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STRUCTURE OF THE VERB PHRASE IN NGOMBA

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Abbreviations

AM – associative marker (a high tone for most classes except C1 and C9)

AUX – auxiliary verb

C1 – noun class 1

C2 – noun class 2

C3 – noun class 3

C4 – noun class 4

C5 – noun class 5

C6 – noun class 6

C7 – noun class 7

C9 – noun class 9

COMP – complementiser

CONJ – conjunctive verb/conjunction

CTP – complement-taking predicate

DO – direct object

DTR – dependent time reference

F1 – future tense one (hodiernal future)

F2 – future tense two (immediate future)

F3 – future tense three (post-hodiernal future)

F4 – future tense four (remote/indefinite future)

HAB - habitual

IMP - imperative

IMPF – imperfective

INF – infinitive

IO – indirect object

ISVC – integrated serial verb construction

IT- iterative (the action is repeated or has several objects)

ITR – independent time reference

MOD – modifier

NEG – negative marker/negator

NP – noun phrase

P0 – past tense zero (present/immediate past)

P1 – past tense one (hodiernal or ‘today’ past)
P2 – past tense two (pre-hodiernal or ‘yesterday’ past)
P3 – past tense three (non-recent past)
P4 – past tense four (remote past)
PN – pronoun
PP – prepositional phrase
PRPROG – present progressive
SS – same subject
SVC – serial verb construction
T/A – tense/aspect
VP – verb phrase
1S – first person singular
1P – first person plural
2S – second person singular
3INDF – third person indefinite
3S – third person singular
3P – third person plural

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0 Introduction – Ngomba, a ‘Verbing’ Language

A complete description of Ngomba grammar could have as a subtitle, “They do it with verbs”, as adjectival, adverbial and even conjunctive functions are often expressed by or derived from verbs. The goal of this paper is to set forth and discuss the structure of the verb phrase in Ngomba a Grassfields Bantu language spoken on the Bamileke plateau in the West Province of Cameroon. Traditionally, the verb phrase refers to a group consisting of a lexical verb, auxiliary verb(s) as well as particles that together have the same “syntactic function as a single verb.” (Crystal 1985:325). In Generative grammar, AUX¹ (and modals) are separate from the verb phrase which has a much broader reference, encompassing the main verb, the object and other non-subject arguments.² In this paper, I follow a rather broadened traditional view, including auxiliary verbs (AUXes) and verb complements.

The paper consists of an introduction and six sections. The first section, “Order of Constituents”, gives the overall structure of the verb phrase. The second section, included for comprehensiveness, deals with agreement in the verb phrase. While there is a formal “glue” holding the verb phrase together, subject and object agreement marking on the verb are not present in Ngomba. In the third section I discuss verb chaining and serialisation-like phenomena inside and outside the verb phrase. I distinguish three types of verb chains in Ngomba using syntactic, phonological and semantic criteria. This section also deals with two categories of AUXes that occur before the main verb - tense/aspect/negation markers and adverbial AUXes respectively. I note that in the second type of verb chain the semantic structure of serialisation is there, but the forms used to encode it are not proto-typical serial verb constructions. I venture outside the verb phrase in order to give a more comprehensive view of the above-mentioned formal glue. The same formal marking that the language employs to tie the main verb to its AUXes, is also used to unite verb phrases into a multiverbal clause (serial-like) and to link clauses together into same-subject chains. In the fourth section I discuss verbal complements, including the various types of predicate complements.

¹ I use “AUX” as a shorthand for “Auxiliary verb” and not in the Transformational-Generative sense as a technical term for a class of words separate from verbs.

² Radford 1988:52-53

Objects are demonstrated to be closely tied to the verb by a different kind of ‘glue’ than the above-mentioned formal glue, a tonal ‘glue’, and by phonological processes that are also at work in the NP. In the fifth section I discuss adjuncts, including manner and instrument, which are seen in the third section to also be expressed by an adverbial auxiliary and a serial-like construction respectively. The sixth and final section is the conclusion.

Ngomba is a language where AUXes and particles always precede the main verb in the verb phrase. Like many African languages, Ngomba has among its AUXes some that have nothing to do with tense or aspect but modify the verb in other ways. Creissels noted this as a characteristic tendency of African languages and described these verbs as “auxiliary verbs expressing meanings commonly taken up by adverbial expressions in European languages.” (2000:239) Because of this property of the language, a given verb phrase in Ngomba may consist of a string of several verbs in a row. In example (1) below, there are four verbs (underlined> in the verb phrase – the first is functioning as a tense marker and the last as the main verb:

- (1) Pəkɛ ɡɛ́ ń-tsun é-fé'né ń-kwíi tú-n-dá lo'ne.
 1P.incl go(F1) INF-really INF-quickly INF-nail C7.head-AM.C9-house today
 We' re going to really quickly nail on the roof today.

Notice that the verbs in the above example, which are glossed respectively as ‘really’ and ‘quickly’, fit Creissels’ description. It is also important to note that the non-initial verbs in the string are all prefixed. The significance and function of this prefix will be discussed in § 3.1.

1 Order of Constituents

The AUXes and particles preceding the main verb may be divided into two general categories: 1) tense/aspect/negation markers³ and 2) optional adverbial AUXes. These two general categories may be further divided according to co-occurrence rules and whether or not a verb following a particular Auxiliary takes or does not take the INF (infinitive) prefix. As Ngomba is a strongly SVO language, immediately following the main verb is where O (object – NPs, PNs or verb complement clauses), if present, occurs⁴. Following O, other words which modify the verb may occur. Here one finds adverbs, a small closed class in Ngomba, as well as prepositional phrases expressing manner, instrument, IO or demoted DO.

The overall structure of the verb phrase in Ngomba may be summarized by the formula in *fig. 1* below. There are two positions in the verb phrase where negation may be indicated. In most

³ Depending on semantic class of the verb and how one counts them there are from 9 to 11 tenses in Ngomba. Dynamic (perfective) verbs have 5 past tenses, 4 future tenses plus present progressive and habitual (which also serves as gnomic present). See §3.1.1 in this paper. For a more complete discussion see Satre (2002).

⁴ In certain contexts the object may be left implicit.

negative verb phrases it occurs before or in portemanteau with tense marking, hence the NEG1 slot. In one tense, negation marking may alternately occur after the tense marking, hence the NEG2 slot⁵. Most positive tense/aspect markers occur before the adverbial AUXes, as indicated by T/A1 in the formula below. One aspect marker, however, occurs after the modifiers, as indicated by the A2 slot.

FIG. 1 : VP CONSTITUENT ORDER

VP →	+/-NEG1 (NEG.P0/1, NEG.HAB, NEG.P2, NEG.P3/4, NEG.F)	+/-T/A1 (P1, P2, P3, P4, PRPROG, HAB. F1, F2. F3. F4)	+/-NEG2 (NEG.P1 /IMPF)	+/-MOD1 (adverbial AUXes)	+/- A2 (non- Present IMPF)	+ V	+/- O (NPs, PNs, verb complements)	+/- MOD2 (adverbs, PPs)
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Note that in this formula all but the main verb are shown as being optional. The NEG positions are optional because “negative” is a marked case and so will not be present in unmarked cases, i.e., in affirmative verb phrases. The tense and aspect positions are optional because there is an unmarked form of the verb that is assigned tense meaning according to the semantic class of the verb (see §3.1.1), such that only the main verb is obligatory.

While it is true that most positions are optional, it is not true that one may opt for all of the positions at the same time in a given verb phrase. NEG1 and NEG2 are mutually exclusive – only one verbal negator is allowed. The aspect-related markers in T/A 1 – PRPROG and HAB, which also functions as a gnomic present, – are likewise mutually exclusive with the non-present, general imperfective AUX that occurs in A2, the other position where aspect may be marked⁶. Note, however, that MOD1 and MOD2 are not mutually exclusive and both may be present in a given VP. With the exception of the MOD positions, the items listed as occurring in a particular position are mutually exclusive.

Note also that some of the NEG AUXes are specific to a particular tense while others do double duty, occurring with more than one tense, hence the backslashes separating tense numbers. There is only one NEG AUX for all future tenses, so I have not bothered to list all the tenses with which it occurs.

In examples (2) and (3), we see two sentences with minimal VPs, which consist of a single lexical verb in the least marked tense, the “PO” (Past Zero) tense:

⁵ This form seems to be related to the IMPF aspect as well and further research is required to determine the factors that govern its use.

⁶ See §3.1.1 and subsections for a presentation of the various T/A and NEG markers.

- (2) Fɔɔ w-ɛk tó.
C1.chief C1-1P come.P0
Our chief came/has come.
- (3) Fɔɔ w-ɛk sak.
C1.chief C1-1P be_long.P0
Our chief is tall.

2 Agreement Patterns

Ngomba does not have subject or object agreement affixes on the verb. Subject pronouns, which one might analyse as verb phrase clitics⁷, are not required when a full NP is present as the subject. The INF (infinitive) prefix, which does not vary with differing subjects or objects, is more a type of ‘glue’ than agreement and will be discussed below in § 3.1.

3 Verb Chains – Between Verbs Inside the VP, Between Clauses Outside the VP and in Between?

Ngomba chains verbs together in three types of constructions, which are only marked for tense/aspect at the beginning of the chain. These are: 1) a construction linking AUXes together with a main verb without the possibility of inserting a NP (object) at more than one point in the string, 2) a construction linking verbs together which admits the insertion of a NP at more than one point in the string but which in intonation pattern (e.g., lack of pauses⁸) and semantics⁹ still appears to be a single clause/event and 3) a construction linking verbs together which admits the insertion of a NP (object) at more than one point in the string and which appears both in intonation (there are pauses) and semantics to act as a sequence of separate clauses encoding separate and distinct events. The first two constructions —VP with AUXes¹⁰ and ‘spliced/compound’ VP— resemble verb serialisation in their underlying semantics, while the third is a SS (same-subject) clause chain.

In all three cases, the formal marking that links the verbs in a chain is the same (see § 3.1 for a discussion of the ‘glue’). They may, however, as was noted above, be distinguished by other

⁷ The 1S subject is the closest phonologically to whichever verb comes first in the VP, as it is a homorganic nasal in certain tenses, and differs from the INF marker only in tone (L vs. H).

