

THE KISA VERB PHRASE

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ABSTRACT: *The phrase is an important unit of analysis in the grammar of languages. Other than the syntactic level, the phrase is also studied at the phonological, morphological, semantic and pragmatic level. The literature on the phrase in English identifies different types of syntactic phrases thus, noun phrase, verb phrase, adjectival phrase, adverb phrase, prepositional phrase (Aitchison, 1992; Aronoff & Reese-Miller, 2006; Crystal, 2010; Fromkin & Hyams, 2010; Lyons, 1992; O'Grady, Archibalds, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005; Yule, 2006). However, the verb phrase is the most important and widely described phrase because the structure of and the meanings expressed in many languages revolves around the verb word (Crystal, 2010; Lyons, 1992; Yule, 2006). Studies on the Bantu verb have predominantly dealt with the verb word and its structure exploring the elements in a verb word (Downing, 1999; Hyman, 2007; Marlo, 2006). There have been no attempts in the literature at the analysis of the verb phrase in Bantu languages. Therefore, there is no study whatsoever in the Bantu literature dealing with the Verb phrase in Kisa, a Bantu language spoken in Western Kenya. Using a descriptive design and basing on data generated by the author as a native speaker of Kisa, this paper identifies and describes the syntactic structures that constitute verb phrases in Kisa. It delimits the elements that form a Kisa verb phrase and explains how they combine. The paper also explains the relationships that hold between these elements by alluding to syntactic evidence. The paper shows that a Kisa verb phrase has an obligatory element which is the head of the phrase and optional elements. Some optional elements are needed by the head for its meaning to be complete, while others are not. The elements that the head verb needs are closely linked to and in a dependency relationship with the head. Those optional elements that the head does not need to make sense are loosely linked to it and are not in a dependency relationship with the head.*

KEYWORD: Kisa, Verb, phrase, dependents, complements, adjuncts

INTRODUCTION

Phrases are syntactic structures made up of the head element with or without dependent elements. Dependent elements may precede or follow the head (Aitchison, 1992; Aronoff & Reese-Miller, 2006; Crystal, 2010; Fromkin & Hyams, 2010; Lyons, 1992; O'Grady, Archibalds, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005; Yule, 2006). The head determines the type of phrase and how the dependent elements organise and function in the phrase (Aronoff & Reese-Miller, 2006; Crystal, 2010; Fromkin & Hyams, 2010; O'Grady, Archibalds, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005).

There are different types of dependent elements conditioned by the type of phrase (Aitchison, 1992; Aronoff & Reese-Miller, 2006; Crystal, 2010; Fromkin & Hyams, 2010; Lyons, 1992; O'Grady, Archibalds, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005; Yule, 2006). Dependent elements occur in a given order in relation to the head and relate to the head in different ways. In a verb phrase, some dependent elements are needed by the head to complete its meaning, while others are not need by the head verb. Dependent elements that the head verb needs for its

meaning to be complete are closely linked to the it, while those that the head verb does not need are loosely linked to it.

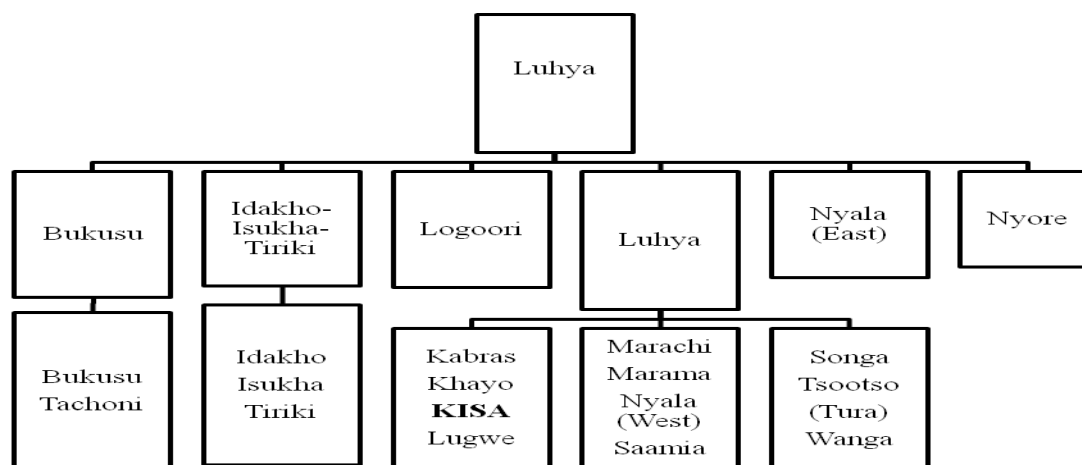
This paper discusses the structures that constitute verb phrases in Kisa, highlighting the head and dependent elements, how they combine and how they relate to each other. The paper is organised as follows. Section 2 gives background information to the language under study. Section 3 briefly describes Kisa segmental inventory and orthography. Section 4 provides a sketch of Kisa Basic morphological patterns. The structure of a Kisa verb phrase is outlined in section 5. Section 6 discusses the relations that hold between elements of a Kisa verb phrase and section 7 concludes the paper.

