



Mandenkan

Bulletin semestriel d'études linguistiques mandé

51 | 2014

Grammatical Sketch of Beng

Clause structure

Section 12

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/mandenkan/568>

DOI: 10.4000/mandenkan.568

ISSN: 2104-371X

Publisher

Llacan UMR 8135 CNRS/Inalco

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 June 2014

Number of pages: 60-89

ISSN: 0752-5443

Electronic reference

Denis Paperno, "Clause structure", *Mandenkan* [Online], 51 | 2014, Online since 01 June 2014, connection on 03 March 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/mandenkan/568> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/mandenkan.568>

This text was automatically generated on 3 March 2021.



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Clause structure

Section 12

Denis Paperno

12.1. Tense, Aspect, Modality, Polarity

12.1.1. Polarity

- 1 The clause-final particle *é* is the default negation marker in Beng. The only sentence type that doesn't use it is the identity statement, marked by clause-final particle *è* in the affirmative polarity and by *n̄í* in the negative polarity.
- 2 In a sequence of two or more negative particles *é*, which happens when both a matrix clause and its embedded clause are negative, the last one is replaced by an allomorph *n̄í* (103c).
- 3 Apart from the negation marker, polarity is also marked within subject pronouns, where it is expressed cumulatively with TAM. Tables 4 and 5 (section 5.3) indicate which pronoun series is used in what type of sentence, depending on polarity.
- 4 Finally, sometimes the verb form itself signals the presence of negation, thereby adding the third marker of polarity in addition to the negative particle and the pronoun series. Example (103a) exhibits all three exponents of polarity at once:

(103a)	<i>Mǎ</i>	<i>n̄í-sà</i>	<i>é</i>
	1SG:PST-	come-PrfNeg	NEG
	'I have not come'.		

(103b)	<i>í</i>	<i>n̄í-n̄á</i>
	1SG:PST+	come-PRF

	'I have come'.
--	----------------

(103c)	Mà	pé	[kē	mà	nú	É]	n̄i
	1SG:PST+3	say:L	that	1SG:PST-	come:L	NEG	NEG
	'I did not say that I did not come'.						

- 5 Out of the sixteen logically possible verb forms (8 TAM values X 2 polarity values), there are only six distinct finite forms. Just the four affixal ones invite some substantive labels. The remaining two are called the 'base form' and the 'low tone form', based on their formal properties. The usage of the six verb forms is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Usage of finite verb forms

TAM value	affirmative		negative	
preterite	low tone	∨̇	low tone	∨̇
habitual	low tone	∨̇	low tone	∨̇
conditional	base	V	low tone	∨̇
optative	base	V	low tone	∨̇
future	base	V	base	V
progressive	progressive			V-léló
perfect	affirmative perfect	V-nā	negative perfect	V-sà
stative	stative			V-lè

- 6 Beng has the so-called negative concord whereby words translating negative indefinites require negative polarity marking of the clause. In Beng, all such negative elements contain a reduplicated element. They include: *pōpō* 'nothing' (reduplication of *pō* 'thing'); *kèkè* 'no' (reduplicated form that does not have a non-reduplicated counterpart), and finally a construction that involves reduplicating a noun with the word *tó* 'the rest' between the two copies: *sòḡ tó sòḡ* 'nobody' (from *sòḡ* 'person'), *pìḡ tó pìḡ* 'not a weed' (from *pìḡ* 'weed'). Examples:

(104a)	ŋā	sòḡ	tó	sòḡ	yē-lè	é.
	1SG:ST-	person	rest	person	see-RES	NEG
	'I see nobody'.					

(104b)	Mǎ	pǐjǐ	tó	pǐjǐ	sò	é.
	1SG:HAB-	weed	rest	weed	chew:L	NEG
'I don't eat anything' (<i>literally</i> I don't eat a weed.)						

(105)	Mǎ	drē	wò	yrámǎ	kèkè	wó	é.
	1SG:PST-	work	do:L	time	no	IN	NEG
'I never worked'.							

12.1.2. Tense and mood

- 7 Mood in independent sentences encodes modality, i.e. the relation of the situation described in the sentence to the actual world. Beng has a relatively limited modality spectrum, distinguishing the indicative (for situations that hold in the actual world) and the optative (for situations that the speaker considers necessary or desirable). Imperative in Beng is minimally formally distinguishable from the optative (see 12.1.3). In addition to indicative and optative, Beng also has conditional mood, which is used only in embedded clauses.
- 8 Each statement has a time reference point, call it T. Depending on T's position on the time scale relative to the utterance time, we can talk about the past, the present, or the future time reference.
- 9 Only verb clauses express the full spectrum of TAM values. Adjective, adverbial, existential, and presentative types of clauses express only indicative, and, along with certain aspectual values in verbed clauses, are interpreted with present time reference by default.
- 10 When it is necessary to indicate past tense, one can use the clause-initial temporal shift marker *nǎ* which replaces default present time reference with past time reference; one consultant also accepted the future interpretation of temporal shift:

(106)	Nǎ	ŋ-ó	pɔ̄	lí-óíó.
	DT	1SG-ST+	thing	buy-PROG
'I was buying'.				

(107)	Nǎ	ŋ	pɔ̄	çì.
	DT	1SG:HAB+	thing	cut:L
'I used to mow'.				

(108)	Nḡ	mḡḡ	ḡ.
	DT	1SG:EMPH	ḡTO
'It was me'.			

(109)	Nḡ	ḡ	gḡḡ.
	DT	1SG:HAB+	beautiful
'I was handsome'.			

- 11 However, the temporal shift marker is not obligatory for changing the time reference of sentences with default present interpretation. If the context explicitly refers to the time, this can suffice to shift the time reference of a statement, cf.:

(110)	Gḡmlḡ	ó	gbḡ	gbó.
	chimpanzee	ST+	village	old
'Chimpanzee used to live in the village' (literally 'Lomg ago, chimpanzee is in the village').				

(111)	ḡó	klóó	nḡ,	ḡ	dā	ò	gbéné	zḡ	fḡ	sḡkpá.
	1SG:ST+	little	when	1SG	mother	3SG:HAB+	manioc	pound:L	day	every
'When I was little my mother would pound manioc every day'.										

- 12 In order to express various temporal and aspectual meanings in sentences that are normally expressed verblessly, they have to be paraphrased using copular verbs *yrä* 'to be located, to take place' (corresponding to existential and adverbial clauses) and *lḡ* 'to be, to make', corresponding to adjectival and identification clauses:

(112a)	Mḡḡ	ḡ.
	1SG:EMPH	this.is
'This is me' (presentative).		

(112b)	ò-ó	lḡ	mḡḡ
	3SG-ST+	COP	1SG:EMPH
'This will be me'. (copula verb)			

(113a)	ḡ	gēḡ.
	1SG:HAB+	beautiful
'I am handsome' (adjectival).		

(113b)	ḡ	lē	gēḡ.
	1SG:HAB+	COP	beautiful
'Let me be handsome!' (copula verb).			

(113c)	ḡó	pōú.
	1SG:ST+	field
'I am in the field' (adverbial).		

(113d)	ḡó	yrä	pōú.
	1SG:ST+	take.place	field
'I will be in the field' (copula verb).			

- 13 The copula verb *lē* 'to be' has an idiosyncratic peculiarity of tense interpretation, shared by no other verb, using the preterite form to express present tense:

(114)	ḡ	lē	bēḡ.
	1SG:PST+	COP:L	Beng
'I am Beng'. (note the past tense form with present meaning)			

12.1.3. TAM values and their expression

- 14 Verbal sentences formally distinguish eight TAM values, briefly characterized below. Table 9 gives a TAMP paradigm of a sentence along with structural formulae of TAMP constructions.

