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A grammar of Mundabli : a Bantoid (Yemne-Kimbi) language of Cameroon

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CHAPTER 10

Other word classes

This chapter deals with all those word classes which have not been dealt with in the preceding chapters: adverbs (§10.1), adpositions (§10.2), temporal deictics (§10.3), spatial deictics (§10.4), ideophones (§10.5), the interjections ‘yes’ and ‘no’ (§10.6) and other interjections (§10.7).

10.1 Adverbs

This section deals exclusively with clause-final manner adverbs which are introduced by the adverbial marker *ǎ*. In certain cases, manner can also be expressed by serial verb constructions (§9.1.4). Furthermore, there is a second type of adverbs called verbal adverbs. They are dealt with in §9.4. Finally, ideophones may also fulfill the function of manner adverbs. Ideophones are treated in §10.5.

Manner adverbs modify the meaning of the verb (cf. Givón (1984: 77,78)). They always occur in clause-final position, introduced by the particle *ǎ* which is glossed ‘ADVLZ’ and may also introduce adverbial phrases. Clause-final manner adverbs are usually derived. They may be based on adjectives or they may be based on reduplicated monosyllabic stems, mostly of unclear origin, as in (395). The tonal pattern of manner adverbs with reduplicated stems is always Low - Low..

- (395) m = bwān mǐ gbè ǎ lə~lə, kě
 1SG = get_wounded(a) 1SG house.LOC ADVLZ empty~RED even
 n = kó tʃyé bə nínj nō ń = lə k-ó kí
 1SG = HAB KNOW(c) FRUST CL7.thing SUBORD 1SG = do(a) CL7-REL CL7

‘I got wounded in my house for no good reason. I don’t even know what I had done.’

Monosyllabic adverbials may be repeated several times for emphasis, as in (396). The repetition in this case is not to be confused with the reduplication found in other adverbs. This is confirmed by the fact that the tone here is not low, as in the latter (see above). The adverbial **dzú** in this example is probably related to the postposition **dzō** ‘under’.

- (396) ń = kwóm gān ǎ dzú dzú dzú, ʃí
 1SG = creep(c) go(a) ADVLZ down down down CL3/7a.storm
 k-ó kó ʃú mī ā kē ǎká
 CL7a-DET catch(b).IPFV come(b).IPFV 1SG COM CL9/10.hand like
 kó mbē
 catch(b).IPFV CL2.person

‘I crept [going] down [very low]. The storm was catching me with its hands as if it were people catching [me].’

The adverb **mò~mò** ‘very much’ (397) could be derived from the numeral **mò** ‘one’, however, its synchronic meaning is not related to the numeral.

- (397) wù sé dzé ǎ mò~mò
 CL1 be_hot(c) CL7.mouth ADVLZ one~RED

‘She is very active!’ (Lit.: She is very hot in her mouth.)

10.2 Adpositions

Mundabli has prepositions and postpositions. However, postpositions far outnumber prepositions. Prepositions are discussed in §10.2.1 and postpositions in §10.2.2.

10.2.1 Prepositions

There are only two prepositions: **ā** ‘COM’, which unites comitative and instrumental function and is roughly equivalent to English ‘with’ and the general locative preposition **ĩ**, which is usually optional and which always co-occurs in combination with a more specific locative or benefactive postposition within a circumpositional construction. In the examples, pre- and postpositions are underlined and their NP complement is enclosed in square brackets. The prepositions and their glosses and meanings are shown in Table 10.1. In the examples

in this section, pre- and postpositions are underlined and their NP complement is enclosed in square brackets.

preposition	gloss (meaning)
<u>ā</u>	‘COM’ (‘with’, comitative or instrumental)
<u>ĩ</u>	‘LOC’ (general locative marker)

Table 10.1: The two prepositions with glosses and meanings

10.2.1.1 The comitative/ instrumental preposition ā ‘with’

The preposition ā **with** heads a prepositional phrase and may have comitative or instrumental function. Class pronouns for noun classes other than Class 1 and 9, which normally bear a superhigh tone in non-preverbal position, are realized with a LH rising tone when they are the object of the comitative preposition, as in §6.1.3.

