

Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation

A Sketch Grammar of the Central Mfumte Language

Greg L. McLean

SIL
B.P. 1299, Yaoundé
Cameroon

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This paper concerns the Mfumte language as spoken in the village of Lus (Central Mfumte) in Donga Mantung Division, in the North West Region of Cameroon.

ISO 639-3 language code: nfu.

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Máløvə mə'sí' tá kɔ' tɔ hyá.

'One finger cannot tie a bundle of sticks.'

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ABBREVIATIONS

This paper uses the glossing conventions described in the Leipzig Glossing Rules (<http://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/pdf/LGR08.02.05.pdf>). A limited number of abbreviations have been changed or added.

*	ungrammatical form	NEG	negation
~	boundary between two parts of a reduplicated stem	NEG2	negation 2
1SG	first person singular	NMLZ	nominalizer
2SG	second person singular	NUM	numeral
3SG	third person singular	P0	immediate past
1PL	first person plural	P1	medial past
2PL	second person plural	P2	remote past
3PL	third person plural	PL	plural
ADJ	adjective	POSS	possessive
AGR	agreement	PRF	perfect
CAUS	causative	PROG	progressive
COMP	complementizer	PRS	present
CONJ	conjunction	Q	question marker
DEM	demonstrative	QUANT	quantifier
DIR ¹	directional	QUOT	quotative
EXCL	exclusive	RECP	reciprocal
FUT	future	REFL	reflexive
H	high (tone)	REL	relative
HAB	habitual aspect	ṽ	low tone
IMP	imperative	v	mid tone
INCL	inclusive	ṷ	high tone
L	low (tone)	Ṹ	super high tone
M	mid (tone)	ṹ	falling tone
		Ṻ	rising tone

¹ In this paper the abbreviation for directional is used in combination with the following two letter abbreviations denoting the slope of travel: GD (gentle descent), SD (steep descent), GA (gentle ascent), SA (steep ascent), LV (level - not sloping), and OV (over - across a valley).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Name of the Language

The Central Mfumte language² is spoken in the village of Lus, Nwa Subdivision, Donga-Mantung Division, North West Region of Cameroon and in the village of Inkiri, Taraba State, Nigeria. The reference dialect for the Central Mfumte language is the language spoken in Lus. The *Ethnologue* (Lewis et al. 2014) identifies the language as Mfumte (ISO 639-3: nfu) and lists one alternative name: Nfumte. Dieu and Renaud (1983:122) in the *Atlas Linguistique du Cameroun (ALCAM)* identify the language as Mfumte [905].

1.2 Genetic Affiliation

The *Ethnologue* gives the following classification for Mfumte: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam, Nkambe (Lewis et al. 2014). *ALCAM* classifies Mfumte [905] as: Niger-Kordofan, Niger-Congo, Bénoué-Congo, Bantoïde, Bantou, Grassfield, Est-Grassfield, Nord, Mfumte (Dieu and Renaud 1983:122).

1.3 Sociolinguistic Situation

This section briefly describes some of the relationships between Central Mfumte and its social context. The subsections below are: demography, viability, language attitudes, and multilingualism.

1.3.1 Demography

The language is spoken in the villages of Lus and Inkiri. The village of Lus has an estimated population of 6000 people and the village of Inkiri has an estimated population of 500 people (McLean 2014). A map of the Mfumte area is found below.

²The Central Mfumte language refers to the Mfumte language [nfu] as it is spoken in the village of Lus.

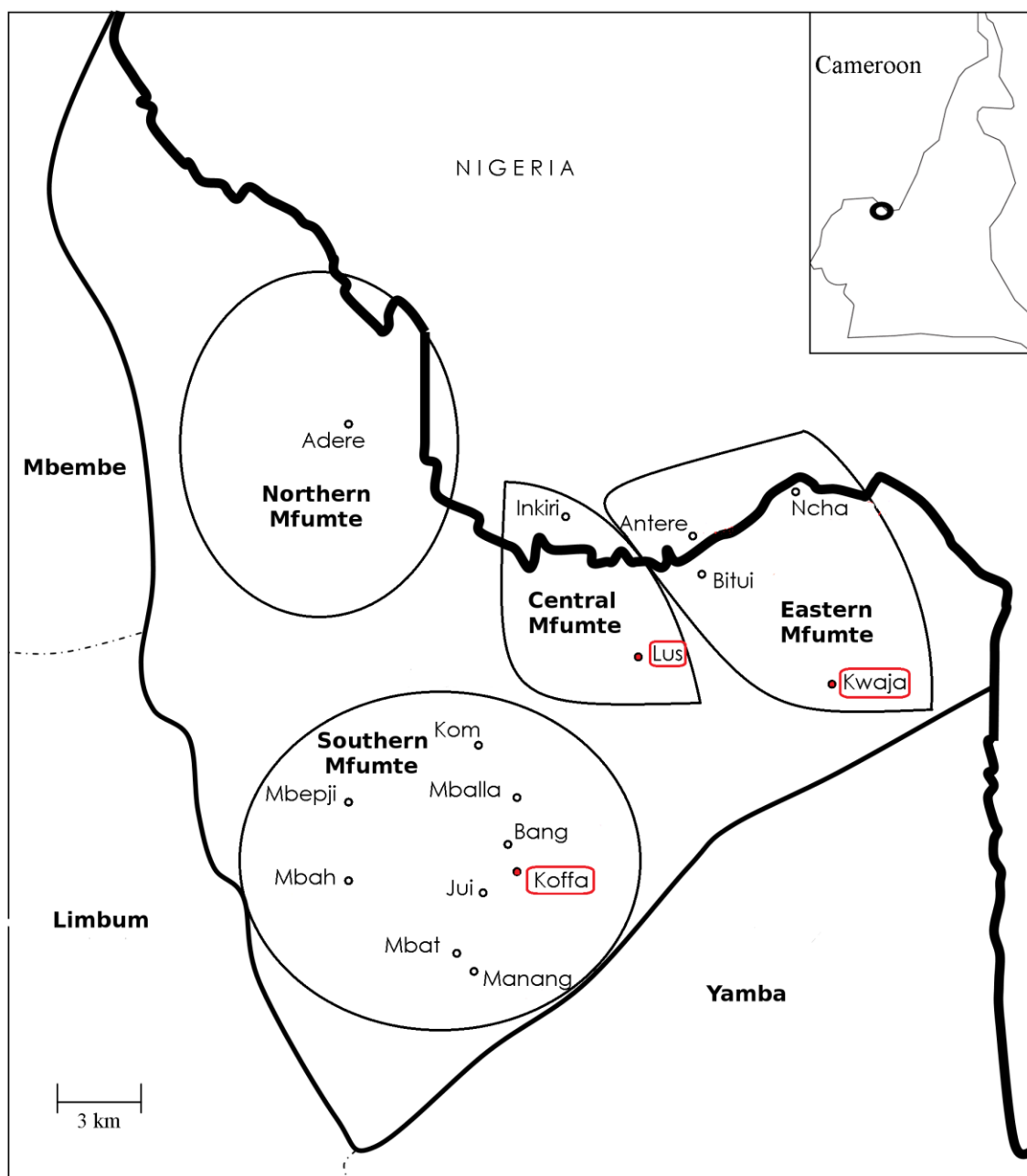


Figure 1. Map of the Mfumte Area.

