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A grammar of Tafi

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5. ADPOSITIONS AND ADPOSITIONAL PHRASES

This chapter presents the forms that are used to express various relational meanings of the kind coded in adpositions (see Hagège 2010 for a recent typological overview). Tafi has two classes of adpositions, like other Kwa languages, prepositions and postpositions. There are two bona fide prepositions, a locative preposition **ní** ‘LOC’ and a comitative preposition **ni** ‘COM’. In addition to these, there are a number of verb forms that are in the process of grammaticalising into prepositions. These are **kú** ‘reach, arrive’ developing into an ‘ALLative’, **kɔ** ‘give, cause, let, make’ developing into a ‘DATive’ preposition, **gano** ‘pass through’ developing into a ‘PERLative’ preposition and **dénɔ** ‘come from’ has fully grammaticalised into an ‘ABLative’ preposition. Such forms in the Kwa languages have led to debates about whether they are verbs or verbids (Ansre 1966). A grammaticalisation perspective provides an adequate account (see e.g. Heine et al. 1991). I assume that they are grammaticalising. The forms and the arguments for grammaticalisation are discussed in §5.1.

The second class of adpositions is the postpositions. These are even more controversial. Some, e.g. Aboh (2005, 2010) argue that they are postnominal elements and not postpositions as they do not behave like typical postpositions, e.g. they do not assign case. Osam et al. (2011) argue with respect to Akan that some of the elements that have been labelled postpositions in Akan should rather be treated as “relator nouns” as they have not been fully grammaticalised yet. They do concede that postposition is the final stage in the grammaticalisation of various spatial and body part nominals. Following Ameka (2003), Ameka and Essegbey (2006), Lefebvre and Brousseau (2002) among others, I assume that the forms that name parts and regions attached to parts of objects and are structurally bound to their dependent nominals are postpositions. They are typically grammaticalised spatial and body part nominals (see Heine 1997, Heine et al. 1991 for the mechanisms involved). Postpositions in Tafi are discussed in §5.2.

5.1 Prepositions

As noted in the introduction, Tafi has two bona fide prepositions which are **ní** ‘LOC’ and **ni** ‘COM’ (see also §7.4.7). Other prepositions have verbal sources and are undergoing grammaticalisation. The preposition **dénɔ** ‘from’ has completely grammaticalised and no longer occurs as a verb.

5.1.1 The locative preposition **ní**

The preposition **ní** ‘LOC’ is a general locative preposition which marks ground phrases in locative constructions. It introduces locative adjuncts, i.e. a place where an event takes place as in (1) – (4). It can also introduce temporal adjuncts (5). The

locative preposition **ní** can take as its complement an NP, as illustrated in (1) and (2), or a postpositional phrase as in (3) – (5).

1. Banóvñ áṅe 'éd5 ní sukū.
ba-nóvñ ní bá-ṅa kí-d5 [ní sukū]
 CM.PL-child DEF SM-eat CM-thing LOC school
 'The children ate at school.'
2. Báát5 'emokó ní Baagbo.
bá-á-t5 kí-mukó [ní Baagbo]
 3PL-PRSPROG-cook CM-red.rice.porridge LOC Baagbo
 'They are cooking red rice porridge in Tafi.'
3. Ányínóvñe ábubó n'íégbúníédé.
á-nyínóvñe ní á-bubó [ní ke-gbu ní ke.de]
 CM-boy DEF SM-bend LOC CM-chair DEF back
 'The boy squats behind the chair.' (TRPS 64)
4. ... kulí áv'edékpú ní kidzon'út5.
kulí yí á-ví e-dé-kpú [ní ki-dzo ní bu.t5]
 then 3SG.IND SM-go SM-ITIVE-hide LOC CM-road DEF edge
 '... then he went and hid beside the road.' (Sáhwī)
5. Bútsú 'íkū ní wolě gugóéním kpí kagbaním.
bú-tsú kí-kū [ní wolě gugóé ní kumí] kpí
 1PL-dig CM-yam LOC month last DEF inside put.into
ka-gba ní kumí
 CM-barn DEF inside
 'We harvest the yam in the last month of the year (i.e. December) and put it into the barn.' (Yam cultivation)

The locative preposition **ní** and its complement can be preposed to the clause and marked by the topic marker **ní** 'TOP' as scene-setting topics.

