Typological Profile of Constituent Orders in the Shabo Grammar

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Abstract

The paper discusses the linguistic profile of Shabo's morphemes, words and phrases based on the position of the head and the dependent unit. The purpose of profiling Shabo is to present a typological description of the language so that comparativists can access what Shabo constitutes in terms of genetic, typological, and areal grammatical features. The 48 sets of data for the study came from Teferra (1991, n = 20) and the linguistic field notes of Aklilu Y. and the author (n = 28) and the data described in line with the typology models (Croft, 1990; Greenberg, 1966; Heine 1976) focusing on language type, word order typology, and harmony features.[1] *As a result, Shabo is profiled as having an SOV word order. It is a pro-drop (null overt pronoun) language. Moreover, Shabo is profiled as a synthetic, fusional, and complex-mixed relational language type. In terms of harmony features Shabo manifests harmony (1) correlates but with five disharmonic ones.*

Keywords: Shabo, typology, profile, word order, language type, harmony

1. Introduction

The paper discusses typological constituent orders (head and its dependents) in the morphology, words and phrases of Shabo, in terms of language type, word order typology, and harmony features described by Croft (1990), Greenberg (1966) and Heine (1976). The purpose of profiling Shabo is to present a typological description of the language so that comparativists can access what Shabo constitutes in terms of genetic, typological, and areal grammatical features.

1.1 The People and the Language

Abbreviations

AA = Afro-asiatic	FUT = Future	OBJ = Object	SBJ = Subject
ACC = Accusative	GEN = genitive	PFV = Perfective	SENT = Sentence
ADJ = Adjective	INS = Instrumental	PL = plural	SG = Singular
ADV = Adverb	IO = Indirect object	POSS = Possessive	STD = Standard
AUX = Auxiliary	M = Masculine	SPOST = postposition	TAM = Tense-
CLO = Clause Subordinate Marker	N = Noun	PREP = preposition	V = verb
COMP= Complementizer	NEG = Negative	PRS = Present tense	
COND = Conditional	NOM = nominative	PRN = pronoun	
DEM = Demonstrative	NS = Nilo-Saharan	Q = Question word	
DO = Direct object;	NUM = Numeral	REL = Relative	

Aspect- Mood

1 = First person pronoun 2 = Second person pronoun 3 = Third person pronoun

The Shabo community is a hunter-gatherer group. While the male members of the community exercise hunting and collecting (wild) honey, the female members practice pottery making. Linguistically speaking, members of the Shabo speech community live at the fringe areas of various neighboring ethnic communities; hence the necessity of life forced them to be multilingual (Abbink, 2010:437; Aberra, 2019).

Shabo is an endangered language spoken by about 600 people mainly in the tropical forest of Southwest Ethiopia in Gambella (Meti) and southwest (Shekka) (Aberra, 2002; 2019; Teferra, 2010). Shabo is also known by other names such as Mekeyir, Shabu, Chabu (Dira, 2016, Aberra, 2019). Linguistically speaking, members of the Shabo speech community live at the fringe areas of various neighboring ethnic communities; the community has very close affinities with Majang of the East Sudanic, Nilo-Saharan and Shekka of the North Omotic and Shabo speakers are conversant with both the Majang (NS) and Shekka (AA).

There are two geographical varieties of Shabo: Godere and Masha (Jordan et.al, 2015). It seems to prefer to name these varieties as Dushi and Yeri. However, both names, Dushi and Yeri, refer to the same geographical variation. However, the two varieties exhibit differences in lexical items and plural marking (Aberra, 2019).

1.2 Literature review

Due to the remoteness of the area where the Shabo speakers reside, there were quite a small number of studies prior to 2000. After, 2000, however, the story changed. There are two dissertations (Taye, 2015) and (Dira, 2016). While the first one is a grammar of Shabo, the second one is an anthropological study of the community. There are also presentations and publications of articles which are quite substantial as compared to the previous decades (Abbink, 2010; Aberra, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; Blench, 2019; Dira & Hewlett, 2018; Jordan et al, 2015; Schnoebelen, 2009; Starostin, 2010; Teferra, 2010) to name a few.

