Adpositions and adpositional relator nouns in Akebu

Abstract: This paper presents an overview, based on field data, of the adpositional system in Akebu, a Kwa (Ghana-Togo mountain) language of West Africa. Like other Kwa languages, Akebu has both linear types of adpositions. Prepositions are not numerous and are fully grammaticalized. Two prepositions are used very widely, one of them expressing a comitative meaning and a number of related ones, the other having a generalized locative meaning, as well as other ones. In contrast, postpositions are more numerous, but most of them are weakly grammaticalized relator nouns that express the meanings of locational orientations and keep nominal morphology and independent uses. Still, grammaticalized postpositions are also present, the most common of them being a postposition that expresses apudessive orientation.

Key words: adpositions, grammaticalization, Akebu, Ghana-Togo Mountain languages, Kwa

1 Introduction

This paper presents a description of adpositions and adpositional relator nouns in Akebu. Akebu (Kebu; ISO 639-3 keu) is spoken mainly in the prefecture of Akebu in Togo (West Africa) by ca. 70 000 people (Gbлем-Poidi and Kantchoa 2012; Eberhard et al. 2019), and there exist different dialect groups, the nature of which requires further research. Akebu is a Kwa (< Niger-Congo) language of the Kebu-Animere group that is as a part of a unity referred to as “Ghana-Togo Mountain languages” (henceforth GTM languages), or “Togo Remnant languages”. Although the genealogical nature of the unity is very disputable, GTM languages have a number of structural similarities (see Ameka & Essegbey 2017 for an overview of both points). As will be shown in the paper, the adpositional system of Akebu is rather typical for GTM.


The data for this study were collected during a number of field trips to the village of Djon and neighbouring villages of Kotora and Djitrime in the prefecture of Akebu of Togo in 2012, 2013, 2016 and 2019. Some examples, marked (txt), are acquired from texts. The text collection contains 4 hours of spoken speech recorded from about three dozens of speakers. The texts are mainly tales and traditional narratives, but include instances of other genres. Elicited examples are unmarked. In sum, 7 speakers were involved in the research as regular consultants during elicitation sessions, but there was no obligatory cross-checking of all the examples elicited. French as used as the contact language during elicitation sessions. No specific questionnaire was used for eliciting the data reported in this paper.

Akebu examples are presented in a phonological transcription; some phonemes have variants and allophones that we do not mark separately. Akebu has a rather typical Kwa phoneme inventory (distinguishing, in particular, ±ATR vowels i vs. i and u vs. u) and a tonal system of three level tones. A
number of prefixes and proclitics contain an underspecified vowel $v$ and are subject to vowel harmony with the following rules: $v \sim e /_e, i; v \sim o /_o, u; v \sim æ /_æ, i; v \sim a /_a, æ, o, i$.

Like other Kwa languages, Akebu is an SVO language, and oblique constituents normally follow the direct object noun phrase. In a noun phrase, Akebu has Poss N X order, in other words, all noun phrase modifiers other than the possessor noun phrase follow the head noun, while the possessor noun phrase precedes it. Akebu has a noun class system. Noun classes are marked by prefixes and suffixes at the same time and are labeled here by letter corresponding to the first sound of the object pronoun. Table 1 (reproduced from Makeeva & Shluinsky 2018a: 5 with some changes in the analysis) introduces the list of the seven Akebu noun classes, labeled by the form of the corresponding object pronouns.

Table 1. Akebu noun classes: markers and examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>class</th>
<th>prefix</th>
<th>suffix</th>
<th>examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ŋ</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>-ya`</td>
<td><code>bird</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>ŋ-</td>
<td>-po`</td>
<td><code>oil</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ĥ</td>
<td>(voicing)</td>
<td>-tø`</td>
<td><code>birds</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>-wø`</td>
<td><code>fire</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ŋ-</td>
<td>-yø`</td>
<td><code>bag</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>à-náá-yø`</td>
<td><code>fires</code></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td><code>-(voicing)</code></td>
<td>-kø`</td>
<td><code>meat</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋ-</td>
<td>-ká-</td>
<td>à-káá-ká`</td>
<td><code>hand</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td><code>-(voicing)</code></td>
<td>-kø`</td>
<td><code>feather</code></td>
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<tr>
<td>KP</td>
<td>wi`</td>
<td>-kpø`</td>
<td><code>market</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>-(voicing)</code></td>
<td>-gù-kpø`</td>
<td><code>room</code></td>
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</table>

As summarized by DeLancey (2005), adpositions are not, strictly speaking, a universal category, since the same semantic functions can be expressed by verbs in serial verb constructions and relator nouns that morphologically and syntactically are still verbs and nouns, although may be further grammaticalized as true adpositions. Such weakly grammaticalized adposition-like items are typical for African and in particular West African languages, see (Heine 1989). For the sake of simplicity, in this paper I use the term adposition broadly, including in the description relator nouns that are not fully grammaticalized, but are widely used in Akebu for expression of locative meanings and for related functions.

It has been established (see Ameka 1995, 2003; Aboh 2010; Osam et al. 2011) that Kwa languages have both linear types of adpositions. Prepositions are the result of the grammaticalization of verbs and linearly precede the noun phrase they introduce, inheriting the VO word order pattern. Postpositions arise from nouns and, on the contrary, inherit the Poss N word order pattern. The two linear types are compatible with one another, a postpositional phrase being a complement of a preposition, and forming a construction that may be labeled as a prepositional-postpositional frame.1 Akebu adpositions follow the pattern of the two linear types, but the system is peculiar. The two linear classes are not symmetrical in the following aspects: number of units, degree of grammaticalization and independent use. While prepositions are a very small closed class, two of them have quite a broad range of use. On the contrary, postpositions are more numerous and have more specialized functions. Most postpositions retain nominal morphosyntax and a transparent semantic relation to nouns; such postpositions are typically

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1 This is part of a more general structural feature of many West African languages of other genealogical affiliation: two series of adpositions compatible with one another (see Heine 1989). But in Kwa this has a correlation with their linear type.
accompanied by prepositions. As will be discussed in Section 4, this pattern is shared by Akebu with other GTM languages.

It is significant that Akebu follows another relevant pattern of Kwa languages. Most Kwa two-argument verbs are morphosyntactically transitive in the sense that they do not involve adpositions in their valency frames, and overt marking of a non-subject argument by prepositions or postpositions is a marginal kind of alignment. In other words, Kwa in general and Akebu in particular have a high ratio of transitivity (Say 2014), or level of transitivity prominence (Haspelmath 2015).2

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents a description of Akebu prepositions. Akebu postpositions are discussed in Section 3, including relator nouns used in this function and prepositional-postpositional frames in which the relevant postpositions appear. Section 4 provides a brief comparison of the adpositional system of Akebu with those of other Kwa and GTM languages. Section 5 draws the conclusion.

2 Prepositions

There are four prepositions attested in Akebu. Two of them, the comitative preposition mī (discussed in Section 2.1) and the locative preposition ṭī (discussed in Section 2.2) have a wide range of uses. The preposition ṭī (see Section 2.3) has the meaning of limit in space or in time. The function word māŋ (see Section 2.4) is used as a simulative preposition. All four are completely grammaticalized function words, and their historical sources (presumably, verbal, based on the word order) are not synchronically attested. Still, all of them take object pronoun forms when introducing pronouns that are in line with their hypothetical verbal origin.

2.1 Comitative preposition

The preposition mī has the following range of uses: (a) it expresses the comitative meaning and is also used as a nominal coordination marker, (b) it is a marker of instrument, (c) it is used in the valency frames of some experiective verbs, (d) it introduces some adverbials. This range of functions is cross-linguistically typical for comitative markers (see, in particular, Lehmann & Shin 2005; Stoilz et al. 2006; Arkhipov 2009).

As a comitative marker, the preposition mī introduces an optional event participant that has virtually the same role as the subject, but is pragmatically backgrounded (see e.g. Arkhipov 2009 for a discussion of comitatives). For example, (1) presents two persons who both go, and (2) introduces two persons who both work.

(1) ɲ-ákó ɲeɛ-wo mī `ná pàànò

D.JNT-go place-W D.JNT-goFCT COM D.POSS brother
‘… so that he would go to the place where he has gone with his brother’ (txt)

(2) ɲe-ɲe kí-nàmí-ká mì mí kàkà-yà

1SG.PFV-do K-work-K COM 1SG.POSS friend-D
‘I have worked with my friend.’

The preposition mī also introduces one of the symmetrical participants of naturally / lexically reciprocal predicates (see e.g. Lichtenberk 1985 or Nedjalkov 2007 for a general discussion on reciprocals, but also an earlier work Boadi 1975 based on Akan data), as in (3), (4) and (5). These sentences differ from those in (1) and (2) by the fact that naturally reciprocal predicates have two or more participants with a symmetrical converse relation to one another as part of their valency frame.

2 So far, there are no detailed accurate quantitative studies of valency classes in any Kwa languages (and Akebu, of course, is not an exception). Still, the strong tendency of a high transitivity ratio / prominence is clear from the data, as well as from any detailed descriptions of valency-related syntactic processes, see e.g. (Osam 2008) for Akan, (Ameka 2013) for a review based on Ewe, Sekpele and Akan.
‘When you meet people...’ (txt)

‘When you get married with a co-wife...’ (txt)

‘The house is near the road.’