⁸ Givón (1991) did a quantified study of pauses in several Papua-New Guinean languages and Neo-Melanesian Pidgin comparing serial and non-serial constructions. He concluded that pauses are much less likely to occur in serial-verb constructions (SVCs) than in main clauses and that, in fact, the chance of a pause occurring in the middle of a SVC “falls within the probability range of mid-clause pauses associated with lexical words, or is even lower, i.e., falling within the range of the probability of mid-word pauses.” (1991: 171)

⁹ Osam proposes a criterion he calls “semantic integration” for typing serial constructions in Akan. He uses it to distinguish between what he terms “Integrated Serial Verb Constructions” (ISVCs), such as my second type of verb chain and “Clause Chaining Serialization” (CCs) (2003:15).

¹⁰ Or as Hyman would put it “consecutivization within the auxiliary” (1985:?)

syntactic and phonological criteria – whether or not they admit objects between them (syntactic) and whether or not there are pauses between them (phonological). (See Table 1 in § 3.4 for a summary.)

Ngomba is not alone in stringing more than one verb together in the same sentence without placing them in “any of the co-ordinate or subordinate relationships used elsewhere in the language.”¹¹ In literature on African languages, the term “verb serialisation” or “serial verbs” is often (and sometimes rather loosely) used in discussing this type of phenomenon. Serial constructions have more than one predicate, yet function like single rather than multiple clauses. This casts doubt on the assumption that where there is more than one predicate, there is more than one clause and/or verb phrase and thus the distinction between the verb phrase, a combination of verb phrases and a combination of clauses becomes blurred in this area of grammatical analysis¹². Bamgbose (1974), Schachter (1974) and Foley & Olsen (1985) argue for a “monoclausal” analysis rather than a multiclausal analysis of verb serialisation. Givón (2003:453) even uses the term “multi-verb single event clauses.”

While Ngomba does string verbs together, it does not do so in a way that fits the formal characteristics of proto-typical verb serialisation. For example, the verbs in a serial construction are said to ‘agree’ in tense/aspect/ negation¹³, i.e., they are formally marked with the same T/A and or NEG markers. This is the case in certain constructions in Akan (a group of West African languages known for having proto-typical serial verbs) as indicated in the following statements by Osam (2003):

“Verbs in an Akan serial construction manifest uniformity in tense aspect marking.” (p. 18)

“Generally, in an Akan serial construction, negating the sentence means each verb being morphologically marked by the negative prefix.” (p. 19)

Neither of these statements, however, holds true for Ngomba. The first statement does not hold true because the INF prefix, which indicates that the verbs in a given string in Ngomba share the same tense/aspect, is not a tense/aspect marker per se (see next paragraph and § 3.1 for further clarification). The second does not hold true because negation may only be marked once at the beginning of the VP (See example (5) in § 3.1.) and, when necessary, once at the very end of the clause. This last marker is a particle *pó*, which only occurs after whatever object, complement or adjunct happens to follow the main verb. (See footnote #20 for more on *pó*.) While there is

¹¹ Hyman 1971:30

¹² See also Foley & Olsen 1985:17-18; Bamgbose 1974:18

¹³ See Durie (1988:3 quoted in Osam 2003:15) states this agreement negatively as, “the verbs cannot have a separate scope for tense, mood, aspect, illocutionary force, and negation.”

agreement in proto-typical serial constructions, there is not what Lord (1993:1) terms “overt connective morphemes.” Durie (not dated) elaborates on this, stating:

“there is characteristically no marker of syntactic dependency, neither complementiser, infinitival or other dependent verb form, on serialised verbs.”

Ngomba also does not fit this formal criterion as the most common marker in serial-like and formally-related constructions is an INF prefix (see § 3.1).

According to Hyman (1971), the functional equivalent of serialisation in Bamiléké languages (i.e., Grassfields Bantu, such as Ngomba) is not properly termed serialisation, but rather consecutivisation. The form is the main criterion for this distinction in terms, whereas others, like Lord (1993)¹⁴ put more weight on the semantics. As was indicted in the opening paragraph of this section, the ‘consecutive’ form of the verb, to use Hyman’s terminology, in Ngomba may occur: 1) within the AUX with both T/A markers and modifiers that precede the verb; 2) in constructions where a predicate serves as an argument within the clause such as instrument, manner etc. or 3) on a higher level, coordinating same subject clauses where action of a given clause is seen to be consecutive to that of the preceding clause. Strictly speaking, it is the third case that is “consecutive”. However, as the same verb form is used in all three, one understands why Hyman grouped them all together as consecutive. I recognize this unity of form in Ngomba and call all these constructions verb chains that I separate into three categories using criteria that will be summarised later on in *Table 1* in §3.4

3.1 Formal ‘glue’ and ‘scope’ in chains of verbs

In a Ngomba verb chain as in example (1) above, the ‘glue’ or form that holds most non-initial verbs together in the verb phrase is the INF prefix. In form, it is usually a homorganic nasal carrying a high tone that is prefixed to the verb root¹⁵. When the root begins with a voiceless fricative such as *f, s, sh*, however, a nasal is not allowed and a replacive dummy vowel [ə] is inserted (represented in the orthography by *ε*) bearing the high tone.

The INF prefix in itself does not express specific information regarding the subject or the tense/aspect of the phrase, i.e., it is not a form of agreement. What it does do, however, is mark the verb on which it occurs as being in the ‘scope’ of the verb (and preverbal modifiers) that

¹⁴ Lord (1993:2) says: “If we focus on surface form, we can limit prototypical serial verb constructions to successive verb phrases without overt connective morphemes. This definition rules out Igbo and Fe’fe’ consecutive constructions, as well as Twi verb sequences with the sequential prefix. However, the meanings communicated by the Twi structures are comparable to meanings communicated elsewhere and in related languages by verb sequences without overt connectives. This makes the “no overt connectives” criterion look rather arbitrary.”

¹⁵ Hyman (1971) terms this the “N-prefix” in discussing types of “consecutivization” in Fe’fe’, another Bamileke language.

immediately precedes it. As the subject is indicated at the beginning of the clause (this is an SVO language) and as tense and negation marking usually occur near the beginning of the verb phrase, this prefix indicates, in effect, that the verb on which it occurs has the same subject and same tense/aspect and polarity as was previously marked. In this respect, the verb phrase may resemble a chain of same-subject clauses¹⁶, which will be discussed in § 3.3 below. This prefix is a very productive tool in the grammar of the language, for, as was mentioned above, it may be employed not only to join strings of AUX verbs to each other and to the main verb within the verb phrase but also to join same-subject clauses together in a chain¹⁷ as may be seen in the following example from a text about a trapper (snare-layer) who wanted to see what was springing his snares:

- (4) A lu', ḡ-góó ḡ-kó' tú, ḡ-náḡ.
 3S lay(snare).PO, INF-immediately INF-climb C7.tree, INF-sit
 He lay (a snare¹⁸), immediately climbed a tree and sat.

In (4), we see that a verb phrase containing the adverbial AUX ḡgóó 'immediately' is situated in a clause in the middle of a same-subject clause chain. It is important to note that the INF prefix on ḡgóó is not functioning on the verb phrase level but rather links that whole clause to the previous clause in the chain. The INF prefix on the verb ḡkó' 'climb', on the other hand, is working on the verb phrase level linking it to the AUX ḡgóó. An important piece of evidence for distinguishing between the clause and the verb phrase level here is found in the fact that the clauses within the chain are set apart by pauses, as is indicated by the commas. There are no such pauses between verbs (main or AUX) within the same verb phrase.

The concept of 'scope' is also essential to a proper understanding of how the verb phrase in Ngomba holds together. Each AUX or particle in the verb phrase may be said to have 'scope' over or to govern the verb (be it another AUX or the main verb) that immediately follows it. As each car in a train is only directly linked to the car that immediately precedes/follows it, and yet all the cars go in the direction which the head of the train, the engine, pulls them, so also each verb in a verb chain in Ngomba is only in the direct scope of the immediately preceding verb, yet all share the same subject, tense/aspect and polarity as these are marked at the head or beginning of the chain. This may sound like we are splitting hairs, but the idea of a 'one-verb' limit to scope coupled with the fact that each verb is nonetheless 'glued' or linked to the one that immediately precedes it helps

¹⁶ Another common term for this in literature on African languages is "consecutive clauses" (see Welmers 1973:364) or "consecutivization" (see Hyman 1971).

¹⁷ Hellan, Beerman & Andernes note a similar formal unity between what they call Integrated Serial Verb Constructions and same subject Clause Chains in Akan: "as far as aspect marking and negation go, the two construction types behave identically, underscoring the unity of the phenomenon of 'serial verb constructions' in Akan." (2003:22)

¹⁸ This sentence is taken from a written text about a man who lays snares and I have supplied the implied information from the context of the story.

us to understand the behaviour of the verbal negators such as *ká*¹⁹, and the P3 tense marker *ka*. None of these allow any verb immediately following to take the INF prefix but any verb thereafter does take the INF prefix. The one-verb limit to scope means that when one of the verbal negators or the P3 tense marker occurs at the beginning of a chain, it cannot extend the prohibition against the INF prefix beyond the next verb in the verb phrase/chain. The fact that each verb is nonetheless glued to the one preceding it, means that the whole chain still shares the tense and/or polarity value the verbal negators or P3 tense marker bring to the chain. In example (5), a part of the normal greeting script, we see a negative question in which the AUX *tsuŋ* ‘really’ immediately follows *ká* and hence does not carry the INF prefix. However, the main verb *ń-dé* ‘sleep’, which occurs just after that AUX, does:

- (5) ∅ ká tsuŋ ń-dé su'ne pɔ²⁰?
 2S NEG.P0 really INF-sleep well NEG
 You didn't really sleep well?

