

The Structure of Noun Phrase in Safaliba

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Abstract

This paper discusses the structure of Noun Phrase (NP) in Safaliba, a Gur language spoken in northern Ghana. The paper examines structurally, the Safaliba noun phrase which is made up of the obligatory head noun and the optionally occurring elements - pre-modifiers and post-modifiers. The adjective and the determiners are analysed as the modifiers of the noun phrase in Safaliba. The Safaliba noun phrase takes several post modifiers which are strictly ordered since each modifier has a prescribed syntactic position. The paper also supports the view of the Minimalist Program (MP) developed by Chomsky (1995). The data used in this paper are from both verbal and written sources. Based on the data available, the paper hypothesizes the occurrence of a definite article 'a' in pre position and adjectives in post position in Safaliba NP.

Keywords: Safaliba, Gur, Dagbani, Buli, Noun phrase, Definite article

1.0 Introduction

This paper examines the detailed description of the structure of the Safaliba noun phrase, a Gur language spoken in the northern part of Ghana. It focuses on the noun phrase (NP) which is composed of three parts: the central part, the head which is obligatory and a minimal requirement of the occurrence of a noun phrase (NP). The other two parts are optionally occurring. The Head may be preceded by some modification, and may be followed by some post-modification.

The paper¹ presents the noun phrase of Safaliba that comprises of a head noun only or a head noun with optional occurring modifiers. All the modifiers of the simple noun phrase are post head items except the determiner which occurs as pre-modifier. Like English, the order of the post modifiers is strictly patterned. The relevant theoretical frame work is the Minimalist Program (MP) developed by Chomsky (1995). As part of the description, the paper compares the findings on the Safaliba noun phrase with other Gur languages like Dagbani and Buli².

The rest of the introduction presents a brief background of Safaliba speakers and the data used in this paper. Section 2 describes the structure of the Safaliba NP showing the domain of premodification and post modification. Section 3 discusses the pattern of adjective order in Safaliba and section 4 concludes the paper.

1.1 A Brief Background of Safaliba speakers

Safaliba is a Gur language spoken in the northern part of Ghana. According to Schaefer and Schaefer (2003), it is a language spoken by people located mainly in the Bole district in the northern region of Ghana, near the border with Côte d' Ivoire³. The main centre of the population is in eight villages a few miles south-west of Bole which is the district capital and seat of the *Bolewura* 'chief of Bole', one of the five divisional chiefs of the Gonja kingdom of Yagbon. Per my estimation, there are about ten thousand (10,000) Safaliba speakers in and around Mandari and the other seven surrounding villages. This contradicts, Knudsen (1994) and Schaefer and Schaefer (2003⁴) who argues that the language has 4,500 and 5,000 speakers. The largest Safaliba town is Mandari; other villages include Gbenful, Tanyiri, Manful, Nsunia, Chorubaŋ, taŋpe⁵ and Nteereso numbering eight villages. There are also significant numbers of Safaliba speakers in several towns in the area including Bole, Sawla, Kalba, Zantige and Chache. Safaliba speakers can also be found in a few places in Cote d' voire: Vonkoro, Bondoukou, and Bouna.

¹ I would like to thank Mavis, Emilia and kuntanawini for the reliable data they provided for this paper, and also Sadiq, Safia and Adam for reading the initial draft of this paper. I also thank Dr Dovlo of University of Ghana for introducing the Safaliba language to me, and Abigail for taking time to read the final draft. I also thank the editor in chief and the IISTE - Editorial Team for spending time to make this paper a dream come true. I however accept responsibility for any error in this paper.

² Dagbani is a Gur language spoken mainly in the Northern Region of Ghana by the Dagbamba people. Speakers of Dagbani are called Dagbamba (plural) and Dagbana (singular)(Gurindom 2014) while Buli is a Gur language spoken in and around Sandema in the Upper East Region of Ghana.(Sulemana 2012)

³ Ghanaian Anthropologist Christiana Oware Knudsen mentions the Safaliba in her recent book, independently estimating a population of 4500 (Knudsen 1994: 101).