Notes. PST – preterite series, ST – stative series, HAB – habitual series, CND – conditional series; '+' – affirmative polarity series, '-' – negative polarity series; V – verb stem, V:L – low tone form of the verb (lexical tone changes to low).

Table 9. TAMP paradigm of the sentence 'you play drum' ('you see drum' in stative)

	affirmative	scheme	negative	scheme
preterite	m̄j m̄l̄à d̄è	PST+, V:L	m̄j̄ m̄l̄à d̄è é	PST-, V:L
perfect	m̄j m̄l̄à d̄è n̄ā	PST+, V n̄ā	m̄j̄ m̄l̄à d̄è sà é	PST-, V sà
stative	(m̄j̄ó m̄l̄à yē.l̄è)	ST+, V.l̄è	(m̄j̄ā m̄l̄à yē.l̄è é)	ST-, V.l̄è
progressive	m̄j̄ó m̄l̄à d̄èÈlo	ST+, V.[l̄]Èló	m̄j̄ā m̄l̄à d̄èÈló é	ST-, V.[l̄]Èló
future	m̄j̄ó m̄l̄à d̄ē	ST+, V	m̄j̄ā m̄l̄à d̄ē é	ST-, V
optative	(m̄j̄) m̄l̄à d̄ē	HAB+, V	m̄j̄̄ m̄l̄à d̄ē é	= preterite
conditional	m̄j̄̄ m̄l̄à d̄ē	CND+, V	m̄j̄̄ m̄l̄à d̄ē é	= habitual
habitual	m̄j̄̄ m̄l̄à d̄è	HAB+, V:L	m̄j̄̄ m̄l̄à d̄è é	HAB-, V:L

- 15 **Preterite** has past time reference, with perfective or habitual aspectual meaning. Beng does not mark telicity.

(115)	ŋ̄	zá	p̄è.
	1SG:PST+	matter	say:L
'I said something / I used to say something'.			

- 16 **Progressive** refers to an ongoing activity and has default present time reference:

(116)	ŋ̄-ó	kálè	lú-óló.
	1SG -ST+	peanuts	buy-PROG
'I am buying peanuts'.			

- 17 A progressive statement accompanied by a clause-initial marker *ŋ̄ḡó* produces the aspectual value of **cancelled result**, an unexpected derivative of progressive:

(117)	ŋ̄ḡó	ŋ̄rā-ló.
	NGO	1SG:go-PROG
'I almost went'.		

(118)	Lā	ó	bā	ná	ǰǰǒ	ɣlūēlélǰ	nùǰ	ɣò-ó	sròbǎi-léló.
	rain	ST+	fall	TOP	NGO	worm	PL	3PL-ST+	appear-PROG
'When it was raining the worms almost appeared' ('they started to appear but they can't be seen anymore').									

- 18 The same element *ǰǰǒ* marks the main clause of counterfactual conditional statements. For example, (119) contains no irrealis marker besides *ǰǰǒ*:

(119)	Lā	ó	bā	déē	ǰǰǒ	ɣlūēlélǰ	nùǰ	ɣò-ó	sròbǎi-léló.
	rain	ST+	fall	if	NGO	worm	PL	3PL-ST+	appear-PROG
'If it were raining now, the worms would have been appearing'.									

- 19 Expression of cancelled result, or ‘antiresultative’, by means of progressive (even in combination with an additional marker *ǰǰǒ*) is typologically unique and deserves explanation, which shall likely involve the fact that progressive, unlike other aspectual meanings, has no implications about the result of an action, e.g. “John crossed the street” implies “John has been on the other side of the street” but “John was crossing the street” does not have such an implication (John might have changed his mind and never finished crossing). Usually, antiresultative include past, perfect, or perfective forms, cf. especially examples in Šožitajšvili (1998: 92-105).
- 20 **Habitual** marks regularly repeated events or stable states, and has default time reference to the present.

(120)	ǰ	ɣǰǰ	ǎi.
	1SG:HAB+	weed	cut:L
'I (usually) mow'.			

- 21 **Future** has future time reference and is compatible with any aspectual meaning.

(121)	ɣ-ó	ǰó.
	1SG:ST+	talk[BSQ]
'I will talk'.		

- 22 **Stative**, or **resultative**, has default time reference to the present and refers to a state. For most verbs this is the resulting state of the event named by the verb; see more on the stative below.

(122)	Jrǎ	ò-ó	dĕ-lĕ.
	lion	3SG-ST+	kill-RES
'The lion is killed'.			

23 **Conditional** is used in certain cases in temporal and conditional subordinate clauses, see 13.5 for more detail.

(123)	Mĭn	mĭ	wō-lĕj	ćí	ná	mĭ	wàj	yè.
	2SG:CND	2SG	hand-child	cut[BSQ]	TOP	2SG:HAB+	blood	see:L
'When you cut your finger you see blood'.								

24 **Optative** expresses a wish when used in an independent clause:

(124)	ĵ	wlá.
	1SG:HAB+	laugh[BSQ]
'Let me laugh!'		

25 **Imperative** is largely formally identical to the optative:

(125)	Kà	drŭ.
	2PL:HAB+	walk[BSQ]
'Go for a walk!' (to more than one addressee or to an elderly person)		

26 There are however minor differences in subject pronoun realization between the imperative and the optative. Indeed, imperatives are peculiar compared to all other TAM values. First, in the imperative the 2SG subject pronoun is omitted. Second, 1PL imperatives distinguish the number of the addressee. When addressing a single person urging her to do something together with the speaker, one uses the regular 1PL pronoun *āĵ* (which one could also call 1st person dual). When the speaker addresses more than one person, or one elderly person in a polite way, Beng uses a combination of 1PL and 2PL pronouns *āĵ kà* instead of a single subject pronoun to mark a request to something together with the speaker:

(126)	Āĵ	drŭ.
	1PL:HAB+	walk:L

	'Let's go for a walk!' (to one person)
--	--

(127)	ĀŋꞨ	kà	drǔ
	1PL:HAB+	2PL:HAB+	walk:L
	'Let's go for a walk together!' (to more than one addressee or to an elderly person).		

27 **Perfect** has default time reference to the present and expresses perfect aspect (similar to the English Present Perfect).

(128)	ŋ	nǔ-nǔ
	1SG:PST+	come-PRF
	'I have come'.	

12.1.4. Stative vs. Perfect

28 **Stative**, or resultative, refers to a state; usually but not always this state results from an event denoted by the verb. **Perfect** refers to a recent event that hasn't yet lost its relevance to the speaker; usually the resulting state of that event is still present. So stative and perfect are applicable to similar classes of situations, and are interchangeable in many contexts without affecting truth conditions. Still, the two constructions have different semantics, and therefore also have some contrasting properties.

29 First, the perfect aspect refers to an event leading to the result state and combines with modifiers that describe that event (129); stative/resultative cannot (130):

(129)	Yrí	lè	ó	drà-nǔ	gblē.
	tree	DEF	3SG:PST+	fall-PRF	yesterday
	'The tree fell yesterday' (and is still lying on the ground).				

(130)	Yrí	lè	ò-ó	drà-lè	(*gblē).
	tree	DEF	3SG-ST+	fall-RES	yesterday
	'The tree is fallen' (*yesterday).				