1.3 Source, Methods, and Models

(a) Source (data)

Twenty of the 48 sets of data for this study came from “A Sketch Grammar of Shabo” (Teferra, 1991). The rest 28 sets of data are from field notes of Aklilu Yilma and author’s notes from two field trips to the two dialectal areas. Unless it is stated, data cited are from

Aklilu Yilma and the author. Taye's (2015) dissertation has extensive phonological, morphological and sentential data and grammatical description of Shabo but not the customary annexed texts usual for dissertations (cf. Anteneh, 2015). The dissertation has also incisive comments on the previously published works on Shabo. Taye's (2015) dissertation merits a review of its own.

(b) Method

Human languages can be studied in isolation or as a group; intensively or extensively. While the isolated study focuses on the grammatical properties or functional use of a single language, the group study focuses on studying features across languages. This group studying of two or more languages presupposes that the languages are in some sort of prior relationship to each other; they are either spoken in the same geographical area, or languages that are genetically related or share similar grammatical or functional properties. Methods of typological study developed in a group setting, but found useful in describing individual languages.

Typological profile study is a deductive, data-based and extensive type of study which highlights the languages' architectural components in terms of archetypes that in my case grammatical typological or functional profiles. Typological profiling is a description of a language or groups of languages in terms of language type as analytic (isolate), agglutinating or fusional, word order, subject, verb, object, SVO, etc and word order harmony correlates; head modifier (dependent) relationships and positions at noun complex, verb complex or Sentence-level structures.

(c) Models

The paper discusses the typological description of Shabo in terms of word order, language type, and harmony features (Croft, 1990; Greenberg, 1966; Heine 1976).

Languages are mainly characterized by their dominant, highly frequent; word order of Subject (S) -Verb (V) - Object (O) in a simple transitive sentence. It is a standard architectural feature of the grammar of languages to state the word order, such as English – by the archetypes SVO – Subject-Verb - Object "The professor (S) writes (V) a paper (O)". This word order is the foundational component in characterizing a language from a typological perspective. In languages, sentences apart from having an SVO word order have their phrase and word internal orders, feature constituents, which the literature

(Croft 1990:96) names as harmony features. When one set of features becomes statistically significant in language data, descriptions of the typological profile set out to study and describe this set of dominant harmony features of the languages.

In identifying language types, the major criteria are a) the degree of phonological fusion between affixes and lexical stems head of the word to which they are attached, b) morphological features such as the number of morphemes per word, and c) syntactic behaviour of morphemes (Croft, 1990; Greenberg, 1966; Heine 1976).

Identifying word order correlations as dominance and harmony correlates of languages, implicational universals and bi-conditionals ('if the language has X, then it also has Y') or bi-conditional universals ('a language has X if and only if it has also Y') respectively were postulated by Greenberg in his 1960s seminal publications (Croft, 2001:819-820). Greenberg's word order universals the left or right-branching of modifiers with their heads, (i.e., the modifier occurs either to the left or the right of the headword it modifies) is the basic premise in the discussion of harmony and dominance features (Dryer, 1992:81).

Shabo demonstrates the SOV word order in a simple transitive sentence and it is a pro-drop (a null overt pronoun) language. Shabo is profiled as a *synthetic, fusional*, and *complex-mixed relational* language type. For the rest of the grammatical features, there are groupings and regroupings. In terms of harmony features Shabo manifests harmony (1) correlates but with five disharmonic ones.

The following sections of the paper consist of (2) an analysis and discussion of the word order; (3) an analysis and discussion of the language type; (4) an analysis and discussion of the harmony correlates of word order universals; (5) conclusion and (6) recommendation.

2. Analysis and Discussion of the Word Order Typology of Shabo

Shabo is an SOV language; where an action/event – the verb (V) is related to the two sets of participants; initiator of the event-noun-subject (S) and recipient – impacted by the action-noun object (O) and how these three elements are ordered in a sentence languages can be typologically classified in terms of their orders as SOV, SVO, etc as sampled in (1-4).

(1) *yar-gi k'onna koo-yi*

God-NOM tree create-PFV
S O V
'God created a tree.'

