

Basic Locative Constructions and Simple Clause Structures of English, Akan, and Safaliba

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Abstract

This paper discusses some basic locative constructions and simple clause structures of English, Akan (a majority language in Ghana), and Safaliba (a minority language in Ghana). Specifically, the paper compares the simple clause of and the basic locative constructions in these three languages by showing clearly how native speakers of these languages produce forms to express meaning. Structures such as clause functions, relative clause, verb forms, serial verb constructions, noun phrase, negation, and locative constructions have been employed as touchstones in juxtaposing the three languages. The data used, were drawn from native speakers' intuition and expressions about the location of entities (this has been vividly explained in section 1.3). Several observations were made. For example, it was realised that while English and Safaliba are pre-determiner languages, Akan is post-determiner language. Again as English recognises prepositions, Akan and Safaliba use postposition.

Keywords: Basic locative constructions, Simple clause, Akan, Safaliba, Adpositional phrases

1. Introduction

A sign, according to Saussure (1915/1966) is a combination of a concept and a sound-image, a combination that cannot be separated. Kreidler (1998:22), describing linguistic signs indicates that:

Words are linguistic signs, similar in certain respects to natural and conventional signs. They do not 'have meanings' but rather are capable of conveying meanings to those who can perceive, identify and interpret. Words go together to form sentences which in turn are capable of conveying meanings – the meanings of the individual words and the meaning that comes from the relation of these words to one another. (1998:22).

Consequently, most linguistically sensitive people can describe every individual word in the structures of every language. But, the sine qua non is semantics. The structures are only meaningful if the reader can identify and interpret the linguistic signs – words. Another point in Kreidler's

definition is ‘perceive’. Before one can identify and interpret linguistic signs, one should possess the ability to perceive. Linguistic signs are perceived with our senses of sight, hearing, and touch (e.g. the use of the braille by visually impaired persons).

In this paper, three languages – English, Akan, and Safaliba – have been paralleled to see how they relate or differ in terms of basic locative constructions and simple clause structure. The discussion commences with synopses of two of the languages – Akan and Safaliba.

1.1 A brief information about the minority language, Safaliba

According to Schaefer and Schaefer (2003:1) Safaliba is a Gur language which is spoken in the western part of the Northern region of Ghana. Naden (1988) categorises it as a Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, North, Gur Central, Northern, Oti-Volta, Western, Northwest language. The closest relatives include Waali, Farefare, and Dagaare. The Safaliba villages are, however, geographically distant from the towns and villages where its sister languages are spoken. One distant relative of Safaliba is Sissala. Both the language and the people are referred to as Safaliba; but the indigenous people usually use the word Safaluu in reference to a Safaliba person.

According to Schaefer (2009:5), the language is spoken by about 5000 – 7000 people in the north-western part of Ghana. Thus, the speakers can be found in several towns and villages located near the Black Volta River, which serves as a border with Côte d’Ivoire. The language is not known to have any dialects. Many of the Safalibas whose L1 is Safaliba are able to conduct business and basic communication activities in either Gonja or Vagla (Naden 1989 as cited in Schaefer and Schaefer 2003:2). A number of Safalibas understand Jula or Birifor, and majority of them are able to communicate in Waali partly because of the natural similarities between the two languages. Again, there are several other languages which are employed sporadically by a smaller number of the Safalibas. These languages include: Twi, Hausa, French, and the official language of Ghana, English.

According to our informant, the Safaliba communities are primarily agricultural. A vast majority of the people engage in subsistence farming, whose main activities include: growing of yam, cassava, millet, and maize. Recently, cashew farming has become very popular. Therefore, a lot of farmers are now going into small, medium, or large scale cultivation of the cash crop. Many of the women also engage in sheabutter making and gari processing.

1.2 A brief information about Akan

Akan is a kwa language. Kwa happens to be one of the branches of Niger-Congo language family. The Akans are the largest ethnic group in both Ghana and the Ivory Coast. It therefore has a lot of speakers in Ghana. (www.vibeghana.com/.../ghanaian-languages). In Ghana, the dialects of Akan include: Fante (or Fantse), Akuapem, Asante, Agona, Bron, Wasa, Akyem, and Kwahu (Saah 1994). ‘From the 15th century to the 19th century, the Akan people dominated gold mining and the gold trade in the region; ... and from 17th century on, the Akan were among the most powerful group(s) in West Africa. They fought many battles against the European colonists to maintain autonomy. (www.saylor.org/site/.../akan-people.pdf).