The Language

Kisa¹ is a dialect of the Luhya² language spoken in the Khwisero District, Western Province of Kenya. It has approximately 89,000 speakers (1999 population census³). Luhya belongs to the Bantoid genus of the Benue-Congo sub-family of the Niger-Congo language family (Haspelmath, Dryer, & Comrie, 2008). There are at least 19 dialects of Luhya in Kenya (Marlo, 2007).

The *Ethnologue* classification in figure 1 identifies 20 dialects, while the map in figure 2 shows 18.

Figure 1: Ethnologue classification of the Luhya dialects

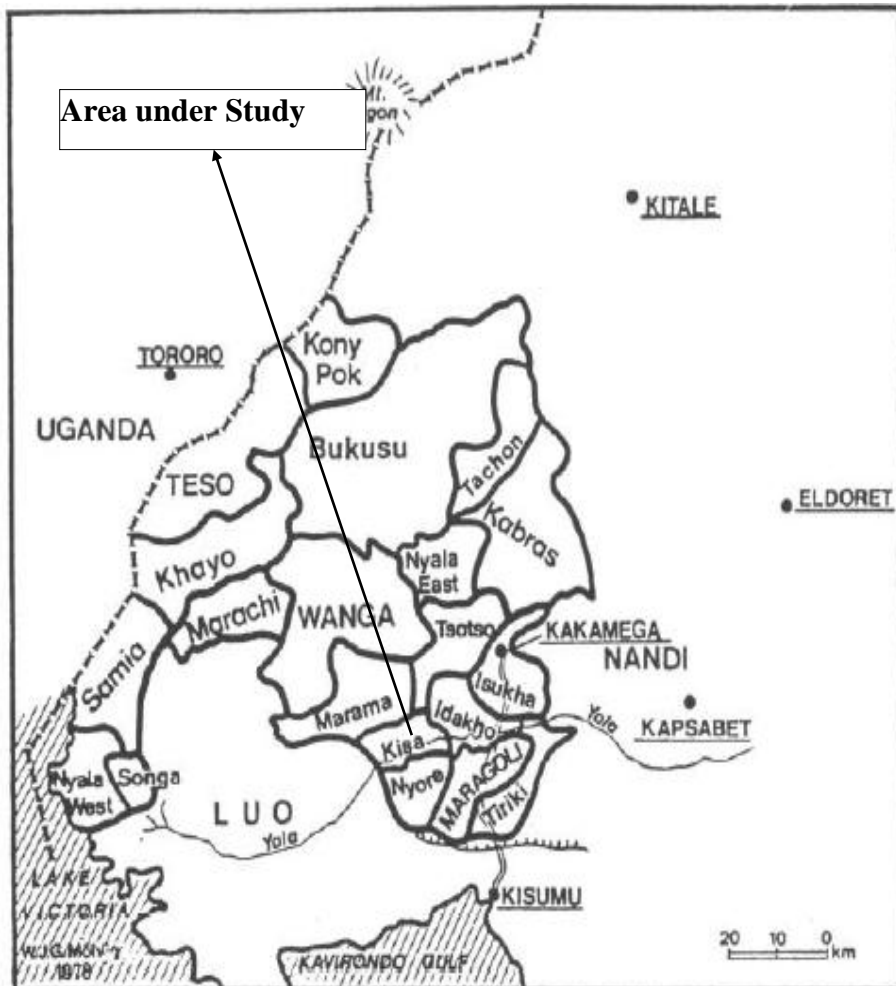


¹ There are alternative names, Olushisa, Shisa, and Olukisa.

