

Mercy Akrofi Ansah

University of Ghana, Legon

The Morphosyntax of the Leteh¹ Simple Noun Phrase

This paper describes how elements constituting the Leteh simple noun phrase are structured. It describes the morphosyntax of the various modifiers with, and their co-occurrence restrictions. The barest Leteh noun phrase may be constituted by a proper noun; a mass noun; a singular or plural count noun or an abstract noun. It could also be constituted by a pronoun. All modifiers are optional, and they follow the noun head in the order: Np → N (Adj) (Qt/Num) (Det). As the formula indicates, the quantifier and the numeral are mutually exclusive. The determiner covers the definite article and the demonstrative. The adjective immediately follows the head noun, and could be one or several. It has been observed that the ordering of multiple adjectives in a Leteh noun phrase is congruent with native speakers' preferences. Leteh is a less-studied Guan language of the Kwa group of languages spoken in Ghana by about 8,300 people. Data for this study is gleaned from a larger Leteh corpus which spans a wide range of genres. This study makes a contribution to the literature on the typology of the structure of noun phrases.

Key words: noun phrase; morphosyntax; Leteh; modifier; optional

1. Preliminary

This paper describes the structure of the Leteh ((Kwa family, South-east Ghana) simple noun phrase, and the morphosyntactic properties of the elements that make up the noun phrase. Disparities in the structure of the world's noun phrases usually border on the constituency of its barest form, and also, the ordering of nominal modifiers. While Kwa languages exhibit bare nouns in a number of discourse situations, languages like the Romance and Germanic languages require noun heads to occur with determiners. A study done by Hawkins (1983: 2) on the ordering of nominal modifiers stated that languages

¹ Leteh is the spelling adopted for the name of the language under discussion. In the literature and

tend to use modifying expressions “either consistently before or consistently after modified elements.” The study came up with four proven major patterns (table 1) which are found in the world’s languages.

Table 1 Ordering of nominal modifiers in the world’s languages

| Number of modifiers to the left of head noun | Number of modifiers to the right of head noun | Examples of languages |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 3 | 0 | Mandarin, English, Finnish, Hungarian |
| 2 | 1 | French, Italian |
| 1 | 2 | Basque, Welsh, Warao |
| 0 | 3 | Selepet, Yoruba |

It has been observed that with regard to word sequencing in noun phrases, the world’s languages may be dichotomized: languages where modifiers precede the noun and languages where the modifiers follow the noun (Aboh 2010: 25). A revision of Greenberg’s (1966: 87) universal hypothesis on word ordering in Noun Phrases by Hawkins substantiates this observation as follows:

When any or all of the modifiers (demonstrative, numeral, and descriptive adjective) precede the noun, they (i.e those that do precede) are always found in that order. For those that follow, no predictions are made, though the most frequent order is the mirror-image of the order for preceding modifiers. In no case does the adjective precede the head when the demonstrative or numeral follows (Hawkins 1983: 120-121).

The discussion that follows will demonstrate that in Leteh, a mirror-image order pertains.

Although the morphosyntax of noun phrase structure of a number of Kwa languages have been discussed in the literature (see Aboh 2010; Boadi 2010), no such study has been done on Leteh, a less-described Kwa language. Furthermore, Aboh (2010: 35) fails to give an account of Kwa quantifiers, and admits that ‘quantifiers’ is ‘a rather poorly understood domain’ of Kwa languages. The paper therefore seeks to describe the structure of the Leteh noun phrase, bringing out the morphosyntactic properties of its members, including quantifiers, and the co-occurrence restrictions that exist among the constituents.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: section two is an overview of Leteh grammar with details of relevant aspects to the present discussion. In section three, there are some notes on the morphosyntax of the Kwa noun phrase. Section four is dedicated to the description of the Leteh noun phrase, and also discusses the morphosyntax of each element into detail. This is followed by concluding remarks in section five.