30 Second, perfect and stative have pragmatic differences. Perfect is not used if the event of entering the resulting state is not relevant. For example, the verb 'to know' is usually used in the stative, since the event of getting to know something is comparatively

rarely at issue. In an evidential scenario where the occurrence of an event is inferred from the resulting state (‘the tree obviously fell as evidenced by the fact that it’s lying on the ground’), again stative is used since the resulting state is more salient than the event itself. Similarly, stative/resultative is used to describe present results of distant events that are no longer relevant themselves. However, if the result of an event is the very fact of its occurrence (‘Yes I have been to Paris’), the event can be relevant for an indefinitely long time, an in this case perfect (the so called experiential perfect), not stative, is used.

- 31 Third, while every verb can be used in the perfect, not all verbs occur in the stative. Verbs that enter the causative-inchoative alternation (see 12.2.2) are used in the stative intransitively but not transitively. Perfect is formed regardless of transitivity, compare:

(131a)	ŋ̃	ŋlū	trī-nā.
	1SG:PST+	head	blacken-PRF
‘I have colored my hair black’.			

(131b)	ŋ̃	dròŋí	ó	trī-nā.
	1SG	shirt	3SG:PST+	blacken-PRF
‘My shirt has gotten black (dirty)’.				

(132a)	*ŋ-ó	ŋlū	trī-lè.
	1SG-ST+	head	blacken-RES
(‘I have a black head’.)			

(132b)	^{OK} ŋ̃	dròŋí	ò-ó	trī-lè.
	1SG	shirt	3SG-ST+	blacken-RES
‘My shirt is black (dirty)’.				

(133)	ŋ̃	klé	drà-nā.
	1SG:PST+	bag	drop-PRF
‘I have dropped a bag’.			

(134)	ŋ̃	klé	ó	dra-̀-̀-na-̀.
	1SG	bag	3SG:PST+	drop-PRF

	'My bag has dropped'.
--	-----------------------

(135a)	*ŋ-ó	klÉ	drà-lÊ.
	1SG-ST+	bag	drop-RES
	('I have a bag dropped'.)		

(135b)	^{OK} ŋ	klÉ	ò-ó	drà-lÊ.
	1SG	bag	3SG-ST+	drop-RES
	'My bag is lying dropped'.			

- 32 These restrictions have a simple semantic explanation if we assume that a clause describing an eventuality can't include among its syntactic arguments one that is not a semantic participant of the eventuality. Stative/resultative, as already mentioned, denotes a state. States that the causative-inchoative verbs introduce have only one semantic participant, the patient, expressed by the subject of the inchoative use of the verb and the object of the causative use. The event leading to that state can have either one participant, the patient, in the intransitive use or two, the patient and the causer, in the transitive use. In other words, in causative-inchoative verbs there is an asymmetry between the event and its resulting state: while the event can include the causer among the semantic participants, the result state normally won't. This lines up perfectly with the facts in (131-135): the stative, denoting a state, can only combine with the patient but not the causer that is not a participant of the state, so only intransitive usages are allowed. The perfect, which refers to an event, can combine with both participants of the event, so it is compatible with transitive uses.
- 33 As I just argued, admissibility of stative has semantic explanation; transitivity of the verb is a factor only as long as it correlates with the event structure. Indeed, stative construction is perfectly legitimate if both the subject and the object of the verb correspond to participants of the resulting state:

(136a)	ŋ-ó	mī	dō-lÈ.
	1SG-ST+	2SG	know-RES
	'I know you'.		

(136b)	ŋ-ó	mī	yē-lÈ.
	1SG-ST+	2SG	see-RES
	'I see you'.		

(137a)	ò-ó	ī	ḏī-nè.
	3SG-ST+	1SG	send.courier-RES
	'I am his courier'.		

(137b)	ŋ-ó	léj	dòdó-lè.
	1SG-ST+	child	put.on.back-RES
	'I have a child on my back'.		

34 Conversely, if a verb is intransitive but atelic, i.e. does not come with a natural resulting state, it does not form the stative:

(138)	*ŋ-ó	dru-lè.
	1SG-ST+	walk-RES
	*('I am walked'.)	

35 One more class of cases where the stative of a transitive verb is acceptable includes resulting states that are not simply caused by an agent's action but are maintained with the agent's involvement, cf. :

(139a)	ò-ó	à	mèlálá-lè.
	3SG-ST+	3SG	fall-RES
	'He is keeping him on the ground' ('he is keeping him fallen')		

36 compare the simple preterite construction of the same verb :

(139b)	ó	à	mèlálá.
	3SG:PST+	3SG	fall
	'He felled him on the ground'.		

12.1.5. Periphrastic expression of tense and aspect

37 In addition to the fully grammaticalized constructions for TAM values described earlier, Beng also has periphrastic ways of expressing progressive and future tense. The alternative progressive construction consists of the stative series of pronouns followed

by a verb phrase where the verb bears the event nominalization suffix and is accompanied by the postposition *mà*. This “progressive II” is structurally similar to the “progressive I” construction, with the difference that it employs postposition *mà*, not *ló* as the standard progressive I does. Another difference is that progressive I has phonological peculiarities (see 6.4) that no longer allow to clearly separate it into a combination of a nominalized verb form with a postposition; indeed, speakers do not perceive the *mà* progressive form as one word but as two (*pēlè mà* ‘saying’), the way they perceive the *ló* progressive form (*pēléló*). There is a subtle semantic difference between progressive I and progressive II: the latter tends to imply that the eventuality has been going on for a while, so it could be labelled ‘continual progressive’, for example:

(140)	ò-ó	<i>drē̄</i>	<i>wō-lè</i>	<i>mà</i> .
	3SG-ST+	work	do-NMLZ	CONT
	‘He is working/ he has been working’.			

- 38 Periphrastic future with intentional flavor, similar to the English *to be going to* construction, is expressed by combinations of verbs *tá* ‘to go’ or *nū̄* ‘to come’ and the goal converb:

(141)	<i>Nrá-ló</i>	<i>dē̄</i> ⁷	<i>čí-yà</i> .
	1SG:ST+:go-PROG	(kind of a tree)	cut-Gl
	‘I am going to cut down the <i>dē̄</i> ⁷ tree’.		

- 39 The auxiliary verb in the periphrastic future construction varies, producing slightly different semantics.
- The verb *nū̄* ‘to come’ in periphrastic future implies that the action will take place where the subject is now; the verb *tá* ‘to go’ implies that the action will take place elsewhere.
 - The auxiliary can be in the progressive form or in the future. Progressive indicates the intention to start the action immediately, while the future form signals that the action would be started in the future.

12.2. Argument structure of verbal clauses

12.2.1. Subject

- 40 The syntactic subject in Beng has several features that distinguish it from other NP positions.
- The subject NP is doubled by subject series of pronouns.
 - The subject binds reflexive pronouns in direct or indirect object positions:

(142)	ò	à-drà	bò	fià	sòj	sē	mà.
	3SG:HAB+	3SG-Refl	raise:L	better	person	all	SUPER
	'He believes himself to be better than all the people'.						

(143)	Mj	vj	m̄j-drà	nj.
	2SG:HAB+	love:L	2SG:Refl	BENEF
	'You love yourself'.			

- The sentential subject binds the subject of the goal converb (used only with a few motion verbs, see 6.5):

(144a)	Ij	nú	drù-yâ.
	1SG:PST+	come:L	walk-GL
	'I came for a walk'.		

(144b)	*Ij	drē	wò	drù-yâ.
	1SG:PST+	work	do:L	walk-GL
	(*I worked for a walk.)			

- The sentential subject controls the null subject participant of verb nominalization with certain matrix predicates:

(145)	Mj	pō	dè-lé	ɲl̄b̄i.
	2sgPst+	thing	cook-NMLZ	begin:L
	'You began to cook'.			