1.3.2 Viability

The language is spoken by all age groups and is used in all social domains. There is a strong presence of middle-aged leadership which will help in the development of a language program (Watters 1989). The people of Lus and Inkiri, although located in different countries, are homogenous in their language and culture. They are also open to development as indicated by the existence of cultural and development associations, schools, and health clinics.

Interpretation into the mother tongue is usually done in Church services. This shows that the people's aptitude in English or Cameroon Pidgin [wes] is inadequate

(Grant et al. 1994). In summary, the Central Mfumte language is in no danger of dying out.

1.3.3 Language Attitudes

The Lus and Inkiri people are positively disposed toward the development of their language. They said that they would be willing to learn to read and write in Central Mfumte and have their children do the same. They are proud of their language and culture.

1.3.4 Multilingualism

Other languages can be heard in Lus on occasion due to visitors to the village; these include: Limbum [lim], Yamba [yam], and Hausa [hua]. When people of Lus encounter someone from a different language group, they will communicate in Cameroon Pidgin English and rarely in Hausa. Lus people can use Pidgin English with varying levels of proficiency. Those who travel outside of the area a lot tend to have more aptitude in Pidgin.

1.4 Summary of Previous Research

Previous academic research in the Mfumte area dates back to the early 1980's. Voorhoeve wrote a paper on noun classes in Adere (1980). Baeke has written an ethnography which focuses on cultural traits found in Lus, one of the Mfumte villages where she lived off and on from February 1980 to August 1983 (2004). A 120 item word list was transcribed in the Dzodinka language by Voorhoeve and Leroy in connection with the *ALCAM* project (Dieu & Renaud 1983). Grant et al. completed a rapid appraisal survey describing the language situation in the Mfumte area (1994). Eyoh did linguistic research in the village of Lus under the auspices of BASAL (Basic Standardization of All African Languages) - a program of the National Association of Cameroon Language committees. He produced a phonology (Eyoh 2008) and tentative orthography (Eyoh & Hedinger 2008) for Central Mfumte. In order to confirm the language development needs in the Mfumte area, a Recorded Text Testing and Rapid Appraisal survey³ were completed (McLean 2014). Based on the results of the 2014 survey, it was recommended that language development work proceed in four Mfumte languages. The four languages would be based on the speech varieties spoken in the villages of Adere, Koffa, Kwaja, and Lus (see figure 1).

³ The Rapid Appraisal survey was conducted in the quarters (neighbourhoods) of Adere.

1.5 Corpus and Nature of the Research

The current paper is an attempt to describe the fundamentals of Central Mfumte grammar, mainly from a descriptive standpoint. Data for the research comes primarily from a number of Central Mfumte texts from a range of genres and elicited utterances. These texts and utterances have been gathered over a period of five years, from 2008 to 2013. The texts and other language data were collected with the help of several Central Mfumte speakers, especially Mr. Detoh Frederick and Pastor Nwufa William.

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. Surface tone markings are used and no formal attempt has been made to account for tonal alternation.

Also, the data is generally presented utilizing orthographic forms. The reader is directed to the *Mfumte Orthography Guide* (Eyoh & Hedinger 2008) for aid in realizing their phonetic forms. There are forty letters in the Central Mfumte alphabet represented below in both upper and lower case:

A a, B b, Ch ch, D d, Dz dz, E e, Ə ə, F f, G g, Gb gb, Gh gh, H h, ' ', I i, Î î, J j, K k, Kp kp, L l, M m, N n, Ny ny, Ŋ ŋ, O o, ɔ ɔ, Ø ø, P p, R r, S s, Sh sh, T t, Ts ts, U u, ʉ ʉ, V v, W w, Wy wy, Y y, Z z, Zh zh.

2 NOUNS AND NOUN PHRASES

2.1 Types of Nouns and their Structures

Central Mfumte nouns are simple in their morphology. The majority of nouns consist of a monosyllabic stem. Unlike most Grassfields Bantu languages, Central Mfumte does not have a noun class system. However, there are a number of nouns that begin with the prefix *ma-* (excluding derived nouns - cf. 2.1.2) which could be a remnant of a noun-class system. The prefix can carry different tones which could suggest that it is not one prefix but many different prefixes. The prefix can carry one of the following tones: High, High-Low, High-Mid, Mid-Low or Mid-High. There is no plural affix composed of segments. However, plurality can be expressed through a tone change on the first noun of a noun phrase⁴ or compound noun

⁴ This does not apply to a noun followed by a cardinal numeral. The tone on a noun preceding a cardinal number remains the same. The mid tone on *mbɔ'* 'cutlass' remains constant in the following examples: *mbɔ' mɛ'sí'* 'one cutlass' and *mbɔ' bwâ'* 'two cutlasses'. Plurality is expressed in the numeral rather than as a tonal change on the noun.

(section 2.1.3). Plurality can be expressed on the first noun of an associative noun phrase (section 2.3.9). Plurality can also be expressed on a noun when it precedes a demonstrative (section 2.3.2) or possessive pronoun. The author posits that there is a floating high tone suffix which represents plurality coming after the head noun or modified noun. The floating plural tone only attaches to the TBU (tone bearing unit) of the noun when the noun precedes another constituent of the noun phrase or compound noun.

2.1.1 Proper Names

Proper names include those given to people as well as to places. In Central Mfumte, proper names of people are mostly descriptions of the circumstances on the day of birth, an attribute of the mother or father, an insult to one of the parents, or ancestral names. An example of a proper name is *Nwìkpâ* which means 'person of death'. It signifies that the mother or father of the person with this name has experienced a lot of death in their family. Another example of a proper name is *fábi* which means 'generous'. It signifies that the mother or father of the person with this name is generous. An example of a proper name that refers to a place is *Sìngi* (the name of a prominent hill in the village of Lus).

2.1.2 Derived Nouns

Central Mfumte nouns may be derived through the addition of a nominalizing prefix *má* to a verb. The resulting noun may be characterized by the following schematic.

stem-NMLZ-verb-(stem) (stem)-NMLZ-verb-stem

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) a. <i>nwì-má-lìsì</i>
person-NMLZ-teach
'teacher' | b. <i>nwì-má-vø-kà</i>
person-NMLZ-build-pot
'potter' |
| c. <i>má-se-tá</i>
NMLZ-cut-tree
'chainsaw' | d. <i>nwì-má-se-tá</i>
person-NMLZ-cut-tree
'sawyer' |
| e. <i>má-wò'-gùmbì</i>
NMLZ-grind-corn
'corn mill' | f. <i>nwì-má-wò'-gùmbì</i>
person-NMLZ-grind-corn
'corn mill operator' |

Derived nouns in Central Mfumte are often formed through partial reduplication (see examples 2a, 2c, and 2f). In cases where the verb contained in the derived

noun does not take a verbal extension suffix,⁵ the suffix *-mà* is added (see examples 2b, 2d, and 2e). In this context, both the reduplication and the addition of the suffix *mà* contribute to form the derived noun.

