Why No Double Objective Construction in Shupamem

Introduction: Shupamem (Grassfields Bantu, Cameroon; SVO) doesn't allow double object construction (DOC). Only prepositional dative construction (PDC) is available (see (1) and (2) in Example). Recent studies have concluded that PDC and DOC are not related to each other derivationally (see, Rappaport Hovav and Levin, 2008), although the underlying structures are still under debate. The most widely accepted theories can be divided into two categories: the semantic decomposition approach, which proposes that the structures are derived from the semantic decomposition of the verb 'give' (Harley, 2002), and the applicative approach, which argues that the indirect object in DOC is introduced by an applicative head (e.g. Marantz, 1993; Bruening, 2010). This study applies both approaches to explain why Shupamem doesn't allow DOC.

The Semantic Decomposition Approach: Harley (2002) revised Pesetsky (1995) and proposed two structures for PDC and DOC (see (3) in Example). The verb 'give' is decomposed into a CAUSE component and an abstract preposition head either encodes location (P_{LOC}), with direct object (DO) as its specifier, or encodes possession (P_{HAVE}), with indirect object (IO) as its specifier. Based on these structures, Harley (2002) hypothesized that if a language doesn't have P_{HAVE}, it doesn't allow DOC. Furthermore, she made three predictions about languages without P_{HAVE}: (a) DOC is not allowed; (b) There is no verbal 'have'[1] to express possession; (c) In a sentence that denotes possession, the possessor does not always c-command the possessee.

For prediction (b), there is no verbal 'have' in Shupamem. Shupamem expresses possession through a multi-functional light verb 'ɣět', which can mean 'to make', 'to have' or 'to do' (see (4) and (5)). Prediction (c) is also true in Shupamem (see (6)). Apart from using the verb 'ɣět', Shupamem can also express possession with 'COPULA + yǐ[2]', where the possessee proceeds the possessor. As shown in (6b), 'his$_{k*}$ dream' can't refer to 'every child$_k$'s dream'; thus the possessor doesn't c-command the possessee. The evidence above suggests that Shupamem doesn't allow DOC because it lacks P_{HAVE}.

The Applicative Approach: Marantz (1993) proposed two structures for PDC and DOC based on the Voice theory, shown in (7). In DOC, the indirect object (IO) is introduced by an applicative head that takes the VP as complement. Marantz (1993) didn't make any hypothesis about why languages don't allow DOC. In order to derive the word order for DOC, the applicative head has to be empty or null. It's reasonable to assume that a language doesn't allow DOC because it doesn't have an empty or null applicative head.

Unlike other Bantu languages, Shupamem doesn't have a typical applicative construction, since most of the applicatives are introduced by a preposition, such as the instrumental and the locative applicative (see (8)). In addition, the benafactive applicative[3] is expressed through a serial verb construction with the phrase 'fá nɔ́' ('give to'), see ((9) and (10)). Therefore, the lack of empty or null applicative head could account for why DOC is not allowed in Shupamem.

Discussion: Both approaches can explain the lack of DOC since Shupamem doesn't have P_{HAVE} or an empty applicative head. It is unclear if both P_{HAVE} and an empty applicative head are necessary for DOC. Harley (2002) showed that Navajo and Irish, two languages without DOC, don't have P_{HAVE}. However, Navajo has an extensive system of applicative constructions, Irish relies on prepositions. Further studies could investigate the typology of DOC based on P_{HAVE} and the applicative head.

Example

(1) a. Mimsha fá   gàtô nɔ́ Raje.
    Mimsha give cake to Raje.
    'Mimsha gave a cake to Raje.'

b. * Mimsha fá   Raje gàtô.
    Mimsha give Raje cake.
    intended: Mimsha gave Raje a cake.

(2) a. Mimsha sá ngám nɔ́ Raje.
    Mimsha tell matter to Raje.
    'Mimsha told a story to Raje.'

b. * Mimsha sá Raje ngám.
    Mimsha tell Raje matter.
    intended: 'Mimsha told Raje a story.'