Moreover, mī is the only Akebu marker that is used for noun phrase coordination. In (6) and (7), it conjoins two noun phrases that have the same semantic role and refer to symmetrically related objects, none of them being backgrounded. (7) also shows that if such a coordinated structure is used as the subject of the clause, it may trigger a plural noun class agreement of the verb (as the P class is the plural counterpart of the Ŋ class).

‘When the old man there has taken the clothes and the mats ...’ (txt)

‘The dog and the cat are near one another.’

On the other hand, mī is used for accompanying participants that are not symmetrical with the subject. For example, in (8), in which the accompanying participant introduced by the preposition is inanimate and even in (9), in which the subject is not a person and there is clear asymmetry. This preposition is also used as a marker of an adnominal comitative introducing an asymmetrical attribute that is syntactically a noun phrase constituent, as in (10).

‘… so that you carry the wine (lit. go with the wine)’ (txt)

‘I have brought the dog. (lit. I have come with the dog)’

‘the glass with the wine’

As an instrument marker, the preposition mī introduces different optional participants. First of all, an instrument proper, as in (11) and (12). (13) demonstrates the usage with an intangible instrumental entity. In addition, mī introduces a consumable, i.e. a participant that is used and gradually consumed in the event expressed by the lexical verb, as in (14) and (15).

3 Agreement patterns differ for different noun classes, see (Makeeva and Shluinsky 2018) for a short discussion and (Shluinsky 2022) for a detailed report.
They cool it with a big plate. (txt)

I have adzed a chair with an axe.

I have woken my friend with my voice.

I have sewed my dress with a thread.

Afi has filled the bucket with water.

As part of valency frames of experientive verbs, the preposition *mī* is attested, depending on the verb, to introduce both a stimulus or an experiencer depending on the participant that is expressed by the subject.

*mī* is attested to express the stimulus with the verbs *fāŋ* ‘get tired’ (16), *wọtù* ‘amuse’ (17), *máá* ‘accustom’ (18).

I got tired of work.

He got amused by the tales.

The road has accustomed me to walking.

As for the experiencer, it is regularly expressed by the verb *pōŋ* ‘be good, be liked by’ (19) and with the adjective *sìsìɛɛtī* ‘good’ (20), but is also attested in examples with a more or less occasional experiencer, such as *mà* ‘laugh; here: smile (at someone)’ (21) or *yè* ‘do; here: do unpleasant things (to someone)’ (22).

I like this girl.

This old man is kind to children.

The woman is smiling at you.
Also, the preposition më introduces adverbials expressed by a noun phrase. An important group among these are time adverbials, most typically those expressing times of day, as in (23) and (24), but also days of the week (25) and the noun è-nì-yô ‘time’ (26). Time adverbials with a more general meaning expressed by nouns with a non-temporal lexical meaning may be introduced by më as well, as in (27), in which the noun refers to the time period of pregnancy or in (28), in which the noun refers to the timespan of a situation expressed by a nominalization.

(23) léé-yí më ‘-dökôŋpi-ʈô’ kútúkútú
3.HAB-stand COM ʈ-morning-ʈ dark
‘He gets up early in the morning.’ (txt)

(24) ’nà-pọ́tò më ‘-dúmù-ʈô’
1SG.PFV-vomit COM ʈ-night-ʈ
‘I have vomited at night.’

(25) kúŋwù-yô’ lô wì- tàà- kpà’ wi-lóo-kù mì è-ﬁtå-pô’
Kougnohou-D POSS KP-market-KP KP-3.HAB-meet COM P-Friday-P
‘The market of Kougnohou gathers on Fridays.’

(26) lë-yé à-cúmá-yô mì è-ni-yé
d.3.PFV-do Y-work-Y COM Y-time-Y.DE
‘By that time he has already worked.’

(27) pì-yà pì-láá-nìý lô mì wi-kùlù-kpà’ wé
P-PROG P-3.HAB-see 2SG.O COM KP-pregnancy-KP DEM
‘People see you during your pregnancy.’ (txt)

(28) tû-ʈɔ̀ɔ̀ʈɔ̀ɔ̀-wé wì-lûŋ-pôŋ mì è-yé-kâ’ wà
thing-bad-W.DE W-3.HABNEG-be_good COM K-do-K conj
‘It is not good to do bad things. (lit.: Bad things are not good when they are done)’ (txt)

Another group introduced by the preposition më are noun phrases used as manner adverbials, illustrated in (29), (30) and (31).

(29) màjkì látô-yô’ Ø-yô láó-pí ọ̀ mì nìmísì-wô’ wé
magic-PSNMLZ-D D-PROG 3.HAB-ask D.O COM malice-W DEM
‘The magician asks him angrily.’ (txt)

(30) ‘në-yé wô mì kì-pùtÌ-kà’
1SG.PFV-do W.O COM K-stupidity-K
‘I have acted in a stupid way.’

(31) lë-sitì pëtëcë-yô’ sà mì ọ̀-kùtù-yô’
3.PFV-sell goat-D DEM COM Y-price-Y
‘He has sold this goat expensively.’

Finally, the preposition më is used as a marker that introduces exclamations directed to someone, such as greetings, thanks, apologies and others. In (32), an example with the Akebu condolence formulation is presented, which literally consists of a nominalized verb with a possessor introduced with the preposition in focus.

(32) à-kpëlâtô-pô’, mì nì è-tì wó, mì nì è-tì!
P-die-PSNMLZ-P COM 2PL.POSS K-sit FOC COM 2PL.POSS K-sit
‘The family in mourning, my condolences to you, my condolences to you! (lit.: with your sitting)’

(41) \text{wè-cù-kpò} \quad \text{tè} \quad \text{pi-là-kà-càdà} \quad \text{kpi} \quad \text{tì} \quad \text{`-gbò-tò`}

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4 I adopt here the most widely used (and following among others Talmy 1983; Svorou 1994; Pederson et al. 1998) terminology for locative meanings and locative constructions dealing with “Figure” (referring to a movable object), “Ground” (referring to a reference stationary object), “orientation” (setting the Figure towards the Ground) and “direction” (setting the motion or its absence towards the speaker or a speaker-oriented reference point). Other terms are e.g. “search domain” for orientation (Ameka 1995; Nikitina 2009) and “semantic role” (Nikitina 2009) and “relation” (Ameka 1995) for direction.
In contrast to other directional meanings, the lative direction more typically has no overt marking of the spatial participant with verbs of motion. For example, in (42), the direction is not encoded by the locative preposition ʈʈ, but receives zero marking⁵. The choice between zero marking such as in (42) and overt marking such as in (35) and (36) is lexical, but most intransitive verbs of motion behave like those presented in (42), (43) and (44). Importantly, if a verb of motion is semantically compatible with different types of spatial participants, lative ones are encoded with no overt marking, the locative preposition being used to encode other directions. For example, in (43), the verb ʈú ’exit’ takes an unmarked lative, in contrast to (37), in which it takes elative with ʈʈ; in (44), lative has no overt marker with kó ‘go’, but in (37), the preposition is used for elative.

(42) ́nə̄-pə̄tə̄ŋ̄tə̄-wə́
1SG.PFV-come village-W
‘I have come to the village.’

(43) wə̀ jecé pi-túū ’-gój-ʧɔ̀’ pi-kóŋ-kó
and really P-exitFCT ṭ countertops P-HABPST-go
‘And so they went out to the road and left.’ (txt)

(44) wə̀ ʈpə̄ mə̀ ’né tiè pi-kóŋ-kó à-téé-kɔ̀
and P.INDP COM D.Poss woman P-HABPST-go K-field-K
‘So he and his wife went to the field.’ (txt)

If a serial verb construction is used in a clause that introduces a complex motion or a motion and position event, it either takes or does not take the locative preposition, depending on the last verb that behaves as in an independent use. For example, in (45), the verb źi ‘sit, stay’ takes the locative preposition in a serial verb construction, as well as in (46), in which it is the only verb. In contrast, in (47), the verb źi ‘enter’ takes no locative preposition in a serial verb construction, just as it does not on its own (48).