2. A grammatical profile of Leteh

Lewis (2009) sub-classifies Guan (Kwa, Niger-Congo) into two language clusters: North Guan and South Guan. Leteh, the language under discussion, belongs to the South Guan group. The language is spoken by about 8, 310 people (Ghana Housing and Population Census, 2000) in Larteh, a town located in the South-eastern part of Ghana, West Africa.

The Leteh language has a nine-vowel inventory (2) with a corresponding vowel harmony system. The tongue-root harmony requires that for every Leteh word of two or more syllables, all the vowels that occur in the word must belong to either Set A, which

are produced with an advanced tongue root, or to Set B, which are produced with a retracted tongue root.

(2) Leteh oral vowels

| SET A | SET B |
|----------|----------|
| [+ATR] | [-ATR] |
| <i>i</i> | <i>ɪ</i> |
| <i>e</i> | <i>ɛ</i> |
| <i>o</i> | <i>ɔ</i> |
| <i>u</i> | <i>ʊ</i> |
| [ə] | <i>a</i> |

The ninth vowel, /a/ is opaque; it occurs freely with advanced vowels in roots where it is realized as [ə] before an advanced vowel in the following syllable, but maintains its basic phonetic value when it occurs in root final position after advanced vowels. In an environment of unadvanced vowels too, the vowel /a/ maintains its basic phonetic value. It has been observed that the vowel [ə] occurs in Leteh as a result of Vowel Harmony; it may therefore be regarded as an allophone of /a/.

In exceptional cases, vowels from the two sets co-occur. When vowels from sets A and B co-occur in a word which is constituted by two or more syllables, [+ATR] vowels usually precede [-ATR] vowels.

In the few studies that have been conducted on the Leteh language, the Akan orthography which is based on seven² vowels has been applied, because Leteh does not have an official orthography.

² The Akan orthography which is based on seven vowels is employed in this paper. These are /i, e, o, u, ɛ, ɔ, a/.

Akin to many African languages, its consonant inventory displays labial-velar sounds, /kp, gb/ and avoids consonant clusters. However, syllable and word-initial nasal clusters like /nk, mf, nt/ are not uncommon. The preferred syllable structure is CV, a hint of an open-syllable language. Leteh is a tone language with two level tones: high and low. The lexical tone helps to distinguish meanings of words which otherwise are the same in terms of their constituents (3). The grammatical tone³, coupled with verbal prefixes, is employed in marking tense and aspectual distinctions.

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| (3) <i>bà</i> ‘sew’ | <i>bá</i> ‘arm’ |
| <i>nyò</i> ‘switch on’ | <i>nyó</i> ‘two’ |

The language is isolating with agglutinative features. Case is not marked; constituent order marks grammatical relations. An unmarked Leteh clause has SVO word order. In the examples that follow, we find intransitive (4), transitive (5) and ditransitive clauses: double object ditransitive (6) and indirect ditransitive clauses (7) which operate in Leteh.

- (4) *Ananse sù.*
 Name Pst.weep
 ‘Ananse wept.’
- (5) *Ntikuma dé-kèrà o-wure.*
 Name Prog-read Sg-book
 ‘Ntikuma is reading (a) book.’

In the double object clause (6), the agent argument (A) occurs in subject position, the recipient argument (R) and the theme argument (T) are postverbal in that order. The order

³ All verbs in the data presented are tone-marked to indicate tense and aspectual distinctions

of R and T is however reversed in the indirect ditransitive clause (7). Moreover, the R-argument is marked by an adposition.

(6) *Ananse né Nkɔnɔre eteeni.*
 Name Pst.give Name money
 ‘Ananse gave Nkɔnɔre money.’

(7) *Ananse bɛtɛ eteeni né Nkɔnɔre.*
 Name Pst.take money Adp Name
 ‘Ananse gave money to Nkɔnɔre.’

