

## POSTPOSITIONS IN AWUTU

ZYGMUNT FRAJZYNGIER

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to describe the function of postpositions in Awutu,<sup>1</sup> a language belonging to the southern branch of the Guang group of the Kwa languages.<sup>2</sup>

Such morphemes exist in other Kwa languages and in the older grammars they were dealt with rather extensively. In the grammar of Twi by Christaller they were described as a subclass of substantives, and were called "nouns of place and relation serving as adverbs and postpositions".<sup>3</sup> A similar approach is found in Westermann's grammar of Ewe; the same approach has been followed in more recent works as well.<sup>4</sup>

This paper will concentrate on the postpositions *sò*, *tò* and *ò*, which are the most frequent postpositions occurring in any Awutu text; occasional examples illustrating the use of other postpositions will also be given.

While there are obvious etymological relationships in Awutu (as in other Kwa languages) between postpositions and nouns meaning 'top', 'inside', 'body', 'lower part', etc., I do not think that postpositions have to be considered as nouns in all instances. Actually, there are only a few cases in which such an argument could be maintained.

The following sentences represent some of the main sources for the occurrence of postpositions. One additional source will be added later in this paper.

1. *móó ʼjírè èkùlé ò* 'He is standing by the door'<sup>5</sup>  
he Prog. stand door Postp.
2. *nhótè bò mí àwíè sò* 'There are termites in my house'  
termites are my house Def. Postp.
3. *ó nè òfánbè tà jáá sò* 'Put the eggs on the fire'  
you eggs Def. put fire Def. Postp.

<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on material collected by me during the summer of 1970, at Awutu, 23 miles west of Accra, Ghana.

I wish to thank the West African Linguistic Society for the grant-in-aid which made field-work possible. I am also deeply grateful to my friends, Mr. F. B. Armah-Agyeman and Paul Kwao Orleanspobee, for the time and energy they devoted to helping me with my work.

An earlier version of this paper was read before the Linguistic Circle, University of Colorado, in March 1971, and appeared in the Colorado Research in Linguistics, No. 1, December 1971.

I would like to thank Professor Allan R. Taylor for reading the final draft of this paper and for the valuable remarks he made. For any mistakes which remain, however, I alone am responsible.

<sup>2</sup> In Stewart 1970 Awutu is classified as a member of the Awutu-Larteh subgroup of Guang (Guan) which, in turn, is the major subdivision within the Volta-Comoe languages (Greenberg's Akan).

<sup>3</sup> Christaller 1875, 77.

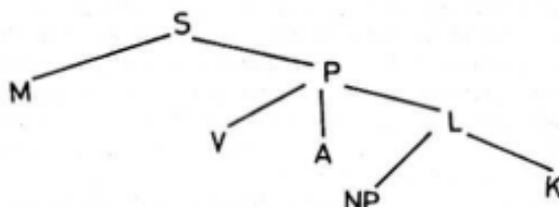
<sup>4</sup> For a similar approach, see Welmers 1946 and Redden et al. 1963.

<sup>5</sup> The postpositions have not usually been given glosses here in the literal translation. Translating them by 'top', 'body', 'inside', etc., as has been frequently done, would imply that those meanings are somehow 'basic', which is not the point of view presented in this paper.

4. m̀ò f̀ófà òpl̀é ò 'He polished the table'  
 he polished table Def. Postp.
5. àkr̀ómà fé èkírì t̀ò 'The hawk released the hen'  
 hawk released hen Postp.

## 2. POSTPOSITIONS AS THE LOCATIVE CASE MARKERS

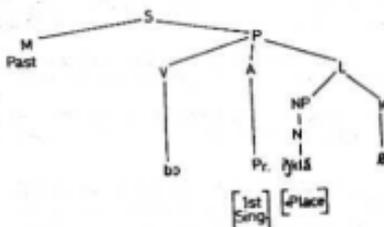
Sentences 1 and 2 contain locative expressions èk̀ùlé ò 'by the door' and àwíè s̀ò 'in the house'. Using the framework of Case Grammar (cf. Fillmore 1968, 1971, Stockwell *et al.* 1973), the following type of the deep structure is postulated for these two sentences:



In the above representation A stands for Agentive case, L for Locative case, K for case marker, and M for Modality. The verbs that can occur in the frame [— (A) (O) L], i.e., the verbs that can be immediately followed by a Locative case, are b̀ò 'to be /exist/', jírè 'stand', ka 'lie', etc. L is realized in Awutu by an NP and a Locative case marker which is a postposition when the locative NP has the feature [—Place]. The only instances in which the Locative K is not realized are those in which the NP dominated by L has the feature [+Place]. Such are the nouns èt̀nàá 'there', éyè 'here', names of towns, villages, etc., and hé 'home', e.g.

