

# 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 paper<sup>1</sup> 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 Buli<sup>2</sup>.

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'Ivoire<sup>3</sup>. 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 (2003<sup>4</sup>) 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, Chorubaj, tanpe<sup>5</sup> 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 Côte d'Ivoire: Vonkoro, Bondoukou, and Bouna.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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)(Gurindow 2014) while Buli is a Gur language spoken in and around Sandema in the Upper East Region of Ghana.(Sulemana 2012)

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

<sup>4</sup> According to I. Jeduwa (p.c., 6<sup>th</sup> January, 2015) the total number of registered voters in four of the villages (Mandari-2151; Gbenful-387; Manful-378 and tanpe-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., 7<sup>th</sup>, January, 2015)

<sup>5</sup> Tanpe- 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., 9<sup>th</sup> 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**<sup>6</sup> (Safaliba, Waali, Dagaare, Birifor), **Guang** (Gonja, Choruba), **Grusi** (Vagla, Dé, Siti), and **Mande** (Jula [Dyula], Ligbi). Safaliba is presently classified in the Mabia (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 languages<sup>7</sup>. (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 SVO<sup>8</sup> 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                             | ŋaa     | ŋubi     | kɔba    |
|       | dog                             | that    | eat.perf | bone.pl |
|       | 'That dog has eaten the bones.' |         |          |         |
| b)    | * ŋubi                          | kɔba    | baa      | ŋaa     |
|       | 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' | ŋe  | 'see'  | po  | 'farm'    |
| b)    | CVC | zij | 'blood' | duj | 'bite' | woj | 'hear'    |
| c)    | CVV | zaa | 'all'   | saa | 'rain' | poo | 'stomach' |
| d)    | V   | ŋ   | '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) | <b>Adamu</b>         | di       | a   | diibu |
|       | Adamu                | eat.perf | Det | food  |
|       | 'Adamu ate the food' |          |     |       |

<sup>6</sup> "Mabia" is an appropriate indigenous term for this group of closely-related Gur languages (the cognates of mabia in these languages denote a sibling relationship). Mabia 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)

<sup>7</sup> This was confirmed during the data collection, the informant on campus gave words such as pkíri 'short'; néne 'good'(M. kuntanawini, p.c., 16<sup>th</sup>, December, 2014) which during my cross checking were corrected as óŋmáá 'short' sónŋjá('good') in Safaliba (S. Mavis and I. Emilia, p.c. 7<sup>th</sup>, December, 2015). pkíri 'short' and néne 'good' are Vagla words which also mean short and good.

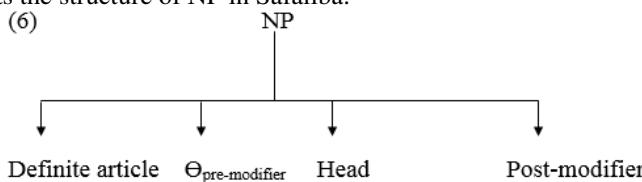
<sup>8</sup> SVO is subject-verb-object sentence pattern.

- 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 jne 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 **ŋaa ŋ-le badaa**  
 dog that it-is dog-male  
 ‘That dog is a male dog.’
5. a) a **kuuri ŋ-le kuuri oŋmaa**  
 Det hoe it-is hoe short  
 ‘The hoe is a short hoe.’
- b. \* a **kuuri ŋ-le 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:



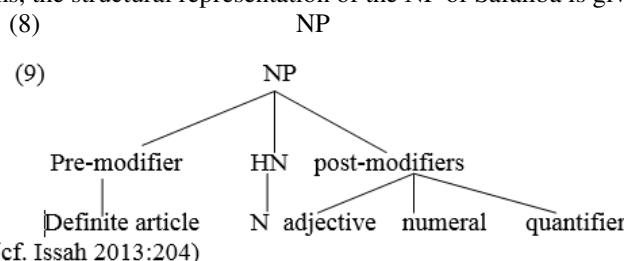
The structure in (6) shows the NP structure in Safaliba, the pre-modifier position for other pre-modifiers (adjectives, numerals, cardinals, quantifiers, etc) is described as null ( $\Theta$ ) except the occurrence of a definite article. The modifiers occur at the post-modifier position in the NP. The 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)	gbaj	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:	sɔblík	lɔj	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 language<sup>9</sup>. This is shown in (14) below:

(14)	numbile	pɛ̄līga	kpeɛñu		
	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 [θ] position at premodification appears only as post-modifier. This is illustrated in the Examples (15) to (17) bellow:

(15)	nira	+	zia <sup>10</sup>	=	ni	zia <sup>11</sup>
	person.sg		red		person.sg	red
	'Red person'					
(16)	bvunja	+	dɔzɔŋ	=	buj	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

<sup>9</sup> 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)

<sup>10</sup> Most Safaliba speakers may say **ni** zíá 'red person' by deleting the final syllable in the noun *nírá* 'person' to read as' *ni*' in the NP. I tried it on other NPs and it works.

