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**Title:** A grammar of Mundabli: a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon  
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This chapter deals with the structure of basic clauses, i.e. pragmatically unmarked declarative main clauses. The discussion is restricted to verbal predicates. Non-verbal predicates are dealt with in Chapter 13. The current chapter starts off with a description of the attested types of argument frames (§11.1). Following this is a section on constituent order within the clause (§11.2), which is in turn followed by a detailed description of the different attested syntactic constituents (§11.3). Finally, the last section discusses the status of grammatical relations in Mundabli (§11.4).

11.1 Types of argument frames

This section deals with the argument structure of verbs. However, it is restricted to nominal arguments. In the case of complex verbal cores (or serial verb constructions), arguments should be understood as arguments of the whole verb complex rather than arguments of specific individual verbs. For ease of reference, I will simply refer to these complex verbal cores as verbs in this chapter. Lovegren (2013: 320) offers an account on how the argument structure of a verbal core can be deduced from the argument structure of the verbs it contains for the related language Mungbam. As the two languages behave nearly identically as regards the argument structure of verbs, his findings can most likely be transferred one-to-one to Mundabli.

A valency distinction based on the minimal number of core arguments makes no sense in Mundabli because arguments other than the subject can always be omitted when their content can be inferred from the context. This
includes not only oblique arguments, but also the second core argument, the object. Instead of a distinction based on the minimal number of core arguments, a distinction based on the maximal number of arguments is adopted. Verbs are thus regarded as intransitive only if they cannot take an object and they are regarded as transitive when they can take an object. This rather uncommon definition of transitive vs. intransitive verbs is based on Lovegren (2013: 280ff.) who proposes this definition for Mungbam and provides more elaborate argumentation in favour of such a definition. Intransitive verbs only have the subject as an argument,\(^1\) cf. e.g., bǐ ‘exit’ in (448). Transitive verbs can take two arguments: a subject and an object, like e.g., tsú ‘contribute’ and mū ‘take’ in (449) and (450).

\[(448)\]  
\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{wān} & \text{w-} 5 \text{ bǐ} \\
\text{cl1.child} & \text{cl1-Det exit(b)}
\end{array}
\]

‘The child went outside.’

\[(449)\]  
\[
\begin{array}{ll}
bō & \text{tsū} \text{ d5} \\
\text{cl2 contribute(c)} & \text{cl3.beans}
\end{array}
\]

‘They contributed beans.’

\[(450)\]  
\[
\begin{array}{ll}
wū & \text{mū} \text{ Hôtel,} \\
\text{cl1 take(a)} & \text{cl3/7a.fufu_stick}
\end{array}
\]

‘She took the fufu stick.’

As pointed out above, the object in a transitive clause can always be omitted when it is understood from the context, as e.g., in the second clause in (451). There are no syntactic restrictions on object omission.

\[(451)\]  
\[
\begin{array}{llll}
wū & \text{bōn} & \text{tē} & \text{k-5}, wū yā \text{ tō} \\
\text{cl1 pick(b)} & \text{cl7/8.walking_stick} & \text{cl7-Det cl1.throw(a) away(c)}
\end{array}
\]

‘She then picked up the stick and threw [it] away [from herself].’

In addition to simple intransitive and transitive verbs, there are extended transitive and intransitive verbs. Extended intransitive verbs take a subject and an oblique constituent, but no object. Extended transitive verbs take a subject,\(^{\text{1}}\) It has been stated for other languages that any verb can occur with a cognate noun as object, see Heath (2013: 149ff.) for the Dogon of Beni and Lovegren (2013: 350-351) for Mungbam. This would mean that there are no real intransitive verbs. At first glance, I thought the same was the case in Mundabli. Mundabli has what I call the cognate deverbal noun construction (cf. §14.3.1) which expresses verb focus by adding an infinitive deverbal noun to the end of an intransitive or transitive clause. However, I believe that the deverbal noun is not an object in the case of Mundabli, because it can co-occur with an object in a transitive clause, in which case it generally follows the object. As it is not otherwise possible to have two objects in one clause, I believe that the infinitive in the cognate deverbal noun construction in Mundabli has an adverbial function, and that therefore there are true intransitive verbs which cannot take an object argument.
an object and an oblique constituent. This distinction was made by Dixon and Aikhenvald (2000: 3) and was adopted by Lovegren (2013) for Mungbam. The current chapter is strongly inspired by Lovegren’s treatment of the same issues in Mungbam; see Lovegren (2013: 314ff.).

