

SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE OF ADJECTIVE, PREPOSITION AND ADVERB PHRASES OF AWGNI

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DOI: 10.24071/llt.v23i2.2527

received 14 April 2020; accepted 8 June 2020

Abstract

College students and teachers were facing difficulties to examine syntactic structure of Awgni phrases. Thus, this study is a logical inspection of syntactic structures of Awgni Adjective, Adverb and Preposition Phrases. The article attempts descriptive research design. Through purposive sampling, 16 texts were selected. Six Awgni informants (three females and three males) were involved in group discussion to crosscheck these data. Results indicated that Awgni Adjective, Adverb and Preposition Phrases were pending in a variety of head, complement, specifier and adjunct utterances. The selections of complement, adjunct, and specifier in between phrases were to some extent syntactically similar. Moreover, the study showed that syntactic structures have dominance, and precedence relationships.

Keywords: adjective, adverb, preposition, structure, syntax

Introduction

The Agaw people are one of the Cushitic races and the oldest ethnic groups in Ethiopia and Eritrea are one of the least researched (Desalegn, 2016). They are ancient inhabitants of the Northern and central highlands of today's Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Agaw people were either forced out of their original settlements and formed a number of scattered enclaves, which they are now or assimilated with Semitic people and adopted their culture.

Agaw is the branches of the Cushitic macro-family, itself part of the larger phylum generally called Afroasiatic. The Agaw language forms the main substratum of Semitic languages, particularly Tigrinya, and Amharic. The majority of the existing Agaw language speakers are bilingual, speaking both Agaw and Semitic languages (Amharic and Tigrinya). According to Esubalew (2015) the current Agaw nation can be classified into four categories. Northern Agaw is Blin. They live in Eritrea, in and around Keren in Anseba zone. Western Agaw includes Qemant (ethnic name), who live around Gonder, of the Amhara region, north of Lake Tana and West of Takkeze. Kemantney is the original language of the Kemantney people of Semen Gondar Zone, Ethiopia. According to Semalgn (2015) the Kimant are the original inhabitants of the north central Ethiopia. Their historical land stretched from north of Lake Tana, the origin of Abay River (Blue Nile), to North West rural areas around Gonder town. Eastern

Agaw is Xamtanga. They live around Sokota sandwiched between the Southern Tigray and the Amharic speaking people.

The Southern Agaw includes Awngi. The ethnic group of Southern Agaw is Awi who are living in central Gojjam in North-Western Ethiopia. The Awngi language, in some publications (Desalegn, 2016) also wrongly called as Awngi. Here what the researcher underlined that the language of Awi ethnic group is evidently Awngi. Most speakers of the language live in the Awi Zone of the Amhara Region, but there are also communities speaking the language in various areas of Metekele Zone of the Binshangul-Gumuz Region.

Awngi is not the official working language in Awi Administrative Zone of Amhara Region. Awngi heritable cultural legacies are mostly existed in the memories of tradition bearers (Yaregal, 2007). Thus, Melakneh (1991) argued that Awngi language can naturally be considered as free of the threat of endangerment and on the verge of extinction. There was high acculturation process between Awi and Amhara tribalism in Awi is slow; there is the probability of Awngi extinction soon (Haileluel 1991). Lately in 1996 (Ethiopian Calender), the language is written and service as medium of instruction in the primary, junior secondary schools and in the college of teachers' education at a diploma level (Esubalew, 2015). In order to preserve the language, syntactic structure of Awngi phrases will be studied.

The attentiveness of the researcher showed that studies were not investigated syntactic structure of Awngi Adjective, Adverb and Preposition Phrases. As a result, students, teachers, researchers and other Awngi language users face difficulties to examine syntactic structure of these phrases. They were inept to explore the syntactic structures of Awngi phrase structure in explicit ways. Therefore, the drive of this research is intended to fill the gap all the way through analysing syntactic structure of Awngi Adjective, Adverb and Preposition Phrases. Henceforth, the objective of this study is to undertake a systematic examination of syntactic structures of Adjective, Adverb and Preposition Phrases in Awngi.