6. Ní kedziním ní, Ám'edzí bladzyō
[ní ke-dzi ní kumí ní] Ámā e-dzí bladzyō
 LOC CM-market DEF inside TOP Ámā SM-buy plantain
 'In the market, Ama bought plantain.'
7. Ní sukū ní, Agoe átsánī Mensah.
[ní sukū ní] Agoe á-tsá-nī Mensah
 LOC school TOP Agoe SM-meet-COM Mensah
 'At the school, Agoe met Mensah.'

5.1.2 The comitative preposition **ni**

The comitative preposition **ni** ‘COM’ is used to introduce participants in different roles such as instrument (8) and comitative (9). When its complement is an abstract NP denoting emotion as in (10), or human propensity, e.g. strength, the phrase is interpreted as doing something with the abstract propensity and hence as doing something in a certain manner. It can thus head manner phrases (10). The comitative preposition **ni** also has an additive function – it is used to link NPs. These NPs linked by **ni** ‘COM’ are co- or joint participants as shown in (11). However, when **ni** ‘COM’ is used to link pronouns it is the independent forms that are used as illustrated in (12), (see §3.6.1). The sentence in (13) is ungrammatical because **ni** ‘COM’ is used in that example to link pronominal clitics (see §3.6.1).

8. Óbósó ’uyaním ni kápā.
ó-bó-só bu-ya ní kum [ni ká-pā]
 2SG-FUT-weed CM-farm DEF inside COM CM-hoe
 ‘You will weed the farm with a hoe.’
9. Adívi sukū ni y’úplúkpa.
a-dí-vi sukū [ni yí bu-plukpá]
 3SG-NEG2-go school COM 3SG.IND CM.PL-book
 ‘He did not go to school with his books.’
10. Agoe áshĩ ávi Igě ni samí.
Agoe á-shĩ á-vi Igě [ni samí]
 Agoe SM-leave SM-go Accra COM joy
 ‘Agoe left for Accra with joy (joyfully).’
11. Ésí ni y’eyíalín éplú bawin pétée.
[Ésí ni yí e-yí-alí ní] bē-plú ba-wi
 Ésí COM 3SG.IND CM-child-PL DEF SM-wash CM.PL-dress
ní pétée
 DEF all
 ‘Esi and her children washed all the clothes.’
12. Wó ni yí, nóbá.
[wó ni yí] nɔ-bá
 2SG.IND COM 3SG.IND 2PL-come
 ‘You and s/he came.’
13. *Ó ni á nóbá
[ó ni á] nɔ-bá
 2SG COM 3SG 2PL-come
 ‘You and s/he came.’

The preposition **ni** ‘COM’ becomes **no** when its complement is not adjacent to it, but occurs elsewhere in the clause:

- as a fronted constituent for purposes of information packaging – topic/focus, i.e. when the preposition is stranded and
- in a **yuk3** ‘take’ SVC where the NP with the instrument role occurs as object of V1 – **yuk3** ‘take’ (see Chapter 10 on SVCs).

14. Kápā, Kókú aso ’ed5 ní n5.

ká-pā **Kókú** **a-só** **kí-d5** **ní** **n5**
CM-hoe Kókú SM-weed CM-thing DEF COM

‘It is with a hoe Koku did the weeding.’ (Lit.: ‘A hoe Kókú weeded with.’)

15. Kókú áyíko kápā áso ’ed5 ní n5.

Kókú **á-yíko** **ká-pā** **á-só** **kí-d5** **ní** **n5**
Kókú SM-take CM-hoe SM-weed CM-thing DEF COM

‘Koku used a hoe to weed.’ OR ‘Kókú used a hoe to do the weeding.’