11.1.1 Extended intransitive verbs

There are a few extended intransitive verbs, i.e. verbs which take an oblique argument but no object. This section only deals with oblique arguments which are included in the verb semantics, although formally, they are no different from obliques which are not included in the verb semantics. The oblique argument in the examples is enclosed in square brackets.

The verb də̆ ‘see’ usually takes a dative complement (452) rather than an object. However, the undergoer, which is usually expressed as dative, may also take the form of a direct object, in which case the verb is transitive (453). In (453), the verb is part of a relative clause and takes the cl7 pronoun ki̋ as its object.

\[(452)\quad \text{tō dō̄m lā bām dō̄ [wū lā], wū kā gān cl7/8.day some dat cl9.antelope see(a) cl1.pp dat cl1 pʒ go(a) dʒwō cl1/2.water.place}\]

‘One day, an antelope saw her when she went to the stream.’

\[(453)\quad \text{k-ɛ́n dī̆ ŋkūŋ k-ʒ nīŋ nō̄ cl7-dem.prox be(b) cl7;1sg.poss cl7-det cl7.thing subord ŋī=dō̄ k-ʒ [kφ] 1sg=see(a) cl7-rel cl7}\]

‘This is my own thing that I see.’

Another example of an extended intransitive verb is fɨ̋, which takes a comitative complement when it means ‘happen’ (454).

\[(454)\quad \text{à dā mē nā ndʒām bī fɨ̋ b-ʒ [ā wā] 2sg see(a) finish(a) as cl8.things cl8 pass(b) cl8-rel com 2sg}\]

‘As you have already seen what happened to you...’

The movement verb yó ‘run’ is also attested as an extended intransitive, taking a locative postpositional phrase as its oblique argument, as in (455). In this case, it basically means ‘run away from, escape’.

\[\text{2A less literal but better translation might be ‘This is the way I see things.’}\]
\[\text{3In combination with other verbs in an SVC, fɨ̋ can mean ‘disappear’ or ‘be useless’.}\]
\[\text{4The verb yó ‘run’ is also attested as a simple intransitive verb.}\]
11.1. Types of argument frames

(455) kɔ́ kɔ̀ yó tʃū [dzɔ́ mā kān] bɔ̀ mǐ
Koshin pɔ́ run(c) come(b) cl.9/10. war hands.loc cl.2 consec
tʃū kwó kʊ́ŋ bǐ yō
come(b) enter(c) hunt(c) go.out(b) go.up(c)

‘The Koshin people ran away from war, then they came in[to this area] and chased away [the Nshwen].’

(456) ē, wù ywō tī [kū y-5 kān]
yes cl.1 run(c) surprisingly cl.9 ratmole cl.9-det hands.loc

‘Yes, he ran away from the ratmole.’

The verb nǐm ‘be located, stay’ is also attested as extended intransitive verb, in which case it takes a comitative complement (457).

(457) nɔ́m nɛ́ tʃū yè bɔ̀ nǐm [ā wà], ā
cl.2.children mother.2poss come(b) comp cl.2 live(a) comp 2sg 2sg
mǐ mù bɔ́, ā mǐ gī yē dī mǐ
consec take(a) cl.2 2sg consec put(b) comp be(b) cl.9 slave
y-ā
cl.9-2sg poss

‘Your siblings have come to stay with you and you make them your slaves.’