⁴ According to I. Jeduwa (p.c., 6th January, 2015) the total number of registered voters in four of the villages (Mandari-2151; Gbenful-387; Manful-378 and taŋpe-85) was 3000. This implies that the estimate of the rest of the voters in the other four villages' including children may be around the 10000 I projected. This was also confirmed by a district assembly driver.(A. Alex, p.c., 7th, January, 2015)

⁵ Taŋpe- it is a village near Bole where Safaliba is mainly spoken. As at 1992, there were only 3 houses there but currently there are about 11 houses. (S. Mavis, p.c., 9th January, 2015)

“The Safalibas are well integrated; they inter-marry with several other ethnic groups in the area, particularly the Gonja, Vagla, Choruba, and Siti” (Schaefer and Schaefer 2003:2). Bole district is a multilingual area; the languages spoken in and around the district are from quite diverse language families: **Mabia**⁶ (Safaliba, Waali, Dagaare, Birifor), **Guang** (Gonja, Choruba), **Grusi** (Vagla, Dég, Siti), and **Mande** (Jula [Dyula], Ligbi). Safaliba is presently classified in the Mabilia (Western Oti – Volta) sub-group of central Gur, and seems to be most closely related to Waali and Farefare (Naden 1989, Greenberg 1963 and Wilson 1970). Safaliba has been in contact with the Vagla and Gonja languages for a long period of time, and a number of Safaliba words are shared with one or the other of these two languages⁷. (Schaefer and Schaefer 2003:2).

Unpublished work on Safaliba includes papers describing earlier stages in the discovery of Safaliba language structures (Schaefer 1999; Schaefer 2000, 2002, 2003; P. & J. Schaefer 2002, in preparation), as well as language-learning and anthropological materials (J. Schaefer 2000, 2002). Manfred von Roncador (University of Bayreuth), working closely with Elisha K. Dari of the Mandari literacy-facilitators’ group, has also done some analysis of Safaliba nominal morphology (Roncador 2002).

1.2 Source of Data

The data used in this paper are largely from both verbal and written sources. The verbal is elicited from three informant Safaliba speakers. The secondary data used is taken from a written text (Schaefer and Schaefer 2003:14). The tone marking is restricted to high, low and falling tones in the language but tone is not marked in this paper. A cross checking of the data was also done with other native Safaliba speakers.

1.3 Some Grammatical Properties of Safaliba

Safaliba is basically an SVO⁸ language implying that in an unmarked sentence, the subject precedes the verb while the object follows the verb. The case of arguments is determined strictly by word order since there are no overt case markers in the language. The sentences in (1) below illustrate the word order patterns of the language.

- | | | | | |
|-------|---------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
| 1. a) | baa | ɲaa | ɲubi | kɔba |
| | dog | that | eat.perf | bone.pl |
| | ‘That dog has eaten the bones.’ | | | |
| b) | *ɲubi | kɔba | baa | ɲaa |
| | eat.perf | bone.pl | dog | that |
| | ‘That dog has eaten the bones.’ | | | |

Sentence (1a) is grammatical because it follows the word order in Safaliba but sentence (1b) is ungrammatical because it does not follow the SVO pattern in the language. Schaefer and Schaefer (2003:30) note that Safaliba is also a CV (V) (C) language: CV, CVV and CVC syllables are most common and preferred as illustrated in (2) below.

- | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-----|-----|---------|-----|--------|-----|-----------|
| 2. a) | CV | se | ‘roast’ | ɲe | ‘see’ | po | ‘farm’ |
| b) | CVC | ziŋ | ‘blood’ | duŋ | ‘bite’ | won | ‘hear’ |
| c) | CVV | zaa | ‘all’ | saa | ‘rain’ | poo | ‘stomach’ |
| d) | V | ɲ | ‘I’ | i | ‘you’ | | |

CV and CVC are the most common syllable patterns in the language and any consonant phoneme can occur in the onset of a syllable as demonstrated in 2(a-d).