(45) pì-paľtì pì-tini źi źuŋtɔ̀-wɔ̀ sə̀ wə̀
P-comeFCT P-sitFCT LOC village-W DEM CONJ
‘They came and stayed in this village.’ (txt)

(46) tató-yɔ̀ we j-tini źi ’dú-tɔ̀’ we wə̀
ancestor-D DEM D.JNT-sitFCT ṭ-stone-DEMO DEM CONJ
‘That old man was sitting on the stone there.’ (txt)

(47) kɔ̀ pi-ló-kò pó-lé-ʃi le gió wé
CONJ P-3.PFV-go P-3.PFV-enter Lagos DEM
‘When they have entered Lagos there...’ (txt)

(48) wə̀ nē-ʃi lọ̀ kóŋ-wɔ̀ sə̀
and D.JNT.PFV-enter 1PL.Poss forest-W DEM
‘And he has entered our (sacred) forest.’ (txt)

While direction marked by the preposition ʈʈ is predefined by the verb, orientation is related to the meaning of the Ground expressed by the introduced noun phrase and to the most typical position of the Figure expressed by another noun phrase. The relevance of a default orientation for a given Ground has

⁵ Since it is not relevant to the topic of this paper, the question of whether the unmarked lative is syntactically a direct object is left aside.
been noticed e.g. in Svorou (1994) as an “inherent reference frame”. For example, in (49) the default orientation of people in relation to a door is the position in front of it. If a non-default orientation is expressed, the locative preposition is accompanied by a postposition, specifying the orientation, see Section 3.1.

\[(49) \text{ʈɨ́ `-gú-műŋműŋ-kpô` wé lò `-gúŋpòlà` ọtútú pi-tini pi-léé-wì} \]

LOC KP-room-big-KP DEM POSS T-gate.SearchParams so P-sitFCT P-3.HAB-bask

‘They are basking in front of the gate of the old house.’ (txt)

The locative meaning expressed by the preposition ʈɨ́ may be subject to a metaphoric extension in which a specific location is relevant not because of its spatial configuration, but more due to its social function. This can be illustrated by (50) and (51). In (50), the act of matchmaking is directed to the inhabitants of a specific quarter and does not obligatorily take place exactly in the quarter itself. In (51), school activities of a child are in focus, not the school building. As shown by (52), an even more metaphorical locative meaning is attested when a complement noun phrase has an abstract meaning and therefore has no spatial reference at all.

\[(50) lò to ụ-ká-pí tiè-yá’ ʈɨ́ nàtā-wé ụ-kúŋ lò 2SG.POSS father D.JNT-AND-ask woman-D LOC house-W.DEM D.JNT-give 2SG.O

‘Your father should ask for a wife for you in that quarter.’ (txt)

\[(51) píí-y sá Ọ-lò sísìè̄тив ʈɨ́ súkúú-wò’

child-D DEM D-COP good LOC school-W

‘This child is a good student in school.’

\[(52) ló-tóŋ́ ụi-yá’ sá tì́ ńá kí-nàńé-ká’

3.PFV-help person-D DEM LOC K-work-K

‘He has helped this man in his work.’

A special kind of metaphorical extension of the locative meaning is the use of the locative preposition with a temporal reference, except for times of day, days of the week and the noun è-nì-yá’ ‘time’, which are introduced by the comitative preposition mì̀ (see section 2.1). More typically, temporal adverbials are introduced by a combination of the preposition ʈɨ́ with a postposition (see Section 3.1), but as shown in (53) and (54), there are still contexts in which the preposition can take this function on its own.

\[(53) ènìn̄ ʈɨ́ káká-wò̀ kó lé-kè-kpíí wò́

once LOC old_times-W when 1PL-STATPST-beFCT CONJ

‘In old times when we were here…’ (txt)

\[(54) ʈɨ́ ji té pì-làá-sò̀ lò́ ńyú-tò́

LOC day INDF P-3.PROSP-cut 2SG.POSS T-head-T

‘One day someone will cut your head.’ (txt)

Finally, the preposition can be used for the expression of an adnominal locative that is an attribute of a noun phrase with a spatial meaning, as in (55).

\[(55) ọtù-yá’ ʈɨ́ wì-țàá-kpò́ yí-kpéé̄̄li

Y-thing-Y LOC KP-market-KP Y-lieFCT

‘The things from the market are here.’

\[\text{6 Except for this group of nouns, the distribution between the two prepositions in the function of introducing time adverbials remains unclear so far.}\]
In addition to the expression of the locative meaning, the preposition ṭì has a number of secondary functions.

First, it can introduce the participant with the meaning of source. This is one of the strategies of alignment of verbs of asking (the other one is ditransitive, see Makeeva and Shluinsky forthcoming), shown in (56). Still, in other contexts in which a noun phrase expressing a source or a donor is present, it is introduced by the locative preposition, as in (57). Clearly, this meaning is related to the elative uses. Another kind of participant encoded by the locative preposition is the content of some mental verbs, as illustrated by (58).

(56) ̀ná-pí  kòòqú-yá’  ṭì  tiè-yá’
1SG.PFV-ask banana-D LOC woman-D
‘I asked a woman for a banana.’

(57)  po-lâ-lâ  ki-nâné-kâ’  ṭì  mí
P-3.PROSP-catch K-work-K LOC 1SG.O
‘I have been deprived of work. (lit.: They took the work from me.)’

(58) ̀ nyá  ̀nóó-pù  ṭì  ní  à-wëël-kâ’
1SG-PROG 1SG.HAB-think LOC 2PL.POSS K-speak-K
‘I think of your conversation.’

Second, the locative preposition can express the causer or even the agent adjunct with passive-like uses of labile verbs. This function is also clearly related to the locative one, since examples in which the participant encoded by ṭì is simultaneously the location and the causer are typically attested. For example, although in (59a) the noun phrase c̱kò̱h-yà’ ‘sun’ is a subject and therefore is a causer, in (59b) in which it is introduced by ṭì, it has a spatial component in its meaning. (60) is an example in which the noun phrase introduced by the preposition has an ambiguous function of an ‘acting’ location as well. Still, some examples are attested in which an inanimate causer, as in (61a), or an animate agent, as in (61b), are introduced by the locative preposition, but have no apparent locative reference.

(59) a.  c̱kò̱h-yà’  là-yàkílì  à-pọ́-pọ́
sun-D 3.PFV-melt P-oil-P
‘The sun has melted butter.’

b.  à-pọ́-pọ́  po-là-yàkílì  ṭì  c̱kò̱h-yà’
P-oil-P P-3.PFV-melt LOC sun-D
‘The butter has been melted by / at the sun.’

(60) ̀ ní-yá’  wé  là-wòò  ṭì  kpànj-wò̀
person-D DEM 3.PFV-wash away LOC river-W
‘This man has been carried away by / in the water.’

(61) a.  là-kpà́ṯáá  ṭì  ‘ní  ò-tù-yà’
3.PFV-stop LOC thing-Y
‘He is stopped by his things.’

b.  là-kpà́ṯáá  ṭì  ní-yà’  sà
3.PFV-stop LOC person-D DEM
‘He is stopped by this man.’

Third, the preposition ṭì is used to express certain kinds of cause adverbials, as shown in (62). In some contexts, as in (63) and especially in (64), the causal meaning of the prepositional phrase can also be analyzed as the semantic role of stimulus, but in this case, no distinction is made, since the borderline is not clear.
(62) tó-yá` wé ló-cúlù pú-yá` wé tī `nó wè-là-kpá` father-D DEM 3.PFV-beat child-D DEM LOC D.POSS KP-be-KP
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘The father has punished the child for his behaviour.’

(63) lóó-pù jì-yá` sā tī `nó ò-tù-cí-yá` 3.HAB-respect person-D DEM LOC D.POSS Y-thing-know-Y
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘He respects this man for his intelligence.’

(64) wò-là-cá mì tī `nó à-pà-ká` W-3.PFV-beat 1SG.O LOC D.POSS K-come-K
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘I am surprised by his arrival.’

Fourth, the locative preposition is used to form introductory constructions that refer to one’s point of view or position, as in (65).

(65) tì mì à-jiñ-ká` wé, yâùe-yé à-cómá-yá` ñpá LOC 1SG.POSS K-see-K DEM 1PL.PFVNEG-do Y-work-Y many
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘In my view, we have not worked enough.’

2.3 Limitative preposition

The preposition ə́ʈə́ has a much smaller range of uses than the comitative and the locative prepositions, and has the meaning of limit in space or in time.

In its spatial uses, ə́ʈə́ typically marks the destination point in the contexts of motion, as in (66) and (67). Still, other contexts in which it introduces a limit in space are attested, as (68).

(66) pì-ké-fí ə́ʈó ə́ประตู-yá` P-AND-enter to Y-sea-Y
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘... so that they come to the sea.’ (txt)

(67) ãsãská` ñ-túù tì `jóó-tá` ə́ʈó ə́kpáhtó-ká` yesterday 1SG-exitFCT LOC T-Djon-T to K-Gbende-K
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘Yesterday I went from Djon to Gbende.’

(68) ã-yù-tùó-yá` sā wé ə́ʈó kùtù-wà` Y-head-feather-Y DEM DEM to ground-W
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘hair down to the ground’ (txt)

In its temporal uses, the limitative preposition may introduce temporal nouns (69a) or nominalizations that refer to the time of the corresponding event (69b).

(69) a. ñé-yé à-cómá-yá` ə́ʈó `dëw-tá` 1SG.PFVNEG-do Y-work-Y to T-evening-T
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘I have worked until evening.’

b. ñé-yé à-cómá-yá` ə́ʈó `vàñ-tá` lo à-pà-ká` 1SG.PFVNEG-do Y-work-Y to T-tiredness-T POSS K-come-K
\vspace{0.2cm}
‘I have worked until I was tired.’