11.1.2 Extended transitive verbs

There is at least one extended transitive verb, namely fə̀ ‘give’. The verb fə̀ accepts two different argument frames, both of which involve an object and an oblique constituent.5 One possibility is for the object to represent the recipient and for a prepositional phrase with the comitative preposition ā to represent the theme, as in (458). The second possibility is for the object to represent the theme and for an adpositional dative phrase to represent the recipient, as in (459) (see §11.3.5 for more on dative constituents).

(458) nʉ́nfũ fə̀ ntí [ā kpō]
N. give(b) N. comp cl.3/7a. money
‘Nyungfu gave Ntie money.’

(459) nʉ́nfũ fə̀ kpō [Ī ntí lā]
N. give(b) cl.3/7a. money loc N. dat
‘Nyungfu gave money to Ntie.’

5This alternation seems to be found throughout Lower Fungom (and in Naki) (Good, p.c.).
The choice between these two constructions is determined pragmatically. While adpositional phrases are not usually considered to be arguments of the verb, verbs like ‘give’ represent borderline cases, as their use demands the presence of an adpositional phrase. The verb ‘give’ is also attested as an extended transitive verb with the locative noun/postposition kân ‘in hands’ as the locative argument (460). The object in (460) is not realized. Verbs of placement like ŋi ‘put’ or tên ‘pour’ take locative complements, cf. e.g., (461) or (462).

(460) wù fó [wān nĩ wū-bwé dzū
cl1 give(b) cl1.child cl1.mother.3SG.POSS cl1-toddler cl1.other
kân] hands.LOC

‘She gave [it] to her little sister.’

(461) wù dā bà kà ŋi tê [ĩ gbɔ]
cl1 see(a) IMPERS 3 put(b) cl7/8.walking_stick LOC clergy.house
sè] front.LOC

‘She saw that someone had put a walking stick in front of the house.’

(462) à mĩ tên wū [kyà mĩ]
2SG CONSEC pour(c).SUBJ cl3 st.9/10.basket in

‘and you pour it into a basket [to remove all the water].’

### 11.2 Constituent order within the clause

The basic constituent order in Mundabli is SVO. The schema in Figure 11.1 shows the unmarked constituent order of a positive declarative main clause with neutral focus.

**Subject** – [...]_verbal core..._verbal complex – (Object) – (Oblique Argument) – (X)

Figure 11.1: Basic word order

While the presence of subject and verb are obligatory, none of the constituents following the verbal complex in the above schema have to be present, as indicated by the parentheses. Oblique arguments include dative or comitative arguments like à kō⁶ ‘with a knife’ in (463). The X in Figure (11.1) represents adverbial phrases (e.g., temporal and locative phrases), such as njwén

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⁶The noun kō refers to a specific type of knife used by the so-called ‘Aku people’. According to IWGIA (2017), the local term ‘Aku’ refers to the ‘Galeği’, a subgroup of the Mbororo. However, the source of this information is unclear.
11.3 Syntactic arguments

This section gives an overview of syntactic arguments and their structure. While the arguments include subject, object and oblique constituents, the only obligatory argument in Mundabli is the subject. All other arguments, including the object, can be omitted when they can be inferred from the context. If one took obligatoriness as a criterion for argument status, i.e. if one considered only the minimally present constituents of a phrase as arguments, only the subject could ever be considered an argument of the verb. However, if we consider the maximally present constituents which can occur with a verb instead, more than one argument may be supported. While some verbs, such as

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In example (463), the subject pronoun wù and the f1 marker dɨ̋ are contracted. The resulting form wù integrates the tone of the f1 marker with the shape of the subject pronoun. Phonological mergers like this are occasionally attested.