² There are alternative names, Luyia and Oluluhya.

³ The 2009 census figures do not report population figures by ethnic group, so more current figures are not available.

Figure 2: Luhya dialect map (adapted from Marlo (2007: 3))



Kisa Segmental Inventory and Orthography

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) representation of the Kisa consonantal inventory is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Kisa consonantal inventory - IPA

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p		t			k	
Affricates			ts	tʃ			
Fricatives	β	f	s	ʃ		x	h
Nasals	m		n	ɲ		ŋ	
Trill			r				
Lateral			l				
Glides	w				j		

Table 2 presents the practical orthography representation of the Kisa consonantal inventory. (Kisa consonantal inventory - Practical orthography)

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	p		t			k	
Affricates			ts	ch			
Fricatives	b	f	s	sh		kh	h
Nasals	m		n	ny		ng'	
Nasal-Stop	mb		nd			ng	
Nasal-Affricate			nz	nj			
Trill			r				
Lateral			l				
Glides	w				y		

Kisa has a classic five vowel system /a, e, i, o, u/.

Kisa Basic Morphology

Kisa shows standard Bantu morphological patterns. Nouns in Bantu languages are divided into classes numbered from 1-24 (Guthrie, 1967; Katamba, 2006; Meeussen, 1967; Welmers, 1973). While there is justification for the 1-24 numbering in Proto-Bantu, changes have occurred in several of the Bantu languages. As a result, not all of the 24 classes are necessarily found in any present day Bantu language (Katamba, 2006).

Synchronically Kisa has 16 noun classes. It is prefixation and in particular noun class prefixes that are the hallmark of the Kisa noun class system. Nouns are placed into classes depending on the prefixes they take and their meanings.

The class system for Kisa common nouns is set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Kisa common noun class system

Singulars				Plurals			
	Augment	Class	Semantic Domains		Augment	Class	Semantic Domains
1	<i>o-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	Humans	2	<i>a-</i>	<i>ba-</i>	Regular plurals of class 1
3	<i>o-</i>	<i>mu-</i>	Trees, plants	4	<i>e-</i>	<i>mi-</i>	Regular plurals of classes 3 and 20
5a	<i>Ø-</i>	<i>lii-</i>	Fruits	6	<i>a-</i>	<i>ma-</i>	Regular plurals of class 5, liquid masses
5b	<i>e-</i>	<i>li-</i>					
7	<i>e-</i>	<i>shi-</i>	Nouns of manner	8	<i>e-</i>	<i>bi-</i>	Regular plurals of class 7
9a	<i>i-</i>	<i>Ø-</i>	Loans	10a	<i>e-</i>	<i>tsi-</i>	Regular plurals of class 9a

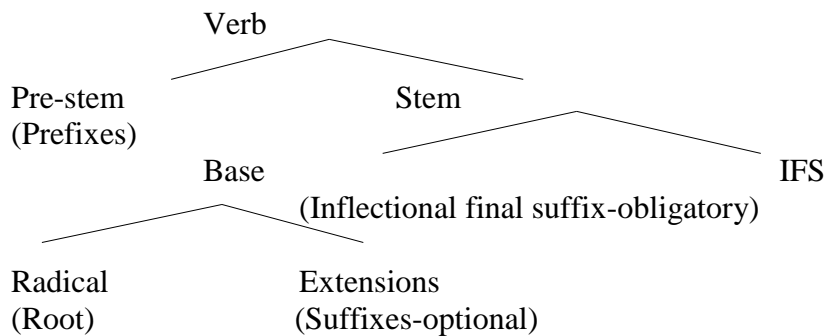
9b	<i>i-</i>	<i>ny-</i>	No clear semantic domain associations	10b	\emptyset -	<i>tsiiny-</i>	Regular plurals of class 9b
9c	<i>i-</i>	<i>ny-</i>	Gerunds with the meaning 'style or way of doing things'	10c	\emptyset -	<i>tsiiny-</i>	Regular plurals of class 9c/d
9d	<i>i-</i>	<i>nz-</i>		10d	\emptyset -	<i>tsiinz-</i>	
12	<i>a-</i>	<i>kha-</i>	Diminutives	13	<i>o-</i>	<i>ru-</i>	Regular plurals of class 12
15	<i>o-</i>	<i>khu-</i>	Infinitives/gerunds	14	<i>o-</i>	<i>bu-</i>	Abstract entities, mass nouns
20	<i>o-</i>	<i>ku-</i>	Augmentatives				