- (2) a. *bì~bítà*
NMLZ~ask
'question'
- b. *le~lé-mà*
NMLZ~pray-NMLZ
'prayer'
- c. *lù~lúlà*
NMLZ~admire
'admiration'
- d. *wyi~wyí-mà*
NMLZ~laugh-NMLZ
'laughter'
- e. *zɔ~zò-mà*
NMLZ~greet-NMLZ
'greeting'
- f. *ne~né'mà*
NMLZ~look at
'a look'

Nominalization occurring as a result of partial reduplication is accompanied by a change in the surface tonal melody of the new word.

- (3) *bítá* \Rightarrow *bì~bítà*
ask NMLZ~ask
'ask' 'question'

Nominalization can also occur solely through a change in the surface tone melody although it is uncommon.

- (4) a. *hútá*
cover
'cover' (verb)
- b. *hutà*
cover
'cover' (noun)

2.1.3 Compound Nouns

Compound nouns may be formed by joining a noun with another constituent such as a second noun or adjective.

- (5) a. *bǎ-kyà*⁶
bag.PL-clothes
'pocket(s)'
- b. *kùku-tá*
short-tree
'stump'
- c. *mvú'-l'*
group-village
'quarter'
- d. *nkǒ'-nki*⁷
box.PL-foot
'shoe(s)'

⁵ See section 3.2 - Functions of Verb Morphology.

⁶ *bǎ* 'bag(s)' is always in plural form in this context even for singular meaning.

⁷ *nkǒ* 'box(s)' is always in plural form in this context even for singular meaning.

- e. *ndzà-nga'*
Bambara groundnut-antelope
'groundnut'
- f. *lø-nhu*
male-corpse
'widower'
- g. *lø-ngu'*
male-chicken
'rooster'
- h. *nshi-kə*
earth-pot
'clay'

2.2 The Structure of the Noun Phrase

The Central Mfumte noun phrase consists of a noun followed by a number of optional constituents: possessive, adjective⁸, demonstrative, numeral, quantifier and relative clause. The following chart illustrates the noun phrase. In some cases the numeral precedes the noun which it modifies (see example 12).

#	NUM	Noun	ADJ	POSS	DEM, DEF.ART	NUM, QUANT	REL Clause
--		<i>mbɔ'</i> 'cutlass'	<i>ke'ké'</i> 'sharp'	<i>vəmə</i> 'my'	<i>rì</i> 'the'		
7b		<i>nwǎ'</i> 'book'			<i>nínî</i> 'these'		
--		<i>mpǎ'</i> 'cows'			<i>nî</i> 'these'	<i>ngbá</i> 'all'	
20		<i>gungbɔ</i> 'papaya'					<i>[yì bɔ̀bɔ̀ nî]</i> 'that is ripe'
--		<i>nwà'</i> 'book'		<i>zè</i> 'his'	<i>nî</i> 'this'		
--	<i>hwyi</i> 'four'	<i>ve</i> 'children'	<i>tsitsɔ'</i> 'small'	<i>zí</i> 'his'			
--		<i>vé</i> 'children'	<i>lǎ̀lǎ̀</i> 'lazy'			<i>tɔ'</i> 'three'	
10		<i>ngú'</i> 'chickens'	<i>búbú</i> 'white'			<i>bwá</i> 'two'	
16a		<i>ve</i> 'children'				<i>gǎ</i> 'many'	
--	<i>hwyí</i> 'four'	<i>mpǎ'</i> 'cows'	<i>gba</i> 'big'	<i>zí</i> 'his'			
12	<i>tɔ'</i> 'three'	<i>ndzɛ'</i> 'goats'			<i>nî</i> 'these'		
--	<i>hwyi</i> 'four'	<i>ngú'</i> 'chickens'	<i>gba</i> 'big'		<i>nû</i> 'those'		
--	<i>hwyi</i> 'four'	<i>nwà'</i> 'books'	<i>riri'</i> 'heavy'		<i>nû</i> 'those'		
--		<i>mpǎ'</i> 'cows'	<i>riri'</i> 'heavy'			<i>hwyi</i> 'four'	

Figure 2. Noun Phrase Chart

⁸ There are some utterances in which the adjective precedes the noun it modifies. However, since there was some dispute among speakers of the language whether this was correct or not, the author has omitted them from the noun phrase chart. For an example of the disputed use of an adjective before the noun it modifies, see the word *lǎ̀lǎ̀* 'lazy' in example 18.

2.3 Elements in the Noun Phrase

2.3.1 Possessives

Possessed nouns are followed by a possessive pronoun.

- (6) a. *mbɔ'* *vəmə* *mbɔ'* *zì*
 cutlass 1sg.poss cutlass 3SG.POSS
 'my cutlass' 'his cutlass'
- b. *mì* *vəmə* *mì* *zì*
 child 1SG.POSS child 3SG.POSS
 'my child' 'his child'

The full set of possessive pronouns may be seen in Figure 3 below.

Person	Possessive pronouns
1 st singular	<i>vəmə</i> , <i>rà</i> ⁹
2 nd singular	<i>vəwə</i>
3 rd singular	<i>zì</i> , <i>zì</i> ¹⁰
1 st plural (excl.)	<i>bì</i>
1 st plural (incl.)	<i>éwyì</i> '
1 st plural (two of us)	<i>áwə̀</i> '
2 nd plural	<i>vəwyi</i>
3 rd plural	<i>vəwə̀</i> , <i>rɔ́</i> ¹¹

Figure 3. Central Mfumte Possessive Pronouns

2.3.2 Demonstratives

Demonstratives follow the noun in the noun phrase. The proximal demonstrative is *nínî* 'this' and the distal demonstrative is *núnû* 'that'. The plural forms - 'these. . .' and 'those. . .', are expressed by a change of tone on the noun. A low toned monosyllabic noun in the singular changes to a rising 'Low-High' tone in the plural. The plural marker is a floating High tone located to the right of the noun. The floating High tone associates leftward to the preceding TBU. The two demonstratives *nínî* 'this' and *núnû* 'that' can be abbreviated to *nî* and *nû* respectively.

⁹ *rà*' is becoming an archaic term.

¹⁰ *zì* with low tone is used to modify a singular noun and *zì* with high tone is used to modify a plural noun.

¹¹ *rɔ́*' is becoming an archaic term.

- (7) a. *nwà'* *nínî* *nwà'* *núnû*
 book this book that
 'this book' 'that book'
- b. *nwǎ'* *nínî* *nwǎ'* *núnû*
 book.PL these book.PL those
 'these books' 'those books'
- c. *yù'* *nínî* *yù'* *núnû*
 stone this stone that
 'this stone' 'that stone'
- d. *yǔ'* *nínî* *yǔ'* *núnû*
 stone.PL this stone.PL that
 'these stones' 'those stones'
- e. *mányu* *nínî* *mányu* *núnû*
 bee this bee that
 'this bee' 'that bee'
- f. *mányú* *nínî* *mányú* *núnû*
 bee.PL this bee.PL that
 'these bees' 'those bees'
- (8) *Nyi-lá* *fînwà'* *mí* *ghó'* (yì) *mbûmbû* *nî¹²*.
 place-go paper on shelf (rel) high DEM
 'Put the paper on the high shelf.'

2.3.3 Definite Article

The definite article *rî* 'the' is used to show that the noun it modifies is specific - that it has been known or discussed previously. The definite article *rî* follows the noun it modifies. There is no indefinite article in Central Mfumte.