For an explanation of this term, see first footnote in Chapter 14 of this thesis.
Basic clause structure

mwé ‘be sad’ and kwé ‘return from the bush’ in (465)-(466) can take only one argument, namely a subject, others, such as tsu ‘contribute’, dʒye ‘cook’ and mū ‘take’ in (467)-(469) can take an object as well.9 If the object is omitted, as in (479), it is still semantically present, which supports the status of objects as verb arguments.

(465) wù mwē
   cl1 be_sad(a)
   ‘She was sad.’

(466) kpé w-ɔ̄ kwé dzŋā
   cl1.woman cl1-DET return_from_bush(c) again
   ‘The woman came back again.’

(467) bɔ̋ dʒyē dɔ̄
   cl2 cook(a) cl3.beans
   ‘They cooked the beans.’

(468) bɔ̋ tsū dɔ̄
   cl2 contribute(c) cl3.beans cl3-DET
   ‘They contributed beans.’

(469) wù mū ŋān
   cl1 take(a) cl3/7a.fufu_stick
   ‘She took the fufu stick.’

A syntactic distinction between non-core (oblique) constituents and adverbial phrases (or adjuncts, in each case non-arguments) is not warranted by formal criteria. For convenience, I will refer to all constituents other than the subject and object, i.e. all constituents which are formally flagged,10 as non-core or oblique constituents. The following constituents are thus attested:

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9 Verbs in isolation are given with their citation tones, which differ in some cases from their tones in the examples.
10 I use the term ‘flag’ as explained by (Haspelmath 2008: 506): “There is no widely accepted cover term for cases and adpositions, but the terms flag and relator have sometimes been used as terms which are neutral with respect to the case/adposition distinction.”
11.3. Syntactic arguments

1. Subject (unflagged constituent, usually directly precedes the verb)
2. Object (unflagged constituent, usually directly follows the verb)
3. Comitative (preceded by the particle ā)
4. Locative (optionally preceded by the preposition i, followed by a spatial postposition; or unmarked)
5. Dative (optionally preceded by the preposition i, followed by the dative postposition lā)

Locative and Dative are both optionally preceded by the preposition i (glossed LOC) and obligatorily followed by a postposition. While one could lump them together, I chose to split them because this allows for a more detailed treatment. In the remaining sections, the listed constituents are discussed in the given order.

11.3.1 Subject

The subject is a bare noun phrase which, in a sentence with neutral information structure, precedes the verb complex, as in the intransitive sentence in (470) and the transitive sentence in (471).

(470) mɨ̄ wān kà tjìā kpi
1SG CL1.child p3 long.ago die(b)

‘My child died long ago.’

(471) ni̋ w-ɔ̄ ɲwɔ́m ɲām b-ɔ́
CL1.mother CL1-DET stir(b) CL8a.fufu CL8a-DET

‘The mother stirred the fufu.’

When the subject is in focus, it occurs in the position immediately after the verb complex (472) with the object following it.\footnote{See §14.2.3 for more on subject focus.}

The canonical subject position immediately before the verb complex is then filled with a purely tonal dummy subject. However, consisting of a low tone, this dummy subject is only detectable when it precedes a Class b verb and only in certain inflectional forms, causing the superhigh tone of the Class b verb to be realized as low-high rising tone, as e.g., in (472) (cf. §3.4.2 and §14.2.3 for details).

(472) tsū ɲkɔ ḏunjfū
ds.hit(b) N. N.

‘NGKO hit Nyungfu.’
The subject is the only obligatory argument. While objects are freely omitted when they can be inferred from the context, subjectless sentences are extremely rare. The only two cases of subject ellipsis attested are (473) and (474). This strategy seems to be restricted to stylistic repetition and enumeration. Subject ellipsis is neither attested in multi-clause sentences, nor in sequences of main clauses.

(473) wù tsú wù sūtēe, tsū wù tsū wù tsū wù 
    cl1 hit(b) cl1 so_much hit(b) cl1 hit(b) cl1 hit(b) cl1

    ‘She beat her, so much, beat her again and again.’