<sup>11</sup> Most Safaliba speakers may say **ni** zíá 'red person' by deleting the final syllable in the noun *nírá* 'person' to read as' *ni*' in the NP. I tried it on other NPs and it works.

in both singular and plural NH before it occurs with the adjective. *paaligu* ‘white’. The picture in Safaliba is similar in Dagbani as noted by Issah ( 2013) from a semantic perspective, he suggested that the head is the noun as the adjective is just an optional modifier within the construction. This means that the singular or plural form of the noun cannot co-occur with an adjective in Dagbani, unless the suffix of the noun is truncated. Example:

19. paya + vielli → pay'vielli  
 woman.sg nice  
 ‘Nice woman’ (Issah 2013:205)
20. pay-a + vielli → \*paya vielli  
 woman.sg nice  
 ‘Nice woman’ (Issah 2013:205)

The examples illustrated in (19-20) testify the idea that the final syllable in NH is really truncated to occur with adjectives. The head may also be a pronoun of some kind; mostly a personal pronoun e.g.

21. **ŋ** baŋi daaru yaka  
 1sg know.perf tree.pl many  
 ‘I knew many trees’
22. **ŋaa** ku ma  
 this kill.perf me  
 ‘This has killed me’
23. **i** drigi-ri juurii ſaani  
 2sg take.imperf yam outside.loc  
 ‘You were taking the yam outside’

In Safaliba, when a pronoun functions as Head of a noun phrase, it usually occurs without any kind of modification as seen in (21 - 23)

## 2.2 Premodification of NP in Safaliba

Pre-modifiers of a noun phrase may be determiners, numerals, adjectives, nouns, genitive and participles. In Safaliba, it is only the determiner that occurs at the pre-modifier position in a noun phrase. The NPs below illustrate that:

- (24) i. **a** daba  
 Det man  
 ‘the man’
- ii. **a** bidaba  
 Det boy  
 ‘the boy’
- iii. **a** zu  
 Det head  
 ‘the man’
- (25) i. \*daba **a**  
 Man Det  
 ‘man the’
- ii. \*bidaba **a**  
 boy Det  
 ‘boy the’
- iii. \*zu **a**  
 head Det  
 ‘head the’

The examples in (24) are grammatical in the language because they follow the word order of NP while illustrations in (25) are ungrammatical since they don’t follow the word order of NP in Safaliba but follow that of other Gur languages including Dagbanli and Buli.

## 2.3 Determiners as modifiers of the NP in Safaliba

The class of determiners (D) is a little broader. It contains a number of subcategories including articles, quantifiers, numerals, deictics, and possessive pronouns. Determiners appear at the very beginning of English noun phrases (Carnie 2013:53).

Issah (2013:206) states that articles are generally used in languages to encode specificity or definiteness<sup>12</sup> 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) | <b>a</b>                     | daba         | ŋε       | <b>a</b> | ŋɔyɔ  |
|      | 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                        | <b>a</b>     | ŋε       | pɔyɔ     | 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                       | <b>maa</b> | zu         | bu-hi              | maa |
|      | man                       | Def        | steal.perf | goat.pl            | Def |
|      | 'The man stole the goats' |            |            |                    |     |
| (30) | bìa                       | <b>ka</b>  | dom        | bi:k <sup>13</sup> |     |
|      | 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) | <b>a</b>         | 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. | nmbili      | ayi <sup>14</sup> |  |  |
|         | bird.pl     | two               |  |  |
|         | 'Two birds' |                   |  |  |
| b.      | *ayi        | nmbili            |  |  |
|         | two         | bird.pl           |  |  |
|         | 'Two birds' |                   |  |  |

<sup>12</sup> 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)

<sup>13</sup> The noun phrase *bìa 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) *bìa: 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)

<sup>14</sup> Two is counted in Safaliba as *àyà* and when used as determiner, it is *àyi* as in (32). Similarly, one is counted as *kpan* but when used as determiner it is *kpènlèèri*.

