



CONDITIONAL CLAUSES IN SHUPAMEM

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ABSTRACT: *This paper describes the structure of conditional clauses in Shupamem, a Grassfield Bantu language spoken in the West region of Cameroon. The analysis of the empirical data collected from selected Shupamem native speakers revealed that Shupamem makes use of discontinuous morphemes to mark conditional constructions. The structure of these morphemes depends on (i) the branching configuration between the conditional clause and the main clause, and (ii) the tense feature of the conditional clause' finite verb. The structure Cond.<MC involves the discontinuous morpheme kà.....mbú whereby kà "if" is inserted between the subject and the verb of the conditional clause, while mbú "then" introduces the main clause. The tense features of the conditional clauses are marked by the corresponding tense morphemes. In the second alternative of the Cond.<MC structure, the conditional clause is introduced by à pà jùá (roughly translated as "is it that") and closed by ná, and the main clause is introduced by mbú. In MC<Cond. structures, on the contrary, no morpheme introduces the main clause. The conditional clause displays a relative clause-like structure introduced by the morpheme mà jùá "if" and closed by the definitizer ná. Finally, Shupamem conditionals are classified into three types (general truth, possible actions, and imaginary actions), based on their semantic interpretations.*

KEYWORDS: Shupamem, Conditional clause, Main clause, Definitizer.



List of abbreviations and symbols

Cond.	Conditional
Def.	Definitizer
DP	Determiner Phrase
F1	Immediate future tense
F2	Intermediate future tense
F3	Remote future tense
LF	Logical Form
MC:	Main Clause
NP	Noun Phrase
P1	immediate past tense
P2	recent past tense
P3	intermediate past tense
P4	remote past tense
Prs.	Present tense
Rel.	Relativizer
SVO	Subject-Verb-Object
TAM	Tense-Aspect-Mood
VP	Verb Phrase



INTRODUCTION

Conditional clauses are subordinate clauses that express constraints which must be fulfilled so that the object of the main clause can be realized. The concept of conditionality is central to human communication and action, the reason why it is widely studied in linguistics. Crosslinguistically, conditional constructions have the format *if P, then Q*, whereby *P* and *Q* are referred to as the protasis and the apodosis, respectively (Salone, 1979; Caron, 2006). The properties of conditionals can be convergent or divergent in world languages. Relevant literature identifies four types of conditional clauses in English which are introduced by the subordinate conjunctions *if/when* and whose form varies with respect to the tense feature of the verbs of the clauses: (i) the zero conditional which expresses facts that are generally true, (ii) the first conditional which expresses possible situation in the future, (iii) the second conditional that expresses hypothetical or unlikely situations, and (iv) the third conditional used for imaginary situations that did not happen (Adams, 1975; Veltman, 1985; Jackson, 1987; Okoro, 2009; Ragueso 2013; Iatridou, 2000). They are illustrated in (1) below:

- (1) a. If you stand in the rain, you get wet (zero conditional);
- b. If I have money, I will buy a car (first conditional);
- c. If I drove carelessly, I would have an accident (second conditional);
- d. If you had studied, you would have passed the exam (third conditional);

Some studies with insightful findings have been carried out on conditionals in various African languages, few of which are summarized below. Quoting Bassene (2017), conditionality is denoted by the morphemes *me* and *éni* in Eegimaa, a language of the Casamence region of Senegal. However, these multifunctional morphemes appear in other subordinate constructions. Thus, the most reliable conditionality marker in this language is intonation. In substance, Eegimaa conditionals are characterized by an intonation break separating the protasis from the apodosis, and the protasis is consistently marked by a falling pitch before the break.

In Cuwabo, a Bantu language spoken in Mozambique, conditionality is marked in the protasis either through a specific tense or conjunctions (Rosen, 2017). In the first case, two tenses are attested: the situative and the *ka-* counterfactual/hypothetical. In the second case, three conditional conjunctions exist in Cuwabo: *akala* ‘if, whether’ for the situative, *maásikini* ‘even if’ and *yoóvi* ‘otherwise’ for concessive conditionals.