(2) *minǰa-k* *abi-ye*
cow-PL come-PFV
S V
'The cows came.' (Teferra,1991)

(3) *gum-uk* *tiŋ-ka* *apale*
stick-INS 1SG-ACC hit.3SG.M.SBJ
IO DO V
'He hit me with a stick.' (Teferra,1991)

(4) *č'iiŋi kaan-gak* *gi-t* *haa-y*
black dog-ACC PF-1SG kill-PF
O S V
'I killed a black dog.' (Teferra,1991)

From the twenty-six sentences of the 20 sets of data (Teferra (1991), 3 are distinctly SOV; 6 are intransitive sentences with SV order, and another 6 are equative sentences with no copula verb as in *afal košša* 'fighting (is) bad' and eleven occur with null pronoun subjects. Where there is a ditransitive construction, the order of direct object (DO) and indirect object (IO) and the verb is IO-DO-V as in (3). However, there is a controversial instance where an O(S)V word order is observed as in (4).

The issue in (4) is whether to consider /gi-t/ as a separate word as Teferra (1991) wrote it, or to consider it as a prefix of the verb as I like to claim. If /gi-t/ is considered as a prefix, the order for this sentence is going to be an OV – which conforms to the SOV order proposed.

3. Analysis and Discussion of the Classification of Shabo by Language Type

Based on the degree of phonological fusion that affixes exhibit with their co-occurring lexical stems, languages are classified as *isolating /analytic* (no affixation at all), *agglutinating* (simple affixation with constant forms), fusional (considerable regular and irregular morphemic variations), and *symbolic* (suppletion, internal modification).

Affixes among themselves and also affixes with the co-occurring noun or verb stems of Shabo make them difficult to isolate - hence Shabo is classified as a *fusional* language.

Languages are classified, as (a) *analytic* (1morph/word), (b) *synthetic* (small number of morphemes/word), and (c*) polysynthetic* (large number of morphemes /word) using the proposed quantitative morphological index of Greenberg (Croft, 1990:40-42), i.e., based on the quantity of the morphemes that a typical lexical word constitutes, Shabo shows a range of 0-4 affixes per verb, and 0-2 affixes per noun summarized in Table (1).

		VERB	NOUN
1	morpheme/word	1-4, 3 is frequent	1-2
2	derivational morphemes/word	1	1
3	inflectional morphemes/word	1-4, 3 is frequent	1-2
4	prefixes/ word	1-4, 3 is frequent	1-2
5	suffixes/word	1-2?	1-2

Table 1. The quantitative index of morphemes per word in Shabo

Using quantity of morphemes and degree of phonological fusion of morphemes, two of my observations are:

1) Verbs and nouns of Shabo constitute up to four morphemes. Hence based on the quantity of morphemes per word it exhibits, Shabo is categorized as a *synthetic* (a small number of morphemes per word) language.

2) Based on the syntactic behaviour of affixes, languages are classified into four; *concrete* (Type I), *derivational* (Type II), *concrete relational* (Type III), and *pure relational* (Type IV). Concrete (= lexicon) and pure relational (= inflection) seem universal, while derivational and concrete relational (= inflection that has language external concrete references like gender and number) vary and can be language-specific. Moreover, these four types can be combined and form a kind of typology called *simple, complex* and *mixed* (Croft 1990). Shabo exhibits *concrete, derivational* and *concrete relational* affixes; hence it is classified as a *complex mixed–relational* language.

4. Analysis and Discussion of the Shabo's Dominance and Harmony Correlate Features with Word Order Universals

Shabo is an SOV language – and as an SOV language, it follows the major dominant features in (5):

(5) Dominance Feature of Shabo

S precedes V

O_{PRN} precedes V

GEN precedes N

DEM precedes N

NUM precedes N

ADV precedes A

Shabo's phrasal level co-occurrence and order of units are exemplified in (6).