- (33)      karikpa      kpenleeri  
 louse.sg      one  
 ‘one louse’  
 (34)      boori      **ŋ- le      kubiri      ayis̄ba**  
 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      ŋuni      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)      \* kɔŋj      ayi  
 water      two  
 ‘\*two water’  
 (38)      \* zɪŋj      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 quantifier<sup>15</sup> *bile* ‘small’ can occur with mass, non-count and even<sup>16</sup> 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.      ŋmari-sí.      bile      =      **ŋmari 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 *bile* ‘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*

<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>16</sup> 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)

(Carnie 2013:55). Issah (2013:210) also argues that the modification of nouns by quantifiers display a morphological property similar to that of adjectives. This is because, just like adjectives, quantifiers do not occur with full forms of nouns they modify, but only occurs with the root forms of the noun as shown in Dagbani in examples (42) and (43).

(42)	bu'	so.
	goat	certain
	'a certain goat'	
(43)	bi	sheba
	child	some
		'some children'

The paper suggests that just as the adjective class, the noun class final syllables within quantifiers are deleted. This explains why Example (41c)<sup>17</sup> is ungrammatical in Safaliba.

## 2.6 Demonstratives in the Safaliba Noun Phrase

Dixon (2003:61) defines a demonstrative as any item, other than 1st and 2nd person pronouns, which can have pointing or (deictic) reference. He proposes that all languages may have at least one demonstrative, even though their types, forms and functions may vary in different languages. Dryer (2007) further suggests that demonstratives seem a common grammatical category of most languages. There are two classes of demonstratives that have been identified in languages: demonstrative pronouns, which occur as NPs, and demonstrative modifiers of nouns, which are traditionally called demonstrative determiners (Issah 2013). This paper discusses both types of demonstratives as they occur in Safaliba.

Dryer (2007:162) posits that demonstratives basically have two functions in languages: they can be used to draw the hearer's attention to something in the perceptual space of the speaker and hearer, possibly with a gesture indicating approximate location of the referent. They also involve a two-way contrast in terms of distance from the speaker; as in English 'this' and 'that'. The demonstrative *yaa* 'this' or 'that' of Safaliba is similar to that of English demonstratives 'this' and 'that'. The Demonstrative determiners, like the adjectives are post noun modifiers as in example (43)

(43)	Ømariga	<b>yaa</b>	ŋ-le	peeliga
	star.sg	DEM	it-is	white
	'This star is white'			
(44)	* <b>yaa</b>	ŋmariga	ŋ-le	peeliga
	DEM	star.sg	it-is	white
	'This star is white'			

As seen in (43), the demonstratives in Safaliba postmodify the noun. (44) is ungrammatical because the demonstrative does not premodifies the HN. The position of the demonstratives<sup>18</sup> is the same in Dagbani and Buli as they occur in Safaliba. This is illustrated in (45)-Dagbani and in (49)-Buli

(45)	bia	<b>ŋɔ</b>	bi	bɔ-ri	vuri
	child	DEM	NEG	want.imperf	noise
	'This child does not want noise/trouble.'(cf.Issah 2013:208)				

(46)	bā	kā - <b>lá</b>		
	dog	3sg-DEM		
	'That dog'			

(Sulemana 2012:69)

In Safaliba, demonstrative determiners, unlike those of English, do not make a distinction between singular and plural. A close relative of Safaliba, Dagbani and Gurene, has the same morphological property as reported in Nsoh and Ababila (2009:199–200) where the demonstrative does co-vary with the noun while the proximal demonstrative does not. Accordingly, irrespective of whether these demonstratives are used to modify plural nouns or singular nouns, they are invariant in shape as in (47) and (48)

<sup>17</sup>. \*bu-a so  
 goat.sg certain

The modification of nouns by quantifiers displays a morphological property similar to that of adjectives. The noun class morphemes within quantifiers are deleted.

<sup>18</sup> The Demonstratives of Dagbani might pragmatically be similar then to the English Demonstratives 'this' and 'that'. I also observe that while the Demonstrative 'this' has its equivalent as *ŋɔ* (Example 35) (Issah 2013:208) Dagbani is genetically closer to Dagaare than Gurene, and Dagaare does make distinctions between singular and plural Demonstratives (cf. Bodomo, 1997).

- (47)      numbilli            **ŋaa**            di                bee-bie  
             bird.pl            Dem                eat.perf        seed.pl  
             ‘These birds have eaten the seeds.’