5.1.3 Other prepositions

Certain verbs in Tafi are in the process of grammaticalising into prepositions. They include **dén5** ‘come.from’; **kú** ‘reach, arrive’, **k5** ‘give, cause, let, make’ and **gano** ‘pass through’. These verbs are used as ablative, allative, dative and perlative prepositions respectively. When used as prepositions, they do not take agreement markers, i.e. subjects are not marked on them and they have a reduced possibility of co-occurring with preverb markers. These are all signs of grammaticalisation in progress.

5.1.3.1 The preposition **dén5** ‘from’

The preposition **dén5** ‘from’ can be used to express extent. Thus when its complement is a temporal noun, it translates as ‘since’ as in (18). When the head of its complement is the postposition **shú** ‘surface’ it translates as ‘about’, that is the **dén5** prepositional phrase with a **shú** postpositional phrase complement indicates the topic of a speaking event or speech act as in (17). It appears that **dén5** consists of the verb **dé** ‘come from’ and the associative verb extension **-no** ‘ASSOC’. Speakers also use the alternate form **déní**. Both forms are used interchangeably without any discernible semantic difference. Even though **dén5** ‘from’ has a verb source it doesn’t seem to be used as a verb anymore. It has fully grammaticalised into a preposition. The following are examples:

16. Bázhíá típíplín5 dé5 ekusín 5k5.

bá-zhíá **tí-pí-plín5** [**dén5** **e-kusí** **ní** **5k5**]
3PL-need CM-RED-help from CM-chief DEF place

‘They need help from the chief.’

17. Ébísí ebúí dēnō áxwī ní shú.
É-bísí e-búí [dēnō á-xwī ní shú]
 3SG-ask CM.PL-word from CM.PL-work DEF surface
 ‘He asked questions about the work.’
18. Bényí Mawutō dēnī kúnóvobe ké.
bé-nyí Mawutō [dēnī kú-nóvobe] ké
 3PL-know Mawutō from CM-child.period INT
 ‘They know Mawutor since (her) childhood.’
19. ... dēn’otsōō ní ríqíqí ódónánī ’ibe nō n’ibe gú lóba yíkí sákáń
[dēnī otsōō] ní ríqíqí ó-dō-nánī ki-be nō
 from now TOP continuously 2SG-ITIVE-reach CM-time wh.ever
ní kí-be gú ló-ba-yíkí sáká ní
 DEF CM-time REL 1PL.DEP-VENT-receive money DEF
 ‘... from now until whenever we receive the money’

As example (19) shows, a **dēnō** ‘from’ prepositional phrase, like a locative prepositional phrase, can be topicalised. In that case, it is fronted and marked by the topic marker **ní** ‘TOP’. Also, the complement of **dēnō** can either be a (temporal) nominal, as in (19), or a postpositional phrase as in examples (16) and (17).

5.1.3.2 The preposition **kú** ‘to, towards’

When **kú** is used as a verb, it means ‘reach, arrive’ and it takes subject pronominal prefixes or subject markers as illustrated in (20) where it occurs as V2 in an SVC. In its function as a preposition, it translates as ‘to’ or ‘towards’. It is used to indicate direction to or toward a place. As a preposition, the subject is not cross-referenced on it as shown in (21). The sentence in (21) is a monoverbal clause with a prepositional adjunct phrase.

20. Anóvōń éwu ekú kitrekpúníábhā.
a-nóvō ní é-wu e-kú ki-trekpú ní kábhā
 CM-child DEF SM-climb SM-reach CM-anthill DEF top
 ‘The child climbed onto an anthill.’ (FS)
21. Anóvōń awóń kú kením.
a-nóvō ní á-wóń kú ke-ní kumí
 CM-child DEF SM-fall ALL CM-river inside
 ‘The child fell into a river.’ (FS)

Because of its allative semantics, a **kú** prepositional phrase does not seem to be able to be fronted for topic.

22. *Kú kenínīm ní anóvǝ́n áwǝ́lǐ.

kú ke-ní ní kumu ní a-nóvǝ ní á-wǝ́lǐ
 ALL CM-river DEF inside TOP CM-child DEF SM-fall
 ‘Into the river the child fell.’