2.4 Similative marker
The similative marker *məŋ* is used to introduce noun phrases and functions as a preposition in this kind of context. It may express a similative meaning proper,\(^7\) as in (70), or a meaning of exemplification, as in (71).

(70) \[məŋ \ mə́jiki-làtọ-yà\]
    as magic-PSNMLZ-D 'as a magician' (txt)

(71) \[tùŋtò-mùmùŋ-wò\] \[tè\] \[wì-kpú\] \[màŋ\] \[bàdū\]
    village-big-W INDW beFCT as Badu 'any town, such as Badu' (txt)

*məŋ* also can introduce an adverbial clause of comparison (usually accompanied with a more general adverbial conjunction), as in (72), and therefore has a broader syntactic distribution than a standard preposition.

(72) \[nàá-pí\] \[wò\] \[ǹ-yé\] \[tù-wé\] \[màŋ\] \[kà\] \[kéè-yà\]
    D.INT.HAB-want W.O D.INT-do thing-W.DEM as CONJ friend-D

\[né-tù\] \[wò\]
    D.INT.PFV-say CONJ

'He wants to do it in the way that the person had told him.' (txt)

3 Postpositions

The number of postpositions in Akebu is significantly higher than the number of prepositions, but none of them are as frequent or have such a wide range of functions. A group of nine weakly grammaticalized relator nouns (Section 3.1) is used mainly to express orientation in locative contexts. A strongly grammaticalized apudessive postposition (Section 3.2) is used as a part of the orientation system, but differs from the other ones by the degree of grammaticalization. One more relator noun has non-spatial postposition-like uses (Section 3.3). Finally, there is a number of function words that combine postpositional functions with others (Section 3.4). All the postpositions and relator nouns discussed in this section take the possessive pronominal series when introducing pronouns.

3.1 Locative relator nouns as weakly grammaticalized locative postpositions

Akebu has a group of relator nouns that on the one hand retain their independent uses in their lexical meaning, but on the other hand also function as postpositions introducing the orientation of a lexical noun. Some of these relator nouns retain specific body part meanings when applied to humans and/or animals, while others, at least synchronically, have only more abstract locative meanings.\(^8\) All of them function as weakly grammaticalized locative postpositions that are used to express orientation meaning in locative constructions. Morphologically and morphosyntactically, all the relator nouns are still nouns, because they retain noun class marking and can be used independently.

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\(^7\) For the purpose of this paper, which does not focus on constructions expressing different kinds of comparison, I do not distinguish between equative and similative meanings, which have been shown to be different, but which at the same time tend to be marked in the same way in some languages (see in particular Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998). Akebu is such a language, as both similative markers discussed in this paper (in 2.4 and 3.4) are attested both in similative and equative contexts.

\(^8\) As assumed in studies on grammaticalization and shown for a number of unrelated languages (cf. de León 1992; Sonnenschein 2005), a more abstract locative meaning is usually a result of the diachronic evolution of a more concrete body part meaning. In this perspective one can say that Akebu relator nouns represent different stages of the semantic evolution. As for the term “relator nouns”, it is sometimes used in a narrow sense limited with those having only an abstract locative meaning (cf. DeLancey 1997; Grenoble 2014), but I use it in a wider sense, as it is done even more frequently, e.g. Osam et al. (2011).
Table 2 presents the list of Akebu relator nouns attested in the data, their noun class, their lexical meaning when used independently as relator nouns proper and their orientation meaning when used in the postpositional function.

Table 2. Weakly grammaticalized locative postpositions and their lexical sources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lexical item</th>
<th>noun class</th>
<th>lexical meaning</th>
<th>orientation meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ʼmítá</td>
<td>Ġ</td>
<td>‘interior’</td>
<td>‘in the Ground’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ki-lēētõ-ká</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>‘side’ (related to ‘side (body part)’)</td>
<td>‘next to the Ground’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ô-ŋũj-ká</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>‘upper side’</td>
<td>‘on the Ground’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ki-ŋũj-ká</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>‘buttocks’</td>
<td>‘under the Ground’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>põõlù-wõ</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>‘perineum, lower side’</td>
<td>‘below behind the Ground’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ki-maã-ká</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>‘back side’ (related to ‘back’)</td>
<td>‘behind the Ground’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ki-ŋũj-ká</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>‘front side’ (related to ‘face’)</td>
<td>‘in front of the Ground’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ki-tà-ká</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>‘vicinity’</td>
<td>‘next to the Ground’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ki-siê-ká</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>‘plot’</td>
<td>‘next to the Ground’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the lexical items listed in Table 2 have the following morphological and morphosyntactic features of nouns. First, they take both suffixal and prefixal noun class markers, see e.g. (73a). Most of them belong to the K noun class (which is expected, since, as shown in Makeeva and Shluinsky 2018a: 11, this is one of the classes for body part terms), but two of them belong to different noun classes, namely, Ġ and W (Ḡ being another class containing body part terms, W being the default class for inanimate objects). Second, at least in their lexical uses, they are able to incorporate adjectival or verbal stems between their own stems and class suffixes, similarly to other nouns (see Makeeva 2018 for details), as shown in (73b). Third, as presented in (74), the noun phrase introduced by these items takes a possessive marker (or takes the form of a possessive pronoun, if the noun phrase is pronominal) and therefore a relator noun takes the same position as a head noun in a possessive noun phrase. Finally, the postpositions have plural class counterpart forms that are used in the plural when there is a meaning of several locations. For example, in (75a), the singular K class form of the lexeme ki-ŋũj-ká ‘front side’ is used for localizing a singular object, but in (75b), a plural KP class form wi-ŋũj-kpá ‘front sides’ is used when several objects are localized towards plural Grounds.

(73) a. ki-ŋũj-ká   b. ki-ŋũj-mũŋũj-ká
   K-buttocks-K       K-buttocks-big-K
   ‘buttocks, under’  ‘thick buttocks’

(74) wõ ô-kólù ô-tini tô wi-čú-kpá tô lā ki-ŋũj-ká
and ḅJNT-goFCT ḅJNT-siFCT LOC KP-tree-KP INDF POSS K-buttocks-K
‘And she went and sat down under a tree.’ (txt)

(75) a. ki-kpœ-ô-kà   ki-kpëlî tô lâa ki-ŋũj-ká
K-mud-K          K-liéFCT LOC IPL.POSS K-front-K
‘There is a mud in front of us.’

b. wi-kpœ-kpá   ki-kpëlî tô lâa wi-ŋũj-kpá
KP-mud-K          K-liéFCT LOC IPL.POSS KP-front-K
‘There are muds in front of us (i.e. mud in front of everyone).’

All these items can be used as independent nouns, as shown in (76) (with the same lexeme as in (74), but used independently in its lexical meaning), and in (77). Importantly, in such independent uses
relator nouns can be accompanied by noun phrase modifiers, such as demonstrative markers, as in (78)-(79).

(76)  kán ṣọfó ṣọ tó ‘né pî-yé tî kî-núj-kâ
  CONJ D.JNT-take D.JNT-tie D.POSS child-D.DEM LOC K-buttocks-K
  ‘… in order that she ties (these pearls) to her child along (his) hip.’ (txt)

(77)  lôô-kó  kî-màà-kâ
  3.PROSP-go K-back-K
  ‘He will go to the back part (that is, to the toilet).’ (txt)

(78)  ṣô-yí tô  ̩‘-gû-kpô tê lá cákâ-wé, lá kî-lëëô-tô ̩wé
  D.JNT-look KP-room-KP INDF POSS corner-W.DEM POSS K-side-K DEM
  ‘… so that she looks to the corner, to the side of a room.’ (txt)

(79)  ká  à-fàì-pô  pì-tì tî ‘-mì-tô’ sâ
  CONJ P-wine-P P-sit LOC T-interior-T DEM
  ‘… in order that the wine stays inside there.’ (txt)

As previously mentioned, the degree to which these elements’ lexical meanings are abstract when used as independent nouns is different for each one. Three of them, namely,  kî-nûj-kâ ‘buttocks’,  pòòlûwâ ‘perineum’ and  ‘mì-tô ‘interior’, have concrete body part meanings when used with animate Grounds, although with  ‘mì-tô the notion of interior is more general than that of other body part terms. Lexical items of this group can be used to express the locations of physical sensations, as in (80). For  kî-nûj-kâ, referring to a body part meaning is the only attested option with an animate Ground, while  ‘mì-tô can also have a figurative meaning, as in (81), and  pòòlûwâ ‘perineum’ can be used both as a body part (82a) and as a location at some distance from the body (82b).

(80)  kî-nûj-kâ  kî-yâ  kî-lôâ-fâtô  mî
  K-buttocks-K K-PROG K-3.HAB-hurt 1SG.O
  ‘My buttocks hurt.’

(81)  nôâ-kâ  ô-tû-yô tî mì ‘-mì-tô
  1SG-PROG 1SG.HAB-count Y-thing-Y LOC 1SG.POSS T-interior-T
  ‘I think to myself (lit. I count things inside myself).’