Leteh major word classes include nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverb classes. Minor word classes comprise quantifiers, intensifiers, determiners, including demonstratives, utterance particles, interjections, adpositions and conjunctions. It is worth noting that similar to some related Kwa languages like Akan and Ewe, the class of Leteh adpositions has evolved from major word classes like nouns and verbs through serial verb constructions (Osam 1994; Ameka 1991; Lord, 1993). Leteh nouns may be categorized based on identical prefixes. Singular and plural prefixes are used in indicating number contrast in countable nouns. The nominal class is open, and processes like reduplication, compounding and nominalization are notable ways by which membership of the class is augmented. In contrast to the class of nouns, no process has yet been identified which derives verbs. The class of adjectives numbers thirteen monomorphemic lexemes, whilst other property concepts are expressed using nouns and verbs in various forms. Adverbs are mostly derived from adjectives through partial and complete reduplication of adjective stems.

Available data on Leteh demonstrate that both prepositions and postpositions operate in Leteh grammar. Negation is marked through the prefixation of the main verb of a clause.

3. Some Notes on the Kwa Noun Phrase

This section deals with morphosyntactic properties that are common to noun phrases of Kwa languages. One noteworthy trait of Kwa NPs is that, they exhibit bare nouns in a variety of contexts where many of the world's languages do not. Although a Kwa language like Akan marks specificity (8), it is also possible to have a noun phrase which is constituted by a noun only (9).

(8) *ɔ-dan* *no*
Sg.-building Def
'the building'.

(9) *ɔ-dan*
Sg.-building
'building'.

(10) *A-dan* *a-kɛse* *abien.*
Pl-building Pl-big Num
'The two big buildings'.

The Akan NP structure variants shown in (8 & 9) are common to most Kwa languages. The determinerless NP (9) may occur as head with modifiers (10). The determinerless NP can occur as the possessed, object of prepositions or as an independent answer. In Akan, as well as many other Kwa languages, the bare noun is interpreted as generic. However, in instances where the item in reference is known to all the parties in a communication context, a bare noun could connote definiteness.

A modified NP displays the order N > modifying expression. As already stated in previous sections, the head noun always precedes its modifiers in Kwa languages.

Though the languages may differ as to the arrangement of these modifiers, the common order appears to be noun-adjective-numeral-demonstrative. With regard to adjective sequencing, there are two patterns:

(11). Color, size, quality (e.g. Yoruba, Gungbe, Ewegbe, Akan)

(12). Size, color, quality (e.g. Gungbe, Ewegbe, Akan)

(Aboh 2010: 18)

The orderings indicate that, the arrangement of items of color and size are usually interchangeable. Research has shown that multiple adjective sequences in Kwa languages often conform to native speakers' preferences (Adjei 2007; Pokuaa, Osam, Saah 2007; Amfo, Boateng, Otoo 2007).

In the following section, there is a description of the Leteh simple NP structure. The discussion will demonstrate the ordering of the elements within the NP, number concord that operates among elements in the NP and adjective sequencing within the NP.

4. The Structure of the Leteh noun phrase

A simple noun phrase in Leteh has the following structure: $Np \rightarrow N$ (Adj) (Qt/Num) (Det), where the noun head precedes all modifiers, and all modifiers are optional. Quantifiers and numerals do not co-occur. The Leteh noun phrase in the simplest case can be constituted by a lexical noun (13) or a pronoun (14). Whilst the lexical noun may occur with modifiers, the pronoun is not modified.

(13) *ɔ-tse*
Sg-woman
'woman'

(14) *wonɛ*
2Pl
'you'

The noun head is the obligatory element, and it may be modified by an adjective, a quantifier, a numeral and a determiner in the form of an article (definite or indefinite) or a demonstrative. In the noun phrase, the adjective follows the noun directly, and it may also be followed by a quantifier or a numeral and then finally by one determiner. There is number concord between the head and all its modifiers with the exception of the definite article. The order of the elements in the NP is exemplified in (15). Further in example (16), number concord among NP constituents is exemplified (compare (15) and (16)).

(15) *A-yirebi* *ɔ-he* *mɔ*.
 Sg-child Sg-red Dem
 ‘This light-skinned child’.

(16) *N-yirebi* *ε-he* *mɔ-εεε*.
 Pl-child Pl-red Dem-Pl
 ‘These light-skinned children’.