1.3 Data and data collection procedure

Data and the way they are collected are essential in every field linguistic work. The main primary data were elicited from some sources. Firstly, ten (10) of Bowerman and Eric's (1993) TRPS¹ were used in addition to fourteen (14) other sentences (see appendix B) in English with transcriptions in Akan and Safaliba. The TRPS used were 6, 27, 69, 58, 31, 40, 49, 10, 2, and 64 (see appendix A). Again, we relied on native speaker's intuition² of Akan. Lastly, the data (TRPS translation in Safaliba, the short story, and the 14 other sentences) on the minority language were provided by a respondent³. The raw data (from Safaliba and Akan) elicited, were glossed by using Audacity and Praat⁴.

2. Basic locative constructions and simple clause structures

2.1 Basic locative constructions

Levinson and Wilkins (2006:1-2) have indicated that basic locative constructions (BLCs) are the expressions that are commonly used in response to a 'where'-question in delivering the basic locative function. Thus, these expressions are the answers we give to a questioner when a question is posed about the location of an object. In field linguistics a lot of works (for example: Bobuafor 2013, Dorvlo 2008, Levinson and Wilkins 2006, and Ameka *et al.* 1999) have been done in this area.

The locative constructions in both Safaliba and Akan consisted of two adjacent nouns, the vocative verb, and postpositional phrase which included the final noun – NP⁵, V⁶[loc⁷], NP Postpp⁸. However, there was a slight variation in the two languages about the position of the locative notions (adpositions). This variation has been explained below. The objects used for this exercise (as already mentioned in section 1.3) were from Bowerman and Eric's (1993) TPRS. The materials were about the location of an entity (figure) as against its environment (ground).

In the case of Safaliba, most of the locative verbs were realised as *be* 'is'. This, however, does not mean that Safaliba does not recognise locative verbs. The possibility of the respondent in Safaliba realising most locative verbs as *be* 'is' could be a factor. But, in Akan, quite a number of them were found. Some of the verbs used in locative constructions in Akan and Safaliba have thus been projected below:

1. Verb (Safaliba)	Gloss (English)
be	is
tiili	lean
dobi	squat
2. Verb (Akan)	Gloss (English)

¹ Topological Relations Pictures Series

² Two of the writers, (Owusu and Adade-Yeboah) are native speakers of Akan. Therefore, all the Akan data were provided by them.

³ Miss Ruth Karehina Bodua-Mango, an MPhil Linguistics graduate of University of Ghana, Legon, was our respondent for the data on Safaliba. We want to use this opportunity to thank her immensely for the precious time she spent with us.

⁴ These are software used in processing raw voice data elicited from the field.

⁵ Noun phrase

⁶ Verb

⁷ Locative

⁸ Postpositional phrase

te/si	sit
sen	hang
hye	wear
twere	lean
da	sleep
kutu	squat

2.1.1 The Safaliba locative verb *be* ‘is’

This verb almost functions as the English copula verb, *be*, which has one of the present forms as ‘*is*’. It appears *be* can be used to denote *sit*, *top*, and *hang*. Every language has the unmarked locative verb. From the data collected, it can be inferred that *be* ‘is’ is the unmarked locative verb in Safaliba. Two illustrations are portrayed below:

- a) A baa be a dii kerega.
 DET⁹ dog COP¹⁰ DET house side
 ‘The dog is by the side of the house.’ [See TRPS 58: Appendix A]

- b) A nmanibe a daa zu.
 DET fruit COP DET tree head
 ‘The fruit is on the tree.’ [See TRPS 27: Appendix A]

2.1.2 The Safaliba locative verb *tiili* ‘lean’

tiili ‘lean’ is used for objects (figures) that do not stand straight but rather the upper part of them are touching the upper part of the ground (the affected entity) that the figure leans against. When this verb is used, the postposition that is selected is *zu* ‘head.’ This is illustrated below:

- A dunigutiili a dijkpinizu
 DET ladder lean DET wall head/top
 ‘The ladder leans on the wall’ [See TRPS 58: Appendix A]

2.1.3 The Safaliba locative verb *dobi* ‘squat’

dobi ‘squat’ is used to denote entities that are squatting on the surface of a ground. A human being is an example of this entity since *dobi* ‘squat’ is not normally used for most animate and inanimate objects. *pore* ‘back/behind’ is a postposition that can be used for *dobi* ‘squat.’ See the example below:

⁹ Determiner

¹⁰ Copular

A be-dabili dobi a koke pore
 DET child-male-small squat DET chair behind/back
 ‘The boy squats behind the chair’ [See TRPS 64: *Appendix A*]