The comitative phrase usually stands at the end of a clause, as in (398) and (399), but exceptions are possible; see (400).

- (398) wù tʃú ā [mbí], bʃ mú
 CL1 come(b) COM CL6.palm_wine CL2 drink(b)

‘He came with wine [and] they drank.’

- (399) m̀ w-ḡ yí ndʒɔmɲyĩn ā [kē yí]
 CL1.man CL1-DET eat(b) CL8.food COM CL10.fingers CL10;3SG.POSS

◊‘The man eats the food with his hand.’

- (400) ń = l̀ ā [mb̀̀ɲ ḿɲ] ỳ̀ɲ
 1SG = go_to_bush(a) COM CL1/2.COW(S) CL2;1SG.POSS CL1/2.bush

‘I am going to the bush with my cows.’

In (400), the comitative phrase directly follows the verb, preceding the locative adjunct ỳ̀ɲ ‘bush’.

The preposition ā also occurs in a certain construction with a transitive verb. Here, the direct object represents the benefactor of the action and the preposition ā introduces the undergoer in the form of an oblique argument, as in (401).

- (401) yē gǎn tsē mī ā [ntsɔm mū-ɲ-gē-ɲ-gē]
 COMP go(a) find(a) 1SG COM CL6a-soil CL6a-N-be_red-RED

‘...: Go and find me some red soil!’

The same may be expressed by a different construction in which the undergoer is the direct object and directly follows the verb while the recipient is embedded in a circumpositional construction with the general locative preposition *ĩ* preceding it and the dative postposition *lā* following it. For more on this construction, which is characteristic for the verb ‘give’, see §11.1.2.

10.2.1.2 The locative preposition *ĩ*

The general locative preposition *ĩ* is always part of a circumpositional construction in which it co-occurs with a semantically more specific postposition. The postpositions with locative semantics which co-occur with the preposition *ĩ* include *wō* ‘on’ in (402) and *mī* ‘in’, and even derived postpositions, such as *sē* ‘house_front.LOC’ and the benefactive postposition *lā* ‘for’; see (404) and (405). Its use is generally optional.

- (402) *ká* *ŋ=ká* *kpĩ* *f-án* *bēn ká* *mū* *tjũ* *ā*
 COND 1SG = COND die(b) PROX-here 2PL COND take(a) come(b) COM
dzám, *bēn ká* *mī* *dzi* *ji* *ĩ*
 CL7/8.calabash_plant 2PL COND CONSEC put(a) go_down(a) LOC
 [dzám *ŋgĩ*] *wō*
 CL9/10.grave CL9;1SG.POSS on

‘If I die here, you will bring a calabash seed, and then you will plant [it] on my grave.’

- (403) *wù dā* *bā* *kà gí* *tē* *ĩ* [gbō]
 CL1 see(a) IMPERS P3 put(b) CL7/8.walking.stick LOC CL3.house
sē
 front.LOC

‘She saw that someone had put a walking stick in front of the house.’

- (404) *kpé* *w-ō* *dzyè* *ndzomyĩn* *ĩ* [*mò* *w-ō*] *lā*
 CL1.woman CL1-DET cook(a) CL8.food LOC CL1.man CL1-DET DAT

◊‘The woman cooks food for the man.’

- (405) *ɲwām* *wān* *wū* *dzé* *ĩ* [*gbàn*
 CL1.husband CL1.child CL1;3SG.POSS say(b) LOC CL1/2.in-law
wū] *lā* *yē*
 CL1;3SG.POSS DAT COMP

‘Her child’s husband said to his in-law: ...’

Certain speakers sometimes pronounce the locative preposition *á* rather than *ĩ*. This may be due to contact influence from Missong, where the general locative preposition has the form *á* (Lovegren 2013: 279ff.).

