

Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation

A Sketch Grammar of the Kemezung Language

Christopher L. Smoes

SIL

B.P. 1299, Yaoundé

Cameroon

2010

Table of Contents

Abbreviations.....	iv
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Name of the language	1
1.2 Genetic affiliation.....	1
1.3 Sociolinguistic situation	1
1.3.1 Demography.....	1
1.3.2 Viability	1
1.3.3 Language attitudes	1
1.3.4 Multilingualism	1
1.4 Corpus and nature of the research.....	2
2 Nouns and noun phrases	3
2.1 Types of nouns and their structures.....	3
2.1.1 Proper names	3
2.1.2 Derived nouns	4
2.1.3 Compound nouns	4
2.2 Functions of noun morphology.....	5
2.2.1 Derivational morphology on noun roots.....	5
2.2.2 Noun classes and genders.....	6
2.2.3 Gender system.....	8
2.3 The structure of the noun phrase	9
2.4 Elements in the noun phrase	10
2.4.1 Possessives	10
2.4.2 Associative noun phrases.....	11
2.4.3 Demonstratives.....	12
2.4.4 Numerals.....	14
2.4.5 Quantifiers	17
2.4.6 Adjectives.....	18
2.4.7 Relative clauses.....	19
2.4.8 Personal pronouns.....	20
3 Verbs and Verb Phrases	22
3.1 Verbs and their structures	22
3.2 Functions of verb morphology.....	22
3.2.1 Tense and aspect morphology	22

3.3	The structure of the verb phrase	25
3.4	Elements in the verb phrase	25
3.4.1	Verbal particles	25
3.4.2	Verb phrase level negation.....	32
3.4.3	Adverbs.....	35
3.4.4	Complements.....	35
3.4.5	Valence changing operations.....	36
4	Clauses	38
4.1	General clause structure.....	38
4.2	Basic clause types and their structures	38
4.2.1	Declarative clauses.....	38
4.2.2	Imperative clauses.....	38
4.2.3	Interrogative Clauses.....	39
4.3	Functions of elements in the clause.....	42
4.3.1	Grammatical relations.....	42
4.3.2	Adverbial elements.....	43
4.3.3	Clause level particles.....	44
5	Conclusion	46
6	References	47

Abbreviations

Ø-	Zero prefix	Irr	Irrealis
#σ	Word initial syllable	Loc	Locative
???	Unanalyzed form	N-	Homorganic nasal prefix
1s	First person singular	Neg1	Negative 1
2s	Second person singular	Neg2	Negative 2
3s	Third person singular	Neg3	Negative 3
1p	First person plural	Nom	Nominalizer
2p	Second person plural	O	Object
3p	Third person plural	P0	Past 0 (immediate past)
AGR	Agreement marker	P1	Past 1 (medial past)
AM	Associative marker	P2	Past 2 (remote past)
c1	Class 1	PhCl	Phrase closure
c2	Class 2	Pos	Possessive pronoun
c3	Class 3	Pres	Present
	etc.	Prog	Progressive
C	Consonant	Prt	Particle
Caus	Causative	QM	Question marker
C ^w	Labialized consonant	QP	Quotative particle
CL	Class	Rel	Relative Pronoun
Comp	Complementizer	S	Subject
Cop	Copula	Subj	Subjunctive
DO	Direct object	V	Verb
F1	Future 1 (near future)	V	Vowel
F2	Future 2 (medial future)	Ṽ or ṽ	Nasalized vowel
F3	Future 3 (distant future)	̀	Low tone
Fut	Future	̄	Mid tone
Hab	Habitual aspect	́	High tone
IO	Indirect object	̂	High-Low falling tone
Imp	Imperfective	̃	Mid-Low falling tone
Inf	Infinitive marker	̄	High-Mid falling tone
Instr	Instrument	VPart	Verbal particle

1 Introduction

1.1 Name of the language

Kemezung is a language spoken in the Misaje Sub-Division, Donga-Mantung Division, North West Region of Cameroon, West Africa. Dieu and Renaud (1983) in the *Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM)* list the language as: Kemezung [872]. The *Ethnologue* (Gordon 2005) lists the language as Kemezung, and the following as language name variations: Dumbo, Dzumbo, Kumaju (ISO 639-3 language code: dmo). The official language committee of the Kemezung speaking people have agreed that a more accurate spelling of the name of the language would be: in English, Kemedzung, and in the local orthography, *Kimədzun*.

1.2 Genetic affiliation

Kemezung has the following genetic affiliation: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Beoid, Eastern (Gordon 2005).

1.3 Sociolinguistic situation

1.3.1 Demography

The language is spoken predominately in the village of Dumbu (spelled Dumbo on government maps), though it is also spoken in a very small nearby village, Kwei. Published literature lists the number of speakers as 4,500, although the exact number is unknown since there are clusters of people living in larger towns and cities outside the area.

1.3.2 Viability

Kemezung is spoken by young people as well as old people and is the language of choice in Kemezung homes. It is also used in local churches and during community events when the audience is predominantly Kemezung.

1.3.3 Language attitudes

The Kemezung people are positively disposed toward their language.

1.3.4 Multilingualism

Several other languages can be regularly heard in Dumbu due to a variety of non-Kemezung people living in the area; for example, Fulfulde, Hausa, Naami, and Limbum.

However, the majority of communication between the people groups, as witnessed in the common market place, is Cameroonian Pidgin English, which most Kemezung speakers can speak with at least a minimum of functionality.

1.4 Corpus and nature of the research

The current paper is an effort to describe the basics of Kemezung grammar, particularly from a descriptive viewpoint. Data for the research comes primarily from a number of Kemezung texts of various genres, as well as from elicited sentences and words, collected over a period of six years, from 2004 to 2010. During this time the author spent two plus years living in the village of Dumbu, and also made regular trips to Dumbu while living one year in the nearby town of Misaje. The texts and other language data were collected with the help of several language consultants, most notably Kitati John Gamboh and Ngwa Robert Njajo.

Certain conventions have been observed in the paper and the reader is encouraged to take note of the following items related to the presentation of the data. Relative tone marking is used and no formal attempt has been made to account for tonal perturbations. Also, the data is generally presented utilizing orthographic forms. The reader is directed to the *Kemezung Orthography Guide* (Cox 2005) for aid in realizing their phonetic forms.

2 Nouns and noun phrases

2.1 Types of nouns and their structures

Kemezung nouns may be divided into those requiring a noun class prefix and those which do not. Thus, the Kemezung noun may be represented by the following schematic.

(CL-) stem

Some proper names do not require any grammatical markings and so may be considered morphologically the most basic noun type.

1. *Fúbà*

In other cases, nouns normally consist of a prefix designating the noun class, followed by the stem.

2. *kì-nchíndá*

c7-cutlass

'cutlass'

2.1.1 Proper names

Proper names include those given to people, as well as to places, and some of them have no morphological marking. In other words, they do not take a noun class prefix. Other proper names, of both people and places, take the noun class 7 prefix, *kì-*. People names, even when they contain the noun class 7 prefix, are considered to belong to noun class 1 and utilize noun class 1 pronouns and concord markers.

3. *Ná Fùbà wū ...*

it.is Fuba c1Rel

'It is Fuba who...'

4. *Ná Kì-nsàkiò wū ...*

it.is c7-nsakio c1Rel

'It is Kinsakio who...'

Places are often named after people, and as such often utilize noun class 1 concord markers (example 5). However, place names that contain the noun class 7 prefix are

considered to belong to noun class 7 and use the noun class 7 pronouns and concord markers (example 6).

5. *Ŋgàntì w-á*
Nganti c1-that
'That Nganti'

6. *Kì-bìlè k-á*
c7-bile c7-that
'That Kibile'

2.1.2 Derived nouns

Kemezung nouns may be derived through the addition of a nominalizing prefix (Nom) to a verb. The resulting noun may be characterized by the following schematic.

CL-Nom-verb

Below is a representative example.

7. *kì-n-tsísí*
c7-Nom-greet
'greeting'

2.1.3 Compound Nouns

Compound nouns may be formed by joining a noun with another constituent such as a second noun. The resulting compound noun will be treated as a noun from the same noun class as the initial noun of the compound. Note that only nouns from gender 1/2 have been observed as the initial noun in the compound noun construction. Thus, this process may be restricted to nouns belonging to this gender. Note also that compound nouns are relatively uncommon in Kemezung.