(82) a.  nôâ-fôtô tî mî  pòòlû-wô
  1SG-PROG 1SG.HAB-hurt LOC 1SG.POSS perineum-W
  ‘I feel hurt in my perineum.’

  b.  kî-kpûè-kâ  kî-kpëëlî tî mî  pòòlû-wô
  K-mud-K K-lieFCT LOC 1SG.POSS perineum-W
  ‘There is mud below me.’

The other three lexemes are related to the ones expressing body parts, but differ from the latter by their morphological classes.  kî-lëëô-tô ‘side (in general)’, which is also used as a locative postposition, belongs to the K noun class, while  lëëô-wô ‘side (body part)’, having the same stem, belongs to the W noun class.  kî-màà-kâ ‘back side’ and  kî-jûj-kâ ‘front side’, which have a more general meaning and can be used as postpositions, belong to the morphological subclass of the K noun class with the prefix  kî-, while  à-màà-kâ ‘back (body part)’ and  à-jûj-kâ ‘face’, which refer to body parts, also belong to the K noun class, albeit to its different morphological subclasses with the harmonizing vowel prefix (see morphological subclasses of this class in the Table 1 in section 1). The contrast between these pairs of lexemes can be shown in (83a) and (83b) or (84a) and (84b), which have clearly different meanings.
Body part terms can be used in contexts of physical sensations (85a), while more general locative nouns cannot (85b).

(83) a. mí kì-màà-kà' b. mí à-màà-kà'
1SG.POSS K-back-K 1SG.POSS K-back-K
‘behind me’ ‘my back (body part)’

(84) a. mí kì-ńùŋ-kà’ kì-là-cíí
1SG.POSS K-front-K K-3.PFV-get_dirty
‘My front (i.e. the front of my clothes) has gotten dirty.’
b. mí à-ńùŋ-kà’ kì-là-cíí
1SG.POSS K-face-K K-3.PFV-get_dirty
‘My face has gotten dirty.’

(85) a. mí lèëëi-wò wì-yà wì-láá-fàtò mí
1SG.POSS side-W W-prog W-3.HAB-hurt 1SG.O
‘My side hurts.’
b. *mì kì-lèëëi-kà’ kì-yà kì-làá-fàtò mí
1SG.POSS K-side-K K-prog K-3.HAB-hurt 1SG.O

The noun kì-siè-kà’ ‘plot’ has a concrete lexical meaning when used independently, but refers to a territory or one’s part, not to a body part, even and especially when used with an animate possessor, as in (86).

(86) mí kì-siè-kà’ kì-náání
1SG.POSS K-plot-K K-be_big_fct
‘My plot of land is big.’

Finally, the nouns ó-ńūŋ-kà’ ‘upper side’ and kì-tà-ńà ‘vicinity’ have only general spatial meanings, as in (87), and cannot refer to contexts in which there is physical contact of a Figure and a body part of an animate Ground, cf. ungrammatical (88a) with its possible equivalent (88b).

(87) à-yáláá-pò pì-téé tì là ó-ńūŋ-kà’
P-wasp-P P-be_located_fct loc 2SG.POSS K-upper_side-K
‘There are wasps above you.’

(88) a. *né-téé è-léé-yà’ tì mí ó-ńūŋ-kà’
1SG.PFV-carry_on_head Y-luggage-Y loc 1SG.POSS K-upper_side-K
exp. ‘I have carried the luggage on myself.’
b. OK né-téé è-léé-yà’ tì mí ‘-yù-ńà’
1SG.PFV-carry_on_head Y-luggage-Y loc 1SG.POSS T-head-T
‘I have carried the luggage on my head.’

Depending on the direction meaning and on the specific verb of motion, a construction with a relator noun may be used on its own, as in (89), may be introduced by the locative preposition tà, as in (90) and (91) or by the limitative preposition èt, as in (92). In (89), the absence of the preposition is conditioned by the verb fì ‘enter’ that takes the zero-marked lative. In (92), the limitative preposition is used, because the destination point is expressed. In (90) and (91), the locative preposition is present as in the most part of locative contexts.

(89) kà nò-kò nè-fí tì≤ńò-wò’ lò ‘-mè-ńà’ wé
When he entered the village…’ (txt)

‘There is no pepper in this sauce?’ (txt)

‘When she arrived there, next to the sea…’ (txt)

The main function of all the relator nouns listed in Table 1 is expressing orientation meanings, i.e., setting the Figure against the Ground. For example, (93) illustrates the orientations ‘on’ (93a), ‘in’ (93b), ‘in front of’ (93c), ‘under’ (93d), ‘behind under’ (93e).

Importantly, for some Figure-Ground configurations, there is only one relator noun that can describe the orientation. For example, (94a) where the relator noun kinýj-kå ‘under (lit. buttocks)’ is used, but inside a room, as in (94b) with the relator noun ‘mi-tå’ ‘inside (lit. interior)’. Still, other configurations can be construed in two ways. For example, with the noun ‘gazebo’ both relator nouns are possible, as shown in (94c) and (94d), as for a sitting person both interpretations are allowed with this Ground.
As mentioned in Section 2.2, the default configuration of a Figure and a Ground can take no overt marking, as in (95a), or, more frequently, can be expressed by the locative preposition tī on its own, as in (96a). The use of the corresponding locative relator noun in such a case is also possible and has virtually the same meaning, as in (95b) or (96b). Nevertheless, locative relator noun is only obligatory when the orientation is different: (95a) is synonymous to (95b), but not to (95c), (95d) and (95e). However, a specific position of the Figure is relevant as well: for example, sitting on a chair, as in (96a), is the default position that can be expressed by a locative preposition on its own, but an analogous sentence expressing standing on a chair, as in (96c), is ungrammatical, as this non-default position requires an explicit expression of the orientation by a locative relator noun, as in (96d).

(95) a. ɔ-tù-yá` wé yì-là-kà kpól5-yá` wé
   Y-thing-Y DEM Y-3.PFV-fit table-D DEM
   ‘The things have fit on (*under, *behind, *next to) the table.’

b. ɔ-tù-yá` wé yì-là-kà kpól5-yá` wé ló ɗ-ŋụŋ-kà
   ‘The things have fit under the table.’

c. ɔ-tù-yá` wé yì-là-kà kpól5-yá` wé ló kɨ-ňùñ-kà
   Y-thing-Y DEMY-3.PFV-fit table-D DEM POSS K-buttocks-K
   ‘The things have fit next to the table.’

d. ɔ-tù-yá` wé yì-là-kà kpól5-yá` wé ló pɔ̀lō-wà
   Y-thing-Y DEM Y-3.PFV-fit table-D DEM POSS perineum-W
   ‘The things have fit behind the table.’

e. ɔ-tù-yá` wé yì-là-kà kpól5-yá` wé ló kà-lêe-ti-kà
   ‘The things have fit next to the table.’

(96) a. ní-yé  Ø-tìni tī `záá-tó`
   person-D.DEM DU-sitFCT LOC T-chair-T
   ‘The man is sitting on a chair.’

b. ní-yé  Ø-tìni tī `záá-tó` ló ɗ-ŋụŋ-kà
   person-D.DEM DU-sitFCT LOC T-chair-T POSS K-upper_side-K
   ‘The man is sitting on a chair.’

c. *nì-yé  Ø-yáá tī `záá-tó`
   person-D.DEM DU-standFCT LOC T-chair-T exp. ‘The man is standing on a chair.’

d. nì-yé  Ø-yáá tī `záá-tó` ló ɗ-ŋụŋ-kà
   person-D.DEM DU-standFCT LOC T-chair-T POSS K-upper_side-K
   ‘The man is standing on a chair.’

Apart from relator nouns expressing apudessive orientations, the differences between orientation meanings listed in Table 2 are more or less clear. As for the former, namely, kiléetikà̄ ‘next to (lit. side)’, kíticā ‘next to (lit. vicinity)’, kisiiekà̄ ‘next to (lit. plot)’, the semantic difference between them requires further research. No clear contrast can be derived from their translations in the attested
examples, as seen from (97a), (97b) and (97c). At the same time, according to the speakers’ judgments, such sentences are still not completely synonymous.

(97) a. ‘nə-túŋ’ ə-tú-yə̀  tĩ kpøl3-yə̀ lá ki-lééʔi-kə̀
   1SG.PFV-put Y-thing-Y LOC table-D POSS K-side-K
   ‘I have put the things next to the table.’

b. ‘nə-túŋ’ ə-tú-yə̀  tĩ kpøl3-yə̀ lá ki-tà-kə̀
   1SG.PFV-put Y-thing-Y LOC table-D POSS K-vicinity-K
   ‘I have put the things next to the table.’

c. ‘nə-túŋ’ ə-tú-yə̀  tĩ kpøl3-yə̀ lá ki-siè-kə̀
   1SG.PFV-put Y-thing-Y LOC table-D POSS K-plot-K
   ‘I have put the things next to the table.’

For most of the locative relator nouns, their locative uses are the only ones attested. However, ‘mìtɔ̀‘ ‘inside (lit. interior)’ is attested in more metaphorical uses. On the one hand, it can refer to a location associated with a group of people, not literally to an internal part of a Ground (98). On the other hand, it can even refer to a group that does not form a unity located in the same place (99).