This example also illustrates one manifestation of the summary of the overall structure as was given above in *Fig. 1*:

NEG1: *ká* + **MOD1** (adverbial AUX): *tsuŋ* + **V:** *ń-dé* + **MOD2** (adverb): *su'ne*

3.1.1 Tense/aspect/negation markers in the structure of the verb phrase

As was shown in § 1, tense/aspect and negation (or polarity) are seen to be constituents of the verb phrase and so are not analysed as being affixed to the verb, per se. The complexity in the tense/aspect system of Ngomba, then, is not expressed through a complex verb morphology, but rather through the repertoire of markers that occur in the verb phrase. As was noted above in §1, tense/aspect and negation may be marked at various positions in the verb phrase, though they most often occur at the beginning. This is accomplished in Ngomba by an intricate system of segmental AUXes, particles, and affixes as well as tonal markers. As tense-related affixes occur at a certain position in the verb phrase, they often “land” on various AUXes rather than the main verb, thus substantiating the claim that tense/aspect and negation marking are an operation on the verb phrase level rather than on the verb itself. This ‘hopping around’ of an affix (and accompanying tonal changes) is illustrated in the P2 examples (6-8) below. The P2 ‘Yesterday Past’ is marked by a combination of an affix - high tone nasal prefix - and a ‘super low’ tone on the verb root that

¹⁹ See section 3.1.1.1 for a full listing of verbal negators along with examples. See also SATRE 2002 for a more complete presentation.

²⁰ The particle *pɔ* is invariable. It occurs obligatorily at the end of a clause that contains any type of verb complement or adjunct.

overrides the lexical tone. (In the examples, this combination is indicated simply by a grave accent on the prefix of the verb where these occur, following the orthographic convention of the language.) Observe the change in position of the grave accent in the three examples to trace the migration of the P2 marker within the verb phrase:

- (6) Mɔ̃ ñ-zúu m-bap sɛ'ne zón .
 1S P2-buy C9-meat good yesterday
 I bought good meat yesterday.
- (7) Mɔ̃ ñ-tsuŋ ñ-zúu m-bap zón.
 1S P2-really INF-buy C9-meat yesterday
 I really bought good meat yesterday.
- (8) Mɔ̃ ñ-kaa tsuŋ ñ-zúu m-bap sɛ'ne zón pó.
 1S P2-NEG really INF-buy C9-meat good yesterday NEG
 I didn' t really buy meat yesterday.

Note that in example (6) the only verb in the VP is the main verb and the P2 marker occurs there. In example (7), however, the marker may be seen to 'hop' to the adverbial AUX preceding the main verb. Finally, in example (8), it lands on the negator which precedes both the adverbial AUX and the main verb. Clearly, this marker cannot be analysed as occurring 'on' any particular verb in the string but rather as occurring in the phrase-initial position.

A given verb phrase in Ngomba must be positive or negative with negative being the marked case. While it is not in the scope of this paper to delve deeply into the tense/aspect system²¹, it is important to note that these intricacies stem from the fact there are 4-5 past tenses (depending on the semantic class of the verb) and 4 future tenses! The markers will be listed in § 3.1.1.2 .

It is also important to note that there are two semantic classes of verbs in Ngomba – those which are inherently perfective in aspectual meaning (dynamic verbs) and those which are inherently imperfective in aspectual meaning (stative verbs—including cognitive state verbs and stative verbs with an attributive function). On a semantic level, this classification manifests itself in the fact that the least marked verb form, what I term the 'P0', has a present tense reading with verbs in the imperfective semantic class (see example (3) above in § 1) and a recent past (almost 'perfect') reading with those in the perfective semantic class (see example (2) above in § 1). On a formal level, the semantic class of a verb has a bearing on the marking of aspect and tense in the verb phrase. Verbs in the perfective group require special marking not only to take on an imperfective meaning, but also to have any kind of a present tense! The perfective class of verbs require the presence of the particle *sé* in the verb phrase for the present progressive tense/aspect (see examples

²¹ See SATRE 2002 for a fuller discussion of the the tense/aspect & negation system of Ngomba.

(52) and (55) below) and of the particle *lɔ* for ‘present’ habitual tense/aspect. In other tenses, the perfective class takes the AUX *mbɔ* ‘to be’ as a general imperfective marker that may have either a progressive or a habitual reading depending on the context. Again, the markers do not always occur adjacent to the main verb, but at a particular position in the verb phrase as may be seen with the habitual marker in examples (9), (10) and (11) below:

- (9) A *lɔ* ɛ̃-kʉɔ n-dyɔl mba'mba'.
 3S HAB INF-flee C9-course morning
 He (always) runs in the morning.
- (10) A *lɔ* ɛ̃-bɔ́tné ɛ̃-kʉɔ n-dyɔl.
 3S HAB INF-be_{slow} INF-flee C9-course
 He (always) runs slowly.
- (11) A *lɔ* ɛ̃-tsuŋ ɛ̃-bɔ́tné ɛ̃-kʉɔ n-dyɔl.
 3S HAB INF-really INF-be_{slow} INF-flee C9-course
 He (always) really runs slowly.

As with examples (6-8) we see the migration of the marker, in this case a particle²², to the left as AUX verbs are inserted into the verb phrase. One could replace *lɔ* with *sé* in examples (9-10) to change them into present progressive ‘he is running.’²³ Note the presence of the INF prefix, the ‘glue’ mentioned above in § 3.1, on all the verbs in the verb phrase, including the main verb.

3.1.1.1 NEG1 and NEG2

As was noted in §1, the segmental markers for tense/aspect and negation may be divided into those which require that a following verb carry the INF prefix and those which prohibit that from occurring. Those which prohibit the INF prefix from occurring, as was partially noted in §3.1 are the P3 (non-recent Past) tense marker *ka* and the verbal negators – *ká* ‘NEG.P0/1’, *ké* ‘NEG.FUT’, *ɛ̃kaa*²⁴ ‘NEG.P2’, *ɛ̃kaa* ‘NEG.P3/4’, *mbɔɔ/pɔɔ* ‘NEG.IMPF/P1’. (An exception among negative markers is the negative habitual marker *lɔɔ* ‘never’.) Of the negation markers all but *mbɔɔ/pɔɔ* occur in NEG1, i.e., not preceded by a tense marker. The latter, when it negates P1 tense, occurs in NEG2, after the P1 (‘Today’ Past) tense marker *lá*²⁵. The following examples (12-

²² The habitual marker *lɔ* is low-tone but does not seem to have all the tonal qualities of a low-tone verb, hence I hesitate to call it an Auxiliary verb.

²³ One may need to remove *mba'mba* ‘morning’ and replace it with *ɛ̃kʉɔne* ‘now’ to avoid a collocational clash with the meaning of the tense/aspect.

²⁴ The grave accent is a grammatical mark used in the orthography indicating P2 tense. The prefix is H and the root extra L [ɛ̃.kã].

²⁵ In example (18), we see *dá* instead of *lá* because /l/ hardens to [d] when preceded by a nasal (subj marker, INF prefix or noun class prefix). See Satre 1997.

17) put these NEG1 markers in the context of a sentence. In example (18) below, we see the NEG2 position with its marker in a sentence:²⁶

- (12) ɲ ké zúu m-bap lo'ne pó.
 1S NEG.F buy C9-meat today NEG
 I'm not buying meat today
- (13) ɲ ké lo hí-zúu m-bap η-gap yi pó.
 1S NEG.F F3 INF- buy C9-meat C9-week that NEG
 I will not buy meat next week.
- (14) ɲ ká zúu m-bap pó.
 1S NEG.P0/1 buy.P0 C9-meat NEG
 I didn't buy meat. (implication: I do not have any meat.)
- (15) ɲ ká lá' hí-zúu m-bap mba'mba' lo'ɔ pó.
 1S NEG.P0/1 P1 INF-buy C9-meat morning today NEG
 I didn't buy meat this morning.
- (16) Mo ηkaa zúu m-bap zón pó.
 1S NEG.P2 buy C9-meat yesterday NEG
 I didn't buy meat yesterday.
- (17) Mo ηkaa zúu m-bap η-gap yi pó.
 1S NEG.P3 buy C9-meat C9-week that NEG
 I didn't buy meat last week.
- (18) N dá' mbɔɔ zúu m-bap mba'mba' pó.
 1S P1 NEG.P1 buy C9-meat (this)morning NEG
 I didn't buy meat this morning.

In the examples above, one gets a sampling of the range of tenses there are in Ngomba. Observe again that there is no INF prefix on any verb that immediately follows a NEG marker, whether it is the main verb or some AUX verb, such as the F3 (post-hodiernal, 'after-today' future) tense marker híɔ/lo in example (13). The absence of the INF prefix on tense markers could occasion the loss of many tense distinctions were it not for the fact that the NEG markers themselves also help maintain these distinctions as may be seen if one compares example (16) with example (17)²⁷ or example (12) with example (14). As the NEG 1 verbal negators occur before T/A markers, one does not find them occurring with the INF prefix. The P2 & P3/4 verbal negators have a homorganic nasal prefix as part of the tense marking, and while this prefix resembles the INF prefix, it does not function as 'glue' and I, therefore, do not equate it with the INF prefix. It does, however, say

²⁶ The reader will notice variation in the 1S subject pronoun. This variation is phonologically motivated – it is most often a homorganic nasal, resembling the verb prefix but carrying a low rather than a high tone. This is replaced by the more emphatic mo (elsewhere used in prepositional phrases) when the marker following it carries the verb prefix.

²⁷ NB: Only tone distinguishes NEG.P2 (super low on 'root') from NEG.P3 (normal low on 'root') and so only tone distinguishes these two tenses in the negative.

something about the verbal quality of these markers. (NB: The time adverbials are not obligatory and are only included to shed light on the tense meaning.)

It is important to note that while the negation markers vary according to the tense/aspect of the verb phrase, they occur in conjunction with or in the place of the tense/aspect AUXes and not in the place of the main verb. Thus, they are not what are termed finite negative verbs²⁸. If Ngomba employed a finite negative verb construction as its negation strategy, these negation markers would take a complementiser and the main verb would then be set apart in a complement clause; and this is not the case.