Literature Review

Syntax refers to the ways symbols were combined to create well-formed sentences in a given language (Cinque, 2010). It defines the proper relations between the constituents of a language, thereby providing a structural description of the various expressions that make up legal strings in the language (Copeland, 2009; Miller, 2008). Furthermore, syntax concerned with the ways in which words were combined together to form phrases. The smallest unit of syntactic structure is a word that grammatically interacts with other such units, forming constructions on various levels arranged in a hierarchical order (Kim, 2007; Yasui, 2006).

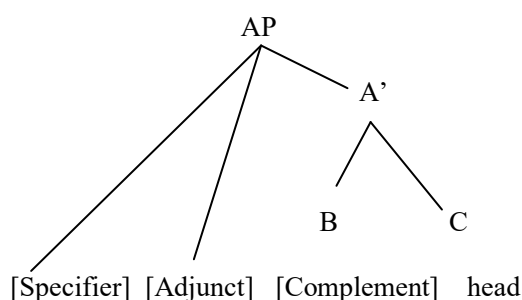
Phrase is a group of words that function as a constituent in the syntax of a sentence, as single unit in grammatical hierarchy (Iic, 2008; Marques, 2011). Phrases are considered as the second level of classification as they tend to be larger than individual words, but smaller than sentences. They combine words into a larger unit that can function as a sentence element (Carnie, 2013). Phrases have a hierarchical blueprint in which words are clustered jointly in to productively bigger

structural units (Wiltschko, 2014). Therefore, Phrasal categories be able to be classified by the type of the head they take as: Prepositional Phrase (PP), Noun Phrase (NP), Verb Phrase (VP), Adjective Phrase (AP) and Adverb Phrase (ADVP) (Chung, 2012; Marcotte, 2014). According to Carnie (2010) and Rauh (2010), depending on the number of components inside the phrases to be analyzed, the Verb Phrase VP can be further broken down into V'; a second Noun Phrase N', Prepositional Phrase into P', Adjective Phrase as A', Prepositional Phrase as P'

In transformational grammar, phrase structure rules are illustrated by the means of tree diagram, which show the structure of the Phrase. Phrase structure rules interpreted as an instruction to rewrite or expand the symbol on the left of the arrows as the sequence on the right as in (Radford, 2004):

- S' → NP, VP
- NP → (S'), (Spec), (AP), (ADVP), (NP) N
- VP → (S'), (Spec), (PP), (NP), (Ad), V
- AP → (Spec), (PP), (NP), A
- PP → S' P, or PP P or VP P or NP P or AP P
- ADVP → (Spec), (PP), ADV

With reference to rule, N, V, A, P, and ADV were heads of their phrases based on the evidence from headedness. Typically, Awgni is head-final language that heads are located on the right of other phrasal material. Syntactic units are organized around a head. Let each head D, projects a larger syntactic unit (a phrase, AP), and each phrase AP, must have one head. This assumption captures the traditional intuition that the head of a Prepositional phrase, for instance, D is an Adjective. In one precise implementation of this idea, all syntactic constituents have the same format, which can be represented below:



Specifier, an Adjunct and Complement position in brackets indicates that they are optional in x-bar syntax. Every Phrase structures must have obligatory heads. In Awgni, the head of the phrases all the time occurs at the right edge of the constituent in Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb and Prepositional Phrases. The position of constituency is the obligatory head of each phrase types come first, and then not obligatory complements, adjuncts and specifier may structured respectively from right to left position (Pullum, 2011).

Complements are phrasal categories whose objective is to provide information about entities and locations. Heads and complements are typically adjacent; in few occasions, a head verb might have two complements. Adjuncts typically come after the sequence of head and complements. Adjuncts are

constituents that tell us more about the how, when, where or why of the activity or situation expressed by the sentences they occur in. They can be Verb Phrase, Adjective Phrase, Adverb Phrases, Prepositional Phrases, Noun Phrases, and independent clauses (De Materials, 2011). On the other hand, syntactically, specifier can mark a given phrase boundary and it occurs at the left side of the actual Phrase structure. As a result, its position might be changed. Besides, the category of the specifier differs depending on the type of the head. It is, in fact, not so straightforward to find a case where all four syntactic terms head, complement, modifier and specifier syntactically filled (Kristin & Anne, 2013).