- The sentential subject controls the null subject of the locative nominalization used as a converb of simultaneous action:

(146)	∅ _{i/ij}	Drē	wō-yà	ná	ɲ-ó _i	ɲò _j	yè.
		work	do-PLC	TOP	1SG-ST+	3PL	see:L
	'I saw them while working' (I, not them, was working).						

- 41 When the subject of the converb is not null, it does not have to be coreferent to the sentential subject:

(147)	ŋò _j	drĕ̃	wō-yà	ná	má _i	ŋò _j	yè.
	3PL	work	do-PLC	TOP	1SG:PST+	3PL	see:L
'I saw them while they were working'.							

(148)	ŋò _i	trí-yá	ná	ŋ-ó	dǎ	ŋò _i	ló	n̄.
	3PL	return-PLC	TOP	1SG-ST+	find[BSQ]	3PL	SUPER	here
'When they will be going back I will find them here'.								

12.2.2. Direct object and lability in Beng

- 42 Direct object in Beng always precedes the verb and can never be omitted. A transitive verb requires a direct object in the form of an overt NP, an object pronoun, or both. Direct object is equally obligatory with all derivatives of transitive verbs (goal converb, agent nominalization, nominalizations in *-ya* and *-lɛ*). If the object is semantically underspecified or irrelevant (as in *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*), one has to employ in the direct object position semantically impoverished nouns *s̄ḡḡ* 'person' (for animate objects, including people and animals), *p̄* 'thing' (for inanimate objects), *zá* 'matter' (for abstract objects). These nouns function essentially as indefinite pronouns. Examples:

(149)	ŋ-ó	p̄	blē.
	1SG-ST+	thing	eat
'I will eat'.			

(150)	ŋò	s̄ḡḡ	dè.
	3PL:HAB	person	kill:L
'They kill'.			

(151)	ó	zá	pē.
	3SG:PST+	matter	say:L
'He said (something)'.			

(152)	Dé	fĕ	ó	pō	cì	ī	bèsé	è	lō	ná?
	who	Rel	3SG:PST+	thing	cut:L	1SG	machete	DEF	with	TOP
'Who has been cutting with my machete?'										

- 43 With verbs *cá* ‘to watch’, *yē* ‘to see’, *klū* ‘to dig’, *klūklū* ‘to dig, to clean up’, *túà* ‘to leave’, and *wlā* ‘to sweep’, the semantically impoverished object can be expressed not only with the generic *pō* ‘thing’ but also with *blī* ‘place’ (*pō* / *blī yē* ‘to see (something)’, *pō* / *blī cá* ‘to watch (something)’, *pō* / *blī wlā* ‘to sweep (someplace)’); native speakers find no semantic contrast between the variants with *pō* and *blī* used as an underspecified object with these verbs.
- 44 Beng has a handful of A-labile verbs, i.e. verbs that occur both transitively and intransitively without any change in the semantic role of the subject. Here is a list of such verbs with examples of optional objects in parentheses: (*drĕ*) *blā* ‘to stop (work)’; a recent Baule borrowing (*pō*) *fōtú* ‘to give advice’; (*sòŋ*) *kákà* ‘to cause itching (in someone)’; (*pō*) *lāmō* ‘to step over (something)’, (*zá*) *zázà* ‘to argue (on something)’. All of these verbs except for the borrowing *fōtú*, show A-lability in only one word sense out of several. Two other lexically A-labile verbs of Beng are (*pō*) *klúá* ‘to steal (something)’ and (*sòŋ*) *pōpò* ‘to ask (somebody)’.
- 45 Verbs *wlá* ‘to laugh’ and *wlāwlā* ‘to smile’ are also A-labile, with the added direct object expressing the semantic role of stimulus (‘to laugh **at someone**’, ‘to smile **at someone**’).
- 46 A-lability is a regular property of manner of motion verbs in Beng. In their transitive use, the direct object takes the semantic role of path, as in the following example:

(153)	ó	pōú	drù.
	3SG:PST+	field	walk
'He walked through a field'			

where *pōú* is a direct object; compare

(154)	ó	drú	pōú.
	3SG:PST+	walk	field
'He walked in a field'			

where *pōú* is a sentential modifier.

The verb *gbā* ‘to give’ is A-labile in passive usages, see below.

- 47 There is another group of predicates, in addition to the verbs mentioned above, that exhibit a superficially A-labile pattern but differ in internal structure. Predicates of this group are idiomatic phrases that consist of a verb and noun in the direct object position, with an optional object filling essentially the noun’s possessor slot. Such

complex verbs include: (X) *gblóǵ dǎ* ‘to pay a fine (optional object: with X)’ (the word *gblóǵ* is never used outside of this expression; *dǎ* is a polysemous verb which participates in many idiomatic expressions), (X) *kǎǵ bō* ‘to revenge (for X)’ (*kǎǵ* ‘revenge’, *bō* ‘to take out’), (X) *yé súá* ‘to pray (for someone)’ (*yé* ‘mouth’, *súá* ‘splash’). In all of those the semantic object is optional, for instance:

(155)	ó	(à	dē	lè)	kǎǵ	bò.
	3SG:PST+	3SG	father	DEF	revenge	V:L
‘He took revenge (for his father)’.						

48 In contrast to the limited scope of A-lability in Beng, P-lability, i.e. the alternation between the subject of an intransitive verb and the direct object of a transitive usage of the same verb expressing the same semantic role, is widespread. Most verbs that can have transitive uses (457 out of 553¹) can also have intransitive uses characterized by P-lability. Semantically, there are three types of relation between the transitive and the intransitive usages:

- reflexive: *ó lèǵ ñì zró.* ‘He washed the child’. – *ó zró.* ‘He washed’;
- (de)causative: *ó kpǎǵ ñì tà.* ‘He opened the door’. – *Kpǎǵ ñì ó tà.* ‘The door opened’;
- passive: *ó jrǎ lè dè.* ‘He killed the lion’. – *Jrǎ lè ó dè.* ‘The lion was killed’.²

49 The distinction between passive and decausative can be hard to draw in practice: passive (*Jrǎ lè ó dè.* ‘The lion was killed’) implies involvement of an agentive participant³, while decausative (‘the door opened’) does not imply the presence of an agent or even the fact of causation. But whether a statement logically implies a cause or an underlying agent’s activity can be a hard judgment.

50 The boundary between decausative and reflexive is also somewhat blurry (Letučij 2006: 25). And indeed, under closer consideration reflexive usages of P-labile verbs reveal the availability of decausative or passive interpretation; for example, the paradigmatic case of reflexive interpretation, sentence *ó zró*, normally interpreted as ‘S/he washed (himself/herself)’, can also mean ‘She was washed (by someone)’, and is used with this meaning when referring to ritual bathing of girls during initiation.

51 To summarize, the *a priori* distinction between the semantic types of P-lability turns out to be quite blurry in reality. It would be desirable to treat the three variants semantically in a uniform way as the alternation between ‘S does V to O’ and ‘V occurs to O’, and to leave to pragmatics the subtle questions on whether ‘V occurs to O’ implies an S that does V (passive), and whether that S is identical to O (reflexive).