In Tuwuli, a Kwa language spoken in Ghana, conditionals are encoded by the clause-initial morpheme *ntɛ*, and the protasis generally precedes the apodosis (Harley, 2017). In the unmarked conditional, the protasis contains a perfective (unmarked) verb together with its arguments, whereas marked conditionals contain some kind of additional coding, either in the form of special morphemes such as the irrealis morpheme *kufɛ* or the contrast marker *malo*, or in the form of a predicate focus construction involving verbal periphrasis.

In the Gumuz language of Metekel zone, Williamson and Larson (2017) note that the basic structure of conditional constructions is quite consistent, showing only minor variation across their various uses. The apodosis (Q) is always preceded by the protasis (P), thus aiding the listener by mirroring the logical sequence of events implied in the construction (the condition



described in the protasis must be met prior to the main statement of the apodosis). The Gumuz conditional construction is limited for use only in irrealis situations or events that are in doubt as to whether they have happened.

In Ghomala', a Grassfield Bantu language spoken in the West region of Cameroon, the branching configuration between the conditional clause and the main clause is flexible. In the MC<Cond. structure, the conditional clause is introduced by the morpheme *bájə* (Cond.) and closed by the definitizer *áá* (Def). However, in the Cond.<MC structure, the morpheme *bā* introduces the conditional clause, and no definitizer is required. Both the Cond.<MC and the MC<Cond. Structures in Ghomala' are illustrated in (2) below:

- (2) a. Tálá gōtí γō sōkū *bájə* é sōk mkê áá
 Tala F2 go school Cond. 3sg wash plates Def
 “Tala will go to school if he washes the plates” (Bessala & Mogouo 2017)
- b. Tálá sōk mkê *bā* é gōtí γō sōkū
 Tala wash plates Cond. 3sg F2 go school
 “If Tala washes plates, he will go to school” (Bessala & Mogouo 2017)

As indicated above, the aim of this paper is to present the structure of conditional clauses in Shupamem. The data analyzed here originates from recorded speech from Shupamem native speakers and some conditional clauses translated from English/French into Shupamem by the literate informants. The paper first gives an overview of Shupamem, then reviews the relevant literature on this language. It further describes the branching configuration between the main clause and the conditional clause and examines Shupamem conditionals and tense encoding. The paper wraps up with the semantic taxonomy of conditional clauses in Shupamem.

Overview of Shupamem

Shupamem is an SVO, tone and noun class Bantu language spoken by the Bamun people of the Noun Division in the western region of Cameroon. Previous studies on this language identified fifteen noun classes based on the singular/plural pairing, four past tenses and three future tenses. Quoting Ngougouo (2020), the present tense of non-stative verbs in Shupamem is always associated with aspect (progressive, habitual and the evidential). The past tense is structured into four tenses: the immediate past (P1) which is not morphologically realized, the recent past (P2) marked by the morpheme *pé*, the intermediate past (P3) marked by *pí*, and the remote past (P4) marked by *kàpí*. Likewise, there exist an immediate future tense (F1) marked by the morpheme *ná-ntwá*, an intermediate future tense (F2) marked by *ná-ló?* and a remote future tense (F3) marked by *ná-ntwá-ló?*. Shupamem tense markers are left-adjoined to the finite verbs as illustrated in (2) below:

- (3) a. món *ténă* n3ú péén
 Child Prog-Prs Eat fufu
 “The child is eating banana” (Progressive present tense)



b. món pé jù péén
 Child P2 eat fufu
 “The child ate banana” (recent past tense)

c. món ná-ntwá jù péén
 Child F1 eat fufu
 “The child will eat banana” (immediate future tense)

The examples above illustrate the progressive present, the recent past and the immediate future tenses in Shupamem. They are respectively marked by *ténǎ*, *pé* and *ná-ntwá*. Before examining the branching configuration between the main clause and the conditional clause in Shupamem, it is important to review the literature on this language and emphasize on the gap this paper is aimed to fill.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON SHUPAMEM

This section reviews the few descriptive works achieved on Shupamem, the language under study.