Phrase structure is the basic unit of syntactic analysis, which is easier to see the parts of (phrases) and subparts (parts of speech) of the phrase in a tree. Apparently, syntactic tree enable to see at a glance the hierarchical structure of Phrase. Pullum (2011) depicted that structure reliance is apprehension with the hierarchical structure, normally opened in syntactic examination by means of tree diagrams. The relation that can be appearing between nodes in p-marker is dominance. A single node thoroughly dominates sets of nodes. Consequently, comprehensive supremacy holds between a set of daughter nodes and their mother node. When the mother nodes dominate the entire set, it can be said that the mother node exhaustively dominates the rest (Sag, 2010a). Where one node contains another, the containing node is mother and the contained node is the daughter. A mother node contains several daughters, where these are said to be sisters to each other (Sag, 2010b).

Method

The research design used in this study was descriptive type that involves gathering data which describe syntactic structure of Awgni Adjective, Adverb and Preposition Phrases. It uses visual aids such as syntactic tree to aid the reader in understanding the syntactic structure of Phrases. Expert sampling was used to capture knowledge rooted in a particular form of expertise in Awgni syntax. Six Awgni informants (three females and three males) were involved in group discussion to crosscheck these data. Through this sampling texts based on layout, the length of data, meaning and structural simplicity as simple to display, 16 anticipated data were chosen for analysis. The method of data analysis employed was collection, systematic classification and description supported by tree.

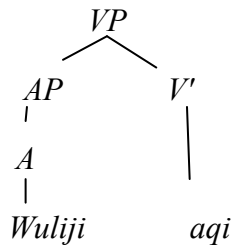
Findings and Discussion

Adjective Phrase (AP): The assumption that adjectives are an independent category from nouns and verbs and thus, authors (Cabredo, 2010; Matthews, 2015) agree on the fact that the boundaries between adjectives and nouns, and adjectives and verbs may be fuzzy. In this context Adjective Phrases are cohesive word groups that are often little more than a series of adjectives or words they can go with adjectives to modify nouns or their replacements (Cristin, 2013; Pullum, 2017). Every Adjective Phrase (AP) contains a head and possibly, but not necessarily, one or more modifiers (Meltzer-Asscher, 2012). In Awgni an adjectival phrase is a group of words in which the headword is an adjective.

Adjectives can be attributive (pronominal) and Predicative refer to the position of an adjective in a phrase. An adjective is attributive or is used attributively when it comes before a noun (and is therefore part of the noun

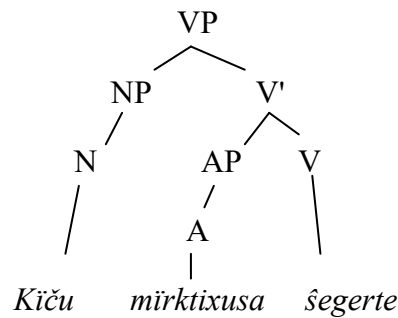
phrase). In the *wuliji aqi* (*Adjective + Noun*) attributive adjective is *wuliji* that comes before the noun *aqi*. Here the head of the phrase is the noun *aqi* not an adjective as in (1):

- (1) *Wuliji aqi*
An old man
'An old man'



However, in the case of Adjective Phrase structure of Awgni, the head (adjective) must be always found in the right edge of the tree. All Phrase types in Awgni are usually right headed. Therefore, the nature of attributive adjectives will not be examined in this study. This actuality also works for predicative. An adjective is predicative when it comes directly after the verbs (*šegere/ seem, incoxste/ feel* etc.). The resulting structure is Verb Phrase (not an Adjective Phrase) that follows the pattern Noun + Adjective +Verb. Therefore the Predicative adjective always come before Verb head as in:

- (2) *Kiču mirktixusa šegerte*
Your mother angry seem
'Your mother seems angry'

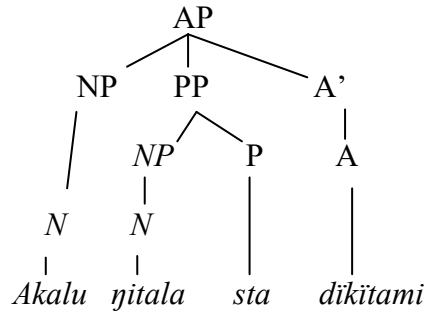


Fábregas (2016) assured that adjectives are built in a different way depending on the language. By the same token, it can be concluded that in all cases attributive (pronominal) position is not the most characteristic position for adjective Phrases structures in Awgni. Attributive position can be appeared before Noun, Verb, Adverb and Prepositional Phrase structures. Pre-nominal adjective can't acts as the head of the adjective phrase and phrasal categories can't take complements. Whereas post-nominal adjectives in Awgni fully agree with the nouns they modify in all phases of syntactic structure.

Adjective Phrase heads derived from nouns do not take complements. These include *amilini/sulky*, *lixami/spitfire*, *dikítami/stubborn*, *guzgisti/esurient*,

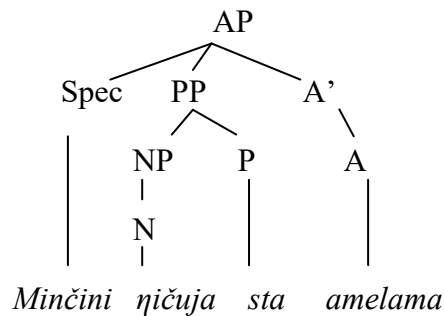
amelena/ moody, guzgista/ esurient, and the like have been conjoined to form their own Phrase structures in the absence of complements as in:

- (3) *Akalu ηitalasta dikitami*
Akalu like his father stubborn
 'Akalu stubborn like his father'



What the above tree indicates that, *dikitami* is an Adjective head that is conjoin with Prepositional Phrase *ηitalasta*. *Akalu* and *ηitala* are nouns. *Sta* is the preposition used to link two nouns *Akalu* and *ηitala*. Comparison was occurred between *Akalu* and his father. Their act of connection and common behavior is stubbornness. The mother AP immediately dominates NP, PP and A'. PP immediately dominates NP and P. Thus, NP precede PP node; PP also precedes A'. These in turn are daughters of AP node; similarly, all terminal nodes (N, N, P and A) are sisters to each other.

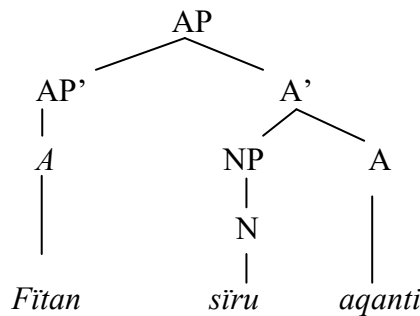
- (4) *Minčini ηičujasta amelama*
Many times, like his sister moody
 'Many times moody like his sister'



The preceding tree (4) provides a visual representation of the constituent structure of Adjective Phrase (AP). Thus, *amelama* is the head of an Adjective Phrase, *ηičujasta* is Prepositional Phrase, and the specifier *minčini* refers the act of moody. The specifier in Awgni is not recursive and every Adjective phrase has one specifier. Regarding relations, AP node immediately dominates Spec, PP and A'. Consequently, Spec precede PP node; PP node also precedes A'. Consequently, AP node is the mother of three constituents Spec, PP and A'. These in turn are daughters of AP node. All terminal nodes (Spec, N, P and A) are sisters to each other.

