

THE CONSECUTIVE MORPHEME IN BAMILEKE-NGOMBA*

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Payne (1997) proposed a continuum of clause combinations to categorize multiverb constructions (including serial verbs) between the two poles of one single clause and two separate clauses based on their degree of semantic integration. In this article, I argue that Bamileke-Ngomba treats multiverb constructions at either end of this continuum (as well as in the middle) as verb chains. The consecutive morpheme is used in each case to link main verbs to other verbs within and between clauses. The distinction between these chain types is maintained by degree of semantic integration, as well as additional syntactic (location of NP insertion) and phonological (insertion of pauses) criteria.

1. Introduction

Bamileke-Ngomba (ISO 639-3 code [jgo], Lewis 2009) is a Western Bamileke, Grassfields Bantu language. It is spoken by approximately 63,000 people who reside primarily on the Bamileke plateau in the Mbouda Subdivision of the Bamiboutos Division in the West Region of Cameroon. The area is accessible year-round by asphalt highway, Cameroon's National Route 6, and is located approximately 25 kilometers northwest of the West Region capital of Bafoussam and 50 kilometers south-southeast the Northwest Region capital of Bamenda. The data used in this paper are primarily from the Bamendjinda village dialect. The other main speech varieties are those of the villages of Bamesso,

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Bamengkoumbo, Babete and Bamendjo. The data were collected as part of a language development project of the Cameroon Branch of SIL which works in the country under an agreement with the Cameroonian government. Work on the project began officially in April of 1994 when I and my family allocated to the village of Bamendjinda, which had been chosen as the reference dialect. Aspects of the project are ongoing and are mostly in the hands of the Bamileke-Ngomba speech community with guidance and assistance from the Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy.

The tonal complexity of Bamileke-Ngomba has not been given as much attention as it deserves, but at the present time I have analyzed it as having two basic tones: **L** and **H**. There are two types of Low tones – those which fall in the phrase-final position, as in the word *naa* [nää] ‘animal’ and those which remain level (**L**[°]), as in the word *fu* [fũ[°]] ‘leaf/remedy’. The non-falling **L**[°] is relatively rare in the data. The presence of downstep is also attested in Bamileke-Ngomba, arising in grammatical constructions. Phonetically, one also finds the contours : **F**, a **high-low falling tone**, as in the word *mômbí* ‘goat’, **R** a **low-high rising tone**, as in the word *ndũm* [ndũm] ‘grasscutter_rat’ and **RF** a **rise-fall**. One may view these as sequences of basic tones.

Bamileke-Ngomba is a rather conservative Grassfields Bantu language that retains some strongly Bantu characteristics. Agreement, for example, is still very important in the noun phrase. Although some collapsing of noun classes has occurred, it still boasts of a vigorous noun class system. The nine noun classes present are, according to the bantuist numbering system, : 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, & 10. These combine into eight genders: 1/2, 1/6, 1/10, 3/4, 5/6, 7/6, 9/4, 9/6. Nouns are categorized into classes by their various combinations of prefixes (*N-*, *ø-*, *mó-*, *môN-*, *má-*, *pε-*, *pa-*, *pεN-*, *mbó-* *mεN-*, *mε-*), agreement tones (H or L – occurring in possessive pronouns and as the associative marker¹), and agreement consonants (w, p, m, n, & y – occurring in the syllable-initial slot of possessive and demonstrative pronouns).

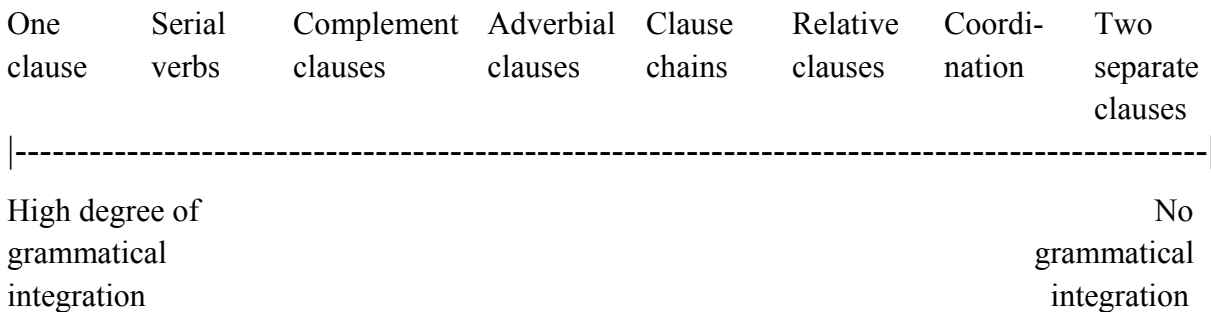
On the other hand, Bamileke-Ngomba has also highly isolating tendencies as may be seen in the sparseness of the verb morphology and the fact that lexical roots for both nouns and verbs tend to be monosyllabic. There are only two productive verbal extension suffixes – one that is roughly valence raising *-tε* (for repeated intransitive actions or transitive actions affecting multiple objects) and another that is roughly valence lowering *-nε* (for reciprocal actions, for making transitive verbs intransitive and for verbs in relative and some other dependent clauses). For example, the intransitive verb *íjkit* ‘to jump’, becomes *íjkitté* ‘to

¹ Hyman and Tadadjeu attest to a floating H tone as “the mark of association when the first noun belongs to any noun class other than 1 or 9” (1976:60) in Babete, which is one of the speech varieties of Bamileke-Ngomba. My research concurs with this finding.

jump up and down(repeatedly)’ with the addition of the valence-raising suffix -*te*. Since the verb morphology is limited, the language relies, to a large extent, on auxiliary verbs and grammatical tone to mark and maintain TAM² and polarity distinctions as will be seen particularly in §§ 4.1, 4.2, 4.4 & 4.5.

The consecutive morpheme in Ngomba, a verbal prefix, is one of the most frequently-used grammatical morphemes in the language and we will see in this article that it is employed in multiverb constructions at various levels both within and between clauses. A clause is commonly defined as a unit of syntax prototypically consisting of a subject and a predicate. The grammatical dictum of one verb one clause, which may be traced back to Aristotle’s assumption of “one predicate one proposition” (Givón 2003:452), is called into question, however, by certain combinations of verbs, notably serial verb constructions. Thomas Payne, therefore, proposed categorizing clause combinations on a continuum from one clause to two separate clauses based on the criterion of the degree of grammatical integration (Payne 1997:307) as may be seen in the reproduction of it below:

Figure 1: Thomas Payne’s Clause Combination Continuum



In this article, I argue that in Bamileke-Ngomba clauses and clause combinations at three points on Payne’s continuum – one clause, serial-like constructions and same-subject clause chains³ – are all treated the same way, as verb chains. The evidence for this is that the same morpheme is used in all three instances to link the main verb to other verbs in the same clause or combination of clauses. That morpheme is what I term the consecutive morpheme (CNS).

I will briefly present phonological realizations of the CNS morpheme in Bamileke-Ngomba, i.e. its form, in section 2. In the section 3, I go on to introduce the three types of constructions, or verb chains, where the consecutive

² For the reader’s convenience, there is a list of abbreviations at the end of this article before the table of references.

³ Only same-subject chains are attested in Bamileke-Ngomba. It is not a switch-reference chaining language.

morpheme occurs. I note that in the second type of verb chain – and sometimes in the first type – the semantic structure of serialization is there, but the formal marking differs greatly from that of proto-typical serial verb constructions. This leads into a brief justification of the use of the term “consecutive” to denote the morpheme under discussion. In section 4, I deal with the first type of verb chain, setting forth the basic constituent order of the Bamileke-Ngomba verb phrase and also discussing the two categories of auxiliary verbs that occur before the main verb - tense/aspect/negation markers and adverbial auxiliary verbs, respectively. In section 5, I deal with the second type of verb chain, discussing its function in case-role marking, the expression of manner, and the co-lexicalization of complex lexical concepts. In section 6, I deal with the third type of verb chain, pointing out that this construction is not only used for encoding consecutive events, in the strictest sense, but also for adding multiple objects to the verb. I also delve into the conjunctive functions of certain auxiliary verbs. In section 7, the conclusion, I set forth in table form the three criteria for distinguishing these three types of verb chains.

2. Phonological realizations of the consecutive morpheme in Bamileke-Ngomba

The consecutive morpheme in Bamileke-Ngomba is a prefix on the verb root that is most often realized as a syllabic homorganic nasal bearing a high tone. Close cognates of this prefix may be found in other Grassfields Bantu languages. For instance, it is very similar in form and function to the N- prefix in Bamileke-Fe’fe’ [fmp] discussed by Hyman (1971) and the consecutive marker in Mankon [nge] (Leroy 2007⁴) and Awing [azo] (van den Berg 2009:24). The morphophonemic rules of Bamileke-Ngomba do not allow the prefix to be realized as a nasal on lexical roots that begin with a voiceless fricative, i.e., /f, s, ʃ/. In these cases, the prefix is realized as a [ə] that bears high tone (Satre 1997:5)⁵. In Table 1 below, we see realizations of the consecutive morpheme (CNS-) on various verb roots of Bamileke-Ngomba written in the orthography of the language. For each verb there is an IPA transcription⁶ and free translation to the right as well as a morpheme gloss underneath:

⁴ According to Leroy (2007:17), Mankon does not have syllabic nasals before any voiceless consonant.

⁵ There I referred to it as a tense/subject prefix which has the same form.

⁶ In many examples throughout this article, I have inserted the IPA transcription of certain verbs and other words to aid the reader. My desire is to respect the official orthography of the language, but I realize that the orthography at times obscures the tone and other features of interest.

Table 1: Realizations of the consecutive morpheme

CNS- as homorganic nasal		CNS- as minimal vowel	
m̄-bu ¹⁷ [m̄.būʔ]	‘to pierce’	é-fú [é.fú]	‘to come from’
CNS-pierce		CNS-come_from	
n̄-tó [n̄.tó]	‘to come/arrive’	é-sɔp [é.sɔp]	‘to prick’
CNS-come		CNS-prick	
n̄-jú [n̄.dʒí]	‘to eat’ (without chewing)	é-shɔt [é.ʃɔt]	‘to turn’ (trans.)
CNS-eat		CNS-turn	
n̄-gu [n̄.gɪ̃ ^x]	‘to go/depart’		
CNS-go			

3. Three types of verb constructions viewed as verb chains

The consecutive morpheme in Bamileke-Ngomba plays an important role in three types of verb/clause constructions. It links verbs in these constructions together into a chain, thus making it possible to mark tense/aspect and often polarity only once, at the beginning of the chain. For convenience, we may simply label these by numbering them - type one, type two and type three. We will classify verb chains into these types according to syntactic, phonological and semantic criteria.