2.0 The Structure of the Noun Phrase in Safaliba

The Noun Phrase (NP) is defined as an element in the clause which typically functions as subject, object or complement. The phrase is called a noun phrase because the word which is its head is a noun. Sometimes the term nominal phrase or nominal group is used rather than noun phrase because pronouns and other words can also be heads of the noun phrase. In most languages, a simple noun phrase is made up of a single word which is either a noun or pronoun. Issah (2013) argues that, it is common for pronouns to occur in noun phrases (NPs) without modifiers. Consider the subjects in the following clauses:

- | | | | | |
|-------|----------------------|----------|-----|-------|
| 3. a) | Adamu | di | a | diibu |
| | Adamu | eat.perf | Det | food |
| | ‘Adamu ate the food’ | | | |

⁶ “Mabilia” is an appropriate indigenous term for this group of closely-related Gur languages (the cognates of mabilia in these languages denote a sibling relationship). Mabilia is intended as an alternative to the terms “Mole-Dagbani”, “Moore-Dagbani”, and Western Oti-Volta” which have been used in various source to refer to this group languages. Bodomo (1994 cited in Olawsky 1996)

⁷ This was confirmed during the data collection, the informant on campus gave words such as pkíri ‘short’; néné ‘good’ (M. kuntanawini, p.c., 16th, December, 2014) which during my cross checking were corrected as ɔŋmáá ‘short’ sùŋŋú (good) in Safaliba (S. Mavis and I. Emilia, p.c. 7th, December, 2015). pkíri ‘short’ and néné ‘good’ are Vagla words which also mean short and good.

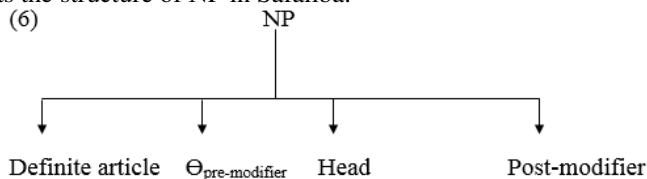
⁸ SVO is subject-verb-object sentence pattern.

- b) **a** **bidaba bile** **be** **a** **zaka** di a diibu
 Det boy small inside Det house eat.perf Det food
 ‘The small boy in the house ate the food’
- c) ŋ ɲɛ **Adamu**
 1sg see.perf Adamu
 ‘I saw Adamu.’
- d) **O** di a diibu
 3sg eat.perf Det food
 ‘She has eaten the food.’

The illustrations in (3a -3b) show that the NP in Safaliba in a clause can function as subject and as an object as seen in (3c). The pronoun as an NP also functions as subject as illustrated in (3d). The NPs also function as complement in clauses as illustrated in (4) and (5) below:

4. baa ɲaa ŋ-lɛ **badaa**
 dog that it-is dog-male
 ‘That dog is a male dog.’
5. a) a kuuri ŋ- lɛ **kuuri** **oŋmaa**
 Det hoe it- is hoe short
 ‘The hoe is a short hoe.’
- b. * a kuuri ŋ- lɛ **oŋmaa** **kuuri**
 Det hoe it-is short hoe
 ‘The hoe is a **short hoe**.’

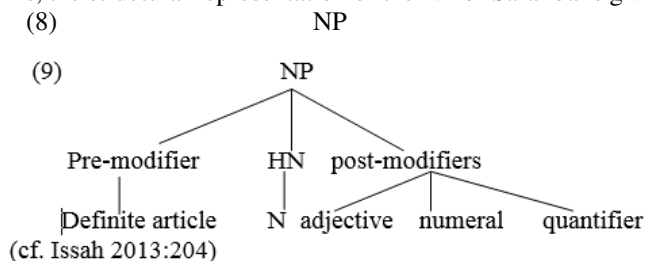
The sentence in (5b) is ungrammatical because the word order in the NP that functions as the complement is not correct in Safaliba; the NH comes before the adjective as in (5a) but not after the adjective. The diagram in (6) represents the structure of NP in Safaliba:



The structure in (6) shows the NP structure in Safaliba, the pre-modifier position for other pre-modifiers (adjectives, numerals, cardinals, quantifiers, etc) is described as null (Θ) except the occurrence of a definite article. The modifiers occur at the post-modifier position in the NP. The occurrence of the other pre-modifiers may result in ungrammatical construction of a noun phrase in Safaliba as seen in example (5b). Following the claims of Abakah (2004) on the linear representation of the Akan NP, I suggest that a linear representation of the Safaliba NP could be as in example (7).