(98) wó ə-pòːtɛŋ-pɔ̀  pì-pàlɪ pì-fií lásó ’-mì-ʈɔ̀
and P-white_person-P P-comeFCT P-enterFCT 1PL.POSS T-interior-T
   ‘And the white people came to our place.’ (txt)

(98) ə-pù-pɔ̀  pì-ǐtʃi ə-tù  tɔ̀ lá ’-mì-ʈɔ̀
   P-child-P P-surpassFCT LOC ten POSS T-interior-T
   pì-liŋ-ʈi ɔkɔŋ-kèe̯-kɔ-wo
   P-HABNEG-eat morning-food-W
   ‘More than five children out of ten do not have breakfast.’

Second, ‘mìtɔ̀‘ ‘inside (lit. interior)’ and kìmààkɔ̀‘ ‘behind’ (lit. ‘back side’) are used to express not only spatial, but also temporal meanings. ‘mìtɔ̀‘ has two temporal meanings: it introduces time period adverbials indicating the duration of an event, as in (100) and (101), and it is also used in positional time adverbials marking a time span after which an event takes place, as in (102) and (103). kìmààkɔ̀ is also used to introduce time spans in positional time adverbials, as in (104).

(100) ənɛ-yɛ̀ ki-nòŋe-kɔ̀  tĩ ə-pù-yə̀  e-yí lá ’-mì-ʈɔ̀
   1SG.PFV-do K-work-K LOC Y-hour-Y Y-two POSS T-interior-T
   ‘I have worked for two hours.’

(101) ’-nìmì-ʈɔ̀’  ’-làà-te’ɛrɪ  pì-ỹɔ̀  wé tĩ ɛ̀-nì-yə̀  wé
   T-eye-T T-3.PROSP-dominate child-D DEM LOC Y-time-Y DEM
   lá ’-mì-ʈɔ̀’
   POSS T-interior-T
   ‘(The parents) will look after the child (lit. The eye will dominate the child) during this period.’
(txt)

(102) ə  ’mì  nùŋ-pɔ-kò  lòmë-yə̀  tĩ kèkè-neŋ-yə̀  cèŋcèŋ lá ’-mì-ʈɔ̀
   CONJ 1SG.INDP 1SG.FUT-FUT-go Lome-D LOC moon-shine-D one POSS T-interior-T
   ‘... that I will go to Lome in a month.’

(103) tĩ ənì-pí-yə̀  tə lá ’-mì-ʈɔ̀’ wɔ̀ ʃɛɛcè pì-kòônù ’nɛ̀ ənì-yə̀’

9 In French (the contact language), à côté de.
After a while, they gave him some time. (txt)

I stood up two hours later.

3.2 Apudessive postposition

The apudessive postposition kpəŋ ‘near, at’ functions as part of the orientation system expressed by the locative relator nouns discussed in Section 3.1 and listed in Table 1. Still, its morphological features are different. First, in contrast to relator nouns, no independent noun-like uses of this lexeme are attested. Second, it has no noun class morphology. Third, it cannot incorporate adjectival or verbal stems, as shown by the ungrammaticality of (105b). Still, as seen from (106), a noun phrase introduced by kpəŋ takes a possessive marker or is a possessive pronoun, just like noun phrases introduced by locative relator nouns and lexical possessive noun phrases.

(105) a. kpəŋ
   b. *kpəŋ-můŋmůŋ

near
near-big

The apudessive postposition can be used on its own, like locative relator nouns, as in (106), or can form a prepositional-postpositional frame with the locative preposition, as in (107). Again, this follows the general pattern of locative preposition use: it can only be absent with the lative direction and this is triggered lexically. Examples in (108) give a good illustration of this: with the verb or motion pə ‘come’ the apudessive postposition is used on its own (108a), and the use of the locative preposition is ungrammatical (108b); on contrary, in (108c), in which the lexical verb tî is not a verb of motion, and the lative motion is expressed by the verbal ventive marker, the locative preposition is used, and its omission is ungrammatical (108d).

(106) móŋ ŋ-kó ńáá-wâ’ lá kpəŋ wó
if  DJNT-go fire-W POSS near CONJ
‘If he comes close to fire…’ (txt)

(107) ńā-tûnî ń-ńî-yâ’ tî ‘dōŋ-tō’ lá kpəŋ
1SG.PFV-put Y-thing-Y LOC T-road-T POSS near
‘I have placed the thing near the road’.

(108) a. ńā-pô mî kēe-yâ’ lá kpəŋ
1SG.PFV-come 1SG.POSS friend-D POSS near
‘I have come to my friend.’

b. *ńā-pô tî mî kēe-yâ’ lá kpəŋ
1SG.PFV-come LOC 1SG.POSS friend-D POSS near

c. ńē-pē-tî tî mî kēe-yâ’ lá kpəŋ
1SG.PFV-VENT-eat LOC 1SG.POSS friend-D POSS near
‘I have come to have dinner at my friend’s.’

d. *ńē-pē-tî mî kēe-yâ’ lá kpəŋ
1SG.PFV-VENT-eat 1SG.POSS friend-D POSS near

As seen in (106) and (107), the locational meaning of the postposition kpəŋ is the apudessive orientation. As shown in Section 3.1, there is also a handful of relator nouns with apudessive meanings, and the semantic difference between them remains obscure. When comparing these relator nouns to
kpəŋ, the following two points can be made. First, kpəŋ has a more abstract apudessive meaning than the relator nouns, which, when relevant, are more oriented to the sides of the Ground, not to any place in its vicinity. For example, in (109b), the relator noun kīlēētikà ‘next to (lit. side)’ refers to the right or to the left side of a person, while in (109a), kpəŋ ‘near’ has less restrictions and can refer to a random place around. Second, kpəŋ refers to a wider area of the Ground. For example, according to a speaker’s intuition, (110b) with kīlēētikà means that the event takes place right near the Ground, while (110a) with kpəŋ is associated with a wider space around it.

(109) a. mì tiè-yə̄ O-tìni tì mì kpəŋ
1SG.POSS woman-D D-sitFCT LOC 1SG.POSS near
‘My wife is sitting near me (in any place around me).’
b. mì tiè-yə̄ O-tìni tì mì kī-lēētikà
1SG.POSS woman-D D-sitFCT LOC 1SG.POSS K-side-K
‘My wife is sitting next to me (at my right or at my left).’

(110) a. ń-yə̄ náā-wé ő-tū-yə̄ tì kpəŋ-wə̄ ló kpəŋ
1SG-PROG 1SG.HAB-wash Y-thing-Y LOC river-W POSS near
‘I wash the clothes near the river (up to about 10 meters from the river).’
b. ń-yə̄ náā-wé ő-tū-yə̄ tì kpəŋ-wə̄ ló kī-lēētikà
1SG-PROG 1SG.HAB-wash Y-thing-Y LOC river-W POSS K-side-K
‘I wash the clothes next to the river (up to about 1 meter from the river).’

With nouns referring to persons kpəŋ ‘near’ can have a general apudessive locative meaning, such as with other Grounds, as can be seen from (109) and also from (111) and (112). Still, as visible in (108), in relevant contexts it also has a conventionalized meaning of someone’s home.10 In a context referring to a personal contact, such as (113), the meaning of someone’s home is not in focus, but in those like (114) it is exactly the home location that is introduced. Still, kpəŋ cannot normally introduce a home location when no physical closeness of a Figure and a Ground is meant, for example, it does not sound well in the context where a speaker refers to his own home location, cf. the dubious grammaticality of (115b).

(111) tiè-yə̄ ... ń-kōŋ-kó è-ni-pə̄ ló kpəŋ
woman-D.DEM D.JNT-HABPST-go P-person-P POSS near
‘That woman … went out together with people (lit. near to people).’ (txt)

(112) pū-fə̄ ő-ŋəló tì ‘né léé ló kpəŋ
child-D D-crawlFCT LOC D.POSS mother POSS near
‘The child crawled to his mother.’

(113) wō jẹće ń-fə̄ ŋə̄ ń-kōŋ-kó ‘né léé ló kpəŋ
and indeed D.JNT-takeFCT D.O D.JNT-HABPST-go D.POSS mother POSS near
‘And indeed he took her to his mother.’ (txt)

(114) ăsšaŋkə̀ ló-kūū tì őtōgá ló kpəŋ
yesterday 1PL-meetFCT LOC Otoga POSS near
‘Yesterday we met at Otoga’s place.’

(115) a. ńə̄-pə̄ mì nàtə̄-wə̄
1SG.PFV-come 1SG.POSS house-W
‘I have come to my house.’

10 Its most typical translation to French is chez.
Another secondary use of the postposition kp̄ŋ̄ ‘near’ is its use as part of the prepositional-postpositional frame with the locative preposition t̄i with the meaning of source of opinion ‘according to’, shown in (116) and (117).