(474) tsə̄m b-5 tfú kwō gbá, tsū 
    cl7/8_python cl8-det come(b) enter(c) house loc hit(b)
    kpè w-5 áná tsū wù áná tsū wù áná, 
    cl1.woman cl1-det like_that hit(b) cl1 like_that hit(b) cl1 like_that
    lyfm wù, kù wù
    wrap_around(b) cl1 tie(a) cl1

    ‘The pythons came and entered the house. They beat the woman like
    this, beat her like this, beat her like this, wrapped themselves around
    her and tied her up.’

11.3.2 Object

Just like subject NPs, object NPs are not marked by adpositions. The object is distinguished from the subject mainly by its characteristic position within the sentence. In basic clauses, i.e. simple declarative clauses with pragmatically unmarked word order, the subject precedes the verbal complex, while the object follows it, as in (475). Only when the subject is in focus does it occur in the position immediately after the verb complex (cf. §11.3.1 and references therein).

(475) nī w-5 jwōm nām b-5 
    cl1.mother cl1-det stir(b) cl8a.fufu cl8a-det

    ‘The mother stirred the fufu.’

When the object is defocalized, it precedes the verbal complex (476), which, in a subject focus sentence, results in O(X)VS order (477). For more on information structure and word order alternations, cf. §14.2. In clauses which are syntactically ambiguous and can be alternatively interpreted as SVO or OVS clauses, the structure is sometimes disambiguated by the presence of a tonal dummy subject (see §11.3.1).

(476) nām b-5 yi mī 
    cl8a.fufu cl8a-det eat(b) 1sg

    ‘I ate the fufu.’
11.3. Syntactic arguments

The object of a verb is frequently omitted when it can be inferred from the context, cf. e.g. (478) and (479)). There are no known formal restrictions on the omission of an object.

(478) yẹ́ gàn tsè mī ā ntsūm mū-ŋ-gē-ŋ-gē, ā 
        comp go(a) search(a) 1SG COM CL6.soil 6-N-be_red-N-be_red 2SG 
        mī tʃū fō ndā là 
        come(b) give(b) 1SG.DAT DAT 

‘[She said]: go and search for some red soil for me, and then you come and give [it] to me!’

(479) wū bǒn tē k-Ŏ, wū yō tă 
        CL1 pick(b) CL7.walking_stick CL7-DAT CL1 throw(a) away(c) 

‘She picked up the stick and threw [it] away [from herself].’

11.3.3 Comitative

The label “comitative” is chosen to indicate a constituent whose most common semantic interpretation is indeed comitative, but which may also have an instrumental function or may represent the theme in a transfer event. In the remainder of this section, a description of the structure of comitative constituents, illustrated mainly by examples with comitative semantics is followed by examples of the instrumental function and transfer events. Comitative phrases are headed by the preposition ā. The preposition can take either a full noun phrase (480) or a pronoun (481) as its object. Pronouns with a superhigh tone (i.e. non-preverbal pronouns of all noun classes other than Class 1 and 9) are realized with a low-high rising tone when they are the object of the comitative preposition,12 like e.g. the Class 7 non-preverbal pronoun kō in (481).

These and other data suggest that pronouns participate in a kind of case system, see §11.4.1 for more on this. Unlike postpositions, the preposition ā never gets stranded (cf. §12.3 on adposition stranding in relative clauses).

(480) wū tʃū [ā mbō], bō mū 
        CL1 come(b) COM CL6.palm_wine CL2 drink(b) 

‘He brought wine [and] they drank.’

12This tone change is described in §6.1.3.
Basic clause structure

(481) bə̄ mī kwé jū [ā kī] 
  impers consec return_from_bush(c) come(b) com cl7

‘They then returned home with it.’

The comitative constituent generally follows the verb and the object, occurring towards the end of the clause. Its position relative to other oblique constituents is not fixed. In (482), the comitative argument directly follows the verb, preceding the unmarked locative phrase dʒwō ‘water place’ (cf. §11.3.4 on unmarked locative phrases).