3.1.1.2 T/A1 AND A2

The tense/aspect markers which require following verbs to carry the INF prefix include: *ńdá'* 'P4'²⁹ (remote/indefinite past) (accompanied by downstep on H tone roots³⁰), *lá'* 'P1' (hodiernal past) (accompanied by downstep on H tone roots), *sé* 'PRPROG' (accompanied by downstep on H tone roots), *ge/ g#* 'F1' (hodiernal 'today' future), *ńge/ ńdɔ*³¹ 'F3' (post-hodiernal future), *ńda' / ńtáa* 'F4' (remote/indefinite future), *lɔ* 'Pr.HAB', *lɔɔ* 'NEG.HAB' and *ńbó* 'IMPF(non-present)'. The 'F2' tense (immediate to next day future) is not listed here as it is not marked by an AUX. Instead, a verb in 'F2' (adverbial AUX or main verb) carries a high tone prefix like the INF prefix and a following high (accompanied by downstep on H tone roots). Low-tone verb roots in F2 are realised with rising tones. The general imperfective marker *ńbó* is an AUX verb that may also be glossed as 'to be' and it is what occurs in the A2 position. The other markers listed in this section as well as the P3 marker *ka* occur in T/A1.

While tone is an important part of the package of markers, there are only two tenses in the affirmative that are distinguished solely by a tonal difference, as well as two in the negative (see examples 16 & 17 above and footnote #27). The P2, which was mentioned above in section 3.1.1 (see examples 6-8), and F2 are both marked by the high-tone nasal prefix, but are distinguished by grammatical tone on the root. While F2 carries a downstepped H tone or rising tone on the root, the P2 has a 'super low' tone that overrides the lexical tone on the verb root. This marking may occur on the main verb or on whichever verb, i.e., such as *ńbó* 'be' or one of the adverbial AUXes that happens to occur first in the verb phrase in a given utterance.

²⁸ See Payne 1997: 287-88 for an discussion of the finite negative verb negation strategy.

²⁹ P4 may also be formed by a combination of the P3 marker *ka* followed by the P1 marker *lá'* and seems to have a more definite reading than *ńdá'*.

³⁰ NB: Downstep is not marked in Ngomba orthography and will only be indicated in examples when attention is being drawn to its presence and function.

³¹ Both 'F3' and 'F4' have two alternate AUXes meaning the same thing. I do not know how this came about but neither appear to be due to morphophonemic variation. Further investigation might reveal some other nuance in meaning.

3.1.2 Adverbial AUXes in the structure of the verb phrase

Adverbial AUXes occur before the main verb and after the tense/aspect/negation markers mentioned in the section just above. Their verbal quality may be seen in the fact that they may and often must take the INF prefix (see example (1) above) and can carry the tense marking for the verb phrase (see example (7) above). So it is that in Ngomba one finds such remarkable lexical items as the verb 'really' *ńtsuŋ* or the verb 'perhaps' *ńmmaa*. Bagbose (1974) calls these "modifying verbs" in the serialising languages of West Africa such as Yoruba and Twi and says that they occur in "modifying serial verb constructions" (p.31). I choose to call them AUXes, as most may not function as independent verbs. There are some, however, such as the verbs *ńbótné* and *ńduome*, that may function either as an adverbial AUX or as an independent lexical verb. As an independent lexical verb *ńbótné* is glossed 'to be soft/weak/easy' and *ńduome* is glossed 'to hide'. Some of the more common adverbial AUXes are listed below³²:

<i>ńna'</i>	'a little, slightly, somewhat'
<i>ńtsuŋ</i>	'really'
<i>éfé'né</i>	'quickly'
<i>ńbótné</i>	'slowly'
<i>ńmmaa</i>	'perhaps'
<i>ńzee</i>	'even/also'
<i>ńben</i>	'again, and'
<i>ńmúu</i>	'early'
<i>ńgóo</i>	'immediately'
<i>ńduome</i>	'secretly'

Examples of these adverbial AUXes in sentences appear below, most taken from narrative texts. In this series of examples (19-26), notice the following characteristics of the adverbial AUXes in Ngomba:

- 1) They may be preceded by a tense or aspect marker (as in examples (19) and (21) below).
- 2) They may themselves carry the tense marking (as in example (7) where an adverbial AUX carries the P2 marking or examples (20),(22), (23) and (26) in the P0 below).
- 3) They must take the INF prefix when preceded by another verb (as in examples (23 -25) below).

³² This is NOT intended to be an exhaustive listing.

4) They may co-occur with other adverbial AUXes in the same verb phrase (also as seen in examples (23-25) below):

- (19) É ka ná' mí-bó mbuu lá' y-i páaténé y-ek lá'.
3S P3 slightly INF-be side C7.village C7-REL be_next C7-IP C7.village
It was sort of on the side of the village that borders ours.
- (20) O tsun n-ji ngó η-ki léené?
2S really.P0 INF-know COMP C3-water clean
Do you really know that the water is clean?
- (21) Teto' pó é-fé'né n-nen.
C1.toad IMPF.P0 INF-quickly INF-walk
Toad was walking quickly.
- (22) Cwímanko' pótné é-fú η-ká'.
C1.tortoise slowly.P0 INF-come_from C3-field.
The tortoise slowly came from the field.
- (23) Puu ηu maá n-zee η-gwée y-ecó nu?
2P person perhaps.P0 INF-even INF- have C7-certain/other C7.problem
Did you and the person by chance also have some/another problem?
- (24) Te é-fúné lé'-mbi ey-á, a lóo n-ben n-du' mēη-ku pó.
til INF-come_from C7.day-world C7-that(ANAPH) 3S never INF-return INF-lay C4-rope NEG
Since that day, he never again lay snares.
- (25) Múu é-fé'né n-tó!
be early(IMP) INF-quickly INF-come
Hurry and get here early!
- (26) A góo η-ge η-kút n-tó'.
2S immediately.P0 INF-make INF-build C9-palace
He immediately caused the palace to be built.
- (27) A luame η-gá η-káp mbō cō'-shíshí.
2S secretly.P0 INF-give C3-money to C7.hat-black
He secretly gave money to the policeman.

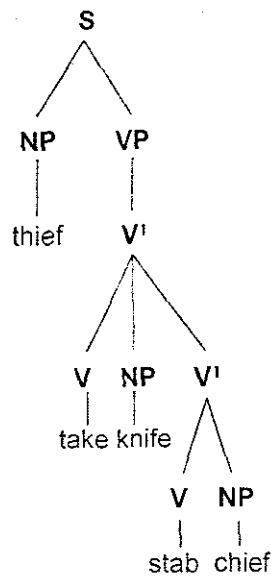
3.2 Type-two verb chains: joining verb phrases in the same clause

In this section, we will discuss those verb-chaining constructions in Ngomba which, unlike chains involving adverbial AUXes discussed above in § 3.1, do allow the insertion of NPs at more than one place in the string, but which are not “the concatenation of potentially independent events” (Osam 2003:15) (i.e., not a same subject clause chain) and have an intonation pattern consistent with that of a single clause. In its macrostructure, this type of chain can be divided into two parts, each with its own object NP, though in many contexts the objects may be left implicit if they may be inferred from the context. In the first part of such chains, one finds all the tense/aspect markers for the chain along with adverbial AUXes as seen in Fig 1 and discussed in the preceding sections

(3.1-3.1.2). In the second part, one finds only a verb with the INF prefix and another object (see examples in sections 3.2.1-3).

This type of chain is in a bit of a gray area with regard to whether or not they are made up of two distinct verb phrases in one clause or just one, albeit complex or compound, verb phrase in one clause. One may look on the second VP as a totally separate unit, but many analyses of serial constructions that this type of chain resembles see both VPs together as constituting a single complex VP, the second being nested within the other and both relating to the first object NP. In Fig. 2 below, adapted from Baker (1991:90)³³, we see one conceptualisation of this structure:

Fig. 2 SENTENCE DIAGRAM OF A SERIAL CONSTRUCTION



Example (22) below in § 3.2.1 could be diagrammed in the same way as Fig 2.

Although these are formally distinct from serial-verb constructions, as was noted above in § 3, they are the functional and semantic equivalent of what Osam (2003) calls ISVCs “Intregrated Serial Verb Constructions” owing to their high degree of semantic integration. Since they seem to function more like a single predicate, they may be termed single clauses, although it is stretching the traditional dictum of one predicate, one clause.

Ngomba puts its second type of verb chain to some of the same uses that serial-verb constructions are frequently put in proto-typical serialising languages. It is employed most commonly in some case-role marking (Instrumental and Benefactive), in expressing Manner, in expressing some

³³ The structure was in a section entitled “SVCs with dative and instrument verbs” and diagrams a Yoruba sentence. I have cut out an empty branch “I” off of “S” between “NP” and “VP”.

complex lexical concepts (most notably ‘bring’ and ‘take (away)’³⁴ and in the comparative construction.

3.2.1 Case-role marking and Manner with verbs

Instrumental and Benefactive case roles may be encoded in Ngomba by type two verb chains. As with the serializing languages of West Africa, Instrumental is typically expressed in the first part of the chain with a verb, usually glossed as ‘take’, that has the instrument as its object. Example (28) is from Yoruba (Stahlke 1970: 61-2 quoted in Foley & Olsen 1985:53):

- (28) mo fi àdà gé igi nà
 I take machete cut tree the
 ‘I cut the tree with a machete.’

The corresponding sentence in Ngomba is of a similar structure, but requires the addition of the INF prefix, the ‘glue’ holding the verb chain together, to the second verb :

- (29) N dɔk nī ŋ-kūɔ' tɔ.
 I take.P0 C7.machete INF-cut C7.tree
 ‘I cut the tree with a machete.’

Manner, though not a case role, may similarly be expressed in a chain with the verb ‘take’³⁵, as may be seen in example (30)

- (30) N-zwé w-ε lɔk nε-kīi ŋ-cú mbɔ̃ w-ε ŋgɔ³⁶...
 C1-wife C1-3S take.P0 C5-cry INF-say to C1-3S COMP
 His wife, with crying, said to him (that)...