- (6) NP → (Def) + **H+** (post modifiers).
- This linear representation could further be broken down into (8) below.
- (7) a. NP → HN (head noun only)
 b. NP → Def + **HN** (definite + head noun only)
 c. NP → Def + **HN** + adjective + numeral + quantifier

Issah (2013:204) confirms the modifying structural elements of the NP basically are post head modifiers since they invariably follow the HN. Based on the claim that all the modifiers of the NP of Dagbani are post head items, the structural representation of the NP of Safaliba is given as in (9).



According to Bendor-Samuel (1971:171), in Gur languages, nominal phrases are usually quite simple; constructions consisting of a noun followed by a numeral or a noun followed by a demonstrative are common, but a noun followed by an adjective is not frequent and a noun with a string of adjectives never occurs. This, Sulemana (2012) argues that it is not a true reflection of the structure of nominals in these languages citing (Angkaaraba 1980;Bodomo 1993; Olwasky 1999). Angkaaraba (1980:26) shows it is possible to have a string of

adjectives modifying a noun in Dagaare contrary to Bendor-Samuel. The following construction in (10) from Angkaaraba (1980:26) illustrates this point:

- (10) dɔɔ sɔgli wog faa n-ga
 man big black tall bad.this
 ‘This big black tall bad man’ (cf. Angkaaraba 1980:26)

Drawing from Mampruli, another language from the Gur family Bodomo (1993:9) proves the existence of strings of adjectives in the noun structure of Gur languages. The Construction in (11) exemplifies this:

- (11) gbaŋ bili gyia
 book small red
 ‘Small red book’ (cf. Bodomo 1993: 9)

Olawsky (1999:43), in a study in Dagbani, notes that it is possible to have series of adjectives though it might be unusual. The following construction in (12) is used to buttress his point.

- (12) pay viel’ bundaan titali maa
 woman nice wealthy big Det
 ‘The big nice rich woman’ (cf. Olawsky 1999:43)

Sulemana (2012:12) mentions that just like its sister languages, sequences of adjectives follow the head noun they modify in Buli as shown in (13).

- (13) ná: sɔblik wɔŋ ku
 cow black tall DEF
 ‘The tall black cow’ (cf. Sulemana 2012:12)

It is obvious from the examples (9-13) that the nominal structure in Safaliba can also accommodate more than an adjective. Similarly, this same structure occurs in Safaliba just as in the other Gur language⁹. This is shown in (14) below:

- (14) numbile pɛɛliga kpɛɛŋu
 bird white big
 ‘Big white bird’

2.1 The head of the Safaliba NP

The simplest NP contain only a noun (usually a proper noun [+proper], pronoun [+pron], mass noun [count] or a plural noun [+plural])(Carnie 2013:74). The most usual kind of head of a Safaliba noun phrase is a noun. I however suggest that the final syllable of the nouns in Safaliba is deleted to co-occur with adjectives. The adjective which has a null [Ø] position at premodification appears only as post-modifier. This is illustrated in the Examples (15) to (17) below:

- (15) **nira** + zia¹⁰ = **ni** zia¹¹
 person.sg red person.sg red
 ‘Red person’
 (16) **bvuŋa** + dɔzɔŋ = **buŋ** dɔzɔŋ
 donkey.sg yellow donkey.sg yellow
 ‘Yellow donkey’
 (17) **sɔya** + paaligu = **sɔ** paaligu
 path.pl white path.pl white
 ‘White paths’
 (18) **sɔya** + paaligu = * **sɔya** paaligu
 path.pl white path.pl white
 ‘White paths’