A type one verb chain in Bamileke-Ngomba is a construction linking auxiliary verbs together with a main verb without the possibility of inserting a NP (object) at more than one point in the string and without pauses in the flow of speech between the components. It corresponds to what Hyman (1971) termed “consecutivization within the auxiliary” (pp. 40-41) in Bamileke-Fe’fe’. They are clearly one event; and verbs which precede the main verb in the chain act as auxiliaries of tense/aspect, negation or may be seen to have an adverbial⁸ function. In example (1) below, there are **four** verbs (underlined> in the verb phrase – the first is functioning as a future tense marker, the second and third have an adverbial function and the last is the main verb:

⁷ Note that the symbol “ ’ ” is the Ngomba orthographic symbol for /ʔ/ in all examples.

⁸ The use of the term “adverbial” in reference to such constructions is not unique to me. Aikhenvald (2006) states in a footnote that, “the term ‘adverbial serialization’ was introduced by Bradshaw (1993:152).” (p. 18)

- (1) Pɛkɲɛ gɯ [ɣĩ]⁹ ń-tsun [ńtsũŋ] é-fɛ'ne ń-kwĩ¹⁰ [ńkɥí:]
 1P.INCL go(F1) CNS-really CNS-quickly CNS-nail¹¹
- tú-n-dá lɔ'ne.
 C7.head-AM¹².C9-house today

‘We’re going to really quickly nail on the roof today.’

In composition, example (1) is asymmetrical according to Aikhenvald’s (2006) rubric for describing and classifying serial and other multiverb constructions. It has one characteristic similar to manner SVC’s in Toqabaqita[mlu], which Aikhenvald states are, “analysed as asymmetrical, since the modifying ‘manner’ verb can only be stative intransitive and thus comes from a restricted class.”(2006:29) The first three verbs in example (1) are likewise from a restricted class of verbs, i.e., they are intransitive, and modify the main verb, glossed as ‘nail’, which is from a non-restricted class and describes the event.

As seen in example (2) below, a type two verb chain in Bamileke-Ngomba is a construction linking verbs together which admits the insertion of a NP at more than one point in the string but which in intonation pattern (e.g., lack of pauses) and semantics still appears to be a single clause/event. In example (2), the first part of the construction acts as what Aikenwald (2006) calls a “valency-increasing mechanism” (p.25) by specifying another argument, the instrument.

⁹ The orthographic symbol “g” in Ngomba represents the voiced velar fricative /ɣ/ which in certain environments, as in before the high front vowel /i/, is realized by the voiced palatal fricative [j]. When preceded by a nasal it is realized by the voiced velar stop [g]. Following the convention in Bamileke languages, the orthographic symbol “ɯ” in Ngomba represents the close central unrounded vowel /ɨ/ in all examples.

¹⁰ The orthographic symbol “w” in Ngomba represents the labio-palatal approximate [ɥ] in all examples.

¹¹ Unlike its English gloss, this verb in Bamileke-Ngomba does not appear to be derived from a noun.

¹² The associative marker in Bamileke-Ngomba is a floating tone, L or H, depending on the noun class of the head noun, which may dock to left (on the head noun) or to the right.

- (2) N dɔk [dɔ̃k] níi ń-kũɔ'¹³ [ń-k^xuĩɔ̃?] t́á.
 I take.P0 C7.machete CNS-cut C7.tree
 ‘I cut the tree with a machete.’

I hesitate to call either of the preceding examples a serial verb construction because of the way each is marked and will discuss that later on, in §5. Like serial constructions, type two chains have more than one predicate, yet function like single rather than multiple clauses; hence the doubt cast on the assumption that where there is more than one predicate, there is more than one clause and/or verb phrase. This, in turn, blurs the distinctions between the verb phrase, a combination of verb phrases and a combination of clauses¹⁴. In the debate over the number of clauses in a serial verb construction, Bamgbose (1974), Schachter (1974) and Foley & Olsen (1985) argue for a “monoclausal” analysis rather than a multiclausal analysis of verb serialization. Givón (2003) even uses the term “multiverb single event clauses” (p. 453).

The significance of pauses as a phonological evidence in support of the mono-clausal analysis of serial constructions was attested by Givón (1991) in a quantified study comparing the occurrence of pauses in several Papua-New Guinean languages and Neo-Melanesian Pidgin. He concluded that pauses are much less likely to occur in serial-verb constructions (SVCs) than in main clauses and that, in fact, the chance of a pause occurring in the middle of a SVC:

“...falls within the probability range of mid-clause pauses associated with lexical words, or is even lower, i.e., falling within the range of the probability of mid-word pauses.” (p. 171)

Pauses are part of the intonation pattern that I take into account when classifying verb chains in Bamileke-Ngomba.

By semantic criterion, I refer to Osam’s (2003) “semantic integration” criterion for typing serial constructions in Akan [aka]. He uses it to distinguish between what he terms “Integrated Serial Verb Constructions” (ISVCs), which are similar to the type two verb chain in Bamileke-Ngomba and “Clause Chaining Serialization” (CCs) (2003:15), which resembles type three chains. His ISVCs are “tightly integrated events...we cannot break up...into two separate events.” (p.16) His CCs “can be broken into separate clauses and linked with conjunctions”. (p.16)

¹³ The orthographic symbol “ũ” in Ngomba represents the velar approximate [u] in all examples.

¹⁴ See also Foley & Olsen 1985:17-18; Bamgbose 1974:18

Aikhenvald (2006) also makes reference to something akin to semantic integration in describing serial constructions. She states:

“semantically, serial verb constructions may encode one event or several subevents closely linked together, or even several subevents in sequence which may be conceptualized as connected to each other.” (p.12)

She seems to postulate a sort of semantic integration continuum, similar in some respects to Payne’s continuum, but only with reference to serial verb constructions. Payne’s continuum is one of grammatical integration, while Aikhenvald’s (2006), in the context, would seem to be semantic though her placement of SVCs on it involves grammatical parameters:

“Cross-linguistically, and even within one language, SVCs occupy different places on the continuum between one indissoluble event and a package of subevents all linked together. The place of a serial verb construction on this continuum correlates with grammatical parameters—such as contiguity and wordhood of components, and argument sharing.” (p.12)

Type one chains are closest to what Aikhenvald terms “one indissoluble event” (2006:12). We have seen in example (1) that they are, of necessity, asymmetrical, with their requirement of intransitive verbs fulfilling an adverbial function, which also limits the number NPs that may be ‘inserted’, other than the subject, to one. Type two chains are more of a mixed bag. One could view the addition of an argument such as instrument in example (2) as a single event or as subevents closely linked, yet in sequence. One must first pick up an object (the instrument) before using it, so it would also fit an iconic ordering of subevents. The addition of a benefactive argument, which involves the verb ‘give’ and an IO (see examples (33 & 34) below in §5.1) is not truly iconic. And the requirement of a specific verb to introduce an argument means that that verb constitutes a very restricted class, indeed, and hence the chain is asymmetrical. Co-lexicalization, which will be discussed in §5.2, always involves two verbs from an unrestricted class, and so such verb chains are classified as symmetrical constructions. Although type one chains in Ngomba are tighter semantically and are all asymmetrical, looking at type two chains, I cannot see a consistent, direct correlation between Aikhenvald’s asymmetry (or symmetry) characteristic and semantic integration.

As may be seen in example (3), a type three verb chain is a construction linking verbs together which admits the insertion of a NP (object) at more than one point in the string and which appears both in intonation (there are pauses)

and semantics to act as a sequence of separate clauses encoding separate and distinct events.

- (3) A kó' tɛ ń-kúu kón, ɲkónɛ, ń-cwɛɛɛ¹⁵ fyɛt, ń-gá
 3S climb.P0 until CNS-arrive above now CNS-take_out C7.ring CNS-give
- mbǎ w-ɛ¹⁶.
 to C1-3S

‘He climbed up to the top, now, took out the ring (and) gave (it) to him.’

Notice how the insertion of the time adverbial *ɲkónɛ* ‘now’ accentuates the separation between the first and second clauses in the chain. Type three chains may also be distinguished by their admission of conjunctive elements, i.e., verbs that act as conjunctions (see example 47 §6.1) at the beginning of one or more clauses in the chain.

The type two verb chain, which one may broadly term a ‘spliced’ or ‘compound’ VP, and often the type one verb chain—VP with auxiliary verbs—resemble verb serialization in their underlying semantics, while the third is a same-subject(SS) clause chain.

In all three cases, the formal marking that links the verbs into a chain is the same. They are linked together, as has been stated above, by the presence of the consecutive morpheme that is prefixed to the non-initial verbs in the chain.

The motivation for the formation of verb chains in Bamileke-Ngomba appears to be economy of marking. It is always at the beginning of a chain that one finds the TAM markings and the subject. Since chain types one and two are often embedded in a type three chain, many individual type two and three chains contain no overt subject or TAM marking, only the consecutive morpheme. When there is a change of subject to interrupt the chain, the subject and TAM must again be expressed and a new chain may begin. This is most evident in example (38) in §5.2.

3.1 Use of the term ‘consecutive’. According to Hyman (1971), the functional equivalent of serialization in Bamileke languages (i.e., Grassfields Bantu, such as Bamileke-Ngomba) is not properly termed serialization, but rather

¹⁵ The orthographic symbol “c” in Ngomba represents the alveo-palatal affricate /tʃ/ in all examples.