- Ward (1938) in *The phonetic structure of Bamun* gave an overview of the sound system of Shupamem. Her paper identifies the vowels, the consonants and the tones of Shupamem.
- Boum (1977) wrote her postgraduate Degree Diploma (DES) thesis on a phonological sketch of Bamun (*Esquisse phonologique du Bamun*). She studied the structure of vowels, consonants and tones identified in Shupamem, complementing the phonological analysis by Ward (1938).
- Nguesso (1979) described the phonology of Bapi, a “Shupamem Linguistic Island” in his DES thesis, reviewing the sound system of Shupamem, initially discussed by Ward (1938) and Boum (1977).
- Djeunou (1981) worked on the VP in Shupamem in his “Maitrise” dissertation entitled *Le verbe en bamun*. The work analyzed the syllabic structure and the valency of verbs, and overviewed the TAM system of Shupamem.
- Ondoua (2004) provided the sentence structure of Shupamem within the Generative Approach of Chomsky. He focused on the simple, the compound and the complex constructions in Shupamem.
- Molu (2009) worked on *A key to Shupamem nominal morphology*. The paper analyzed the noun class system of Shupamem laying emphasis on the grammatical function of tones on singular and plural nouns.
- Rojas (2011) worked on *Definite and indefinite Numeral Phrases in Shupamem*. Based on truth-value tests and distributional contrasts, she demonstrated that the orders



Numeral>Noun vs Noun>Numeral actually correspond to different interpretations of the corresponding noun phrases. Pre-nominal numerals give rise to indefinite interpretations, while post-nominal numerals are associated with a definite reading of the noun phrase in which they occur. In other words, when the numeral precedes the noun, the modified noun is considered indefinite. Reversibly, the NP is considered definite when it precedes the numeral. The order between the noun and the numeral is flexible; the nuance is at the level of the semantic interpretation of the utterance.

- Nchare (2011) in *The syntax of agreement in the Shupamem DP and Greenberg's Universals 20* described and explained data from Shupamem that provide significant counter evidence to Cinque's (2005:315) Theory of Greenberg's Universal 20. The said theory argues that only fourteen of the mathematically possible orders of the four elements: Demonstrative, Numeral, Adjective and Noun are attested in the languages of the world. Contrary to Cinque's hypothesis, data from Nchare (2011) revealed that eighteen word orders of the four above-mentioned elements are licensed in Shupamem.
- Nchare (2012) in *The grammar of Shupamem* (a Ph.D thesis) proposed a grammar of Shupamem. Prominent aspects of the Shupamem morphosyntax are discussed in this thesis. In addition to providing evidence that many movement operations in Shupamem are highly constrained, he analyzed the internal syntax of the DP, the words alternation between the head noun and its different modifiers, the syntax of negation, the syntax of focus, the syntax of body part expressions, the distribution of lexical categories within the Shupamem clause, among others. His analysis indicated that Shupamem displays a bipartite negation with a wide range of negation particles whose surface forms depend on the status of Tense, Aspect and Mood (TAM). Furthermore, the syntax of focus suggests two focus fields for Shupamem (the left peripheral field and the post-verbal field).
- Ngougou (2016) analyzed the morphology and syntax of adverbs and adverbial expressions in Shupamem. On the one hand, the morphological study of adverbs established the morphological distinctions between the adverb classes that exist in this language, while, on the other, the syntactic study provided the unmarked positions and the hierarchy of adverbs within a Shupamem structure. Based on empirical data, the results of the study showed that Shupamem has both pure and derived adverbs. The adverbs derivation processes attested in this language are affixation, adjunction, reduplication and substitution. The syntactic study showed that in Shupamem, adverbs can be right-adjoined or left-adjoined to the verb. Additionally, some adverbs allow movements through focalization and topicalization, (including higher class adverbs and post-verbal lower class adverbs). For other adverb classes, movements are impossible or highly constrained (in particular pre-verbal lower class adverbs). The results also revealed that the hierarchy between post-verbal adverbs is highly flexible, because a locative adverb can precede or follow a manner, a temporal, or a degree adverb etc. Finally, contrary to the Cinque's (1999) Fixed Hierarchy Hypothesis, this study provided the hierarchy of adverbs in Shupamem, a hierarchy that remains flexible as far as post-verbal adverbs are concerned.
- Njutapmvoui (2017) presented the various forms a Shupamem verb takes according to its tense, aspect and mood. It emerged from his work that the verb in the infinitive comprises the prefix, /jìn-/ , and a verbal base to which a suffix can be added to form a



new word. In addition, the verb phrase is made up of seven elements against Meeussen's (1967) ten ones. They are: "initial, post initial, formative, limitative, verbal base, pre-final and post-final". Moreover, his data revealed that aspects in Shupamem can be expressed lexically. In addition, he realized that there is no simple present tense, as present events can only be habitual or progressive. Finally, his work has proven that negation, which varies according to mood, tense and aspect triggers a subject marker in the sentence.