(482) wù gān [ā bō] dʒwō 
  cl1 go(a) com cl2 cl1/2.water_place

‘He went with them to the stream.’

Comitative constituents can also have other semantic functions. They can represent an instrument, as in (483) and (484), or the theme in a transfer event, as in (485) and (486).

(483) jî k-ō kó jū mī [ā kē] 
  cl3/7a.storm cl7a-det catch(b).ipfv come(b) 1sg com cl9/10.hand 
  âkō kō mbè 
  like catch(b).ipfv cl2.person 

‘The storm was catching me with its hands as if it were people catching [me].’

(484) n=dzé Pē là yē wū fā dzē dzēŋ, mā w-ā 
  1sg = say(b) P. dat comp cl1 prohib say(b) again cl1.man cl1-det 
  kā twó kū wū f-ān [ā 
  abil? pierce(a) cl3/7a.stomach cl3/3sg.poss prox-here com 
  kō] 
  cl3/10.aku_knife 

‘I told Pe that he should not talk again, so that the man shouldn’t pierce his stomach with a knife.’

(485) n=dzé mó the best nîŋ dē mē kā à 
  1sg = say(b) cs_quot the best cl7.thing be(b) only cond 2sg 
  tū gbō kō ndʒmŋin ā dī wō bàn come(b) house.loc cond cl8.food neg be(b) neg impers have(c) 
  yē bō tū fā mē wà [ā ngî] 
  comp impers fetch_water(b) give(b) only 2sg com cl6.water 

‘I said that the best thing can only be, if you come home, if there is no food, they have to carry water and give it to you.’
11.3 Syntactic arguments

Locative constituents combine the optional general locative preposition Ꜣ with either a noun phrase followed by a locative postposition, as in (487-489), or a locative noun form, as in (490), which combines the function of a noun phrase and a postposition (cf. §10.2.2). While the optional particle Ꜣ is used only in (489), its use would be grammatical in all these examples.

(487) à mî těn wű [kyà mî]
2SG CONSEC pour(c) CL3 CL9.basket in

‘And then you pour it into a flat basket.’

(488) wû kwô [mbâŋ mî]
CL1 enter(c) CL7/8.door in

‘She entered the space behind the door.’

(489) wû dâ bô kà gi tê [Ĩ gbɔ]
CL1 see(a) IMPERS P3 put(b) CL7/8.walking_stick LOC CL3.house sè]
house_front.pp

‘She saw that someone had left a walking stick in front of the house.’

(490) wû kwô [gbâ]
CL1 enter(c) HOUSE.LOC

‘She entered the house.’

The main function of locative constituents is to create a locational setting, i.e. to represent the ground in an event of motion or location. By extension, locative constituents are sometimes used to create a temporal setting (491).

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13Refer to §10.2.2 for more on postpositions (including a list of locative postpositions) and locative noun forms.

14Early during the process of making corn beer, the corn is poured into a flat basket which functions as a strainer, in order to remove the water which the corn has soaked in for a couple days.

15The term ‘ground’ was first introduced by Talmy. It refers to “the entity which acts as a spatial reference point for the motion/location of [a] figure” (Talmy 1972), as critically revised in (Croft et al. 2010: 2).
Occasionally, locative constituents are attested which consist of a bare noun phrase, marked neither by the general locative preposition nor by a postposition, cf. e.g. (492) and (493). The relevant locative phrases in these examples are enclosed in square brackets. Example (493) contains two unflagged locatives: ṭfǎnj ‘fire place’ and ṣè ‘attic’.

Oneday, an antelope saw her. She was going to the stream.’

‘When she lit the fire in the fire place, her mother let a little bit of water drop down from the attic.’