5.1.3.3 The preposition **kǝ** ‘for’

When **kǝ** has a prepositional function, it is used to mark dative objects in monoverbal clauses and it does not take an agreement marker as in (23) and (24). However, when **kǝ** functions as a verb meaning ‘give, cause, let, make’, it can occur as the main verb in a monoverbal clause or as the second verb in an SVC. In this verbal function, the subject is cross-referenced on it, as in (25).

23. ... so ní ní badǝ́ǝ ʼédǝ́ǝ́ǝ́n kǝ gbaxǎ́ǎ́.
so ní ní ba-di-go kǝ́-dǝ́ǝ́ǝ́n ní kǝ gbaxǎ́ǎ́
 so TOP TOP 3PL-NEG2-leave CM-food DEF DAT striped.mouse
 ‘... for that reason, they did not leave any food for striped mouse.’
 (Gbaxǎ́ǎ́)
24. Kú ko létsi kǝ lǝ́ǎ́.
kú ko lé-tsi kǝ blǝ́ aní
 death just 3PL.DEP-tell DAT 1PL TOP
 ‘It was only the death that was announced to us.’ (Butsiugǝ́)

In (23) and (24), the complement of the dative preposition **kǝ** is a benefactive and an addressee respectively.

25. Ádǝ́ǝ́ ʼédǝ́ ákǝ́é.
a-da-sǝ́ kǝ́-dǝ́ á-kǝ́ yí
 3SG-ITIVE-weed CM-thing SM-give 3SG
 ‘S/he went to weed for her (on her farm).’

A **kǝ** prepositional phrase does not occur clause initially functioning as a topic. However, when **kǝ** is used as a verb, its complement can be fronted for focus as shown in (26).

26. Anóvǝ́n Ámʼedzí bawin akǝ́.
a-nóvǝ ní Ámǎ e-dzí ba-wi ní a-kǝ́
 CM-child DEF Ámǎ SM-buy CM.PL-dress DEF SM-give
 ‘It was the child Ama bought the dress for.’

As the Dative is the non-local relation, the complement of the **kǝ** preposition tends to be an NP as opposed to a postpositional phrase as is the case with the local relation prepositions like the ablative and allative.

5.1.3.4 The preposition **gano** ‘through’

Gano is a verb which means ‘keep, walk with, pass through’. It is used as an operator verb in habitual aspect constructions (see § 7.3.10). It is grammaticalising into a perlocative preposition, i.e. ‘through’. **Gano** has two alternating forms – **gano/gani**. **Gano** appears to be made up of the verb **ga** ‘walk’ and the associative verb extension **no** ‘COM’. The following sentences in (27) and (28) illustrate the use of **gano** as a verb and as the perlocative preposition respectively.

27. Ágbánī ányín ágano áyakpáním.
 á-gbání á-nyí ní á-gano á-yakpá ní kumí
 3SG-lead CM-man DEF SM-pass.through CM-bush DEF inside
 ‘S/he led the man through the bush.’
28. Ágbánī ányín gano áyakpáním.
 á-gbání á-nyí ní [gano á-yakpá ní kumí]
 3SG-lead CM-man DEF through CM-bush DEF inside
 ‘S/he led the man through the bush.’

Unlike **kú** ‘ALL’, and **kó** ‘DAT’ phrases, **gano** phrases can be fronted for topic as illustrated in (29).

29. Gano kílílíní shú ní, ábashĩ obón.
 [gano kílílíní shú] ní á-ba-shĩ o-bón
 through AM-DIST surface TOP 3SG-FUT-leave CM-today
 ‘As a result of that, s/he will leave today.’

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the prepositional forms, their functions and verbal sources where relevant.

Table 5.1: Prepositions in Tafi

Preposition	Function	Gloss	Verbal Source	Source Gloss
ní	LOCATIVE	‘LOC’		
ni	COMITATIVE	‘COM’		
dénĩ	ABLATIVE	‘from’	dé + no	‘come.from + ‘COM’
kó	DATIVE	‘for’	kó	‘give’
kú	ALLATIVE	to, towards	kú	‘reach, arrive’
gano	PERLATIVE	through	ga + no	‘walk’ + ‘COM’

5.2 Postpositions

Tafi has a closed set of about a dozen or so members of the postposition class which are used to denote the parts and regions of objects. Some of these are spatial nominals or body-part nouns which are at different stages in the process of grammaticalisation. Table 5.2 lists the postpositions in Tafi.