The NP in (18) is ungrammatical because the final syllable in the NH *sɔya* ‘paths’ is not deleted and therefore violates the structure of NH occurring with adjective of NP in Safaliba-the rule is that the final syllable is deleted

⁹ The illustrations in Dagaare, Mampruli Dagbani, Buli and Safaliba prove that the nominal structure in the Gur languages is more complex than the simple one ascribed to it by Bendor-Samuel (1971). However, the closely knit relation that exists between nouns and adjectives in Gur exemplified by Mampruli according to Bodomo (1993) creates the impression that they are compound words motivating the conclusion reached by Bendor-Samuel. (Sulemana 2012:12)

¹⁰ Most Safaliba speakers may say **ni** *ziá* ‘red person’ by deleting the final syllable in the noun *núra* ‘person’ to read as *nú* in the NP. I tried it on other NPs and it works.

¹¹ Most Safaliba speakers may say **ni** *ziá* ‘red person’ by deleting the final syllable in the noun *núra* ‘person’ to read as *nú* in the NP. I tried it on other NPs and it works.

Issah (2013:206) states that articles are generally used in languages to encode specificity or definiteness¹² of the NPs they modify. Dryer (2007:152) argues that most languages may have either a definite article or an indefinite article but not both. In a few languages, however, both occur, for example ‘the’ and ‘an/a’ in English and *la* (definite) and *se* (indefinite) in Farefare (Nsoh & Ababila, 2009). In Safaliba, it is only the definite ‘a’ that occurs as seen in example (24)

According to Crystal (1985:86), the concept of definiteness refers to references that focus on specific, identifiable individual entities or class of entities. Givón (2001:459) also argues that speakers code a noun referent as definite when they assume that it is identifiable or accessible to the hearer. The coding of definiteness and indefiniteness in Safaliba is shown in the sentences in (26) to (28)

- (26) **a** *daba* *ɲɛ* **a** *pɔɔɔ*
 Def man see.perf Def woman
 ‘The man has seen the woman’
- (27) *bidaba nu* *kɔŋ*
 boy drink.imperf water
 ‘The boy was drinking water’
- (28) * *daba a ɲɛ pɔɔɔ a*
 man Def see.perf woman Def
 ‘The man has seen the woman’

As illustrated in (26), Safaliba encodes definiteness by the use of ‘a’ as pre noun modifier while its indefinite counterpart is coded by a bare noun as example (27) illustrates. The example in (28) is ungrammatical in Safaliba because it does not follow the word order of NP in the Safaliba but may be grammatical in other Gur languages like Dagbani and Buli. This is shown in (29) in Dagbani and (30) in Buli.

- (29) *doo maa zu bu-hi maa*
 man Def steal.perf goat.pl Def
 ‘The man stole the goats’
- (30) *bɪa ka dom bi:k*¹³
 Dog DEF bite.PST child.INDEF
 ‘The dog bit a child.’ (cf.Sulemana 2012:46)

2.4 Numerals in the Safaliba Noun Phrase

Another structural element of the Safaliba NP is the numeral. Issah (2013:206) explains that typologically, two classes of numeral words occur as modifiers of nouns. These are cardinal numeral words that indicate how many referents the NP denotes as in English, for example, ‘five pens’. This contrasts with ordinal numerals which identify a referent in terms of its order in respect to other referents, for example, in English ‘the third book’. This is illustrated in Safaliba as:

- (31) *a buku batasɔba*
 Def book.sg third
 ‘The third book’

The example in (31) is used in this paper to indicate that cardinal numerals just as ordinals may occur directly with the noun they modify. The ordinal numeration is also expressed using a relative clause. The difference in the syntactic behaviour of these two numeration systems is illustrated in examples in (32) to (34)

- (32) a. *nmbilii ayi*¹⁴
 bird.pl two
 ‘Two birds’
- b. **ayi nmbilii*
 two bird.pl
 ‘Two birds’