8. *chē-kú*
c1:father.of-c5:compound
'compound head'

2.2 Functions of noun morphology

2.2.1 Derivational morphology on noun roots

Nouns may be derived from verbs by the addition of a noun class prefix. In many cases a nominalizing prefix, *N-*, is also present, immediately preceding the noun root. The resulting noun belongs to gender 7/8 or 14/25. Note that a majority of nouns derived from verbs belong to noun class 7, and the nominalizing prefix is used in a majority of these class 7 derived nouns. The nominalizing prefix is used less often for class 8, 14, and 25 derived nouns.

9. a) *kì-m-bíŋ*

c7-Nom-believe

‘belief’

b) *bì-m-báǵí*

c8-Nom-thank

‘thanks’

c) *bú-dió*

c14-fight

‘fight’

In a somewhat similar operation, some nouns may have their “basic” noun class markers removed and replaced with the gender 19/26 prefixes *fì-/mìn-*, resulting in a smaller version of the original noun.¹

10. a) *kí-tí*

c7-stick

‘tree’

→

fì-tí

c19-stick

‘branch/twig’

b) *bà-nàŋ*

c2-cow

‘cows’

→

mìn-nàŋ

c26-cows

‘tiny cows’

¹ Not every word belonging to gender 19/26 is obviously diminutive, like ‘cup’, so gender 19/26 is not inherently diminutive. However this gender is used to form the diminutive of other words, and this seems to be quite productive in Kemezung.

Nouns may also be derived from certain adjectives by the simple addition of a noun class marker. The resulting noun belongs to gender 14/25, as may be seen in the examples below.

11. a) *bú-bià*

c14-bad

‘badness/evil’

b) *bù-mbóŋ*

c14-alone

‘loneliness’

2.2.2 Noun classes and genders

Kemezung common nouns may be described as belonging to seven distinct noun class pairings or genders. ‘Noun class’ refers to a system of classification in which all nouns are grouped, with the nouns of each group or class receiving an affix distinct to its class. ‘Noun gender’ refers to noun class pairings, usually consisting of singular and plural forms of the same noun. The noun class designations in this work follow Hombert (1980:83-98), which closely follow the Bantu numbering established by bantuists (Welmers 1973:163). Notable exceptions are classes 25 and 26, which appear to be creations of Hombert.

Nouns are typically marked by a prefix to indicate the number of the noun (i.e., singular vs. plural). Notable exceptions are genders 3/4, 5/6 and 9/10. The number of gender 3/4 nouns is indicated by the presence or absence of labialization of the initial consonant (example 12a). The presence of labialization, historically coming from a prefix, indicates singular number, while its absence indicates plural number. Class 5 nouns appear to have no affixation, but may undergo morphological alternations (example 12b). While the majority of class 5 nouns maintain the full root, some polysyllabic forms undergo a deletion (complete or partial) of the final syllable of the noun root. The distinction for gender 9/10 nouns is made by tone (example 12c). The singular forms are marked with relative low tone and plural forms with relative high tone.

Many words in Kemezung, from different noun classes, may optionally begin with the vowel *i*. However, many speakers do not utter this word-initial *i*, so it is not frequently heard. This word-initial *i* may not be used with words from noun class 9, so, when present, it is another way to distinguish between class 9 and class 10 nouns.

12. a) <i>kpóŋ</i> ²	<i>kóŋ</i>
c3:ridge	c4:ridge
‘ridge’	‘ridges’
b) <i>gíí</i>	<i>gí</i>
c5:egg	c6:egg
‘egg’	‘eggs’
c) <i>tsòŋ</i>	<i>tsóŋ</i> (or <i>ĩ-tsóŋ</i>)
c9:house	c10:house
‘house’	‘houses’

The full array of noun class markers with examples are given in Table 1 below. See also Hombert (1980).

Class	Noun class marking	Example	Gloss
1	∅-	nàŋ	‘cow’
2	bə-	bənàŋ	‘cows’
3	C ^w -	kpóŋ	‘ridge’
4	C-	kóŋ	‘ridges’
5	∅-	gíí	‘egg’
6	∅-	gí	‘eggs’
7	ki-	kàndzú	‘cloth’
8	bi-	bìndzú	‘cloths’
9	#ò	bì	‘goat’
10	#ó	bí	‘goats’
14	bu-	bùdénfí	‘story’
25	məN-	mèndénfí	‘stories’
19	fi-	fíkó	‘cup’
26	miN-	mìŋkó	‘cups’

Table 1. Kemezung Noun Class Markers

² kp is the common realisation of labialized k^w

2.2.3 Gender system

As suggested above, Kemezung nouns may normally be grouped into singular/plural pairs referred to as genders. The genders may be seen in the table below.

<u>singular classes</u>	<u>plural classes</u>
1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10
14	25
19	26

Table 2. Kemezung Genders

Most constituents that modify the noun must take a prefix that corresponds to the noun's class. There appears to be some partial collapsing of the system, with classes 1, 3, and 5 sharing prefixes for possessive pronouns and adjectives. However, class 1 does not share the numeral and determiner prefixes of classes 3 and 5. Likewise, classes 4, 6, and 10 share concord prefixes, though class 10 does not share the numeral prefix of classes 4 and 6.

Table 3 below shows some of the noun class concord markers.

Class	Possessive Pronouns	Adjectives	Numbers	Demonstratives
1	we-	wu-	-i,-u	nu-
3	we-	wu-	∅-	wu-
5				
2	be-	bə-	bə-	be-/b-
4	ye-	yi-	∅-	yi-/y-
6				
10	ye-	yi-	-i-	yi-/y-
7	ke-	ki-	ki-	ki-/k-
8	bie-	bi-	bi-	bi-
9	ye-	yi-	-i,-u	nyi-/y-
14	bwe-	bu-	bu-	bu-
25	me-	mən-	mən-	me-/m-
19	fi-	fi-	fi-	fi-
26	mie-	min-	min-	mi-

Table 3. Kemezong Noun Class Concord Markers³

2.3 The structure of the noun phrase

The Kemezong noun phrase consists of a noun followed by a number of optional constituents: possessor, demonstrative, numeral, quantifier, adjective(s), relative clause(s). The following schematic illustrates the noun phrase.

noun (possessor) (demonstrative) (numeral) (quantifier) (adjective) (relative clause)

Each of these constituents, except for relative clauses, must take a noun class concord prefix, which agrees with the modified noun. Note that relative clauses are preceded by a relative pronoun, which corresponds to the class of the head noun.

³ Tone marking has not been obtained for these prefixes as they seem more variable and harder to determine.

2.4 Elements in the noun phrase

2.4.1 Possessives

Possessed nouns are immediately followed by the possessive pronoun which consists of a root and a prefix corresponding to the noun's class.

13. a) *kì-nchíndá* ***kè-mì*** *kì-nchíndá* ***kì-hí***
 c7-cutlass c7-1sPos c7-cutlass c7-3sPos
 ‘my cutlass’ ‘his cutlass’
- b) *fì-kó* ***fiè-mì*** *fì-kó* ***fi-hí***
 c19-dish c19-1sPos c19-dish c19-3sPos
 ‘my dish’ ‘his dish’

The full set of possessive pronouns may be seen in Table 4 below. Note that the sound *h*, occurring between two like vowels, may or may not be pronounced depending on the speaker, resulting in a lengthened vowel when absent. Note also that the third person plural possessive pronoun has certain similarities to an associative noun phrase (see section 2.4.2).

Class	Person					
	1s	2s	3s	1p	2p	3p
1	wèmí	wòhó	wùhú	wàhá	wèní	wúbō
2	bémí	bóhó	búhú	báhá	béní	bābóló
3	wémí	wóhó	wúhú	wáhá	wéní	wūbóló
4	yémí	yóhó	yíhí	yáhá	yéní	yībóló
5	wémí	wóhó	wúhú	wáhá	wéní	wūbóló
6	yémí	yóhó	yíhí	yáhá	yéní	yībóló
7	kēmí	kōhó	kīhí	kāhá	kēní	kībóló
8	biēmí	biōhó	bihí	biāhá	biēní	bibóló
9	yèmí	yòhó	yìhí	yàhá	yèní	yíbō
10	yémí	yóhó	yíhí	yáhá	yéní	yībóló
14	bwēmí	bwōhó	būhú	bwāhá	bwēní	būbóló
25	mēmí	mōhó	mūhú	māhá	mēní	mābóló
19	fiēmí	fiōhó	fihí	fiāhá	fiēní	fibóló
26	miēmí	miōhó	mihí	miāhá	miēní	mībóló

Table 4. Kemezung Possessive Pronouns

2.4.2 Associative noun phrases

Associative noun phrases are produced when two nouns are brought into relation with each other by an associative marker which agrees in class with the first noun (head noun) of the noun phrase. Following the second noun of the noun phrase there typically also appears the particle *l̥* (PhCl), which signifies the closure of that noun phrase. While more research needs to be done, this phrase closure particle appears to be used in multiple environments, and not only with noun phrases.