11.3.5 Dative

The dative constituent is followed by the dative postposition lā and can be preceded by the optional locative preposition ɪ̋. Thus, formally, the dative constituent is a special type of locative constituent. However, due to its special function, it is treated as a separate type of constituent and is dedicated a separate section.

The main semantic function of the dative is to indicate the recipient or beneficiary of an action, although it is also attested with other semantic functions. The dative adposition can take a full NP, as in (494) and (495), or a pronoun, as in (496) and (497), as its complement.

‘Who gave money to Ntie?’
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11.3. Syntactic arguments

(495) wù fyá bí-lúŋ [n̩w̩m b-ɔ̄ lá] ā
  CL1 give(b).IPFV CL1.8-suffering CL2.children CL2-DAT ADVLZ
mɔ̆ mɔ̆, gε̆ n̩w̩m n̩ kɔ̆ wù kɔ̆ tʃyɛ̆
very_much be_there CL2.children CL1.mother ?? CL1 HAB know(c)
bɔ̆
FRUST

‘She made them suffer, not knowing that they were her siblings.’

(496) nsʊŋ wū dzé [wū lā] yē wâ, â dī
  CL1.friend CL1.3SG.Poss say(b) CL1PP DAT SUBORD 2SG, 2SG be(b)
  kpé bō
  CL1.woman CL1.9.bad

‘Her friend said to her: You, you are a bad woman!’

(497) bɔ̀ fō tʃū [bī lā] yē bō tsè
  CL2 tell(a).IPFV come(b).IPFV 1PL.PP DAT COMP CL2 search(a).IPFV
  dzī gàn kpé
  travel(b).IPFV go(a).IPFV CL3/7a.money

‘They are telling us that they are searching for money.’

Examples (494)-(497) contain verbs which commonly take a dative complement, such as fō ‘give’ (494 and 495), dzē ‘say’ (496) and fō ‘report’ (497) (cf. §11.1). However, any active verb can take a dative complement in order to express the benefactor of the action, as in (498). This happens in a context where related Bantu languages would add a derivational applicative affix to the verb.

(498) kpé w-ɔ̄ dʒyē ndʒɔ̆mɲyīn [ɪ̋ loc mɔ̀ CL1.person w-ɔ̄]
  CL1.woman CL1-DAT cook(a) CL1.8.food LOC CL1.person CL1-DAT
  lá

‘The woman prepares food for the man.’

The dative exhibits a case-like alternation in two pronouns. The 1SG pronoun m̩ and the interrogative pronoun ndɛ̀ ‘who’ have special dative forms, namely nd̩n for the 1SG dative pronoun (499) and ndyɛn for the dative interrogative pronoun (500) (cf. §6.1.5 for details). These forms are only used in the dative. They cannot occur in (other) locative phrases.

The dative interrogative pronoun ndyɛn behaves differently from the dative 1SG pronoun in that it is obligatory in dative constituents and the postposition is absent when the dative interrogative pronoun is used. In (500), the

16A special section is devoted to the locative copula gɛ, cf. §13.2.5.4.
two forms of the interrogative pronoun, ndè (Subject) and ndyén (Dative) are contrasted.

(499) gbàm kó mî tsò dʒî dźàŋ [ndá lá] first
c.l7.God f2 consec show(a) c.l9.way be_good(b) 1sg.dat dat first

‘First, God will show me the right way.’

(500) fō ndè kî-mâŋ [ī ndyén]
dS.give(b) who cl7-what loc who.dat

‘Who gave what to whom?’

While the use of the dative form ndyén is obligatory in dative contexts, the 1sg dative pronoun form is in free variation with the unmarked 1sg pronoun mî, cf. (501).

(501) à mî tʃū fō [mî lá]
2sg consec come(b) give(b) 1sg.pp dat

‘[...] and then come and give it to me!’