- (9) *mbà* *rî*
 money ART.DEF
 'the money'

2.3.4 Numerals

Central Mfumte numerals normally follow after the noun they modify. Numbers above ten are formed with the word *nkò'* when the numbers one through nine occur in the ones column. The morpheme *nkò'* is used only in numbers and it is not possible to assign a meaning to it. The morpheme *má* occurs at the beginning of words for the numbers between twenty and ninety-nine - its meaning is unclear.

¹² This *nî* has the same form as an abbreviated proximal demonstrative and occurs when the relative pronoun *yì* is used. In the above example, *yì* is elided but *nî* remains.

Figure 4 below presents a partial list of Central Mfumte cardinal numerals. In the column to the right, these numerals are shown modifying the noun *ngu'* 'chicken'.

	Cardinal Numerals	('ngu' ___) 'chicken'
1	mè'sí'	<i>ngu' mè'sí'</i>
2	bwê	<i>ngu' bwê</i>
3	tó'	<i>ngu' tó'</i>
4	hwyì	<i>ngu' hwyì</i>
5	hyà	<i>ngu' hyà</i>
6	ntumfá	<i>ngu' ntumfá</i>
7	sòmbâ	<i>ngu' sòmbâ</i>
8	wamá	<i>ngu' wamá</i>
9	tòhwyì	<i>ngu' tòhwyì</i>
10	wû	<i>ngu' wû</i>
11	wu nkò' mè'sí'	<i>ngu' wu nkò' mè'sí'</i>
12	wu nkò' bwê	<i>ngu' wu nkò' bwê</i>
13	wu nkò' tó'	<i>ngu' wu nkò' tó'</i>
14	wu nkò' hwyì	<i>ngu' wu nkò' hwyì</i>
15	wu nkò' hyà	<i>ngu' wu nkò' hyà</i>
16	wu nkò' ntumfá	<i>ngu' wu nkò' ntumfá</i>
17	wu nkò' sòmbâ	<i>ngu' wu nkò' sòmbâ</i>
18	wu nkò' wamá	<i>ngu' wu nkò' wamá</i>
19	wu nkò' tòhwyì	<i>ngu' wu nkò' tòhwyì</i>
20	má wu bwê	<i>ngu' má wu bwê</i>
21	má wu bwê wá nkò' mè'sí'	<i>ngu' má wu bwê wá nkò' mè'sí'</i>
22	má wu bwê wá nkò' bwê	<i>ngu' má wu bwê wá nkò' bwê</i>
60	má wu ntumfá	<i>ngu' má wu ntumfá</i>
100	nghì mè'sí'	<i>ngu' nghì mè'sí'</i>
101	nghì mè'sí' wá nkò' mè'sí'	<i>ngu' mè'sí' wá nkò' mè'sí'</i>
200	nghè bwê	<i>ngu' nghè bwê</i>
1000	nghè wû	<i>ngu' nghè wû</i>
2000	nghè mɔ bwê	<i>ngu' nghè mɔ bwê</i>

Figure 4. Central Mfumte Cardinal Numerals

The following example shows the numeral following the noun it modifies.

- (10) *ngu' búbú bwê.*
 chicken white two
 'two white chickens'

The following examples show the numeral preceding the noun it modifies.

- (11) *bwê nwǎ' nî*
 two book.PL DEM
 'these two books'

- (12) *tɔ́ ndzí nî*
 three goat.PL DEM
 'these three goats'

2.3.5 Non-numeral quantifiers

Central Mfumte non-numeral quantifiers follow the modified noun. The quantifier *mɔ́* means 'a' or 'another' whereas *mɔ́* means 'some' or 'some other'.

- (13) a. *vø ngbá*
 thing all
 'all things'
- b. *ndɔ ngbá*
 cup all
 'all cups'
- (14) *mpɔ́ nî ngbə*
 cow DEM all
 'All these cows'
- (15) a. *mpɔ́ mɔ́*
 cow one
 'a cow or another cow'
- b. *mpɔ́ mɔ́*
 COW.PL some
 'some cows or some other cows'
- c. *Yá tsítá nghya' mɔ́*
 3SG has house another
 'He has another house.'
- d. *Yá tsítá nghya' mɔ́*
 3SG has house some
 'He has other houses.'
- (16) a. *ve gǎ*
 children many
 'many children'
- b. *mvá gǎ*
 sand much
 'much sand'

2.3.6 Adjectives

Adjectives follow the noun which they modify and their form is often reduplicated.

- (17) a. *nghya' gbá*
 house big
 'big house'
- b. *á kyí*
 3SG correct
 'it is correct'
- c. *kà dɔ́*
 pot old
 'old pot'
- d. *gù dùdù'*
 plantain black
 'unripe plantain'
- e. *kyǎ' sisi*
 clothes.PL new
 'new clothes'
- f. *be kyúkyú*
 fufu hot
 'hot fufu'
- g. *lugu mbi'mbi'*
 cassava raw
 'raw cassava'
- h. *mi tsí'tsɔ́*
 child small
 'small child'
- i. *ndɔ pyá'*
 cup full
 'full cup'

In general, personal pronouns cannot be used for inanimate things. There are some exceptions as in the example below where *wá* (3PL) 'they' is used to refer to stones.

- (23) *Yá kí tsí wá.*
 3SG PROG crack 3PL
 'He is cracking them (stones).'

In cases where one doesn't know the sex of a person (like a baby in the womb) one can refer to it with the pronoun *á* 3s 'it'.

- (24) *Á mimbarì à?*
 3SG boy Q
 'Is it a boy?'

2.3.9 Associative Noun Phrase

Associative noun phrases are produced when two nouns are brought into a syntactic relationship with each other. The construction can be translated - 'Head noun of noun'. In Central Mfumte there is no segmental morpheme or floating tone which acts as an associative marker. Instead, the head noun and the noun are brought into a syntactic relationship through simple juxtaposition.

- (25) *tó mpò*
 head.PL cow
 'cow's head'
- (26) *mi ngu'*
 child chicken
 'chick'

2.4 Phrase Level Particles - Conjunctions

The coordinating conjunction *wá* 'and/with' is used to join nouns in a phrase. The conjunction *laba* 'and/with' also joins nouns but it typically occurs between the last two item in a series. The use of *wá* 'and/with' is optional when it is used to join three or more items in a series. To show that *wá* is optional in certain contexts it is enclosed in parentheses (*wá*).

- (27) *Wá má zə lugu wá ndzə̀nga'.*
 3PL PO eat cassava and groundnut
 'They ate cassava and groundnuts.'
- (28) *Du-la nwarí mbe, wá tə laba vø-mfɔ'.*
 go-go bring nails CONJ wood CONJ things-work
 'Go bring the nails, wood and tools.'

- (29) *Wá má zì ngǎ nsò wá lugu laba ndzànga'.*
 3PL P0 come from farm CONJ cassava CONJ groundnut
 'They came from the farm with cassava and groundnuts.'
- (30) *Yá tsítà gùmbì (wá) zu' (wá) ndzànga' laba gu.*
 3SG have corn (CONJ) yam CONJ groundnut CONJ plantain
 'He has corn, yams, groundnuts and plantains.'

