A Sketch Grammar of the Mungong Language

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This paper concerns the Mungong language, formally considered a variety of Nchane and spoken in Bum Subdivision, Menchum Division, in the North West Region of Cameroon.

ISO 639-3 language code: ncr

Table of Contents

Abbreviations

Ø-	zero prefix		HORT	hortative
#σ	word initial syllable		IMP	imperative
???	unanalyzed form		IMPF	imperfective
1	class 1		INCL	inclusive
2	class 2		IO	indirect object
3	class 3		LOC	locative
	etc.		N	nasal archiphoneme, noun
1s	first person singular		NEG	negative
2s	second person singular		NEG1	negative 1
3s	third person singular		NEG2	negative 2
1p	first person plural		NOM	nominalizer
2p	second person plural		P0	past 0 (immediate past)
3p	third person plural		P1	past 1 (today past)
AGR	agreement marker		P2	past 2 (medial past)
AM	associative marker		P3	past 3 (remote past)
ANA	anaphoric demonstrative		POSS	possessive adjective
C	consonant		PRO	pronoun
CAUS	causative		QM	question marker
COMP	complement particle		Rel	relative Pronoun
DISTR	distributive		S	subject
DL	dual		Subj	subject
DO	direct object		V	verb, vowel
EXCL	exclusive		v̀	low tone
EXT	verbal extension		v̰̀	extra low tone
F0	future 0 (immediate future)		v̄	mid tone
F1	future 1 (near future)		v́	high tone
F2	future 2 (medial future)		v̂	high-low falling tone
F3	future 3 (distant future)		v̄̀	mid-low falling tone
FUT	future		VPart	verbal particle
HAB	habitual			

1 Introduction

1.1 Name of the language

Mungong is a language spoken in the Bum Subdivision, Menchum Division, North West Region, Republic of Cameroon. The Atlas Administratif des Langages Nationales du Cameroun (Breton and Fohtung 1987) gives it the language code [885]. The *Ethnologue* (Fennig, Lewis, and Simons 2013) lists Mungong as a dialect of Ncane, ISO 639-3 language code: ncr.

1.2 Genetic affiliation

Mungong has the following genetic affiliation: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Wide Bantu, Southern, Beboid, Eastern (Fennig, Lewis, and Simons 2013).

1.3 Sociolinguistic situation

1.3.1 Demography

The Mungong language area is comprised of the one village of Mungong with its own chief. There are approximately 1,500 speakers of the language.

1.3.2 Viability

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

1.3.3 Language attitudes

The Mungong people are positively disposed toward their language.

1.3.4 Multilingualism

A significant number of Mungong people may be fluent in the neighboring languages of Noni, Nchane and Bum. A majority of adult Mungong speakers may also have at least a minimum of functional fluency in Cameroonian Pidgin English, which is very often the language of use at neighboring markets.

1.4 Corpus and nature of the research

The current paper is an effort to describe the basics of Mungong grammar, particularly from a descriptive viewpoint. Data for the research comes primarily from a number of Mungong narrative texts, as well as from elicited sentences and words collected over a period of seven years, from 2007 to 2014. Significant data collection and analysis was accomplished as a result of a series of grammar workshops held in Misaje in late 2012. The texts and other language data were collected with the help of several language consultants, most notably Kemcha Gabriel, Nganti Joseph, Ngong Augustine, Sofa Cletus, Ferdinand Muchuo and San Linus Gabushi.

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. The data is generally presented utilizing orthographic forms. Of special note is palatalization, which is represented as a *Ci* + *V* sequence. Thus, any occurrence of *CiV* in the data should be interpreted as *CʸV*. The function of Mungong tone is limited to a handful of grammatical features and lexical distinctions. Therefore, orthographic tone is included in the data, with the exception of examples illustrating tense, yes-no questions and hortative mood. Because of the important role tone plays in these areas, surface tone is given in these examples. The reader is directed to the *Mungong Orthography Guide* (Boutwell and Boutwell 2011) and the *Mungong Phonology Sketch* (Boutwell 2011) for aid in realizing phonetic forms.

2 Nouns and noun phrases

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

noun (possessor) (demonstrative) (number) (quantifier) (relative clause)

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

2.1 Noun classes and genders

Mungong common nouns belong to eight 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 are informed by Hombert (1980), which closely follows the Proto-Bantu numbering established by bantuists (Welmers 1973:163). A notable exception is class 25, which appears to be a creation of Hombert.

Nouns are typically marked by a prefix to indicate the number of the noun (i.e., singular vs. plural). Notable exceptions are classes 1, 3, 9 and 10. Classes 1 and 3 each take a zero morpheme to indicate singular, while the number for gender 9/10 nouns is indicated by distinctive tone. The singular forms are marked with relative low tone and plural forms with relative high tone.

Gender 3/4 displays three distinct subgroups, with different affixation on the nouns. The first subgroup, gender 3/4(a), is prevalent and marks singular nouns with a zero prefix and plural nouns with the prefix *i-*. Gender 3/4(c) indicates singular nouns by labializing the initial consonant of the noun stem, while plural nouns lack such labialization (and have no prefix). Gender 3/4(b) represents a transitional phase between genders 3/4(a) and 3/4(c). Singular nouns are marked by labialization and plural nouns by the prefix *i-*.

The examples below are representative of the three gender 3/4 groups.[1]

1. a) *Ø-ʧuŋ*   *i-ʧuŋ*
       3-axe   4-axe
       'axe'   'axes'

    b) *jwə*   *i-dzə*
       3.mouth   4-mouth
       'mouth'   'mouths'

    c) *gbə*   *Ø-gə*
       3.root   4-root
       'root'   'roots'

Classes 6a and 16 are worthy of special comment. Some liquids, and possibly certain other uncountable nouns, belong to the single class gender 6a. Nouns in this very small class take the prefix *m(ə)-*. Class 16 is a locative class and is marked by the prefix *fə-*. Nouns in this class often have no plural counterpart. When a plural exists, it often belongs to class 8, but other plural classes are observed as well. A number of body parts belong to this class. Below are some examples to illustrate.[2]

2. a) *fə-njiŋ*
       16-forehead
       'forehead' (lit. at eyes)

    b) *fə-ka*
       16-palm
       'palm' (of hand)

    c) *fə-ŋkə*
       16-beginning
       'beginning'

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[1] Note that backing of initial nonsonorant, alveolar consonants is observed in class 3 nouns of genders 3/4(b) and 3/4(c). Also note that in these two groups, class 3 labialization is realized as a labialvelar (kp or gb) when the initial consonant of the noun stem is velar (k or g). See Boutwell (2011) for more details. Furthermore, there appears to be a regularization of gender 3/4(c) to include only nouns with stem initial velar consonants.

[2] A small number of nouns is observed with a *kə-* prefix, corresponding to the locative class 17 (e.g., *kə-njiŋ* 'the inside of the eye').

The full array of noun class markers with examples are given in the table below.

Class	Noun class marking	Example	Gloss
1	Ø-	na	'cow'
2	bə-	bəna	'cows'
3	Ø-/(-ʷ-)	taka	'fish bone'
4	i-/(Ø-)	itaka	'fish bones'
7	kɨ-	kɨyu	'elephant'
8	bɨ-	bɨyu	'elephants'
9	#ɔ̀	bi	'goat'
10	#ɔ́	bí	'goats'
14	b(v)u-	budɨ	'bridge'
25	məN-	məndɨ	'bridges'
19	fɨ(N)-	fɨntaŋ	'fruit'
18a	mu(N)-	muntaŋ	'fruits'
16	fə-	fəkiŋ	'wrist'
6a	m(ə)-	məntəŋ	'saliva'

Table 1. Noun Class Markers

2.2   Gender system

As suggested above, Mungong nouns may normally be grouped into singular/plural pairs referred to as genders. There is overwhelming one-to-one correspondence between the singular and plural classes. In other words, the singular-plural pairings are quite simple and rigid, with class 1 pairing only with class 2, class 3 pairing only with class 4, etc. This is in contrast with other Eastern Beboid languages like Nchane, where class 3 pairs with both class 4 and class 27 (Boutwell 2010). Note that several classes that normally belong to singular-plural genders have been observed with nouns lacking a singular or plural counterpart (i.e., single class genders). However, this area needs more exploration at this time. Classes 6a and 16 form single class genders. As noted above, class 6a nouns are generally mass nouns, which are semantically constrained from making a singular-plural distinction. A few class 16 nouns can be distinguished as singular, and generally pair with class 8 for their plural form.