¹⁶ From an Ngomba folk tale called ‘The person who came from a foreign land’ told to the author by Mrs. Marie MATCHO of Bamendjinda, Cameroon.

consecutivization. The form is the main criterion for this distinction in terms, whereas others, like Lord (1993), put more weight on the semantics. Lord says:

“If we focus on surface form, we can limit prototypical serial verb constructions to successive verb phrases without overt connective morphemes. This definition rules out Igbo and Fe’fe’ consecutive constructions, as well as Twi verb sequences with the sequential prefix. However, the meanings communicated by the Twi structures are comparable to meanings communicated elsewhere and in related languages by verb sequences without overt connectives. This makes the “no overt connectives” criterion look rather arbitrary.” [p. 2]

As was stated in section 3, the consecutive morpheme in Bamileke-Ngomba may occur: 1) within the verb phrase with both tense/aspect markers and other modifiers that precede the verb (see example 1 above in §3); 2) in constructions where a predicate serves to add an argument within the clause such as instrument, manner etc. (see the instrument expressed in example 2 above in §3); or 3) on a higher level, joining same-subject clauses where the action of a given clause is seen to be consecutive to that of the preceding clause (see example 3 above in §3). Strictly speaking, it is the third case that is “consecutive”. However, as the same verb form is used in all three, one understands why Hyman grouped them all together as consecutive. I concur with Lord’s observation about the communication of comparable meanings but choose to recognize the unity of form in Bamileke-Ngomba as Hyman did in Bamileke-Fe’fe’. I consider the constructions that are linked together by the CNS morpheme in Bamileke-Ngomba to be verb chains and find in the data that there are three distinguishable types of them.

4. Function of the consecutive morpheme in type one verb chains: joining main verb and auxiliary verbs within the verb phrase

Bamileke-Ngomba is a language where auxiliary verbs and particles always precede the main verb in the verb phrase. Like many African languages, Bamileke-Ngomba counts among its auxiliary verbs some that have nothing to do with tense or aspect but which modify the verb in other ways. Creissels (2000) noted this as a characteristic tendency of African languages and described these verbs as “auxiliary verbs expressing meanings commonly taken up by adverbial expressions in European languages” (p. 239). In example (1) above in §3 we saw two verbs *ńtsun* ‘really’ and *éfé hε* ‘quickly’ that fit Creissels’ description. All the non-initial verbs in that string are all linked to the initial

verb of the verb phrase, *gu* ‘go’, an auxiliary verb which marks the tense, by the consecutive morpheme and so are also linked to the main verb *ɲkwii* ‘CNS-nail’.

4.1 Order of constituents in the Bamileke-Ngomba verb phrase. The auxiliary verbs and particles preceding the main verb in Bamileke-Ngomba may be divided into two general categories: 1) tense/aspect/negation markers and 2) optional adverbial auxiliary verbs. These two general categories may be further divided according to co-occurrence rules and whether or not a verb following a particular auxiliary takes or does not take the CNS (consecutive) prefix. In figure 2 below, “+CNS” means that if there is a verb immediately following, it takes the CNS prefix, while “-CNS” means it does not take it.

As Bamileke-Ngomba is a strongly SVO language, immediately following the main verb is where O (object – NPs, PNs or verb complement clauses), if present, occurs. Following O, other words which modify the verb may occur. Here one finds adverbs, a small closed class in Bamileke-Ngomba, as well as prepositional phrases expressing manner, instrument, IO or demoted DO.

The overall structure of the verb phrase in Bamileke-Ngomba may be summarized by the formula in figure 2 below. There are two positions in the verb phrase where negation may be indicated. In most negative verb phrases it occurs before or in portmanteau with tense marking, hence the NEG1 slot. In one tense, negation marking may alternately occur after the tense marking, hence the NEG2 slot. Most positive tense/aspect markers occur before the adverbial auxiliary verbs, as indicated by T/A1 in the formula below. One aspect marker, the auxiliary verb *mbó* ‘to be’ however, may occur before or after the modifiers, as indicated by the A2 slot.

Figure 2: VP constituent order

VP →	+/-NEG1	+/-T/A1	+/-NEG2	+/-MOD1	+/-A2	+ V	+/- O	+/- MOD2
	ká 'NEG.P0/1' (-CNS), lɔɔ 'NEG.HAB' (+CNS), ŋkaal[ŋkà:] 'P2' ¹⁷ , NEG' (-CNS), ŋkaal[ŋkà:] 'P3/4-NEG' (-CNS), ké 'NEG.F' (-CNS)	lá' 'P1' (+CNS), ŋ-' ¹⁸ 'P2' (+CNS), ka 'P3' (-CNS), ka lá' 'P4' (+CNS), m̀bɔ́/pɔ́' ¹⁹ 'non-Present IPFV' (+CNS), IPFV' (-CNS), (ŋ)ké 'PER' ²⁰ (+CNS) sé 'PR.PRG' (+CNS), lɔ 'PR.HAB' (+CNS), gɛ/gɛ 'F1' (+CNS), ŋ-1 'F2' (+CNS), ŋgɛ/ndɔ 'F3' (+CNS), ndá' 'F4' (+CNS)	M̀bɔɔ/pɔɔ [m̀bɔ:]/ [pɔ:] NEG.P1 /NEG.IPFV (-CNS)	adv. aux. verbs	m̀bɔ́/pɔ́ 'non- Present IPFV' (+CNS)	Main verb	NPs, PNs, verb complements ²¹	adverbs, PPs

¹⁷ Though P2 is glossed as the prefix here and elsewhere in examples, there are also changes on the tone on the root involved.

¹⁸ This is a low tone that replaces the lexical tone of H tone verbs and appears to keep L tone verb roots from rising. More research would be needed to determine if this is a 'super low' or a lowering of the register.

¹⁹ The two verb forms, *m̀bɔ́/pɔ́*, are with and without the CNS prefix respectively. The form with the CNS prefix occurs here when it is required to link the clause to a preceding clause in a type three chain.

²⁰ Persistent aspect. According to Nurse 2008(p. 145) this "affirms that a situation has held continuously since an implicit or explicit point in the past up to the time of speaking" and in many Bantu languages has the form *ki*. English equivalent is the adverb 'still'.

²¹ Complement clauses with the same subject as the matrix verb begin with nominalized form of the verb, i.e. with C5 prefix *ne-*; different subject from matrix verb begin with complementizer *ngɔ*, which is a grammaticalized form of the verb 'say'

Note that, in this formula, all but the main verb are shown as being optional. The NEG positions are optional because “negative” is the marked case and so will not necessarily be present in every verb phrase. The tense and aspect positions are optional because there is an unmarked form of the verb that is assigned tense meaning according to the semantic class of the verb (see §4.3) such that only the main verb is obligatory.

While it is true that most positions are optional, it is not true that one may opt for all of the positions at the same time in a given verb phrase. NEG1 and NEG2 are mutually exclusive – only one verbal negator is allowed. The aspect-related markers in T/A 1 – PR.PRG and PR.HAB (which also functions as a gnomic present) – are likewise mutually exclusive with the non-present, general imperfective auxiliary verb that occurs in A2, which is the other position where aspect may be marked²². Note, however, that MOD1 and MOD2 are not mutually exclusive and both may be present in a given VP, as may be seen in example (4) below:

- (4) O ká tsuŋ[tsũŋ] ń-dé sũ'ne pó [póõ]?²³
 2s NEG.P0 really CNS-sleep well NEG
 ‘You did not really sleep well?’

With the exception of the MOD positions and the non-present imperfective marker *mbó/pó* in T/A1 that co-occurs with tense markers, the items listed as occurring in a particular position are mutually exclusive.

Note also that some of the auxiliary verbs marking negation are specific to a particular tense while others do double duty, occurring with more than one tense, hence the backslashes separating tense numbers. There is only one negation marker for all future tenses, so I have not bothered to list all the tenses with which it occurs.

In examples (5) and (6), we see two sentences containing minimal verb phrases, which consist of a single lexical verb²⁴ in the least marked tense, the “P0” (Past Zero) tense:

²² See sections 4.4 and 4.5 for a presentation of the various T/A and NEG markers.

²³ This conversational sentence is part of the conventional morning greeting script. The length and tone perturbation on the final syllable of the utterance are best described in terms of intonation patterns and are not in the scope of this paper.

²⁴ In Bamileke-Ngomba I distinguish between lexical verbs, i.e., verbs with lexical content that may function as the main verb in a verb phrase, from auxiliary verbs. Certain auxiliary verbs may also function as the main verb in a verb phrase while others in the language have not been observed to do so. (See §4.6)

- (5) Fɔɔ w-ɛk tɔ.
 C1.chief C1-1P come.P0
 ‘Our chief came/has come.’
- (6) Fɔɔ w-ɛk sak [sǎk].
 C1.chief C1-1P be_long.P0
 ‘Our chief is tall.’

The reader will note that the verb in the P0 in example (5) has past tense meaning but the one in the P0 in example (6) has a present tense meaning. This is due to the semantic class of the verb – inherently perfective vs. inherently imperfective – and is discussed in §4.3 below.

4.2 Tense/aspect/negation markers in the structure of the verb phrase.

Tense/aspect and negation are best seen as constituents of the verb phrase and so are not analyzed as being affixed to the verb per se. (See following paragraph below.) The complexity in the tense/ aspect system of Bamileke-Ngomba, then, is not expressed through complex verb morphology (as in Narrow Bantu languages), but rather through the repertoire of markers that occur in the verb phrase. As was noted above in §4.1, tense/aspect and negation may be marked at various positions in the verb phrase, but they most frequently occur at the beginning. This repertoire consists of an intricate system of segmental markers—auxiliary verbs, particles, and affixes—as well as tonal markers.

As tense marking occurs at a certain position in the verb phrase, tense-related affixes often occur on various auxiliary verbs rather than the main verb, thus substantiating the claim that tense/aspect and negation marking are an operation on the verb phrase level rather than on the level of verb morphology. As the verb phrase expands, the tense marking maintains its position at or near the left edge of the VP. This is illustrated by the P2 examples (7-9) below. The P2 ‘Yesterday Past’ is marked by the combination of a segmental affix bearing a high tone - high tone nasal prefix - and a tonal affix, i.e., a low tone on the verb root that overrides or replaces the lexical tone (see also footnotes 17 & 18 above in §4.1). In these examples, be advised that the orthographic convention of the language uses the grave accent on the prefix of the verb not as a tone mark but as an indication of the P2 tense and only that. The tonal melody is shown in the phonetic transcription next to it. It is important to note that, in the case of the P2 tense, the prefix is not a realization of the CNS morpheme but rather part of the tense marking. Note the absence of the CNS morpheme on *tsuŋ* ‘really’ in example (9) that is occasioned by the negative marker that immediately precedes it:

- (7) Mɔ̀ ñ-zúu [ń-zù:] m-bap sɛ'ne zón.
 1S P2-buy C9-meat good yesterday
 'I bought good meat yesterday.'
- (8) Mɔ̀ ñ-tsun[ń-tsùŋ] ñ-zúu m-bap sɛ'ne zón .
 1S P2-really CNS-buy C9-meat good yesterday
 'I really bought good meat yesterday.'
- (9) Mɔ̀ ñkaa [ńkà:] tsun ñ-zúu m-bap sɛ'ne zón pó.
 1S P2-NEG really CNS-buy C9-meat good yesterday NEG
 'I didn't really buy good meat yesterday.'