12.2.3. Secondary object in Beng in the light of the typology of ditransitive constructions

52 Ditransitive constructions, i.e. clauses that realize a predicate with its agent, recipient, and theme (object of transfer), have not been subject to typological scrutiny until recently. I rely here on the terminology introduced in (Haspelmath 2006a). Haspelmath distinguishes three strategies of ditransitive marking: indirective (theme is marked as a direct object, recipient as an indirect object), secundative (recipient is marked like a

direct object, theme as a ‘secondary’ object), and neutral (recipient and theme have the same marking). The main ditransitive strategy in Beng is secundative: the recipient takes the direct object position, and the theme (object of transfer) occupies a special postverbal secondary object position. The secondary object is a noun phrase, never followed by a postposition or a doubling pronoun, which immediately follows the verb. Unlike the secondary object of the ditransitive construction, other indirect objects are marked with postpositions. Most often the secondary object is a dependent of the verb *gbā* ‘to give’, but at least two other verbs, *bli* и *pòpò*, are also attested in the secundative ditransitive construction, compare:

(156a)	Ó	mī	gbà	yí.
	3SG:PST+	2SG	give:L	water
‘He gave you water’.				

(156b)	Ó	ḡ	pòpò	wálí
	3SG:PST+	1SG	ask:L	money
‘He asked me for money’.				

(156c)	Mī	à	bli	mlĕ.
	2SG:PST+	3SG	bury:L	chicken
‘You sacrificed a chicken for his funeral’ (literally ‘You buried him with a chicken’).				

- 53 From the viewpoint of case and adposition marking (so-called ‘flagging’), the ditransitive construction in Beng is neutral: both the recipient and the theme are zero-marked. This is a strong areal trait of languages of sub-Saharan Africa (Haspelmath 2005a).
- 54 From the viewpoint of word order and pronominal agreement (‘indexing’) this construction is secundative: the preverbal recipient is doubled by object pronouns like preverbal direct objects of transitive verbs, while the ditransitive theme is never doubled with a pronoun:

(157)	Ó	Kòlā	(à)	gbà	lóklor	bi	lè	(*à).
	3SG:PST+	Kola	3SG	give:L	child	this	DEF	3SG
‘He gave this child to Kola’.								

- 55 Beng, like the 22 languages from Haspelmath’s sample with secundative indexing (Haspelmath 2006a: 12), has no agreement with the theme, not distinctive agreement marking that would contrast with that of the recipient.
- 56 Besides, the recipient, like the object of a typical transitive verb, has to be overtly expressed, while the object of transfer can be omitted. Moreover, personal pronouns, even emphatic ones, are banned from the secondary object position:

(158)	ó	āī	gbà	(*ā-yā).
	3SG:PST+	1PL	give	3SG-EMPH
	‘He gave it to us’ (pronoun after the verb is degraded).			

- 57 Compare the superficially similar postverbal position of nominal predicate with the copular verb *lē* ‘to be, to make’ where emphatic pronouns can be used:

(159)	ó	lé	ā-yā.
	3SG:PST+	COP:L	3SG-FOC
	‘It was him’ (postverbal pronoun can’t be omitted).		

- 58 In case it is necessary to name the object of transfer with a pronoun, it can only be done periphrastically, in a structure that closely resembles one found in Baule (Creissels, Kouadio 1977):

(160)	ó	kā	srà	ó	ī	dā	gbà.
	3SG:PST	2PL	take:L	3SG:PST	1SG	mother	give:L
	‘He gave you (plural) to my mother’ (literally: ‘He took you, he gave to my mother’).						

- 59 The fact that personal pronouns can’t be secondary objects contrasts them with non-pronominal NPs. In a sense, Beng shows “split ditransitivity”. As in the other cases of split ditransitivity, as well as in many cases of split transitivity, it is the definiteness scale that determines the split, personal pronouns being an extreme point on the scale.
- 60 Typologically, the combination of secundative strategy for pronominal elements (ban on pronouns in the secondary object position contrasts with the direct object position in transitive and ditransitive clauses) and a neutral strategy (in terms of adposition marking) for full NPs is in accordance with the universal tendency: higher ranked elements from the definiteness scale tend towards more secundative marking and lower ranked elements gravitate towards more indirective marking (Haspelmath 2006b: 15). For instance, Maltese uses the neutral strategy for personal pronouns, and the indirective strategy for other NPs (Comrie 2004). Another example is French that

employs the neutral strategy for locutor pronouns (*me, te, nous, vous*) and indirective marking for all other elements (*le:lui, les:leur, NP:à + NP*).

- 61 The ditransitive construction alternates in a way that closely resembles P-lability. However, it is the secondary object, not the direct object, that gets promoted into the subject position. The direct object under such a ‘passive’ transformation is optional:

(161)	<i>Wálí</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>ó</i>	<i>(mī)</i>	<i>gbà.</i>
	money	DEF	3SG:PST+	2SG	give:L
	‘The money was given (to you)’.				

12.2.4. Nominal predicate

- 62 Immediately following the main verb, one can also find the secondary predicate, expressed by an NP, an emphatic (focus) pronoun, an adjective phrase, or a stative verb form. Semantically, a nominal predicate can either depend on the copula verb *lè* ‘to be, to make’ or be a secondary predicate:

(162)	<i>ó</i>	<i>lé</i>	<i>ñ</i>	<i>dē.</i>
	3SG:PST+	COP	1SG	father
	‘This is my father’.			

(163)	<i>ó</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>māñ.</i>
	3SG :PST+	COP	1SG:EMPH
	‘It was me’.		

(164)	<i>ó</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>lè</i>	<i>kló.</i>
	3SG :PST+	3SG	COP	little
	‘He made it little’.			

(165)	<i>ó</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>yè</i>	<i>yātró-lè.</i>
	3SG :PST+	3SG	see	sit-RES
	‘He saw him sitting’.			

(166)	<i>ó</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>lù</i>	<i>klū-pò.</i>
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	3SG :PST+	3SG	buy	dig- MEN
	'He bought this to dig' (literally 'as a digging tool').			

- 63 The subject of the nominal predicate is always coreferent to the direct object or to the intransitive subject of the main verb.

12.2.5. Sentential modifiers and arguments with postpositions

- 64 Many verbs (also adjectives in the comparative construction, see the section on adjectival clauses in 12.4) govern indirect objects with a postposition. Almost any postposition can be selected for, with the exception of *kúmà* 'because of'. Postposition choice can be idiosyncratic and lack semantic motivation. For instance, *gbé* 'to exceed' selects for the postposition *mī* (used only with this verb), the verb *dǎ* 'to fall' when used in the sense 'to help' selects the postposition *dí* which usually expresses APUD localization 'near', the verb *kàflé* 'to ask for protection' selects postposition *mà* (regular meaning CONT 'on'). Examples:

(167)	<i>ŋò-ó</i>	<i>gbé</i>	<i>bū</i>	<i>mī</i> .
	3PL-ST+	exceed	ten	P
	'There will be more than ten of them'.			

(168)	<i>ò-ó</i>	<i>dǎ</i>	<i>mī</i>	<i>dí</i> .
	3SG-ST+	fall	2SG	APUD
	'He will help you'.			

(169)	<i>ŋò-ó</i>	<i>kàflé</i>	<i>ḡ</i>	<i>mà</i> .
	3PL-ST+	trust	1SG	CONT
	'They will ask me for protection'.			

- 65 Emotion predicates tend to require not a direct object but an indirect object with the benefactive postposition *ḡ* (*X* in the examples below stands for the NP argument of the verb): *fɛ̀ɛ̀ sí X ḡ* 'to be beware of *X*', *kókò X ḡ* 'to worry for *X*', *kp̄ X ḡ* 'to hate *X*', *ḡrǎ X ḡ* 'to be disgusted with *X*', *vī X ḡ* 'to love *X*', *yēḡ X ḡ* 'to be afraid of *X*', *yēḡrɛ X ḡ* 'to be ashamed for *X*'.
- 66 This is somewhat unexpected typologically, since crosslinguistically the argument of an experiential predicate marked like a benefactive is the experiencer, cf. literature on dative subjects (Bhaskararao, Subbarao 2004), (Verma, Mohanan 1990), etc. On the other hand, the intransitive status of emotion verbs in Beng fits well into Tsunoda's

transitivity hierarchy (Tsunoda 1985): Direct effect > Perception > Pursuit > Knowledge > Feeling > Relationship > Ability. In Beng, the line between transitive and intransitive verbs is drawn to the left of Feeling verbs, while in European languages this line is on the right of the Feeling class.