(6) 1. Noun precedes Postposition *kaabbo-ti* 'from Kaabbo'

2. Genitive precedes Noun *ufa-ke bak'k'e* 'the man's spear'

3. Numeral precedes Noun *bab kaan* 'two dogs'

4. Demonstrative precedes Noun *ma ufa* 'this man'

5. Object pronoun precedes Verb *tiŋ-kak obole* '(he) hit me'

6. Adjective precedes Noun *č'iiŋ kaan* 'black dog'(Teferra, 1991)

The following table which is adopted from Croft (1990:56) has been used to summarize the dominance and harmony features of Shabo.

DOMINANCE	HARMONY (1)	HARMONY (2)
SV	SV	
V ONOM	ONOM V	
OPRN V	OPRN V	
SO	-	
PREP	POST	
GEN N (?)	GEN N	
POSS N		N POSS
DEM N	DEM N	
NUM N	NUM N	
N REL	REL N	
N ADJ	ADJ N	
ADV A	ADV A	
-	STD M A	
V COMP	COMP V	

-		AUX V
-		Q SENT
ANT CONS		TAM- V
	Suffixing	Prefixing
	Case	
	No Article	
	Manner V	
	V NEG	
	CLO	

Table 2. Summary of dominance and harmony features of Shabo

Although we see similarities in (5) and (6), Shabo, however, follows more *harmony* (1) features (12 of them) than the DOMINANCE features (6 of them). In the case of Q Sent, Prefixing, N Poss, Aux V, and TAM V, Shabo follows harmony (2) features.

Moreover, harmony features can be best grouped into three; a) sentence-level features, b) verb complex features and c) noun complex features.

4.1 Sentential Modifiers (Sentence Level Features)

Five harmonic features are classified as sentence-level modifiers or have sentence-level roles than the two other word classes (noun, verb). These are 1) SV (4.1.1), 2) question particle and sentence (4.1.2), 3) subordinate marker and subordinated clause (4.1.3), 4) affixation with syntactic function (4.1.4), and 5) adpositions (4.1.5).

4.1.1 SUBJECT PRECEDES VERB (SV)

In intransitive sentences of Shabo, the subject precedes the verb.

(7) *minja-k* *abi-ye*
cow-PL come-PFV
S V
'The cows came.' (Teferra,1991)

The word 'come' shows three variants /ab/ in sentences (2, 7), /am/ in sentences (12, 24, 26, 36), and /an/ in sentences like (38). The basic stem is /am/, and [an] is a phonologically conditioned allomorph as it is followed by dental and alveolar stops. However, the occurrence of [ab] and its conditions is not clear.

4.1.1. Question Word Precedes Sentence (Q Sent)

In Shabo, a question word precedes the sentence.

(8) *haama-ti* *k'a-am-e*
where-from PAST-come-PAST
Q SENT
'From where did he come?'

(9) *ambo-kek* *an-g*
when-2SG.M come-FUT
Q SENT
'When will you come back?'

4.1.2. Clause Precedes Subordinate –Marker

In Shabo, a CLAUSE precedes the SUB–MARKER as *moh t'aa* before *–k* or *moh t'uul* before *–ka*. COMP is a complementizer that marks dependency of the preceding clause.

(10) *moh t'aa-k'* *gitt* *ɗet*
now food-COMP PRS.1SG.M want
'I want to eat now.'

(11) *moh t'uul-ka* *gitt* *ɗet*
now sleep-COMP PRS.1SG.M want
'I want to sleep now.'

4.1.3. Affixation — Prefixing or Suffixing

Shabo has both prefixes as in (12) and suffixes as in (12-13).

(12) *ka-k-am-e*
PAST-3SG.M-come-PAST
'He came.'

(13) *tiŋ-ka*
I-ACC
'me' (Teferra,1991)

4.1.4. Post-Position

Shabo is a postpositional language.

(14) *teppi-ka*
Teppi-to
'to Teppi' (Teferra, 1991)

(15) *bič'iro poont-ik*

mule on-with

'on mule-back' (Teferra, 1991)

4.2 Verbal Complex

Eight harmonic features are classified under verbal complex as they have more co-occurrence relationships with verbs than other word classes.