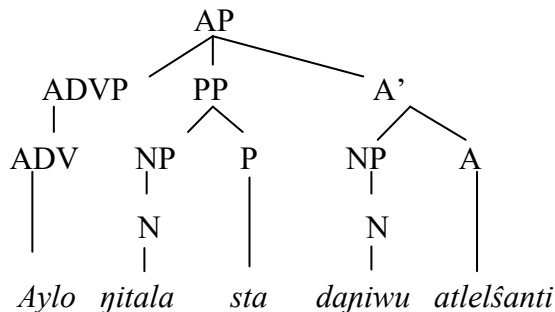
If the root word was transitive, adjectives derived from this type of verb can take the complement. Then Adjective which is derived from such verbs can also conjoin their minimal Adjective structure with complement. Therefore, an adjective *atlelsanti/cheater*, *aqanti/sensible*, *jifi/ craven* and others are derived from transitive verbs, and then they take their complements in the node labels of minimal adjective Phrase structure as in (5 and 6):

- (5) *fitan siru aqanti*
Fast the child knowledgeable
'Fast the knowledgeable child'



What (5) tells us is that the head (*aqanti*) is conjoining with the Noun complement *siru*. The bound morpheme (*u*) is added at *sir* to show the relative relation between the head and the complement. An adjective *fitan* describes the Noun Phrase *siru aqanti*. In terms of relation AP node immediately dominates AP' and A'. Thus, AP' proceeds A' node. As a result, AP node is the mother of two constituents AP' and A'. These in turn are daughters of AP node. Adjective Phrase A' also immediately dominates NP and A, and all terminal nodes (A, N and A) are sisters to each other.

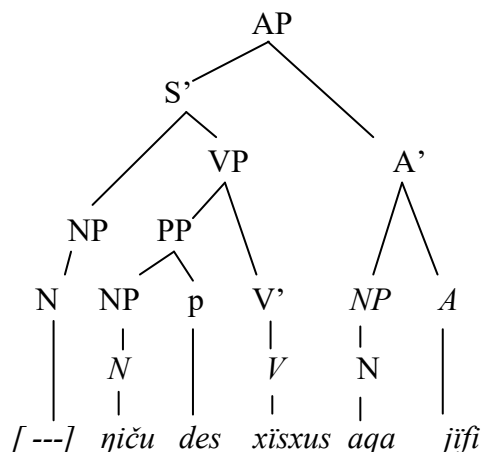
- (6) *Aylo ηitalasta daniwu atlelsanti*
Very like his father the umpire cheater
'Very cheater umpire like his father'



The tree notation used in (6) posits that *atlelsanti* is derived from transitive Verb and due to this reason; *daniwu* becomes conjoined as complement Noun Phrase. An Adverb *aylo* and Prepositional Phrase (*ηitalasta*) are modifying the given Adjective Phrase *daniwu atlelsanti*. On the subject of relation, the mother

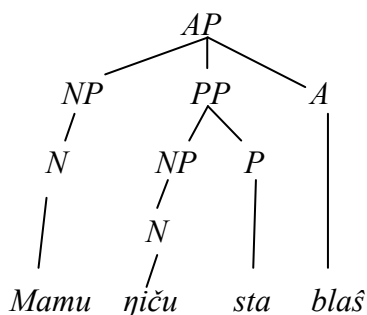
node AP immediately dominates ADVP, PP and A'. Thus, ADVP precede PP node; PP also proceeds A'. These in turn are daughters of AP node; similarly, PP at once dominates NP and P. All terminal nodes (ADV, N, P, N and A) are sisters to each other.

- (7) *ničudes xisxus aqa jifi*
From his mother greater than man fright
'He is freighter than his mother'