The genders may be seen in the table below.

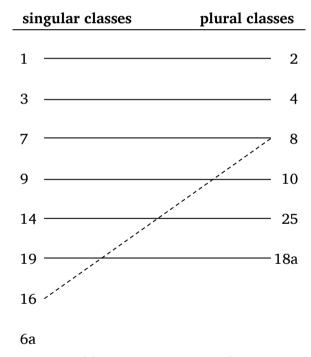| singular classes	plural classes
1	2
3	4
7	8
9	10
14	25
19	18a
16	
6a	

Table 2. Mungong Genders

Most constituents that modify the noun must take a prefix that corresponds to the noun's class. Note that when the root of the modifier begins with a vowel, the vowel of the concord marker is deleted leaving only the consonant of the concord marker.

There appears to be some collapsing of the system, with classes 1 and 3 sharing concord markers. Likewise, classes 4 and 10 share concord markers and classes 6a and 25 also share concord markers.

Class	Numbers, Quantifiers, Demonstratives	Possessive Adjectives	Associative Markers, Relative Pronouns
1, 3	wu-	wu-	wu
2	bə-	bə-	bə
4, 10	yi-	yi-	yɨ
7	kɨ-	kɨ-	kɨ
8	bɨ-	bɨ-	bɨ
9	yɨ-	yɨ-	yɨ
14	bu-	bu-	bu
6a, 25	məN-	mə-	mə
19	fɨ-	fɨ-	fi
18a	muN-	mu-	mu
16	fə-	fə-	fə

Table 3. Mungong Class Concord Markers

2.3 Possessives

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

3. a) *Ø-na*   ***w-aŋ***   *Ø-na*   ***w-i***
    1-cow   1-1sPOSS   1-cow   1-3sPOSS
    'my cow'   'his cow'

    b) *kɨ-ba*   ***k-aŋ***   *kɨ-ba*   ***k-e***
    7-bag   7-1sPOSS   7-bag   7-3sPOSS
    'my bag'   'his bag'

Note that the third person singular and third person plural possessive adjectives have two forms each—a long form and a shorter, presumably contracted, form. The third person singular short forms consist of the noun class consonant followed by *i, e, ɛ,* or *ɨ,* likely phonological variants of the possessive adjective root vowel. The third person plural short forms simply delete the final *lə* from the root. Note also that initial observations suggest that classes 1 and 9 have low tone, while the other classes have relatively higher tone, following

the pattern seen in other languages in the area. However, more research is needed to confirm this.

The full set of possessive adjectives may be seen in Table 4 below.

Class	Person							
	1s	2s	3s	1p	1p + 1s	1p + 2s	2p	3p
1	waŋ	wo	wi/wusɨ(ə)	wusa	wusabemə	wusabewə	wuna	wubə/wubələ
2	baŋ	bo	be/bəsɨ	bəsa	bəsabemə	bəsabewə	bəna	bəbə/bəbələ
3	waŋ	wo	wi/wusɨ	wusa	wusabemə	wusabewə	wuna	wubə/wubələ
4	yaŋ	yo	yi/yisɨ	yisa	yisabemə	yisabewə	yina	yibə/yibələ
7	kaŋ	ko	ke/kɨsɨ	kɨsa	kɨsabemə	kɨsabewə	kɨna	kɨbə/kɨbələ
8	biaŋ	bio	biɨ/bɨsɨ	bɨsa	bɨsabemə	bɨsabewə	bɨna	bɨbə/bɨbələ
9	yaŋ	yo	ye/yisɨ	yisa	yisabemə	yisabewə	yina	yibə/yibələ
10	yaŋ	yo	ye/yisɨ	yisa	yisabemə	yisabewə	yina	yibə/yibələ
14	bwaŋ	bwo	bwi/busɨ	busa	busabemə	busabewə	buna	bubə/bubələ
25	maŋ	mo	mɛ/məsɨ	məsa	məsabemə	məsabewə	məna	məbə/məbələ
19	fiaŋ	fio	fiɨ/fɨsɨ	fɨsa	fɨsabemə	fɨsabewə	fɨna	fɨbə/fɨbələ
18a	m(w)aŋ	mwo	mwi/musɨ	musa	musabemə	musabewə	muna	mubə/ mubələ
16	faŋ	fo	fiɨ/fəsɨ	fəsa	fəsabemə	fəsabewə	fəna	fəbə/fəbələ
6a	maŋ	mo	mɛ/məsɨ	məsa	məsabemə	məsabewə	məna	məbə/məbələ

Table 4. Mungong Possessive Adjectives

2.4 Demonstratives

Demonstratives immediately follow the noun in the noun phrase, except in the relatively rare case that there is an accompanying possessive, in which case they follow the possessive. There are three distinct stem forms distinguishing three degrees of distance, near the speaker (proximal), near the hearer (distal) and away from both speaker and hearer (far distal).

The proximal demonstrative has the underlying form *nə³*, the distal demonstrative has the underlying form *i*, and the far distal demonstrative has the underlying form *ɔkɔ*. These three demonstratives must be marked with a prefix corresponding to the noun class of the modified noun. In the case of the distal demonstrative, this leads to vowel harmony in some cases. And in the case of the far distal demonstrative, this results in the loss of the normal concord prefix vowel.

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[3] A shortened version of the proximal is observed that has the root *ŋ*.

4. a) *Ø-na*   **wu-nə**   *Ø-na*   **wi-i**   *Ø-na*   **w-ɔkɔ**
    1-cow   1-this   1-cow   1-that   1-cow   1-that (far)
    'this cow'   'that cow'   'that cow' (far)

   b) *bə-na*   **bə-nə**   *bə-na*   **bɛ-ɛ**   *bə-na*   **b-ɔkɔ**
    2-cow   2-this   2-cow   2-that   2-cow   2-that (far)
    'these cows'   'those cows'   'those cows' (far)

   c) i-*gɔŋ*   **yi-nə**   i-*gɔŋ*   **yi-i**   i-*gɔŋ*   **y-ɔkɔ**
    4-spear   4-this   4-spear   4-that   4-spear   4-that (far)
    'these spears'   'those spears'   'those spears' (far)

The addition of the concord prefix to the distal demonstratives results in labialization in classes 14 and 18a. Similarly, palatalization occurs in classes 8 and 19. Note that palatalization is represented here as *CiV* sequences. Thus, for example, *fi-i* '19-that' should be interpreted as *fʲ-i*.

