.

(11.72) S   V   O_(APPL)   OBL_{LOC}

[nēŋgé]	[yɛ̄ŋ]	[chā̰:	(lē)]	[ā	kī-tē	lē]
N.	see	c9.monkey	APPL	in	c7-tree	APPL

'Nengɛ saw a monkey in a tree.'

        The text corpus contains no examples of clauses with more than three of the
primary nominal constituents, but the elicited examples in (11.73), alternative
iterations of the same clause, show that they can be formed. It could be argued that
the Locative Oblique in (11.73)a is modifying the RECIPIENT-Applied Object, and
therefore not actually a clausal constituent. However, this argument is less tenable for
the clause in (11.73)b, where the Locative Oblique and the RECIPIENT-Object are
separated by the THEME-Object.

(11.73) a. S   V   O   O_{APPL}   OBL_{LOC}

[tádà]	[gɛ̄	ɲá]	[Ø-ǹgɔ̀nē]	[chā̰:	lē]	[ā	kī-tē	lē]
T.	P3	give	c1-banana	c9.monkey	APPL	in	c7-tree	APPL

'Tada gave a banana to the monkey in the tree.'

        b. S   V   O₁   O₂   OBL_{LOC}

[tádà]	[gɛ̄	ɲá]	[chā̰:]	[Ø-ǹgɔ̀nē]	[ā	kī-tē	lē]
T.	P3	give	c9.monkey	c1-banana	in	c7-tree	APPL

'Tada gave the monkey a banana in the tree.'

The applicative postposition marking the Applied Object in (11.73)a is obligatory in this case, avoiding a potentially problematic double-object construction. I assume that the grammar dictates that the first Object in such constructions be interpreted as the RECIPIENT and the second Object as the THEME. Thus, omitting the applicative postposition would result in a semantically infelicitous utterance.

11.2.4 Alternative argument frames

A small number of verbs have been observed to have more than one argument frame. In other words, the same verb appears in different clauses with different kinds of, and/or different numbers of, clausal constituents. This sometimes leads to difficulties in determining which constituents are required by a given verb, as stated in the chapter's introduction. Thus, rather than considering the valency of verbs, I have chosen to describe the valency of clauses. This section illustrates some of these verbs and the accompanying semantic shift presented by the alternative frames.

The examples below illustrate the alternative argument frames of the verb **ɲá** 'give'. In example (11.74), the verb takes two Objects, (or as shown in (11.65) above, an Object and an Applied Object). In contrast, the verb in example (11.75) takes an Object and a Comitative Oblique. Considering the Semantic roles in each clause, (11.74) has a RECIPIENT and a THEME, while (11.75) has a BENEFACTIVE and a THEME (or perhaps INSTRUMENT).

(11.74)   S   V   O$_{RECIPIENT}$ O$_{THEME}$
          [wū]   [ɲá]   [mɛ̄]   [Ø-ŋ̄gwè]
          3SG   give   1SG.PRO   c1-fishing pole

          'He gave me a fishing pole.'   Fishing.1.2

(11.75)   S   V   O$_{BENEFACTIVE}$ OBL$_{THEME?}$
          [Ø-sɔ̄ŋɔ̄]   [ɲá-á]   [bè]   [bɛ́   m̄-mɛ̄:]
          c5-oil.palm give-PROG 1PL   with   c6a-oil

          'The palm tree provides us with oil.'   King of Trees.1.3

The verb **gɛ̀:** 'put' often takes an Object and a Locative Oblique as seen in (11.76). A second argument frame is illustrated in (11.77), where there is no locative constituent. In this second frame, the verb expresses the notion of something being put aside or stored for use at a later time.

(11.76) S   V   O_{PATIENT}
        [bā-mĩ   bā-mû]   [gɛ̄   tɔ̀   bɔ̄   gɛ̂:]   [wü]
        c2-person c2-some P3   come 3PL put 3SG

        OBL_{LOCATION}
        [à   kì-ntā   lē]
        in   c7-chair APPL

        '...some people came, put him in a chair...'   Fire.5.1

(11.77) S   V   O_{PATIENT}
        wù   gɛ̂:   bī-nfūnɛ̄
        3SG put c8-corn

        '...she put the corn aside...'   Disobedient Child.1.3

The lack of a locative element in this example does not simply imply that the location is unimportant and therefore unspecified. When this is the case, the generic location **bvūjú bvūmū** [c14-place c14-some] can be used.

    The verb **yɛ́ŋ** 'see' also has multiple argument frames, as illustrated in examples (11.78) and (11.79). The first takes an Applied Object and expresses that the object is actually seen or will be seen. The second example takes a complement clause and functions like a verb of cognition.