2.1.4 *The Akan locative verb te/si ‘sit’*

te/si ‘sit’ is used for objects that position on the surface of an object. It can also be used in reference to where an object is situated. By this all the surface of entity A is placed on entity B. This verb can be used for both animate and inanimate objects. The postposition that is normally selected for **te/sit** ‘sit’ is *so* ‘on’. The examples below clearly illustrate this assertion.

a) ɔkra no te kɛɛ no so
 cat DET sit mat DET Postp¹¹
 ‘The cat sits on the mat’ [See TRPS 40: *Appendix A*]

b) ɛdua no si asoredan no ho
 tree DET sit church.house DET Postp
 ‘The tree is planted by the chapel’ [See TRPS 64: *Appendix A*]

2.1.5 *The Akan locative verb sen ‘hang’*

sen ‘hang’ is used to describe a figure suspending on the surface of a ground. **sen** ‘hang’ is especially used when a figure is attached to an entity by a person. By this, one has to apply a relative amount of force if one wants to remove the figure from the entity. Some expressions that can use **sen** include: *the man hangs himself on the ceiling fan*, and *she hangs the clothes on the line*. **sen** normally uses the postposition, *so* ‘top.’ The example below shows this assertion:

ɛduabano sen ɛdua no so
 fruit DET hang tree DET top
 ‘The apple hangs on the tree’ [See TRPS 27: *Appendix A*]

2.1.6 *The Akan locative verb hyɛ ‘wear/enter’*

When the whole circumference of a figure is positioned or submerged under/inside another object **hyɛ** ‘wear/enter’ is used. Examples of such sentences in English are: *the animal enters its cage*, and *he wears a particular t-shirt every Saturday*. By this it is assumed that the whole perimeter or part of the figure is inundated in another figure. Therefore, part or the whole body of the figure cannot be seen. **mu** ‘in’ is the postposition that is normally selected for **hyɛ**. See the examples below:

¹¹Postposition

a) asomadeɛ no hyɛ aso no mu
 earring DET wear ear DET in

‘The earring is in the ear’

[See TRPS 69: *Appendix A*]

b) ɔkra no hyɛ ɛpon no ase
 cat DEF enter table DEF under

‘The cat is under the table’

[See TRPS 31: *Appendix A*]

2.1.7 The Akan locative verb *twere* ‘lean’

The Akan locative verb *twere* ‘lean’ is used for objects that cannot stand vertically. They are therefore positioned diagonally with the tip of the edge contacting the upper part of the reference entity receiving support from the base of the two objects. A walking stick, a cane and a ladder are examples of objects that cannot stand without part of them resting on the skin of another object. *ho* ‘skin’ is the postposition that is normally chosen for *twere*. See the example below:

atwedɛ no twere ban no ho

ladder DET lean wall DET skin

‘The ladder leans on the wall’

[See TRPS 58: *Appendix A*]

2.1.8 The Akan locative verb *da* ‘sleep’

da ‘sleep’ is used in reference to an entity which is lying on the skin of another figure. By this, the whole circumference of an entity is on the surface or the interior of another entity. A vegetable or a fruit in a bowl is a perfect example. *da* is normally used with the postposition *mu* ‘inside or upper surface.’ TRPS 02 is an example:

ɛduaba no da kyɛnsɛn no mu

apple DET sleep bowl DET inside/stomach/interior

‘The fruit is in the bowl’

[See TRPS 02: *Appendix A*]

2.2 Adpositions and adpositional phrases

‘Adpositions refer to both prepositions and postpositions’ (Dorvlo 2008:117). English recognises prepositions as one of the minor word classes. Examples are: *in*, *under*, *on*, *beside*, and *at*. English prepositional phrase ‘consists of a preposition followed by a prepositional complement, which is characteristically a noun phrase or a *wh*-clause or *V-ing* clause’ (Quick and Greebaum 2012:155). In the English examples below, the prepositions have been highlighted while the prepositional phrases have been underlined:

a) The earring is *in* the earhole

b) The ladder leans *on* the wall

c) The cat is *under* the table

Looking at the position of the prepositions in the above structures, one realises that they all occur at the initial position of the prepositional phrases. This, thus, makes English a prepositional language. It would therefore be ungrammatical for a structure like: *the cat is the table **under***, to be produced in English language.