- 67 The emotion verbs listed above are just one semantically motivated class of Beng verbs that select for postpositions but translate as transitive verbs in European languages. In fact, Beng verbs that govern an indirect object which corresponds to a direct object in European languages are numerous. Examples (170-173) provide several illustrations:

(170)	ó	zú	ḡ	lù.
	3SG:PST+	offend:L	1SG	SUB
	'He offended me'.			

(171)	ó	lílá	ḡ	mà.
	3SG:PST+	beat.up:L	1SG	CONT
	'He beated me up'.			

(172)	ó	mlǔ	ḡ	lō.
	3SG:PST+	meet:L	1SG	C
	'He met me'.			

(173)	ó	dá	ḡ	ló.
	3SG:PST+	find	1SG	SUPER
	'He found me'.			

- 68 Of course, in some of those cases one can find metaphorical motivation for the particular postposition used, some of which even find analogs in better-known languages. For example, postposition *ló* selected by the verb *dǎ* 'to fall' when used in the sense of 'to find' has an exact equivalent in the Russian prefix *na-* in *najti* 'to find;' both *ló* and *na-* can be translated into English as *on*, and the Beng and the Russian expressions of 'to find' have similar literal meanings ('to fall on something' and 'to come/step on something'). In both cases the SUPER localization is motivated by the prototypical situation of finding a object on the ground, at the finder's feet. Postposition *lō* 'with' of the verb *mlǔ* 'to meet' is motivated by the symmetry of the roles of two participants of the meeting event, etc.
- 69 At least 30 Beng verbs select an indirect object that corresponds to a direct object in English, French, and Russian (4% among the 705 verb senses in my database). There are

also converse cases, where a direct object in Beng corresponds to an indirect object in European languages, compare:

(174)	ó	p̄	b̄	ḡ	m̄.
	3SG:PST+	thing	touch:L	1SG	CONT

70 ‘He touched me **with something**’ (literally ‘He touched some thing on me’), compare transitive French *toucher*, Russian *trogat*’ etc.

(175)	ḡ	lò	ó	ḡ	s̄.
	1SG	neck	3SG:PST+	1SG	ache:L
‘My neck ached’ (literally ‘My neck ached me’).					

71 In contrast to the direct/indirect object, subjects of Beng verbs are almost always translated into English, French, or Russian as syntactic subjects. We observe that subjects are more cross-linguistically stable as compared to direct objects. This fact can be seen as an argument for greater semantic grounding of the notion of subject. In Aleksandr Kibrik’s terminology (Kibrik 2004), the Principal hyperrole expressed by the subject is no less semantically motivated than the Patientive hyperrole marked as the direct object, despite the greater semantic abstractness of the former that raises understandable doubts in its existence (Testelec 2003: 33).

72 Non-locative postpositions *ḡ*, *m̄*, *lò*, *kúm̄*, and *wó* (*m̄* and *wó* also admit locative usages) are used in semantically transparent ways to form modifiers of sentences or indirect objects.

The postposition *ḡ* has a general benefactive meaning:

(176)	ḡ	bé	m̄	ḡ.
	1SG:PST+	run	2SG	BENEF
‘I ran for you’.				

(177)	Tá	bā	kló	dō	klū	ḡ	ḡ.
	go	earth	little	one	dig	1SG	BENEF
‘Go dig a bit of earth for me’.							

(178)	Nrá	báj	ḡ	klá-yà	ḡ	ḡ	ḡ.
	1SG:ST+:go	trap	DEF	set-GL	3PL	BENEF	tomorrow

	'I am going to set traps for them tomorrow'.
--	--

73 As a spinoff of the benefactive meaning, *n̄i* can mark the role of addressee:

(179)	ó	zá	bì	lè	pè	m̄	n̄i.
	3SG:PST+	matter	this	DEF	say	2SG	BENEF
'He told me about this matter'.							

74 The addressee is encoded with the postposition *n̄i* with the following predicates (x in the examples strands for the NP variable): *k̄l̄i dá X n̄i* 'to express condolences to X', *flú X n̄i* 'to tell the truth to X', *f̄t̄ú X n̄i* 'to give advice to X', *kl̄ōj̄ bí X n̄i* 'to tell a secret to X' (literally 'to stick a nail to X'), *lā X n̄i* 'to show X (something), to teach X (something), to introduce (someone) to X' etc. The only verb of speech that is not compatible with a *n̄i*-marked addressee is the intransitive *jó* 'to talk' which requires postposition *lō* 'with' to mark the addressee.

The postposition *lō* expresses the semantic role of instrument (132, 137), means (133, 135), comitative (134, 136) or manner (157):

(180)	ŋ-ó	dr̄	wō-òlò	kpálé	lō.
	1SG-ST+	work	do-PROG	hoe	with
'I am working with a hoe'.					

(181)	ó	ḡ	bòyà	ml̄	dō	lō.
	3SG:PST	1SG	gift:L	chicken	one	with
'He gave me a chicken'.						

(182)	Dé	ó	yrā-lê	m̄	lō?
	who	ST+	be.located-RES	2SG	with
'Who lives with you?'					

(183)	ŋ-ó	n̄	ḡ	bɛ́j̄	n̄i	z̄	dǎ	à	lō.
	1SG:HAB+	come	1SG	barn	DEF	mat	fall	3SG	with
'I will make of it a mat for my barn'.									

(184)	ŋó	nǔ	léj	dùténéj	pé	lō.
	3PL:PST+	come:L	child	only	just	with
'They came with only one child'.						

(185)	ŋà	zì	jě	tòṅòbí	lō	kā	pɔ́ú	zrě	lè	yé	é.
	3PL:HAB-	can	pass	car	with	2PL	field	road	DEF	mouth	NEG
'One can't drive a car on your field road'.											

75 The postposition *mà* competes with the benefactive *ni* in addressee marking with several predicates: *yé súá* 'to pray', *klɔ̄j bí* 'to tell a secret', *ŋim̄j* 'to insist' etc. For example, *mà* is interchangeable with *ni* in the following sentence:

(186)	ó	à	klɔ̄j	bí-nā	ṅ	mà.
	3SG:PST+	3SG	nail	stick- PRF	1SG	CONT
'He told me about this as a secret'.						

76 The postpositions *wó* 'in' and *klē* 'behind, after' have temporal meanings besides the locative ones:

(187)	mī	tá-lé	klē
	2SG	go-NMLZ	POST
'after your departure'			

77 *bàāj wó* 'during the dry season', *kpāṅā wó* 'in the third month of the traditional calendar', *yim̄j lè wó* 'in Ramadan' etc. Postposition *wó* can also mark the stimulus of the following reaction predicates: *gblé X wó* 'to complain (to someone) about his action X', *dɔ́ X wó* 'to accept X', *yé ká X wó* 'to discuss X', *kɔ̄j bō X wó* 'to take revenge for X', *wē X wó* 'to agree with X', *yēdǎ X wó* 'to reply to (person) X'.