(11.78) S   V   O_{THEME}
        mɛ̄   ŋ̄-gɛ̄   ɲ-yɛ̄n-é   [bà-mì   lē]   fɛ̀-kū,
        1SG.PRO 1SG-P3 1SG-see-PROG c2-person APPL c16-down

        'I was seeing people on the earth...'   Training.1.16

(11.79) S   V   COMPLEMENT
        [wù] [yɛ́ŋ] [lɛ̄   lé   Ø-nlɔ̀
        3SG see COMP COP c1-poison

        wù   bɔ̱̄:   bā-ā   jí]
        c1REL c2.child c2-ANA1 eat

        '...he realized that it is POISON that the children had eaten.'
                                                    What-goes-around.9.7

11.3   Order of clausal constituents

The canonical order of clausal constituents (in terms of grammatical roles) is given in Figure 11.1. This schema reflects the basic order of words in positive declarative main clauses with default or neutral topicality and focus.

Subject-Verb-(Object)-(Object$_{APPL}$)-(Oblique$_{COM}$)-(Oblique$_{LOC}$)

Figure 11.1 Canonical word order.

The above order is extrapolated from examples with various constituent combinations, since all of the constituent types have not been observed together in a single clause. All of the constituents following the verb are in parentheses, indicating that they are optional elements of the clause. In some clauses, a first-person singular subject is expressed only through an agreement prefix on the verb. However, as this is the only case in which it could be argued that the Subject constituent is not present, at least in canonical sentences, I maintain an analysis of the Subject as an obligatory constituent of the clause.[83] This observation has been made for the nearby language Mundabli (Voll 2017: 269) and is likely representative of all the languages in the area.

Note that time adverbs like "yesterday" and "next week" are somewhat free in their clausal position, although they tend to occur either clause-initially or clause-finally.

In general, there is no case marking of constituents, and grammatical relations are dictated to a large extent through word order. Yet, there is a strong tendency for object pronouns to carry a L tone or a H tone, while subject pronouns usually have a M tone, although this tendency is considered to be associated with clause position rather than with grammatical case. (See §11.4 for further discussion).

Departure from the canonical word order primarily has to do with topic-marking and focus strategies. These are described in Chapter 16.

11.4   Clausal constituent alignment

In this section I attempt to identify how Nchane organizes and governs clauses. There are three areas with apparent influence over constituent alignment and selection: grammatical roles, semantic roles, information structure. First impressions are that much of clause governance falls within the domain of grammatical roles. However, as will be demonstrated below, semantic role and information structure considerations are more active in influencing clause syntax. The hypothesized constituent mapping as controlled by these three systems is summarized in Figure 11.2.

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[83] It might be more precise to say that the only obligatory constituent is the Agent rather than the Subject. See §11.4 and §16.3.1 for details regarding this point.

Slot	1	V	2	3	4	5
GR:	SUBJ	VERB	OBJ	OBJAPPL	OBLCOM	OBLLOC
SR:	AGT	VERB	PAT/THM	RECIP	INSTR	LOC
IS:	[TOPIC]	VERB	[FOCUS…			…]

Figure 11.2 Comparison of constituent mapping in clauses via grammatical roles vs. semantic roles vs. information structure.

Each of these systems are addressed below in order.

Nchane can be viewed as an SVO language, with grammatical relations encoded largely by word order. As observed for Mundabli (Voll 2017: 279), support for grammatical relations is relatively weak beyond word order. The only possible evidence of case marking is found in the pronominal system, where preverbal pronouns may be differentiated from postverbal pronouns by the realization of tone. As mentioned earlier, preverbal pronouns usually have a mid tone, while postverbal pronouns usually have a low or a high tone.

However, this variation in tone appears to be more associated with clause position than with grammatical role. As was stated in §7.1, the observation that postverbal pronouns usually have a low or a high tone extends not only to Objects, but also to Applied Objects and Comitative Obliques; in other words, any postverbal pronoun. Thus, for example, tone cannot be said to specifically mark for Accusative case, although it might be argued that pronouns are marked tonally as Subjective/Nominative case, in opposition to non-Subjective/Nominative case.

Another possible evidence for grammatical relations is agreement marking on verbs. It is clear that in focus-neutral, declarative sentences with certain TAM configurations, verbs agree with the Subject, as in (11.80).

(11.80)   **bā-**nā   ché   **bā**   jí   kì-nfūnē
           c2-cow   P2   c2   eat   c7-corn

        'The cows ate the corn.'

However, as (11.81) shows, in agent focus constructions where the logical subject and the logical object switch clausal positions, the preverbal "object" does not elicit verbal agreement. Nor does the postverbal "subject" (which by my definition is an AGENT-Object).

(11.81)   kì-nfūnē   ché   jí   bā-nā
           c7-corn   P2   eat   c2-cow

        'The COWS ate the corn.'

Constructing a sentence with the inanimate referent serving as a grammatical subject (i.e., preverbal and eliciting verbal agreement) results in the clause in (11.82). This clause is grammatical, but semantically infelicitous.

(11.82)   #kì-nfūnē   ché   kī   jí   bā-nã̄
           c7-corn   P2   c7   eat   c2-cow

'The corn ate the cows.'