Akan, unlike English, is a postpositional language. Thus, prepositions normally occur at final positions. Examples are shown below:

- a) Asomadeɛ no hyɛ aso no mu
 earring DET wear ear DET Postp-in (stomach)
 ‘The earring is in the ear’ [See TRPS 69: *Appendix A*]
- b) atwedee no twere ban no ho
 ladder DET lean wall DET Postp-side (skin)
 ‘The ladder leans on the wall’ [See TRPS58: *Appendix A*]
- c) ɔkra no hyɛ ɛpon no ase
 cat DEF enter table DEF Postp-under (bottom)
 ‘The cat is under the table’ [See TRPS 31: *Appendix A*]

These postpositional words in Akan have been grammaticalized as nouns which portray their semantic root. So, words like *mu* ‘in’, *ho* ‘side’, and *ase* ‘under’ are used in reference to the human body parts, *stomach*, *skin*, and *bottom* respectively. These words are used to indicate locative notions in Akan.

In Safaliba, the situation is not different from the observation made in Akan. The data revealed that the language is a postpositional language. Consequently, we see the prepositions in the following examples occurring at the final position of the structures (See appendix A for TRPS 69, 40 and 31):

- a) A simdiya be a tobe poku poo
 DET earring COP DET ear hole Postp-inside (stomach)
 ‘The earring is in the earhole’
- b) A dogite be a kalaŋ zu.
 DET cat COP DET mat Postp-top (head)
 ‘The cat is on the mat.’
- c) A dogite be a tabuli pɔraa
 DET cat COP DET table Postp-under (bottom)
 ‘The cat is under the table’

Just like Akan, these prepositions in Safaliba have undergone grammaticalization as nouns to indicate the human part from which they emerged. Thus, *poo* ‘inside’, *zu* ‘top’ and *praa* ‘under’ are derived from *stomach*, *head*, and *bottom* correspondingly; and these are some of the words that are used to indicate locative notions in Safaliba

3. Simple clause structures

This section discusses the similarities and disparities among the three languages in relation to clause structure and functions, relative clause, verb forms, verbal structures such as: transitive, intransitive, ditransitive structures and serial verb constructions. Again, the section focuses on noun phrase structures and negations.

3.1 The clause structure of the three languages

3.1.1 According to Quirk and Greenbaum (2012:179) English has seven clause types: *SVA*, *SVC*, *SVO*, *SVOA*, *SVOC*, *SVOO* and *SV*. So, basically English has an SVO structure as illustrated below:

1. Abu beat the child
 S V O

In the example above, Abu (S) is the subject, beat (V) is the verb and the noun phrase – the child (O) is the object. According to Quirk and Greenbaum (2012:179), the elements *O*, *C*, and *A* (in the above-mentioned patterns – *SVA*, *SVC*, *SVO*, *SVOA*, *SVOC*, and *SVOO*) are mandatory elements of clause structure. This is because they are needed for complementation of the verb. Thus, native English speakers use *O*, *C*, and *A* to denote that an action is complete.

3.1.2 Basically, Akan is also an SVO language (Saah 1994:4). This is shown in the example below:

1. Abu bu-u abofra no - AKAN
 S (V) beat-COMPL¹² child DET
 Abu beat
 ‘Abu beat the child.’
 [see appendix B (1)]

Native speakers of Akan also use this structure to show that an action is complete. Looking at the structure above, one realises that if the phrase, *abofra no* ‘the child’ is deleted, the structure, *Abu buu* ‘Abu beat’ will be meaningless.

3.1.3 Schaefer (2009:120-121) has also argued that Safaliba has subject-verb-object (S-V-O) word order in simple clauses. This example from my native respondent of Safaliba confirms this position: See appendix B (1)

Abu tɔ á bie
 S V O
 Abu beat DET child
 ‘Abu beat the child.’

Just like Akan, if the phrase, *á bie* ‘the child’ is deleted, the rest of the structure will be meaningless.

3.2 Clause functions

¹²Completive

Quirk and Greebaum (2012:203) and Biberet *al.* (2002:248-256) group simple clause structures into four major syntactic classes as: *statements (declarative)*, *questions (interrogative)*, *commands (imperative)*, and *exclamations*. The uses of these types correlate with different communicative functions (Quick and Greebaum 2012:203). The analyses on structure functions in the three languages under study are based on three – declarative, interrogative and imperative clauses – of the four major syntactic classes.

3.2.1 Declarative clauses

A declarative sentence states an idea and ends with a period. These sentences normally have SV (subject-verb) structures. The subject is always present and generally precedes the verb (Quick and Greebaum 2012:203). An example is:

Kofi will go home today.