5. a) bu-dɨ   **bu-nə**   *bu-dɨ*   **bw-i**   *bu-dɨ*   **b(w)-ɔkɔ**
    14-bridge   14-this   14-bridge   14-that   14-bridge   14-that (far)
    'this bridge'   'that bridge'   'that bridge' (far)

   b) muŋ-kɔ   **mu-nə**   *muŋ-kɔ*   **mw-iŋ**   *muŋ-kɔ*   **mw-ɔkɔ**
    18a-cup   18a-this   18a-cup   18a-that   18a-cup   18a-that (far)
    'these cups'   'those cups'   'those cups' (far)

   c) bɨ-tɨ   **bɨ-nə**   bɨ-tɨ   **bɨ-i**   bɨ-tɨ   **bɨ-ɔkɔ**
    8-tree   8-this   8-tree   8-that   8-tree   8-that (far)
    'these trees'   'those trees'   'those trees' (far)

   d) fɨ-musə   **fɨ-nə**   fɨ-musə   **fɨ-i**   fɨ-musə   **fɨ-ɔkɔ**
    19-cat   19-this   19-cat   19-that   19-cat   19-that (far)
    'this cat'   'that cat'   'that cat' (far)

A fourth demonstrative, with the underlying form *juŋ*, is used with nouns that have previously been mentioned in the discourse. Like the spatial demonstratives, this anaphoric demonstrative is marked with a prefix which corresponds to the noun class of the modified noun. The distal demonstrative is used in anaphoric reference as well, as illustrated in 6b below, and may actually be the preferred demonstrative for this function. Preliminary observations suggest that these two demonstratives may be used interchangeably with no change in meaning. Further research needs to be done to know if there is any actual difference between them when used in making anaphoric reference.

6. a) Wu mwo nji   yi mwə   **wu-juŋ** nə busɨ.
     3s   just   enter in 3.farm 3-ANA   it   remove
     'He just entered the (aforementioned) farm and removed some (ground nuts).'

   b) *M-bo*   *mbɔkɔ* **wi-i**   *wii.*
     1s-descend 1.hill 1-that   slow
     'I descended the (aforementioned) hill slowly.'

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

Class	this/these	that/those	that/those (far)	that (anaphoric)
1	wunə	wii	wɔkɔ	wujuŋ
2	bənə	bɛɛ	bɔkɔ	bəjuŋ
3	wunə	wii	wɔkɔ	wujuŋ
4	yinə	yii	yɔkɔ	yijuŋ
7	kɨnə	kiɨ	kɔkɔ	kɨjuŋ
8	bɨnə	bii	biɔkɔ	bɨjuŋ
9	yinə	yii	yɔkɔ	yijuŋ
10	yinə	yii	yɔkɔ	yijuŋ
14	bunə	bwi	bwɔkɔ	bujuŋ
25	mənə	mɛɛ	mɔkɔ	mənjuŋ
19	fɨnə	fiɨ	fiɔkɔ	fɨjuŋ
18a	munə	mwiŋ	mwɔkɔ	munjuŋ
16	fənə	fɛɛ	fɔkɔ	fəjuŋ
6a	mənə	mɛɛ	mɔkɔ	mənjuŋ

Table 5. Mungong Demonstratives

2.5 Numerals

Mungong numerals typically immediately follow the noun they modify. The numbers 1-5 always agree with the modified noun, while the numbers 6-9 do not take concord.

7. *Ø-na*   **wu-** *mbwaka*   'one cow'
   bə-na   **bə-** *tələ*   'three cows'
   bə-na   **bə-** *nə*   'four cows'

   bə-na   *nya*   'eight cows'
   bə-na   *bʋukə*   'nine cows'

Numbers above ten are formed through the use of *ntso* 'plus', joining numbers in the one's position with those in the ten's position.

8. *yufə* ***ntso*** *mbaka*   'eleven' (ten plus one)
   yufə ***ntso*** *nya*   'eighteen' (ten plus eight)

In numbers higher than ten, the numbers 1-7 in the one's position agree with the noun modified, when a noun is present. Otherwise, they are generally marked with the class 2 concord prefix *bə-*.

9. *yufə ntso* **bə-***tələ*   'thirteen' (ten plus three)
   yufə ntso **bə-***nə*   'fourteen' (ten plus four)

   bíaŋ yufə ntso **yi-***tələ*   'thirteen palm nuts'
   bíaŋ yufə ntso **yi-***nə*   'fourteen palm nuts'

Numbers above one hundred use the word *bə* 'and' to join numbers in the higher positions with those in the lower positions when not modifying a noun; otherwise *ntso* is used.

10. *gbeŋ* ***bə*** *mbaka*   'one hundred and one'

    bə-na gbeŋ ***ntso*** *wu-mbwaka*   'one hundred and one cows'

The numbers in the hundred's position are treated as nouns belonging to gender 3/4, and numbers in the thousand's position are treated as nouns belonging to gender 1/2.

11. *gbeŋ* 'one hundred'
    ge fe 'two hundred'

    Ø-*nchukə* 'one thousand'
    bə-*nchukə* **bə**-*fe* 'two thousand'

This is maintained even when modifying a noun.

12. *bíaŋ gbeŋ* 'one hundred palm nuts'
    bíaŋ ge fɨ 'two hundred palm nuts'

    bíaŋ **Ø**-*nchukə* 'one thousand palm nuts'
    bíaŋ **bə**-*nchukə* **bə**-*fe* 'two thousand palm nuts'

Some class concord markers apparently effect morphophonological changes to the numeral 'one'. Classes 1, 3, and 14 concord results in labialization of the initial consonant of the root. Class 9 concord results in palatalization of the initial consonant of the root.

13. *mbaka* 'one'

    na wu-mbwaka 'one cow'(1)
    biaŋ yi-mbiaka 'one palm nut'(9)

Table 6 below presents a partial list of Mungong cardinal numerals used for counting, along with the numerals as they appear when modifying a noun.

	Numeral	'cow___' (Gender 1/2)	'palm nut__' (Gender 9/10)
1	mbaka	na wumbwaka	biaŋ yimbiaka
2	fe	bəna bəfe	bíaŋ yife
3	təle	bəna bətələ	bíaŋ yitələ
4	nə	bəna bənə	bíaŋ yinə
5	tiŋ	bəna bətiŋ	bíaŋ yitiŋ
6	so	bəna buso	bíaŋ buso
7	fwe	bəna busofwe	bíaŋ busofwe
8	nya	bəna nya	bíaŋ nya
9	bvukə	bəna bvukə	bíaŋbvukə
10	yufə	bəna yufə	bíaŋ yufə
11	yufə ntso mbaka	bəna yufə ntso wumbwaka	bíaŋ yufə ntso yimbiaka
12	yufə ntso bəfe	bəna yufə ntso bəfe	bíaŋ yufə ntso yifiɨ
13	yufə ntso bətələ	bəna yufə ntso bətələ	bíaŋ yufə ntso yitələ
14	yufə ntso bənə	bəna yufə ntso bənə	bíaŋ yufə ntso yinə
15	yufə ntso bətiŋ	bəna yufə ntso bətiŋ	bíaŋ yufə ntso yitiŋ
16	yufə ntso bəso	bəna yufə ntso buso	bíaŋ yufə ntso buso
17	yufə ntso bəsofwe	bəna yufə ntso busofwe	bíaŋ yufə ntso busofwe
18	yufə ntso nya	bəna yufə ntso nya	bíaŋ yufə ntso nya
19	yufə ntso bvukə	bəna yufə ntso bvukə	bíaŋ yufə ntso bvukə
20	mbaŋ fi	bəna mbəŋ fiɨ	bíaŋ mbaŋ fiɨ
21	mbaŋ fi ntso mbaka	bəna mbaŋ fiɨ ntso wumbwaka	bíaŋ mbaŋ fiɨ ntso yimbiaka
22	mbaŋ fi ntso bəfe	bəna mbəŋ fi ntso bəfe	bíaŋ mbaŋ fiɨ ntso yifiɨ
100	gbeŋ	bəna gbeŋ	bíaŋ gbeŋ
101	gbeŋ bə mbaka	bəna gbeŋ ntso wumbwaka	bíaŋ gbeŋ ntso yimbiaka
200	ge fe	bəna ge fe	bíaŋ ge fiɨ
1000	nchukə	bəna nchukə	bíaŋ nchukə
2000	bənchukə bəfe	bəna bənchukə bəfe	bíaŋ bənchukə bəfe

Table 6. Mungong Numerals

2.6   Quantifiers

Mungong quantifiers immediately follow the modified noun and take a prefix corresponding to the noun's class.