14. *T̥* *bí* *chī* *kì-nfīdī* *kī* *chà* *l̥* *nā* *jì*.
 say 1pO as c7-death.celebration c7AM c1:your.father PhCl P2 Cop
 ‘Tell us how the death celebration of your father was.’

If the second noun ends with a consonant, and immediately precedes the phrase closure particle, the phrase closure particle is realized as the simple vowel *ə*, rather than *l̥*.

15. *M̥n* *kā-sī* *bū-dánfí* *bū* *nàŋ* *ə*.
 1sS finish-Caus c14-story c14AM c9-bamboo PhCl
 ‘I have finished the story of/about bamboo.’

If there are optional modifiers of the possessor noun present, such as a demonstrative or adjective, then the phrase closure particle appears after the modifiers.

16. *Béŋ* *bá* *shīā* *yí-bàŋ* *ə*
 c2:child c2AM c9:fowl c9-big PhCl
 ‘Big chicks’

The phrase closure particle is not used when the head noun is of class 1 or 9.

17. a) *Wèŋ* *wú* *shìà*
 c1:child c1AM c9:fowl
 ‘Chick’ (lit. ‘child of a fowl’)

- b) *Béŋ* *bá* *shìà* *l̥*
 c2:child c2AM c9:fowl PhCl
 ‘Chicks’ (lit. ‘children of a fowl’)

The full set of associative markers may be seen in Table 5 below.

c) <i>bù-dánfǐ</i> <i>bù-ŋ</i> c14-story c14-this 'this story'	<i>bù-dánfǐ</i> <i>bw-á</i> c14-story c14-that 'that story'
d) <i>màn-dánfǐ</i> <i>mè-ŋ</i> c25-story c25-this 'these stories'	<i>màn-dánfǐ</i> <i>m-á</i> c25-story c25-that 'those stories'
e) <i>Ø-nàŋ</i> <i>nú</i> c1-cow c1:this 'this cow'	<i>Ø-nàŋ</i> <i>w-à</i> c1-cow c1-that 'that cow'
f) <i>bà-nàŋ</i> <i>bé-ŋ</i> c2-cow c2-this 'these cows'	<i>bà-nàŋ</i> <i>b-á</i> c2-cow c2-that 'those cows'

The following table gives the demonstrative forms for each of the classes.

Class	Proximal	Distal
1	nú	wà
2	béŋ	bá
3	wùŋ	wá
4	yìŋ	yá
5	wùŋ	wá
6	yìŋ	yá
7	kìŋ	ká
8	bìŋ	biá
9	nyíŋ	yà
10	yìŋ	yá
14	bùŋ	bwá
25	mèŋ	má
19	fìŋ	fiá
26	mìŋ	miá

Table 6. Kemezung Demonstratives⁴

⁴ The distal demonstratives reflect the common Bantu historical L/H pattern (though with no distinct stem tone), whereas with the proximal demonstratives the tones are inverted, except for class 2.

2.4.4 Numerals

Kemezung numerals typically immediately follow the noun they modify. When numbers are used to modify a noun, the numbers 1-5 always agree with the modified noun, while the numbers 6-9 do not. Also note that the numbers 20, 30, 40, and 50 are considered as belonging to noun class 10, numbers 60-90 are considered as belonging to noun class 3, numbers 100-900 are considered as belonging to gender 3/4, and numbers 1.000 and above are considered as belonging to gender 1/2. The noun class marking indicating these distinctions may be seen in Table 7 below. Numbers above ten are formed through the use of *ntse* 'plus', joining numbers in the one's position with those in higher positions.

Table 7 below presents a partial list of Kemezung cardinal numerals used for counting, along with the numerals as they appear when modifying a noun.

	Numerals for counting	Gender 7/8 ('tree__')
1	mò (miu)	<i>kítí kímó</i>
2	fé	<i>bítí bífé</i>
3	té	<i>bítí bíté</i>
4	nà	<i>bítí bínà</i>
5	tìŋ	<i>bítí bítìŋ</i>
6	búsí	<i>bítí búsí</i>
7	fùmbá	<i>bítí fùmbá</i>
8	yàŋ	<i>bítí yàŋ</i>
9	fùmbóò	<i>bítí fùmbóò</i>
10	yó (yɔfu)	<i>bítí yó (yɔfu)</i>
11	yó ntsé miù	<i>bítí yó ntsé kìmò</i>
12	yó ntsé fé	<i>bítí yó ntsé bífé</i>
13	yó ntsé té	<i>bítí yó ntsé bíté</i>
14	yó ntsé ná	<i>bítí yó ntsé bínà</i>
15	yó ntsé tíŋ	<i>bítí yó ntsé bítìŋ</i>
16	yó ntsé búsí	<i>bítí yó ntsé búsí</i>
17	yó ntsé fùmbá	<i>bítí yó ntsé fùmbá</i>
18	yó ntsé yàŋ	<i>bítí yó ntsé yàŋ</i>
19	yó ntsé fùmbóò	<i>bítí yó ntsé fùmbóò</i>
20	mbá fié	<i>bítí mbá fié</i>
21	mbá fié ntsé mò	<i>bítí mbá fié ntsé kìmò</i>
22	mbá fié ntsé fé	<i>bítí mbá fié ntsé bífé</i>
60	gbí búsí	<i>bítí gbí búsí</i>
100	gbí	<i>bítí gbí</i>
101	gbí ntsé mò	<i>bítí gbí ntsé kìmò</i>
200	gí fé	<i>bítí gí fé</i>
1000	ntsùkù	<i>bítí ntsùkù</i>
2000	bàntsùkù báfé	<i>bítí bàntsùkù báfé</i>

Table 7. Kemezung Numerals

In many cases, the roots of cardinal numerals also undergo morphological changes, according to their gender. This process is illustrated in the examples below.

19. a)	\emptyset -nàŋ	<i>miù</i>	bà-nàŋ	<i>bá-fé</i>
	c1-cow	c1:one	c2-cow	c2:two
		'one cow'		'two cows'

b) <i>gbó</i>	<i>mó</i>	<i>gó</i>	<i>fé</i>
c3:foot	c3:one	c4:feet	c4:two
'one foot'		'two feet'	
c) <i>bì</i>	<i>miù</i>	<i>bí</i>	<i>fié</i>
c9:goat	c9:one	c10:goat	c10:two
'one goat'		'two goats'	
d) <i>bù-dánfí</i>	<i>bù-mò</i>	<i>màn-dánfí</i>	<i>màn-féŋ</i>
c14-story	c14-one	c25-story	c25-two
'one story'		'two stories'	
e) <i>fì-kó</i>	<i>fì-mò</i>	<i>mìŋ-kó</i>	<i>mín-féŋ</i>
c19-cup	c19-one	c26-cup	c26-two
'one cup'		'two cups'	

Table 8 below presents the numbers 1-5 as they appear when modifying each noun class.

Class	'one'	'two'	'three'	'four'	'five'
1	miu				
2		bəfe	bəte	bəna	bətiŋ
3	mo				
4		fe	te	na	tiŋ
5	mo				
6		fe	te	na	tiŋ
7	kimo				
8		bife	bite	bina	bitiŋ
9	miu				
10		fié	tié	niá	tiŋ
14	bumo				
25		mənfəŋ	məntəŋ	mənəŋ	məntiŋ
19	fimo				
26		minfəŋ	mintəŋ	minəŋ	mintiŋ

Table 8. Kemezung Numeral Agreement for Numbers 1-5

2.4.5 Quantifiers

Kemezung quantifiers immediately follow the modified noun. Two quantifiers ('all' and 'some') take a prefix corresponding to the noun's class, while one quantifier ('many') is invariable.