In Akan, *bε* ‘will’ is used to denote future marker in declarative structures (see appendix B [2]):

a.	Kofi	bε-kɔ		fiε	εnε.
	Kofi	will-go		home	today.
	S	FUT ¹³ -V(INF ¹⁴)		A ¹⁵	A
	‘Kofi will go home today.’				

The structure of declarative sentences in Safaliba, is not different from that of English and Akan. The data elicited from my respondent revealed this (see appendix B [2]):

a.	Kofi	na-ti		zaka	dinaa.
	Kofi	will-go		home	today.
	S	FUT-V(INF)		A	A
	‘Kofi will go home today.’				

3.2.2 Interrogative clauses

An interrogative structure asks a question and ends with a question mark. According to Biberet *al.* (2002:249) there are three main types of independent interrogative clauses in English: *wh-questions*, *yes/no-questions*, and *alternative questions*. The illustration below shows how native speakers of the three languages produce a typical *wh*-question, *what is your name?*:

What	is	your	name?	– ENGLISH
Wo	din	de	sen?	– AKAN
2POSS ¹⁶	name	COP	what?	
‘What is your name?’				
ε	yoore			–SAFALIBA

¹³Future marker

¹⁴Infinitive

¹⁵Adjunct/Adverb

¹⁶Possessive

Digu.ɔ beje – SAFALIBA
 put.3OBJ down
 ‘Put it down’

As indicated earlier, most English imperative clauses have the implied subject – *you*. This is seen in the two structures above, where *beat him* and *put it down* though do not have clear-cut subjects, could both be preceded by the second person pronoun, *you*. In the case of Akan this theory still holds as *bu no* ‘beat him’ and *fatuhɔ* ‘put it down’ could be preceded by *wo* ‘you’. This is also the case in Safaliba, where the structures, *tɔɔ* ‘beat him’ and *diguɔ beje* ‘put it down’ could be preceded by the implied subject (pronoun) *ɪ* ‘you.’

3.3 Relative clause structures

According to Dixon (2005:32) a relative clause ‘is a constituent of an NP and provides a description of the referent of the head noun, parallel to an adjectival or adverbial modifier’. In this comparative analysis of the three languages, the relative clause: *I know the boy who killed the snake*, has been used. (see appendix B)

I know the boy who killed the snake – ENGLISH

Me-nim abarimaa no a o-kum ɔwɔ no – AKAN
 1¹⁸SG¹⁹.SUBJ²⁰-knowboy DEF RP²¹ 3²²SG.SUBJ-kill snake DEF

‘I know the boy who killed the snake’

ɔ baje a bidaba ni aɲ ku a waafu – SAFALIBA
 1SG know DET child.male that RP kill.PST²³ DET snake

‘I know the boy who killed the snake’

The Akan example above shows that relative clauses in Akan are marked by relative marker *a*. It (*a*) normally appears after the determiner of the subject of the independent clause and at the beginning of the relative clause. In English, it (relative pronoun) can be located at the same position. The only difference is that while English is a pre-determiner language, Akan is a post-determiner language.

In the Safaliba example of the same structure, the relative pronoun, *aɲ*, is located between *ni* ‘that’ and *ku* ‘kill.PST’. Thus, in Safaliba too, relative pronouns begin relative clauses; but where necessary, another RP structure (for example: *ni* ‘that’ as seen in the example) is introduced to precede the main relative pronoun that come before the relative clause.

3.4 Verb forms and verbal structures

3.4.1 Verb forms

¹⁸ 1st person
¹⁹ singular
²⁰ Subject
²¹ Relative pronoun
²² 3rd person
²³ Past marker

According to Quick and Greebaum (2012:38) all main verbs in English have five forms: the base (V), the present (V-s), the past (V-ed₁), the present participle (V-ing), and the past participle (V-ed₂). The illustrations below only consider how past form/time/tense is marked in the three languages under study:

a. I called you – ENGLISH

Me- frɛ-ɛ	wo	– AKAN
1SG.SUBJ-call-PST	2 ²⁴ SG.OBJ	
‘I called you’		

D	bole-ya	i	– SAFALIBA
1SG	call-PST	2SG.OBJ	
‘I called you’			

b. S/he ate the food – ENGLISH

ɔ̣-di-i	aduane no	– AKAN
3SG.SUBJ-eat-Pst	food DET	
‘S/he ate the food’		

ò	dì-ye	á	dìibù	– SAFALIBA
3SG.SUBJ	eat-PST	DET	food	
‘S/he ate the food.’				