We see that in example (7) the only verb in the VP is the main verb and the P2 tense marking occurs there. In example (8), however, the tense marking occurs on the adverbial auxiliary verb preceding the main verb. Finally, in example (9), it is realized on the negator which precedes both the adverbial auxiliary verb and the main verb. Clearly, while the marking for this tense must be realized on a particular verb in the string, it is best analyzed as occurring in the phrase-initial position of the verb phrase. Note, also, that the CNS morpheme occurs on the main verb, *ń-zúu* 'CNS-buy', in examples (8) and (9) where the main verb does not occur in the phrase-initial position. The function of the consecutive morpheme is thus shown to be to link the main verb to whatever auxiliaries precede it in the verb phrase.

4.3 Semantically-Based Verb Classes. A very pertinent fact to be aware of when considering the tense and aspect system of Bamileke-Ngomba is that the language recognizes two semantic classes of verbs. It treats those which are inherently perfective in aspectual meaning, i.e., dynamic verbs, such as *ńkũɔ* 'to run', differently from those which are inherently imperfective in aspectual meaning, i.e., stative verbs—including cognitive state verbs, such as *ńkwanɛ* 'to think', and stative verbs, such as *ńduu* 'to be sweet', which exercise an attributive function. On a semantic level, this classification manifests itself in the fact that the least marked verb form, what I term the 'P0', has a present tense reading with verbs in the imperfective semantic class (see example (6) above in § 4.1) and a recent past (almost 'perfect'²⁵) reading with those in the perfective semantic class (see example (5) above in § 4.1).

²⁵ The force of it is that the action occurred (recently) and the expectation is that the results are still in effect.

On a formal level, the semantic class of a verb has ramifications for the marking of aspect and tense in the verb phrase. Verbs in the perfective group require special marking not only to take on an imperfective meaning, but also to have any present tense! There are two of these markers that specifically mark a verb for present tense and imperfective aspect — the particle *sé*²⁶ for the present progressive (PR.PRG) tense/aspect (see examples (10) and (11) below) and the particle *lɔ* for (gnomic) present habitual tense/aspect (PR.HAB). Neither of these tense/aspect markers can co-occur with other tense or aspect markers; thus in future and past tenses, verbs of the perfective class employ the appropriate form of the auxiliary verb *mbó* ‘to be’ as a general imperfective marker (see example (22) in §4.6). This imperfective marker may have either a progressive or a habitual reading depending on the context. Again, the markers do not always occur adjacent to the main verb, but at a particular position in the verb phrase as may be seen with the habitual marker in examples (10), (11) and (12) below:

(10) A *lɔ* *ń-küɔ* [ń-kʰuɾ] *n-dyɔl* *mba'mba'* [m.baʔ.m.baʔ].
 3S PR.HAB CNS-run C9-course morning
 ‘He (usually) runs in the morning.’

(11) A *lɔ* *m-bótne* [m-bótné] *ń-küɔ* *n-dyɔl*.
 3S PR.HAB CNS -be_slow CNS -run C9-course
 ‘He (usually) runs slowly.’

(12) A *lɔ ń-tsuŋ* [ń-tsuŋ] *m-bótne* *ń-küɔ* *n-dyɔl*.
 3S PR.HAB CNS -really CNS -be_slow CNS-run C9-course
 ‘He (usually) runs really slowly.’

As with examples (7-9), we see in examples (10-12) that the tense/aspect marker maintains its position at the left edge of the verb phrase as auxiliary verbs are inserted into the verb phrase to the left of the main verb. The present habitual marker *lɔ* has a low tone but does not seem to have all the tonal qualities of a low-tone verb, hence I hesitate to call it an auxiliary verb. For example, there is a low rather than high tone on the CNS- prefix immediately following it which may be part of the present habitual marking. One could replace *lɔ* with *sé* in examples (10-12) to change them into present progressive ‘he is running’ with only a minor change to the time adverbial in example (10).

²⁶ The present progressive marker, *sé*, also functions elsewhere in the language to predicate existence. It appears to be a grammaticalized form of the word *sé* ‘ground’.

4.4 NEG1 and NEG2. As was noted in §4.2, the segmental markers for tense/aspect and negation may be divided into those which require that a following verb carry the CNS prefix and those which prohibit that from occurring. While most of the markers which prohibit the CNS prefix from occurring are involved in negation, it is unclear what the motivation²⁷ for the prohibition is. Those which prohibit the CNS prefix from occurring are: *ka* the P3 (non-recent Past, *ká* ‘NEG.P0/1’, *ɲkaa* [ɲká:] ‘P2-NEG’, *ɲkaa* [ɲkā:] ‘P3/4-NEG’, *ké* ‘NEG.F’, and *mbɔɔ/pɔɔ* [mbò:]/ [pò:] NEG.P1/NEG.IPFV. The negative marker *lɔɔ* ‘NEG.HAB’ (never) is an exception. As with the ‘positive’ present habitual maker *lɔ*, the verb that immediately follows *lɔɔ* has a homorganic nasal prefix with a low tone instead of a high tone, so there is some uncertainty. I take the position that they are followed by the CNS prefix, hence the designation (+CNS) in Figure 2, but further research is required to determine why it bears a low tone in this environment.

The following examples (13-19) show the interaction of tense and negation marking in the Bamileke-Ngomba verb phrase. In examples (13-18), we see the NEG1 position markers in the context of a sentence. The reader will notice variation in the 1S subject pronoun in (17 and (18). This variation is motivated by a need to differentiate between the subject pronoun and the marker that follows it. The more frequent 1S subject pronoun, a homorganic nasal bearing a low tone, is replaced by the more emphatic *mɔ* (employed elsewhere in the language in prepositional phrases) when the verb that follows it already has a homorganic nasal prefix, albeit one bearing a high tone. Be advised that the time adverbials in these examples are not obligatory and are only included to shed light on the tense meaning:

(13) D ké zúu m-bap lɔ'ne pó.
 1S NEG.F buy C9-meat today NEG
 ‘I will not buy meat today.’ (without the time adverbial it would have the force of ‘now’)

(14) D ké lɔ²⁸ [lɔ̃] ń-zúu m-bap ɲ-gap yi pó.
 1S NEG.F F3 CNS- buy C9-meat C9-week that NEG
 ‘I will not buy meat next week.’

²⁷ See section 7, the conclusion for a discussion of the possible motivations.

²⁸ In a positive clause the F3 marker is *ńdɔ*. When the homorganic nasal is dropped in the negative clause, the phonology of the language dictates that [d] revert to [l]. Both are allophones of the phoneme /l/ in Ngomba.

- (15) D ká zúu m-ba pó.
 1S NEG.P0/1 buy.P0 C9-meat NEG
 ‘I didn’t buy meat.’ (implication: I do not have any meat.)
- (16) D ká lá' n-!zúu m-bap mba'mba' ló'ó pó.
 1S NEG.P0/1 P1 CNS -buy C9-meat morning today NEG
 ‘I didn’t buy meat this morning.’
- (17) Mò ḡkaa [ḡ-kà:] zúu m-bap zón pó.
 1S P2-NEG buy C9-meat yesterday NEG
 ‘I didn’t buy meat yesterday.’
- (18) Mò ḡkaa [ḡ-kā:] zúu m-bap ḡgap yi pó.
 1S P3-NEG buy C9-meat C9-week that NEG
 ‘I didn’t buy meat last week.’

In the examples above, one gets a sampling of the range of tenses there are in Bamileke-Ngomba. Observe again that there is no CNS prefix (nor the homorganic nasal prefix that is simply part of the tense marking) on any verb that immediately follows a NEG marker, whether it is the main verb or some auxiliary verb, such as the F3 (post-hodiernal, ‘After-today’ Future) tense marker *ndɔ/lɔ* [*ndɔ̄/lɔ̄*] in example (11). The scope of the suppression of the CNS marker, whether following a NEG marker or following the P3 marker *ka*, only extends to the verb that immediately follows it, hence the presence of the CNS marker on the main verb *n-zúu* in example (14). On a side note, in example (16) the P1 marker *lá'* is the same in the positive or the negative, i.e., it does not have a homorganic nasal to be suppressed.

The absence of the homorganic nasal prefix on tense markers that require it could occasion the loss of many tense distinctions were it not for the fact that the NEG markers themselves also help maintain these distinctions. This fact may be observed by comparing example (17) with example (18) or example (13) with example (15). As verbal negators in the NEG 1 position in the verb phrase occur before tense/aspect markers, one does not find the CNS prefix occurring on them. The verbal negators that have a homorganic nasal prefix, P2 & P3/4, have it as part of the tense marking. Again, while this prefix resembles the CNS prefix, it does not, however, function to link the verb to others in a chain; I, therefore, do not equate it with the CNS prefix. It does, however, say something about the verbal quality of these markers.

Of the negative markers, all but *m̄bɔɔ* always occur in NEG1, i.e., they are not preceded by a tense marker. When *m̄bɔɔ* is used to negate the P1 tense, it

occurs in NEG2, after the P1 ('Today' Past) tense marker *lá'*. It is important to note that the occurrence of the nasal prefix here is a realization of the CNS morpheme that links it to the tense marker. In example (19), we see the NEG2 position with its marker in a sentence.

- (19) N *dá'* *m-bɔɔ* *zúu* m-bap *mba'mba'* *pó*.
 1S P1 CNS -NEG.P1 buy C9-meat (this)morning NEG
 'I didn't buy (wasn't buying) meat this morning.'