The expression of a Benefactive argument in serialising languages typically involves the use of the verb ‘give’³⁷ in the second part of the chain. Ngomba also uses the verb ‘give’ in its Benefactive construction, as may be seen in the examples (31) and (32):

- (31) Tsé'lé n-zwé w-u ŋ-gá mbɔ̃ mɔ.
 greet(IMP) C1-wife C1-2S INF-give to 1S
 Greet your wife for me!
- (32) Mɔɔ w-aɔ lá' ní-bú' ŋwáŋ ŋ-gá mbɔ̃ cíɔɔ.
 C1.child C1-1S P1 INF-beat C1.bell INF-give to C1.teacher
 My child rang the bell for the teacher (today).

³⁴ Givón categorizes ‘bring’ and ‘take’ constructions with the verbs ‘come’ and ‘go’ as “deictic-directional marking” (1991:138).

³⁵ It is interesting to note that both Instrument and Manner may also be expressed by a prepositional phrase with the preposition *né* in the adjunct position after the verb. Lord (1993) documents a similar association of these functions with the same form in her chapter entitled “Comitative Verbs, Prepositions and Conjunctions.” She posits that the morpheme/preposition glossed as ‘with’ in several West African languages came from a verb in a serial construction.

³⁶ *ŋgɔ* is a quote introducer and general complementiser. It comes from the verb *ŋgɔ* ‘say’, but seems to have lost some of the tonal quality of verbs, so I take it to be in the process of grammaticalization into a conjunction.

³⁷ “Many languages with serial verbs use a verb ‘give’ to introduce Recipient and/or Benefactive nouns.” (Lord 1993:44). She gives examples from African and Asian languages and discusses how the verb ‘give’ in these constructions often undergoes grammaticalization, losing some of its verbal qualities, and becomes a case marker. This has not yet happened in Ngomba.

Note again the use of the INF prefix in examples (31) and (32), this time on ‘give’, since it is in the second part of the chain. Remember that although it is not a tense or agreement marker per se, here it does indicate that ‘give’ is under the scope of the preceding verb’s tense/aspect marking and carries the same subject.

3.2.2 Co-lexicalization

In this category, Givón says that “two or more verb-stems are co-lexicalized to create a more complex verbal concept” (1991:138). In Ngomba, one does not necessarily see two stems juxtaposed, for the object comes after the first verb and the second verb always has the INF prefix, but they do work together to “create a more complex verbal concept.”(ibid) Note that in examples (33) – (36) both verbs have the same object so there is no need for it to be expressed after the second verb.

(33) Póp ñtswáa ma'ñkatém ñ-jwí.
3P beat.P2 C1.hunter INF-kill
They beat the hunter to death (yesterday or the day before).

(34) Pé lo ñ-tsó' tú - zú' ñ-bi .
3S HAB INF-pull_up C7.tree-AM.C7.yam INF-plant
One (usually) transplants a yam plant.

One may look at examples (33) and (34) and wonder why these are not under same-subject clause chains. The reason I put them here is that there is no pause to separate the first and second parts of the chain and they would appear to be conceptualised as facets of a single event. In Example (33) The second part of the chain is the outcome of the first, and is not viewed as a separate action.

In Examples (35) and (36) below. we see our old friend ‘take’ coupled with directional verbs ‘go’ and ‘come’. This time, instead of either verb marking a case-role, they work together to form the more complex concepts of ‘take away’ and ‘bring’. Each verb carries a component of the meaning. Normally, there is an object between the two, but in example (35) it is left implicit, being supplied in a preposed clause that connects this event with the rest of the discourse.

(35) Mbó m-bát ñ-tém me-naa pɔ'ɔ³⁸; ñ-jí kie , a lok ñ-gɛ é-fen me-táa.
CONJ INF-watch INF-shoot C6-animal like.this; C9-time brighten 3S take.P0 INF-go INF-sell C6-market
Having thus observed and shot animals, the next morning he took (them) away and sold (them) at the market

(36) Lok gwuple y-áa ñ-tó!
take.IMP C7.umbrella C7-1S INF-come
Bring my umbrella!

³⁸ This clause functions on a discourse level to link the main clause to the preceding action in the story by the same principal actor as in the main clause, thus the use of the INF on ‘ watch’ may be looking back to the previous paragraph/chain or looking ahead to the main clause. I have included it in the example to show the object (*mena*) that is left implicit in the serial construction with ‘ take’ and ‘go’ .

In the next examples, (37) and (38), we still have ‘take’, not with verbs of motion, but speech verbs. It is hard to see the verbs as components of an action in their logical sequence, for this is more abstract.

- (37) A *lɔk* w-é *é-fúŋ* mɔ̄-naa, n̄-tém.
 3S *take.P0* C1-3S *INF-call* C1-animal, INF-shoot
 He *considered* him (or *took* him *for*) an animal and shot (him).
- (38) ɔ *lɔk* n̄-cú ngo ku?
 2S *take.P0* *INF-say* *COMP* *what*
 What do you mean?

It is important to note that one could make a sentence with the gloss ‘he called him animal’ that would not require *lɔk* ‘take’. The combination of *lɔk* ‘take’ with *é-fúŋ* ‘call’ forms its own distinct lexical unit. It is a case of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts.

As was stated in §3.2, the comparative ‘-er than’ is expressed in Ngomba by a type-two verb chain. As there are few true adjectives in Ngomba, it is not surprising that the language does not have comparative or superlative forms of adjectives. So again, this is something the language does with verbs. It usually involves a stative verb, such as *ésak* ‘to be long/tall’, in the first part of the chain as the point of comparison with the subject serving as the standard for comparison. The second part of this construction always consists of the verb *n̄tsa* ‘pass/surpass’ with the INF prefix followed by an object, indicating the person/thing being compared to the standard as may be seen in the following examples:

- (39) ŋ-ká-m-buŋ sak n̄-tsa ŋ-ká-luu.
 C9-time-AMrain be_long.P0 *INF-surpass* C9-time-AMheat
 The rainy season is longer than the dry season.
- (40) Nε-fú Mbu'nda n̄-kúu Fu'usap tu'
 C5-come_from Mbouda *INF-arrive* Bafoussam be_short.P0
 Going from Mbouda to Bafoussam is shorter
- n̄-tsa nε-fú Mbu'nda n̄-kúu Pamenda.
INF-surpass C5-come_from Mbouda *INF-arrive* Bamenda.
 than going from Mbouda to Bamenda.
 (or It is shorter to go from Mbouda to Bafoussam than to go from Mbouda to Bamenda³⁹.)

Observe also in example (40) the structure of a subject complement clause involving something resembling a type-two (serial-like) verb chain. We see that direction is inherent in the verbs so that they seem to function like prepositions in Indo-European languages. This structure begins with a verbal noun (class 5 prefix + verb root) but continues as a verb chain with the INF-prefix on the second verb. (See also sections 4 and 4.1 for a discussion of verbal noun complements.)

³⁹ FYI: Mbouda is the divisional capital in the Ngomba area. Bafoussam is the provincial capital for the Ngomba area (the West Province), and Bamenda is the capital of the neighbouring (Northwest) province.

Even when a true adjective functions as the standard of comparison, *ńtsa* is still required and it still has the INF-prefix as can be seen in example (41) below:

- (41) N-dá y-u y-é fi ń-tsa y-aa.
 C9-house C9-2S C9-3S new INF-surpass C9-1S
 Your house is newer than mine.

Given the usual structure of such constructions and the presence of the INF prefix on *ńtsa* ‘surpass’, one wonders where the ‘verb’ or something functioning as a verb is in the first part. The most likely candidate is *yé*, which appears to be either ‘his’ or perhaps a contraction of the relative pronoun/relativiser *yi* with the impersonal 3S pronoun *é* that is often used in (verbless) equative clauses⁴⁰ with a reading of ‘it is’. If we take the latter interpretation, a more literal ‘free’ translation of (41) would then be something like ‘Your house (which) is new surpassing mine.’

3.3 Type-three verb chains : joining clauses in SS (same-subject) chains.

This type of chain goes beyond the verb phrase and clause level, but it is included here because of the unity of form one sees in the three types of verb chains in Ngomba. (See also footnote #17 for a similar “unity” in Akan.) All three have the same ‘glue’, i.e., the INF prefix that occurs on all⁴¹ non-initial verbs in the chain. This chain type is the ‘loosest’ semantically speaking in terms of Osam’s concept of semantic integration. In fact, this third type of chain can itself be made up of chains of the other two types as can be seen in the example below taken from a narrative text about a hunter who mistakenly killed one of his relatives and was subsequently beaten to death in retribution:

- (42) Póp tó, ń-gwεε póc-ηu p-i p-óp ńtswáa-ne⁴² ma'ηkatém ń-jwí,
 3P come.P0, INF-grab C2.children-AM.C1.person C2-REL C2-3P beat.P2-VL C1.hunter INF-kill
 They came, arrested the relatives of the man who had beaten the hunter to death (the day before),
 ń-dók ń-gε né jandamali.
 INF-take INF-go to C1.Gendarmerie
 and took them to the Gendarmerie.

Example (42) is a verb chain that encodes a sequence of distinct events that have the same subject. Apart from the relative clause, there are three clauses in this chain, three separate events occurring in succession. The relative clause is on a separate level from other clauses in the chain, i.e. it is part of a NP, and this is evidenced by the fact that it has its own separate tense marking. Note also that

⁴⁰ The copular element for equative, locative and predicate adjective (with a true adjective) clauses is merely a high tone in the present tense and the verb ‘to be’ in all other tenses. See Satre (1999:12-13).

⁴¹ with the exception of the those that immediately follow the verbal negators and the P3 marker as was noted above in section 3.1

⁴² The suffix *-ne* has many functions in the verb morphology of Ngomba and they might be subsumed under the general rubric of ‘valence-lowering’. This suffix is almost always present on the main verb in a relative clause.

this relative clause is a type-two chain with all tense/aspect marking on the first verb, including usual relative clause marking

3.3.1 Verbal conjunctions?

Back in § 3.1.2 we saw a certain adverbial AUX *mben* with a gloss ‘again, and’. As an independent intransitive verb, it has the gloss ‘return’. In a type-one chain it functions as an adverbial AUX with the gloss ‘again’ (see example 24). In a type-three chain, however, it seems to function as a sort of coordinating conjunction, a ‘conjunctive AUX’ to coin a new term, and is glossed ‘and’ as may be seen in example (43) below:

- (43) A tó, ń-naŋ sé, m-ben ń-kwét yúu la⁴³ ń-gu.
 3S come.PO INF-sit ground, INF-and INF-eat thing and.then/before INF-go
 He came, sat down and ate something, then left.