10.2.2 Postpositions

All postpositions are monosyllabic. Postpositions are often historically derived from nouns and in many cases, they are segmentally identical with the latter (see §10.2.2.1). Table 10.2 provides a list of all known postpositions and their glosses. A comparison of postpositions and cognate nouns is found in §10.2.2.1.

postposition	gloss
ʃī	‘in front of’
dzēm	‘behind’
gyiŋ	‘next to’
dzō	‘under’
wō	‘on’
mī	‘in’, ‘inside’
yā	‘in’ (rare)
ŋgō	‘upon, at, on, by’, ‘with’ (instrumental, comitative)
yū	‘behind’ (following someone)
sām	‘in the middle of’
gbó	‘in house’, ‘at home’
sē	‘in front of’ (only with dwelling)
kúŋ	‘behind’ (only with dwelling)
kú	‘in home village’
kàn	‘in hands’
fō	‘on head’
dzæ	‘in mouth’
wúŋ	‘in nose’
kúŋ	‘around neck’
bān	‘around waist’
lā	‘for’

Table 10.2: comprehensive list of postpositions with glosses

Postpositions head postpositional phrases. They directly follow the noun phrase they head and they usually encode spatial location, as in (406)-(407).

- (406) sèsǎŋ dā kwō wù yǎ kwō [bwē] yà
 CL9.spider braid(a) climb(c) enter(c) CL1 enter(c) CL3a.sky in

‘The spider braided [the bridge] until it reached heaven.’

- (407) bīkɔ́ kpɔ́ wū-dʒwē dǐ ná, wū dǐ ā
 because CL3/7a.money CL3-much/many be(b) as CL3 be(b) COM
 sǎtàn [wú] yū ǎ mō~mō
 CL1/2.satan CL3.PP behind ADVLZ one~RED

‘Because a lot of money always has many devils behind it.’

All postpositions may co-occur with the optional locative marker ǐ, as in (408); see §10.2.1.2.

- (408) wù pēn kwō ǐ [dzé] dzō
 CL1 hide(a) enter(c) LOC CL3/7a.rock under

‘He hid under a rock.’ (lit.: He hid entered rock under.)

Most postpositions have static spatial semantics. They express location relative to their complement NP. Direction of movement is not encoded by adpositions, but instead by verbs like ‘come’/‘go’, ‘ascend’/‘descend’, ‘enter’/‘exit’ etc., which form part of serial verb constructions (see Chapter 9 for more on serial verb constructions).

The postposition **kān** ‘hands.LOC’ can be used in a metaphorical sense, as exemplified in (409) and in (410). In (409), **kān** is translated as ‘away from’. A better translation would probably be ‘from the clutches of’. Recall that direction is never marked on the locative phrase. Thus ‘from the hands’ is no different from ‘in the hands’.

- (409) wù yó tí [kū y-5] kān
 CL1 run(c) surprisingly CL9.ratmole CL9-DET hands.LOC

‘He ran away from the rat mole!’

- (410) kō kə yó tǔ [dzōm] kān bǒ mī
 Koshin P3 run(c) come(b) CL9/10.war hands.LOC CL2 CONSEC
 tǔ kwó kún bí yó
 come(b) enter(c) hunt(c) go_out(b) go_up(c)

‘The Koshin people ran away from war. They then came in[to this area] and chased away [the Nshwen].’

Only two postpositions are also used in a non-spatial sense: the postposition **ngō** and the postposition **lā**. The former may be used in a spatial sense, as in (411), or in a temporal sense, as in (412).

- (411) wē w-ó bán [mí] ngō á kē-lī
 CL3a.SUN CL3a-DET shine(b) 1SG.PP upon ADVLZ NMLZ-strong

‘The sun is shining on me strongly.’

- (412) mō wù kə dzé w-5 dzú gbàm [tō
 CL1.man CL1 P3 say(b) CL1-REL CL3/7a.word CL7b.God CL7/8.day
 k-ó] ngō kə dī pǎ pítà kyǎ
 CL7-DEM.DIST upon P3 be(b) Pa P. K.