¹² Determiners express definiteness. The use of a definite determiner in a construction implies that the reference of the noun is known to both the speaker and the hearer(Sulemana 2012)

¹³ The noun phrase *bɪa ka* - ‘the dog’ in (2a) is known to both the speaker and the hearer; this knowledge is expressed by the presence of the definite determiner *ka* after the noun. Similarly in (2b) *bɪa: ká* ‘the child’ is the known entity; All nouns in Buli are marked as either definite or indefinite by the use of determiners(Sulemana 2012:46)

¹⁴ Two is counted in Safaliba as *ɔ̀yà* and when used as determiner, it is *ɔ̀yi* as in (32). Similarly, one is counted as *kpaŋ* but when used as determiner it is *kpènlè̀eri*.

- (33) karikpa kpenleeri
 louse.sg one
 ‘one louse’
- (34) boori η- le kubiri ayisóba
 which it- is stone.sg second
 ‘Which is the second stone?’

Examples (32a) and (33) illustrate the co-occurrence of cardinal numerals and nouns while the example in (34) illustrates the co-occurrence of ordinal numerals and nouns. The example in (32b) is ungrammatical. Issah (2013:209) argues that in Dagbani, while the cardinal numerals can directly modify a noun head, ordinal numerals are expressed by introducing a relative clause after the HN, and following the relative pronoun with the verb *payi* ‘add’ as illustrated in (35 and 36)

- (35) bi-hi anahi
 child.pl four
 ‘four children’ (cf Issah 2013:209)
- (36) bia ηuni payi-ri anahi
 child.sg rel add.imperf four
 ‘a fourth child’ (cf. Issah 2013:209)

It should be pointed out, however, that mass nouns and non-count nouns cannot be modified by numerals (Issah 2013:209). This explains why the examples in (37) and (38) are ungrammatical NPs in Safaliba. Example (39) is an illustration in Dagbani, a Gur language spoken in northern Ghana.

- (37) * kɔ̃η ayi
 water two
 ‘*two water’
- (38) * zɪ̃η kpenleeri
 blood one
 ‘* one blood’
- (39) *nimdi ata
 meat three
 ‘*three meat’ (Dagbani)

2.5 Quantifiers in the Safaliba Noun Phrase

Like numerals, quantifiers are words that follow nouns and have a modifying function on the HN. They tell us about ‘how many’ or ‘how much’. The main difference between the numerals and the quantifiers is that while the numerals give a specific number in terms of the quantity of the HNs they modify (e.g. ‘two’), the quantifiers do not give specific numbers /numeration value (Issah 2013:209). Some of the quantifiers are also selective in terms of the nouns with which they co-occur. For instance, the quantifier¹⁵ *bile* ‘small’ can occur with mass, non-count and even¹⁶ count nouns. The quantifier *yaka* ‘many’ also co-occur with count nouns but not non-count nouns. Examples (40) and (41) illustrate the use of quantifiers with nouns in Safaliba:

- (40) nganní bile = ngan bile
 skin small
 ‘a small skin’
- (41) a. ηmari-sí. bile = ηmari bile
 star.pl small
 ‘small stars’
- b. baa-sí yaka = baa yaka
 dog.pl many
 ‘many dogs’
- c. * tannu yaka = * tannu yaka
 sand many
 ‘*many sand’

The examples in (40-41a) prove that in Safaliba, the quantifier *bilè* ‘small’ can co-occur with both count and non-count nouns but *yaka* ‘many’ can only co-occur with count nouns as in (41b). Just like the adjectives, the final syllable of the noun is deleted to co-occur with the quantifiers. There are two easy distributional tests to distinguish between mass and count nouns. Mass nouns take the quantifier much, while count nouns take many

¹⁵ The quantifier *biela* (little) in Dagbani can occur with mass, non-count and even count nouns. The quantifier *pam* (a lot) also co-occurs with both count and non-count nouns.