Lastly, the postposition *kúmà* marks the cause of a situation:

(188)	ó	drá	mī	kúmà.
	3SG:PST+	fall	2SG	because.of
'He fell because of you'.				

12.2.6. NPs in postverbal position

78 There are a few classes of non-locative NPs that can occur postverbally. One case is temporal nouns:

(189)	ó	nú	yru.
	3SG:PST+	come:L	night
'He came at night'.			

79 Another case is NPs with numerals (or sometimes bare numerals) which exhibit a special case of quantifier float where the whole quantified NP (QNP) is floated:

(190)	Áj	nú	sòḡ	plāḡ.
	1PL:PST+	come:L	person	two
'We came, the two of us'.				

80 Often a floated quantified NP is accompanied by a personal pronoun of the non-subject series. The pronoun marks the person and number of the referent that the quantified NP describes:

(191)	Áj	à	wò	āḡḡ	sòḡ	plāḡ.
	1PL:PST+	3SG	do :L	1PL	person	two
'We did it, the two of us'.						

81 In the absence of a pronoun the floated QNP is coreferent with the subject of a one-place predicate or the direct or indirect object of a transitive verb. (Speakers do not have an intuition on the interpretation of floated QNPs with the ditransitive verb 'to give': such examples do not seem to occur naturally and when presented with a constructed example, the speakers find it difficult to grasp its exact meaning.)

(192)	ḡó	zú	kā	lù	plāḡ.
	3PL:PST+	offend	2PL	SUB	two
'They offended the two of you' (*the two of them offended you).					

82 Practically any NP with a numeral can be found in the floated QNP context, effectively binding one of the pronoun arguments of the verb. The grammatical number of the QNP is determined by the semantic definiteness of its referent (not by the formal

marking as articles are typically absent from NPs with numerals): indefinite QNP are singular and require a singular pronoun, while definite QNPs are plural:

(193)	MíꞤ	à	yè	lɛꞤŋ	ŋāꞤŋꞤ.
	2SG:PST+	3SG	have:L	child	three
'You had three children'.					

(194)	MíꞤ	ŋò	yè	lɛꞤŋ	ŋāꞤŋꞤ.
	2SG:PST+	3PL	have:L	child	three
'Your children were three in number'.					

- 83 Besides the temporal NPs and QNP float, postverbal NPs include subjects of the verb *gū̀à* ‘to remain’, which allows almost any NP to be used postverbally as the semantic subject, while the surface subject position is filled by the “expletive” 3SG pronoun:⁴

(195)	ó	gū̀à-nāꞤ	Kòlā.
	3SG:PST+	remain-PRF	КОЛА
'Kola remains'.			

12.2.7. Adverbs

- 84 Finally, the postverbal position hosts adverbs such as *kpà* ‘a lot’ or *drú̀lè̀í* ‘in the morning’:

(196)	Àbá	wálé	lè	ó	tó	kpà.
	father	yam	DEF	3SG:PST+	yield:L	much
'My father's yam produced a great yield'.						

(197)	ŋ	nú	drú̀-lè̀í.
	1SG:PST+	come:L	morning-TEMP
'I came in the morning'.			

12.3. Word order in verbal sentences

- 85 Beng has a strict Subject Object Verb order. Other constituents follow the verb. Their relative order is in turn subject to constraints.
- 86 The secondary object (theme in the ditransitive construction) cannot be separated from the verb by any constituent:

(198a)	ó	ɣmà	wápló	gblē
	3gs:PST+	1SG:give:L	fufu	yesterday
'He gave me fufu yesterday.'				

(198b)	*ó	ɣmà	gblē	wápló
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- 87 'He gave me fufu yesterday'. (198b) is acceptable only in the reading 'He gave me yesterday's fufu' where *gblē* 'yesterday' modifies *wápló* 'fufu'.
- 88 Other elements that can't be separated from the verb include nominal predicates and indirect objects with a postposition selected by the verb, for example:

(199a)	ò	v̩	wápló	ɲì	Kòlā	kúmà.
	3SG:HAB+	love:L	fufu	BENEF	Kola	because.of
'He loves fufu because of Kola'.						

(199b)	*ò	v̩	Kòlā	kúmà	wápló	ɲì.
	3SG:HAB+	love:L	Kola	because.of	fufu	BENEF
'He loves fufu because of Kola'.						

(200a)	ó	zú	m̩	lu	Ko:la	kúmà.
	3SG:PST+	offend	2SG	SUB	Kola	because.of
'He offended you because of Kola'.						

(200b)	*ó	zú	Ko:la	ku:ma	m̩	lu.
	3SG:PST+	offend	Kola	because.of	2SG	SUB
'He offended you because of Kola'.						

89 Indirect objects that are not idiosyncratically selected by the verb can be separated. Separability correlates with the traditional argument vs. adjunct distinction but the real factor seems to be not the semantic obligatoriness of the participant, compare examples (201-202), but whether the postposition has its own semantic contribution or is syntactically selected by the verb.

(201a)	Ó	à	pè	gblē	ȷ̄	n̄i.
	3SG:PST+	3SG	say:L	yesterday	1SG	BENEF
'He told this to me yesterday'.						

(201b)	Ó	à	pè	ȷ̄	n̄i	gblē.
	3SG:PST+	3SG	say:L	1SG	BENEF	yesterday
'He told this to me yesterday'.						

(202a)	Ó	kòȷ̄	bò	[ȷ̄]	[lò]	[à	wó].
	3SG:PST+	nail	take.out:L	1SG	with	3SG	IN
'He took revenge for this with me'.							

(202b)	Ó	kòȷ̄	bò	[à	wó]	[ȷ̄]	[lò].
	3SG:PST+	nail	take.out:L	3SG	IN	1SG	with
'He took revenge for this with me'.							

90 Another restriction on modifier ordering is that temporal modifiers never precede locative ones:

(203a)	Ó	zrà	n̄ȷ̄	gblē.
	3SG:PST+	get.lost:L	here	yesterday
'He got lost here yesterday'.				

(203b)	*Ó	zrà	gblē	n̄ȷ̄.
	3SG:PST+	get.lost:L	yesterday	here

- 91 The relative order of both temporal and locative modifiers with respect to other sentential adjuncts is free:

(204a)	Ó	zrá	mī	kúmà	nḡ.
	3SG:PST+	get.lost:L	2SG	because.of	here
'He got lost here because of you'.					

(204b)	Ó	zrá	nḡ	mī	kúmà.
	3SG:PST+	get.lost:L	here	2SG	because.of
'He got lost here because of you'.					

(205a)	Ó	zrá	mī	kúmà	gblē.
	3SG:PST+	get.lost:L	2SG	because.of	yesterday
'He got lost here yesterday because of you'.					

(205b)	Ó	zrá	gblē	mī	kúmà.
	3SG:PST+	get.lost:L	yesterday	2SG	because.of
'He got lost here yesterday because of you'.					

- 92 Complement and goal clauses (see 13.1) are always clause-final, although I was able to elicit marginally acceptable examples with a sentential modifier after such an embedded clause:

(206)	ʔA	pè	[kē	mì	nú	é]	gblē.
	3SG:PST+3	say:L	that	2SG:PST-	come:L	NEG	yesterday
'He said yesterday that you hadn't come'.							

- 93 However, embedded clauses always precede the negative particle é that occupies the ultimate rightmost position in the clause, as in (207):

(207)	Wà	pé	[kē	mí	nú]	é.
	3SG:PST-3	say:L	that	2SG:PST+	come:L	NEG
'He didn't say that you had come'.						

- 94 To summarize, the constituent order in simple clause is as follows:
 Subject + direct object + verb + secondary object / nominal predicate / strongly selected postpositional phrase + modifiers + embedded clauses + negation.