‘The person who was preaching on that day was Pa Peter Kia.’

postposition	postposition gloss	noun	noun gloss
dzēm	‘behind’	dzēm	‘back’
yâ	‘in’	yâ	‘intestines’
yū	‘behind’	yū	‘buttock’
sê	‘in front of (dwelling)’	sê	‘front side of dwelling’
kúŋ	‘behind (dwelling)’	kúŋ	‘back side of dwelling’
gbó	‘in house, at home’	gbó	‘house’
kú	‘in home village’	kwé	‘home’
fō	‘on/at head’	fō	‘head’
kān	‘in hands’	kān	‘hold’
		(v)	
dzé	‘in mouth’	dzé	‘mouth’
wúŋ	‘in nose’	wúŋ	‘nose’
kúŋ	‘around neck’	kúŋ	‘neck’
bān	‘around waist’	bān	‘waist’

Table 10.3: Comparison of postpositions and cognate nouns

When a noun is modified by another NP in a possessive construction, the resulting noun phrase is head-initial, i.e. the possessum precedes the possessor, as in (415) where the noun **yū** ‘buttocks’ is followed by a possessive pronoun. A postpositional phrase, on the other hand, is head-final, i.e. the noun phrase precedes the postposition, as in (416), where the postposition **yū** ‘behind’ is preceded by the dependent noun phrase **kwā kí k-ó** ‘that his frog’.

Finally, postpositions have a specific tonal effect on dependent pronouns. Pronouns which are the object of a postposition always bear a high tone. Their segmental shape is the same as that of independent pronouns (see §6.1 for details).

While there is a clear case for postpositions to be considered a different word class from nouns, grammaticalization is clearly underway with some postpositions.

10.3 Temporal deictics

Temporal deictics allow the speaker to specify the time of an event more precisely than grammatical tense. They are adjuncts, and their position within the sentence is relatively flexible. Table 10.4 contains a few selected temporal deictics.

Examples of temporal deictics are given in (417)-(422). They usually occur at the end of the clause, as in (417), but not necessarily so, see e.g., (419) where **ɲwén** ‘now, today’ is followed by a manner adverb. The temporal deictic in each example is underlined.

temporal deictic	gloss
ɲwén	‘now, today’
ɲántō	‘yesterday’
ɲgwé	‘tomorrow’
tywǒm	‘long time away, past or future’

Table 10.4: Selected temporal deictics

- (417) m̀̀ w-̄ táŋ tsí b-̄ ɲwén
 CL1.person CL1-DET buy(b) CL8.banana CL8-DET now
 ‘The man bought the banana now.’
- (418) wù f̄ ā gàn w̄ d̄zwō ɲwén
 CL1 P1 NEG go(a) NEG CL1/2.stream today
 ‘She did not go to the stream today.’
- (419) yū y-̄ bō ɲwén á kī-lī
 CL9/10.buttock CL9-DET be_bad(a) now ADVLZ NMLZ-be_strong(a)
 (e)
 INTERJ
 ‘Sex is very dangerous these days.’
- (420) wù à t̄jũ ɲántō
 CL1 P2 come(b) yesterday
 ◊‘He arrived yesterday.’
- (421) wù k̄á jí ɲgwé
 CL1 F2 spend_day(b) tomorrow
 ◊‘He will spend the day at home tomorrow.’
- (422) s̄ó ń̄ = t̄jyé yē mī w̄ān k̄è kp̄ī tywǒm
 so 1SG = know(c) COMP SG CL1.child P3 die(b) long_ago
 ‘So I know that my child died long ago.’

10.4 Spatial deictics

Spatial deictics have not been elicited in detail. However, some of them occur commonly in natural speech. These include **t̄j̄m**, **f̄** and **t̄**, all of which translate roughly as ‘there’. The deictics are given here without tones because their tones may vary. Historically, **f̄** and **t̄** must have functioned as deictic

demonstratives, with the demonstrative root -ɔ́ and the agreement prefixes **f-** (PB class 16) and **t-** (PB class 17). However, synchronically, they do not modify nouns. Instead, they are adjuncts.

Historically the difference was probably one between closeness (**fɔ́**) and distance (**tɔ́**). Examples (423)-(426) contain instances of **fɔ́**, **tɔ́** and **tʃɪm**. The deictic in the examples is underlined.

(423) kwó gān t-ɔ́ mī
enter(c) go(a) DIST-DET in

‘Go in there!’

(424) wān w-ɔ́ yóm mě t-ɔ́ gbō kúŋ
CL1.child CL1-DET sing(c) only DIST-DET CL3.house behind_house.LOC

‘The child continued to sing behind the house.’