¹⁶ Count nouns represent individual, “countable” elements. For example, apple is a count noun. “Mass nouns” usually can’t be counted in the same way. For example sincerity and air are mass nouns. (Carnie 2013:55)

Def.Pot.sg cook.imperf charming small old round black sand

‘The charming small round old black sand cooking pot’

It is often assumed that the ordering is according to the semantic category of the adjective as shown in (57). In the example, the categories of adjectives represented are:

(58)

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| • epithet | <i>nyelsira</i> | ‘charming’ |
| • size | <i>bile</i> | ‘small’ |
| • shape | <i>gilibu</i> | ‘round’ |
| • age | <i>korogu</i> | ‘old’ |
| • colour | <i>saaliga</i> | ‘black’ |
| • origin | <i>tannu</i> | ‘earth’ |
| • substance | - | - |
| • participle | <i>duyvu</i> | ‘cooking’ |

It is unusual for all the possible positions to be filled, except in a linguist’s concocted example. Issah (2013) says that once we have strings of adjectives modifying the same noun, only the last adjective occurs in full; the rest of the adjectives occur in the root forms as in (59) in Dagbani.

(59) pay kur ze wayin biε titali maa
 woman old fair tall ugly big Def

‘The tall old fair big ugly woman

In (59), we observe that the noun head, *paya* (woman) is modified by five adjectives: *kurili* (old), *zee* ‘fair’, *wayinli* ‘tall’, *biεyu* ‘ugly’, *titali* ‘big’. However, all these adjectives appear in the root form with the exception of the last adjective *titali* (big) which appears in full. This phenomenon occurs not only in Dagbani but in most Gur languages. It is the formation of such closely knit units between the noun and adjective(s) that probably prompted Bendor-Samuel (1971) to propose that in Gur languages, a noun is never followed by a string of adjectives. In Safalibu all the adjectives occur in full as in (57).

3.2 Nouns as Modifiers in the Safaliba Noun Phrase

A noun may function not only as heads of noun phrases, but also as modifiers in the noun phrase. In other words, words that are generally nouns can act as adjectives. Example:

- (60) saa kɔŋ
 rain water
 ‘Rain water’
- (61) tambisige tannu
 gravel sand
 ‘Gravel sand’
- (62) alidzana naaŋmɪnɪ
 heaven God
 ‘Heaven God’
- (63) yɪya kpia
 village elder.sg
 ‘Village elders’
- (64) *kpia yɪya
 elder.sg village
 ‘*elder Village’

(60-63) are grammatical because the noun modifier premodifies the noun head in Safaliba which contradicts the adjective modification. But Example (64) is ungrammatical because the modifier occurs before the NH. More than one noun modifier may also occur in a noun phrase in Safaliba. See Example (65):

(65) portrube tamfɔ Safaliba niriba
 follower.sg war Safaliba person.pl
 ‘The followers of Safaliba people in war’

In example (65), it is noticed that *Safaliba* modifies *niriba* ‘people’ forming a prepositional phrase which together with *tamfɔ* ‘war’ postmodifies *portrube* ‘follower’

3.3 Post modification in the Safaliba NP

The Postmodification¹⁹ position in the Safaliba noun phrase is also filled by phrases or a clause which is the

¹⁹ Postmodification occur after the head in a noun phrase. (Note: in Hallidayan grammar, the term qualifier is used for structures following the head of the noun phrase. Thus *the man in the room* would be analysed in terms of *M-H-Q* (standing for modification-head-qualification)

focus in this part of the paper. The following can function as post-modifiers in the NP: relative clause, and prepositional phrases.