(3) a. PDC: $[_{vP}\text{DP}[_{v'}[_v\text{CAUSE}[_{PP}\text{DO }[_{P'}\text{P}_{LOC}[_{PP}\text{P IO}]]]]]]$

b. DOC: $[_{vP}\text{DP}[_{v'}[_v\text{CAUSE}[_{PP}\text{IO}[_{P'}\text{P}_{HAVE}\text{ DO}]]]]]$

(4) Raje **ɣɛ̌t**   gàtô.
    Raje **have/make** cake.
    'Raje has a cake.' or 'Raje made a cake.'

(5) A pâ jim-pim yúɔ́ Mimsha **ɣɛ̌t** nɔ́.
    It COP to-dance that Mimsha **do** COMP.
    'It was dancing that Mimsha did.'

(6) a. nʃə **mɔ̌n**$_k$ ɣɛ̌t jɤ́:ʃá-**ʃí:**$_{k/i}$.
    every child$_k$ have dream-his$_{k/i}$.
    'Every child$_k$ has his$_{k/i}$ dream.'

b. jɤ́:ʃá-**ʃí:**$_{i/*k}$ pâ yǐ: nʃə **mɔ̌n**$_k$.
    dream-his$_{i/k*}$ COP that of every child$_k$.
    'Every child$_k$ has his$_i$ dream.'

(7) a. PDC: $[_{VoiceP}\text{DP}[_{Voice'}\text{Voice}[_{VP}\text{DO}[_{V'}\text{V}[_{PP}\text{P IO}]]]]]$

b. DOC: $[_{VoiceP}\text{DP}[_{Voice'}\text{Voice}[_{ApplP}\text{IO}[_{Appl'}\text{Appl}[_{VP}\text{V DO}]]]]]$

(8) lɛ́ra   tɔ̄tɔ̄ lɛ́rva **nɔ́** fɔ̀m **tɔ́** dáfit.
    teacher write letter **with** chalk **on** blackboard.
    'The teacher wrote a letter with chalk on blackboard.'

(9) Mimsha jɔ́ng gàtô **fá** **nɔ́** Raje.
    Mimsha buy cake **give to** Raje.
    'Mimsha bought a cake for Raje.'

(10) Mimsha ʃikɛ́t **fá** **nɔ́** Raje.
    Mimsha speak **give to** Raje.
    'Mimsha spoke for Raje.'

Notes

1. One common claim is that all languages represent 'have' underlyingly as BE+PREP. Merging PREP and BE results in the verbal 'have' (Freeze, 1992; Kayne, 1993; Guéron, 1995)

2. According Nchare (2012), 'yǐ:' is a possessive pronoun that can be roughly translated 'that of'

3. The BA can encode different meanings, including recipient, substitutive beneficiary and concrete beneficiary(Kittilä, 2005). All three readings are available in Shupamem.

References

Bruening, B. (2010). Double object constructions disguised as prepositional datives. *Linguistic inquiry*, 41(2):287–305.

Freeze, R. (1992). Existentials and other locatives. *Language*, pages 553–595.

Guéron, J. (1995). On have and be. In *Proceedings-NELS*, volume 25, pages 191–206. University of Massachusetts.

Harley, H. (2002). Possession and the double object construction. *Linguistic variation yearbook*, 2(1):31–70.

Kayne, R. S. (1993). Toward a modular theory of auxiliary selection. *Studia linguistica*, 47(1):3–31.

Kittilä, S. (2005). *Recipient-prominence vs. beneficiary-prominence*. Walter de Gruyter.

Marantz, A. (1993). Implications of asymmetries in double object constructions. In *Theoretical aspects of Bantu grammar*, pages 113–150. CSLI.

Nchare, A. L. (2012). *The grammar of Shupamem*. New York University.

Pesetsky, D. M. (1995). *Zero syntax: Experiencers and cascades*. Number 27. MIT press.

Rappaport Hovav, M. and Levin, B. (2008). The english dative alternation: The case for verb sensitivityl. *Journal of linguistics*, 44(1):129–167.