Looking at the examples (a. and b.) above, one realises that English has a past marker (-ed) for regular verbs; while irregular verbs form their past differently. So, we have *called* (regular verb) and *ate* (irregular verb) as past forms of the above structures – a. and b.

In the case of Akan, it is clear that there is also a marker for past tense; but the marker is derived from the main verbs of structures. So in the examples above, we have *frɛ* ‘called’ and *dii* ‘ate’ as the past forms of the verbs: *frɛ* ‘call’ and *di* ‘eat’. Thus, in Akan, most past times/tenses are marked by a repetition of the last vowel of the main verb in a given structure. It is important to note that this is always the case when the verb in the structure has been used transitively. So, in the simple clause: *Me frɛ-e* ‘I called’, the vowel, *e*, has been used to mark past time. This is so; since the verb has been used transitively.

In Safaliba, the past tenses of both regular and irregular verbs are marked by different markers. Consequently, in example, a, *ɔ̣bole.ya* ‘I called’ the marker, *ya*, has been employed in marking past time; while *ye* in *ò di.ye* ‘s/he ate’ has been used in marking past time.

3.4.2 Transitive, intransitive and ditransitive verbs

Biberet *al.* (2002:461) argues that transitivity is a valency pattern that includes one or more objects. A transitive verb therefore, is a verb that requires an object before the meaning of a structure is complete; while a ditransitive verb requires two or more objects before the meaning of a structure is complete. For example, in the example below:

They gave the child to the man,

²⁴2nd person

the structure ... *the child to the man*, completes the sense of meaning in the clause, *they gave*. Akan and Safaliba also recognise transitive and ditransitive structures:

Wɔ-de abofra no ma-a papa no – *AKAN*

3PLU.SUBJ-take child DEF give-COMPL man DEF

‘They gave the child to the man’

Ba di a bie ku a daba – *SAFALIBA*

3.PLU.SUBJ give.PST DET child give DEF man

‘They gave the child to the man’

Intransitive verbs on the other hand are those verbs that do not necessarily require an object before the verb is complete semantically. An example of such a structure in English is: *I cried*.

Akan recognises intransitive verbs:

- a) Me-su-iɛ.
1SG.SUBJ-cry-PST
‘I cried.’

Safaliba also recognises intransitive verbs:

- a) ɔ Kɔŋ.ya
1SG.SUBJ cry.PST
‘I cried.’

3.5. Serial verb constructions (SVC)

Nordquist (2014) writes that Serial verb constructions (SVCs) in English are structures that have ‘verbs that occur together in a single verb phrase without a marker of coordination or subordination.’ These constructions contain two or more verbs, neither of which is an auxiliary. According to him, serial verbs are more common in creoles and in certain dialects of English than in Standard English. Examples of this construction in English are:

- a) *Go get* him now.
- b) *Come tell* me about it.
- c) Don’t make me *come get* you (Nordquist 2014).
- d) *Come see* a snake.

Serial verb constructions also exist in Akan and Safaliba as Osam (2003:14) and Schaefer and Schaefer (2003:6) have noted. ‘Serialization in Akan has had a fairly good coverage in the linguistics literature’ (Osam 2003:14); ‘Serial verbs occur frequently in Safaliba’ (2003:6). Examples of Safaliba serial verb constructions given by my respondent include:

- a. Buɲ iŋ cheŋ ti da?
What 2SG walk go buy
‘What did you walk to go and buy?’

- b. Nyina Aziz ti dogi a diibu?
Where Aziz go cook DEF food

‘Where did you go and cook the food?’

Examples of serial verb constructions in Akan are:

- a) Bε- dikoko
come eat porridge
 ‘Come and eat porridge.’
- b) Bε- kye aboa no
come catch animal DET
 ‘Come and catch the animal.’

3.6 Noun phrase structures

Wiredu (1999:67) defines a phrase ‘as a group of words which together can be replaced by a single word in a sentence.’ He again argues that a noun phrase is ‘called so because it is a noun which can replace the whole group of words.’ To Biberet *al.* (2002) ‘a phrase with a noun as its head is a noun phrase.’ Thus, in a noun phrase (NP), the noun, which is the head element of the structure, is the most important word. The examples below demonstrate how NPs in the three languages under study, are formed (see TRPS 27 and 69):

a) The apple hangs on the tree – ENGLISH

εduabano sen εdua no so – AKAN
 fruit DET hang tree DET top
 ‘The fruit hangs on the tree.’