4.2.1 OBJECT NOMINAL Precedes VERB

(16) *ma ufa* *depe* *debe-k* *ha-y*

this man lion AUX-3SG.M.SBJ kill-PFV

S ONOM V

'This man killed a lion.' (Teferra,1991)

4.2.2 OBJECT PRONOUN PRECEDES VERB

In general, it is very difficult to find data where the object is a pronoun. Vitale (1981:14) noted that "personal pronouns rarely or never occur alone as direct objects and occur as derived subjects only in emphatic or contrastive contexts." However, for Shabo, it is highly common to find an Object pronoun in a Noun–verb collocation.

(17) *gum-uk* *tiŋ-ka* *apale*

stick-INS 1SG-ACC hit.3SG.M.SBJ

OPRN V

'He hit me with a stick.' (Teferra, 1991)

4.2.3 COMPLEMENT precedes VERB

Shabo has COMP V correlates. Complement stands for complement or subordinate clause to the main verb or the main sentence.

(18) *moh t'aa-k'* *gitt* *ɗet*

now food-COMP PRS.1SG want

'I want to eat now.'

(19) *moh t'uul-ka* *gitt* *ɗet*

now sleep-COMP PRS.1SG want

'I want to sleep now.'

4.2.4 AUXILIARY PRECEDES VERB

Shabo has an aspect marking (perfective) auxiliary *ɗebe*. It is not known at this stage whether the auxiliary is derived from a verb or any other lexical class.

(20) *ma ufa* *depe* *ɗebe-k* *ha-y*
this man lion AUX-3SG.M kill-PFV
'This man killed a lion.' (Teferra, 1991)

/h/ and /k/ freely vary with the word 'kill'. See also examples (4), (16), and (37). Moreover, the words for 'meat' /ha/ example (31) and 'kill' /ha/ are homophonous.

4.2.5 COPULA precedes/ follows PREDICATE

Shabo has no copula as noted in section (3).

4.2.5 TAM PRECEDES VERB

Shabo has TAM (Tense-Aspect- Mood)-V correlates as in (21- 22). However, it shows a split TAM marking (22-23).

(21) *ɗebe-gi-t* *t'ay*
FINITE-PFV-1SG.M eat
TAM V
'I ate.'

(22) *ind-g-et* *t'a-g*
FUT-PFV-1SG eat-FUT
TAM V- TAM
'I will eat.'

(23) *tin ǰaba* *g-et* *wo-ge*
I yesterday PAST-1SG drink-PAST
TAM V
'I drank yesterday.'

Both constructions, auxiliary verbs (*Aux V)* and *TAM- V*, have the same grammatical function - marking verbal inflections. As we observed from the quantitative index (cf. Table 1) it is possible for a Shabo verb to have up to four affixes that precede it. These affixes are HEAVY in comparison with the stem as they are built from more sounds. Heavy constituents should follow the head (Hawkins 1983 (cited by Croft, 1990:57-8)). However, they precede in Shabo's case. Hence, they show disharmony to the predominant OV pattern. HEAVINESS may not explain the phenomenon as the affixes are heavy. Probably Hawkins' second reason, MOBILITY IS at work here. Shabo manifests split TAM and agreement marking (Aberra, 2002) i.e., before and after the verb in some

of its constructions. For reasons unknown heavy Aux and TAM moved to the preverbal positions. Due to TAMs being split within a construction before and after verbs, TAM-V or V-TAM does not seem to be a reliable indicator to classify languages into harmony (1) or harmony (2).

4.2.6 MANNER PRECEDES VERB

Manner –V like other strong harmonic features classifies Shabo into a harmony (1) group.

(24) *guure ka-k-am-e*
quickly PAST-3SG.M-come-PAST
Manner V
'He came quickly.'

4.2.7 NEGATION FOLLOWS VERB

Shabo has V-Neg harmony (1) feature. Although the word order remains the same, variations in the negative markers have been noticed, Teferra (1991) has *p'ikin* as a negation marker. The data I collected, however, show /-*be*/ as a typical negation marker.

(25) *wo p'ikin*
drink NEG
'Don't drink!' (Teferra,1991)

(26) *am-be*
come-NEG
'not come'

(27) *afaale be-et-enko*
hit NEG-PAST-COND
'if I did not hit'

The construction in (25) may be an imperative negative construction; hence it may not be a parallel comparison with (26) and (27).