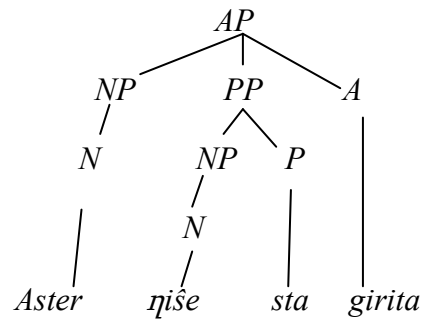
As shown in (7), *ničudes xisxus aqa jifi* is an adjective Phrase. Two modifiers are existing, namely complement *aqa* and dependent clause an adjunct *ničudes xisxus*. S' node can be omitted; the complement is typically obligatory and is always mentioned in the lexical entry for an adjective phrase. Concerning relation, the mother AP immediately dominates S' and A'. Thus, S' proceed A' node. These in turn are daughters of AP node. Similarly, S' immediately dominates NP and VP. VP immediately dominates PP and V'. PP also immediately dominates NP and P. Consequently all terminal nodes (N, N, P, V', N and A) are sisters to each other. On the other hand, Awgni language has small set of adjectives which are not derived from word list in the intended language or not borrowed from other languages. It possess naturally exist adjectives (Mc Laughlin, 2014) as in:

- (8) *Mamu ničusta blaš*
Mamu like his mother canny
'Mamu is canny like his mother.'



This (8) is a typical hierarchical tree structure. The Phrase element (represented by the symbol AP) consists of three constituents: NP *Mamu*, PP *ηičusta* and the head Adjective *blaš*. The PP Phrase is further broken down into two bits: Noun Phase *ηiču*, and the Preposition *sta*.

- (9) *Aster ηišesta girita*
Aster like his brother ingenious
'Aster is ingenious like her brother.'



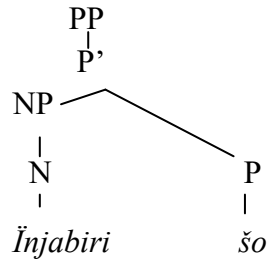
The above structure has the subject head *girita*, the Prepositional modifier *ηišesta* and the Noun Phrase *Aster*.

Prepositional Phrase (PP): A prepositional phrase is a group of words consisting of a preposition, its object, and any words that modify the object (Aarts, 2011). The object of the preposition will often have one or more modifiers to describe it. Some examples of the most basic prepositional phrase are *ηīnda/ at home* (*ηīnu* = noun, *da* = preposition), *Akaluli/ with Akalu* (*Akalu*=noun, *li*=preposition), *jimis/ by singing*, *Bardardes Addis Ababašo / from Bahirdar to Addis Ababa* (*des* and *šo*=prepositions).

Ablative (*des/from*), dative (*s/for*), locative (*da/over*), comparative (*ta/like*, *tagi*) commutative (*li/with*) directive (*šo/to*) are case systems in Awgni. The role of marking case types are often marked with a preposition. Therefore, these all are prepositions of Awgni. By the same token, *des*, *s*, *da*, *ta*, *tagi*, *li*, *šo* are primary prepositions. The primary prepositions are basic prepositions of the language, not borrowed from another language or transparently built up from other materials within the language. Prepositions in Awgni can't derive from any words.

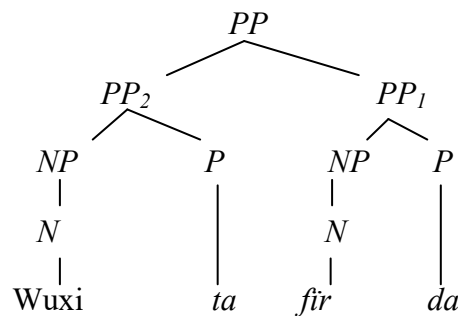
A Prepositional Phrase consists of a Preposition as its head, constituent and the complement or object of that preposition is typically a Noun Phrase. Like heads, the complements of Prepositional Phrases are obligatory. On the other hand, different kinds of complements like adverbs and other clauses might occupy the place of a Noun Phrase positions. An intriguing aspect of this analysis is that Prepositional Phrase can be used to designate a constituent consisting of a Preposition plus a Noun Phrase as in:

- (10) *Īnjabiri šo*
Injibara to
 'To Injibara'



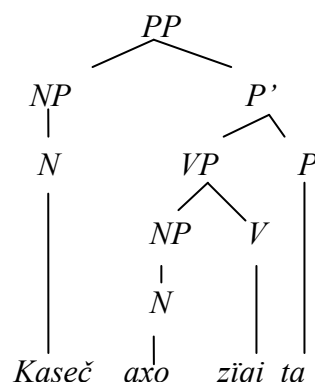
What (10) suggests is that, the heads of the given Phrase structure is preposition *šo*. The town name *injabiri* is the complement. The head (*šo*) determine the function of the complement.