20. a) *bì-tí* ***bí-chí***
c8-tree c8-all
'all trees'

b) *mìŋ-kó* ***mín-chúŋ***
c26-cup c26-all
'all cups'

21. a) *bà-nàŋ* ***bà-dò***
c2-cow c2-some
'some cows'

b) *gó* ***yí-dò***
c4:feet c4-some
'some feet'

22. a) *bì-tí* ***kí-yéŋ***
c8-tree c7-many
'many trees'

b) *bà-nì* ***kí-yéŋ***
c2-people c7-many
'many people'

In certain contexts, these quantifiers can give slightly different senses than the basic one. The example below shows how *chi* 'all' can be used with some singular nouns to indicate the entirety of the modified noun. However, this construction does not seem very common in Kemezung.

23. *kì-tí* ***kí-chí***
c7-tree c7-all
'the whole tree'

Below *do* 'some' modifies a singular noun and gives a discriminating sense.

24. *tsòŋ* *yí-dò*
 c9-house c9-some
 ‘another house’

The following table provides a summary of Kemezung quantifiers.

Class	‘all’	‘some’	‘many’
1	wúchí	wídò	-
2	báchí	bədò	kíyéŋ
3	wúchí	wùdò	-
4	yíchí	yídò	kíyéŋ
5	wúchí	wùdò	-
6	yíchí	yídò	kíyéŋ
7	kíchí	kìdò	-
8	bíchí	bídò	kíyéŋ
9	yíchí	yídò	-
10	yíchí	yìdò	kíyéŋ
14	búchí	bùdò	-
25	mánchí	méndò	kíyéŋ
19	fíchí	fìdò	-
26	mínchí	mídò	kíyéŋ

Table 9. Kemezung Quantifiers⁵

2.4.6 Adjectives

It appears that there are only a few true adjectives in Kemezung. Adjectives follow the modified noun and are marked with a prefix that corresponds to the modified noun’s class.⁶

25. a) *wèŋ* *wú-fà*
 c1:child c1-new
 ‘new child’

⁵ The tone patterns in this table for the words meaning ‘some’ are more complicated than in other tables, but they are still consistent. The final syllable is always low. In general the first syllable for singular is low and plural is high, but the inverse is true for genders 1/2 and 9/10, which fits the pattern of those genders being different.

⁶ Kemezung also expresses adjectival meaning through verbs that are adjectival in meaning (but take tense/aspect and negative marking like other verbs) or noun phrases (often beginning with the word *bə* ‘with’). True adjectives are distinguished by the fact that they agree in class with the noun they modify.

b) *bí* *yí-bàŋ*
 c10:goat c10-big
 ‘big goats’

c) *bì-ndzú* *bì-biá*
 c8-cloths c8-bad
 ‘bad clothes’

2.4.7 Relative clauses

Relative clauses follow the modified noun and are marked by a relative pronoun. The relative pronoun agrees in class with the head noun.

26. a) *Bù-ŋ ná bù-dənfɛ̀ bù fì-ʒŋ [fì ná jì bá mè].*
 c14-this it.is c14-story c14AM c19-thing c19Rel P2 Cop to 1sO
 ‘This is the story of the thing which happened to me.’

b) *N-tá lá sá nɛ̀ŋ [yí sá fùnsà mè].*
 1s-say Comp it.was c9:work c9Rel P1 disturb 1sO
 ‘I said that it was work which disturbed me.’

c) *Ø-mèní tɛ̀ là nà ŋgʒŋ mən-shì [mə sá shíshà kɛ̀-bàndá k-á wì].*
 c1-mother say Comp it.is c25:water c25-hot c25Rel P1 pour c7-arm c7-that on
 ‘The mother said that it is hot water which was poured on that arm.’

The full set of relative pronouns may be seen in Table 10 below.

Class	Relative Pronoun
1	wú
2	bè
3	wù
4	yì
5	wù
6	yì
7	kì
8	bì
9	yí
10	yì
14	bù
25	mè
19	fì
26	mì

Table 10. Kemezong Relative Pronouns

2.4.8 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns agree with the noun class of the noun the pronoun is replacing. The full set of personal pronouns used with people (noun class 1) may be seen in Table 11 below.

Person	Subject	Object
1 st singular	mīN	mì
2 nd singular	wē	wè
3 rd singular	yō	yò
1 st plural	kē	bì
2 nd plural	bē	bèŋ
3 rd plural	bō	bō

Table 11. Kemezong Class 1 Personal Pronouns

The full set of third person pronouns may be seen in Table 12 below.

Class	3rd person
1	yō
2	bō
3	wū
4	yī
5	wū
6	yī
7	kī
8	bī
9	yī
10	yī
14	bū
25	mā
19	fī
26	mī

Table 12. Kemezung 3rd Person Pronouns

3 Verbs and Verb Phrases

3.1 Verbs and their structures

Kemezung verbs are rather simple in their morphology. They may occur with subject agreement marking (though only with the first person singular) or an infinitive/gerund prefix, an imperfective aspect suffix, and a negative suffix.

27. *Gāŋ!*

go

‘Go!’

28. *Mīn ná m-bā-tí bā-lōkō.*

1sS Pres 1s-uproot-imp c2-cassava

‘I am uprooting cassava.’

29. *Wā ŋáŋ lā n-diò bū-diō ndzīŋ-é hē.*

2s see Comp Inf-fight c14-fight be.good-Neg3 Neg2

‘You see that fighting is not good.’

The Kemezung verb may be illustrated by the following schematic.

(AGR- or Inf-) stem (-Imp) (-Neg3)

3.2 Functions of verb morphology

3.2.1 Tense and aspect morphology

The bare form of a verb has a completive sense; often, but not always, referring to the immediate past.

30. a) *Kā bá nì ká.*

1p come from c5:farm

‘We have come from the farm.’ (just now or recently)

b) *Yó dà bí-diáŋ.*

3s cook c8-food

‘She has cooked food.’

The addition of the imperfective suffix renders a progressive/continuative sense in the present tense.

31. *Yò ná dà-lí bì-diàŋ.*
 3s Pres cook-Imp c8-food
 ‘She is cooking food.’

The imperfective aspect suffix is morphologically complex. Hyman (1981) reports that Noni, a nearby language, also has a number of imperfective aspect forms that generally arise from phonological conditioning. The same is true for Nchane, another nearby language, as reported by Boutwell (2010).

Generally, only monosyllabic verb roots can take an aspectual suffix, while polysyllabic verb roots do not. The aspectual suffix typically takes the form: -CV. There is a significant degree of vowel harmonization between the vowel of the suffix and the vowel of the monosyllabic verb root. However, there do not appear to be any clearly consistent patterns in determining the consonant of the imperfective suffix, so most times the consonant appears to be randomly chosen from the following set: k, t, l, n, m, ch, y, and d.

Below, verbs are presented in the infinitive form, with the infinitive prefix *N-*, followed by the verbs in the imperfective form. The verbs are grouped according to the ending of the infinitive form of the verb so that the variable nature of the aspectual suffixes may be seen more clearly.

When the radical ends with the vowel *a*, the imperfective suffix is typically realized with the vowel *-i*:

<i>n-dā</i>	‘to cook’	<i>dā-lì</i>	‘cooking’
<i>m-bā</i>	‘to uproot’	<i>bā-tì</i>	‘uprooting’
<i>n-sā</i>	‘to judge’	<i>sā-kì</i>	‘judging’

When the radical ends with the vowel *ɔ*, the imperfective suffix is typically realized with the vowel *-o*:

<i>m-fɔ̄</i>	‘to taste’	<i>fɔ̄-kò</i>	‘tasting’
<i>ŋ-gɔ̄</i>	‘to scratch’	<i>gɔ̄-tò</i>	‘scratching’

When the radical ends with the vowels *i* or *u*, the imperfective suffix is typically realized with the vowel *-i*:

<i>ŋ-kwī</i>	‘to catch’	<i>kwī-tì</i>	‘catching’
--------------	------------	---------------	------------

<i>n-lī</i>	‘to throw’	<i>lī-yì</i>	‘throwing’
<i>ŋ-gū</i>	‘to open’	<i>gū-yì</i>	‘opening’
<i>ŋ-kū</i>	‘to clap’	<i>kū-chì</i>	‘clapping’

When the radical ends with the vowel *e*, the imperfective suffix is typically realized with the vowels *-e* or *-i*:

<i>m-bē</i>	‘to enter’	<i>bē-kè</i>	‘entering’
<i>n-dē</i>	‘to pick’	<i>dē-tè</i>	‘picking’
<i>ŋ-gbē</i>	‘to bite’	<i>gbē-tì</i>	‘biting’
<i>n-chē</i>	‘to pass’	<i>chē-tì</i>	‘passing’

When the radical contains the vowels *ə* or *i*, the imperfective suffix is typically realized with the vowel *-i*, but also occasionally with the vowel *-i*:

<i>m-biā</i>	‘to add’	<i>biā-lì</i>	‘adding’
<i>ŋ-kā</i>	‘to slap’	<i>kā-tì</i>	‘slapping’
<i>n-tā</i>	‘to jump’	<i>tā-kì</i>	‘jumping’
<i>n-tā</i>	‘to tell’	<i>tā-dì</i>	‘telling’

Verbs ending with a consonant take an imperfective suffix that follows the same patterns of vowel harmonization demonstrated above. Note that Kemezung words cannot end with any consonant other than *ŋ*.