A nmani be a daa zu – SAFALIBA
 DET fruit COP DET tree head
 ‘The fruit is on the tree’

b) The earring is in the earhole – ENGLISH

Asomadeε no hyε aso no mu – AKAN
 earring DET wear ear DET in
 ‘The earring is in the earhole.’

A simdiya be a tobe poku poo – SAFALIBA
 DET earring COP DET ear hole inside
 ‘The earring is in the earhole’

It is obvious that native speakers of English form noun phrases by placing the determiner before the noun. Thus, English is a pre-determiner language. So, in the English structures underlined above (examples a. and b.), the determiner (definite article), *the*, appears before the nouns or NPs, *fruit/apple* and *earring*. Another observation made in the English examples is that the notions of location – *on* and *in*– appear before the NPs, *the tree* and *the ear* in examples a) and b) respectively. This also makes English a pre-determiner language.

But in Akan, the determiner, *no* ‘the’, in the two examples above, appears after the nouns, *ɛduaba* ‘fruit’ and *asomadeɛ* ‘earring’. Again, we see the same determiner, *no*, appearing after the nouns, *ɛdua* ‘tree’ and *aso* ‘ear’. This clearly portrays that Akan is a post-determiner language. Consequently, determiners in Akan NPs will always occur after the head elements in those NPs. Looking at the locative notions – *so* ‘top’ and *mu* ‘in’ – used in the Akan structures, it is conspicuous that they correspondingly occur in final positions of the structures. This makes Akan, a post-determiner language.

In Safaliba, the determiner, *a*, ‘the’ appears before the nouns, *nmani* ‘fruit’ and *simdiya* ‘earring’ in examples a) and b) respectively. The same determiner, *a*, ‘the’ appears before the nouns *daa* ‘tree’ and *tobe* ‘ear’ in the prepositional phrases of examples a) and b) respectively. The indication that this state of affair portrays is unambiguous – like English, Safaliba is a pre-determiner language. But, other complex structures should be used in another study to verify whether there could be an instance where determiners could occur after nominal groups.

3.7 Negation

The negation of a simple sentence is accomplished by inserting *not*, *n* ‘t’ between the operator and the predication (Quick and Greebaum 2012:195). Native speakers of English thus, produce negative meaning of structures by inserting a *negator* (mostly *not*) between the lexical item and the predicator. We see examples in the structures below:

The dog is by the house – the dog is *not* by the house. Declarative structure.

Is the dog by the house? – Is the dog *not* by the house? Interrogative structure.

Biberet *al.* (2002:239) on the other hand, have the opinion that there are two main kinds of clause negation: **not-negation** and **no-negation**. Not-negation is formed with *not* or *-n* ‘t’ while no-negation is formed with other negative words such as *no*, *nothing*, and *none* (Biberet *al.* 2002:239):

There is *nothing* I can do about this situation.

Saah (1994:14) has argued that in Akan, the inflected verb carries a number of affixes to indicate tense, aspect, mood and **negation**. Osam (2003) states that negation in Akan, is marked by ‘a homorganic nasal which is normally said on a low tone.’ These examples confirm these positions:

ɔkraman no te ɛdan no ho – positive declarative structure.

Dog DET sit house DET skin

‘The dog is by the house’ –

ɔkraman no **n**-te ɛdan no ho. – NEG declarative structure.

Dog DET NEG²⁵-sit house DET skin

‘The dog is not by the house’

The illustrations above only indicate how native speakers of Akan produce positive and negative declarative structures. It is obvious that in the second illustration (negative declarative structure), *n*, which is a nasal alveolar voiced consonant, has been used in a low tone to express a negative

²⁵Negative/negator

meaning of the structure. But, how do Akans produce negative interrogative structures? This example shows how:

Na	Kofi	ɲ-kɔ	fiɛ?
CONJ ²⁶	Kofi	NEG-go	home

‘Is Kofi **not**going home?’

One realises that native speakers of Akan use the same sound, **ɲ**, to produce negative interrogative structures.

In Safaliba, **ba** and **kuy** are used to mark negation. While **ba** ‘not’ is used with common nouns, **kuy** ‘not’ is used with proper nouns. These two examples display it:

a) A Baa ba be a donone.
 DET dog NEG COP DET door
 ‘The dog is not by the door.’

b) Kofi kuɲ ti saka?
 Kofi NEG go home
 ‘Is Kofi not going home?’