14. a) *bɨ-tɨ*   ***bɨ-chi***
    c8-tree   8-all
    'all trees'

    b) *m-uŋ*   ***mun-chi***
    18a-thing   18a-all
    'all things'

15. a) *bə-ni*   ***bə-mbə***
    2-person   2-some
    'some people'

    b) i-*soŋ*   *yi-mbə*
    4-palm trees   4-some
    'some palm trees'

16. a) *bə-ni*   ***bə-chɛ***
    2-person   2-few
    'few people'

    b) i-*soŋ*   *yi-chɛ*
    4-palm trees   4-few
    'few palm trees'

17. a) *bɨ-tɨ*   ***bɨ-yaŋnə***
    8-tree   8-many
    'many trees'

    b) *bə-ni*   ***bə-yaŋnə***
    2-person   2-many
    'many people'

In certain contexts, these quantifiers can give slightly different senses than the basic ones. The example below shows how *chi* 'all' can be used with some singular nouns to indicate the entirety of the modified noun.

18. *kɨ-tɨ*   ***kɨ-chi***
    7-tree   7-all
    'the whole tree'

Below, we see *mbə* 'some' modifying a singular noun and giving a discriminating sense.

19. a) *Ø-soŋo*   ***wu-mbə***
    3-palm tree   3-some
    'one of the palm trees'

    b) *Ø-mu*   ***wu-mbə***
    1-person   1-some
    'a certain person'

The quantifier *chɛ* 'few' can be used to modify many singular nouns and indicates that the noun is small in size.

20. *Ø-lɛ*   *wu-chɛ*
    3-compound   3-few
    'small compound'

When used to modify a mass noun, the quantifiers *chɛ* 'few' and *yaŋnə* 'many' express the amount of the noun, often relative to the size of the container. With some nouns, this can also include a comment on the perceived stinginess or liberality of the quantity. For example, if palm wine is provided for guests in a less than expected quantity, the use of *chɛ* indicates that the amount is not sufficient.

21. a) *me*   ***mən-chɛ***
    6a.oil   6a-few
    'a small amount of oil'

    b) *me*   ***mən-yaŋnə***
    6a.oil   6a-many
    'a large amount of oil'

The following table provides a summary of the Mungong quantifiers.

Class	'all'	'some'	'few'	'many'
1	wuchi	wumbə	wuchɛ	-
2	bəchi	bəmbə	bəchɛ	bəyaŋnə
3	wuchi	wumbə	wuchɛ	-
4	yichi	yimbə	yichɛ	yiyaŋnə
7	kɨchi	kɨmbə	kɨchɛ	-
8	bɨchi	bɨmbə	bɨchɛ	bɨyaŋnə
9	yichi	yimbə	yichɛ	-
10	yichi	yimbə	yichɛ	yiyaŋnə
14	buchi	bumbə	buchɛ	-
25	mənchi	məmbə	mənchɛ	mənyaŋnə
19	fɨchi	fɨmbə	fɨnchɛ	-
18a	munchi	mumbə	munchɛ	munyaŋnə
16	fəchi	fəmbə	fəchɛ	-
6a	mənchi	məmbə	mənchɛ	mənyaŋnə

Table 7. Mungong Quantifiers

2.7 Adjectives

While more research needs to be conducted, no true adjectives in Mungong have been identified in the current data corpus. Attributive words generally have predicate-like qualities and are often seen in relative clause constructions.

2.8 Associative noun phrases

Two nouns may be joined together by an intervening associative marker (AM) to form associative noun phrases. The AM agrees with the class of the first noun. Usually, the noun class prefix of the second noun is deleted.[4] Note that the class of the second noun is given in parentheses following the noun in the examples below.

22. *a) fɨ-uŋ*   *fɨ*   *mu*
     19-thing   19AM   person(1)
     'person's thing'

   b) *shəŋ*   *yi*   *chɛŋ*
     9.heart   9AM   monkey(9)
     'heart of monkey'

   c) *kɨ-ntasɛ*   *kɨ*   *mbɛ*
     7-spoon   7AM   soup(9)
     'ladle'

   d) *mun-taŋ*   *mu*   *kɔ*
     18a-fruit   18aAM   forest(7)
     'fruits of forest'

The second noun of the associative noun phrase may be a nominalized verb or a gerund, as illustrated below.

23. a) *bə-ni*   *bə*   *n-tuŋ*
     2-person   2AM   NOM-to send(1)
     'messengers'

   b) *kɨ-mbaŋ*   *kɨ*   *tu-kə*
     7-cane   7AM   pound-IMPF(1?)
     'pestle, pounding stick'

---

[4] A small number of examples of N2 maintaining the noun class prefix are observed. Presently, it is not known why the noun class prefix is maintained in these cases.

2.9   Compound nouns

Compound nouns may be formed by joining a noun with 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. Furthermore, some compound nouns apparently can not be pluralized, indicating that this process is fairly constrained.

24. a) *bə-tsɨ-lɛ*
    2-father-compound
    'compound heads'

  b) *Ø-mu-n-yɛyə*
    1-person-NOM-teach
    'teacher'

  c) *Ø-mwa-Nywə*
    1-child-God
    'God's son'

2.10 Derivational morphology on noun roots

Nouns may be derived from verbs by the addition of the nominalizing prefix *N-*. When present, this prefix immediately precedes the noun root. The newly formed noun stem then will take the appropriate noun class prefix. Most derived nouns belong to gender 1/2, although they are found in other genders as well.

25. a) *Ø-**m**-bi*
       1-NOM-ask
       'question'

    b) *bə-**n**-shiya*
       2-NOM-insult
       'insults'

    c) *fə-**ŋ**-kə*
       16-NOM-begin
       'beginning'

    d) *kɨ-**n**-tɛʃə*
       7-NOM-gather
       'wedding'

    e) *bɨ-**m**-bashɛ*
       8-NOM-saw (wood)
       'wood saws'

In a somewhat similar operation, some nouns may have their "basic" noun class markers removed and replaced with the gender 19/18a prefixes *fɨ-/mu-* resulting in a smaller version of the original noun. This does not appear to be very productive in Mungong when compared with some other Eastern Beboid languages.

26. a) *nyúŋ*   →   **mu-*nyuŋ***
   10.cutlass   18a-cutlass
   'cutlasses'   'small knives'

   b) *kɨ-ŋka*   →   **fɨ-ŋka**
   7-half   19-piece
   'half'   'piece'

   c) *Ø-na*   →   **fɨ-na**
   1-cow   19-cow
   'cow'   'small cow'

   d) *bə-na*   →   **mu-*na***
   2-cow   18a-cow
   'cows'   'small cows'

   e) *shi*   →   **fɨ-shitɨ**
   9.fowl   19-fowl
   'fowl'   'small fowl'

2.11 Relative clauses

Relative clauses follow the modified noun and are marked by a relative pronoun. The relative pronouns agree in class with the head noun. Subject as well as object nouns may be relativized.

27. a) *Bemə*   *nji*   *kə*   *ŋgwə*   ***[yi***   ***Nywə***   ***nya***   ***kə***   ***bemə]***   *nə.*
   1p+1s[5]   eat   just   9.food   9Rel   God   give   to   1p+1s   LOC
   'We eat only food that God gives to us.'

   b) *Wə*   *gaŋə*   *noŋ*   *fə*   *wə*   *shi*   *nsaŋ*   *bə*   *mu*   ***[wu***   ***chi***   ***kɨ-tɨ***   ***wɨ]***   *lə.*
   2s   travel   how   to   2s   stay   9.friend   with   1.person   1Rel   live   7-tree   up   ???
   'How can you be friends with someone who lives in a tree?'

   c) *Mu*   *wi-i*   ***[wu***   ***ka***   ***si-lɨ***   ***bɨ-tɨ***   ***bi-ɨ]***   *bɨ*   *tə.*
   1.person   1-that   1Rel   PAST   cut-IMPF   8-tree   8-that   come.out   come
   'That person who was cutting those trees came out.'