<i>m-bāŋ</i>	‘to close’	<i>bāŋ-kì</i>	‘closing’
<i>ŋ-kōŋ</i>	‘to chase’	<i>kōŋ-kò</i>	‘chasing’
<i>n-jūŋ</i>	‘to stay/sit’	<i>jūmì</i>	‘staying’
<i>m-būŋ</i>	‘to break’	<i>būŋ-chì</i>	‘breaking’
<i>n-nūŋ</i>	‘to work’	<i>nūŋ-tì</i>	‘working’
<i>n-wōŋ</i>	‘to pluck’	<i>wūŋ-tì</i>	‘plucking’

m-b̄ɪŋ ‘to answer’ *b̄ɪmì* ‘answering’

3.3 The structure of the verb phrase

The Kemezung verb phrase consists of at least one verb. Preceding the verb may be a verbal particle indicating tense (past or present) or aspect, as well as a negative marker (Neg1). Following the verb may be one or more of the following: negative markers (Neg1, Neg2), and a verbal particle (future).⁷ The order of these constituents is summarized in the schematic below.

Verb Phrase = TAM (Past, Present) Neg1 Verb Neg1 Neg2 TAM (Future) ... Neg1

32. *Yò [n̄ ká fiāt-à m̄ b̄i-diāŋ f̄ f̄ k̄].*
3s P2 Neg1 cook-Neg3 1sO c8-food quick quick Neg1
‘He did not cook food for me very quickly.’

3.4 Elements in the verb phrase

3.4.1 Verbal particles

3.4.1.1 Tense

Tense is primarily indicated through the use of various verbal particles. However, events that occurred recently in the day are often indicated by using the bare form of the verb. This past tense construction may be labeled as P0.

33. a) *Yò ḡàŋ fiá.*
3s go ahead
‘He went ahead.’

b) *K̄ k̄àŋ Ø-nàŋ.*
1p chase c1-cow
‘We chased a cow.’

Events occurring at the time of speech (present tense) are expressed using the imperfective form of the verb. The morphological structure of an imperfective verb has been dealt with above. However, there are also two verbal particles which may occur with an

⁷ While the Neg1 marker may be realized with different tones, this is likely due to the tonal environment rather than representing distinct negative markers. Further studies need to be done to verify this.

imperfective verb in the formation of the present tense. These two particles seem to belong to two parallel constructions from which the speaker must choose one. One construction does not appear to result in a different meaning from the other, as the two constructions may be used interchangeably in the same context, but the two particles may not be used together in the same sentence.⁸

One present tense construction makes use of the verbal particle *na* (Pres). As with the P1 and P2 particles (see below), the *na* particle occurs before the verb. If the sentence is short and nothing else follows the verb, such as a direct object, content question word, etc., then the particle *li* also follows the verb. However, if a direct object or some other word follows the verb, then the particle *li* will not occur. In example 34 below, note that the verb does not take any overt imperfective marking because it is a polysyllabic verb. Also note in example 34a that the particle *li* has become *li* due to vowel harmonization with the final vowel of the verb, though many speakers also retain the pronunciation *li*.

34. a) *Kə ná bàdì li.*
1p Pres weed Prt:Imp
'We are weeding.'

b) *Kə ná bàdì kə.*
1p Pres weed c5:farm
'We are weeding a farm.'

The second present tense construction makes use of the distal demonstrative⁹, and since the agents in most sentences belong to gender1/2, the distal demonstratives most often used are *wa* in the singular and *ba* in the plural. Unlike the particle *na* above, this particle occurs after the verb, remains even if a direct object or other word follows the verb, and the particle *li* is never used in this construction.

⁸ Some speakers suggest that one form is used when making an unsolicited statement, and the other form is used when answering a question. More research needs to be done on this.

⁹ In this present tense construction this particle consistently takes the form of the distal demonstrative, and to note this fact I have labelled it that way in the example sentences. But the reader should understand that the particle is not functioning as a demonstrative, but rather as an indication of the present tense. Further studies need to be done to clarify the relationship of the parallel present (and future) constructions.

35. a) *K̀̀ bádí b-á.*
 1p weed c2-those
 ‘We are weeding.’

b) *K̀̀ bádí b-á ká.*
 1p weed c2-those c5:farm
 ‘We are weeding a farm.’

Events that occurred earlier in the day are indicated by the particle *sə* (P1). The particle *sə* seems to be used relatively infrequently compared to the use of the bare form of the verb or the particle *nə* (P2).

36. a) *Lénỳ̀ sá t̀̀ nyè̀̀.*
 Linyo P1 buy c9:meat
 ‘Linyo bought meat.’

b) *Dzà̀̀ sá bā.*
 c9:rain P1 come
 ‘Rain came.’

Events that occurred yesterday or longer ago are indicated by the particle *nə* (P2). Some speakers suggest that, when spoken, the greater the amount of stress placed on the particle *nə*, the further in the past the speaker refers to.

37. a) *B́́ ń́ diā b̀̀-ł̀̀k̀̀.*
 3p P2 eat c2-cassava
 ‘They ate cassava.’

b) *Tà ń́ kp̀̀ bì-yá ý́ ntsè bì-fé ǹ̀ j̀̀.*
 Father P2 die c8-year ten plus c8-two from behind
 ‘My father died twelve years ago.’

Progressive actions taking place in the past also use the verbal particles *sə* and *nə*, and make use of the particle *l̩* in the same way as a present tense progressive construction.

38. a) *Shālā sá bìn-chì l̩.*
 Shela P1 dance-Imp Prt:Imp
 ‘Shela was dancing.’

b) *Dá ná tàŋ-kē nyèŋ.*
 Da P2 buy-Imp c9:meat
 ‘Da was buying meat.’

Similar to the present progressive, there appear to be two parallel future constructions, more or less identical in meaning, from which the speaker must choose one in any particular utterance.

One future construction utilizes the copula *ji*, the distal demonstrative, and the bare form of the verb. The components of a simple sentence would be placed together in the following manner:

Subject *ji* distal demonstrative personal pronoun verb

39. *Fúbá jì w-á yò gāŋ.*
 Fuba Cop c1-that 3s go
 ‘Fuba will go.’ (later today)

A second future construction utilizes the imperfective form of the verb and the particle *lì* (Fut) following the verb, but in this case no verbal particle must come before the verb (as with the present progressive). It is very important to note that while the form of the verb is imperfective, the meaning of the verb is not progressive. A progressive future construction can be seen in example 47 of section 3.4.1.3.

40. *Fúbá gín-tí lî shî bîŋ.*
 Fuba go-Imp Fut c5:market on
 ‘Fuba will go to the market.’ (later today)

The examples used above to demonstrate the two future constructions are referring to an event that will take place sometime later on the same day. If the speaker wants to refer to an event happening tomorrow or within the following week, the same general constructions may be used, except the particle *ná* (F2) must also be included. In the first construction, which uses the copula, the particle *ná* occurs directly before the copula. In the second construction, which uses the imperfective verb form, the particle *ná* occurs directly before the verb.

41. a) *Fúbá ná jì w-á yò bíj.*
 Fuba F2 Cop c1-that 3s dance
 ‘Fuba will dance.’ (within the next week)

b) *Fūbā ná bīn-chī lī.*
 Fuba F2 dance-Imp Fut
 ‘Fuba will dance.’ (within the next week)

An event happening a week or more later is indicated by the particle *nà* (F3), occurring in the same position as F2. When the F3 particle is used the speaker is often also expressing less confidence in the surety of the event happening.

42. *Fúbá nà lī-yī tà.*
 Fuba F3 throw-Imp c5:stone
 ‘Fuba will throw a stone.’ (a week or more later)

It should also be pointed out that another common way to express a future event is to use a present progressive construction and then specify its location in the future with an adverbial time word, such as *woki* ‘tomorrow’.