The data elicited revealed that in Safaliba, negations normally appear before verbs. Thus, in example a) above, **ba** ‘not’ appears before the copula verb – is – and in example b) **kuy** ‘not’ appears before the action verb, go. The opposite is the case in English language, where negations are attached to the operator by way of post-modification.

4. Conclusion

This work has looked at the linguistic parity and disparity of three languages – English, Akan, and Safaliba – in terms of simple clause structure and basic locative constructions. Several observations were made. Key among them include: English shares some similarities with Safaliba in terms of the position of determiners in noun phrases – both languages are pre-determiner languages. It was also seen that Akan and Safaliba have various locative verbs which agree with some locative notions which are derived from the parts of the human body. Again, English uses prepositions which normally occur at the initial position of prepositional phrases; but Akan and Safaliba recognise postposition, which normally occur at the final position of adpositional phrases.

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²⁶Conjunction

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APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A: *Topological Relations Picture Series (TRPS)*



TRPS 6 – The dog is by the side of the house

– *ENGLISH*

ɔkraman no te εdan no ho
dog DET sit house DET PP
‘The dog is by the side of the house’

– *AKAN*

A baa be a dii kerega

– *SAFALIBA*

DET dog COP DET house side

‘The dog is by the side of the house’



1. TRPS27 – The apple hangs on the tree

- *ENGLISH*

εduaba no sɛn εdua no so
apple DET hang tree DET top

– *AKAN*

‘The apple hangs on the tree’

A nmani be a daa zu.

– *SAFALIBA*

DET fruit COP DET tree head

‘The fruit is on the tree.’



2. TRPS69 – The earring is in the earhole

– *ENGLISH*

asomadee no hyɛ aso no mu
earring DET wear ear DET in

– *AKAN*

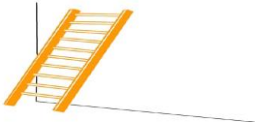
‘The earring is in the ear’

A simdiya be a tobe poku poo

– *SAFALIBA*

DET earring COP DET ear hole inside/stomach

‘The earring is in the earhole’



3. TRPS58 – The ladder leans on the wall

– *ENGLISH*

atwedee no twere ban no ho
ladder DET lean wall DET skin

‘The ladder leans on the wall’

A dunigutiili a diŋkpinizu
DET ladder lean DET wall head/top

– *SAFALIBA*

‘The ladder leans on top of the wall’



4. TRPS31 – The cat is under the table

– *ENGLISH*

Ɔkra no hye εpon no ase
cat DEF enter table DEF under

‘The cat is under the table’

A dogite be a tabuli pıraa
DET cat COP DET table under/bottom

– *SAFALIBA*

‘The cat is under the table’



5. TRPS 40 – The cat sits on the mat

– *ENGLISH*

Ɔkra no te keɛ no so
cat DET sit mat DET PP

– *AKAN*

‘The cat sits on the mat’

A dogitebe a kalaŋzu
DET cat COP DET mat top/head

– *SAFALIBA*

‘The cat is on the mat’



6. TRPS49 – The tree is planted by the chapel

– *ENGLISH*

Ɛdua no si asoredan no ho

– *AKAN*

tree DET sit church.house DET PP

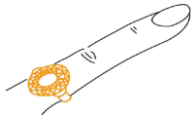
‘The tree is planted by the chapel’

A daa be a kyɛkyekerega

– *SAFALIBA*

DET tree COP DET church side

‘The tree is by the chapel’



7. TRPS10 – The ring is on the finger

– *ENGLISH*

petia no hyɛ nsatia no so

– *AKAN*

ring DET wear finger DET top (upper surface)

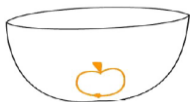
‘The ring is on the finger’

A nupini be a numbin zu/iɲna

– *SAFALIBA*

DET ring COP DET finger topb/ody

‘The ring is on the finger’



8. TRPS2 – The apple is in the bowl

– *ENGLISH*

Ɛduaba no da kyɛnsen no mu

apple DET sleep bowl DET inside (stomach) interior

‘The fruit is in the bowl’

A nmani be a laa poo

– *SAFALIBA*

DET fruit COP DET bowl inside(stomach)

‘The fruit is in the bowl’



9. TRPS64 – The boy squats behind the chair

– *ENGLISH*

abarımaa no koto akongua no akyi
boy DET squat chair DET back

– *AKAN*

‘The boy squats behind the chair’

A be-dabili dobi a koke pore
DET child-male-small squat DET chair behind/back

– *SAFALIBA*

‘The boy squats behind the chair’