Notice in the above example as well as in (45) and (48) below, that *mben* as ‘and’ never stands alone in its VP/clause, hence the use of the term “AUX” to describe it.

Another verb in Ngomba that acts like a sort of conjunction, or perhaps “adverbial subordinator” (see Lord 1993: XI) is a better term, is the verb ‘before’ *ńgó*. It occurs in the VP at the usual place for adverbial AUXes, but it seems to be functioning at a higher level, indicating its clause is subordinate to what follows. In example (44), taken from a procedural text, it occurs in the initial clause of the chain and so is preceded by the tense/aspect marker:

- (44) Pé sé ń-gó ń-ge mbelik-lá',
 3INDF PRPROG INF-before INF-make C1.brick-AMC7.village,
Before one makes village bricks,

 ń-kúó' mɛ-gii nũu zu' y-i pé gu é-fa' zu'.
 INF-cut C6-grass on C7.place C7-REL 3INDF go INF-work there
 one cuts the grass in the place where one is going to work.

In example (45), we see both *ńgó* ‘before’ and *mben* ‘and’ in a chain. The whole chain is an aside in a larger discourse and the ‘before’ clause links it to a higher level:

- (45) (ń-gó ń-ge pɔ'ɔ, pɛ-cíca zé nɛ-ŋwa'nɛ pɛ-mápitsɔ',
 INF-before INF-do like.this C2-teacher begin.PO C5-write C2-witty.story
 Before this, the teachers began writing witty stories,

m-ben ń-ge pɛ-sakneket,
 INF-and INF-do C2-proverb/fable
 and proverbs,

m-ben ń-ge mɛ-lɛ'lɛnu nũu yúu m-i p-óp ka jáɔ-nɛ.)
INF-and INF-do C6-relate-affair on thing C6-REL C2-3P P3 see-VL
 and personal accounts about things that they had experienced.

⁴³ Ngomba does much with verbs, but it does have some nonverbal (or deverbal? some may have come from verbs) conjunctions and prepositions, which are not the focus of this paper.

Notice the presence of a ‘pro-verb’ or dummy verb *ńge* ‘do’ in this chain alongside *mben* ‘and’, standing in the place of *zé neɲwa'ne* ‘begin writing’. The reason for inserting this ‘dummy verb’ at these positions is that, apparently, there is an upper limit as to how far an object can be separated from the verb or on the number of objects that may be assigned to a single verb in Ngomba. When a verb has more than two objects, it requires the insertion of a repeated (as in example 48 below) or dummy verb to take up the ‘excess’ objects, even if there is a conjunctive element. In example 46, there are two objects and we see the two conjoined by what appears to be a grammaticalised 3P pronoun⁴⁴:

- (46) N zúu m-bap póp mɛ-yúu -ná'.
 1S buy.P0 C9-meat 3P(and) C6-thing-AM.C7.sauce
 I bought meat and sauce fixings.

Two appears to be the limit on the number of object NPs that can be conjoined in this manner⁴⁵. This is evidenced by the fact that example (47a) is ungrammatical and would need to be reformulated. One possible reformulation is given in (47b):

- (47a) *N zúu ńkɛndɔŋ póp m-bap póp mɛ-yúu -ná'.
 1S buy.P0 C7.plantain 3P(and) C9-meat 3P(and) C6-thing-AM.C7.sauce
 I bought plantain and meat and sauce fixings.
 (47b) N zúu ńkɛndɔŋ, ń-ge m-bap póp mɛ-yúu -ná'.
 1S buy.P0 C7.plantain, INF-do C9-meat 3P(and) C6-thing-AM.C7.sauce
 I bought plantain and meat and sauce fixings.

Unlike Indo-European languages, Ngomba does not allow multiple objects to be juxtaposed and/or conjoined with a conjunctive element and attached to a single main verb in a clause. Rather than exceeding the limit of two objects assigned to one verb in a clause, it prefers to place the ‘excess’ objects in separate clauses in a SS clause chain. Each clause in such a chain does not necessarily require a ‘conjunctive AUX’ as may be seen in example (48) below:

- (48) A zúu mákap, ń-zúu m-bap, n'-zúu shú, ń-bɛn ń-zúu mɛ-yúu -ná'.
 3S buy.P0 C1.macabo, INF-buy C9-meat, INF-buy C7.fish, INF-and INF-buy C6-thing-AM.C7.sauce
 He bought macabo, meat, fish and sauce fixings.

More research would be required to determine the significance, if any, of choosing to use the ‘pro-verb’ *ńge* ‘do’ vs. choosing to repeat the lexical verb.

3.4 Conclusion

⁴⁴ It has the form of the C2 pronoun ‘they’, but conjoins a C9 noun and C6 noun. This lack of agreement would fit with a grammaticalization scenario with its use in this context having generalized over time to mean ‘and’. A similar construction in S involving a subject pronoun is formed with the 1P exclusive subject pronoun *pék*, e.g. *Pék nzwé waa náɲ Yawúnde* ‘My wife and I live in Yaounde.’

⁴⁵ *póp* literally means ‘they’. The use of pronouns to conjoin NPs is common in the subject slot, e.g., *Pék nzwé waa fú Amelík* ‘we wife my come.from America’ means ‘My wife and I come from America’.

In this section, we have seen how Ngomba links verbs together in chains when they can share the same subject⁴⁶ and tense/aspect/mood. This occurs between verbs within the verb phrase as well as between clauses in larger constructions. We have also seen that these chains may be separated into three categories according to certain syntactic, phonological and semantic criteria. To sum up this information, I present the three chain-types and the various criteria used to distinguish them in Table 1 below.

Table 1: CRITERIA FOR DISTINGUISHING VARIOUS CONSTRUCTIONS / CLAUSE TYPES IN NGOMBA INVOLVING VERB CHAINS

Criteria Chain-type	SYNTACTIC: Separate subject marking possible more than once in chain	SYNTACTIC: Ability to insert NPs (objects) at more than one place in chain	PHONOLOGICAL: Intonation over whole chain as one clause	SEMANTIC: Degree of semantic "integration" of chain
1 - Single clause w/ AUXes	NO	NO	YES	HIGHEST: SINGLE EVENT
2 - 'Serial-like' construction	NO	YES	YES	FACETS OF A SINGLE EVENT
3 - SS-clause chain	NO	YES	NO	LOWEST: SEPARATE EVENTS

The first syntactic criterion is included as the common factor in all verb chain types in Ngomba – they share the same subject and so it is not possible or necessary to mark the subject at more than one place in the chain. The semantic criterion on the far right is a different type of criterion from the others in that it is graded rather than binary.

4 O: Objects and Verb Complements

Here we begin to look at what follows the main verb in the verb phrase. As previously mentioned, Ngomba is an SVO language, so objects, including predicate complements, follow the main verb. We saw above in §3.1.1 that a verb may take only one or two objects. We also saw that the way the grammar deals with events that involve three or more objects is to form clause chains. It inserts as many dummy or repeated verbs (each with the INF prefix) as is necessary to stay within the limits, converting from a single clause structure to a SS clause chain. (See examples (45), (46), (47b) and (48) above.)

4.1 Object nouns and pronouns

⁴⁶ Note that Ngomba does NOT allow chains in which there may be different subjects at various parts of the chain, i.e., this is not a switch-reference language.

Objects, apart from most types of verb complements, are NPs – nouns or pronouns. The transitive verb and its object are closely linked in Ngomba. One evidence of this is a sort of tonal ‘glue’ between the main verb and its object. The situation is complicated by end of utterance lowering and downstep that occurs with some tenses (see §3.1.1.2), but there often seems to be a verb final high tone, which spreads from the verb to the object. This high replaces the low tone on the prefix and occasions downstep in high tone lexical roots⁴⁷ (see examples 49a&c and 50a&c below), rather like what happens in an associative NP in Ngomba⁴⁸. In the following examples (49a-d) and (50a-d) taken from Bird & Bell 2001 (a CD with Ngomba tone data), I use my own transcriptions. I conform to Ngomba orthography for the segments, but have written the surface tones. We find both high tone *mbátte* ‘stare at’ and low tone *nduyte* ‘aim at’ verbs and high tone lexical root *mvú* ‘dogs’ and low tone lexical root *mēnaa* ‘animals’⁴⁹ object nouns. Examples (49a-c) are in the P4⁵⁰ and examples (50a-c) are in the F2⁵¹:

- (49a) Fòò kà lá'⁵² m-!bát-té m-!vú.
 C1.chief P3 + P1(P4) INF-watch-IT C10-dog
 The chief stared (long ago) at the dogs.
- (49b) Fòò kà lá' m-!bát-té mé-nàa.
 C1.chief P3 + P1(P4) INF-watch-IT C6-animal
 The chief stared (long ago) at the animals.
- (49c) Fòò kà lá' n-dùŋ-té m-!vú..
 C1.chief P3 + P1(P4) INF-aim-IT C10-dog
 The chief aimed (long ago) at the dogs.
- (49d) Fòò kà lá' n-dùŋ-té mé-nàa.
 C1.chief P3 + P1(P4) INF-aim-IT C6-animal
 The chief aimed (long ago) at the dogs.
- (50a) Fòò m-!bát-té m-!vú.
 C1.chief watch.F2-IT C10-dog
 The chief will (is about to) stare at the dogs.
- (50b) Fòò m-!bát-té mé-nàa.
 C1.chief watch.F2-IT C6-animal
 The chief will (is about to) stare at the animals.
- (50c) Fòò n-dùŋ-té m-!vú..
 C1.chief aim.F2-IT C10-dog
 The chief will (is about to)aim at the dogs.

⁴⁷ On low tone roots there is no change, as the displaced L may be said to merge with the L tone on the root.

⁴⁸ See Satre 1997:29-30.

⁴⁹ The tone on the root of ‘animals’ is lower than a normal low.