4.1 The noun head

The noun head of a noun phrase may be a proper noun, mass noun, an abstract noun or a count noun in the singular or plural form, which is usually indicated by a class marker in the form of a prefix. Most Leteh nouns can be analysed as having a prefix in the citation form, because in the plural, the prefix gets replaced with a different prefix. This resembles a noun class system, however in some instances, although there is number agreement between nouns and their modifiers, there is no class agreement (see (17a) and (17b)). As already stated, the noun could be the sole constituent of a simple noun phrase. In the instance where there are modifiers, it occupies initial position in the phrase, followed by the modifiers.

4.2 The adjective

The Leteh adjective class is constituted by thirteen monomorphemic lexemes (table 2) which do not originate from any word class. It is noteworthy that all the adjectives have vowel prefixes. The thirteen adjectives span the four core semantic types put forward by Dixon (1982). With the exception of the semantic class of color, each semantic class exhibits at least, one antonymic pair. Within the semantic class of value for instance, the antonymic pairs are good/bad; true/false.

Table 2

| DIMENSION | COLOR | AGE | VALUE |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>atimi</i> 'short' | <i>ofufuru</i> 'white' | <i>ohue</i> 'new' | <i>okose</i> 'good' |
| <i>ɔtɔntɔ</i> 'tall' | <i>obibi</i> 'black' | <i>ɔdede</i> 'old' | <i>ɔkpamkpa</i> 'bad' |
| <i>akitibi</i> 'small' | <i>ɔhe</i> 'red' | | <i>efe</i> 'true' |
| <i>ɔkpɔmkpɔ</i> 'big' | | | <i>enufu</i> 'false' |

The thirteen adjectives have both attributive and predicative functions. Their role in a noun phrase is only attributive where they occur immediately after the head noun: noun>adjective. With the exception of adjectives of value (17a) and (17b)), there is number concord between the head noun and the adjective (compare (18a) and (18b)).

(17a). *N-yirebi o-kose*
 Pl-child Sg/Pl-good
 'good children'.

(17b). **N-yirebi n-kose*
 Pl-child Pl-good

(18a). *ɔ-tse a-timi*
 Sg-woman Sg-short
 'short woman'

(18b). *ε-tse n-timi*
 Pl-woman Pl-short
 'short women'

In addition to the thirteen monomorphemic adjectives, some nouns and verbs in various forms are used to communicate physical and human attributes. The majority of these nouns and verbs are however used predicatively to express property concepts.

In Leteh, it is possible to have a series of adjectives as modifiers. These adjectives could come from different semantic classes or from the same semantic class. The ordering of multiple adjectives conforms to native speakers' preferences.

4.2.1 *Order of adjectives in a noun phrase*

The issue of adjective sequencing restrictions (henceforth, ASR) is one that has been widely discussed in the literature (Adjei 2007; Amfo, Boateng, Otoo 2007; Pokuaa, Osam, Saah 2007; Ameka 1991, 2003 regarding Kwa languages). Ameka (1991: 113) for instance, reports that in Ewe, age items occur first in a sequence, and attributes it to the importance speakers of Ewe attach to age. In the case of Siya (Kwa) also, adjectives which connote age occur closest to the noun they modify, after which others may follow. Adjei (2007) further notes that in Siya, after placing the age adjective first, stringing the remaining adjectives is at the discretion of speakers to a large extent. In the case of Akan, a preliminary investigation on ASR conducted by Pokuaa, Osam, Saah (2007) found that age and color adjectives occur closest to the noun they modify. It was also observed that for Akan, human propensity adjectives largely occur farther away from the head noun.

The discussion on adjective sequencing in a Leteh noun phrase will account for the case of adjectives from different semantic classes, and also adjectives from the same semantic class.

In order to get the correct or most preferred sequences, various adjective orderings were presented to Leteh speakers, and in most of the cases, speakers showed a large measure of agreement on the ensuing orderings.

From examples (19) – (21), we see the order of Leteh adjectives from different semantic classes in a noun phrase.

