Another constituency test: VP-ellipsis

(1)  
a. John can speak Passamaquoddy, and Mary can speak Passamaquoddy too.
b. John can speak Passamaquoddy, and Mary can __ too.  
   [ __ = ‘speak Passamaquoddy]  
c. *John can speak Passamaquoddy, and Mary __ Passamaquoddy too.  
   [ __ = ‘can speak’]

(2)  
\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{T'} \\
\text{N} \\
\text{T} \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{V} \\
\text{NP} \\
\text{Passamaquoddy}
\end{array}
\]

> *speak Passamaquoddy* is a constituent.
> *can speak* isn’t.

convention followed here for examples like (2b):

(3)  
John can speak Passamaquoddy, and Mary can (*speak Passamaquoddy*) too.
Passamaquoddy-Maliseet background

• Algonquian language(s) of New Brunswick and northern Maine
• Rich verbal morphology:

(4) a. ‘t-olom-aph -a -1
3 away track_{TA} DIR OBV
‘S/he heads away, tracking him/her’

b. ‘t-ap-aph -a -l
3 back.from track_{TA} DIR OBV
‘S/he is back from tracking him/her’

c. mihq-aph -a -l
(3) find track_{TA} DIR OBV
‘S/he discovers his/her tracks’

d. motiy-aph -a -l
(3) heard track_{TA} DIR OBV
‘S/he is heard, but not seen, tracking him/her’

e. ‘-koskay-aph -a -l
3 destroy track_{TA} DIR OBV
‘S/he loses his/her tracks’

f. ‘-tehsahq-aph -a -l
3 high.ground track_{TA} DIR OBV
‘S/he tracks him/her on high ground’

(5) a. ‘t-olom-aptu -n
3 away track_{TI} INAN
‘S/he heads away, tracking it’

b. ‘t-ap-aptu -n
3 back.from track_{TI} INAN
‘S/he is back from tracking it’

(6) a. olo\text{-}\text{m-apt} -u
away track_{AI} 3
‘S/he heads away, leaving tracks’

b. pet-apt -u
this.way track_{AI} 3
‘S/he arrives, leaving tracks’
(7) **animate** | **inanimate**  
|:----------------|-----------------|  
| skitap ‘person’ | ponapsq ‘rock’  
| amsqochehkan ‘doll’ | wikuwam ‘house’ |  
| psikhqimins ‘strawberry’ | saht ‘blueberry’  
| nitq ‘my eyebrow’ | nsisoq ‘my eye’  

- Agreement with the subject, object, indirect object:

(8) kt-ol -ihtu -l -oni -ya -l
  
  2 thus TA+O 1>2 INAN 2PL INANPL
  
  ‘I made them for you (pl)’

- overt pronouns are mainly for emphasis:

(9) ?? nil k-tokom-ol kil
  
  I 2 hit 1>2 you
  
  ‘I hit you’

(10) (??lui) mangia gli spaghetti  
    [Italian]
    
    he eat-3SG theMPL spaghetti
    
    ‘He’s eating spaghetti’

- word order is quite free:

(11) a. N-siwehs n-kisi- mil -a -n -ol psite oqitonu-l  
    [Bruening 2001, 21]
    
    1- brother 1-PERF-give-DIR-INAN-INANP all canoe- INANP
    
    ‘I gave my brother all the canoes’
  
  b. Nkisimilanol nsiwehs psite oqitonul.
  
  c. Psite oqitonul nsiwehs nkisimilanol.
  
  d. Nsiwehs psite oqitonul nkisimilanol.
  
  e. Nkisimilanol psite oqitonul nsiwehs.
  
  f. Psite oqitonul nksimilanol nsiwehs.
Some theories of languages like Passamaquoddy-Maliseet:

Hale 1983:

(12)  
\[
\text{S} \\
\text{nsiwehs} \quad \text{nkisimilanol oqitonul} \\
\text{my-brother} \quad \text{I-gave} \quad \text{canoes} \\
\text{‘I gave my brother the canoes’}
\]

Jelinek 1984, Baker 1996:

(13)  
\[
\text{XP} \\
\text{NP} \quad \text{X’} \\
\text{nsiwehs} \quad \text{NP} \quad \text{X’} \\
\text{‘my-brother’} \quad \text{oqitonul} \\
\text{‘canoes’} \\
\text{TP} \\
\text{T} \quad \text{NP} \\
\text{(pro)} \quad \text{T} \\
\text{‘I’} \\
\text{NP} \quad \text{VP} \\
\text{(pro)} \quad \text{V} \\
\text{‘him’} \quad \text{nkisimilanol} \\
\text{‘1-gave-3-InPl’} \quad \text{(pro)} \\
\text{‘them’}
\]

(14)  
As for my brother, as for the canoes, I gave them to him.
VP-ellipsis

(15) N-ikuwoss ‘t-apqote-htu-n khakon,
1 mother 3 open TI INAN door
‘My mother opened the door...’

   a. ... kenuk nil nt-aluw- apqote-htu-n
       but I 1 unable open TI INAN
   ‘...but I couldn’t open it’

   b. ... kenuk nil nt-aluw-ehtu-n
       but I 1 unable TI INAN
   ‘...but I couldn’t (open the door).’