- Ngoungou (2020) in his paper entitled *English vs Shupamem relative clauses: A contrastive analysis* outlined the major structural differences between the English and Shupamem relative clauses. He noted that English relative clauses are introduced by pronouns which indicate the position relativized and the syntactic/semantic role of the head noun (Comrie, 1998). Also, English relative pronouns can be omitted in object relativization without affecting the sentence's grammaticality and semantic interpretation. In Shupamem however, the relativizer is a discontinuous morpheme which encircles the relative domain: the first item (*juá* for singular or *fuá* for plural) introduces the relative clause while the second one (*na*) closes the relative domain. Unlike the English relative pronouns, none of these morphemes encodes the syntactic/semantic role of the antecedent. Similarly, the deletion of a relative morpheme in Shupamem renders the sentence ungrammatical.
- Ngoungou (2021) in *The syntax-semantics of relative clauses in Shupamem* examined the syntactic and semantic properties of relative clauses in Shupamem, based on the generative procedure, in particular, the minimalist framework of Chomsky (1995) and subsequent works). According to his results, the relative particles in Shupamem are discontinuous morphemes having polysemous and multifunctional interpretations. The investigation of the co-occurrence relations between relative clauses and other clause constructions comprising questions, focus, topics, negations etc. revealed some alternations of positions between the relativizers and otherwise morphemes of the aforementioned clauses. The study also revealed that while some types of relative clauses (embedded, finite, restrictive, and nonrestrictive) are licensed in Shupamem, some others (headless and non-finite) are not. Moreover, the relativization strategy attested in this language is pronoun retention and the derivation strategy that best describes relative clauses is the Head Raising Analysis (Brame, 1968; Schachter, 1973; Vergnaud, 1974; Carlson, 1977; Kayne, 1994; Bianchi, 1999 & 2000), whereby the antecedent is generated inside the relative clause before moving to a position inside the main clause. The extraction site of the antecedent is filled by a resumptive pronoun. Finally, the semantic features of the relativized head noun must match with the truth-value of the verb of the relative clause for the construction to be legible at LF.
- Wokwenmendiam (2022) in *Des faits grammaticaux à la didactisation dans le contexte de la revitalisation des langues camerounaises: le cas du Shupamem* proposed a pedagogic grammar of Shupamem based on the descriptive works available in this language. The purpose of her thesis is language revitalization and teaching to native and non-native speakers.

It clearly appears from the literature above that Shupamem conditionals are a virgin topic of research on Shupamem. Therefore, this paper intends to fill in this gap and complements the existing literature on this language.



The Structure of Conditional Sentences in Shupamem

Syntactically, conditional sentences consist of two clauses: the conditional clause (or if-clause) which states the condition upon which the main clause depends, and the main clause which contains the result. In many languages including English, French and other Grassfield Bantu languages, the position of the main clause is flexible with respect to that of the conditional clause. This flexibility is also observed in Shupamem where the main clause can precede or follow the conditional clause.

The Structure MC<Cond.

In the branching configuration MC<Cond. in Shupamem, the conditional clause displays a relative clause-like structure introduced by the morpheme *mà jùə* “if” and closed by the definitizer *ná*. In fact, Shupamem relative clauses are introduced by the relativizer *jùə* (Rel) and closed by the relative clause reinforcer (definitizer) *ná*. This is illustrated in (4) below:

- (4) a. *məmví* *ténă* *ntwó*
 goat Prog-Prs come
 “The goat is coming”
- b. *məmví* *jùə* *í* *té* *ntwó* *ná*
 goat Rel Res. Prog-Prs come Def
 “The goat that is coming” (Ngoungouo 2021:115)

It is observed from the examples above that the relative clause *jùə í té ntwó ná* “that is coming” is introduced by the relativizer *jùə* “that” and closed by the definitizer *ná*. This configuration is observed with Shupamem conditional clauses whereby the main clause precedes if-clause. Consider the examples below:

- (5) a. *món* *ná-ntwó* *kpú* *màjùə* *í* *nɔú* *lí?* *ná*
 child F1 die Cond. 3sg eat poison Def
 “The child will die if he eats poison”
- b. * *món* *nántwó* *kpú* *màjùə* *í* *nɔú* *lí?* ____
 child F1 die Cond. 3sg eat poison

Intended: “The child will die if he eats poison”

In (5.a), the main clause *món nántwó kpú* “the child will die” precedes the conditional clause *màjùə í nɔú lí? ná* “if he eats poison”. As indicated above, the conditional clause behaves like a relative clause, as it is introduced by the conditional morpheme *màjùə* “if” (comparable to the relativizer *jùə* “that”) and closed by the conditional clause reinforcer *ná* (equivalent to the relative clause reinforcer *ná*). It should be noted that the presence of the definitizer *ná* is obligatory in both types of clauses (relative clause and conditional clause) in Shupamem. This



It is observed in the data above that the absence of the conditional morpheme *mbú* “then” led to the ungrammaticality of that sentence. The second alternative with the structure Cond.<MC in Shupamem calls upon the use of the conditional phrase *à pà jùə* “is it that” which introduces the conditional domain. The latter which contains the relativizer *jùə* “that”, as in the structure MC<Cond. is closed by the definitizer *ná*. The main clause on its turn is introduced by *mbú* “then”. This is illustrated in (9) below:

- (9) *à pà jùə wǎ -fǎ ŋgét mbùəm ná, mbú í nántwé jùn màtwá*
 Cond1 father-my have money Def Cond2 3sg F1 buy car
 “If my father has money, (then) he will buy a car”

It is worth noting that the presence of these morphemes altogether is obligatory. Living out any of them renders the sentence ungrammatical.

In the analysis done so far, the focus has been on the structure (word order) of the conditional clauses. Let us examine tense encoding in Shupamem conditional constructions.

Shupamem Conditionals and Tense Encoding

Tense is an important feature to take into consideration in language study. It was previously indicated that Shupamem distinguishes between the past, the present and the future tenses. These tenses are divided into sub-tenses respective of their remoteness from the discourse time. In the following sub-section, the conditional clauses shall be examined based on the tense of the “if-clause”.

Conditional Clause in the Present Tense

Morphologically, there is no present tense morpheme per se, at least for dynamic/non-stative verbs in Shupamem. The present tense is mostly used with the imperfective aspect (Nchare, 2012). Thus, the present tense co-occurs with the aspect (habitual, progressive, etc.) morphemes. Consider the progressive and habitual present tenses below:

- (10) a. *món ténǎ nǔ lí?*
 child Prog-Prs eat poison
 “The child is eating poison”
 b. *món káá nǔ lí?*
 child Prog-Prs eat poison
 “The child is eating poison”

In the data above, the present tense is associated with the progressive morpheme *ténǎ* and the habitual morpheme *káá*. In such a conditional, the verb of the main clause is in the future tense, irrespective of the branching configuration between both clauses. The structure in (11) illustrates conditional in the progressive present tense:



- (11) a. *món kù mbá tié nʒú lí? mbú í ná-ntwó kpù*
 child Cond1 Prog-Prs eat poison Cond2 3sg F1 die

“If the child is eating poison, then he will die”

- b. *món ná-ntwó kpù màjùá í mbá tié nʒú lí? ná*
 child F1 die Cond 3sg be Prog-Prs eat poison Def

“The child will die if he is eating poison”

The structure of (11.a) is Cond.<MC while that of (11.b) is MC<Cond. In both of them, the verb in the conditional clause is in the present tense while the main clause’ verb is in the future tense. It is also possible in Shupamem to have the following tense combination: if-clause in the present tense and main clause in the present tense. In this case, if-clause contains the condition morpheme *kù*; *mbú* does not introduce the main clause. Moreover, only the structure Cond.<MC is allowed in this option, as as illustrated below:

- (12) a. *món kù nʒú lí? í φ kpù*
 child Cond1-Prs eat poison 3sg Prs die

“If the child is eating poison, then he will die”

- *b. *món φ kpù màjùá í kù nʒú lí? ná*
 child Prs die Cond 3sg Cond-Prs eat poison Def

Intended: “The child will die if he is eating poison”

From the data above, one notes that both the conditional clause and the main clause are in the present tense and follow the structure Cond.<MC (12.a). The attempt to have otherwise configuration renders the sentence ungrammatical. This type of conditional sentence encodes general truth, as shall be discussed in section 6.