Table 5.2: Postpositions in Tafi

Postposition	Gloss	Putative Noun Source
kábhā	‘top’	
kumɪ	‘inside’	
kesí	‘under, beneath’	ke-sí ‘bottom, down part’
kede	‘back, behind’	ke-de ‘back’
otúgba	‘in front of’	o-túgba ‘front’
ɔbha	‘beside, near’	
ɔtɔ	‘outside’	
ɔkɔ	‘“chez”, place’	ɔ-kɔ ‘place’
bunú	‘opening, endpoint, tip, mouth’	
kishí	‘between, among’	
kibe	‘side, direction’	
kenú	‘entrance’	
shú	‘surface’	i-shú ‘body’
butɔ	‘edge’	bu-tɔ ‘ear’
kĩwã	‘beside’, ‘at the side of’	
adɛm	‘apex, peak’	a-da ‘top of head’ + kumɪ ‘inside’

As the postpositions have developed from nominals, they share some form properties with them, especially in relation to class prefixes. The majority of them have retained their class markers. The postposition **shú** has lost it completely as shown in (30). Like nouns, those postpositions with CV prefixes have their C-initial segments deleted in speech as in (31). Moreover, for those that have a **ka/ke**-prefix, the **i/ɪ** insertion rule after the deletion of an initial **k** applies as in (32) (see §2.5.3). The postposition **kumɪ** ‘inside’ has different realisations at different stages of grammaticalisation as in (33) and (34). It seems to have lost its prefix in the varieties of Agorme and Abuífé (Ofu). Thus, as shown in (34), the form of the postposition is **m** which may have resulted from the deletion of the final vowel of **mi**. In (33) however, the initial consonant and final vowel of **kumɪ** have been elided yielding **um**. Furthermore, the prefix vowel **ɪ** coalesces with the final vowel of the preceding word and the resulting vowel is **ɛ** (see §2.5.5 for further details).

30. Kánā Baagbō kōnún álí ní adzú gbígbánō shú.
ká-nā **Baa-gbō** **kōnún** **ní** **a-lí** **ní**
 CM-manner CM.PL-Táfi custom DEF SM-be.at LOC
a-dzì **gbí-gbánō** **shú**
 CM-woman RED-marry surface
 ‘That is how marriage (of a woman) rites are performed in Tafi.’
31. Anóvōn ébélí fēsṛī ’útó.
a-nóvō **ní** **é-bé-lí** **fēsṛī** **ní** **bu.tó**
 CM-child DEF SM-VENT-be.positioned window DEF edge
 ‘The child went and stood by the window.’ (FS)
32. Ekusí tédíkpo y’áaṇa ló’abhá.
e-kusí **te-díkpo** **yí** **á-a-ṇa** **bló** **kábhā**
 CM-chief AM-one 3SG.IND SM-PSTPROG-eat 1PL.IND top
 ‘One king was ruling over all of us.’
33. Ányín áshī ávì ’upém.
á-nyí **ní** **á-shī** **á-vì** **bu-pá** **kumì**
 CM-man DEF SM-leave SM-go CM-house inside
 ‘The man left and went home.’
34. Ányín áshī ávì ’upám.
á-nyí **ní** **á-shī** **á-vì** **bu-pá** **kumì**
 CM-man DEF SM-leave SM-go CM-house inside
 ‘The man left and went home.’

Postpositional phrases have the same external properties as NPs. In fact, the grammatical context for the development of the spatial or body part nominals into postpositions is the possessive phrase where the spatial nominal heads it as a possessee. Thus, postpositional phrases function as subjects (36), objects (37) and prepositional objects (39) just like NPs.

