

The Structure of Dangme Adverbs and Adverbials

One scope of language structure that has constantly remained an eminent area of discussion for linguists, crosslinguistically is word classes (Schacter & Shopen, 2007). Interestingly, the class of ‘adverbs’ which forms an intriguing word category appears relatively unexplored area for many languages, especially in Ghana (Asamoah, 2018; Saah, 2004). A few works done on adverbs, especially in African languages, reveal the class ‘adverbs’ to be one of the predominant lexical categories of a language with an impeccable nature due to its wider scope capabilities, morphology, semantics and syntactic behaviour (Asamoah, 2018; Eckardt, 2003; Lusekelo, 2010; Saah, 2004; Tabe, 2015). The study which aimed at contributing to the growing research on adverbs in African languages explored the structure of adverbs in Dangme (Kwa, Niger-Congo family of languages) using the parameters of categorization of the prototype theory. The study found that in Dangme, adverbial concepts are expressed not only by prototypical adverbs, but also temporal nouns, adjectives, emphatic makers and derived elements which are formed through the process of reduplication and compounding. It was also observed that Dangme, like all other human languages productively uses other higher syntactic constituents termed ‘adverbials’ to execute adverbial functions that are generally not associated with them in anyway. Consider the following examples.

- (1) a. Dèdé tè sī pám
Dèdé wake.PST GROUND¹ suddenly
‘Dede woke up suddenly.’
- b. Wà-yà-á sòlèm Hògbà
1PL.SUBJ-go-HAB church Sunday
‘We go to church on Sunday.’
- c. Àblá fó yā² mòbòmòbò
Àblá cry.PST sorrowfully
‘Abla cried sorrowfully.’

¹ The word *sī* is a ‘ground’ which represents an abstract locative site or orientation from the natural state of rest where you are unconscious to the state where you are awake and conscious and aware of what surrounds you. The expression ‘ground’ often co-occurs with verbs of movement which normally have a ‘located site or position’ and a ‘locating entity’.

² The verbal construction in (1c) *fo ya* ‘cry’ is an inherent complement verb. This inherent complement verb *fo ya* ‘cry’ presents us with another interesting phenomenon where both forms; *fo* and *ya* mean ‘cry’. Here, the first is a verb and the second, a noun. This feature is seen in many of the inherent complement verbs in Dangme.

- d. Yò nò péé-ò hējō sàmínyá
 Woman DEM do-HAB laziness very/really
 ‘This woman is very lazy.’
- e. Àmáne bò mī sè-ɔ wà kpàlé
 news narrate POST back-DEF 1PL return.PST
 wà sè bā wē mì
 1PL.POSS back come.PST home POST
 ‘After delivering the news, we returned home.’

The underlined words in (1) are perfect exemplars of Dangme adverbs. The examples show that indeed Dangme ‘adverb system’ exhibits a heterogeneous class, rich with prototypical adverb such as in (1a) as well as other forms, ranging from temporal nouns (1b) , derived elements through reduplication (1c), adjectives (1d), phrases such as in (1e) and others, including locative particles, emphatic markers, ideophones which are discussed in the study.

Keywords

- Dangme
- Adverbials
- Reduplication
- Compounding

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