43. *ŋ-gīn-tí w-á Nkāmbè wòkī.*
 1s-go-Imp c1-that Nkambe tomorrow
 ‘I am going to Nkambe tomorrow.’

Table 13 below provides a summary of the Kemezung tense forms.

Tense	Example	Gloss
Present1	Yò <i>ná</i> <i>dī-ī</i> <i>bì-diàŋ</i> . 3s Pres eat-Imp c8-food	She is eating food.
Present2	Yò <i>dī-í</i> <i>w-á</i> <i>bī-diāŋ</i> . 3s eat-Imp c1-that c8-food	She is eating food.
P0	Yò <i>diá</i> <i>bī-diāŋ</i> . 3s eat c8-food	She has eaten food. (typically very recently)
P1	Yò <i>sá</i> <i>diá</i> <i>bī-diāŋ</i> . 3s P1 eat c8-food	She ate food. (earlier today)
P2	Yò <i>ná</i> <i>diá</i> <i>bī-diāŋ</i> . 3s P2 eat c8-food	She ate food. (yesterday or before)
F1	Yò <i>dī-í</i> <i>l̩</i> <i>bī-diāŋ</i> . 3s eat-Imp Fut c8-food	She will eat food. (today)
F1	Yò <i>jì</i> <i>w-á</i> <i>yò diá</i> <i>bī-diāŋ</i> . 3s Cop c1-that 3s eat c8-food	She will eat food. (today)
F2	Yò <i>ná</i> <i>dī-ī</i> <i>l̩</i> <i>bì-diàŋ</i> . 3s F2 eat-Imp Fut c8-food	She will eat food. (tomorrow or within a week)
F2	Yò <i>ná</i> <i>jì</i> <i>w-á</i> <i>yò diá</i> <i>bī-diāŋ</i> . 3s F2 Cop c1-that 3s eat c8-food	She will eat food. (tomorrow or within a week)
F3	Yò <i>nà</i> <i>dī-ī</i> <i>l̩</i> <i>bì-diàŋ</i> . 3s F3 eat-Imp Fut c8-food	She will eat food. (a week or more later)
F3	Yò <i>ná</i> <i>jì</i> <i>w-á</i> <i>yò diá</i> <i>bī-diāŋ</i> . 3s F2 Cop c1-that 3s eat c8-food	She will eat food. (a week or more later)

Table 13. Kemezung Tense Forms¹⁰

¹⁰ Further research needs to be done to verify and improve the understanding of the role of tone in the various tenses, particularly the future.

3.4.1.2 Aspect

Habitual aspect is expressed through the use of the imperfective verb minus any verbal particles to indicate the time of the event.¹¹ The meaning may be clarified by the use of an adverbial phrase such as *tsa chi* ‘all the time’ or *dio chi* ‘every day’.

44. a) *Fùbà bìn-chí k̄.*¹²
Fuba dance-Imp Prt:Imp
‘Fuba dances (often/regularly).’

b) *Fùbà bìn-chí diō chí.*
Fuba dance-Imp c6:days all
‘Fuba dances every day.’

c) *Yò dá-lí bí-diǎŋ?*
3s cook-Imp c8-food:QM
‘Does she cook food?’

3.4.1.3 Irrealis

An irrealis mood is produced with the particle *k̄i* and the imperfective form of the verb. The particle *k̄i* precedes the verb, like most other verbal particles, but the particle *l̄i* is not used following the verb, as with some other imperfective constructions.¹³

This irrealis construction is used a lot in hortatory discourse to say that someone should be doing something.

45. *Wə k̄í nēndē Nyò tsā chí, wə kə fùŋ k̄ō h̄.*
2s Irr beg c1:God c9:time all 2s Neg1 tire Neg1 Neg2
‘You should pray to God all the time, without tiring.’ (lit. ‘You be begging God

¹¹ For example, in example 44, if the particle *na* were included the meaning would change to a present progressive.

¹² At first glance this sentence appears to be identical to one of the future constructions. Further research needs to be done to show what the definitive differences are between this habitual and the future construction. However, note in example 44b that the particle *l̄i* is not present, as happens with present and past constructions where a DO appears after the verb, and unlike with the future where the particle remains.

¹³ Further research needs to be done on this particle *k̄i* for a more comprehensive analysis.

all the time. Don't tire!')

This construction is also used in fictional stories, such as folk tales, to indicate a general progressive, often in the past.

46. *Bù-tsū bū-dō ná jī dzì kí gàndà dzà chí.*
c14-day c14-some P2 Cop c9:elephant Irr walk c9:path on
'One day elephant was walking on the path.' (lit. 'Some day was, elephant be walking on the path.')

This is also the progressive construction commonly used in the future.

47. *Yò ná jì w-á yò kí bìn-chì.*
3s F3 Cop c1-that 3s Irr danc-Imp
'He will be dancing.' (a week or more later, more uncertain)

3.4.2 Verb phrase level negation

Negation in Kemezung involves the negative markers *kə* (Neg1) and *hə* (Neg2), and sometimes the addition of the suffix *-ə* (Neg3). As a general rule, *kə* (Neg1) is only used to negate verbs that are perfective in form, while *hə* (Neg2) and the suffix *-ə* (Neg3) are the markers of negation for imperfective verbs. However, the suffix *-ə* (Neg3) is also occasionally used with perfective verbs, and *hə* (Neg2) may also occur optionally with many perfective verbs.

Following are some examples of negation with perfective verbs. Note that negation markers occur both before and after the verb. Example 46d shows the use of the optional Neg2 with a perfective verb.

48. a) *Kə gəŋ ká!*
Neg1 go Neg1
'Don't go!'
- b) *Yò nā ká nìŋ kə.*
3s P2 Neg1 work Neg1
'He did not work.'

c) *Kà jì b-á ká jí kà wàŋ kà dā.*
 1p Cop c1-those 1p Cop Neg1 pluck Neg1 c4:bean
 ‘We will not pluck beans.’

d) *Kà gàŋ ká há!*
 Neg1 go Neg1 Neg2
 ‘Don’t go!’

Many verbs that have an imperfective form ending with the vowel *i* do not follow the above pattern. Rather than adding Neg1 after the perfective form of the verb, a variation of the imperfective verb form is used as the base form, to which the suffix *-ə* (Neg3) is added. Note that in example 49a the normal imperfective form of the verb would be *tí-ki*, and in example 49b Neg1 may still occur after the verb, but it is now optional due to the negation marking on the verb. Examples 49c and 49d show that the placement of the optional Neg1 after the verb is flexible, occurring directly after the verb or at the end of the clause or sentence. It is also important to note that, while the verb is imperfective in appearance, the meaning is not progressive.

49. a) *Kà tá-ki-ə!*
 Neg1 jump-Imp-Neg3
 ‘Don’t jump!’

b) *Kà tá-ki-ə ká!*
 Neg1 jump-Imp-Neg3 Neg1
 ‘Don’t jump!’

c) *Kà gù-y-á ká kì-bà k-á!*
 Neg1 open-Imp-Neg3 Neg1 c7-bag c7-that
 ‘Don’t open that bag!’

d) *Kà gù-y-á kì-bà k-á ká!*
 Neg1 open-Imp-Neg3 c7-bag c7-that Neg1
 ‘Don’t open that bag!’

Irregular forms of negation may occur as a result of vowel harmonization (examples 50a and 50b), or due to the absence of expected negation markers (example 50c).

b) *Kpánsí w-à ná mí sìn.*
 c1:woman c1-that P2 there not
 ‘That woman was not there.’

c) *Kpò ná sìn.*
 c5:money it.is not
 ‘There is no money.’

3.4.3 Adverbs

Adverbs normally follow the direct object if present, otherwise they follow the verb.

53. *Nā η-gà-yì bí búní.*
 P2 1s-put-imp c8:them well
 ‘I was placing them well.’

Many adverbs may be reduplicated to express emphasis or intensity.

54. a) *Pētér t̄ l̄ yò l̄t̄ f̄ f̄.*
 Peter tell QP 3s run quick quick
 ‘Peter told him to run very quickly.’

b) *Mīn ná η̄η j̄ f̄-óη f̄-dò ch̄ ch̄.*
 1sS P2 see Cop c19-thing c19-some different different
 ‘I saw it was something very different.’

3.4.4 Complements

Complements are introduced by *l̄* (Comp). This particle follows verbs of cognition or desire such as ‘to think’, ‘to know’, ‘to see’, or ‘to want’.