11.4 Grammatical relations

Mundabli is a non-prototypical marked nominative language (cf. König (2006) for more on marked nominative languages). It has nominative-accusative alignment, but canonical subject pronouns are functionally more marked than object pronouns. Evidence for grammatical relations is relatively weak and evidence for the subject is stronger than for the object. The label “marked nominative” for Mundabli is based on the pronominal forms. While case is not marked in full NPs, the shapes of pronouns vary, depending on their syntactic function. The form used for out-of-focus preverbal subjects is used only in this function, while the form used for objects covers various functions, including postverbal in-focus subjects and elicitation forms. Overt coding properties for grammatical relations in Mundabli are word order and - in pronouns only - case morphology. Mundabli has no verb agreement. Noun phrases other than pronouns are not marked for case.

11.4.1 Case morphology in pronouns

Mundabli pronouns have various different case forms, including special dative forms for the 1sg pronoun mî and the interrogative pronoun ndè ‘who’. Mundabli makes a distinction between preverbal pronouns and non-preverbal pronouns. The preverbal pronoun forms directly precede the verb complex. These forms only refer to topical subjects. They have no other syntactic function. The non-preverbal forms are used elsewhere for pronouns which are not
the object of a pre- or postposition. When a pronoun is the object of a (locative or dative) postposition, or of the comitative preposition ā, respectively, it surfaces with the same segmental shape as the non-preverbal forms, but with alternated tonal patterns. For an overview of such forms, see Table 11.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>person</th>
<th>gender</th>
<th>SG</th>
<th>PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PVB</td>
<td>NPVB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PVB</td>
<td>NPVB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>mɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ệ̀</td>
<td>wà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>wɨ́</td>
<td>wɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/7a</td>
<td>wɨ́</td>
<td>wɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7/8</td>
<td>kɨ́</td>
<td>kɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9/10</td>
<td>yɨ́</td>
<td>yɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19/18</td>
<td>fɨ́</td>
<td>fɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single genders</td>
<td>PVB</td>
<td>NPVB</td>
<td>LOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6a</td>
<td>mǔ́</td>
<td>mǔ́</td>
<td>mǔ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>wɨ́</td>
<td>wɨ́</td>
<td>wɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a</td>
<td>bɨ́</td>
<td>bɨ́</td>
<td>bɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10a</td>
<td>yɨ́</td>
<td>yɨ́</td>
<td>yɨ́</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7b</td>
<td>kɨ́</td>
<td>kɨ́</td>
<td>kɨ́</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11.1: Preverbal, non-preverbal, object of postposition and object of comitative preposition forms of all personal pronouns, adapted from Table 6.2

When a pronoun which would otherwise bear a superhigh tone in non-preverbal position, i.e. any third person pronoun of a noun class other than Class 1 and 9, is the object of the comitative preposition ā, it is realized with a LH rising tone; otherwise the tone is the same as that of the non-preverbal pronoun; see also §11.3.3.

When they are the object of a postposition, all pronouns except for the Class 2 (or third person plural) pronoun bear a high tone. The Class 2 (or third person plural) pronoun is realized bɨ́ (with a low-high rising tone). All other pronouns bear a high tone when headed by a postposition.

When they are the object of the dative postposition lā, pronouns generally take the same form as when they are the object of a locative postposition. Only the first person singular pronoun mɨ́ ‘1SG’ and the interrogative pronoun ndɛ̀ ‘who’ also have special dative/benefactive forms; see Table 11.2.

While ndyēn may occur on its own without a postposition, the 1SG benefactive pronoun ndā always co-occurs with the dative postposition lā. Whereas the 1SG benefactive pronoun ndā can always be replaced by the “object of postposition”-form of the 1SG pronoun mɨ́, the dative form ndyēn ‘to/for
Basic clause structure

Table 11.2: Special dative/benefactive pronoun forms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1sg</th>
<th>mɨ̄</th>
<th>ndɛ̀ndye᷇n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>ndá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>ndê</td>
<td>ndyên</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

whom’ must be used to express the dative/benefactive of the interrogative pronoun ndê.