- (19). *o-nyine* *ɔ-kpamkpa* *ɔ-tɔntɔ* *a*
 Sg-man Sg-bad Sg-tall Def
 ‘The bad tall man’

There are two adjectives in (19), modifying the noun head *onyine* ‘man’. The adjective denoting value precedes that signaling dimension. The order can be represented as: VALUE>DIMENSION. Speakers explained that the character of an individual was more important than his looks, and that explains why the value adjective occurs closest to the head noun.

Example (20) demonstrates the adjectival order: VALUE>DIMENSION >COLOUR. In this case, color occurs last, which gives a hint of the importance speakers place on physical features.

- (20). *o-nyine* *ɔ-kpamkpa* *ɔ-tɔntɔ* *ɔhe* *a*
 Sg-man Sg-bad Sg-tall red Def
 ‘The bad tall fair man’

In (21), the four adjectives that modify the noun occur in the order:

AGE>VALUE>DIMENSION>COLOUR. This order is comparable to what pertains in related languages like Akan and Ewe (Pokuaa, Osam, Saah 2007; Ameka 1991) where age adjectives are placed closest to the nouns they modify. The inclination to place age adjectives closest to noun heads seems to be cross-cultural for Kwa languages. The explanation offered by Ameka (1991) goes for Leteh as well. Among the speakers of

Leteh, the age of an individual is an overriding concern in any interaction. The age of participants in a conversation will determine address forms and choice of words of speakers in most cases.

- (21). *o-nyine o-numu ɔ-kpamkpa ɔ-tɔntɔ ɔhe a*
 Sg-man Sg-old Sg-bad Sg-tall red Def
 ‘The old bad tall fair man’

During an interaction, a speaker would normally use a sequence of adjectives to specify a referent to ensure that the addressee makes no mistake in identifying the referent. When an adult is sending a child on errand to deliver a message for instance, to ensure that the message is sent to the right person, the adult would use a string of adjectives to describe the intended recipient.

On the other hand, multiple adjectives that occur as modifiers could come from the same semantic class. When that occurs, the order remains the prerogative of the speaker; normally depending on ease of producing them, and also which of the adjectives the speaker wants to emphasize (Bybee 1985). In many cases, the adjective the speaker wants to underscore is placed closest to the head (see examples (22) and (23)).

- (22) *o-yi ɔ-kpɔmkpɔ ɔ-tɔntɔ ɔ-ko*
 Sg-tree Sg-big Sg-tall a/some
 ‘A big tall tree.’

- (23) *o-yi ɔ-tɔntɔ ɔ-kpɔmkpɔ ɔ-ko*
 Sg-tree Sg-tall Sg-big a/some
 ‘A tall big tree.’

My informants however preferred option (23); they explained that it was easier to produce *ɔ-tɔntɔ* ‘tall’ than *ɔ-kpɔmkpɔ* ‘big’. In the instance where adjectives come

from the same semantic class, speakers would also prefer to produce the simpler adjective first.

During an interaction, a speaker would normally use a sequence of adjectives to specify a referent to ensure that the addressee makes no mistake in identifying the referent. When an adult is sending a child on errand to deliver a message for instance, to ensure that the message is sent to the right person, the adult would use a string of adjectives to describe the intended recipient.

Speakers intimated that it was easier, or that less effort was required, in stringing the adjectives in the order they gave. Whenever some orders were reversed, they would comment that those orders did not sound right. The given orders conform to the cross-linguistic tendencies expressed in Dixon (1977). In related languages like Akan, the order of multiple adjectives is the same as that of Leteh (Osam, 1999).

On the other hand, multiple adjectives that occur as modifiers could come from the same semantic class. When that occurs, the order remains the prerogative of the speaker; normally depending on ease of producing them phonologically, and also which of the adjectives the speaker wants to emphasize (Bybee, 1985). The adjective the speaker wants to emphasize is closest to the head (see examples (24) and (25)).

(24) *o-yi* *ɔ-kpɔmkpɔ* *ɔ-tɔntɔ* *ɔ-ko*
 Sg-tree Sg-big Sg-tall a/some
 ‘A big tall tree’

(25) *o-yi* *ɔ-tɔntɔ* *ɔ-kpɔmkpɔ* *ɔ-ko*
 Sg-tree Sg-tall Sg-big a/some
 ‘A tall big tree’

In (24) & (25), both adjectives are members of the semantic class of dimension.