4.5 T/A1 and A2. Most of the tense/aspect markers require verbs that immediately follow them in the verb phrase to carry the CNS prefix. These include: *nda'* / *ka lá'* 'P4'²⁹ (indefinite/remote past) which is accompanied by downstep on H tone roots³⁰, *lá'* 'P1' (hodiernal past) which is also accompanied by downstep on H tone root, *sé* 'PR.PRG' which is also accompanied by downstep on H tone roots, *ge/ gu* [yě/ yĩ] 'F1' (hodiernal 'today' future), *hge* [hgě]/ *nda* [nda] 'F3' (post-hodiernal future), *nda'* / *ntaa* 'F4' (remote/indefinite future), *lo* 'PR.HAB', *lɔɔ* 'NEG.HAB', *(h)ké*³¹ c (may also be glossed as 'still') and *mbó* 'IPFV (non-present)'. The 'F2' tense (immediate to next day future) is not listed here as it is not marked by an auxiliary verb. Instead, a verb in 'F2', whether it is an adverbial auxiliary or a main verb, carries a high tone homorganic nasal prefix, i.e. same form as the CNS prefix, and is also marked by tone perturbations on the lexical root. There is downstep on H tone roots while L tone verb roots in F2 are realized with a rising tone. The general imperfective marker *pó/mbó* is an auxiliary verb that may also be glossed as 'to be' and it is what occurs in the A2 position. The other markers listed in this section as well as the P3 marker *ka* occur in T/A1.

While tone is an important part of the repertoire of markers, there are only two³² tenses in the affirmative that are distinguished solely by a tonal difference, as well as two in the negative (see examples 17 & 18 above). The P2, which was

²⁹ The P4 formed by a combination of the P3 marker *ka* followed by the P1 marker *lá'* seems to have a more definite reading than *nda'*.

³⁰ NB: Downstep is not normally marked in Bamileke-Ngomba orthography but is indicated in examples for those interested in its presence and function.

³¹ Note that the future negator(NEG.F) *ké* and the the persistive (PRS) aspect *(h)ké* are distinguished in context by the fact that verbs following the NEG.F do not carry the CNS prefix while those that follow the PRS aspect marker do carry the CNS prefix.

³² I have also recently discovered a variant of P4 with the high tone nasal prefix and either H that is not downstepped or perhaps an upstep, making three tenses with the same segmental form, only distinguished by tone. Further research is required to determine that there are indeed two variant forms of P4 or if there is some other distinction that determines their usage.

mentioned above in section 4.2 (see examples 7-9), and F2 are both marked by the high-tone nasal prefix, but are distinguished by grammatical tone on the root. While F2 carries a downstepped H tone or rising tone on the root, the P2 has a low tone that overrides the lexical tone on the verb root. This marking may occur on the main verb or on whichever verb, i.e., such as *mbó* ‘be’ or one of the adverbial auxiliary verbs that happens to occur phrase-initial in the verb phrase in a given utterance as was shown in examples (7-9) above.

4.6 Adverbial auxiliary verbs in the structure of the verb phrase. Adverbial auxiliary verbs occur before the main verb and after the tense/aspect/negation markers mentioned in the section just above. Their verbal quality may be seen in the fact that they may (and often must) take the CNS prefix (see example (5) above) and can carry the tense marking for the verb phrase (see example (6) above). So it is that in Bamileke-Ngomba one finds such lexical items as the verb ‘really’ *ńtsuŋ* or the verb ‘perhaps’ *ńmaa*. Bamgbose (1974) refers to verbs like these as “modifying verbs” in the serializing languages of West Africa, such as Yoruba and Twi, and says that they occur in “modifying serial verb constructions” (p.31). While type one verb chains with an adverbial auxiliary verb are more serial-like than those without any, I still choose to call them auxiliary verbs, as many may not function as independent verbs, e.g., the two just mentioned above in this paragraph. There are some, however, such as the verbs *mbótne* ‘slowly’ and *ńduome* ‘secretly’, that may function either as an adverbial auxiliary or as an independent lexical verb. As an independent lexical verb *mbótne* is a stative verb and is glossed as ‘to be soft/weak/easy’ while *ńduome* is glossed ‘to hide’(intransitive). It is conceivable, perhaps even probable, that these adverbial auxiliaries were all lexical verbs originally, but that the lexical usage of some died out or their meaning changed drastically over time such that they are no longer associated with the adverbial auxiliaries that developed from them. Some of the more common adverbial auxiliary verbs are listed below:

Table 2: Common adverbial auxiliary verbs in Bamileke-Ngomba

Verb	English Gloss
ńna' [ń-nāʔ]	'a little, slightly, somewhat'
ńtsuŋ [ń-t̥sūŋ]	'really'
éǝ'ne [é-fǝʔ-né]	'quickly' or 'hurry-VL'
ńbótne [ń-bót-né]	'slowly' or 'be_soft/easy'
ńmaa [ń-máā]	'perhaps'
ńzεε [ń-zéé]	'even/also'
ńben [ń-bēn]	'again, and' or 'return'
ńmúu [ń-mí:]	'be_early'
ńgóó [ń-gó:]	'immediately'
ńduome [ń-díō-mē]	'secretly' or 'hide-VL' ³³

Note that none of these verbs are transitive. In fact, the *-né* and *-mε* suffixes, the latter being an alternate form of the valence-lowering verbal extension *-ne*³⁴, assure that these verbs are not transitive. There is apparently a necessity for the adverbial auxiliary verbs to be intransitive or stative so as to leave no doubt that their only function in this construction is to modify the main verb, which encodes the event, hence the use of the valence-lowering verbal extension. As was stated above in §3, this restriction also means that type one verb chains in Bamileke-Ngomba are asymmetrical multi-verb constructions. Examples of these adverbial auxiliary verbs in the context of sentences appear below, most taken from narrative texts. In this series of examples (20-28), notice the following characteristics of the adverbial auxiliary verbs in Bamileke-Ngomba:

1. They may be preceded by a tense or aspect marker, as in examples (20) and (25) below.
2. They may themselves carry the tense marking, as in example (8) in §4.2 where an adverbial auxiliary carries the P2 marking or in examples (21), (23), (24) and (27) in the P0 below.

³³ There is a transitive form of this verb also – *ńduo* 'to hide (something)'.

³⁴ This suffix has a L tone in the normalized form of the verb (cl 5) but in many other forms of the verb it has a H tone. My hypothesis is that it is either L or toneless and picks up a H from the tone melody of the verb root or a grammatical tone.

3. They must take the CNS prefix when they are not phrase-initial nor preceded by one of the markers that prohibit it, as in examples (22) *é-fé'ne* 'CNS-quickly', (24) *ń-zεε* 'CNS-even', (25) *ń-ben* 'CNS-again', and (26) *é-fé'ne* 'CNS-quickly' below.
4. They may co-occur with other adverbial auxiliary verbs in the same verb phrase, also as seen in examples (24-26) below.
5. They may not be followed by a pause, i.e., no pause occurs between adverbial auxiliaries and the main verb in the verb phrase.

Note in all the immediately following examples the presence of the consecutive morpheme. Its use there, both on the auxiliaries themselves and on verbs that follow them, also confirms the verbal quality of the adverbial auxiliaries.

- (20) *É ka ná' m-bó mbuu lá' y-i páate-ne [pá:réne]*
 3S P3 slightly CNS-be side C7.village C7-REL be_next-VL³⁵
y-εk lá'
 C7-1P C7.village

'It was sort of on the side of the village that borders ours.'

- (21) *ᵐ tsun [tsũŋ] ń-jí ηᵑᵑ η-ki læne [lè:né è:³⁶]?*
 2S really.P0 CNS-know COMP C3-water be.clean
 'Do you really know that the water is clean?'

- (22) *Tεto' pó é-fé'ne [é-fé?-né] ń-nen [ń-nēn].*
 C1.toad IPFV P0 CNS -quickly CNS-walk
 'Toad was walking quickly.'

- (23) *Cwímaŋko' pótne [pót-né] é-fú η-ká'.*
 C1.tortoise slowly.P0 CNS -come_from C3-field.
 'The tortoise slowly came from the field.'

³⁵ The suffix *-ne* 'VL' is obligatory present on the first verb of VP in a relative clause, also in certain other dependent clauses introduced by a conjunction, such as *ká'* 'when' and *pá'* 'as/while', even if it falls on a verb where the suffix is already present to lower the valency.

³⁶ The lengthening of the final vowel with low tone is part of the interrogative intonation pattern.

- (24) P_{HH} ηu maɔ [mǎ:] ń-zεε ń-gw̃εε y-εcɔ nu?
 2P person perhaps.P0 CNS-even CNS-have C7-certain/other C7.problem
 ‘Did you and the person by chance also have a certain/another problem?’
- (25) Tε é-fúne [é-fúné] lé'-mbi êy-á, a lɔɔ
 til CNS-come_from C7.day-world C7-that(ANA) 3S NEG.HAB
- m-ben [m-bɛ̃n] ń-du' [ń-dĩʔ] mɛη-ku pɔ.
CNS-again CNS -lay C4-rope NEG
- ‘Since that day, he never again lay snares.’
- (26) Múu é-fé'ne[é-féʔné] ń-tó!
be_early(IMP) CNS -quickly CNS -come
 ‘Be early and come quickly!’
- (27) A gɔɔ[γó'] ń-ge ń-kút n-tó!
 2S immediately.P0 CNS -make CNS -build C9-palace
 ‘He immediately caused the palace to be built.’
- (28) A lɔmε [lìòmé] ń-gá η-káp mbɔ cɔ' shíshí.
 2S secretly.P0 CNS -give C3-money to C7.hat black
 ‘He secretly gave money to the policeman (lit. “black hat”).’

The presence (and exact placement) or absence of pauses in the flow of speech is not only significant as a boundary marker between clauses in Bamileke-Ngomba. It is also an important syntactic criterion in the categorization of chains of verbs into their various types. On a semantic level, it may have bearing on the interpretation not only of a particular chain but also of particular verbs in a chain. In example (25), the lack of a pause in the second part of the sentence is significant. If, for example, the speaker were to insert a pause after *m-ben* ‘again’, it would indicate a clause boundary and that verb would, in this case, have to be interpreted as an independent verb, the verb ‘return’; and the verb for laying snares, *ń-du'*, would then be interpreted as part of a separate clause in a same-subject clause chain, i.e., a type three chain instead of a type one. Thus, instead of the free translation, “he never again lay snares,” we would have, “he never returned and lay snares.” The placement of the consecutive morpheme on the verbs in question would be the same in either case.