Conditional in the Past Tense

The past tense in Shupamem is fourfold. The immediate past tense (P1) is not morphologically realized in Shupamem. The recent past tense (P2) is marked by the morpheme *pé*, while *pí* marks the intermediate past tense (P3). Finally, the remote past tense (P4) is marked by *kàpí*. Consider the following examples:

- (13) a. *món φ kù nʒú lí? mbú í φ kpù*
 child P1 Cond1 eat poison Cond2 3sg P1 die

“If the child has eaten poison, then he would die (Immediate past tense)

- b. *món pé ñkù nʒú lí? mbú í pé kpù*
 child P2 Cond1 eat poison Cond2 3sg P2 die



“If the child ate poison, then he would die” (Recent past tense)

c. *món pí kù nʒá lí? mbú í pí kpù*
 child P3 Cond1 eat poison Cond2 3sg P3 die

“If the child ate poison, then he would die” (Intermediate past tense)

d. *món kàpí kù nʒá lí? mbú í kàpí kpù*
 child P4 Cond1 eat poison Cond2 3sg P4 die

“If the child had eaten poison, then he would have died” (Remote past tense)

The examples above illustrate conditional constructions in the immediate past tense, (13.a), the recent past tense (13.b), the intermediate past tense (13.c) and the remote past tense (13.d). It should be noted that the interpretation of these constructions is related to the remoteness of the actions from the discourse time.

Conditional clause in the Future Tense

Quoting Ngougou (2021), the future tense in Shupamem is divided into three forms (F1, F2, and F3), according to the remoteness of the action from the present. The immediate future (F1) expresses actions that will take place very soon and is marked by the morphemes *ná-ntwá*. The intermediate future tense (F2) expresses actions that will be performed later in the future and is marked by the morpheme *ná-lʒ?*. Finally, the remote future tense (F3) expresses actions that are remote from the present, and at times not specified. It is marked by the morpheme *ná-ntwá-lʒ?*, which is the association of F1 and F2 morphemes.

For conditional clauses in the future tense, the morpheme *ná-* which is the surface form of the verb *mbá* (be) is replaced by the latter in the if-clause, while the main clause maintains the surface form. Moreover, unlike the present and past tenses, the future tense morphemes follow the conditional morpheme in the if-clause. Consider the data below:

(14) a. *món kù mbá-ntwá jù lí? mbú í ná-ntwá kpù*
 child Cond1 F1 eat poison Cond2 3sg F1 die

“If the child will eat poison, then he will die” (Immediate future tense)

b. *món kù mbá-lʒ? jù lí? mbú í ná-lʒ? kpù*
 child Cond1 F2 eat poison Cond2 3sg F2 die

“If the child will eat poison, then he will die” (Intermediate future tense)

b. *món kù mbá-ntwá-lʒ? jù lí? mbú í ná-ntwá-lʒ? kpù*
 child Cond1 F3 eat poison Cond2 3sg F3 die

“If the child will eat poison, then he will die” (Remote future tense)



It appears from these examples that when the if-clause is in the immediate future tense (F1), the main clause is in the immediate future tense (F1). Similarly, when if-clause is in the intermediate future tense (F2), the main clause is in the intermediate future tense (F2). Finally, when if-clause is in the remote future tense (F3), the main clause is also in the remote future tense (F3).

Based on the data above, the following rules can be drawn with regards to the tense of Shupamem conditionals:

- Rule 1: if-clause in the present tense, main clause in the future tense.
- Rule 2: if-clause in the present tense, main clause in the present tense.
- Rule 3: if-clause in the immediate past tense (P1), main clause in the immediate past tense (P1).
- Rule 4: if-clause in the recent past tense (P2), main clause in the recent past tense (P2).
- Rule 5: if-clause in the intermediate past tense (P3), main clause in the intermediate past tense (P3).
- Rule 6: if-clause in the remote past tense (P4), main clause in the remote past tense (P4).
- Rule 7: if-clause in the immediate future tense (F1), main clause in the immediate future tense (F1);
- Rule 7: if-clause in the intermediate future tense (F2), main clause in the intermediate future tense (F2);
- Rule 7: if-clause in the remote future tense (F3), main clause in the remote future tense (F3);

All these rules can be summarised into two, as follows:

- **Rule 1: if-clause in the present tense, main clause in the future tense.**
- **Rule 2: If-clause in x-tense, main clause in x-tense.**

After presenting the tenses of the conditional clauses in Shupamem, let us examine the semantics of these clauses in Shupamem.