My informants however preferred option (25) on the grounds that, it is easier to produce

ɔ-tɔntɔ ‘tall’ than ɔ-kpɔmkpɔ ‘big’ which has two double articulated sounds. Speakers would normally prefer to produce the morphologically simpler adjective first.

4.3 Numerals and Quantifiers

Two types of numeral words occur as noun modifiers in Leteh: cardinals and ordinals. Cardinals indicate the precise number of referents and ordinals give information about the noun in terms of its order with respect to other referents.

4.3.1 Cardinals

The basic counting forms in Leteh can be found in (26). Numerals between ‘eleven’ and ‘nineteen’ are formed by combining the numerals one to nine and the word for numeral ten. Multiples of ‘ten’ are formed by prefixing the number for ten with /ə-/ and suffixing it with /-o/, then adding the numbers two to nine.

| | | | | |
|-----|-------|---------|--------------|--------------|
| 26) | kɔ | ‘one’ | du-kɔ | ‘eleven’ |
| | nyɔ | ‘two’ | du-nyɔ | ‘twelve’ |
| | sa | ‘three’ | du-kpunɔ | ‘nineteen’ |
| | nɛ | ‘four’ | əduo-nyɔ | ‘twenty’ |
| | nu | ‘five’ | əduo-nyɔ-kɔ | ‘twenty-one’ |
| | sie | ‘six’ | əduo-nyɔ-nyɔ | ‘twenty two’ |
| | sunɔ | ‘seven’ | əduo-sa | ‘thirty’ |
| | twi | ‘eight’ | əduo-sa-kɔ | ‘thirty-one’ |
| | kpunɔ | ‘nine’ | əduo-kpunɔ | ‘ninety’ |
| | du | ‘ten’ | ɔlɛɛ | ‘hundred’ |

The syntax of the numeral in a Leteh NP may be shown as: N>Adj>Num (see examples (27) and (28)). In example (28), the noun head and the adjective inflect for number in agreement with the numeral, two.

27) *A-tale o-hue kɔ.*
 Sg-dress Sg- new one
 ‘One new dress’.

28) *n-tale e-hue nyɔ.*
 Pl-dress Pl- new one
 ‘Two new dresses’.

When a human full NP is modified by a numeral, above one, the classifier *εε* which marks the semantic class of humans has to accompany the numeral (see example (29)). The classifier is not prefixed to the numeral one (see 30).

29) *N-yirebi n-tɔntɔ εε-sa.*
 Pl-child Pl-tall Cl-three
 ‘three tall children’.

30) **A-yirebi ɔ-tɔntɔ εε-kɔ.*
 Sl-child Sg-tall Cl-one
 ‘three tall children’.

4.3.2 *Ordinals*

Leteh expresses ordinal numerals with a periphrastic construction. Similar to Akan, ordinal numbers are expressed by a relative clause. It is therefore the relative clause that modifies the noun in the capacity of an ordinal. The relative clause is marked by the relativizer, *né*, and has the relevant cardinal number as the final element (see examples (31) and (32)). In Leteh, ordinals commonly modify singular nouns. Cardinals and ordinals are mutually exclusive in the Leteh NP; a phrase like (33) is therefore ungrammatical.

31) *A-yirebi* [né fò so nyɔ].
 SG-child Rel. Pres.reach on two
 ‘The second child’.

32) *A-yirebi okose* [né fò so nyɔ].
 SG-child good Rel. Pres.reach on two
 ‘The second good child’.

33)* *N-yirebi n-tɔntɔ sa* [né fò so nyɔ].
 Pl.-child Pl.-tall three Rel. reach on two
 ‘The second three tall children’.

4.3.3 Quantifiers

Quantifiers do not co-occur with numerals in a simple Leteh noun phrase (36).