The coordinating conjunction *ka* 'or' can join two nouns or a series of three or more nouns.

- (31) *Wà kí we gumbi à ká lǔgù á?*
 2SG PROG want corn that CONJ cassava Q
 'Do you want corn or cassava?'
- (32) *Wà kí we ndzànga' à ká gùngbò à ká gù á?*
 2SG PROG want groundnut that CONJ papaya that CONJ plantains Q
 'Do you want groundnuts, papaya or plantains?'

3. VERBS AND VERB PHRASES

3.1 Verbs and their Structures

The majority of Central Mfumte verbs are simple in their morphology. The Central Mfumte verb may be illustrated by the following schematic.

stem (suffix)

Verb stems can be categorized into two tone groups (see table below) based on surface tone in affirmative constructions. The underlying tone of verb stems in verb group 1 is High¹³. Verb stems in verb group 2 exhibit a wide variety of surface tones in different tense and aspect constructions. The author believes that the underlying tone of verb stems in verb group 2 is Mid¹⁴. Thus, the underlying tone for both verb groups are reflected in the present and imperative constructions.

Verb Group	Example	P2	P1	P0	Present	Future	Imperative
1	<i>zá</i> 'eat!'	H	H	M	H	H	H
2	<i>ga'</i> 'share!'	H	H	L	M	H	M

Figure 6. The Two Verb Groups Based on Surface Tone.

¹³ In verb group 1, the surface tone is High in the majority of different tense and aspect constructions except for P0 - Immediate Past.

¹⁴ In verb group 2, the non-Mid surface tones could be a result of a phonological process or as a result of replacive grammatical tone. More research needs to be done in this area.

- (33) *Du!* (when addressing one person)
 go
 'Go!'
- (34) *M̀̀ ḱí wílá nghi.*
 1SG PROG uproot grass
 'I am weeding the grass.'
- (35) *M̀̀ nu lá zô ng̀̀m̀' v̀̀m̀ m̀̀nk̀ẁ.*
 1SG P1 go greet friend 1SG.POSS yesterday
 'I went to greet my friend yesterday.'

3.2 Functions of Verb Morphology

There are five verbal extensions that can be seen on Central Mfumte verbs. These suffixes all bear a surface high tone in the present tense. It is not possible to assign a consistent lexical or grammatical meaning to the five verbal extensions. There are rare cases when it seems that a meaning could be assigned to one or more of the suffixes. For example in the word *bɔ'tá* meaning 'come down', the stem *bɔ'* means 'come out' and suffix seems to mean 'down'. However, when one looks at other words with the suffix *-tá* (see chart below), it becomes apparent that *-tá* does not mean 'down'. The verbs in the table below can be either transitive or intransitive.

<i>-lá</i>	<i>-sí</i>	<i>-tá</i>	<i>-rí</i>	<i>-má</i>
<i>sílá</i> v. 'sell'	<i>misí</i> v. 'finish'	<i>bítá</i> v. 'ask'	<i>sírí</i> v. 'wash'	<i>yimá</i> v. 'help'
<i>wílá</i> v. 'weed' (grass)	<i>lisí</i> v. 'teach'	<i>tsí'tá</i> v. 'have, hold'	<i>bɔ'rí</i> v. 'come'	<i>bímá</i> v. 'love, agree'
<i>kú'lá</i> v. 'change' (money, clothes)	<i>bisí</i> v. 'reply'	<i>bátá</i> v. 'follow'	<i>bírí</i> v. 'roll' (something)	<i>hi'má</i> v. 'commit suicide'
<i>bálá</i> v. 'embrace, hug'	<i>gesí</i> v. 'defend, protect'	<i>bɔ'tá</i> v. 'come down'	<i>bórí</i> v. 'destroy' (something)	<i>hwyímá</i> v. 'think, hope'
<i>dulá</i> v. 'announce, tell'	<i>husí</i> v. 'bring up' (a child)	<i>fətá</i> v. 'plan, get ready'	<i>fərí</i> v. 'measure'	<i>dɔ'má</i> v. 'bow' (as in greeting)
<i>gúlá</i> v. 'look at, look for'	<i>hwɔsí</i> v. 'scrape'	<i>gwétá</i> v. 'bend' (something)	<i>tsí'rí</i> v. 'sneeze'	<i>nwyimá</i> v. 'grumble'
<i>lélá</i> v. 'learn'	<i>kásí</i> v. 'tighten' (something)	<i>kwitá</i> v. 'pour'	<i>hwɔ'rí</i> v. 'crown'	<i>sə'má</i> v. 'drown' (intr.), 'stammer'
<i>lúlá</i> v. 'put out' (fire), 'turn off'	<i>lusí</i> v. 'heal' (someone)	<i>mɔtá</i> v. 'leave'	<i>hwyírí</i> v. 'stir, mix'	<i>shɔ'má</i> v. 'hide' (from someone)
<i>shɔlá</i> v. 'loosen'	<i>másí</i> v. 'stop it'	<i>nyitá</i> v. 'stretch'	<i>nyərí</i> v. 'tickle'	<i>vɔmá</i> v. 'entice'
<i>yílá</i> v. 'knead, wrap up' (baby)	<i>nyisí</i> v. 'put on, wear' (clothes)	<i>tótá</i> v. 'tear' (something)	<i>wyi'rí</i> v. 'write' (book)	<i>shu'má</i> v. 'snatch'
<i>zílá</i> v. 'dry'	<i>tósí</i> v. 'count'	<i>zótá</i> v. 'listen, feel, taste'	<i>zərí</i> v. 'wake up' (someone)	<i>bá'má</i> v. 'bend down, bow'

Figure 7. Central Mfumte Verbal Extensions

3.3. The Structure of the Verb Phrase

The Central Mfumte verb phrase consists of at least one verb. Preceding the verb, there may be constituents indicating tense, aspect or negation. The order of these constituents is summarized in the schematic below.

Verb Phrase			
(Tense Marker)	(Aspect Marker)	(Negation)	Verb

Figure 8. The Structure of the Central Mfumte Verb Phrase

3.4 Elements in the Verb Phrase

3.4.1 Tense

3.4.1.1 Remote Past

Tense is primarily indicated through the use of various tense markers. The tense marker *mǎ* is used for remote past. This tense marker is used for actions (or conditions) which took place more than a week ago (from the perspective of the speaker). It is realized with a super high tone due to a phonological processes which is not yet fully understood.

- (36) *Mə mǎ fa mbà wá ngomɔ' vəmɑ.*
 1SG P2 give money to friend 1SG.POSS
 'I gave (a long time ago) money to my friend.'

- (37) *Yá mǎ lá nghwɔ.*
 3SG P2 go bush
 'He went to the bush.'

3.4.1.2 Medial Past

The tense marker *nu* is used for Medial Past. This tense marker indicates that the action of the verb took place from yesterday up to a week ago.

- (38) *Wá nu sɪ́í kyà' mánkwì'.*
 3PL P1 wash clothes yesterday
 'They washed clothes yesterday.'

- (39) *Yá nu wɔ' gùmbì.*
 3SG P1 grind corn
 'He ground (yesterday) corn.'

3.4.1.3 Immediate Past

The tense marker *má* is used for Immediate Past. This tense marker indicates that the action of the verb took place just recently or earlier in the day.