4.3 Noun Complex

The largest group of harmonic features is classified under noun modifiers. To begin with, a general statement noun modifier in Shabo precedes the head noun.

4.3.1 GENITIVE Precedes NOUN

Though very difficult to distinguish one another, Genitive –N and Possessive –N correlate, classify Shabo into two, Genitive Noun harmony (1), and Possessive Noun harmony (2).

(28) *tiŋ-ke* *handa*
1SG.M-GEN tongue
'my tongue' (Teferra, 1991)

4.3.2 NOUN follows POSSESSIVE

(29) *ǰimme-ke* *mue*
Jimma-GEN coffee
'coffee of Jimma'

Interestingly, in the inalienable possession such as an animal's body and its parts, the source noun precedes the possessed body part as in (30) and (31) and no visible suffix possessive marker exists.

(30) *minǰa* *k'ari*
cow horn
'horn of a cow/cow's horn'

(31) *gongoǰ* *ha*
antelope meat
'meat of antelope/ antelope's meat'

4.3.3 DEMONSTRATIVE AND NUMERAL PRECEDE NOUN

(32) *ma ufa*
this man
'this man' (Teferra, 1991)

(33) *ma kaan*
this dog
'this dog' (Teferra, 1991)

(34) *bab mat č'iiŋ kaan*
two big black dog
'two big black dogs' (Teferra, 1991)

4.3.4 RELATIVE CLAUSE PRECEDES NOUN

Both the subject and direct object of a clause can be relativized in Shabo. Sentence (36) shows object relativization. The relativizer /–em/ has variants /-en/ and /-de/. Though it needs further study, it seems that the three allomorphs are in complementary distributions; /em/ occurs with an object modifying a relative clause, /en/ occurs with a subject modifying a relative clause, and /de/ occurs with a plural noun modifying a relative clause.

(35) *mač'ok* *appal-em* *ufa*
horse bought-RELT man
REL N
'the man who bought horse'

(36) *ak* *am-em* *um-šak* *agityey*
here come-RELT woman-? saw.1SG.M.OBJ
REL NOBJ
'I saw the woman who came here.'

(37) *ɗebe* *kay-en* *ufa*
lion kill-RELT man
REL N
'the man who killed a lion'

(38) *an-de* *ufe* *yeero* *nansibu*
come-REL man PLURAL little
REL NPL
'The people who came are few.'

Although the relativizer is suffixed on the plural noun (38), it is also possible to interpret that *–de* marks a relativizer in a predicate functioning nominal be it a noun or adjective.

4.3.5 ADJECTIVE PRECEDES NOUN

Shabo adjectives precede the nouns they modify. If the adjective has a predicative function, we find *N A*, as in (40) – with TAM marking, or *N A* as in (41) – with no TAM marking.

(39) *bab mat č'iiŋ kaan*
two big black dog
'two big black dogs' (Teferra,1991)

(40) *kass dama-yi*

kass tall-TAM

'Kassa is tall'

(41) *afal košša*

fighting bad

'Fighting is bad.'

4.3.6 ADVERB PRECEDES ADJECTIVE

In Shabo intensifying adverb precedes the adjective it modifies.

(42) *ɗo č'iiŋ*

'very black'

(43) *ke du umba*

very big woman

'a very big woman'

The above examples demonstrated that Shabo has two intensifying adverb variants *ɗo* and *ke* 'very'. An adjective or a noun head may serve to identify their complementary distribution. Further observation is necessary here.

4.3.7 CASE

In the nominal-accusative case system of Shabo subject, direct object and genitive are all morphologically marked. In addition, subjects of intransitive sentences and objects of transitive sentences are frequently marked by *–k*. Subjects of transitive sentences show variations in the case morpheme. In some sentences, subjects are also unmarked and have the citation form as in (46).

(44) *yar-gi k'onna koo-yi*

God-NOM tree create-PFV

'God created a tree.'

(45) *tiŋ-ka koyi-bee*

1SG-NOM understand-NEG

'I do not understand.'

(46) *yi ille-kak wo-y*

he milk-ACC drink-PFV

'He drinks milk.'