Quantifiers include “... words or expressions that give a relative or indefinite indication of quantity” (Matthews, 2005: 305). Quantifiers in Leteh modify only plural nouns; they include: *mkpuree* ‘few’, *pɪi* ‘many/much’ and *pɛɛ* ‘all’. The syntactic properties of the quantifiers are illustrated in (34) and (35). In the two examples, the quantifiers indicate the quantities of the nouns they modify although no precise amounts are given.

Quantifiers are not obligatory elements in a simple Leteh NP.

34) *N-yirebi n-timi mkpuree*
 Pl-child Pl-short few
 ‘A few short children’

35) *ɛ-tse pɪi*
 Pl-woman many
 ‘Many women’.

36) **E-wure du pɪi*.
 Pl-book ten many
 ‘Many ten books’.

4.4 Determiners

Demonstratives and articles are the two types of determiners in Leteh. A demonstrative determiner (table 2) or an article occurs as the final element in the simple Leteh noun phrase. These are optional elements which do not co-occur in the noun phrase. Table 3 shows the paradigm of Leteh demonstrative determiners.

Table 3 Leteh Demonstrative Determiners

| Distinctions | Demonstrative Determiners |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Proximal, Singular | <i>mɔ</i> 'this' |
| Distal, Singular | <i>nea</i> 'that' |
| Proximal, Plural | <i>mɔnɛ</i> 'these' |
| Distal, Plural | <i>neane</i> 'those' |

It is attested that all languages have at least two demonstratives which make a proximal/distal distinction (Diessel, 1999; Dixon 2003). A proximal demonstrative makes reference to an entity near the deictic centre, and a distal demonstrative denotes a referent that is located at some distance to the deictic centre.

Demonstrative determiners in Leteh are independent morphemes which make a distinction between singular and plural forms, and also proximal and distal forms (table 2). The syntax of the proximal, singular demonstrative determiner in a noun phrase is demonstrated in (37) and that of the distal plural demonstrative determiner in (38).

- 37) *A-tale a-kitibi mɔ.*
 Sg-dress Sg-small Prox.Dem.Sg
 'This small dress'.

- 38) *N-tale n-kitibi nu mɔnɛ.*
 Pl-dress Pl-small five Dist.Dem.Pl
 ‘Those five small dresses’.

Noun Phrase structures demonstrated are, N > Adj > Dem (37) and N > Adj > Num > Dem (38). It must be noted that, the use of the plural demonstrative requires number agreement with the noun head, the adjective and the numeral (38). Furthermore, it is also possible to have the noun head, modified by only a demonstrative determiner: N > Dem (39).

- 39) *A-tale nea.*
 Sg-dress Dist.Dem.Sg
 ‘That dress’.

Definite and indefinite articles are distinguished in Leteh. Whereas the definite article, *a* ‘the’ is invariable with regard to number (compare (40) and (41), the indefinite article makes a singular/plural distinction: *ɔko/nko* respectively (compare (42) and (43)).

- 40) *O-wure o-hue a.*
 Sg-book Sg-new Def
 ‘The new book’.

- 41) *E-wure e-hue a.*
 Pl-book Pl-new Def
 ‘The new books’.

- 42) *O-nyine ɔ-tɔntɔ ɔ-ko.*
 Sg-man Sg-tall Sg-Indef
 ‘A tall man’.

- 43) *E-nyine n-tɔntɔ n-ko.*
 Pl-man Pl-tall Pl-Indef
 ‘Some tall men’.

It is interesting to note that the Leteh definite article *a* ‘the’ has the same form as the third person singular subject pronoun. The two are however easily distinguishable, because of their different syntactic functions; the definite article occurs clause-finally, whereas the pronoun is clause-initial.