Semantic Taxonomy of Shupamem Conditional Clauses

This section classifies Shupamem conditional clauses based on the type of meaning they encode. In this respect, Thompson, Longacre and Hwang (2007) made the distinction between reality and unreality conditionals. Reality conditionals, sometimes referred to as factual conditionals, refer to real present or past conditions. Unreality conditionals refer to unrealised situations, either those that could yet happen or could have happened, but did not. Based on empirical data, Shupamem conditionals can be classified into three types that are presented below.



Type 1 Conditionals

Type 1 conditionals in Shupamem express facts that are generally true, whereby the conditions generally have the same results. Here, the conditional and the main clause are in the present tense, as illustrated below:

(15) a. *món kɛ́ nʒú líʔ í ɸ kpá*
 child Cond1-Prs eat poison 3sg Prs die

“If the child eats poison, he dies”

b. *ɲəm kɛ́ ntá jáʔfù á ɸ júm*
 sun Cond1-Prs hit leaf 3sg Prs dry

“If the sun hits the leaf, it dries”.

The actions expressed by the conditional clauses above are generally true. These examples fall within the type 1 conditional clauses in which the conditional and the main clauses are in the present tense.

Type 2 Conditionals

In type 2 conditionals, the actions described are likely to happen in the future if the condition is satisfied. In other words, the question of the (non-)fulfilment of the action is left unresolved. This is expressed in two manners: (i) the conditional clause is in the present tense while the main clause is in the future tense; (ii) the conditional and the main clauses are in the future tense. This is illustrated in the example below:

(16) a. *món kɛ́ nʒú líʔ mbú í ná-ntwá kpá*
 child Cond1 eat poison Cond2 3sg F1 die

“If the child eats poison, (then) he will die”

b. *món kɛ́ mbá-ntwá jù líʔ mbú í ná-ntwá kpá*
 child Cond1 F1 eat poison Cond2 3sg F1 die

“If the child will eat poison, then he will die”

The actions described above may be fulfilled if the conditions stated by the conditional clause are satisfied. In (16.a) the conditional clause is in the present tense while the main clause is in the future tense, whereas in (16.b), both the conditional and the main clauses are in the future tense. The common semantic feature they share is the possibility for the action to be fulfilled under the stated conditions.



Type 3 Conditionals

Type 3 conditional clauses in Shupamem encode imaginary situations or actions that were not fulfilled because their fulfilment opportunity is past. The past tense is used in the main clause and the conditional clause. This is shown in the data below:

(17) a. *món pé nkú nzú lí? mbú í pé kpà*
 child P2 Cond1 eat poison Cond2 3sg P2 die

“If the child ate poison, then he would die” (Recent past tense)

b. *món kàpí kú nzú lí? mbú í kàpí kpà*
 child P4 Cond1 eat poison Cond2 3sg P4 die

“If the child had eaten poison, then he would have died”

It is observed from the data above that the actions described by the sentences are expressed in the past tense. They were not fulfilled because the opportunity to fulfil them was not given.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to describe and classify the conditional clauses in Shupamem. Based on the analysis of the available data, the following remarks have been made: the positions of the conditional clause and the main clause in Shupamem are interchangeable; conditional structures contain conditional morphemes whose form and position can vary with respect to the tense features of the finite verbs of the sentence; conditional clauses in Shupamem can be expressed in the present, the past and the future tenses and their various subdivisions. The semantic classification of Shupamem conditionals grouped them into three types, namely: type 1 for general truth, type 2 for realizable actions, and type three for imaginary actions. The paper has revealed some similarities between Shupamem and other word languages as far as conditionals are concerned. These reside in the flexibility of the positions of items, the use of conditional morphemes, the optional use of *then*, and the significant role of tense in the expression of conditionality. However, Shupamem divert from Eegimaa which uses intonation to reliably encode conditionals, from Tuwuli whose conditional morpheme is clause-initial, and from Ghomala’ whose definitizer can be omitted whereas they cannot in Shupamem.



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