⁵⁰ Called P5 on the Ngomba Tone Data CD.

⁵¹ Called F1 on the Ngomba Tone Data CD.

⁵² Note that the P1 AUX *lá'* is accompanied by downstep in the root of the following verb even in the compound P4 tense.

- (50d) F3o ndùŋ-té mé-nda.
 C1.chief aim.F2-IT C6-animal
 The chief will (is about to)aim at the dogs.

Another indication of the strong bond between the verb and its object in Ngomba is evident in the behaviour of object pronouns. A verb with a pronoun as object behaves, in some respects, like a noun + possessive pronoun in a NP. The object pronoun and the possessive pronoun in Ngomba are virtually identical in form, sharing the same roots and agreement consonants, and both are subject to the same phonological processes. For example, the agreement consonant on a singular pronoun (whether object or possessive) is elided in normal speech which leads to a weakening of the final consonant of the lexical root (which is now intervocalic) or, if the lexical root ends in a vowel, assimilation takes place, sometimes in both directions. (See Satre 1997 for a fuller discussion and more examples.) In the examples below, the phonetic transcriptions indicate how the pertinent segments are pronounced in normal speech. Examples (51a-53a) on the left side show verb + object pronoun, while examples (49b-51b) on the right side show noun + possessive pronoun. Notice the similarities between the object and possessive pronouns:

- | | | | |
|-------|---|-------|---|
| (51a) | Nyet w-áa! [n'ěrá:]
show.IMP C1-1S
Show me! | (51b) | n-yet w-áa [n'ěrá:]
C3-false_eggplant C3-1S
my (false) eggplant |
| (52a) | Mɔ́ ríná w-ú gó? [ńóó] ⁵³
1S leave.F2 C1-2S where
Where shall I <u>leave you</u> ? | (52b) | n-dá y-u [ńdó:]
C9-house C9-2S
your house |
| (53a) | Mɔ́ ríná w-é gó? [ńéé]
1S leave.F2 C1-3S where
Where shall I <u>leave him/her</u> ? | (53b) | n-dá y-ε [ńdê:]
C9-house C9-3S
his/her house |

4.2 Object complement types and their CTPs (complement taking predicates)

In this section, we will follow Noonan's use of the term "complement" as referring to a predication that "functions as an argument of a predicate," (1985:64) while focusing on object complements⁵⁴.

There are three types⁵⁵ of such complements in Ngomba:

- 1) INDICATIVE COMPLEMENTS, in which the part of speech of the complement predicate is a verb that has the same relation to its subject as in a main clause, i.e., it is sentence-like, and

⁵³ The M tone in (52a) and (53a) is a downstepped H and is part of the tense marking for the F2 as was mentioned in §3.1.1.2. As the prefix that is part of the tense marking and the initial consonant of the root are the same, both are n, it is difficult to hear if the downstep occurs in the middle of the n or if the n is actually 'long' as might be expected.

⁵⁴ Subject complements in Ngomba consist of the verbal noun (third complement type) and possibly an object, e.g., 'Building a house is hard.' *Nekút ndá ten.*

⁵⁵ I base this typing of complements in Ngomba on Noonan's "Table 2.2 Summary of Complement Types" (1985:63???)

also the same range of tense/aspect marking possibilities as a main clause. This type is set off from the matrix clause⁵⁶ by a complementiser.

- 2) Something that could be termed SUBJUNCTIVE COMPLEMENTS, in which the part of speech of the complement predicate is a verb and has the same relation to its subject as in a main clause, i.e., it is sentence-like, but T/A possibilities are reduced to a single 'subjunctive' form. This type is also set off from the matrix clause by a complementiser.
- 3) VERBAL NOUN COMPLEMENTS, in which the part of speech of the complement predicate is a noun (verb root with class 5 noun prefix) and there is no possibility of tense/aspect marking nor is a complementiser allowed. The complement predicate's subject is not expressed as this type occurs only when matrix and complement subjects are co-referential. This type of complement often occurs with the same CTPs (complement-taking predicates) as subjunctive complements. Further research is required to ascertain whether the object that can follow the verbal noun in this type of complement relates to it as an object NP or as an associate NP.

The first two complement types take a complementiser *ŋgɔ* which could be glossed as 'that'. As in many other African languages⁵⁷, this complementiser developed in Ngomba from the verb 'say' *ŋgɔ*. In grammaticalization terms, it is quite 'young', because it has not undergone much desemanticization⁵⁸, i.e., it has not lost its lexical meaning. Phonologically, while it has not 'eroded' much, it has begun losing tonal attributes of a verb⁵⁹, but retains the verbal prefix common in type-two (serial-like) clause chains discussed in § 3.2. That 'say' may still function as an independent verb may be seen in (54b) taken from a dialogue in a folk tale where one finds 'say' in the PO tense rather than in a full quote formula:

(54a) A tséllé wɛ, r̄n-bɛn r̄n-bíkɛŋɛ ŋgɔ: «Ndúu mu pó gá?»
 3S greet.PO 3S, INF-and INF-ask COMP, husband 2S be where
 He greeted her and asked, "Where is your husband?"

(54b) A gɔ: «N-dúu w-aa n-dá pó.»
 3S say.PO C1-husband C1-1S C9-house NEG
 She said, "My husband is not at the house."

Notice 'say' in its role as part of a full quote formula in example (54a) where it appears at the end of a type-two verb chain, as opposed to the quote formula in (54b).

INDICATIVE COMPLEMENTS are fairly independent of their CTP. They have what Noonan terms "independent time reference" (ITR), i.e., their time reference is not "a necessary consequence of the meaning of the CTP" (1985:92). According to Noonan this type of complement is associated

⁵⁶ The matrix clause is the larger clause in which the complement clause serves as an argument.

⁵⁷ "In many languages of the world (including many of the Kwa languages of West Africa), a that-complementiser can be shown to have developed historically from a verb 'say'." (Lord 1993: 151)

⁵⁸ Lord says: "Over time, speakers may come to employ a verb for other functions, and the verb's loss of semantic content can be described in terms of a 'bleaching' or 'desemanticization' process." (1993:8)

⁵⁹ Though it is written in the orthography without a tone mark, one may still discern a high tone on the prefix, but the root seems to have lost the following high tone common in many forms of the verb.

with CTPs that “assert, report, comment on as background, or make truth-value judgments about their complements” (1985: 92). In Ngomba, CTPs that take this type of complement are speech-act verbs, such as ‘ask’ *mbíkŋé* (see example 49a above) or *éswí* ‘tell’, verbs of perception, such as *ńzú* ‘hear/perceive’, and cognition, such as *ŋkwanɛ* ‘think’ as may be seen in examples (55-57) below:

- (55) Ma'ŋkatém swii w-a-a ŋgɔ a ńtèm móɔma w-ɛ ń-dɔk é-fúŋ mɔ-naa.
 hunter tell.P0 C1-1S, COMP 3S shoot.P2 C1.relative C1-3S INF-take INF-call C1-animal
 The hunter told me that he (had) shot his relative having taken him for an animal.
- (56) Fɔɔ zú' ŋgɔ a fú tsán⁶⁰
 Chief hear.P0 COMP 3S, come.from (house of)dispute
 The chief heard that he got out of jail.
- (57) Lá, ŋ kwɛŋɛ ŋgɔ ɔ sé ń-zú' n-dapa'.
 but, 1S think.P0 COMP 2S PRPROG INF-cultivate C9-tobacco
 But I think that you are growing tobacco.

Note that in example (55) the complement is an indirect quote and that while it has its own tense marking, its tense is relative to the time frame of the verb in the matrix clause, i.e., with P2 one or two days previous, hence the ‘(had)’ in the free translation.

SUBJUNCTIVE COMPLEMENTS are marked as being more dependent on the CTP, having what Noonan terms “dependent time reference” (DTR), which “typically refers to a future world-state relative to the time reference of the CTP.” (p.92) He says that CTPs that involve DTR are “usually commands, requests, intention, desires, and expressions of necessity, ability, or obligation” (1985:92). Though these complements are still sentence-like in structure, the verb is exceedingly limited in form (resembling the P0, the most unmarked tense), and is marked by downstep, a drop in the tonal register, between the subject and the verb. In fact, when the subject is a ‘long’ syllable, such as the noun *móɔ* ‘child’, one hears the drop in the middle of the word, so one could more accurately state that the downstep is between the first and second mora of complement clause. Some typical CTP verbs in Ngomba are ‘wish’ *ńtsáa*, ‘like’ *ŋkɔŋ*, ‘want’ *ńdɔɔ* (lit. ‘seek’) and ‘force’ *éfyét*. In the examples (58-61) below I have placed a down arrow (↓) to indicate the drop in register:

- (58) Pe-có paŋgé lo ń-tsáa ŋgɔ Sé ↓gá móɔ mbɔ póp, ń-bɔɔ jéɔ
 C2-certain C2.woman HAB INF-wish COMP God give child to 3P INF-NEG see
 Some women (habitually) ask God to give them a child without seeing (it happen).
- (59) A ka kɔŋ ŋgɔ mó↓ɔ kwét yúu.
 3S P3 like COMP C1.child eat C7.thing
 He liked (for) the child to eat something.

⁶⁰ This is an abbreviated version of ‘house of dispute’, the expression for ‘jail’.

(60) A sé n-doo ngo mó↓o kwét yúu.
 3S PRPROG INF-seek COMP C1.child eat C7.thing
 He wants the child to eat something.

(61) N-tsónj fyét w-da ngo n↓noo sé.
 C1-thief force.P0 C1-1S COMP 1S lie ground
 The thief forced me to lie down.

Notice that Ngomba, unlike English, does not allow the deletion of the subject in the complement clause when it is co-referential with the object in matrix clause. This is especially evident in example (61), where there is a 1S object pronoun on the left side of the complementiser in the matrix clause and a 1S subject pronoun on the right side of the complementiser in the complement. Such a deletion, termed “equi-deletion” by Noonan⁶¹, is only allowed in Ngomba when the subject of the complement is co-referential with the subject of the matrix. This is what occurs in the third type of complement, the verbal noun.