---

[5] The analysis of '1p+1s' is based on paradigmatic evidence, with *bemə* '1p+2s', commonly described as '1p Inclusive', and *bewu* '1p+3s', commonly described as '1p Exclusive', well attested. Further research is needed to understand the practical difference between the complex *bemə* '1p+1s' and the simple *be* '1p'.

3 Verbs and verb phrases

3.1 The Mungong verb

Mungong verbs are rather simple in their morphology. They may occur with subject agreement marking and imperfective aspect or a verbal extension.

28. N-ji-nə.
    1s-go-IMPF
    'I am going.'

The Mungong verb may be illustrated by the following schematic.

(AGR-)root(-EXT)(-IMPF)[6]

3.2 The structure of the verb phrase

The Mungong verb phrase consists of at least one verb or verb-like element. Preceding the verb may be a verbal particle indicating tense or aspect, which may be preceded by a subject agreement marker, but only in first singular person. Also preceding the verb may be a second subject agreement marker[7] and a negative marker (NEG1). Following the verb may be one or more of the following: secondary negative marker (NEG2), adverb.

The order of these constituents is summarized in the chart below.

Subj clitic	VPart	Subj clitic	NEG1	Verb	NEG2	Adverb

3.3 Subject marking

Subjects in Mungong sentences are often indicated by a pronoun once the subject has been presented the first time. These pronouns replace the subject noun and agree with the understood subject in person, number and noun class.

---

[6] Data containing both, a verbal extension and the imperfective suffix, is limited to DISTR+IMPF, realized by the fused form *-shi*. I assume the order of EXT-IMPF based on the maintenance of the DISTR suffix consonant in the fused form. This analysis is also supported by the order observed in neighboring languages. See section 3.6.2 for more discussion.

[7] The second subject agreement marker generally occurs when there is a verbal particle present.

29. a) **Wu** *suŋ-nə*   *kpəŋ.*

      3s   cut-IMPF   3.firewood

      'He is cutting firewood.'

   b) **Bə** *yəsɨ*   *yɔ́*   *yi*   *bə chunə.*

      3p   greet   10.skin   10AM   3p well

      'They greeted each other well.'

      Subject agreement marking normally precedes the verb and any tense or aspect markers when the subject is first person singular. Subject agreement marking for other subjects precedes the verb only when the verb is preceded by some kind of "helping" verb that gives additional tense or aspectual information.

30. a) *Mə* **m-bɨ** **n-***suŋ-nə*   *kpəŋ.*

      1s   1s-P3 1s-cut-IMPF   3.firewood

      'I was cutting firewood.'

   b) *Wu* *bɨ-lɨ*   **wu-***suŋ-nə*   *kpəŋ.*

      3s   come.out-IMPF 3s-cut-IMPF   3.firewood

      'He shall be cutting firewood.'

3.4   Tense

      Tense is primarily indicated through the use of various verbal particles. These tense particles precede the verb and are usually marked with subject agreement when the subject is first person singular as mentioned in the above section. Note that the examples in this section are marked with surface tone.

      Immediate past is expressed through the presence of the tense particle *nə* (P0). This particle is often left out of the phrase and can be considered optional. However, when present, it is morphologically identical with the immediate future tense, differing only in tone. The immediate past tense carries a relatively lower tone on the main verb compared to the immediate future tense.

31. *Bɨ*   *nə́*   *ndzɨ̀*   *gíəŋ.*

    9.goat   P0   eat   10.grass

    'The goat ate grass.' (just now or recently)

Events that occurred one to several hours ago are indicated through the particle *bɨ* (P1). It is generally limited to events which occurred on the same day as the utterance.

32. Mə̄   *m-bɨ́*   *n-sūŋ-nə̄*   *kpə̀ŋ*.
    1s   1s-P1   1s-cut-IMPF   3.firewood
    'I was cutting firewood.' (earlier today)

Events that occurred one day to about 2 weeks ago are indicated by the particle *yi* (P2).

33. *Bɨ̄*   *yɨ́*   *ndzɨ́*   *gɨ́əŋ*.
    9.goat   P2   eat   9.grass
    'The goat ate grass.' (several days ago)

Events that occurred longer than two or three weeks ago are indicated by two particles, *ka* and *be* (P3). The particle *ka*, when used alone, expresses a past event with a somewhat indistinct time of occurrence. So, in example 34a, the actual time of the event is likely known, while in 34b, it is not known if the event happened several days ago or several years ago. *Ka* alone can also be used when the actual time of the event is not considered very important.

34. a) *Bì*   *kà*   *bē*   *ndzɨ́*   *gɨ́əŋ*.
       9.goat   PAST   P3   eat   9.grass
       'The goat ate grass.' (a long time ago)

    b) *Bì*   *kà*   *ndzɨ́*   *gɨ́əŋ*.
       9.goat   PAST   eat   9.grass
       'The goat ate grass.' (sometime in the past)

Future tense marking is complex, formed by the future marker *nə* (FUT) and usually followed by a second tense marker, which indicates the degree of future. An event that will occur very shortly is indicated by the particle *nə* only, which precedes the main verb.

35. *Bì*   *nə̄*   *ndzɨ́*   *gɨ́əŋ*.
    9.goat   FUT   eat   9.grass
    'The goat will eat grass.' (soon)

An event that will occur in one to three days is indicated by *nə* followed by the particle *fə* (F1).

23

36. *Bì*   ***nə́***   ***fə́***   *ndzɨ́ gíəŋ.*
    9.goat   FUT   F1   eat   9.grass
    'The goat will eat grass.' (tomorrow)

An event that will occur in 4 days to a week or two is indicated by *nə* followed by the particle *bɨ* (F2).

37. *Bì*   ***nə̄***   ***bɨ́***   *ndzɨ́ gíəŋ.*
    9.goat   FUT   F2   eat   9.grass
    'The goat will eat grass.' (next week)

An event that will occur a long time from now is indicated by *nə* followed by the particle *tə* (F3).

38. *Bì*   ***nə̄***   ***tə́***   *ndzɨ́ gíəŋ.*
    9.goat   FUT   F3   eat   9.grass
    'The goat will eat grass.' (next year)

Table 8 below provides a summary of the Mungong tense forms.

Tense	Example	Gloss	Time Frame
P3	*Bē* **kà** **bè** *wúyə̄ nằ.* 1p PAST P3 kill 1.cow	We killed the cow.	weeks or years ago
P2	*Bē* **yɨ́** *wūyə̄* *nằ.* 1p P2 kill 1.cow	We killed the cow.	1-14 days ago
p1	*Bē* **bɨ́** *wúyə́* *nằ.* 1p P1 kill 1.cow	We killed the cow.	earlier today
P0	*Bé* **nə̄** *wūyə̄* *nằ.* 1p P0 kill 1.cow	We killed the cow.	recently
F0	*Bē* **nə̄** *wúyə́ nằ.* 1p FUT kill 1.cow	We will kill the cow.	soon
F1	*Bē* **nə́** **fə́** *wúyə́ nằ.* 1p FUT F1 kill 1.cow	We will kill the cow.	later today
F2	*Bē* **nə̄** **bɨ́** *wúyə́ nằ.* 1p FUT F2 kill 1.cow	We will kill the cow.	1 day to 2weeks from now
F3	*Bē* **nə̄** **tə́** *wúyə́ nằ.* 1p FUT F3 kill 1.cow	We will kill the cow.	weeks or years from now

Table 8. Mungong Tense Forms

3.5 Aspect

The primary aspectual distinction made in Mungong is between Perfective and Imperfective (IMPF). Perfective aspect receives no special marking. Imperfective aspect marking is complicated, with several morphological forms. The most prevalent forms observed are: -i/ɨ, -ə, -lə, -nə, -kɨ/kə, -gə. Presumably, these variations can be explained as morphophonemic alternations (Hyman 1981; Boutwell 2010). The phonological motivation for the alternations is beyond the scope of this current work and an area for further research.