5. Function of the consecutive morpheme in type two verb chains: joining verb phrases in the same clause

In this section, we will discuss those verb-chaining constructions in Bamileke-Ngomba which have the following characteristics:

1. They do allow the insertion of NPs at more than one place in the chain.
2. They are not “the concatenation of potentially independent events” (Osam 2003:15), i.e., they are not same-subject clause chains.
3. They have an intonation pattern consistent with that of a single clause. (There are no pauses in the middle of the chain.)

In its macrostructure, this type of chain can be divided into two parts, each with its own object NP, though in many instances the objects are left implicit when they may be inferred from the context as may be seen in example (29) below:

- (29) Tsetsa tí fyɛt y-é, ŋkôɔ, ń-dɔk ń-gu³⁷.
 C1.mouse carry.P0 C7.ring C7-3S, now, CNS-take CNS-leave
 ‘A mouse picked up his ring, now, (and) took (it) away.’

The above example is, taken as a whole, a same-subject chain of two clauses. The second clause is a type two chain that gets its tense/aspect from the first clause in the chain, hence the presence of the CNS prefix on its first verb.

In the first component of a type two chain, when it is not embedded in another chain, one finds all the tense/aspect markers for the chain along with adverbial auxiliary verbs as seen above in Fig. 2 in §4.1 and discussed in §§4.2, 4.4 & 4.5. In the second part of the chain, one finds only a verb with the CNS prefix and another object (see examples in §§5.1-5.3).

This type of chain is in a bit of a gray area with regard to whether or not it consists of two distinct verb phrases in one clause or just one, albeit complex or compound, verb phrase in one clause. One may look on the second VP as a totally separate unit, but many analyses of serial constructions, which this type of chain resembles, see both VPs together as constituting a single complex VP, the second being nested within the other and both relating to the first object NP.

³⁷ Another line of text from ‘The person who came from a foreign land’ told to the author by Mrs. Marie MATCHO of Bamendjinda, Cameroon.

I hesitate to call it serialization because the marking is difficult to categorize. Going by Aikhenvald (2006) these multiverb constructions exhibit the property of single marking of subject (by a full blown NP or pronoun) and of other verbal categories (tense-aspect, negation, illocutional force...) at the beginning of the construction. However, all non-initial verbs, with the exception of those immediately following all but one negation marker and one tense marker are marked with the CNS prefix, though it is not necessarily what Aikhenvald terms concordant marking either. The CNS morpheme in Ngomba is not employed to distinguish multiverb constructions, which in other respects look like serial verb constructions, from consecutivization; it merely links verbs together. Although this type of VP in Bamileke-Ngomba is formally distinct from serial-verb constructions, they are the functional and semantic equivalent of what Osam (2003) calls ISVCs “Integrated Serial Verb Constructions” owing to their high degree of semantic integration. Since they seem to function more like a single predicate, they may be termed single clauses, although it is stretching the traditional dictum of one predicate, one clause.

Bamileke-Ngomba puts its second type of verb chain to some of the same uses that serial-verb constructions are frequently put in proto-typical serializing languages. It is employed most commonly in some case-role marking for Instrumental and Benefactive, in expressing Manner, in expressing some complex lexical concepts (most notably ‘bring’ and ‘take (away)’ and in the comparative construction.

5.1 Case-role marking and expression of Manner with type two verb chains.

Instrumental and Benefactive case roles may be encoded in Bamileke-Ngomba by type two verb chains. As with the serializing languages of West Africa, the Instrumental case role is typically expressed in the first part of the chain by a verb, which is usually glossed as ‘take’, and that has the instrument as its object. Example (30) is from Yoruba (Stahlke 1970: 61-2 quoted in Foley & Olsen 1985:53):

- (30) mo fi àdá gé igi nâ
 I take machete cut tree the
 ‘I cut the tree with a machete.’

The corresponding sentence in Bamileke-Ngomba is of a similar structure. Both the Yoruba and the Bamileke-Ngomba literally say ‘I take machete cut tree’. The Bamileke-Ngomba differs, however, from the Yoruba structure above in that it requires the addition of the CNS prefix, the formal marker that links the verbs together into a chain, on the second verb. Thus the Bamileke-Ngomba

equivalent is a type two chain with the lexical verb in the second part of the chain marked with the consecutive morpheme as may be seen in example (31) below :

- (31) N dɔk [dɔk] ní ń-küə' [ń-k^xuɾʔ] tá.
 I take.P0 C7.machete CNS-cut C7.tree
 'I cut the tree with a machete.'

Manner, though not a case role, may similarly be expressed in a chain with the verb 'take', as may be seen in example (32):

- (32) N-zwé w-ε lɔk [lɔk] nε-kíí ń-cú mbɔ w-ε ɲɔɔ...
 C1-wife C1-3S take.P0 C5-cry CNS-say to C1-3S COMP
 'His wife, tearfully (lit. with crying), said to him that...'

This, of course, is different from how manner is expressed in type one verb chains. The first verb is transitive rather than intransitive, and the object has everything to do with the manner being expressed. It appears to be an instrument construction used idiomatically to express manner.

The expression of a Benefactive argument in serializing languages typically involves the use of the verb 'give' (Lord 1993:44) in the second part of the chain. Bamileke-Ngomba also uses the verb 'give' in its Benefactive construction, as may be seen in the examples (33) and (34):

- (33) Tsé'lé n-zwé w-u ń-gá mbɔ mɔ.
 greet(IMP) C1-wife C1-2S CNS-give to 1S
 'Greet your wife for me!'

- (34) Mɔɔ w-aa lá' ń-bú' [ń-!búʔ] ɲwáj ń-gá mbɔ cíca.
 C1.child C1-1S P1 CNS-beat C1.bell CNS-give to C1.teacher
 'My child rang the bell for the teacher (today).'

Note again the use of the CNS prefix in examples (33) and (34), this time on 'give', since it is in the second part of the chain. Remember that although this prefix is not a tense or agreement marker per se, here it does indicate that 'give' is under the scope of the preceding verb's tense/aspect marking and even illocutionary force, as well as having the same subject.

5.2 Co-lexicalization with type two verb chains. According to Givón (1991), "two or more verb-stems are co-lexicalized to create a more complex verbal concept" (p. 138). In Bamileke-Ngomba, since the object comes after the first

verb and the second verb always has the CNS prefix, one never sees two stems juxtaposed, as one does in the Igbo example below (35) (Aikhenvald 2006: 13):

- (35) ó ti-gbù-rù nwóké áhù
 he hit-kill-TENSE man that³⁸
 ‘He hit that man to death’ (lit.hit-kill)

Note in examples (36-39) that since both verbs share not only the same subject but also the same object, the language does not require the object to be expressed after the second verb. In example (36), the object is *ma'ηkatém* ‘hunter’, a compound noun, while in example (37) the object is an associative noun phrase *tú-zú'* ‘plant(of)yam’, i.e., yam plant.

- (36) Póp ñ-tswáa[ńtswà:] ma'ηkatém ñ-jwí.
 3P P2-beat C1.hunter CNS-kill
 ‘They beat the hunter to death (yesterday or the day before).’
- (37) Pé lo ñ-tsó' tú-zú' m-bi .
 3INDF PR.HAB CNS -pull_up C7.plant-AM.C7.yam CNS-plant
 ‘One (usually) transplants a yam plant.’

One may look at examples (36) and (37) and wonder why these are not under same-subject clause chains. One reason I put them here is that there is no pause to separate the first and second parts of the chain. This is phonological evidence that the language conceptualizes them, if not as what Aikhenvald 2006 terms a “single indissoluble event”, then at least as “a package of subevents all linked together” (p. 12). In example (37), the subevents are more distinct than in example (36); nonetheless, the two subevents in each example share two arguments; each overall event has only one subject and one object.

On the subject of argument-sharing, it is important to remember that no construction in Bamileke-Ngomba that employs the CNS morpheme allows the events or subevents in the chain to have different subjects. They must all share the same subject. In Example (36), although the second part of the chain may be seen as the result or outcome of the first, this is not comparable to Aikhenvald’s switch-function SVC (among which she lists cause-effect and resultative SVCs). In her switch-function SVC the “subject of one component of an SVC can be identical to a non-subject constituent of the other component.” (2006:14). Also, the second verb is usually an intransitive. Neither of these is the case in example

³⁸ This example is originally from Lord 1975 (p.28) but I follow the version found in Aikhenvald 2006.

(36). In other words, it (36) does not say ‘they beat the hunter die’. Such a construction, if it existed in Ngomba, could not employ the CNS morpheme³⁹.

Notice, also, that all the verbs in these examples (36 & 37) are from “a semantically and grammatically unrestricted class” (Aikhenvald 2006:3). No subevent is the ‘head’ in either example, so these would be classified as “symmetrical” rather than “asymmetrical” multiverb constructions according to Aikhenvald’s (2006) analysis framework for the composition of SVCs.

In Examples (38) and (39) below, we again see the verb *lok* ‘take’ coupled with the directional verbs *hgu* ‘go’ and *htó* ‘come’. This time, instead of either verb marking a case-role, they work together to form the more complex concepts of ‘take away’ and ‘bring’. Each verb carries a component of the meaning. It is such a fixed expression in the language that both components seem to be verbs from a restricted class—the first verb is always ‘take’ and cannot be replaced by a synonym—making it difficult to categorize this construction as either asymmetrical or symmetrical. Normally, there is an object between the two components but in example (38) it (*mēnaa* ‘animals’) is left implicit, being supplied in a pre-posed clause that connects this event with the rest of the discourse. The reader will also notice that the type 2 chain ‘take away’ in (38) is embedded in a type three chain with the following action being that of selling the animals (still left implicit) at the market.

- (38) *M-bó m-bát n-tém mē-naa p’ó’o,*
 CNS-be CNS-watch CNS -shoot C6-animal like.this,

n-jí kié [kié], a lok [lók] h-gu, é-fen mē-táa.
 C9-time brighten.P0 3S take.P0 CNS -go CNS -sell C6-market

‘Observing and shooting animals like this, the next morning (lit.day dawned), he took (them) away, sold (them) at the market.’

- (39) *Lok [lók] gwuple y-áa h-tó!*
take.IMP C7.umbrella C7-1S CNS -come
 ‘Bring my umbrella!’