55. a) *W̄ η̄η l̄ [n-diò b̄-diò ndz̄-è h̄].*
 2s see Comp Inf-fight c14-fight be.good-Neg3 Neg2
 ‘You see that fighting is not good.’

b) *B̄n̄b̄ás n̄ s̄ l̄ [yò dz̄ M̄rk].*
 Barnabas P2 want Comp 3s take Mark
 ‘Barnabas wanted to take Mark.’

When this particle occurs with other kinds of verbs, it serves to introduce the purpose or goal of the verb.

56. *Tsà yí nā n-dzá nē tsōŋ lā [n-lè náj jī]*
 Time c9Rel it.is 1s-leave from c9:house Comp 1s-go c10:bamboo Cop

n-dzè kì-nchīndā kè-mì.
 1s-take c7-cutlass c7-1sPos

‘When I leave from the house (in order) to go where the bamboo is I take my cutlass.’

3.4.5 Valence changing operations

3.4.5.1 Causatives¹⁴

Causative constructions are accomplished by moving the subject to the object position along with the “main” verb, adding a subject and replacing the main verb with the verb *nfə* ‘to make’. The particle *lā* (Comp) may optionally occur after the verb *nfə*, as demonstrated in example 58b.

57. a) *Wēŋ sá lè kā.*
 c1:child P1 go c5:farm
 ‘The child went to the farm.’

b) *Mēní sā fə wèŋ lè kā.*
 c1:mother P1 make c1:child go c5:farm
 ‘The mother made the child go to the farm.’

58. a) *Mín m-bìŋ.*
 1sS 1s-dance
 ‘I danced.’

b) *Yò fə lā m-bíŋ.*
 3s make Comp 1s-dance
 ‘He made me dance.’

3.4.5.2 Reciprocals and Reflexives

Reciprocal and reflexive phrases are both produced in the same manner; with the word *gwi* ‘body’ and the appropriate possessive pronoun. Note that when the subject is plural, as in reciprocal phrases, there is often a suffix added to the verb which, at the present time, appears to be randomly chosen for each verb.

¹⁴ Strictly speaking the causative construction may not be considered as valency changing.

59. *Yó η̄āη gwì yì-hī.*
 3s see c9:body c9-3sPos
 ‘He saw himself.’ (lit. ‘He saw his body.’)

60. *B̀ ñá gbé-chè gwí yì-b̄lā.*
 3p P2 bite-??? c10:body c10-3pPos
 ‘They bit each other.’ (lit. ‘They bit their bodies.’)

Note that the sentence in example 60 above is ambiguous, meaning either ‘they bit each other’ or ‘they bit themselves’. If the hearer cannot derive the correct meaning from context then the speaker will need to say more to clarify his exact meaning.

3.4.5.3 Passives

Passives are formed with the copula *ji*, the infinitive form of the verb, which is considered as belonging to noun class 9, and either a possessive pronoun or an associative phrase. The agent of the verb must appear in the sentence. Passives do not seem to be used frequently in Kemezung.

61. a) *Ŋgwà ñá dzè kí-tí k-á.*
 Ngwa P2 take c7-chair c7-that
 ‘Ngwa took that chair.’

b) *K̄t-t̄ k-á ñá jī n-dzè yí Ŋgwà.*
 c7-chair c7-that P2 Cop Inf-take c9AM Ngwa
 ‘That chair was taken by Ngwa.’ (lit. ‘That chair was the taking of Ngwa.’)

c) *K̄t-t̄ k-á ñá jī n-dzè yè-m̄.*
 c7-chair c7-that P2 Cop Inf-take c9-1sPos
 ‘That chair was taken by me.’ (lit. ‘That chair was my taking.’)

4 Clauses

4.1 General clause structure

The Kemezung clause consists of at least a subject followed by a verb phrase. Following the verb phrase may be one or more of the following: indirect object, direct object, adpositional phrase, and adverbial phrase. The order of these constituents is summarized in the chart below.

Clause = Subject VP IO DO AdposP AdvP

62. *Yò [nā ká fiāt-à mī bī-diāŋ fō fō kā].*
3s P2 Neg1 cook-Neg3 1sO c8-food quick quick Neg1
'He did not cook food for me very quickly.'

4.2 Basic clause types and their structures

4.2.1 Declarative clauses

Kemezung declarative clauses are basic with no special morphosyntactic markings.

63. a) *Iŋ-gīn-tí w-à shī bīŋ.*
1s-go-Imp c1-that c5:market on
'I am going to the market.'

b) *Yò ná tàŋ nyèŋ.*
3s P2 buy c9:meat.
'She bought meat.'

4.2.2 Imperative clauses

Imperative clauses generally lack a constituent in the subject slot when the subject is second person singular, though it may be optionally included. The second person plural pronoun *bə* precedes the verb when the subject is plural. First and third person pronouns may also be used in imperative sentences, though the force of command may be weaker at times.

64. a) *Nyà mí kí-tí!*
give 1sO c7-chair
'Give me a chair!'

b) *Bà kò, bà diá, bà kí gòmbià mì!*
2pS take 2pS eat 2pS Irr think 1sO
'Take! Eat! Be thinking of me!'

c) *Kā néndé Nyò!*
1p beg c1:God
'Let's pray to God!'

d) *Yò bè tsòŋ!*
3s enter c9:house
'Let him enter the house!'

4.2.3 Interrogative Clauses

There are two main types of Kemezung interrogative clauses: yes-no questions and content questions. Each is treated separately below.

4.2.3.1 Y/N Questions

Yes/no questions are differentiated from their declarative counterparts by the presence of a floating low tone clitic at the end of the sentence. This floating low tone combines with the last inherent tone to form a contour. The last inherent tone may also be raised or exaggerated to make the contour more evident.

65. a) *Wā ná di-í bì-likā.*
2s Pres eat-Imp c8-papaya
'You are eating papaya.'

b) *Wā ná di-í bì-likā?*
2s Pres eat-Imp c8-papaya:QM
'Are you eating papaya?'

4.2.3.2 Content questions

Content questions are formed by the addition of some question word or phrase, which normally occurs at the end of the clause or sentence. The low tone clitic of Y/N questions is not present in content questions.

The word *la* ‘what’ is quite productive and combines with other words and phrases to provide a number of semantic concepts including time and purpose. When *la* is used without any other question morphemes it gives the basic sense of ‘what’.

66. *Fí-ŋ ná là?*
 c19-this it.is what
 ‘What is this?’

When *la* is used in conjunction with a time word, then the question conveyed is ‘when’.

67. *Ø-ŋkúŋ bā tsà yì lā?*
 c1-chief come c9:time c9Rel what
 ‘When will the chief come?’ (lit. ‘The chief comes at what time?’)

68. *Ø-ŋkúŋ bā bù-tsù bù lā?*
 c1-chief come c14-day c14Rel what
 ‘When will the chief come?’ (lit. ‘The chief comes on what day?’)

‘Why’ questions are commonly formed with *ndzi* ‘because’ followed by *la*.

69. *Wə ká t̄ k̄ h̄ ŋḡŋ ndzī là?*
 2s Neg1 carry Neg1 Neg2 c25:water because what
 ‘Why have you not carried water?’ (lit. ‘Because of what have you not carried water?’)

‘Why’ questions may also be formed by the addition of *li* ‘for’ after *la*.

70. *Wə bá lá lí?*
 2s come what for
 ‘Why have you come?’ (lit. ‘You have come for what?’)

‘Who’, ‘whom’, and ‘whose’ are expressed by the use of *yəŋ*.

71. a) *Nù ná yəŋ?*
 c1:this it.is who
 ‘Who is this?’

- b) *Wə nyá kí-dà bá yəŋ?*
 2s give c7-broom to who
 ‘To whom have you given the broom?’

c) *Kí-ŋ ná kì-nchīndā kì yàŋ à?*
 c7-this it.is c7-cutlass c7AM who PhCl
 ‘Whose cutlass is this?’ (lit. ‘This is the cutlass of who?’)

‘Where’ is expressed by the use of the word *màŋ*. Note that in certain contexts *ji* and *màŋ* are contracted into the word *jàŋ* (example 74).

72. *Wà ná gín-tí màŋ?*
 2s Pres go-Imp where
 ‘Where are you going?’

73. *Kpēnsē ná jī màŋ?*
 c1:my.wife it.is Cop where
 ‘Where is my wife?’