The above observations demonstrate that clause positions are not strictly designated according to grammatical roles. Subjects are limited to the preverbal position, but not all preverbal constituents are Subjects. Furthermore, non-agentive preverbal constituents are normally not Subjects. As reflected in Figure 11.2, there is a fairly strong tendency for constituents encoding the various semantic roles to occur in a particular position and in a particular order relative to the other constituents. In other words, AGENTS almost always precede the verb and PATIENTS and THEMES usually follow the verb. INSTRUMENTS follow PATIENTS and LOCATIONS come last.

One common exception to the semantic role mapping in Figure 11.2 is observed in double-object constructions, where RECIPIENTS precede THEMES. As mentioned in §11.1.2, this word order might be related to animacy concerns. But the important thing to observe about this exception as it relates to constituent alignment is that the RECIPIENT can only precede the THEME when it is encoded as an Object, not as an Applied Object. This indicates two competing influences in the alignment process.

Good (2010: 64–65) notes similar concerns related to the clause structure of Naki, Noni and Aghem, stating that "…the interpretation of the word order facts indicate(d) that such grammatical roles [i.e., subject and object] play relatively little role in these languages' surface syntax." He suggests that information structure concerns such as topic and focus are critical in determining constituent alignment, such that these languages could be described as "discourse centered" rather than "grammatical-role centered."

The degree to which Nchane is similar to Naki in terms of syntax management is difficult to determine. However, it seems clear that Nchane clause structure also displays strong tendencies for Topic and Focus positions (or "fields" as Good puts it). Topics usually appear in the preverbal position, although it seems that clause-initial position is more topical than the immediately before verb position, since non-subject constituents marked as topic are observed to precede preverbal subjects when they are present.

Focus is associated with the postverbal position. This is evidenced in postverbal agent focus constructions as well as the focusing cleft construction (see

examples (11.6) and (11.8) respectively). In both of these constructions, the focused constituent follows the verb (or the copula in the case of the cleft construction).

The argument for Topic and Focus influence over clause syntax is further supported by the "dummy" focus element **lɔ̀** 'FOC' in certain predicate focus constructions, as in (11.83). The focus particle is obligatory in this example and apparently fulfills the syntactic requirement of this verb form to have a complement in the postverbal position, the clausal position which happens to be associated with focus.

(11.83) | wù | gɛ̄ | ɲá | Ø-ntāŋ | lɛ̄ | wū | kwé-é | **lɔ̀** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3SG | P3 | give | c1-thought | COMP | 3SG | die-PROG | FOC |

'He thought that he was dying.' Lake.4.4

Hyman makes similar observations regarding the same focus marker in Noni, noting that certain verb forms "require a verbal complement" (Hyman 1981: 77). One can therefore infer that, in these cases, where the focus is on the entire predication, the language prefers to have some element in the postverbal focus position rather than having it empty. See §16.3.5 for a description of this focus marker.

However, it does not necessarily follow that the sentence topic always occurs preverbally. In the case of postverbal agent focus constructions where the logical object is preposed (or *defocalized)*, the preverbal THEME-Object is normally more topical than in its canonical postverbal position, but it might not be the de facto Topic. In fact, postverbal agent focus constructions with no PATIENT/THEME-Object end up without a preverbal constituent altogether. The same is true of cleft constructions, which have no subject, dummy or otherwise. Nevertheless, topic-marking strategies usually position the Topic to the left of the verb.

In addition, while there is some validity to the notion of the postverbal position being associated with Focus, only postverbal agent focus constructions place the focused constituent immediately after the lexical verb. The focused constituent follows the copula in cleft constructions, while in counter-expectation focus constructions, the focused constituent follows the n-copula and can remain *in situ*, as illustrated in (11.84).

(11.84) | á | wū | bé | ɲá | bvū-lɛ̄: | **ɲū** | **shì** | **lē** | gɛ̀ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NEG1 | 3SG | P1 | give | c14-fufu | COP(N) | c9.chicken | APPL | NEG2 |

'She did not give fufu to THE CHICKEN.' (she gave it to someone else)

In summary, Subjects only appear in the preverbal position, but Objects may be postverbal or preverbal (in certain contexts). However, Applied Objects never precede Objects and Locative Obliques are almost always clause-final. Likewise, AGENTS tend to be preverbal and to serve as sentence Topics. There is a preference

for RECIPIENTS to precede THEMES, but only when encoded as an Object. But when a RECIPIENT follows a THEME, it is encoded as an Applied Object. Topics usually are somewhere to the left of the verb, with non-Subject Topics preceding the preverbal Subject. But postverbal Topics are attested (for example (16.6)). In addition, there is strong evidence that Focused constituents follow the verb or a copula. But the expression of focus through the postverbal position of the lexical verb is limited to *in situ* Objects (in so-called neutral focus constructions) and postverbal agent focus constructions.

I conclude that no single system can be viewed as primary in clausal constituent selection and alignment. It appears that all three of these areas (grammatical roles, semantic roles and information structure) are working together to control the placement of the various clausal constituents. However, the influence of grammatical roles is significantly limited in comparison with discourse-semantic concerns.