The addition of the Imperfective suffix generally renders a present continuative sense.

39. a) *Bə   bu-**nə***   *mun-tsɔnə.*
    3p   plant-IMPF   18a-groundnuts
    'They are planting groundnuts.'

   b) *Nywə   kɔŋ-**ə***   *be.*
    God   love-IMPF   1p
    'God loves us.'

Habitual aspect is expressed through the use of the verbal particle *tu* (HAB), which means 'to come' when used as the main verb. The verb apparently must also be in the Imperfective form.

40. a) *Tata   **tu**   gɨ-lə*   *nyaŋ.*
    Tata   HAB   buy-IMPF   9.meat
    'Tata always buys meat.'

   b) *Be   **tu**   be   nyɨ   shi-ɨ   kɨ-tɨ   wɨ.*
    1p   HAB   1p   leave   remain-IMPF   7-tree   up
    'We always leave (our hearts) up in the tree.'[8]

---

[8] This example is from a folktale. A monkey is riding on the back of a fish to go visit the fish's home. The fish reveals that he wants to eat the monkey's heart. In an effort to escape, the monkey tells the fish that monkeys don't travel with their hearts, but leave them up in the tree.

3.6 Verbal extensions

3.6.1 Causative

The causative suffix has apparently become almost completely unproductive. The example below is the only instance observed.

41. *bo*   + *sɨ*   →   *boksɨ*
    descend   CAUS   'lower (something)'

Remnants of the suffix can be seen in a number of verbs such as *tsaksɨ* 'raise' and *kushɛ* 'loosen'. These verbs are always active and never occur without the causative element.

3.6.2 Distributive

The distributive suffix *-shə* indicates that an action is performed multiple times. The action can involve a single agent performing the action multiple times to the same patient or to several different patients or for several beneficiaries. Or the action can be carried out by multiple agents (e.g., a crowd of people standing at more or less the same time).

Often, the context must be used for obtaining the correct interpretation. The examples below illustrate this point. Both sentences express the same action. However, in 42 b), there is a focus on the action of 'dividing' occurring multiple times as well as an implication that there are many children involved.

42. a) Tsɨboŋ   ga   bvu-shə   kə boŋ   nə.
       1.father   divide 14-inheritance to 2.child LOC
       'The father divided the inheritance between the children.'

    b) Tsɨboŋ   ga-**shə**   bvu-shə   kə boŋ   nə.
       1.father   divide-DISTR   14-inheritance to 2-child LOC
       'The father divided the inheritance between each of the children.'

In some cases, a sense of completion or entirety can be observed, with the action understood to be carried out so many times as to complete the work of the action (e.g., cutting down a forest).

When the distributive suffix and the imperfective suffix (described above) are used together on the same verb, the final vowel is replaced with *i* resulting in the form *shi*. This is illustrated below.

26

43. Boŋ   bi-**shi**   bə-mbi.
    2.child   ask-DISTR+IMPF   2-question
    'The children are asking (many) questions.'

This suffix is not overly productive. There are, however, some verbs with the suffix apparently permanently attached. Below is a partial list of these frozen forms.

44. bashə   'chop into pieces'
    shenshə   'shake (something)'
    shunshə   'mumble'

3.7 Verb phrase level negation

Negation in Mungong involves the negative markers *kə* (NEG1) and *yi* (NEG2). The secondary negative marker *yi* is usually present and always follows the verb being negated. The primary negative marker *kə* sometimes occurs before the negated verb and usually at the end of the clause. However, sometimes it is considered optional. Thus, it might provide emphasis when present.

45. a) *Be chéŋ   kə   gaŋ-ə   yi   bə   shəŋ   yi-sa   kə.*
       1p 10.monkey   NEG1 travel-IMPF NEG2 with 9.heart c9-1pPOSS NEG1
       'We monkeys do not travel with our hearts.'

    b) *Njiŋ yi   mu   wu   kɨ-mbifə wulə yi   kə.*
       4.eye 4AM   1.person 1AM   7-sin   clean NEG2   NEG1
       'The eyes of a sinner are not clean.'

Example 46 below shows the use of NEG2 alone.

46. Ŋ-*wu-kɨ*   yi   nə bə manchiŋ   bee-lə   lə.
    1s-hear-IMPF   NEG2   as 3p 1.machine cry-IMPF   ???
    'I did not hear the sound of the machine (chainsaw).'

Another element involved with negation is the word *bee*, which is a past tense negative copula.

47. *Kɨ-tɨ   kɨ-ɨ   bee   wuyə kə   be.*
    7-tree   7-that   NEG   kill   NEG1   1p
       'That tree did not kill us.'

27

3.8 Serial verb constructions

Two verbs can be placed adjacent to each other to express a single action. In these verb phrases the two verbs share a common subject. Tense, if present, precedes the first verb of the verb phrase. The second verb is usually semantically the main verb. Verbs of motion are common as the first verb in these verb phrases. Below are some examples.

48. a) *Bə* **jiŋ bɨ** *ju* *tinə.*
    3p   go   reach 9.water middle
    'They reached the middle of the water.'

   b) *Bɨ-fwulə* **tə** **bɨ** *yi* *tyre* *w-aŋ* *wu* *kə-fwɨ* *ne.*
    8-leaf   come reach on 1.tyre 1-1sPOSS 1AM 17-front LOC
    'Leaves reached my front tyre.'

   c) *Bə-baa* *bə-mbə* **gbiŋ-nə** *tu.*
    2-father 2-some ascend-IMPF come
    'Some old men came up.'

   d) *Nfəŋ* *nyáŋ* **tfuŋ** *tɛshə* *nyáŋ.*
    1.chief 10.animal call   gather 10.animal
    'The chief of animals called all the animals together.'

3.9 Adverbs

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

49. a) *Bə* *yəsɨ* *yɨ́* *yi* *bə* **chunə.**
    3p greet 10.skin 10AM 3p well
    'They greeted each other well.'

   b) *M-bo* *mboko* *wi-i* **wii.**
    1s-descend 1.hill 1-that slowly
    'I descended that hill slowly.'

Some adverbs may be reduplicated to express emphasis or intensity.

50. *Fɨ-kuŋ* *bi-nə* *tu* **nyiki** **nyiki.**
    19-hare ascend-IMPF come gently gently
    'The hare climbed coming very gently.'

4   Clauses

4.1   Basic order of clause elements

Mungong grammatical relations are 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.

51. a) Intransitive sentence

S   V
Bə   ləŋ.
3p   work
'They worked.'

b) Transitive sentence

S   V   DO
Chɛŋ   biŋ   kɨ-tɨ.
9.monkey   ascend   7-tree
'The monkey climbed the tree.'

c) Ditransitive sentence

S   V   IO   DO
Wu ka   nya   mwa   kwa.
3s   PAST give 1.child 3.money
'He gave money to the child.'

The following schematic provides a summary of Mungong word order.

Subject   Verb   Indirect Object   Direct Object

4.2   Declarative clauses

Mungong declarative clauses are basic with no special morphosyntactic markings.

4.2.1   Active clauses

Active clauses are those which express actions, movements or processes.

52. a) Action

Wu   bvusɨ   mu-ntsɔŋnə.
3s   remove   18a-groundnut
'He is removing (harvesting) groundnuts.'

b) Movement

Biəŋ   bɨ   tə   kə   ju.
9.fish   exit   come   from   9.water
'The fish came out from the water.'

c) Process

Fɨn-taŋ   tsaŋ-ə.
19-fruit spoil-IMPF
'The fruit is spoiling.'

4.2.2   Non-active clauses

Non-active clauses are used to express various kinds of information other than action or movement. Some of these are illustrated below.