(116) t̄i l̄d̄o k̄-kp̄ə̄ŋ̄-s̄úŋ̄-k̄á l̄ó kp̄ə̄ŋ̄ w̄o p̄-l̄d̄á-m̄áŋ̄t̄o t̄īe-ya~we
LOC 1PL.POSS K-Akebu-tradition-K POSS near FOC P-3.HAB-massage woman-D DEM
‘According to our Akebu tradition, people massage that woman (after childbirth).’ (txt)

(117) t̄i m̄í kp̄ə̄ŋ̄ w̄e, t̄īe-ya~ s̄a l̄úŋ̄-k̄o-k̄o
LOC 1SG.POSS near DEM woman-D DEM 3.HABNEG-PST-go
‘In my opinion, this woman shouldn’t go.’

3.3 Relator noun ‘head’ as a weakly grammaticalized postposition

In addition to the relator nouns discussed in Section 3.1, the noun `yū-t̄ɔ ‘head’ is marginally attested in a number of grammaticalized postpositional functions.

On its own, `yū-t̄ɔ introduces the undergoer of the verb ȳɪ̄ʈɪ̀ in its secondary meaning ‘to take care of’, as in (118b) in contrast to its main meaning ‘look’ when an unmarked direct object is used (118a).

(118) a. ŋ̄-yā `n̄á-ȳīʈ ī p̄-ȳo s̄a
1SG-PROG 1SG.HAB-look child-D DEM
‘I am looking at this child.’

b. ŋ̄-yā `n̄á-ȳīʈ ī p̄-ȳo s̄a l̄ó `yū-τ̄ɔ
1SG-PROG 1SG.HAB-look child-D DEM POSS Ҭ-head-Ҭ
‘I am taking care of this child.’

As a part of a prepositional-postpositional frame with the locative preposition t̄i, `yū-t̄ɔ is attested as expressing cause (119) and substitution (120).

(119) k̄ōfi Ø-k̄ōl̄u Ø-l̄s̄ e-ʈ̄ē-t̄ī-m̄úŋ̄m̄úŋ̄-w̄o t̄ī p̄īl̄-ȳo
Kofi d-GOFCT d-graspFCT place-sit-big-W LOC chief-D
l̄ó `yū-τ̄ɔ
POSS Ҭ-head-Ҭ
‘Kofi got a high position because of the chief.’

(120) `n̄á-w̄ēl̄i t̄ī m̄í p̄ūt̄é̄t̄á-ȳo l̄ó `yū-τ̄ɔ
1SG-PROG speak LOC 1SG.POSS friend-D POSS Ҭ-head-Ҭ
‘I have spoken instead of my friend.’

3.4 Categorically wide postpositive function words

Three Akebu lexical items can introduce linearly preceding noun phrases and therefore function as postpositions, but have a significantly wider range of syntactic functions.

One of these lexemes is kp̄ŋ̄ ‘first, before’ that can be used both as an independent time adverbial, as in (121a), and as a postposition with the meaning of precedence in time, as in (121b). In its postpositional uses, kp̄ŋ̄ takes a possessive marker or a possessive pronoun.
(121) a. ʼnē-pē-ğí kpēj wó mí kē-kə-yā nē-cī ą-pā
1SG.PFV-VENT-enter before and 1SG.POSS friend-D DJ.INT.PFV-know INF-come
‘I have come first, and my friend has not succeeded to come (earlier).’
b. ʼnē-pē-ğí mí kē-kə-yā lō kpēj
1SG.PFV-VENT-enter 1SG.POSS friend-D POSS before
‘I have come before my friend.’

Other two such lexical items are the cause marker ƙutò and the similitative marker ƙitò, which can introduce both adverbial clauses and therefore function as conjunctions, as in (122) and in (125), and noun phrases, and therefore function as postpositions (see more details in Muraviev 2015). In contrast to other Akebu postpositions and relator nouns functioning as postpositions, these two function words take no possessive markers when introducing noun phrases.

ƙutò has the meaning of cause. In its postposition function it can be used on its own, as in (123), or as a part of a prepositional-postpositional frame with the locative preposition ʈĩ, as in (124), with no apparent difference in meaning so far.

(122) ʼnā-tō ʼnō-kō kālāŋ ƙutò
1SG.PFV-fall 1SG.PFV-go fast because
‘I fell down, because I was walking fast.’
(123) ʼnā-mō kā-fōō-kā sā ƙutò
1SG.PFV-laugh K-paper-K DEM because
‘I have laughed because of this letter.’
(124) ʼŋōō-tō ʼŋōō tī ő-tō-ƙiŋ-kā ƙutò
T-door-T T-closeFCT LOC K-nature-blow-K because
‘The door closed because of the wind.’

ƙitò is used in similitative constructions. Both when introducing similitative clauses (125) and when introducing noun phrases (126), it is typically used in a frame with the prepositive comparative marker ƙah (see Section 2.4). Still, noun phrases in similitative constructions can be introduced not only by this frame (127a), but also by any of the two prepositive (127b) and postpositive (127c) similitative markers on their own.

(125) ƙaɗa-wēlī ƙah ƙaɗa-nŋh ƙitò
2SG.HAB-speak as 2SG.HAB-sing like
‘You speak as if you are singing.’
(126) ʼnā-tō ƙah mō mī püi-mō-yā ƙitò
1SG.HAB-love 2SG.O as 1SG.POSS child-give_birth-D like
‘I love you like my own child.’
(127) a. ő-kānĩ ƙah ƙah tō ƙitò
2SG-highFCT as 2SG.POSS father like
‘You are tall, like your father’ \(\{a=b=c\}\)
b. ő-kānĩ ƙah ƙah tō
2SG-highFCT as 2SG.POSS father
‘You are tall, like your father’ \(\{a=b=c\}\)
c. ő-kānĩ tō tō ƙitò
2SG-HIGHFCT 2SG.POSS father like
‘You are tall, like your father’ \(\{a=b=c\}\)
4 Adpositions in Akebu in the context of other Kwa and GTM languages

The adpositional system of Akebu is rather typical for GTM and for Kwa in general. Although this section cannot present a full-fledged comparative study of adpositions in Kwa, it contains a short discussion of peculiarieties of Akebu among Kwa and in particular among GTM. Both Kwa languages in general and GTM languages in particular have rather similar adpositional systems, but importantly this concerns first of all patterns of uses, not obligatorily shared forms.

Although the set of languages classified as Kwa (or “new Kwa”) has been more or less commonly accepted after Bennett and Sterk (1977), the internal classification of Kwa languages remains disputable. Stewart (1989), following Bennett and Sterk (1977), argued for a distinction between two large branches of Kwa (Left Bank and Nyo). On the contrary, Williamson and Blench (2000) and, later, Blench (2009) provide a classification where there are more branches. As for GTM languages, Williamson and Blench (2000) classify them into two separate groups, namely Na-Togo and Ka-Togo, and later Blench (2009) even splits Ka-Togo and puts Kebu-Animere languages separately. Remarkably, in Bennett and Sterk’s and Stewart’s classification Na-Togo is a part of Nyo branch, while Ka-Togo is a part of Left Bank branch. As for non-GTM languages, the most numerous groups are Tano languages (including Guang languages) and Gbe languages, but a number of other Kwa languages for smaller groups. Table 3 lists Kwa languages mentioned in this section.

Table 3. Kwa languages in focus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Relation to GTM</th>
<th>Data sources</th>
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<tr>
<td>Akebu</td>
<td>Kebu-Animere</td>
<td>GTM: (?)Ka-Togo</td>
<td>this paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lelemi</td>
<td>Lelemi-Likpe</td>
<td>GTM: Na-Togo</td>
<td>(Allan 1973)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekpele</td>
<td>Lelemi-Likpe</td>
<td>GTM: Na-Togo</td>
<td>(Ameka 2007; Delalorm 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logba</td>
<td>Logba</td>
<td>GTM: Na-Togo</td>
<td>(Dorvlo 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ewe</td>
<td>Gbe</td>
<td>non-GTM</td>
<td>(Ameka 1995, 2003; Ameka &amp; Essegbey 2006; Fenuku 2015; personal data)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fon</td>
<td>Gbe</td>
<td>non-GTM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attié</td>
<td>Attié</td>
<td>non-GTM</td>
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<td>Ga</td>
<td>Ga-Dangme</td>
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<td>Akan</td>
<td>Tano &gt; Akan</td>
<td>non-GTM</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baule</td>
<td>Tano &gt; Bia</td>
<td>non-GTM</td>
<td>(Creissels &amp; Kouadio 1977; Bohoussou &amp; Skopetees 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nawuri</td>
<td>Tano &gt; Guang</td>
<td>non-GTM</td>
<td>(Sherwood 1982; Lange 1996)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A widely used comitative preposition with a range of related functions, shown in 2.1 for Akebu, is typical for Kwa. So far, Kwa comitative constructions have not received much attention, but prepositions introducing optional event participants are attested, e.g. in Ewe (< Gbe; e.g. Ameka 2003) or in Baule (< Bia; Creissels & Kouadio 1977: 348–349); in Ga (Trutenau 1973) and in Akan (Amfo 2010), and comitative markers retain some verbal morphosyntax. In GTM, grammaticalized prepositions are typical to express a comitative meaning, an instrumental meaning and also for nominal coordination, for example cf. (van Putten 2014: 44) for Avatime, (Allan 1973: 354–356, 370–372) for Lelemi, (Dorvlo 2008: 70, 97) for Logba, (Delalorm 2014: 175, 177–180) for Sekpele.