- (11) *Wuxita firda*
Like hyena in a puncture
 'Like hyena in a puncture'



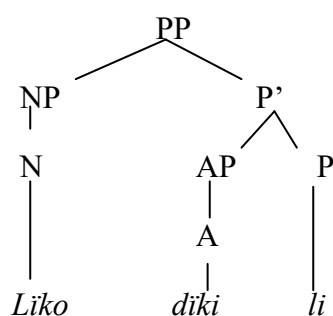
Likewise, (11) could represent the fact that *wuxita* and *firda* are Prepositional Phrases. These categories are set of elements that have essentially the same distributional states (both PP_2 and PP_1) varying their positions. Thus, PP_2 and PP_1 are equivalent in their structure. The heads *ta* and *da* have Noun Phrases *wuxi* and *fir* are complements respectively. As regards relation, PP immediately dominates PP_2 and PP_1 . Thus, PP_2 precede PP_1 node. These in line are daughters of PP node. Similarly, PPs immediately dominates NPs and PPs. In sequence, all terminal nodes (N, P, N and P) are sisters to each other. The prepositions that can be structured with Verb Phrase are (*s*) and (*ta*) as in:

- (12) *Kaseč axo zīqita*
Kaseč the water as drinks
 'As Kaseč drinks the water'



As noted in (12), the Prepositional Phrase PP has the immediate constituents: NP (*Kaseč*) and the second Prepositional Phrase *P'* (*axo zīqita*). This in turn has a head Preposition *ta* that is conjoined with Verb Phrase (*axo zīqi*). On the topic of relation, PP immediately dominates NP and *P'*. Thus, NP precede *P'* node. These in turn are daughters of PP node. Similarly, *P'* immediately dominates VP and P. All terminal nodes (N, N, V and P) are sisters to each other. Adjectives are conjoined as complement in the tree structure of Prepositional Phrase as in:

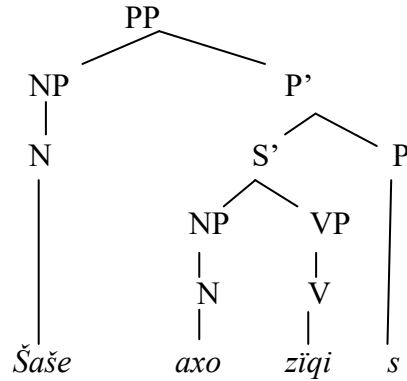
- (13) *Liko dikili*
Leg unlucky
 'With unlucky person'



According to (13) the head of the Prepositional Phrase conjoins with adjective complement. As noted above for instance, Adjective Phrase *diki* is immediate complement for Prepositional Phrase *li*. *Liko* is the Noun Phrase that modifies minimal Prepositional Phrase *dikili*. Regarding relation, in connection with relation, PP immediately dominates NP and *P'*. Thus, NP precede *P'* node. For that reason, these are daughters of PP node. Similarly, *P'* immediately dominates AP and P. Accordingly, all terminal nodes (N, A and P) are sisters to each other.

Let us turn to look another syntactic phenomenon in which a Verb Phrase can be a complement for Prepositional Phrase as in:

- (14) *Šaše axo ziqis*
Šaše the water as she drinks
'As Šaše drinks the water'

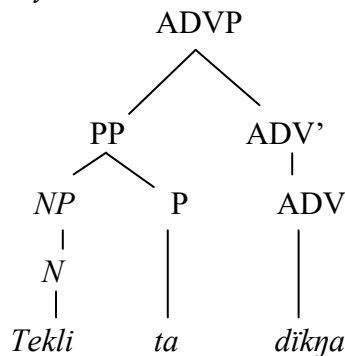


Phrase structure in (14) utters that the head preposition (*s*) of the Prepositional Phrase conjoins with dependent clause complement (*axo ziqi*). As noted above for instance, the Noun Phrase *Šaše* is the subject of the verb in dependent clause. On the subject of relation, PP immediately dominates NP and P'. Thus, NP precede P' node. These in order are daughters of PP node. Similarly, P' immediately dominates S' and P. All terminal nodes (N, N, V and P) are sisters to each other.