It may be noted that the Augment (AUG) prefix is \emptyset - in Classes 5a and Classes 10b/c/d, and that the Class prefix is \emptyset - in Class 9a. There is only one environment where the Augment prefix does not appear with common nouns. This is with the interrogative *shiina* 'which', as illustrated in (1).

- a) *o-mu-lina*
AUG-1-friend
'a/the friend'
- b) *mu-lina shiina?*
1-friend which
'Which friend?'

In all other environments, the Augment appears. This includes citation, so the citation form of 'friend' is *o-mu-lina* and not *mu-lina*.

The verbal word in Kisa, as in other Luhya and Bantu languages, is highly complex in structure (Downing, 1999, 2001; Dunham, 2004; Hyman, 2007; Kanyoro, 1983; Lodhi, 2002; Marlo, 2006; McPherson & Paster, 2009; Mutonyi, 2000; Myers, 1998; Mwita, 2008; Odden, 2008; Salting, 2004; Schadeberg, 2006; Stegen, 2002). Generally a Bantu verbal word takes the structure in figure 3 (Downing, 1998, 1999, 2000; Hyman, 2009; Jone, 2009, 2011; Marlo, 2002).

Figure 3: Bantu verbal word structure⁴

The structure of the verb in Kisa follows the pattern in figure 3. The verbal word in Kisa is made up of a root preceded by a number of prefixes and followed by a number of suffixes, as (2) shows.

yab-ul-ukh-as-ir-i-a!
 dig-RVS-INCH-REC-APPL-CAUS-sgS
 'Dig up for!'

The Structure of a Kisa Verb Phrase

A maximal verb phrase in Kisa has the general structure in (3).

Head + Post-modifier(s)

The head is the only obligatory element in a Kisa verb phrase, and can constitute a minimal verb phrase, as in (4).

take-sgS
 'Take!'

There are four types of post-modifiers in a Kisa verb phrase, noun phrases, locatives, prepositional phrases, and adverb phrases. These post-modifiers come in the order shown in (5) and illustrated in (6).

Head + Noun phrase + Locatives + Prepositional phrase + Adverb phrase

⁴ This structure is used here for comparative Bantu reasons.

sukun-ir-a *o-mu-khaana* *e-shi-tabu*
 throw-APPL-IND AUG-1-girl AUG-7-book

khu-Ø-meesa *no=o-mu-khono* *bwaangu!*
 on-9a-table with=AUG-3-hand quickly

'Throw the book on the table for the girl with the hand quickly!'

The head verb in a Kisa verb phrase can be followed by two noun phrase modifiers. This occurs when the head verb is a ditransitive verb or an applicative verb. Consider (7) and (8) respectively.

h-a *o-mu-khaana* *Ø-lii-tuuma!*
 give-IND AUG-1-girl AUG-5a-maize
 'Give the girl the maize!'

kul-ir-a *o-mu-khaana* *Ø-lii-tuuma!*
 buy-APPL-IND AUG-1-girl AUG-5a-maize
 'Buy the maize for the girl!'

The noun phrase can interchange positions with the locative without a difference in meaning, as (9) shows.

kul-a *khu-shi-iro* *e-shi-tabu!*
 buy-sgS on-7-market AUG-7-book
 'Buy the book in the market!'

In an applicative verb the locative can precede the direct object noun phrase, as (10) illustrates, but it cannot precede the indirect object noun phrase, as seen in (11).

kul-ir-a *o-mu-khaana* *khu-shi-iro* *e-shi-tabu!*
 buy-APPL-sgS AUG-1-girl on-7-market AUG-7-book
 'Buy for the girl the book in the market!'

bukul-a!
 buy-APPL-sgS on-7-market AUG-1-girl AUG-7-book
 'Buy for the girl the book in the market!'