(48)      pçœc                **ŋaa**                ku                a                daaru  
             woman             DEM                kill.perf        Def                tree.PL  
             ‘That woman killed the trees’

This explains that, although *yaa* ‘this’ modifies a plural noun *numbillii* ‘birds’, as in (50), the same morphological shape is used to modify a singular noun *pɔyɔ* ‘woman’ as in (51). Amfo (2007:134) also postulates that, pragmatically, demonstratives are used to focus an interlocutor’s attention on objects or locations in the speech situation. They are used to organize the information flow in an ongoing discourse by specifically keeping track of prior discourse participants and activating shared information.

Issah (2013:209) notes that "It is worth mentioning that the demonstrative determiners of Dagbani do occur with proper names, but never with weak forms of pronouns. This explains the grammaticality of structures of (49) in Dagbani and (50) in Safaliba against the ungrammaticality in (51) in Safaliba.



An unusually feature about the Demonstrative determiner of Dagbani is that it is possible for it to occur with emphatic pronouns. The co-occurrence between the emphatic pronouns and the demonstrative determiner seems to give a structure some kind of metaphorical reading and sets up the pronoun so that it co-occurs with a kind of class thereby playing the ‘pointing’ role that demonstratives are typologically known for (Issah 2013:209). The unusual striking typological feature about the demonstrative determiner is similar in Safaliba, and that it is possible for it also to occur with emphatic pronouns. This is illustrated in (52 and 53)

- (52)      ma                  *ŋaa*                  dʒəndʒa  
           1sg/emph            DEM            nearby  
           'Someone as me nearby'

(53)      tu                  *ŋaa*  
           1pl.emph            DEM  
           'that someone as us'

### **3.0 The Adjective Order in the Safaliba Noun Phrase**

English adjectives, whose function is to modify the head noun, come after the determiners. Several adjectives or none may occur in a noun phrase, and in every language, when a number of adjectives do occur, there appears to be some principle of ordering at work. I have observed that in Safaliba, the adjectives seem to appear after the noun as post-modifier, so I describe the Premodification position by adjectives as null. See the structure in (6). For example, native speakers of Safaliba will regard the structure in (54-56) as grammatical because of the position of the adjectives *zia* 'red' and *kpeenju* 'big':

- (54) a ηminiŋa kpεεŋu zia  
       Def sun.sg big red  
       'The big red sun'

(55) \*a zia ηminiŋa kpεεŋu  
       Def red sun big  
       'The red big sun'

(56) \* kpεεŋuzia a ηminiŋa sun  
       big red Def sun  
       '\*the sun' big red'

Example (54) is grammatical because the word order given appears to be normal and any deviation from it is in some way ungrammatical as in (55) and (56). It is possible to have series of adjectives modifying the same simple noun head provided that there is no semantic opposition in the adjectives. When we talk of semantic opposition, we mean ‘conflict’ in the semantic features of the adjectives that modify a particular noun(Issah 2013), the example in (57) illustrates this in Safaliba;

- (57) a-dugu duvvu nyelsira bile korogu gilibu saaligaa tannu

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>nyelsitura</i>	'charming'
• size	<i>bile</i>	'small'
• shape	<i>giilibu</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 bie 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', *biegyu* '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 Safaliba 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 k̄ŋj  
 rain water  
 'Rain water'  
 (61) tambisige tannu  
 gravel sand  
 'Gravel sand'  
 (62) alidžana naajmnni  
 heaven God  
 'Heaven God'  
 (63) yiya kpia  
 village elder.sg  
 'Village elders'  
 (64) \*kpia yiya  
 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) poritrube 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 *poritrube* 'follower'

### 3.3 Post modification in the Safaliba NP

The Postmodification<sup>19</sup> position in the Safaliba noun phrase is also filled by phrases or a clause which is the

<sup>19</sup> 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 analyses 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 **ajna** wa η-ε n dabale  
Def man.sg rel came.perf it-is 1sg. friend

'The boy **who came** is my friend'

- (67) a kube **boori** dʒεŋ η-ε titori  
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 *ajna wa* 'who came' and *boori dʒεŋ* 'which was lying down'; *ajna* '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) nür wāi āli dē sā: mū lá kúlíf  
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 pɔybā gbisíri **daaru** karige  
Def woman.pl sleep.imperf tree.pl by  
'The women was sleeping by the trees'

- (71) a kolige dʒεŋ a yiri tʃaani  
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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