3.3.1 Relative clause post modification

Relative clause may be defined as a subordinate clause that post modifies a noun and forms part of the noun phrase. Saah (2010:91) explains that syntactically or semantically, the typical relative clause usually consists of an initial NP (the antecedent or head) followed by the modifying clause. Together, they make up one complex NP, which can perform any of the grammatical functions in a sentence such as subject and object. A relative clause is a full clause, one of whose members (phrase) consists of a relative pronoun as head, which refers back to the head noun of the phrase in which it occurs as post-modifier. The examples below explain that:

(66) a daba **aŋna** **wa** ŋ-lɛ n dabale
 Def man.sg rel came.perf it-is 1sg. friend

‘The boy **who came** is my friend

(67) a kube **boori dʒɛŋ** ŋ-lɛ titɔri
 Def stone rel lie.imperf it-is 3sg.emph

‘The stone **which was lying down** is ours’

In examples (66) and (67), the relative clauses are *aŋna wa* ‘who came’ and *boori dʒɛŋ* ‘which was lying down’; *aŋna* ‘who’ and *boori* ‘which’ are the relative pronouns that refers back to the heads *daba* ‘man’ (for person) and *kube* ‘stone.’ The principal function of a relative clause is that of post-modifier in a noun phrase where the relative pronoun points back to the head of the NP. I have observed that the structure of relative clause in Safaliba is the same as that of English. Sulemana (2012:94) mentions that there are some defining characteristics of relative clauses in Buli that either differentiate or make them similar to relative clauses in other languages.’ Consider the examples in (68) below:

(68) núr wāi ali dɛ sā: mú lá kúlí
 man REL. PRO SUBJ.CASE eat TZ DEF RCM go.home

‘The man who ate the TZ has gone home’

(cf. Sulemana 2012:94)

3.3.2 Prepositional phrase postmodification

The most frequently occurring kind of post-modifier in a noun phrase is a prepositional phrase. Examples of postmodifying kind of prepositional phrase are found in sentences (69) - (71)

(69) a vaa laali **daaru pɔri**
 Def leaf.sg fly.imperf tree.pl behind

‘The leaf was flying behind the trees.’

(70) a pɔɣba gbisiri **daaru karige**
 Def woman.pl sleep.imperf tree.pl by

‘The women was sleeping by the trees’

(71) a kolige dʒɛŋ a **yiri ʧaani**
 Def stream.sg lie.imperf Def town.sg outside

‘The stream was lying outside the town’

This presents the structure of Post-modification in Safaliba using relative clauses and prepositional phrases showing a different form of motivation apart from the everyday adjectives. The construction will be ungrammatical if the preposition occurs as a pre-modifier to the object of the preposition as illustrated in (72)

(72) * a vaa laali **pɔri daaru**
 Def leaf.sg fly.imperf behind tree.pl

‘The leaf was flying behind the trees.’

4.0 Conclusion

This paper examined the structure of the Safaliba noun phrase (NP) described to comprise a noun, a pronoun, or a nominal. It also contains a noun plus a modifier, such as an adjective, quantifier, numeral demonstrative or article. It shows that the modifiers occurred only in post-position except the determiner which can only occur in preposition. The paper concludes that the Safaliba NP can co-occur with some optional linguistic elements that serve as modifiers. It is further demonstrated that the modifiers of the NP are post-modifiers except the definite article and noun modifiers which are pre-modifiers. It also showed that it is possible for several post-modifiers to occur with the head noun. It further demonstrated that the cardinal and ordinal numerals have different syntactic relations with the noun head.

This study has also considered the structure of the complex NP which has more complex modifiers, such as relative clauses and prepositional phrases. The prepositional phrases are also noted and described to also

occur as post-modifiers. It however suggests that the pre-modifier position for adjective in a Safaliba noun phrase is null; the possible occurrence of definite article at the pre-modifier position in the NP is the particle 'a'. This paper also contributes some additional data in the study of Safaliba, a Gur language spoken in northern Ghana. Future studies may look at relative clauses post-modification as part of a complex noun phrase in Safaliba.

The Abbreviations used in this paper include:

1, 2, and 3	-	first, second and third person
Def	-	definite marker
Det	-	determiner
Dem	-	Demonstrative
Emph	-	emphatic
HN	-	head noun
imperf	-	imperfective
loc	-	locative marker
N	-	noun
NP	-	noun phrase
perf	-	perfective
pl	-	plural
POSS	-	possessive morpheme
quant	-	quantifier
sg	-	singular
SNP	-	simple noun phrase
Rel	-	relative
Det	-	Determiner

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