35. Sukúním gí yímí létu ányínóvōén ní átsyra.
sukú **ní** **kumì** **gí** **yí** **kumì** **lé-tu**
 school DEF inside REL 3SG.IND inside 3PL.DEP-beat
á-nyínóvōē **ní** **ní** **á-tsyra**
 CM-boy DEF TOP SM-collapse
 ‘The school in which the boy was beaten collapsed.’
36. Kplǎníábhā ’dó ’ébó.
kplǎ **ní** **kábhā** **á-dó** **ki-bó**
 table DEF top CM-contact CM-dirt
 ‘The top of the table is dirty.’

37. Akú étsuru kplǎ́ ní kábhā.
Akú é-tsuru kplǎ́ ní kábhā
 Akú SM-wipe table DEF top
 ‘Aku cleaned the top of the table.’
38. Adıgba ’uvuním.
a-dı-gba bú-vū ní kumı
 3SG-NEG2-sweep CM-house DEF inside
 ‘S/he did not sweep the room.’
39. Báṅe ’edɔ ní y’úpém.
bá-ṅa kí-dɔ ní yí bu-pá kumı
 3PL-eat CM-thing LOC 3SG.IND CM-house inside
 ‘They ate in his house.’
40. Búvūnım y’ágbā.
bú-vū ní kumı yí á-gbā
 CM-house DEF inside 3SG.IND SM-sweep
 ‘The room he swept.’

The sentences below exemplify body-part nouns (41, 42) and spatial nouns (43) - (44) respectively.

41. Wó íshúım umítá.
wó i-shúı kumı i-mítá
 2SG CM-body inside SM-be.not.good
 ‘You are sick.’ Lit: Your body inside is not good.
42. Anúvǎ́n ’útɔ́ ní yékē.
a-núvǎ́n ní bu-tɔ́ ní yékē
 CM-child DEF CM-ear DEF swell
 ‘The child’s ear is swollen.’
43. Gı latrɔ́ ’itsikpı́ ni ’ifún pı kesín á ...
gı la-trɔ́ ki-tsikpı́ ní ki-fú ní pı
 REL 3PL.DEP-put.on CM-pot DEF CM-fire DEF CONN
ke-sí ní á
 CM-bottom DEF CFM
 ‘When they put the pot on the fire and the down part...’ (Kásālā)
44. Ónúgı kihuí dıya kede lí yí.
ónú.gı ki-huí dıya ke-de lí-yí
 COND CM-trap spring CM-back 3SG.DEP-show.up
 ‘When a trap springs, it moves backwards.’ (Proverbs #9)

Although postpositions denote spatial parts and regions of objects, they can be omitted under certain conditions. For instance, when the Ground where the Figure is located is inherently locative such as **kesukpá** ‘land, ground’ as illustrated in (45) or when the search domain is inferable from the verb, i.e., the information carried by the postposition is specified by the verb and so it becomes redundant. Thus, there is no mention of the search domain in sentence (43) above (see Chapter 6, § 6.6 for further details).

45. ki-shǐ́n ílǐ ’ésúkpá
 ki-shǐ́ **ní** **í-lí** **ke-sukpá**
 CM-stick DEF SM-be.positioned CM-ground
 ‘The stick is on the ground.’

Postpositions have evolved from nouns, and they are formally distinct from them. Postpositions cannot be pronominalised, nouns can be. They always occur bound to their dependent NPs as in (46). (47) is ungrammatical because the postposition **shú** has been extracted from its position, i.e., after its dependent NP. However, body part nouns, for example, can occur external to their possessors as illustrated in (48).

46. Fótoń étsirí kidri ní shú.
 fóto **ní** **é-tsirí** **ki-dri** **ní** **shú**
 picture DEF SM-be.on CM-wall DEF surface
 ‘The picture is on the wall.’ (TRPS 44)
47. *shú fotoń étsirí kidriń.
 shú **foto** **ní** **é-tsirí** **ki-dri** **ní**
 surface picture DEF SM-be.on CM-wall DEF
 ‘The picture is on the wall.’
48. Ishú íitǎm.
 i-shú **í-í-tǎ** **mí**
 CM-body SM-PRSPROG-ache 1SG
 ‘My body is aching.’ (Lit.: ‘Body is aching me.’)

From a cross-linguistic point of view, Tafi thus belongs to the group of languages that have two classes of adpositions.