In the next examples, (40) and (41), we still have the verb *lok* ‘take’, though this time it is not with verbs of motion, but with speech verbs. It would be difficult to view the verbs here as components of an action in their logical

³⁹ One could say *Póp tswáa ma hkatém te a pfú* ‘They beat.P0 the hunter until he die.P0’. Note the use of the 3S subject pronoun rather than the CNS morpheme.

sequence because the ‘actions’ are not concrete. So what we see in these examples are type 2 verb chains that express abstract verbal concepts:

- (40) A lɔk [lɔk] w-é é-fũŋ mô-naa, ñ-tém.
 3S take.P0 C1-3S CNS-call C1-animal, CNS -shoot
 ‘He considered him (*or* took him for) an animal and shot (him).’
- (41) O lɔk[lɔk] ñ-cú ŋgɔ ku?
 2S take.P0 CNS-speak COMP what
 ‘What do you mean?’

It is important to note that one could form a sentence with the gloss ‘he called him an animal’ that would not require *lɔk* ‘take’, but it would mean something quite different. The combination of *lɔk* ‘take’ with *é-fũŋ* ‘call’ forms its own distinct lexical unit. It is a case of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts. Likewise, in example (41), it is hard to tell what each component verb contributes to the meaning of this construction; and even though ‘take’ is transitive, one never sees an object, though it might possibly be inferred from context⁴⁰.

5.3 The comparative construction. The comparative in Bamileke-Ngomba is also expressed by a type-two verb chain. As the adjective word class has very few members in Bamileke-Ngomba, it is not surprising that the language does not have comparative or superlative forms of adjectives. This is something the language expresses with a verbal construction. This construction usually involves a stative verb, such as *ésak* ‘to be long/tall’, in the first part of the chain as the point of comparison. The subject of the stative verb serves as the standard for comparison. The second part of this construction always consists of the verb *ñtsa* ‘pass/surpass’ with the CNS morpheme prefixed to it and followed by an object that indicates the person or thing being compared to the standard. In the following examples (42) and (43) we see type two verb chains expressing the comparative construction:

- (42) O-ká - m-bũŋ sak [sǎk] ñ-tsa ŋ-ká - luu.
 C9-time-AM C9-rain be_long.P0 CNS -surpass C9-time-AM heat
 ‘The rainy season is longer than the dry season.’

⁴⁰ Evidence to the contrary of context supplying an object here is the fact that the way one asks “What does ‘X’ mean?” looks like example (41), except that the subject ‘2S’ is replaced by ‘X’.

- (43) Nε-fú Mbu'nda ń-kúu Fu'usap tu' [tùʔú]
 C5-come_from Mbouda CNS -arrive Bafoussam be_short.P0

ń-tsa nε-fú Mbu'nda ń-kúu Paménda.
CNS-surpass C5-come_from Mbouda CNS -arrive Bamenda.

‘Coming from Mbouda to Bafoussam is shorter than coming from Mbouda to Bamenda.’ (or)

‘It is shorter to come from Mbouda to Bafoussam than to come from Mbouda to Bamenda.’

Observe also in example (43) that the subject is a complement clause whose structure resembles that of a type-two (serial-like) verb chain. The complement clause begins with a verbal noun (class 5 prefix + verb root) but continues as a verb chain with the CNS prefix on the second verb. Moreover, we see that, as direction is inherent in these verbs, no prepositions are required.

Even when an adjective does function as the standard of comparison, *ńtsa* is still required and it still has the CNS prefix. This can be seen in example (44) below where we have a comparative construction in which the point of comparison is an adjective:

- (44) N-dá y-u y-é fí ń-tsa y-aa.
 C9-house C9-2S C9-3S new CNS -surpass C9-1S
 ‘Your house is newer than mine.’

Given the usual structure of such constructions and the presence of the CNS prefix on *ńtsa* ‘surpass’, one wonders where the ‘verb’, or something functioning as a verb, is to be found in the first part. The most likely candidate is *yé*, which appears to be either ‘his’ or perhaps a contraction of the relativizer *yi* with the impersonal 3S pronoun *é* that is often used in (verbless) equative clauses (see Satre (1999:14-16) with a reading of ‘it is’⁴¹). If we take the latter interpretation, a more literal ‘free’ translation of (44) would then be something like ‘Your house (which) is new surpassing mine.’

⁴¹ In Satre 1999, I also noted the presence of a H tone on the subject in these so-called verbless expressions serving to link the two elements together. It may function much like a copular element though is not a word.

6. Function of the consecutive morpheme in type three verb chains: joining clauses in same-subject chains.

The type three chain is broader in reach than the other two types, going beyond the verb phrase and clause level. It joins separate clauses that have the same subject, often encoding separate, consecutive events. This type is thus the ‘loosest’ semantically, speaking in terms of Osam’s or Payne’s concept of semantic integration. In fact, it is possible to change polarity in such a chain as may be seen in example (45)

- (45) A ké ń-tó ŋkôɔ, ń-bɔɔ kíi ń-bɛn
 3S PER.P0 CNS-come now CNS- NEG.IPFV more CNS-again
- ń-ku' nu pó.⁴²
 CNS-be_capable_of C7.thing NEG

‘He still came at this time, not being capable any more of (doing) the thing again.’

The second clause in example (45) is a type one chain. While it forms the second half of a type three chain with two components, it is not a separate event per se, but rather gives important background information, making the audience aware of the consequences of a previous event. It is not marked by any subordinating conjunction or conjunctive auxiliary. The CNS prefix on *ń-bɔɔ* links the entire second clause to the first. Notice that the verb *kíi*, glossed as ‘more’⁴³, has no prefix due to the negative immediately preceding it. Then the following two verbs in the clause do have the CNS prefix, including the main verb of the clause, *ń-ku'* ‘be_capable_of’. The verb *ń-bɛn*, glossed here as ‘again’, is not functioning in this clause as a conjunctive element but rather as a form of rhetorical underlining to highlight the importance of this information to the story.

This third type of chain may itself have chains of the other two types nested within it. This can be seen in the example below taken from a narrative text about a hunter who mistakenly killed one of his relatives and was

⁴² Taken from *Du wi a fúne kɔp* ‘The Man Who Came From a Foreign Land’ as told to the author by Mrs. Matcho Marie of Bamendjinda. At this point in the story, the protagonist has had his magic ring stolen by a mouse and has just been summoned by the village chief to perform magic for him.

⁴³ The primary sense of this verb is probably ‘to add (more)’.

subsequently beaten to death in retribution. In Example (46), we have a type three verb chain that also contains two type two chains embedded within it:

- (46) Póp tó, í-gw̃εε [í-gw̃ε̃] póɔ - ηu p-i p-óp
 3P come.P0, CNS -grab C2.children-AM C1.person C2-REL
- ñtswáa-ne [ñ-tswà'-nè] ma'ηkatém ñ-jw̃í, ñ-dɔk í-gu né
 C2-3P P2-beat-VL C1.hunter CNS-kill CNS -take CNS -go to
- jandamali.
 C1.gendarmerie

‘They came, arrested the relatives of the man who had beaten the hunter to death (the day before), and took them away to the gendarmerie (i.e., police station).’

Example (46) is a verb chain that encodes a sequence of three distinct events that have the same subject – they(*gendarmes*) came, they(*gendarmes*) arrested the relatives (of the hunter’s victim) who had beaten the hunter to death, they(*gendarmes*) took them away to the police station. It is important to note the presence of pauses in the flow of speech, as indicated by the use of commas. A Bamileke-Ngomba speaker employs pauses to make a separation between the events in a type three (consecutive) chain. There is, in Haiman’s (1983) terms, an ‘iconic motivation’ for the insertion of such pauses. That is to say that:

“The linguistic separateness of expression corresponds to the conceptual independence of the object or event which it represents.” (p. 782)

Thus, apart from the relative clause, there are three clauses in this chain which encodes three separate, albeit consecutive, events that share the same subject.

The relative clause in example (46) is on a separate level from other clauses in the chain, i.e. it is part of a noun phrase, and its separation from the rest of the chain is evidenced by the fact that it has as different subject *póp* ‘they’, its own separate tense marking (P2) and carries the obligatory *-ne* suffix that marks relative clauses⁴⁴. The separate tense also situates the event in the relative clause in a time prior to the events in the main verb chain and this is

⁴⁴ The suffix *-ne* has several functions in the verb morphology of Bamileke-Ngomba and they might be subsumed under the general rubric of ‘valence-lowering’. This suffix is always present on the verb in a relative clause.

indicated in the English free translation by the use of the past perfect ‘had beaten’. As the point of reference for this P2 is not the moment of speaking, but rather the time of the event in the preceding clause, it is an excellent example of relative as opposed to absolute tense as defined by Comrie (1985b:58). Note also that this relative clause is a type-two chain with all tense/aspect marking on the first verb, including the usual relative clause marking.

6.1 Conjunctive auxiliary verbs in type three verb chains. Back in §4.6, we saw a certain adverbial auxiliary verb *mben* with a gloss ‘again, and’. As an independent intransitive verb, it has the gloss ‘return’ (see discussion of example 25 in the final paragraph of §4.6). In a type-one chain it functions as an adverbial auxiliary with the gloss ‘again’ (see also discussion of example (25) in the final paragraph of §4.6). In a type-three chain, however, it seems to function as a sort of coordinating conjunction, a ‘conjunctive auxiliary verb’ to coin a new term, and is glossed by ‘and’ as may be seen in example (47) below:

- (47) A tó, ñ-naŋ sé, m-ben ñ-kwét yúu la [lǎ] ñ-gu.
 3S come.P0 CNS -sit ground, CNS -and CNS-eat thing and.then/before CNS -go
 ‘He came, sat down and ate something, then left (or before leaving).’

Notice in the above example as well as in (49) and (54) below, that *mben* as ‘and’ does not stand alone in its VP/clause, hence the use of the term auxiliary verb to describe it in these contexts.

Another verb in Bamileke-Ngomba that functions as a conjunction, or perhaps “adverbial subordinator” is a better term, is the verb ‘before’ *ñgɔ*⁴⁵. It occurs in the VP at the usual place for adverbial auxiliary verbs, but it seems to be functioning at a higher level, indicating its clause is subordinate to what follows. In example (48), taken from a procedural text⁴⁶, this subordinating conjunctive auxiliary verb occurs in the initial clause of the chain, a type three chain, and so is preceded by the tense/aspect marker:

⁴⁵ Note that this verb is not to be confused with its homophone the verb *ñgɔ* ‘say’.

⁴⁶ Told to the author by Mr. Léon KOUHEGNOU of Bamendjinda, Cameroon.