Adverb Phrase (ADVP): Adverb Phrases as cohesive word groups that are descriptive, and sometimes called modifiers because they restrict meaning (Lobeck and Denham, 2014). From the structural point of view, each Awgni Adverbial Phrase must contain adverb head. This head is the most important word in the phrase; it bears the crucial semantic information. Like Tallerman's (2011) finding it determines the meanings of the entire phrase. However, adverbs in Awgni are very few in number (*imbit/soon*, *dikŋa/badly*, *indegena/again*, *gimŋa/badly* and so on). Their function is mostly done by Verbs.

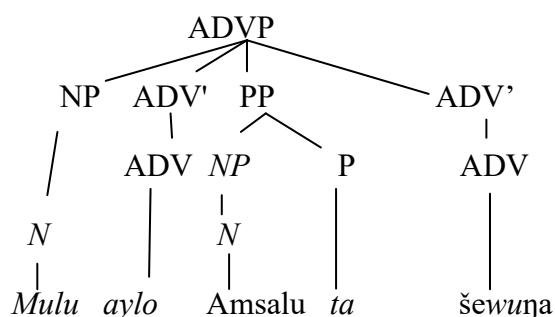
Adverb Phrases cannot build their tree structures with complement. Adverb Phrase contains a head and possibly, but not necessarily, one or more modifiers and specifiers as in:

- (15) *Teklita dikŋa*
Like Tekli badly
'Like Tekli badly'



The output representation in (15) *Teklita dikŋa* is Adverb Phrase. Adverb *dikŋa* is the head of the phrase structure. It conjoins with prepositional phrase *Teklita*. The modifier PP has the head preposition *ta* and structured with Noun complement *Tekli*. Concerning relation, ADVP immediately dominates PP and ADV'. Thus, PP precede ADV' node. These in sequence are daughters of ADVP node. Similarly, PP immediately dominates NP and P. Terminal nodes (N, P' and ADV) are sisters to each other.

(16) *Mulu aylo Amsaluta šewuŋa*
Mulu very like Amsalu heartily
 'Mulu Like Amsalu very heartily'



What tree (16) says that, *Mulu aylo Amsaluta šewuŋa* is an Adverb Phrase (ADVP). *Šewuŋa* is an Adverb head. The structure has a Prepositional Phrase modifier *Amsaluta* and Adverb *aylo*. Pertaining to relation, ADVP immediately dominates NP, ADV', PP and ADV'. Thus, NP precede ADV'; ADV' precede PP; PP precede ADV' node. In the view of that, these are daughters of ADVP node. Similarly, PP immediately dominates NP and P. Terminal nodes N, ADV, N, P and ADV are sisters to each other.

Conclusion

Study showed that lexical categories found in Awgni phrases include Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, and Preposition. Henceforth, the Phrases of the intended language are classified by the type of the head they take as: Prepositional Phrase (PP), Noun Phrase (NP), Verb Phrase (VP), Adjective Phrase (AP) and Adverb Phrase (ADVP). Every phrase contains a head and possibly, but not necessarily, one or more modifiers. In the view of that, there are two types of modifiers, namely complements and adjuncts. Adjuncts are optional; complements are typically obligatory and are always mentioned in the lexical entries for verbs (or nouns or prepositions). Many collocation restrictions apply to heads and complements (but also to phrases other than complements). Heads and complements are typically adjacent; where a head has two complements, adjuncts typically come after the sequence of head and complements. On the subject of relation, every Phrase structure has dominance and precedence relation.

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