(40) *Yá má la lé nhî.*
 3SG P0 go DIR.SD market
 'He went down (this morning) to the market.'

(41) *Venki' má wɔ̀rìrì nwà'.*
 children P0 write book
 'The children were writing.'

3.4.1.4 Present

The present tense construction is distinguished from other tense constructions by: 1) the absence of a tense marker; and to a lesser extent, 2) the tone pattern on the verb¹⁵. The present tense construction typically includes the progressive marker *kí*.

(42) *Nwìmálishi kí lisí nwà'.*
 teacher PROG teach book
 'The teacher is teaching.'

3.4.1.5 Future

The tense marker *kà* is used to indicate that an action (or condition) will take place in the future (after the moment of speaking). The tense marker occurs before the subject unlike the other tense markers which occur after the subject.

(43) *Kà hyà̀nkyà' zá mbi.*
 FUT crow eat palm nut
 'The crow will eat the palm nut(s).'

There can be an element of doubt when using the tense marker *kà*. To make a statement more certain *hì lá* is used after the verb.

(44) *Kà nkú sá' hì-la nsɔ'.*
 FUT chief judge certainly case
 'The chief will certainly judge a case(s).'

There is no doubt when the future marker *kà* is used in a negative construction.

(45) *Kà nkú ta nsɔ' sá'.*
 FUT chief NEG case judge
 'The chief will not judge the case(s).'

¹⁵ This is especially true if the verb is from verb group 2 (see subsection 3.1).

The table below summarizes the Central Mfumte tense forms.

Tense	Example	Gloss
P2	<i>Yá má zó be.</i> 3SG P2 eat fufu	'S/he ate (remote past) fufu.'
P1	<i>Yá nu zó be.</i> 3SG P1 eat fufu	'S/he ate (medial past) fufu.'
P0	<i>Yá má zó be.</i> 3SG P0 eat fufu	'S/he ate (immediate past) fufu.'
PRS	<i>Yá kí zó be.</i> 3SG PROG eat fufu	'S/he is eating food (present).'
FUT	<i>Kà yá zó be.</i> FUT 3SG eat fufu	'S/he will eat food (future).'

Figure 9. Central Mfumte Tense Forms

3.4.2 Aspect

3.4.2.1 Perfect

The perfect aspect marker *lɔ* 'have/has' is used to show that the action of the verb has been completed. The aspect marker *lɔ* occurs in clause final position and is only used in the past tense (i.e. with the tense markers *má*, *nu*, and *má*). The aspect marker *lɔ* cannot be used in the present or future constructions.

(46) *Yá má zè lɔ.*
3SG P0 come PRF
'He has (immediate past) come.'

(47) *Yá má fá yá mbà rì lɔ.*
3SG P2 give 3SG money ART.DEF PRF
'He has (remote past) given him the money.'

3.4.2.2 Progressive

The aspect marker *kí* is used to show progressive action. It can be used in all five tense constructions. In the affirmative construction, the progressive marker comes immediately before the verb.

(48) *Mè má kí zé nhì.*
1SG P2 PROG sing song
'I was (remote past) singing.'

(49) *Wá nu kí vó nghyá mánkwì'.*
3PL P1 PROG build house yesterday
'They were building a house yesterday.'

(50) *Hì' vəmə má kí gyø nyà.*
father 1SG.POSS P0 PROG hunt cutting grass
'My father was (immediate past) hunting cutting grass (cane rat).'

- (51) *Ndú má vəmə kɛ́ bə́ yù́.*
uncle 1SG.POSS PROG carry stone
'My uncle is carrying stones.'
- (52) *Lø-ngu' kɛ́ tóto.*
male-chicken PROG crowing
'The rooster is crowing.'
- (53) *Kà yá kɛ́ fɔ́ nɔ́ mɛ́ nsɔ́ mfǎ'tu'.*
FUT 3SG PROG work work on farm tomorrow
'He will be working on the farm tomorrow.'
- (54) *Kà nkú kɛ́ sá' nsɔ́.*
FUT chief PROG judge case
'The chief will (probably) be judging a case(s).'

The progressive construction can be used to express a future action that will take place later in the day. Expressed in this way, the speaker is more certain that the action will take place than if the future tense marker *ka* 'will' is used.

- (55) *Nkú kɛ́ sɔ́ nsɔ́ rì kǝmfǎ'kwi'.*
Chief PROG judge case ART.DEF evening
'The chief is going to judge the case this evening.'

The progressive construction using *bɔ́* and *mfətu'* expresses an action that will take place tomorrow (or later if used in a figurative sense - such as 'one day'). Expressed in this way, the speaker is more certain that the action will take place than if the future tense marker *kà* 'will' is used.

- (56) *Mə́ kɛ́ bɔ́ sirí kyǎ́ vəmə́ mfǎ'tu'.*
1SG PROG come.out wash clothes.PL 1SG.POSS tomorrow
'I will be washing my clothes tomorrow.'
- (57) *Mə́ kɛ́ bɔ́ tɛ́ sɛ́ mfǎ'tu'.*
1SG PROG come out shoot bird tomorrow
'I will be shooting birds tomorrow.'
- (58) *Mə́ kɛ́ bɔ́ bá nwì mfǎ'tu'.*
1SG PROG come.out be person tomorrow
'I will be a man one day.'

3.4.2.3 Habitual

The habitual aspect is expressed by a floating high tone which precedes the verb. Habitual aspect expresses an action that occurs usually or ordinarily. In the examples below, the floating high tone combines with the low tone of the preceding subject and results in a rising tone.

- (59) *mà* ' *gyø* *nyà.* *mǎ* *gyø* *nyà.*
 1SG HAB hunt animal 1SG.HAB hunt animal
 'I hunt animals.' 'I hunt animals.'
- (60) *mà* ' *ri* *nwà'.* *mǎ* *ri* *nwà'.*
 1SG HAB read book 1SG.HAB read book
 'I read books.' 'I read books.'

3.4.3 Verb Phrase Level Negation

Verbal negation in Central Mfumte is expressed with the negative marker *ta*. In a negative construction, the object comes before the verb.

- (61) *Ta* *rè!*
 NEG cry
 'Don't cry!'
- (62) *Kà* *éwyì'* *ta* *nshà* *ká'.*
 FUT 1PL.INCL NEG huckleberry pluck
 'We will not harvest huckleberry.'
- (63) *Nwimálisə* *má* *ta* *mə* *nwà'* *vəmə* *fa.*
 teacher P0 NEG 1SG book 1SG.POSS give
 'The teacher did not give me my book.'

The equivalent of 'never' in Central Mfumte is constructed with the words *tá* and *fə'*. The first part *tá* precedes the verb and the second part *fə'* follows the verb.

- (64) *Mə* *tá* *yə* *zi* *fə'.*
 1SG NEG 3SG see never
 'I have never seen him before.'

In constructions which use the linking verb *ba* 'to be', negation is expressed with the word *tá* in every tense but the present.

- (65) *Á* *má* *ta* *ndú'* *bá.*
 3SG P0 NEG water be
 'It was not water.'
- (66) *Kà* *ndú'* *rì* *ta* *mɸumɸǔ* *bá.*
 FUT water ART.DEF NEG dirty be
 'The water will not be dirty.'