(47) *suumi-ke minja*

thief-GEN cow

'cow of a thief' (Teferra,1991)

The following singular personal pronoun conjugation highlights the case system. It is interesting to note that in all case markings, the consonant base of the case suffixes is *–k*.

	CITATION	NOMINATIVE	ACCUSATIVE	GENITIVE	BENEFACTIVE
1SG	*tiŋ*	*tiŋ-k*	*tiŋ-ka(k)*	*tiŋ-ke*	*tiŋ-ka*
2SG.M	*kuk*	*kuu-k*	*ku-ka(k)*	*kuu-ke*	*kuk-ka*
2SG.F	*koŋg*	*kuŋ-g*	*kuŋ-ga(k)*	*kuŋ-ge*	*kuŋ-ga*
3SG.M	*yi*	*yii-k*	*yii-ka(k)*	*yii-ke*	*yii-ka*

Table 3. Case marking of singular pronouns

4.3.8 ARTICLE

Shabo does not mark definiteness or indefiniteness using the article.

(48) *ufa bak'k'e-k ye*

man spear-ACC saw

'A man saw a spear.' (Teferra,1991)

(49) *ufa-ke bak'k'e mati*

man-GEN spear big

'The man's spear is big.' (Teferra,1991)

4.3.9 STD M ADJECTIVE

Shabo has the STANDARD MODIFIER ADJECTIVE order of forms in its comparative constructions. The standard in (50) and (51) are *ufati* and *yu*, modifier *moho* and *tiŋi*.

(50) *ŋatu ufa-ti moho ɗaŋka-yii*

this man-M that.one good- TAM

'This man is better than that one.'

(51) *yu tiŋ-i beešo geeč'o-yii*

he 1SG.M-M surpass arrogant- TAM

'He is more arrogant than me.'

The modifiers were followed by the comparative adjectives *ɗaŋka-yii* and *beešo geeč'o-yii*. In example (51), Shabo demonstrates the 'African's unique areal feature of comparative construction with the verb *beešo* 'surpass' (Heine & Kuteva, 2005:216). Greenberg (1983:3) considers it as one areal syntactic trait 'the use of the verb "to surpass" to express comparison'. Heine & Kuteva (2005:216 - 218) consider it as a trait

for Africa's 'macro-area' feature. They state that 'cross-linguistically, there is only a small set of conceptual schemas that tend to be recruited to grammaticalized comparative constructions. Of the world languages that use as a standard of comparison the verb meaning 'surpass, defeat, exceed, pass etc', 65 % of them are African languages. Moreover, they found that this use of the verb cuts across the four African language phyla across genetically unrelated languages. Shabo shares the same trait. It uses *beešo* 'surpass' and a combination of demonstrative and numeral in its comparative expression.

5. Conclusion

Typologically speaking, Shabo is linguistically profiled as a *synthetic, fusional*, and *complex-mixed relational* language type.

Shabo shows a quantitative index of 1-4 morphemes per verb and 1-2 morphemes per noun. The quantitative index supports the claim that Shabo is a predominantly prefixing language though both prefixes and suffixes exist.

Shabo demonstrates the common word order SOV. It is a pro-drop language – with SV in intransitive sentences. For the rest of the other features, there are groupings and regroupings. In terms of harmony features Shabo manifests harmony (1) correlates and it also has five disharmonic features.

In its Relative-noun construction, Shabo relativizes both the subject and object of a clause. In the noun phrase pattern, it also shows the following modifiers sequence before the head noun.

NUM < ADJ < N

GEN < ADJ < N

DEM < NUM < N

Shabo doesn't seem to have unique features that were not observed in other Ethiopian and/ or African languages; instead, Shabo conforms to the existing predominant typological pattern with an SOV word order of the Ethiopian and African languages.

6. Recommendation

One interesting observation that needs to be further researched is whether Shabo follows an ergative-absolutive or nominative-accusative case marking pattern. Shabo seems to have a nominative case marker *–k* in intransitive sentences and an identical accusative

case *–k*/*g* in transitive sentences; this similarity is one criterion in identifying the ergative case marking of a language.

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