(425) tō mī wé ʃì tí (e),
CL7/8.day CONSEC dawn(b).IPFV go_down(a).IPFV surprisingly INTERJ
wù kù nīm f-ɔ́ gbá, (o)
CL1 cry(a) sit(a) PROX-there house.LOC INTERJ

‘When day has broken, she is there in the house crying.’

(426) ŋkwɪn nō bǔ̀ nīm w-ɔ́ wú/tʃɪm wō
CL1.hill SUBORD CL2 live(a) CL1-REL CL1PP/there on

◊‘the hill on which they live’

fɔ́ni and **tɔ́ni** are two other forms used as spatial deictics and derived from **fɔ́** and **tɔ́**, see e.g. (427)-(429). Unlike **fɔ́** and **tɔ́**, which function as nominal modifiers or represent a whole NP, the locative adverbials **fɔ́ni** and **tɔ́ni** (also **fani** and **tani**) are adverbials and generally occur in clause-final position. They often co-occur with prenominal **fɔ́ tɔ́**, **fán** or **tán**, as in (428)¹ and (429).

(427) bī mí nīm fání (ē), bī dzé nīm tí mě
1PL CONSEC sit(a) here INTERJ 1PL speak(b) sit(a) surprisingly only
yē, lùŋ bó dǔ́ tá mě yēn lā, bī
COMP CL8.suffering CL8-DET be(b) specifically only Y. DAT CL8
kwó fúbǔ́ bí ŋgō
enter(c) also 1PL upon

‘And we are sitting here, saying that only Yain is suffering, but the suffering has also attacked some of us.’

¹The italics on **mósi** ‘must’ show that the word is a borrowing. Obligation is usually expressed by a different construction.

- (428) Dyá kà dzē tʃín, ń-kè dī ná tʃín t-ǝ
 D. p3 say(b) there 1SG = P3 be(b) as there DIST-there
 ŋkwīn wō tóní, yē, ká wū tō mē
 CL1/2.mountain on there COMP COND CL1IRR grow_up(b) finish(a)
 tʃū wù tá lá kò wō sǎm, wù ǎ mósí
 come(b) CL1 VER.FOC;NEG do(a) ?? NEG CL1.play CL1 F1 must
 yíŋ gbō áná ní tʃū nīm
 build(c) CL3.house like_that mother.3POSS come(b) live(a)

‘Dya said on that hill when I was there, that when he will have grown up fully, he will not play, he must build a house and bring down his mother.’

- (429) kwé b-én ñà tán sé tání,
 CL7/8.rat CL8-DEM.PROX boast(a) there CL3/7a.attic there
 n = ǎ lá kpí mé kwé b-én tán
 1SG.PVB = F1 make(a) die(b) finish(a) CL7/8.rat CL8-DEM.PROX there
 sé ō
 CL3/7a.attic EMPH

‘These rats which are showing off in this attic - I will kill all of them!’

While **fɔ** and **tɔ** seem to be widely interchangeable, in some contexts only one of them renders a grammatical construction. An example is the use of **fɔ** in relative clauses. The spatial deictic **fɔ** is used as obligatory postverbal demonstrative in relative clauses which relativize on a locative expression. In this case, the spatial deictic **fɔ** occurs immediately after the verb of the relative clause, forming part of a paradigm with relativizers in the form of distal demonstratives which occupy this slot and which agree with the head of the relative clause in noun class, as in (430) and (431). The use of **tɔ** in this context is not attested. For more on relative clauses, see Chapter 12 and Lovegren and Voll (2017).

- (430) ń = tʃyé dè nō [wù ǎ f-ǝ]
 1SG = know(c) CL9.place SUBORD CL1 pass(b) PROX-REL

‘I know the place which she had passed (through).’ (lit.: ...where she had passed.)

- (431) à mī nīm jī bá dè nā [b̄
 2SG CONSEC sit(a) go_down(a) exactly CL9.place there CL2
 kpā f-ó gū], ā fi-ŋī wá
 light_fire(a).IPFV PROX-there CL3/7a.fire COM CL19-water 2SG.PP
 kân
 hands.LOC

‘Then (you will) sit down exactly where they make fire, with a bit of water in your hand.’