These mean more or less the same thing.
But I’ll argue that (a) involves pro-drop of the object, while (b) is VP-ellipsis.

VP-ellipsis, argument 1: adverbs

(16) N-ikuwoss menakaciw ‘t-apqote-htu-n khakon,
1 mother quietly 3 open TI INAN door
‘My mother opened the door quietly...’

   a. ... kenuk nil nt-aluw- apqote-htu-n
       but I 1 unable open TI INAN
   ‘...but I couldn’t open it’
       [...I couldn’t open it at all]

   b. ... kenuk nil nt-aluw-ehtu-n
       but I 1 unable TI INAN
   ‘...but I couldn’t (open the door quietly).’
       [...I opened it, but made noise]

(17) N-siwehs nihikehs miyaw-telom-on,
1 brother three.times (3) well hit INAN
‘My brother hit it (a target) three times...’

   a. ...kenuk nil nt-aluw-miyaw-telom-on
       but I 1 unable well hit INAN
   ‘...but I couldn’t hit it’
       [...not at all]

   b. ... kenuk nil nt-aluw-ehtu-n
       but I 1 unable TI INAN
   ...but I couldn’t (hit it three times)”
       [...though maybe I hit it once]
(18) ‘-Kisi-pqa-nom -on -ol ‘kekiw.
3 PERF lift by.hand.INAN INANPL all.day
‘He lifted them (weights) all day...’

a. ...kenuk nil nt-aluwi- pqa-nom -on -ol
   but I I unable lift by.hand.INAN INANPL
   ‘...but I couldn’t lift them’ [...at all]

b. ...kenuk nil nt-aluw-ehtu-n -ol
   but I I unable Ti INAN INANPL
   ‘...but I couldn’t (lift them all day)’ [...though maybe for a while]

English: VP-ellipsis and adverbs

(19) a. My mother could open the door quietly, but I couldn’t (open the door quietly)

b. TP
   NP
   T’
   my mother
   T could
   VP
   V’
   AdvP
   V
   NP
   quietly
   open
   the door
   ...
   but I couldn’t ___.

proposal: same explanation for Passamaquoddy-Maliseet.
VP-ellipsis, argument 2: objects

(20) Skinuhsis ‘-kisi-sunhom-on ponapsq;
    boy 3 PERF paint INAN rock
    ‘The boy painted a rock,...’

    a. nil-ote-na n-kisi-sunhom-on
    I FOC also 1 PERF paint INAN
    ‘...and I painted it too.’          [we painted the same rock]

    b. nil-ote-na n-kis-ehtu-n
    I FOC also 1 PERF TI INAN
    ‘...and I did (paint a rock) too’   [we painted different rocks]

again, in Passamaquoddy as in English, if you’re eliding the verb, you’re eliding the direct object.

VP-ellipsis: what happens to the VP

The object really is in there....

(21) a. N-ikuwoss ‘t-apqote-htu-n khakon, kenuk nil nt-aluw-ehtu-n
    1 mother 3 open TI INAN door but I 1 unable TI INAN
    ‘My mother opened the door, but I couldn’t (open the door).’

    b. N-ikuwoss ‘t-apqote-htu-n -ol khakon-ol, kenuk nil nt-aluw-ehtu-n -ol
    1 mother 3 open TI INAN INANPL door- INANPL but I 1 unable TI INAN INANPL
    ‘My mother opened the doors, but I couldn’t (open the doors).’

...but it’s obligatorily missing in VP-ellipsis clauses:

(22) *’-Kisi-kpote-htu-n khakon, kenuk ‘t-aluw-ehtu-n possiyantesk
    3 PERF close TI INAN door but 3-unable TI INAN window
    ‘She closed the door, but she couldn’t close the window’
Conclusion:

VP-ellipsis (in English and Passamaquoddy-Maliseet) affects a constituent which includes the verb, the direct object, and (certain) adverbs:

(23) a. N-ikuwoss menakaciw ‘-kis-apqote-htu-n khakon
   1 mother quietly 3 PERF open TI INAN door
   ‘My mother opened the door quietly’

b. TP
   NP
   n-ikuwoss
   ‘1-mother’
   T
   ‘-kis-
   3-PERF’X
   XP
   ‘htu-n
   ‘TI-INAN’
   V
   V’
   AdvP
   menakaciw
   ‘quietly’
   NP
   menakaciw
   ‘open’
   khakon
   ‘door’

One moral of the story

Languages are more similar than they appear. Even a language like Passamaquoddy-Maliseet, with very little straightforward evidence for VPs, actually has them if you look hard enough.
Works cited