74. *Kpēnsē jàŋ?*
 c1:my.wife be.where
 ‘Where is my wife?’

The quantity of countable items is expressed through the use of *me*, which takes the class prefix of the item in question.

75. *Wà jì bá bēŋ bā-mē?*
 2s Cop with c2:child c2-how.many
 ‘How many children do you have?’

76. *Mīn-chúŋ mī-mē nā jī kè-bà k-ā ntìŋ?*
 c26-banana c26-how.many it.is Cop c7-bag c7-that in
 ‘How many bananas are in that bag?’

The quantity of mass nouns is expressed through the word *nəŋ* ‘how’.

77. a) *Ŋgóŋ sá kpāŋsē w-ā ntìŋ nā jì nəŋ?*
 c25:water ??? c3:pot c3-that in it.is Cop how
 ‘How much water is in that pot?’

b) *Wà tàŋ nàŋ?*
 2s buy how
 ‘You bought for how much?’

Nəŋ 'how' is used in various other contexts as well.

78. a) *Wə kwí bī y-à nəŋ?*
2s catch c9:goat c9-that how
'How did you catch that goat?'

b) *Yò fə nəŋ?*
3s do how
'How is he doing?'

4.3 Functions of elements in the clause

4.3.1 Grammatical relations

Kemegung grammatical relations are largely differentiated by word order. Subjects of intransitive as well as transitive sentences precede the verb. Objects follow the verb, with indirect objects occurring first and the direct object occurring last.

79. a) Intransitive sentence

S V
Wéŋ ná làtà.
c1:child P2 run
'The child ran.'

b) Transitive sentence

S V DO
Yò ná mu ŋgəŋ.
3s P2 drink c25:water
'He drank water'

c) Ditransitive sentence

S V IO DO
Yò ná nyá mí kpà.
3s P2 give 1sO c5-money
'He gave money to me.'

The following schematic provides a summary of Kemezung word order.

Subject Verb Indirect Object Direct Object

4.3.2 Adverbial elements

Simple time words and other adverbial phrases are typically phrase final.

80. a) *Yò nā bá mènī Bùshānā.*
 3s P2 come here Bushane
 ‘He came here on Bushane¹⁵.’

b) *Yò nā bá mènī bwá.*
 3s P2 come here two.days.distant
 ‘He came here two days ago.’

More complex adverbials often precede the main clause. These generally relate the action in the main clause to a different action in the adverbial clause. The adverbial word *tsa* ‘time’ is the most productive, though others such as *chi* ‘as’ and *lā* ‘as’ are also used.

81. a) [*Tsà yí kà ná fíchà-à*], *kà ńáń kpànsì bá wèń.*
 c9:time c9Rel 1pS P2 return-imp 1p saw c1:woman with c1:child
 ‘When/while we were returning, we saw a woman with a child.’

b) [*Tsà yí bà tsā-ā bi-áń*], *bà yèntè ńgòń sò.*
 c9:time c9Rel 2pS pound-imp c8-palm.nut 2pS pour c25-water inside
 ‘After you pound the palm nuts, you pour water (on them).’

82. [*Chì ná ń-wò lá bá kpísí yó*], *m-fāń yō wà ì.*
 as P2 1s-hear Comp they kill 3s 1s-send 3s 2s for
 ‘As I heard that they would kill him, I sent him to you.’

83. [*Lā yò kpá*], *bèń bá kí shē bó ã bó ã.*
 as 3s die c2:child come Irr stay 3p cry 3p cry
 ‘As/when he died, the children came and stayed crying and crying.’

¹⁵ Bushane is a day of the week in the Kemezung five-day week system.

4.3.3 Clause level particles

4.3.3.1 Conjunctions

Coordination of clauses is most often done by simple juxtaposition.

84. *Wā kí jì bā n-chìtə, wā jì bā kì-n-sē.*
2s Irr Cop with Nom-help, 2s Cop with c7-Nom-love
'You should be helpful and loving.'

However, in some cases the conjunction *ba* 'and' may join two clauses. Note that the conjunction *ba* 'and' is only used to join verbs (example 85a), while the conjunction *bə* 'and/with' is used to join nouns (example 85b).

85. a) *N-jí w-ā n-dzē yó shīŋ shīŋ, kwā bá yò tsōŋ, bā bùm̄bū*
1s-Cop c1-that 1s-take 3s quiet quiet, return with 3s c9:house and beat

yō bìnì.
3s well
'I will take him very quietly, return with him to the house, and beat him well.'

- b) *Bó bā nì kə bə bə-lōkō bə bə-gbògbò.*
3p come from c5-farm with c2-cassava and c2-groundnut
'They came from the farm with cassava and groundnuts.'

Coordination of clauses may also be accomplished through the use of *makə* 'or'.

86. *Tsā yí ná jì lə m̄n sá ŋəŋ wènè f̄t-tì bi-óŋ*
c9:time c9Rel it.is Cop Comp 1sS P1 see c1:my.child do-Imp c8-thing

bì-biə, m̄kə yò diò b̄-dìò bə wèŋ wū-dò...
c8-bad, or 3s fight c14-fight with c1:child c1-some
'When I have seen my child doing bad things, or fighting with some child...'

Coordination of clauses in a condition-consequence relationship may be accomplished through the use of *tə* 'then'.

87. *Wá gā mánā, tā wà tīj tsā yā-hā kílòlò.*
 2s put thus, then 2s burn c9:time c9-2sPos nothing
 ‘If you leave it that way, then you are wasting your time.’ (lit. ‘burn your time for nothing’)

4.3.3.2 Quotative Particle

Quoted speech is introduced using the quotative particle *lā* (QP). This particle occurs with verbs like *ntā* ‘to say’ and *mbi* ‘to ask’ and immediately precedes the quoted clause or clauses. It is related to, or possibly even the same as, the complementizer. This same quotative particle is also used to introduce indirect speech, as in example 89.

88. *ŋkúj tà bá yó lā, “Wà kà tà-di-ā bá mī lā wā tà bā*
 c1:chief say to 3s QP 2s Neg1 say-Imp-Neg3 to c1:person as 2s say to

mī.”

1sO

‘The chief said to him, “Don’t tell anyone what you told me.”’

89. *N-tā bá bā-nī bā nā kwìn-té bā Paūl lā bó dzè Paūl bā*
 1s-say to c2-person c2Rel P2 accuse-Imp c2-those Paul QP 3p take Paul with

n-sà yì-hī bā fā wā kù.

Nom-judge c9-3sPos come by 2s location.

‘I told those people who were accusing Paul that they should take Paul and his case and go to you.’

5 Conclusion

Like most languages, the grammar of Kemezung is quite complex. As such, the goal of this paper has been to provide only a preliminary study of the basics of the grammar. Many interesting elements remain unaddressed entirely, while still others have been treated here with a cursory examination. For example, clause combining operations need further analysis, as do clause level particles. The subject of deictics has not been formally mentioned and the role of tone in Kemezung grammar remains to be fully researched. However, the richness of the Kemezung language may be seen from this introductory research.

6 References

- Boutwell, Richard L. 2010. *A Sketch Grammar of the Nchane Language*. Yaoundé, Cameroon: SIL.
- Cox, Bruce. 2005. *Kemezung Orthography Guide*. Yaoundé, Cameroon: SIL.
- Dieu, Michel, and Patrick Renaud (eds.). 1983. *Situation Linguistique en Afrique Centrale -- Inventaire Préliminaire: le Cameroun. Atlas Linguistique de l'Afrique Centrale (ALAC), Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM)*. Paris: ACCT; Yaoundé: DRGST/CERDOTOLA.
- Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.), 2005. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Fifteenth edition*. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International.
<http://www.ethnologue.com/>.
- Hamm, Cameron. 2002. *Beoid language family of Cameroon and Nigeria: Location and genetic classification*. Dallas: SIL. Language family series.
<http://www.sil.org/silesr/2002/017>.
- Hombert, Jean-Marie. 1980. Noun classes of the Beoid languages. In Larry M. Hyman (ed.), *Noun classes in the Grassfields Bantu borderland*. SCOPIL No. 8. November, 1980:83-98. Los Angeles, CA: Dept. of Linguistics, University of Southern California.
- Hyman, Larry. 1981. *Noni Grammatical Structure*. SCOPIL No. 9. Los Angeles, CA: Dept. of Linguistics, University of Southern California.
- Welmers, William E. 1973. *African Language Structures*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles, California.