10.5 Ideophones

Ideophones are used frequently in narratives and in spontaneous conversations. However, speakers differ in the quantity of ideophones they use, with a tendency for old people to use them more frequently than younger people. Ideophones are often accompanied by specific gestures. Some examples of ideophones are given in (432)-(435). In (432) and (433), the ideophones follow the adverbial pro-form **áná** ‘like that’, which links them with the rest of the sentence.

- (432) n = dā mē pē kè kwō gbá áná mwàŋ
 1SG = see(a) only P. P3 enter(c) house.LOC like_that IDEO

‘I just saw Pe entering the house like that: “mwàŋ”.’

- (433) pē kè wē fín áná fyàfyà
 P. P3 breath(a) there like_that IDEO

‘Pe was breathing there like this: “fyàfyà”.’

The ideophone **mwàŋ** as in (432), often with a drawn out nasal coda **mwàŋŋŋŋŋ**, depicts speed. The ideophone **fyàfyà** in (433) imitates the sound of heavy breathing, as after physical strain. In examples (434) (which contains two ideophones) and (435), the ideophones are simply attached to the end of the clause; the adverbial pro-form **áná** is not used.

- (434) pē d̄zī jī mbí m-ó, ǎ the very
 P. put(a) descend(a) CL6.palm_wine CL6-DET ADVLZ the very
 mbí ŋgó m-ó ŋgō t̄ŋt̄ŋ, byé-ā-ntí mū jú
 CL6.palm_wine upon CL6-DET upon IDEO B.-COM-N. take(a) come(b)
 kpà?, wù mú
 IDEO CL1 drink(b)

‘Pe put in the wine, still the very wine, the same one, exactly. Bie-antie grabbed it, “kpa?”, and she drank.’

- (435) wéee, ndzóm tán mǎ t-ǎ bán t-ǎ
 INTERJ CL8.things fly(a) only DIST-there CL1/2.outside DIST-DET
wăaawăaa
 IDEO

‘Alas, things were flying outside there, “waaawaaa”.’

The ideophones in (434) and (435) **tɪŋtɪŋ** are very specific ideophones expressing strong resemblance (**tɪŋtɪŋ**) and grabbing (**kpàʔ**) or imitating the sound of the storm (**wăaawăaa**). Most ideophones consist either of a single open or closed syllable or of two or more repetitions of a single syllable. Note that ideophones may end in an obstruent, as in **kpàʔ** (434) or **kăt**.² This is an exception from the general phonotactics of Mundabli. Normally, a syllable can end only in a nasal or in the liquid **l**, see §2.4. The ideophone **kăt** illustrates that something is completely destroyed.² Vowels and final nasals in ideophones may be drawn out for intensity, such as in **mwàŋ** in (432) or **wăaawăaa** in (435) with multiple **a** and **ŋ** representing single segments with an exceptionally long duration.

Ideophones can be subdivided according to semantic criteria into expressions of visible impressions, temperature impressions, smell and taste impressions and audible impressions, as done in the first column of Table 10.5. The second column contains ideophones either isolated or in context. Here, the ideophones are written in bold letters. The third column contains descriptions of their use.

²The ideophone **kăt** is usually followed by the following gesture: lips are pursed and the index finger of the right hand is bent and moved over the pouched lips from right to left.

semantic criteria	ideophone	description
visible	būbūbūbū	‘pure white’
	fīīīīī	‘pure black’
audible	ḡàḡḡḡḡ	‘burning down of sun; bright red’
	tìḡtìḡtìḡ	‘strong resemblance’
	wùùùùù	‘light storm or strong wind blowing’
	wààààà	‘light storm or strong wind blowing’
	ḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡḡ	‘strong storm blowing’
	wàààà	‘rain falling heavily (before it stops abruptly); sound of water being pushed away with force’
	wǎḡwǎḡwǎḡ(...)	‘rain falling heavily and continuously.’
	tjàtjàtjàtjàtjàtjàtjà	‘rain falling lightly but continuously.’
	nyǎḡkàḡkèḡkèḡkèḡkèḡ	‘call of a bushfowl species called nyǎḡ ’
	temperature	byábyábyábyábyábyá
kpàkpàkpàkpàkpà		‘someone talking a lot’
wàwàwàwàwàwàwàwàwàwà		‘someone shouting a lot’
fyátfyát		‘sound of blowing one’s nose’
dzúúúúú		‘really cold’
smell and taste	tsùtsùtsùtsùtsùtsù	‘really hot’
	kpèkpèkpèkpèkpè	‘really hot’
	tsàtsàtsà	‘bad smell’
other	tìtìtìtì(tì(tì))	‘waiting for a long time’
	kìḡkìḡkìḡkìḡ	‘walk stamping ones feet; work heavily; be healthy’
	táp[˧]páp[˧]	‘full to the rim’
	kát[˧]	‘completely finished or destroyed’
	kpà?	‘sound of grabbing something quickly’