5. Conclusion

The paper has described the structure of the simple Leteh noun phrase and the morphosyntactic properties of its constituents. The Leteh noun phrase in its simplest form is constituted by a lexical noun or a pronoun. The noun head occurs as the first item, ensued by optional modifiers. With the exception of the definite article which is invariant, all modifiers agree in number with the noun head. Quantifiers and numerals are mutually exclusive, and so are demonstrative determiners and articles. A related subject which the paper has not addressed is the grammatical functions of the Leteh noun phrase which is forthcoming.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

| | | | |
|------|------------------------|------|-------------|
| Adp | adposition | Prog | progressive |
| Adj | adjective | Prox | proximal |
| +ATR | advanced tongue root | Qt | quantifier |
| -ATR | unadvanced tongue root | Rel | relativizer |
| Cl | classifier | Sg | singular |
| Def | definite article | | |
| Dem | demonstrative | | |

| | |
|-------|--------------------|
| Dist | distal |
| Indef | indefinite article |
| Num | numeral |
| Pl | plural |
| Pres | present |
| Pst | past |

References

- Aboh, Enoch O. 2010. The Morphosyntax of the Noun Phrase. In: E. Aboh & J. Essegbey (eds). *Topics in Kwa Syntax*. Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 78. 11-37. Springer.
- Adjei, Francisca, A. 2007. Adjectives in Siyase (Avatime). In: Dakubu, M.E. , Akanlig-Pare, G. , Osam, E.K. , Saah, Kofi (eds.) *Studies of the Languages of the Volta Basin*. Vol. 4: 127-139.
- Ameka, Felix K. 1991. *Ewe: Its grammatical and Illocutionary devices*. Ph.D. Thesis Australian National University, Canberra.
- Ameka, Felix. 2003. *The Adjective Class in Ewe: Its strata and emergent nature*. Ms.
- Amfo, Nana Aba. 2007. Akan Demonstratives. In: Doris Payne & Jaime Pena (eds.) *Selected Proceedings of the 37th Annual Conference on African Linguistics*. 134-148. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.
- Amfo, Nana. A., Boateng S., and Otoo Y. 2007. A Comparative Study of the Morphosyntactic Properties of Adjectives in three Kwa languages. In: Dakubu,

- M.E. , Akanlig-Pare, G. , Osam, E.K. , Saah, Kofi (eds.) *Studies of the Languages of the Volta Basin*. Vol. 4: 60-71.
- Boadi Lawrence A. 2010. *The Akan Noun Phrase: Its Structure and Meaning*. Accra: Black Mask.
- Bybee, Joan L. 1985. *Morphology: A Study of the Relation between Meaning and Form*. *Typological Studies in Language*, Vol. 9. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Diessel, Holger. 1999. Demonstratives: Form, Function and Grammaticalization. In: Joseph Greenberg et al (eds). *Typological Studies in Language*. Vol. 42. John Benjamins.
- Dixon, Robert. M. W. 1977. Where have all the Adjectives gone? *Studies in Language*. 1: 19-80.
- Dixon, Robert. M. W. 1982. *Where have all the Adjectives gone? And other essays in Semantics and Syntax*. Berlin: Mouton.
- Dixon, Robert. M. W. 2003. Demonstratives: A cross-linguistic Typology. *Studies in Language*. 27 (1): 61- 112.
- Greenberg, Joseph. 1966. *Language Universals with Special Reference to Feature Hierarchies*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Hawkins, John A. 1983. *Word Order Universals*. New York: Academic Press. Lewis, Paul M. (ed.). 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 16th edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International.
- Lord, Carol. 1993. *Historical Change in Serial Verb Constructions*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Matthews, P. H. 2005. *Concise Dictionary of Linguistics*. Oxford: O.U.P

Osam, E. K. 1994. *Aspects of Akan Grammar*. Ph. D. Thesis. University of Oregon.

Osam, E.K. 1999. Adjectives in Akan. *Afrika und Übersee*, Band 82: 189-211.

Pokuua, C., E. K. Osam and Kofi K. Saah. 2007. Adjective Sequencing in Akan: A Preliminary Investigation. In M. E. Kropp Dakubu, G. Akanlig-Pare, E. K. Osam and K.K. Saah (eds.). *Studies in the Languages of the Volta Basin. Vol. 4: Part 1: Nominal Constructions*.

Author information:

Mercy Akrofi Ansah, Ph.D.
University of Ghana, Legon
Institute of African Studies
akrofiansah@googlemail.com;
akrofiansah@googlemail.com