- (48) Pέ sé ή-γο [ή-γῶ] ή-γε [ή-γῆ] mbelik - lá' , ή-küó'
 3INDF PR.PRG CNS -before CNS -make C1.brickAM C1.village, CNS -cut
- mε-γίί [mé-!yí:] nüu zu' y-i pé gu [yĩ] é-fa' zu'.
 CNS -cut C6-grass on C7.place C7-REL 3INDF go CNS -work there

‘Before making village bricks, one is cutting the grass in the place where one is going to work.’

In example (49), we see both the subordinating auxiliary verb *ήγο* ‘before’ and the coordinating auxiliary verb *μέν* ‘and’ in the same type three verb chain. The whole chain is an aside in a larger discourse and the ‘before’ clause links it to a higher level:

- (49) ή-γο ή-γε πό'ῶ, πε-číca zé ne-ηwa'ne πε-mápitsó',
 CNS-before CNS-do like.this C2-teacher begin.P0C5-write C2-witty.story
- μέν-βεν ή-γε πε-saknekēt, μέν-βεν ή-γε με-λε'lenu nüu
CNS -and CNS -do C2-proverb/fable CNS -and CNS -do C6-relate-affair on
- yúu m-i p-óp ka júῶ-ne [jĩx-né].
 thing C6-REL C2-3P P3 see-VL

‘Before doing this, the teachers began writing witty stories, and proverbs, and personal accounts about things that they had seen.’

Notice the presence of a ‘pro-verb’, *ήγε* ‘do’, in this chain alongside *μέν* ‘and’, standing in the place of *zé neηwa'ne* ‘began writing’. The reason for inserting this pro-verb at these positions is that, apparently, there is an upper limit as to how far an object can be separated from the verb or on the number of objects that may be assigned to a single verb in Bamileke-Ngomba. When a verb has more than two objects, the grammar of the language requires the insertion of a copy of the main verb – as in example (52) below – or of a pro-verb to take up the ‘excess’ objects, even when there is a conjunctive element. When there are only two objects, the language may add the second by chaining, as we see below in example (50), but also has a means of adding the second one without resorting to verb chaining. In example (51), we see just two objects and these are conjoined by what appears to be a grammaticalized 3P pronoun. It has the form of the C2 pronoun ‘they’, but conjoins a C9 noun and C6 noun. This lack of

agreement would fit in with a grammaticalization scenario. Its use in this context, then, has generalized over time to mean ‘and’:

(50) A gu mε-táa ń-zúu m-bap ń-ge mε-shú⁴⁷.
 3S go.P0 C6-market CNS -buy C9-meat CNS-do C6-fish
 ‘He went (to) market (and) bought meat and fish.’

(51) N zúu m-bap póp mε-yúu - ná!
 1S buy.P0 C9-meat 3P(and) C6-thing-AM C7.sauce
 ‘I bought meat and sauce fixings.’

The limit on the number of object NPs that can be conjoined in this manner is evidenced by the fact that example (52) is ungrammatical and would need to be reformulated. One possible reformulation is given in (53) where we can observe the obligatory use of the CNS morpheme in a type 3 verb chain:

(52) *N zúu ńkendəŋ póp m-bap póp mε-yúu- ná!
 1S buy.P0 C9.plantain 3P(and) C9-meat 3P(and) C6-thing-AM C7.sauce
 ‘I bought plantain and meat and sauce fixings.’

(53) N zúu ńkendəŋ, ń-ge m-bap póp mε-yúu- ná!
 1S buy.P0 C9.plantain, CNS-do C9-meat 3P(and) C6-thing-AM C7.sauce
 ‘I bought plantain and meat and sauce fixings.’

So we have seen that Bamileke-Ngomba does not allow multiple objects to be juxtaposed and/or conjoined with a conjunctive element and attached to a single main verb in a clause. Rather than exceeding the limit of two objects assigned to one verb in a clause, the language prefers to place the ‘excess’ objects in separate clauses in a same-subject clause chain. Each clause in such a chain does not necessarily require a ‘conjunctive auxiliary’ as may be seen in example (54) below where only the final clause has the verb *ńben* ‘and’:

⁴⁷This example comes via personal correspondence from Mr. Bernard MBOUZOKENIA of Bamesso, Cameroon with the assistance of Céline Mantou et Etienne Lonfo.

- (54) A zúu mákap, ñ-zúu m-bap, ñ-zúu shú,
 3S buy.P0 C1.macabo, CNS -buy C9-meat, CNS -buy C7.fish,
 m-ben ñ-zúu mε-yúu - ná!
 CNS -and CNS -buy C6-thing- AM C7.sauce

‘He bought cocoyams, meat, fish and sauce fixings.’

More research would be required to determine the significance, if any, of choosing to use the ‘pro-verb’ *ñge* ‘do’ vs. choosing to repeat the lexical verb.

7. Conclusion

In this article, we have seen how the consecutive morpheme in Bamileke-Ngomba links verbs together in chains when they can share the same subject and tense/aspect/mood. The language does not allow clauses with different subjects to be chained together as is done in switch-reference chaining languages. Chaining in this language occurs between verbs within the verb phrase and clause as well as between same-subject clauses in larger constructions. We have also seen that these chains may be separated into three categories according to certain syntactic, phonological and semantic criteria. To sum up this information, I present the three chain-types and the various criteria used to distinguish them in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Criteria for distinguishing verb chain types in Bamileke-Ngomba

Criterion / Chain-type	SYNTACTIC: Ability to insert NPs (objects) at more than one place in chain	PHONOLOGICAL: Intonation over whole chain as one clause	SEMANTIC: Degree of semantic integration of chain
1 - Single clause with Auxiliary verbs	NO	YES	HIGHEST: SINGLE EVENT
2 - ‘Serial-like’ construction	YES	YES	FACETS OF A SINGLE EVENT
3 - SS-clause chain	YES	NO	LOWEST: SEPARATE EVENTS

Not listed in the chart is the fact that in all verb chain types in Bamileke-Ngomba there is only one subject for the entire chain and so it is not possible or necessary to mark the subject at more than one place in the chain. The semantic criterion on the far right is a different type of criterion from the others in that it is graded rather than binary.

In this article, we have seen that Bamileke-Ngomba has a rather fixed order of constituents in the VP. We have also noted that tense/aspect and Negation occur, not on the main verb, per se, but at a particular position in the VP, i.e. at or near the beginning. We have seen that one of the positions in the verb phrase is MOD1, in which auxiliary verbs with adverbial functions occur. These are what Bamgbose (1974) terms “modifying verbs” in the serial verb constructions of West African languages. We have also observed that, Bamileke-Ngomba, like many African languages, has a wide range of functions for verbs and that these include adverbial and conjunctive functions.

The question of motivation for the prohibition of the consecutive prefix in certain environments remains unresolved. Two possible solutions suggest themselves. One possibility is that the markers that prohibit the consecutive prefix on a following verb are not really verbs and that only verbs are linked by the consecutive prefix. The P3 marker in particular suggests this, because it bears a resemblance to the ubiquitous Bantu *ka*⁴⁸ affix. However, tense marking on certain negators seems to undermine that analysis. A second possibility is that there may be some realis/irrealis distinction involved and that the CNS prefix is also realis. Negated action, being unrealized, is therefore irrealis. However, the P3 marker does not fit in with this analysis nor does the fact that the scope of the prohibition is only one verb, i.e., the verb immediately following.

We did not look into complement clauses and relative clauses because the CNS morpheme, while at times present, is not an essential part of these types of clause combinations. Rather than using the CNS morpheme to indicate that the complement clause has the same subject as the matrix clause, Bamileke-Ngomba employs the class 5 noun prefix *ne-*. We saw in example (43) the use of this same *ne-* at the head of complement clauses in the comparative construction but subsequent verbs in each complement clause were joined to the initial verbal noun by the CNS morpheme.

In this article, we have also seen that Bamileke-Ngomba, while it is not a switch-reference chaining language, does make frequent recourse to the strategy of building chains of verbs on a variety of levels – between T/A auxiliary verbs,

⁴⁸ Nurse (2008:141) identifies six “main *ka*-morphemes” among Bantu languages, one of which is a distant past. It is possible that the P3 marker in Ngomba is related to that.

adverbial auxiliaries and the main verb within a simple VP, between verbs in a 'complex' VP (i.e., a serial-like construction) and between clauses in same-subject verb chains. This strategy of chaining verbs together on various grammatical levels is so frequent in the language that one often finds complex chains that involve combinations of all three types! Bamileke-Ngomba resorts to forming same-subject verb chains not only when there are a series of events with the same subject, but also when there are more than two direct objects in one verb's event frame. We have seen that while only type three verb chains encode undeniably consecutive events, all three types of chains employ the CNS morpheme to link the verbs together.

It is important to note that the consecutive morpheme, in itself, does not express specific information regarding the subject or the tense/aspect of the phrase, i.e., it is not a form of agreement. What it does do, however, is mark the verb on which it occurs as being in the 'scope' of the verb that immediately precedes it in its chain, whether that chain is contained within one clause or stretches out between a number of clauses. As the subject is indicated at the beginning of the clause—remember, this is a strongly SVO language—and as tense and negation marking usually occur near the beginning of the verb phrase, this morpheme indicates, in effect, that the verb on which it occurs has the same subject and the same tense/aspect and, quite often, the same polarity as was previously marked. It is a highly productive and very frequently-used morpheme in the language, perhaps because it allows maximum economy in the use of tense, aspect and polarity markers.

ABBREVIATIONS

1P	first person plural	F4	future 4
1S	first person singular	IMP	Imperative
3P	third person plural	IO	indirect object
3S	third person singular	INCL	Inclusive
AM	associative marker	IPFV	Imperfective
ANA	Anaphoric	NEG	negative/negation
C1	noun class 1	O	Object
C2	noun class 2	P0	past 0
C3	noun class 3	P1	past 1
C4	noun class 4	P2	past 2
C5	noun class 5	P3	past 3
C6	noun class 6	P4	past 4
C7	noun class 7	PER	persistive
C9	noun class 9	PP	prepositional phrase
CNS	Consecutive	PR.HAB	present habitual
COMP	Complementizer	PR.PRG	present progressive
CONJ	Conjunction	SVC	serial verb construction
DO	direct object	SVO	subject verb object
F1	future 1	TAM	tense/aspect/mood
F2	future 2	VL	valence-lowering
F3	future 3		

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