Table 10.5: Ideophones, partly in context, with descriptions, sorted according to semantic criteria

10.6 ‘Yes’ and ‘No’

The words for ‘yes’ and ‘no’ (see Table 10.6) can serve as one-word answers to polar questions, can introduce more elaborate answers to polar questions, or can serve as general markers of agreement or disagreement, either on their own or followed by a more elaborate explanation. They thus have an ambiguous status between formulaic expressions and interjections.

variants	gloss
hm̩ , ɛɛ , ɛhɛ̃	‘yes’
ŋgàŋ , ǎy~ǎyī , ?m̩?m̩~?m̩?m̩~hm̩?m̩	‘no’

Table 10.6: Variants of ‘yes’ and ‘no’

The form **hm̩**³ is used to express agreement or confirmation; the interjection **ɛɛ** ‘yes’ is more commonly used to signal interest and to encourage another speaker to continue, e.g. when reporting an event. The word **ŋgàŋ** ‘no’ is hardly ever used in spontaneous speech, except sometimes for emphasis. Among the other forms, **ǎyī** expresses more emphasis than **ǎy**. Both **ǎyī** and **ǎy** are stronger than the nasal forms (**?m̩?m̩~?m̩?m̩~hm̩?m̩**). In (436)-(439), **hm̩** ‘yes’ is used to express agreement, accompanied by a complete sentence.

(436) hm̩, wù dǐ kǎ-fī
 INTERJ CL1 be(b) ABIL-descend(a)

‘Yes, she can come down.’

(437) hm̩, wù kǎ dī f-án
 INTERJ CL1 P3 be(b) PROX-here

‘Yes, she was here.’

(438) hm̩, wù kǎ tǔ tū jī fǎn
 INTERJ CL1 P3 come(b) pluck(a) CL9/10.fowl there

‘Yes, she came and plucked feathers here.’

(439) ?mh̩?m̩, bǎ kǎn dè yīŋ lā gbō
 yes INTERJ CL2 lack(b) CL9.place build(c) DAT CL3.house

‘Yes. They don’t even have space to build houses.’

In (440)-(443), **ǎy~ǎyī** is used to mark disagreement. In all these examples, it is accompanied by a complete sentence.

³What is written here as <h> is phonetically a voiceless bilabial nasal.

- (440) ǎy, yē ŋ = gī kó yē ñ = kã dǎ ké, nõ
 no COMP 1SG = put(b) at? COMP 1SG = F2 see(a) ?? no

‘No! That I should allow it so that I will see, right?!’

- (441) ǎy, á ñ = dzě kò wō yē à dzé l̄~l̄
 no NEG 1SG = say(b) catch(b) NEG COMP 2SG say(b) empty~RED
 bǎ, n = dzě yē à dzé á ntʃín
 CL2.PP;DAT 1SG = say(b) COMP 2SG say(b) ADVLZ CL1.truth

‘No, I have not said that you are telling a lie (to them). I said that you are telling the truth.’

- (442) ǎyī, wù dzě yē t-ání wū jǎ
 no CL1 say(b) COMP DIST-there CL1;3SG.POSS hurt(a)

‘No, she said that this part hurts.’

- (443) ǎyī, bǔ ā dǔ wō ā dè fwě́n
 no CL2 NEG be(b) NEG COM CL9.place clear(b)

‘No, they don’t have a place to clear.’