In the present tense, the copula is absent and negation is expressed in the word *bì*.

- (67) *Má* *vəmə* *fə* *bì.*
 mother 1SG.POSS here NEG2
 'My mother is not there.'

- (68) *Mbǎ b̀.*
 money NEG2
 'There is no money.'

3.4.4 Adverbs

Adverbs occur at the end of a clause. If there are any objects or adjuncts in the sentence then the adverb will follow them.

- (69) *Frêd ḱí fá rà v̀̀v̀.*
 Fred PROG give bridge well
 'Fred ties the bridge well.'
- (70) *Álìs má b̀ hwó' ch̀ ẁb̀.*
 Alice P0 come up church early
 'Alice came up to church early.'
- (71) *Nghwýí z̀ nu ḱú l̀ nh́ t̀t̀.*
 wife 3SG.POSS P1 stay DIR.SD market long
 'His wife stayed (yesterday) in the market for a long time.'

3.4.5 Complements

Complements are introduced by the complementizer *dá' à* 'say that'. The complementizer follows verbs of cognition or desire such as 'to think', 'to know', 'to see', or 'to want'. The complementizer *dá' à* 'say that' can be abbreviated to *à*.

- (72) *Yá má zi dá' à gu ta b̀.*
 3SG P0 see COMP plantains NEG ripe
 'She saw that the plantains had not ripened.'
- (73) *M̀ ḱí ri dá' à k̀ yá b̀-zi.*
 1SG PROG know COMP FUT 3SG come out-come
 'I know that he will come.'
- (74) *M̀ ḱí we dá' à k̀ m̀ la f̀ Bitú'.*
 1SG PROG want COMP FUT 1SG go DIR.LV Bitui
 'I want to go to Bitui.'
- (75) *M̀ ḱí h́má à (k̀) m̀ lá ź ng̀m̀' v̀m̀.*
 1SG PROG think COMP (FUT) 1SG go see friend 1SG.POSS
 I think that I will go and see my friend.
- (76) *B̀rnabà we dá' à yá hwá nwa-la Mark.*
 Barnabas want COMP 3SG take take-go Mark
 'Barnabas wanted to take Mark.'

3.4.6 Causatives

Causative constructions use the verb *ghi* 'make'. The causative *ghi* indicates that the subject is causing someone (or something) to do or be something.

- (77) *Yá má ghi dá' à m̀ gb̂.*
 3SG P0 CAUS say that 1SG fall
 'He caused me to fall.'
- (78) *Mankɔ' má ghi dá' à kà m̀ ghí tavə.*
 Devil P0 CAUS say that FUT 1SG do bad
 'The Devil caused me to sin.'
- (79) *Yá ghi m̀ wyi wyĩ.*
 3SG CAUS me laugh
 'He makes me laugh.'
- (80) *Ta ghi à mǎ wyí b̀.*
 Neg CAUS say that 1SG laugh NEG2
 'Do not make me laugh!'

3.4.7 Reciprocals and Reflexives

Reciprocal and reflexive phrases are both produced in the same manner; with the word *manyi* 'body' and the appropriate possessive pronoun.

- (81) *Yá má t̩ manyi' z̀.*
 3SG P0 hit REFL 3SG.POSS
 'He hit himself.'
- (82) *Wá nu gúlá manyi' rà'.*
 3PL P1 look at RECP 3PL.POSS
 'They looked at each other.'
- (83) *Wá má t̩l̀ manyi' rà'.*
 3PL P0 hit REFL/RECP 3PL.POSS
 'They hit each other' or 'they hit themselves.'

The above sentence is ambiguous, meaning either 'they hit each other' or 'they hit themselves'.

4. OTHER PHRASES - PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE

The terrain in the village of Lus and surrounding area is very hilly. This terrain has influenced the use of directional markers in Central Mfumte. The six directional prepositions in the table below indicate the slope of the ground that one travels to reach their destination. There are co-occurrence restrictions between verbs of movement and directional prepositions. The six directional markers in the table below co-occur with the verb *lá* 'go'.

Directional marker	Adverb 'there'	Meaning
<i>lí</i>	<i>ma</i>	steep descent
<i>mbǎ</i>	<i>ma</i>	gentle descent
<i>fí</i>	<i>ma</i>	relatively level place
<i>hǔ</i>	<i>ma</i>	gentle ascent
<i>mí</i>	<i>ma</i>	steep ascent
<i>ndzi</i>	<i>ma</i>	over (across a valley)

Figure 10. Directional Markers Occurring with the Verb *lá* 'go'.

- (84) *Yá nu lá mí Singi.*
 3SG P1 go DIR.SA Singi mountain
 'He went up Singi.'

The preposition *ngǎ* 'to/from/at' can occur with verbs of motion without any co-occurrence restrictions (unlike the directional markers).

- (85) *Wá má zì ngǎ nsò.*
 3PL P0 come from farm
 'They came from the farm.'

The preposition *wá* can be used to express 'to' or 'for'.

- (86) *Yá kí fá mbà wá wá*
 3SG PROG give money to 3PL
 'She is giving money to them.'
- (87) *Kà m̀ lé Nwyì wá wà*
 FUT 1SG pray God for 2SG
 'I will pray for you.'

5. CLAUSES

5.1 General Clause Structure

The affirmative Central Mfumte 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	Verb Phrase	(Indirect Object)	(Direct Object)	(Adpositional Phrase)	(Adverbial Phrase)

Figure 11. Central Mfumte Clause Structure

5.2 Basic Clause Types and their Structures

5.2.1 Declarative Clauses

Central Mfumte declarative clauses are basic with no special morphosyntactic markings.

- (88) *M̀̀* *kí* *la* *lì* *nhi*.
 1SG PROG go DIR.SD market
 'I am going down to the market.'

- (89) *Yá* *nu* *zá* *ngya'* *mpɔ*.
 3SG P1 buy meat cow
 'She bought cow meat.'

5.2.2 Imperative Clauses

Imperative clauses generally lack a constituent in the subject slot, however this is not always the case as can be seen below with the inclusive 1st person plural pronoun *éwyì*'.

- (90) *Fa* *m̀̀* *dì'*
 give 1SG chair
 'Give me a chair!'

- (91) *Éwyì'* *le* *Nwyì!*
 1PL.INCL pray God
 'Let's pray to God!'

5.2.3 Interrogative Clauses

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

5.2.3.1 Yes/No Questions

Yes/no questions are formed by adding the particle *a* to the end of a statement.

- (92) *Ẁ̀* *kí* *ri* *nwà'*.
 2SG PROG read book
 'You are reading (a) book(s).'

- (93) *Wà kí ri nwà' a?*
 2SG PROG read book Q
 'Are you reading (a) book(s)?'
- (94) *Kà wà ta Ì ñhi lá a?*
 FUT 2SG NEG DIR.SD market go Q
 'Are you not going down to the market?'

5.2.3.2 Content Questions

Content questions are formed by adding a question word to the end of an utterance. The question words *ghé* and *nyǎ* meaning 'what?' are used in the examples below.

- (95) *Wà kí ghi ghé?*
 2SG PROG do what
 'What are you doing?'
- (96) *Á ghé?*
 3SG what
 'What's going on?'
- (97) *Á nyǎ?*
 3SG what
 'What's going on?'
- (98) *Wà kí zá nyǎ?*
 2SG PROG eat what
 'What are you eating?'