53. a) Attributive

Nfəŋ   wu-sa   gwən-ə.
1.chief   1-1pPOSS sick-IMPF
'Our chief is sick.'

b) Equative

Ignatius   nə   mu-n-yɛyə.
Ignatius   be   1.person-NOM-teach
'Ignatius is a teacher.'

c) Existential

Ŋgwə   nə lo.
9.food be FOC
'There is food.'

d) Locative

Nyáŋ   nə yə.
10.animal be 9.house
'The animals are in the house.'

e) Possessive

Wu ka   kəmə ŋgə   wu-mbə.
3s   PAST have 1.trouble 1-some
'He had some problem.'

Mu   bə   bvu-ŋga.
1.person   with   14-power
'The man has power.' (lit. is with power)

4.3 Agent suppression

The prominence of Mungong agents can be reduced through the use of the indefinite 3p pronoun *bə*, referring to 'people' in general.

54. *Bə   tsoko fiu.*
3p   wash 9.dish
'They (someone) washed the dishes.'

4.4 Focus

The post verbal position may be considered the focus position. Thus, we see in the examples below, that example a) places focus on *Tata* ("Who gave the money?"), while example b) emphasizes the money ("It was not wine that he gave, but *money*.").

55. a) *Wu ka   nya   **Tata** kwa.*
    3s   P3   give Tata 3.money
    'He gave Tata money.'

   b) *Wu ka   nya   **kwa**   kə Tata.*
    3s   P3   give 3.money to Tata
    'He gave money to Tata.'

In certain cases, the agent may be placed in the post verbal position for focus. In these cases, the direct object is moved to the subject position and the verb must be put into the imperfective form.

56. a) *Wu wuyə kɨ-buŋ*
    3s   break 7-calabash
    'She broke the calabash.'

   b) *Kɨ-buŋ   wuy-i   **wu**.*
    7-calabash   break-IMPF   3s
    '*She* broke the calabash.'

This construction is particularly used in answer to the question of "who" (e.g., "Who broke the calabash?"). The same or similar construction is observed in the related languages of Noni (Hyman 1981:107-108) and Naki (Good 2010:42-46).

4.5   Interrogative clauses

There are two main types of Mungong interrogative clauses: yes-no questions and content questions. Each is treated separately below, along with tag questions, a special type of yes-no question.

4.5.1   Yes-no questions

Yes-no questions are differentiated from their declarative counterparts by the presence of a floating low tone clitic. This floating low tone is often realized as a falling tone on the final syllable of the clause. Note that the examples below are presented with surface tone.

57. a) *Chɛ̄ŋ   bò.*
    9.monkey   descend
    'The monkey came down.'

    b) *Chɛ̄ŋ   bɔ̂?*
    9.monkey   descend.QM
    'Did the monkey come down?'

4.5.2   Content questions

Content questions are formed by the addition of some question word or phrase, which normally occurs at the end of the clause. The word *la* 'what' is quite productive and combines with other words to provide several semantic concepts including time and purpose.

When *la* is used without any other question morphemes it gives the basic sense of 'what'.

58. *Wə nji la?*
    2s   eat what
    'What are you eating?'

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

59. *Nfəŋ   nə   tə́   ki-siki la?*
    1.chief   FUT   come.IMPF   7-time   what
    'When will the chief come?' (lit. 'The chief will be coming at what time?')

60. *Wu ka   tu   bvu   la?*
    3s   PAST come 14.day   what
    'When did he come?' (lit. 'He came on what day?')

    Why questions are formed by *ndzə* 'reason' followed by *la*.

61. *Wə jin-ə   ndzə   la?*
    2s   go-IMPF   reason   what
    'Why are you going?' (lit. 'You are going for what reason?')

    "Which" is also expressed by the use of *la.*

62. *Nə mwa   wu-la   wə bɨ   suŋ?*
    is 1.child 1-what   2s P1   beat
    'Which child did you beat?'

    "Who" and "whose" is expressed by the use of *wiŋ*.

63. *Bɨliŋ   bw-i   bɨ ŋji   wiŋ?*
    14.fufu   14-that   P1 eat   who
    'Who ate the fufu?'

64. *Bi   yi-nə   nə yi-wiŋ?*
    9.goat 9-this   is 9-who
    'Whose goat is this?'

    "Where" is expressed by the use of the word *foŋ*.

65. *Wu bɨ   jiŋ foŋ?*
    3s   P1   go   where
    'Where did he go?'

'How' questions are formed through the use of *noŋ* 'how'.

66. *Mə nə n-fə **noŋ** fə bewə kwi lə?*
    1s FUT 1s-make how before 1p+2S go.home ???
    'How will we go to your home?'

The quantity of mass nouns is also expressed through the word *noŋ*.

67. *Wə kəmə mee **noŋ?***
    2s have 6a.oil how
    'How much oil do you have?'

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

68. *Wə kəmə bɔŋ bə-**mə?***
    2s have 2.child 2-how.many
    'How many children do you have?'

4.5.3 Tag questions

Tag questions may be formed by the addition of the phrase *nə kə nɛ* 'is not so' or a similar variation. The tag remains negative regardless of the polarity of the statement.

69. a) *Biliŋ bu-nə yufɨ, **nə kə nɛ?***
    14.fufu 14-this hot be NEG1 so
    'This fufu is hot, isn't it?'

    b) *Biliŋ bu-nə yufɨ yi, **nə kə nɛ?***
    14.fufu 14-this hot NEG2 be NEG1 so
    'This fufu is not hot, is it?'

70. a) *Wu chu-lə kəŋ, **nə yi wu?***
    3s carry-IMPF 4.firewood be NEG2 3s
    'He carries firewood, doesn't he?'

    b) *Wu chu-lə yi kəŋ, **nə yi wu?***
    3s carry-IMPF NEG2 4.firewood be NEG2 3s
    'He carries firewood, doesn't he?'

Another strategy for making tag questions is to use *ntsɨŋ ntsɨŋ* 'true true' as the tag. In this case, the tag remains positive for positive as well as negative statements.

71. a) *Wu chu-lə   kəŋ,   **ntsɨŋ ntsɨŋ**?*
      3s   carry-IMPF   4.firewood   true true
      'He carries firewood, right?'

   b) *Wu chu-lə   yi   kəŋ,   **ntsɨŋ ntsɨŋ**?*
      3s   carry-IMPF   NEG2 4.firewood   true true
      'He doesn't carry firewood, right?'

4.6 Mood

4.6.1 Imperative clauses

Imperative clauses generally lack a constituent in the subject slot when the subject is singular. The second person plural pronoun *me* precedes the verb when the subject is plural.[9]

72. a) *Lee.*
      sleep.IMP
      'Sleep.'

   b) *Me jwə   shi   yi-nə.*
      2p take.IMP 9.chicken 9-this
      'You(pl) take this chicken.'

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[9] There may be a high tone on the end of imperative verbs when the subject is singular. More research is needed to confirm this.

4.6.2 Hortative clauses

Exhortation is accomplished by a low tone clitic, which is normally realized on the final syllable of the verb and sometimes over the entire verb. Note that the examples in this section are marked with surface tone.

73. a) *Wā jīŋ-nâ.*
    2s   go-IMPF
    'You are going.'

    b) *Wā jìŋ-nà.*
    2s   go-IMPF.HORT
    'You should be going.'

74. a) *Wā yī yēyà.*
    2s   P2 teach
    'You taught.'

    b) *Wà yī yèyà.*
    2s   P2 teach.HORT
    'You should have taught.'

4.7 Coordinating clauses

4.7.1 Coupling

Clauses are joined together in a coupling relationship through juxtaposition. Simultaneous as well as successive events can be expressed in this way, as seen in the examples below.