My data also contain instances of ingressive fricatives, used to indicate agreement. The ingressive fricative may be articulated in different ways. The tokens I have found in my recordings are all from a particular speaker who is around 40 years old. An ingressive sound with assertive function has also been reported by Lovegren (2013: 274-275) to exist in Mungbam.

10.7 Interjections

In this section, I describe a few very salient interjections, in order to provide an impression of interjections in Mundabli. Interjections are used frequently in conversation, e.g. in order to express one’s feelings or one’s attitude or to express agreement or disagreement. Interjections expressing agreement or disagreement were already discussed in §10.6 and will not be repeated here. Many of the common interjections in Mundabli also exist in the regional variety of Cameroon Pidgin and probably in other languages in the area. Among these are wě (444) which expresses dismay and ǎ?ǎ (445) which expresses amazement and disbelief with negative connotations. The interjection ò (444), which expresses emphasis and occurs at the end of a sentence, is also attested in Cameroon Pidgin.

- (444) wě, wū ā dǔ wō gbō kúnj ò
 INTERJ CL1 NEG be(b) NEG CL3.house house_backside.LOC INTERJ

‘Alas! She is not behind the house!’

- (445) yē wù kwō gbá, wù dā bā kà
 COMP CL1 enter(c) CL3.house.LOC CL3;3SG.POSS see(a) IMPERS P3
 ʃyā tō gbō wí, á?á, wù bú yē
 sweep(a) away(c) house CL3.CL1.POSS INTERJ CL1 ask(b) COMP
 mē, ā n=dí wō ā ní ā n=dí
 NCS.QUOT.Q NEG 1SG=be(b) NEG COM CL1.mother NEG 1SG=be(b)
 wō ā tī ā n=dí wō ā wé ā
 NEG COM CL1.father NEG 1SG=be(b) NEG COM CL1.sibling NEG
 n=dí wō ā mē dzū, míŋ gbē
 1SG=be(b) NEG COM CL1.person CL1.certain 1SG house.LOC
 ʃyà gǐ ndè yē
 sweep(a) put(a) who QUOT.Q

‘When she was about to enter the house, she saw that someone had swept her house. Huh! She asked [herself]: I am [here] without a mother, without a father, without a sibling, without anyone. Who has swept my house?’

Examples (444) and (445) are taken from the same narrative. Example (444) contains two interjections, *wé* and *ò*. The first interjection *wé* expresses dismay at the fact that the sister is not behind the house as expected but has instead gone missing. The sentence-final interjection *ò* emphasizes the statement and gives it more weight. Example (445) contains the interjection *á?á* expressing consternation and disbelief by the main character of the story at the fact that someone must have entered and swept her house while she was on the farm. Dismay or disbelief may also be expressed by ululation, which is widespread in the area. The interjection ‘Wonderful!’ [*wándàfùl*], adopted from Pidgin and translatable as ‘amazing, incredible’ is more neutral and without necessarily having a negative or a positive connotation. Finally, an interjection which, to the best of my knowledge, does not exist in Pidgin or in related languages is *òòò*, cf. (446) and (447). It expresses ignorance or lack of knowledge.

- (446) m̄m, bā kǎ níŋ ā wān w-ō, tʃyé bǒ
 yes IMPERS P3;HAB sit(a).IPFV COM CL1.child CL1-DET know(c) CL2
 kà fǎn yī wù è, òòò
 P3 sell(a) eat(b) CL1 INTERJ INTERJ

‘Yes. They kept the child [of the gorilla]; whether they sold [it] and [someone] ate it? I don’t know!’

- (447) tʃyé bā kà yī è, òòò, ā n=dí wō
 know(c) IMPERS P3 eat(b) INTERJ INTERJ NEG 1SG=be(b) NEG
 kā-tʃyé
 ABIL-know(c)

‘Whether they ate [it]? I don’t know! I cannot know.’

The interjection **òòò** is equivalent to saying 'I don't know' or 'I have no idea' or shrugging one's shoulders. There are also volitive interjections which are conventionally used to chase away different animals or even people. The sound **ʃʃʃ** is used to chase away fowl. Goats and sheep are chased away with the interjection **tsi**, and in order to chase away dogs or people (mostly children), the imperative form **bi** 'Go out!' is used.