12.4. Types of verbless clauses

12.4.1. Identity (presentative) statement

- 95 Identity statement has the structure NP + particle è (ní in negative sentences) ‘this is’, ká è ‘here is’, nĕĕ ‘now that’s’. Examples:

(208)	ĩ	dē	è.
	1SG	father	this.is
‘This is my father’.			

(209)	Māĩ	è.
	1SG:EMPH	this.is
‘This is me’.		

- 96 With the addition of a second NP, such clauses become statements of reference identity or express nominal predication, compare:

(210)	[Léj]	gōĩ	yāá	[sò]	jàté-lí	béē	dō	è.
	child	man	this	person	respect-AG	big	one	this.is
‘This boy is very polite’ (literally: ‘This boy is a big respecter of people’).								

12.4.2. Adverbial clause

- 97 Adverbial clauses employ NP subjects doubled with stative pronouns or stative markers, followed by an adverbial predicate: a locative phrase, an adverb phrase, a postpositional phrase, or an NP headed by an adverbial noun. Examples:

(211)	Mĩ-ó	gbòyō	lè	wó.
	2SG-ST+	garden	DEF	IN
‘You (singular) are in the garden’.				

(212)	<i>Kā-ā</i>	<i>nḡ</i>	<i>é.</i>
	2PL-ST-	here	NEG
	'You (plural) are not here'.		

(213)	<i>Āḡ-ó</i>	<i>wlá.</i>
	1PL-ST+	house
	'We are at home'.	

(214)	<i>ḡ-ó</i>	<i>à</i>	<i>lō.</i>
	1SG-ST+	3SG	with
	'I am with him'.		

12.4.3. Existential statements

- 98 Existential statements consist of the subject NP or a pronoun of the existential series, followed by particle *wé* (*wā* under negation):

(215a)	<i>Wlù</i>	<i>wé</i>
	heat	exist
	'It is hot'.	

(215b)	<i>Wlù</i>	<i>wā</i>	<i>é</i>
	heat	exist.NEG	NEG
	'It is not hot'.		

- 99 A distinctive series of subject pronouns is used in existential statements, compare:

(216)	<i>Māḡ</i>	<i>wé.</i>
	1SG:EX	exist
	'I exist'.	

(217)	<i>M̄ī</i>	<i>wé.</i>
	2SG:EX	exist
'You exist'.		

(218)	<i>ò</i>	<i>wé.</i>
	3SG:EX	exist
'S/he exists'.		

100 When it is necessary to use an adverbial constituent restricting the domain of existential quantification in a statement of existence, an adverbial clause is used, e.g.

(219)	<i>Pō</i>	<i>v̄ḡ-lè</i>	<i>dō</i>	<i>ó</i>	<i>nḡ.</i>
	thing	rot-NMLZ	one	ST+	here
'There is something rotten here'.					

101 Notably, the same pronouns are used under negation:

(220)	<i>Māḡ</i>	<i>wā</i>	<i>é.</i>
	1SG:EX	exist.NEG	NEG
'I do not exist'.			

(221)	<i>M̄ī</i>	<i>wā</i>	<i>é.</i>
	2SG:EX	exist.NEG	NEG
'You do not exist'.			

(222)	<i>ò</i>	<i>wā</i>	<i>é.</i>
	3SG:EX	exist.NEG	NEG
'S/he does not exist'.			

12.4.4. Adjectival statements

- 102 Adjectives can be used predicatively, combining with subject NPs or subject pronouns; an optional modifier specific to this clause type is comparison reference, discussed below. Examples:

(223a)	ò	gē̄j̄.
	3SG:HAB+	beautiful
	'It is good'.	

(223b)	Wà-ā	gē̄j̄	é̄.
	3SG-ST-	beautiful	NEG
	'It is not good'.		

- 103 Some words can be predicates in structures of this type but are not admitted to modify nouns. I call such words predicative adjectives:

(224a)	M̄j̄	jā:̄ā:̄!
	2SG	crazy
	'You are crazy!'	

(224b)	*gō̄j̄	jā:̄ā:̄	dō:̄
	man	crazy	one
	(intended: 'a crazy man')		

- 104 Indirect object with predicative adjectives introduces the reference of comparison. It is marked with postposition *m̄à*.

(225)	Àságbě	bé̄É	Gbágbě	m̄à.
	Ouassadougou	big	Moussobadougou	CONT
	'Ouassadougou is bigger than Moussobadougou'.			

- 105 With the adjective *gblē̄j̄* 'tall' the reference of comparison can also take postposition *ló*:

(226)	Làḡzè,	m̄i	gblēḡ	Bēyā	ló.
	Lanze	2SG:HAB+	tall	Beyan	SUPER
'Lanze, you are taller than Beyan'.					

12.4.5. WH question

106 Beng interrogative words usually occur *in situ*, but there is also a sentence type that provides an analog of *wh* fronting in the sense that the interrogative constituent takes the first position. Such *wh* clauses consist of a *wh* constituent accompanied by an optional relative clause. One could interpret such examples as instances of *wh* movement outside of the relative clause, but then for uniformity one should also accept that head nouns are always extracted from relative clauses that modify them. The head-internal analysis for all relative clauses has indeed been proposed on independent grounds (Kayne 1994), but has yet to earn wide acceptance. Here are two examples of *wh*-questions:

(227)	Pó	[fē	ó	sro	do	ba	lo	q̄ḡ	klê	wo	nḡ	ná]?
	what	Rel	3SG:PST+	exit:L	monkey	with	1PL	land	IN	here	TOP	
'What happened to the monkey in this land?'												

(228)	Dé	[fē	ó	ḡ	wálé	klùà	ná]??
	who	Rel	3SG:PST+	1SG	yam	steal	TOP
'Who stole my yam?' (literally: 'who that he stole my yam?')							

107 The exact same meaning can be expressed with *wh*-words *in situ*, in ordinary nominal or adverbial positions:

(229)	Dé	ó	ḡ	wálé	klùà)?
	who	3SG:PST+	1SG	yam	steal:L
'Who stole my yam?'					

(230)	Kà	yí	yè	má)?
	2PL:HAB+	water	see:L	where
'Where do you find water?' (literally, 'you find water where?')				

108 The special type of *wh* sentence must have originated in Beng as a result of interference with other languages. Compare the structure of *wh* questions in Baule, a language that many Beng actively use (quoted from (Creissels, Kouadio 1977: 227)):

(231)	<i>Wān</i>	<i>yÉ</i>	<i>ó</i>	<i>bā-ŕi</i>	<i>ò?</i>
	who	CNS	3SG	come-PRF	CNS
'Who came?'					

NOTES

1. Units counted here and below are word senses, since different senses of the same verb often differ in the argument structures they admit.
2. Agent cannot be expressed in the 'passive' usages of P-labile verbs in Beng, so according to Xolodovič (1970) this passive type should be called 'object quasipassive' ('passive' proper in Xolodovič's system is reserved to passives with an overt agent). However, this agentless type of passive is known to be typologically more common than the 'proper' passive with an oblique agent phrase, to the extent that Keenan and Dryer (2007) even call agentless passives 'basic' and generalize that if a language has any passives it has basic, agentless, ones.
3. More precisely, the participant whose semantic role equals that of the subject of the verb in the transitive usage.
4. An anonymous reviewer notes that in many West African languages, 'remain' is the only intransitive verb allowing for a construction with an inverted subject and an expletive 3rd person pronoun in the canonical subject position. So the construction with postverbal subjects of 'remain' seems to be an areal syntactic feature.

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