75. *Be shɨ wə   jishi,*
    1p   stay there road.LOC

    mu   wu   manchiŋ   wi-ɨ   gbə-shə   bvusɨ   bɨ-tɨ   bɨ-ɨ   wə jishi.
    1.man 1AM 1.machine 1-that cut-DISTR remove 8-tree 8-that on road.LOC
    'We remained there on the road and the man with the chainsaw cut all the branches on the road.'

76. *Biəŋ   taka jiŋ, chɛŋ   biŋ.*
    9.fish show back 9.monkey climb
    'Fish showed his back and Monkey climbed on.'

4.7.2 Alternating

Coordination of clauses in an alternating relationship is accomplished through the use of *lo* 'or'.

77. *Wə nə   jiŋ ŋwa,   **lo** m n-suŋ   wə lə.*
    2s   FUT go   1.school or   1s 1s-beat 2s ???
    'You will go to school or I will beat you.'

78. *Mə nə   n-yiŋ   **lo** mə m-biŋ   lə.*
    1s   FUT 1s-sing or   1s 1s-dance   ???
    'I will sing or I will dance.'

4.7.3 Contrasting

Contrast between clauses is expressed through the conjunction *nəkələ* 'but'.

79. *Wu gunə chu   kɨ-tɨ,   **nəkələ** kɨ   njilə.*
    3s   want carry 7-chair but   7PRO   be.heavy
    'He wanted to carry the chair, but it was heavy.'

80. *Bita   ka   jiŋ ŋwa,   **nəkələ** wu ka   be yɛyə kə   fi-uŋ.*
    Peter PAST go   1.school but   3s   PAST P3 learn NEG1 19-thing
    'Peter went to school, but he did not learn anything.'

4.7.4 Concessive

The word *nəkələ* may also be used to express a concessive relationship. In this case, the subordinate clause is sentence initial.

81. ***Nəkələ** Ngong gunə wu jwə   Nan, bə-tsɨsɨ   faŋ   wu.*
    but   Ngong want 3s marry Nan 2-parent refuse 3s
    'Although Ngong wanted to marry Nan, her parents refused him.'

4.7.5 Conditional

Conditionals are formed by using the word *fə* 'if'. The main clause must be marked with future tense when it precedes the "if" clause, otherwise it is unmarked for tense.

82. a) ***Fə*** *Fwa   yiŋ,   mə   m-biŋ.*
    if   Fwa   sing   1s   1s-dance
    'If Fwa sings, I will dance.'

  b) *Mə nə   m-bíŋ,   **fə**   Fwa   yiŋ.*
    1s   FUT   1s-dance   if   Fwa   sing
    'I will dance, if Fwa sings.'

4.7.6 Reason

Reason clauses are formed by using the word *ndʑə* 'reason'. The subordinate clause must follow the main clause.

83. *Ŋ-gunə   m-bo   mbɔkɔ   wi-i   wú   bə   bu-ŋga,*
    1s-want   1s-descend   1.hill   1-that   1PRO(bike's.gear)   with   14-power

    ndʑə   *kɨ-sɨkɨ   ka   fɨ-lɨ.*
    reason   7-time   PAST   pass-IMPF
    'I wanted to descend that hill with force (or speed), because time was passing.'

4.7.7 Time

There are multiple strategies for expressing events that occur simultaneously. One common strategy is through the use of time words or particles. In the following example, the word *sɨkɨ* 'time' introduces an adverbial clause.

84. *Mə m-bɨ   n-yin-ə   [**sɨkɨ   wu   bɨ   tu-kɨ   mwa.]***
    1s   1s-P1   1s-sing-IMPF   7.time   3s   P1   hit-IMPF   1.child
    'I was singing when he was hitting the child.'

The particle *lə* is quite productive and has multiple senses and functions. The particle can occur with the particle *nə* 'as, like' to give a simultaneous sense.

85. ***[Lə   m-bin-ə   ji-nə   nə],*** *bə   sii-lɨ   kɨ-tɨ   ki-i   nɛ.*
    when   1s-ascend-IMPF   go-IMPF   like   3p   cut-IMPF   7-tree   7-that   so
    'Just as I was climbing (the hill), they were felling a tree.'

The particles *lə* and *nə* can also be used to express sequential events. Presumably, context helps to determine a simultaneous or sequential interpretation.

86. *Fɨ   bo   jiŋ,*
    19PRO   descend   go

    [lə wu jiŋ wu yəŋ nə mu   ləŋ   kɨ-ntsa.]
    then 3s go   3s   see as 1.person work 7-marsh
    'It (squirrel) went down, then he saw someone working a farm.'

    Another way of expressing sequential events is illustrated in the below example, in which the word *bvu* 'day' is used along with the word *mwo* 'then'. Here, the adverbial clause precedes the main clause.

87. *[Bvu   dɨlə kəshə], mwo n-dza   n-jwə   manchiŋ   w-aŋ   ŋ-yɨ   n-jiŋ.*
    14.day   as   reach   then 1s-stand 1s-take 1.machine   1-1sPOSS 1s-leave 1s-go
    'As the day came, I took my machine and left.'

4.8 Complements

    Complements are introduced by *lə* (COMP). This particle follows verbs of cognition or desire such as "to think", "to know", "to see", or "to want".

88. a) *Bemə   yəŋ lə   [bvu-gbwɛmə bvu-ŋ   ndzoŋ yi   kɨ-luŋ   kɨ-nə].*
       1p + 1s see COMP 14-hunt   14-this   good   NEG2 7-year 7-this
       'We have seen that hunting is not good this year.'

    b) *Wə gunə lə   [wə wuyə be]?*
       2s   want COMP 2s   kill   1p
       'Did you want to kill us?'

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

89. *Mwo m-bee   njú   y-aŋ   n-jee lə   [bewu   kə   nə bvuɲjwə.*
    just 1s-remove 10.clothes 10-1sPOSS 1s-put COMP 1p + 3s begin as fight
    'I removed my clothes so that we could begin fighting.'

Complement clauses may also sometimes be formed by the use of a gerund as seen in the below example.

90. *Ŋ-koŋ-ə*   *[lɨ-fə].*
   1s-like-IMPF   sleep-IMPF
   'I like sleeping.'

Quoted speech is also introduced using the complementizer *lə*. The particle occurs with verbs like *dɨ* 'to say' and *chu* 'to reply' and immediately precedes the quoted clause or clauses.

91. a) *Chɛŋ*   *dzəmə*   *lə,*   *"M-bɔŋ n-jiŋ n-te-e*   *kə bə-ni*   *b-aŋ*   *nə."*
      Monkey say.??? COMP 1s-also 1s-go 1s-tell-IMPF INF 2-person 2-1sPOSS LOC
      'Monkey said, "I also will tell this to my people."'

   b) *Mwo*   *m-bi*   *kə*   *wu-nə*   *lə,*
      just   1s-ask to   1-this COMP

      "Wə gunə wə wuyə be?"
       2s want 2s kill   1p
      'I asked this (man), "Did you want to kill us?"'

Indirect quotations are marked the same way, with the complementizer immediately preceding the quoted clause.

92. *Wu mwo kaksɨ chu*   *lə*
    3s just turn reply COMP

    wu bɨ bvusɨ   *mu*   *wu bəwu lən-ə*   *lə*   *wu biliŋ jishi.*
    3s P1 remove 1.person 1Rel 3p + 3s work-IMPF COMP 3s stand road.LOC
    'He replied that he had asked (lit. removed) the man with whom he was working to come out and stand on the road.'

In some cases, the quote verb can be left out altogether, resulting in something like drama.

93. *Biəŋ*   *lə,*   *"Mə nə   n-chu   wə."*
    Fish COMP 1s FUT 1s-carry 2s
    'Fish (said), "I will carry you."'

5 Conclusion

Like most languages, the grammar of Mungong is quite complex. As such, the goal of this paper has been to provide only a preliminary study of some 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 Mungong grammar remains to be fully researched. However, the richness of the Mungong language may be seen from this introductory research.

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