The prepositional phrase can precede the locative, as in (12).

kul-a *e-shi-tabu* *no=o-mu-khaana* *khu-shi-iro!*
 buy-sgS AUG-7-book with=AUG-1-girl on-7-market
 'Buy the book in the market with the girl!'

However, this is not possible with an applicative verb:

**karaang-ir-a⁵* *Ø-tsii-fwa* *ne=e-shi-chiiko*
 fry-APPL-sgS AUG-10b-vegetable with=AUG-7-spoon

khu-shi-toofu!
 on-7-stove
 'Fry the vegetables on the stove with a spoon!'

The adverb can precede the prepositional phrase, as (14) exemplifies.

kul-a *e-shi-tabu* *khu-shi-iro* *bwaangu*
 buy-sgS AUG-7-book on-7-market quickly

no=o-mu-khaana!
 with=AUG-1-girl
 'Buy the book in the market with the girl quickly!'

There can be multiple locatives, prepositional phrases, and adverb phrases in a Kisa verb phrase, as shown in (15-17).

kon-a *mu-u-n-zu* *khu-mu-kotsoro!*
 sleep-sgS in-AUG-9b-house on-3-mattress
 'Sleep on the mattress in the house!'

lim-a *no=o-mu-khaana* *ne=Ø-lii-cheembe!*
 dig-sgS with=AUG-1-girl with=AUG-5a-hoe
 'Dig with the hoe in the company of the girl!'

**kul-ir-a* *khu-shi-iro* *o-mu-khaana* *e-shi-tabu*
 cook-sgS well quickly
 'Cook well quickly!'

There is no fixed ordering of locatives, prepositional, and adverb phrases, regardless of the preposition or adverb involved. Changing the order does not change the meaning. Consider (18-20).

kon-a *khu-mu-kotsoro* *mu-u-n-zu!*
 sleep-sgS on-3-mattress in-AUG-9b-house
 'Sleep on the mattress in the house!'

⁵ The applicative is not obligatory here. The same sentence can have the word order in question without the applicative:

i) *karaang-a* *Ø-tsii-fwa* *ne=e-shi-chiiko* *khu-shi-toofu!*
 fry-sgS AUG-10b-vegetable with=AUG-7-spoon on-7-stove
 'Fry the vegetables on the stove with a spoon!'

lim-a *ne=Ø-lee-cheembe* *no=o-mu-khaana!*
 dig-sgS with=AUG-5a-hoe with=AUG-1-girl
 'Dig with the hoe in the company of the girl!'

teekh-a *bwaangu* *obulayi!*
 cook-sgS quickly well
 'Cook well quickly!'

However, adverbs and their modifiers occur in a fixed order. Consider (21-22).

teekh-a *bwaangu* *muno!*
 cook-sgS quickly very
 'Cook very quickly!'

**teekh-a* *muno* *bwaangu!*
 cook-sgS very quickly
 'Cook very quickly!'

Verb Phrase Constituent Relations

The verb is the head element in Kisa verb phrase, as in other languages. Dependent elements in a Kisa verb phrase relate differently with the head verb. There are those elements that the head verb needs or rather must have whereas other elements are not needed by the head verb and thus are optional. Those elements that are obligatory are referred to as complements. Those that are optional are modifiers in syntactic terms. In semantic terms the obligatory elements are referred to as arguments, while the optional elements are known as adjuncts (Aitchison, 1992; Aronoff & Rees-Miller, 2006; Crystal, 2010; Fromkin & Hyams, 2010; Lyons, 1992; O'Grady, Archibalds, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005; Yule, 2006).

teekh-a *obulayi* *bwaangu!*

Arguments or complements are words, phrases or clauses that add to the meaning of a verb and are necessary in a verb to complete its meaning. Adjuncts or modifiers, on the other hand, add to the meaning of a verb but are not necessary because the head verb does not require them to complete its meaning. They are non-central to the expression of the verb's eventuality.

In Kisa, as in other languages, transitive verbs must be followed by an object which is normally a noun phrase (Aitchison, 1992; Crystal, 2010; Fromkin & Hyams, 2010; O'Grady, Archibalds, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005). In Kisa an object noun phrase occurs as a post-head element in a Kisa verb phrase. Consider (23).

sukun-a *a-ma-tuuma!*
 throw-sgS AUG-6-maize
 'Throw the maize!'