The question word *ndághé* meaning 'why?' is used in the examples below. The word is composed of two morphemes, *ndá* and *ghé* meaning 'because' and 'what' respectively.

- (99) *Wà má bɔ'ri nene ndághé?*
 2SG P0 come here why
 'Why did you come here?'
- (100) *Wà má tá ndí' se' ndághé?*
 2SG P0 NEG water carry why
 'Why didn't you carry water?'

The question word *ndé* meaning 'who?' or 'whom?' is used in the examples below.

- (101) *Ngòmɔ' vəwə ndé?*
 friend 2SG.POSS who
 'Who is your friend?'

- (102) *Wà má fa mbà wá ndé?*
 2SG P0 give money to whom
 'To whom did you give the money?'

The question words *bě* and *wé* meaning 'where?' are used in the examples below.

- (103) *Wǎ la bě?*
 2SG.PROG go where
 'Where are you going?'

- (104) *Wà má là bě?*
 2SG P0 go where
 'Where did you go?'

- (105) *Wà má là wé?*
 2SG P0 go where
 'Where did you go?'

- (106) *Nwà' vəwə bě?*
 book 2SG.POSS where
 'Where is your book?'

- (107) *Nwà' vəwə wé?*
 book 2SG.POSS where.
 'Where is your book?'

The question word *shá* 'how much?' or 'how many?' is used to inquire about the quantity of an item.

- (108) *Wà kí fá mbà shá?*
 2SG PROG give money how much
 'How much money are you giving?'

- (109) *Bì ku mi nghya' shá?*
 people stay in house how many
 'How many people are in the house?'

The question word *wǎ* meaning 'how?' can be used to ask about the condition of someone or something. It is also used to ask about the time.

- (110) *Wá kí ghá wǎ?*
 3PL PROG do how
 'How are they doing?'

- (111) *Keké'mà gùmbì bá wǎ?*
 harvest corn be how
 'How was the harvest?'

- (112) *Mfə' wǎ?*
 time how
 'What time is it?'

The question word *wǎ* meaning 'how?' is also used to inquire about the quantity of a mass noun (a noun that is uncountable).

- (113) *Ndú'* *ku* *lí* *ndɔ* *wǎ?*
 water stay inside cup how
 'How much water is in the cup?'
- (114) *Wè* *má* *zɛ* *nhu* *lugu* *wǎ?*
 2SG P0 buy flour cassava how
 'How much cassava flour did you buy?'
- (115) *Yá* *má* *sílá* *ndzànga'* *wǎ?*
 3SG P0 sell groundnut how
 'How much groundnut did she sell?'

5.3 Functions of Elements in the Clause

5.3.1 Grammatical Relations

Central Mfumte is an SVO language. Grammatical relations of phrases are not marked, but determined by their position in the clause. Subjects precede the verb and in affirmative clauses, verbs are followed by objects. In the case of a ditransitive verb, the indirect object precedes the direct object.

- (116) *Mì* *má* *kyɔ́.*
 child P0 run.
 'The child ran (earlier today).'
- (117) *Yá* *nu* *nyá* *ndú'.*
 3SG P1 drink water
 'He drank water (yesterday).'
- (118) *Yá* *má* *fa* *mè* *mbì.*
 3SG P0 give 1SG kola nut
 'He gave me a kola nut.'

5.3.2 Adverbial Elements

Simple time words and other adverbial phrases typically occur in utterance final position.

- (119) *Alice* *nu* *bó'rí* *nene* *mamba.*
 Alice P1 come here a few days ago
 'Alice came here a few days ago.'
- (120) *kà* *yá* *la* *fí* *Kwɔ* *ya.*
 FUT 3SG go DIR.LV Kom day after tomorrow
 'He will probably go to Kom the day after tomorrow.'

Adverbial clauses 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* 'as, when' is the most productive.

(121) *[tsâ bì nu zî ngǎ l' nî], bì zí venki'.*
 as 1PL.EXCL P1 come at village DEM 1PL.EXCL see children
 'When we came to the village, we saw children.'

(122) *[tsâ wá má tsɔ' mbi nî], wá kè'fá ndú' lí ma.*
 as 3PL P0 pound palm nuts DEM 3PL pour.in water inside there
 'After they pounded the palm nuts, they poured water inside (the pounding pit).'

5.3.3 Clause Level Particles

5.3.3.1 Conjunctions

The coordinating conjunction *la* 'and' joins clauses as seen in the following examples.

(123) *Kà mà lâ ngǎ nghyǎ' nwà' lá la ngǎ nhî.*
 FUT 1SG go to house book CONJ go to market
 'I will go to the school and the market.'

(124) *Mánkwì' mà nu zú ngbɔ lá zú nhì gùmbì.*
 Yesterday 1SG P1 buy salt CONJ buy basket corn
 'Yesterday, I bought salt and a basket of corn.'

The coordinating conjunction *ká* 'or' can join two clauses.

(125) *Wè kí la mfɔ' ká nghwɔ nya á?*
 2SG PROG go work CONJ for animal Q
 'Are you going to work or for hunting?'

(126) *Kà wè lá nghwɔ ká kà wè kútsi mà á?*
 FUT 2SG go bush CONJ FUT 2SG wait 1SG Q
 'Will you go to the bush or will you wait for me?'

The subordinating conjunction *ndá* 'because' introduces a dependent clause.

(127) *Mè má nwa wambi ndá mbə kí fifi.*
 1SG P0 take umbrella CONJ rain PROG darken
 'I took an umbrella because of the dark clouds.'

(128) *Yá má nyɛ ndú' gǎ ndá yá má zə nsɛ.*
 3SG P0 drink water a lot CONJ 3SG P0 eat pepper
 'He drank a lot of water because he ate a pepper.'

5.3.3.2 Quotative Particle

Both direct and indirect speech is introduced using a combination of the words *dá'* 'say' and *à* 'that'. Indirect speech can also be introduced by *dulə'* 'tell' and *à* 'that'.

(129) *Nwímálishi má dá' wá wá à wá 'ku nyo'.*
 teacher P0 say to 3PL COMP 3PL stay quiet
 'The teacher said to them, 'be quiet!''

(130) *Má vəwə má dá' wá wə à wə 'sírí kyà'.*
 mother 2SG.POSS P0 say to 2SG that 2SG wash clothes.
 'Your mother said to you that you should wash clothes.'

(131) *Nkú má dá' à kà yá la nga mbe zǎ.*
 chief P0 QUOT FUT 3SG go to palm bush 3SG.POSS
 'The chief said that he would go to his palm bush.'

(132) *Mi vəmə má dulə' mə à kà yá lá sé' ndí'.*
 child 1SG.POSS P0 tell 1SG that FUT 3SG go scoop water
 'My child told me that she would go and fetch water.'

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to present an introductory grammar of Central Mfumte. Many elements of the grammar remain to be described and some elements that are described in this document are done so only briefly. Some subjects such as clause combining operations and clause level particles need further analysis. The subject of deictics has not been formally mentioned and the role of tone in Central Mfumte grammar remains to be fully researched. However, the richness of the Central Mfumte language may be seen from this introductory research.

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