VERBAL NOUN COMPLEMENTS are the most dependent on the CTP and the least sentence-like of the complements. As nouns in Ngomba, they have no possibility for tense marking⁶² and as object nouns, also take that H tone ‘glue’ mentioned in §4.1 that displaces the L tone on the noun class prefix. This displacement may occasion downstep in H tone roots⁶³. This same ‘glue’ also comes into play not only to bind the verbal noun complement as a unit to its CTP, but also within the complement ‘clause’ itself to bind any object that may be present with the verbal noun. Thus, one finds a H tone on the noun class prefix of *nepi* ‘kola nut’, the object of the verbal noun *nekwét* in (62). In the examples (62), (63) and (65) below, I have not written all the surface tones, but have indicated the H tone on the appropriate prefixes as well as downstep as they pertain to our discussion:

(62) ŋ kəŋ né-!kwét né-pi.
 1S like.P0 C5-eat C5-kola_nut
 I like eating/to eat kola nuts.

(63) N doo né-!cú mápitsɔ' nũu nu -ngəŋ -tán -mɛ-táa kɛ tyot.
 1S want.P0 C5-say C1.funny_story on affair-AMpeople-bargain-C6-market NEG C7.capital
 I wanted to tell the funny tale about the merchant/marketer without capital.

⁶¹ “Equi-deletion (equi)deletes subjects of complements when they are co-referential with some argument in the matrix” (Noonan 1985:66).

⁶² I have, however, seen something that looks like a verbal noun complement marked for negation in an alternative construction in a text about burials: *Pé tɪŋ ne-shi, ní-bɔɔ ne-shi kɛmba ne-pɔɔ pɔɔ*
 3S dig.P0 C5-tomb INF-build c5-tomb or C5-NEG build
 One dug the grave, built a tomb or didn't build (one).

⁶³ One Ngomba speaker has informed me that the verb *ŋkəŋ* followed by a verbal noun complement may occur with or without downstep on the root of the following verbal noun, while still retaining the H tone on the verbal noun prefix. When downstep does not occur there, it has a gnomic or habitual present meaning – ‘I like (as a general rule) to...’. When downstep does occur there it reads as ‘I want (at this point in time) to...’.

Verbal noun complements generally occur with the same CTPs as subjunctive complements⁶⁴. Both of the above examples would be changed to subjunctive complements if we put a different subject in the complement, e.g., 'I wanted you to tell...'

It is interesting to note that a verb may have a slightly different meaning in different constructions requiring a different type of complement. For example, the verb *m̀bíkyé* 'ask' can be put into an impersonal construction to express necessity or obligation (with a reading like 'require' or 'demand'), in which case it takes a subjunctive complement as may be seen in the example below:

- (64) É sé m̀bíkyé ngo ɔ (↓)lɔɔ ŋ-káp ŋkáɔ.
 3S PRPROG INF-demand COMP 2S seek C3-money now
 It is necessary for you to look for money now./ It requires that you look for money now.

Also, the verb *ŋ̀kwaŋe* 'think' with a verbal noun complement can express intention:

- (65) A kwaŋe né-pi ŋ̀-gesáŋ núu pɛ-saŋ p-énékwa.
 3S think C5-sow C9-corn on C2-month C2-four
 I intend to sow corn in April.

There is another type of complement listed by Noonan, PARATACTIC complement, that is also present in Ngomba. In this type, however, the 'complement' is treated as a separate assertion and so seems not to be formally knit to the verb phrase. These involve the juxtaposition of the 'complement' clause, which is in the indicative, with the 'matrix' clause without any complementisers. One may see this with a perception utterance such as in the example below:

- (66) Mo ŋ̀jéɔ ŋu a lɛɛ n-tsu nɛ-zɛ'-n-dá n-tsunjkwɛ'.
 1S see.P2 person 3S pass.P0 C9-entrance C5-outside-AMC9-house C9-evening
 I saw a person pass by the entrance to the compound last evening.

5 Verb Adjuncts

Here we deal with the MOD2 position, the verb modifiers that occur after the main verb. Here one finds modifying words (adverbs) and prepositional phrases in Ngomba that may follow the verb and that are not necessarily verbal in nature. The grammar of the language seems to treat these adjuncts, or, indeed, anything that follows the verb alike – objects, complements or adjuncts. One may draw this conclusion because the clause-final negative particle *pɔ́* is required whenever any of the above-mentioned complements or adjuncts follow the verb in a negative clause. As was stated in § 1, one finds adverbs and prepositional phrases in this position. The most common adverbs are

⁶⁴ We saw in example (41) in the section 3.2.2 that verbal complements are also possible with the verb 'to surpass' in the comparative construction. That is the one case where the verbal noun complement would not be the same subject as the 'matrix' clause.

*sɥ'ne*⁶⁵ 'well' (seen in example 3), *pɔ* 'only/just' which in fast speech becomes *ɔ*. The examples below show these adverbs in the context of a sentence:

(67) *ɔ zi' sɥ'ne.*
2S learn.P0 well
You (have) learned well.

(68) *Pɥɥ ŋ-kɔɔ laa ŋ-tɥɥ tet-n-tso, ɔ zɔŋ pɔ tɯ y-ú.*
2P C1-lame_person COND INF-stand C7.field-AM.C3-war, 2S treat only C7.head C7-2S
If you and a lame person stand on a battlefield, just look after your life.

Note in example (68) that 'only' immediately follows the verb, coming before the object.

In addition to adverbs in the post-verbal position, one also finds prepositional phrases using the preposition *né* 'with' that express manner or instrument. These are an alternative to the adverbial AUXes that occur before the main verb and serial-like constructions with 'take'.

(69) *M-vú tsuetsɥɥ ŋgɔ: «ŋcúŋelúŋ, ŋkúŋelúŋ, ŋkúŋelúŋ» né me-ŋjón⁶⁶ m-i é ka pó lón póp.*
C10-dog all-all say.F2: "chungalung, kungalung, kungalung with C6-bell C6-REL 3S P3 be C1.neck 3P
All the dogs would go, "chingaling, tingaling, tingaling" with the bells that were around their necks.

(70) *Póp zé ne-nen né me-tɥɥ*
3P begin.P0 C5-run with C6-force
They ran quickly.

(71) *A zá' m-bap né níi.*
3S cut.P0 C9-meat with C7.machete
He cut the meat with a machete.

Here are a few other expressions of manner with the preposition *né*:

<i>né tɥɥ</i>	'with power' (loudly)
<i>né jínu</i>	'with wisdom' (wisely)
<i>né kwaŋte sɥ'ne</i>	'with good reflection' (in a well-considered manner)
<i>né lɔŋ</i>	'with laziness' (lazily)
<i>né jí</i>	'with knowledge' (intentionally, knowingly)
<i>né pɔŋtúm</i>	'with a good heart' (in good faith)

The use of the preposition *né* is not limited to manner or instrument but is also used to mark other oblique arguments such as location/direction, IO and direct objects that have been demoted to oblique argument status with the promotion of the indirect object (dative shift). In examples (72) and (73) it is used as a directional, in example (74) more as a locative. In example (75) it is used to mark an IO and in (76) to mark a demoted DO.

(72) *ŋgúɔ' gɥ né n-je' y-ε.*
Ngouo go.P0 to C9-compound C9-3S
Ngouo went to his compound.

⁶⁵ This appears to be derived from a verb, as indicated by what looks like the suffix *-ne*, which is commonly used to derive an 'adjective' from a stative verb. The lexical verb, however, is not in my database.

⁶⁶ Actually, this refers to a "juju collar" that has small bells on it.

- (73) P-uu fú né gó?
C2-2P come_from from where
Where did you(pl) come from?
- (74) Mɛ-kát ntón n-dón né nɛ-gwaŋ - m-bap.
C6-light-skinned_foreigner whistle.F2 C9-horn at C5-market_section-AMC9-meat
The official blows the horn at the meat section of the market.
- (75) Gɛ h-doo mɔŋ-go' -luŋ - n-zwé w-aa,
go.IMP INF-look C1.little-stone -AM.C7-flat_grinding_stone-AM.C1-wife C1-1S
Go look for the little grinding stone of my wife's grinding set,

ŋ-gá mbɔ̃ mɔ , n-ji ŋ gá ŋ-káp y-ú né gwu.
INF-give to 1S C9-time 1S give C9-money C9-2S to 2S
give it to me, then I may give your money to you.
- (76) Sé gá w-áa né ŋu!
C7.God give.IMP C1-1S with C1.person
God give me a person! (a cry for someone to help)

Note that the preposition *mbɔ̃* 'to/for' is also used for indirect objects (as the first 'to' in example 75), but not for direct objects that have been demoted.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have seen that Ngomba has a rather fixed order of constituents in the VP. We have also noted that T/A/M and Negation occur, not on the main verb, per se, but at a particular position in the VP, at or near the beginning. We have seen that one of those positions is MOD1, in which auxiliary verbs with adverbial functions occur, what Bamgbose (1974) terms "modifying verbs" in serial constructions of West African languages. Like many African languages, Ngomba is what I loosely call a 'verbing' language because it employs stative verbs or forms derived from stative verbs for adjectival (even comparative adjectives) and adverbial functions and also uses some verbs for conjunctive functions.

In this paper, we have also seen that Ngomba, while it is not a switch-reference chaining language, does like to build chains of verbs on a variety of levels – between T/A AUXes, adverbial AUXes and the main verb within a simple VP, between verbs in a 'complex' VP (i.e., a serial-like construction) and between clauses in SS verb chains. There are sometimes complex chains where all three types of chains are present! Ngomba resorts to forming SS verb chains not only when there are a series of events with the same subject, but also when there are more than two direct objects in one verb's event frame. We have seen that the formal glue for all these types of chains is the INF prefix.

Finally, we have seen in this paper that there is another type of glue binding O to V. Objects are closely tied to the verb as evidenced by the presence of a tonal 'glue' and the behaviour of object

pronouns, i.e., the phonological processes at work there. This H tone glue not only binds object NP to verb, but also binds the verbal noun complement to its CTP and any object that may occur within such a complement to the verbal noun. We also saw in these evidences a couple points of similarity between VP and NP in Ngomba.

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