The noun phrase, in the verb phrase in (23) is the object of the head verb and must occur with it to help complete the meaning of the verb. In this case this noun phrase is a complement and therefore closely linked to the verb that precedes it.

Ditransitive verbs in Kisa, as in other languages, take two objects in the form of noun phrases (Aitchison, 1992; Aronoff & Reese-Miller, 2006; Crystal, 2010; Fromkin & Hyams, 2010; O'Grady, Archibalds, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005). Consider (24).

h-a o-mu-khaana e-shi-tabu!
 give-sgS AUD-1-girl AUG-7-book
 'Give the girl the book!'

The applicative verb, in Kisa, also takes two objects in the form of noun phrases, as (25) illustrates.

kul-ir-a *o-mu-khaana e-shi-taambaya!*
 buy-APPL-sgS AUG-1-girl AUG-7-head scarf
 'Buy the girl a head scarf!'

The two noun phrases in the verb phrases in (24) and (25) are objects of the head verbs. The first noun phrase is the indirect object while the second noun phrase is the direct object. These noun phrases are needed by the head verbs for their meanings to be complete. They are therefore complements and closely linked to the head verbs that precede them.

Other verbs in Kisa need to be followed by a noun phrase and a locative as complements. Consider (26).

r-a *e-shi-tabu* *khu-shi-taanda!*
 put-sgS AUG-7-book on-7-bed
 'Put the book on the bed!'

The noun phrase, in this example, is a direct object and the locative is an oblique. The two complements are needed by the head verb in order for it to have a complete meaning. They are therefore closely linked to the head verb.

In the applicative form, the verb in (26) requires three complements, as (27) exemplifies.

re-er-a *o-mu-khaana* *e-shi-tabu* *khu-shi-taanda!*
 put-APPL-sgS AUG-1-child AUG-7-book on-7-bed
 'Put the book on the bed for the girl!'

The first noun phrase is an indirect object, the second a direct object and the locative is an oblique. The three complements are needed by the head verb in order for it to have a complete meaning. They are therefore closely linked to the head verb.

Intransitive verbs do not need any complements cross linguistically (Aitchison, 1992; Aronoff & Reese-Miller, 2006; Crystal, 2010; Fromkin & Hyams, 2010; Lyons, 1992; O'Grady, Archibalds, Aronoff, & Rees-Miller, 2005; Yule, 2006). This is also the case in Kisa, as (28) illustrates.

kon-a!
 sleep-sgS
 'Sleep!'

Though intransitive verbs do not take complements, in Kisa, they can be followed by adjuncts, as the following examples show.

kon-a *obulayi!*
 sleep-sgS well
 'Sleep well!'

kon-a *khu-shi-taanda!*
 sleep-sgS on-7-bed
 'Sleep on the bed!'

kon-a *no=o-mu=khaana!*
 sleep-sgS with=AUG-1-girl
 'Sleep with the girl!'

The adverb phrase in (29), the locative in (30) and the prepositional phrase in (31) are not needed by the head verb, in these verb phrases, for it to have a complete meaning. These modifiers can be left out of these phrases. They are therefore loosely linked to the head verb. Note that these modifiers can all occur in the same verb phrase, as (32) illustrates.

kon-a *khu-shi-taanda* *no=o-mu-khaana* *obulayi!*
 sleep-sgS on-7-bed with=AUG-1-girl well
 'Sleep on the bed with the girl well!'

Transitive verbs, in Kisa, must take complements, as pointed out in the preceding discussion. However, they can also take adjuncts in addition, as illustrated in (33).

- a) *sukun-a a-ma-tuuma khu-shi-taanda!*
 throw-sgS AUG-6-maize on-7-bed
 'throw the maize on the bed!'
- b) *sukun-a a-ma-tuuma no=o-mu-khaana!*
 throw-sgS AUG-6-maize with=AUG-1-girl
 'throw the maize with the girl!'
- c) *sukun-a a-ma-tuuma bwaangu!*
 throw-sgS AUG-6-maize quickly
 'throw the maize!'

Note that the locative in (33a), the prepositional phrase in (33b) and the adverb phrase in (33c) are not obligatory. They can be left out of these verb phrases without affecting the meaning of the head verb. They are therefore loosely linked to the head verb.

