

Morphology and syntax of pronouns in Guro (preliminary remarks)¹

In this paper I present the first results of my research on morphology and syntax of postpositions in Guro. I'll try to outline the main morphological and syntactic parameters relevant for the description of postpositions as a part of speech in Guro. There are still lots of gaps in my data for many parameters, that is why these results should be considered as preliminary.

I will consider the main types of syntactic contexts where postpositions and homonymic nouns, adverbs and preverbs can be used, and also the morphology of these lexical units in all the contexts.

The postpositions and homonymic lexical units can undergo two main types of morphonological transformations:

1) tonal transformations. Among the units in question, there are: a) unalterable units (the majority); b) units undergoing tonal changes in all syntactic contexts: *wū̀ò* 'under', *lḕè* 'at («in palm»)', *lầ* 'in space'; c) units undergoing tonal changes only in certain syntactic contexts: *tā̀/lā̀* 'on (the flat upper surface of a volumetric object)', *bā̀* 'on (the outer surface of an object, also vertically oriented)', *lḕ* 'for';

2) contraction with preceding noun. We find: a) unalterable units (the majority); b) units able to contract with certain preceding nouns by losing their initial consonant: *tā̀/lā̀* 'on', *jî̀* 'in (the homogenous medium made by the object)', *jî̀* 'in (the cavity limited by the object)', *vầ* 'in (the liquid, granular objects); towards, to, at'.

The following syntactic contexts will be discussed:

1a) Postpositional phrase following a verb or the existential copula (a position prototypical for postpositions in Mande languages). In this position, 3 functional, 8 locative-functional and 7 locative postpositions can be used in Guro. Postpositions *tā̀/lā̀*, *bā̀*, *lḕ* change their tone into low after the low tone in this context. Ex.:

(1) *bī̀ lî̀ à bā̀ wū̀-lầ à bā̀.*
man PL COP.EXST envy carry-PRGR 3SG.NSBJ on
'People are envious of him'.

1b) Alone after the verb (the adverbial position). Postpositions are not generally used in such a context (the only exception is *lé̀* 'before', but in this case it should rather be considered as a part of a conjunction *lé̀ yḕ* 'before that'). Ex.:

(2) *í fḕ bī̀lî̀ lé̀, yḕ í gū̀*
2SG.IMP thing eat before then 2SG.IMP go
'Eat before you go' («Eat before, then go»).

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2) Position of a subject (noun position) – locative nouns homonymic to all the locative and locative-functional postpositions can be used in this position (esp. before the existential copula and static intransitive verbs). Locative nouns *tā/lā* and possibly *bā* change tone into high after a high tone and into low after a low tone in this context. Ex.:

(3) *tábélé tà / lólú tá / sō tā à fúú.*

table on / lip on / clothes on COP.EXST light

‘Table surface / lip / clothes is (are) white’.

3) Attribute in NP (noun position). Any locative and locative-functional postposition, as well as the functional postposition *lē* ‘for’, can be used in this position. The postposition *lē* always changes its lexical tone into falling following a high or a middle tone, and into low following a low tone. Postpositions *tā/lā* and *bā* sometimes undergo the same tonal change, and sometimes they preserve their lexical tone. It depends on the semantics of a postposition itself (if it is used metaphorically or not), on how idiomatic is the NP on the whole, and on referential status. This tonal change is isomorphic to the change that may undergo nouns and verbal infinitives in the position of an attribute in a NP; it is discussed in more details. Ex. ((4), (5) with postpositions, (6) with a noun, (7) with a verbal infinitive):

(4) *bē bā zèlè* <hand-on-ring> ‘ring on a hand’ – *bē bā zèlè* ‘hand ring’ (“ring meant to be on a hand”);

(5) *gùlú tā fē* <car-on-thing> ‘thing lying on a car’ (on the roof, hood, boot) – *gùlú tā* (/ta*) *jī* ‘smell from a car’ (“smell on a car”);

(6) *gòlò bī* <Guro-man> ‘a Guro man’ – *gòlò bī* ‘a man of a Guro {anthropological} type’;

(7) *yóú fē* <hide-thing> ‘hidden thing’ – *yóú fē* ‘thing to be hidden’ – *yóú fē* ‘type of a hidden thing’.

4) Position before a transitive verb (position of direct objects nouns and preverbs) – the most problematic context for distinguishing between locative nouns, preverbs and postpositions, especially between the first two (my data for this context are also rather poor). Some problematic cases are discussed here, e.g. different grammatical contexts for a verb *yāā* 1. vi. hurt, pain, cause pain; 2. vt. tire, weary, fatigue (in particular, see ex. 12 where a locative noun/preverb/postposition is used without attributes):

(8) *ā jī à yāā-lā ā bā*

1SG.SBJ inside COP.EXST hurt-PRGR 1SG.NSBJ on

‘My insides cause pain to me’.

(9) *táá wû-lī é bī wēlē jī [= wēlē] yā-ā*

walking carry-NMLZ COP.IPRF man bone in tire-IPRF

‘Walking makes human body tired’.

(10) *ā bā / tā é yā-ā ~ ī bā à yāā-lā*

1SG.NSBJ on / on COP.IPRF hurt-IPRF ~ 2SG.NSBJ COP.EXST hurt-PRGR

‘I’m sick’ ~ ‘You are sick’.

(11) *à yāā-lī sí*

3SG.NSBJ hurt-NMLZ leave.PRF

‘Its pain stopped’.

(12) *bē zùè ḅà yàà-ī*

this type on hurt-NMLZ

‘This way of being ill’.

Locative nouns/preverbs/postpositions *tā/lā* and *bā* seem always to have falling tone after high and middle tones and low tone after a low tone in this context.

Apart for the contexts presented above, it will be briefly spoken about relativization and focalization of postpositional phrases.

Abbreviations

PL – plural

COP – copula

EXST – existential {copula}

PRGR – progressive

SG - singular

NSBJ – non-subject {pronoun}

IMP – imperative

SBJ – subject {pronoun}

NMLZ – nominalization

IPRF – imperfective