As for expressing locative meanings, Akebu demonstrates complete grammaticalization of a single locative preposition. As shown in 2.2, the preposition ṭdo does not distinguish direction. Expression of the meanings of direction is restricted to the lexical meaning of verbs. As mentioned, the origin of this preposition is assumed to be verbal, based on the Kwa word order, but no more language-specific evidence for this can be found synchronically. Moreover, no corresponding verbal lexeme is attested in Akebu (based both on the field data and on the Koffi’s (1981) dictionary). At the same time, Akebu has mainly weakly grammaticalized locative relator nouns as postpositions (9 relator nouns in contrast to the apudessive postposition kpəŋḥ, which only differs from nouns morphologically) that are obligatory when specifying a non-default orientation and are optional with a default orientation.
As it was mentioned, the presence of both prepositions and postpositions that make prepositional-postpositional frames with one another has been reported as a typical feature of Kwa languages, postpositions being more or less transparently related to nouns. Still, a more detailed view of Kwa adpositional systems shows that prepositional-postpositional frames are, in fact, a feature of Gbe languages on the one hand and of GTM languages and Akan on the other hand. For example, only postpositions are reported for Attié (< Attié; Kouadio N’Guessan 1996: 599–612) or for Nawuri (< Guang; Sherwood 1982: 238–253; Lange 1996). In Baule (< Bia; Creissels & Kouadio 1977: 347–365; Bohoussou & Skopeteas 2008) both prepositions and postpositions are attested, but used separately, not combined in prepositional-postpositional frames.

In Gbe, different meanings of direction get their own expression. A set of postpositions expressing orientation can be combined with a set of prepositions expressing direction. In other words, locative prepositional-postpositional frames result from multiplication of a number of directional prepositions and a number of orientational postpositions. Prepositions have a clear deverbal origin and typically the corresponding verbs continue retaining their verbal uses. The system is described in detail for Ewe (see especially Ameka 1995; 2003; Ameka & Essegbey 2006), but is also reported for other languages of this group, see e.g. (Lefebvre & Brousseau 2002: 299–346) for Fon. The Ewe examples provided in (128a) and (128b) show how the same specific postposition can be combined with different prepositions.

(128) Ewe

a. Wo-gbɔ tso to la godzi.  
3PL-come from mountain DEF in_direction_of
‘They have come from the side of the mountain.’
b. Me-do ati la ɖe to la godzi.  
1SG-plant tree DEF to river DEF in_direction_of
‘I have planted a tree somewhere near the river.’  (Fenuku 2015: 23–24)

In contrast, in GTM, there is less elaboration of the special expression of directional meanings.11 This indicates that a language either has a unique locative preposition or at least has a locative preposition that is significantly more grammaticalized and widely used than others. Still, there is significant variation between GTM languages, as well. For example, in Avatime (van Putten 2017), there is a single locative preposition ní that can be used for essive, lative and elative and at the same time is typically combined with postpositions specifying the orientation, as shown in (129). But in Logba (Dorvlo 2008: 95–101), the main and completely grammaticalized locative preposition na, used in directive contexts (130a), coexists with the preposition fé, used in essive context (130b), which is reported to continue being used as a verb.

(129) Avatime

a. ò-se-lò ɔ̀-tíñí ní li-to-lè abà  
CL-tree-DEF CL.PFV-be_on LOC CL-mountain-DEF on
‘The tree is (standing) on the mountain.’
b. bé-dɔ̀ ní ɔ̀-dzɔgbè-lo ɔ̀-za-lɔ̀  
CL.PFV-move_from LOC CL-desert-DEF CL-direction-DEF
‘They came from the direction of the desert.’
c. be-bá-wɔlị̀ ku ní ɔ̀-nìpé lɔ̀-ya mè  
CL.PFV-VENT-fall arrive LOC CL-river CL-this inside
‘They fell into this river.’  (van Putten 2017: 308, 309, 312)

(130) Logba

11 The same is true for Akan (see e.g. Osam 1994a; 1994b), but in Akan, the connection of the locative preposition with the deriving verb is straightforward, in contrast to GTM.
a. *kofi o-mi kɔpu-é na u-kplɔ-á tsú*
   Kofi 3SG-take cup-DEF LOC CL-table-DEF upper_surface
   ‘Kofi put the cup on the table.’

b. *i-na 5-kla fé a-bia-á a-má*
   CL-person 3SG-hide at CL-chair-DEF CL-back
   ‘The person hides behind the chair.’ (Dorvlo 2008: 179, 95)

At the same time, GTM languages differ in the degree of grammaticalization of denominal postpositions expressing orientation. For Lelemi (Allan 1973: 363–364) it is reported that all the functional postpositions are morphosyntactically still nouns retaining their regular noun class marking and being able to head noun phrases in any syntactic position, as can be seen from (131b), in contrast to a more postpositional-like use in (131a). For Sekpele (Ameka 2007, see also a discussion in Delalorm 2016: 177–180), a scale can be drawn from relator nouns retaining a possessive linker and a segmentable noun class marker (132a) to grammaticalized postpositions having neither (132b), with most of the items in focus retaining a noun class marker and taking a possessive linker optionally (132c). In Avatime, according to van Putten (2014: 45–47), there are five strongly grammaticalized locative postpositions and only some of them have an etymological relation to nouns, as the one in (129a); still, weakly grammaticalized locative relator nouns are also present in this language, as seen in (129b).

(131) Lelemi
a. *lé-nù kwamì na ka-druì ka-ma*
   1SG.PST-see Kwame LOC CL-house CL-back
   ‘I saw Kwame in the back of the house.’

b. *lé-nù kwamì ka-druì ka-ma*
   1SG.PST-see Kwame CL-house CL-back
   ‘I saw the back of Kwame’s house.’ (Allan 1973: 361, 363)

(132) Sekpele
a. *u-yi 3-mó tákó ló li-tsyitsya etó ko-tosi*
   CL-tree CL-DEF be_on LOC CL-basket POSS CL-edge
   ‘The stick is on the edge of the basket.’

b. *kɔpu 3-mó tákó ló ṣ-punu asúá*
   cup CL-DEF be_on LOC CL-table surface
   ‘The cup is on the the table.’

c. *lé-kpe kpé lí n-tu lí ṣ-lotsyi (eto) ka-fó*
   CL-fish be_in LOC CL-water LOC CL-pot POSS CL-inside
   ‘The fish is in the water in the pot.’ (Ameka 2007: 1084, 1083, 1072)

Well fitting into this picture, Akebu has its own features. On the one hand, it has only single locative preposition that does not distinguish direction, and there are no other functional words that would specify it. On the other hand, orientation postpositions are weakly grammaticalized and are optional with a default orientation. Both factors indicate underspecification of locative meanings expressed by adpositions, and in sum Akebu can be characterized as a language where both orientation and direction are to a large extent based on lexical meanings of the Figure, the Ground and the verb, as well as in the pragmatics. This seems to be an unusual pattern among GTM, because other languages either have more elaboration of direction expressed by prepositions (as Logba), or have more grammaticalized and more obligatorily used postpositions (as Avatime or Sekpele). Interestingly, following Allan’s (1973) description, one can conclude that in Lelemi, relator nouns are more obligatory than in Akebu. Still, in order to make any sure claims, a detailed comparative study of adpositions in GTM is needed, ideally including quantitative data on frequencies of items of different types.

In sum, the Akebu adpositional system mostly follows the tendencies of GTM adpositional systems and more general tendencies of Kwa adpositional systems, but still looks rather peculiar due to
its minimal set of grammaticalized polyfunctional prepositions and mainly relator nouns, which are not fully grammaticalized items acting as postpositions.

5 Conclusion

A description of adpositions in Akebu was presented in the paper. Akebu follows the general pattern of Kwa languages and employs both prepositions and postpositions and in particular follows the general pattern of GTM languages, because it has a single grammaticalized polyfunctional locative preposition.

All four Akebu prepositions are highly grammaticalized. Two of them, labelled here as comitative and locative, have a wide range of functions. Another one, the limitative, has much narrower semantics. The simulative marker is relatively marginal in its prepositional uses.

Among the postpositions the most representative group are ten weakly grammaticalized relator nouns, nine of them expressing spatial orientation and the tenth being used in other adverbial meanings. A single postposition also expressing spatial orientation is highly grammaticalized. One lexical item is used both as a postposition and as an independent adverbial, two items are used both as subordinative conjunctions and as postpositions. All items expressing spatial orientation, as well as the cause marker, are used both on their own and as part of prepositional-postpositional frames with the locative preposition. Prepositive and postpositive simulative markers regularly form a frame with one another.

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Abbreviations

K, KP, D, P, T, W, Y – noun class markers or noun class agreement markers
1, 2, 3 – 1st, 2nd, 3rd person
AND – andative
CL – noun class or noun class agreement marker
COM – comitative preposition
CONJ – conjunction
COP – copula
DEF – definite
DEM – demonstrative marker
DETR – detransitive
DIM – diminutive
References