Ditransitive verbs and applicative verbs, in Kisa, also take adjuncts in addition to the complements. Consider (34) and (35).

- h-a o-mu-khaana e-shi-tabu mu-mu-khoono*
 give-sgS AUG-1-girl AUG-7-book in-3-hand
no=o-lu-yali bwaangu!
 with-AUG-11-respect quickly
 'Give the girl the book in the hand with respect quickly!'
- kul-ir-a o-mu-khaana e-shi-taambaya*
 buy-APPL-sgS AUG-1-girl AUG-7-head scarf
- khu-shi-iro na=a-ma-peesa bwaangu!*
 on-7-makert with=AUG-6-money quickly
 'Buy the girl a head scarf on the market with money quickly!'

The locative, prepositional phrase and the adverb phrase in example (34) are not needed by the head verb for its meaning to be complete. They are therefore loosely linked to the head verb. Similarly, the same constituents in example (35) are not need by the head verb. They can be left out of the phrase without affecting the meaning of the verb. They are therefore also loosely linked to the head verb.

Those verbs in Kisa that must be followed by a noun phrase and a locative as complements also take adjuncts, as (36) and (37) illustrate.

r-a e-shi-tabu *khu-shi-taanda*
 put-sgS AUG-7-book on-7-bed

khu-mu-kostoro *no=o-lu-yali* *bwaangu!*
 on-3-matress with=AUG-11-respect quickly
 'Put the book on the bed on the mattress with respect quickly!'

re-er-a *o-mu-khaana* *e-shi-tabu* *khu-shi-taanda*
 put-APPL-sgS AUG-1-girl AUG-7-book on-7-bed

khu-mu-kotsoro *no=o-lu-yali* *bwangu!*
 on-3-matress with=AUG-11-rrespect quickly
 'Put the book on the bed for the girl on the mattress with respect quickly!'

The last three phrases, the locative *khumukotsoro*, the prepositional phrase *nooluyali*, and the adverb phrase *bwaangu* in these examples can be left out of the verb phrase without affecting the meaning of the head verb. They are therefore not obligatory and hence loosely linked to the head verb.

We learn from the preceding discussion that intransitive verbs do not take complements while transitive verbs do. Monotransitive verbs take one noun phrase complement which is its object. Ditransitive verbs, on the other hand, take two noun phrases as complements which form the indirect and the direct object. There are those verbs that must take a noun phrase and a locative phrase as complements. These complements form a direct object and an oblique respectively. Such verbs in the applicative form take three complements, a noun phrase (indirect object), another noun phrase (direct object) and a locative (an oblique). In this case, the noun phrases and the locative (as an oblique) are obligatory because they are needed by the head verb. They are thus closely linked to the head verbs and in a dependency relationship with them. All the verbs discussed above take adjuncts: locatives, prepositional phrases and adverb phrases. These, as adjuncts, are not needed by the head verb to make its meaning complete. They can be left out of the verb phrase without affecting the meaning of the head verb. They are therefore loosely linked to the head verb and not in a dependency relationship with them.

CONCLUSION

Two types of elements occur in a Kisa verb phrase. The head element and dependent elements. The verb is the head and only obligatory element in a Kisa verb phrase. All the dependent elements in a Kisa verb phrase are post-head. They include: noun phrases,

locatives, prepositional phrases and adverb phrases. Noun phrases, as post-head elements in a Kisa verb phrase, function as indirect and direct objects. They are obligatory in the verb phrases they occur. The head verb needs them to complete its meaning. They are therefore, closely linked to the head verb and in a dependency relationship with it.

Locatives, as post-head elements in a Kisa verb phrase, are obligatory and needed by the head verb to complete its meaning only when they function as obliques. In this way they are closely linked to the head verb and in a dependency relationship with it. When functioning as adjuncts locatives are not required by the head verb. Such locatives are loosely linked to the head verb because they can be omitted from the verb phrase. They are therefore not in a dependency relationship with the head verb given that the head verb does not depend on them for its meaning to be complete.

Prepositional phrases and adverb phrases are always optional in a Kisa verb phrase. They are not required by the head verb to complete its meaning. As such they are loosely linked to the head verb. They are therefore not in a dependency relationship with the head verb and exist independent of the head verbs in the verb phrases.

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