6. m̀ò b̀ò héè 'He is at home'  
 he is home Def.
7. àmánfìt̀ mì b̀ò òklá 'Last year I spent in Accra'  
 last year Def. I was Accra

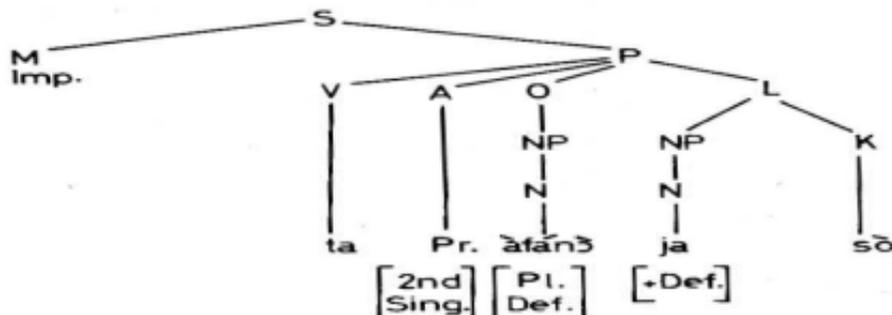
For these sentences the deep structure is essentially the same, except that the Locative K is realized by Ø, i.e.



In an alternative analysis one would not postulate the verb *bə* in the deep structure of this sentence, but rather introduce it by a later transformation. If one postulates a verb in the deep structure, however, one can then analyze not only sentences containing *bə*, but other sentences as well with such verbs as *jirə* 'stand', *ka* 'lie', etc.

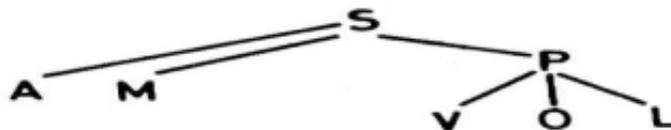
Postpositions as markers of the Locative case are not semantically empty; *tə* refers to the inside of something, *ə* to the side or the surface of an object, *sə* to the top or upper part of something, thus the postpositions cover roughly the same spacio-temporal area as 'in', 'by' and 'on' in English.

Sentence 3 has the following deep structure:



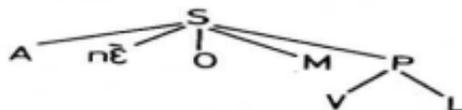
In this structure O (Objective) is the case for the element that undergoes motion. For this deep structure two transformations are postulated. First, movement of A to the front of the sentence. Second, movement of O to the right of A. The second transformation involves insertion of *nə* between A and O.<sup>6</sup> The following is the application of the proposed derivation of sentence 3.

After the first transformation:

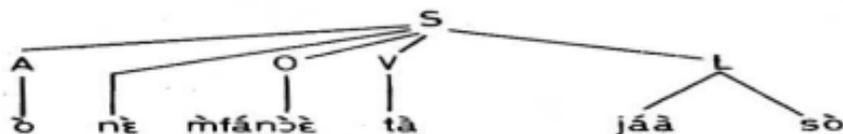


<sup>6</sup> For the description of these transformations see Frajzyngier 1973.

After the second transformation:



After the incorporation of M in the verb the P node is erased and the following structure is obtained:



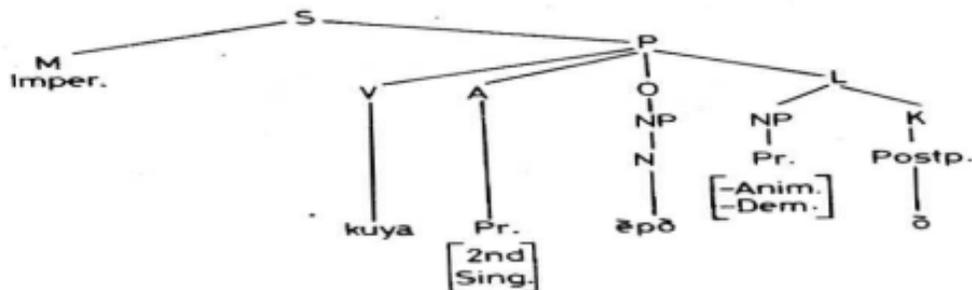
Other examples of the same structure are:

8. ó nĕ sĕnkáà tá òpĭšĕ sò 'Put the dish on the table'  
 you dish put table Def. Postp.
9. m̃ò nĕ m̃fòĕ kĕ floyĕ sò 'He adds oil to the stew'  
 he oil add stew Def. Postp.

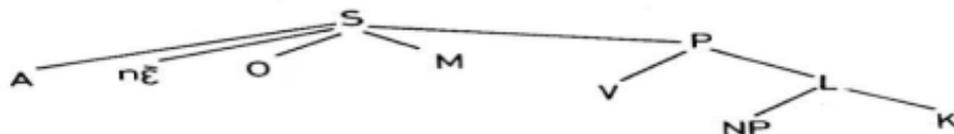
There are sentences in which the postposition directly follows the verb in the surface structure, e.g.

10. ó nĕ épò kúyá ò 'Add some salt to it'  
 you salt add Postp.

The following is the proposed deep structure of sentence 10:



After the Agentive and Objective movement the following structure results:



In Awutu as in some other Kwa languages (Stewart 1963) the segment Pr.

[ - Anim.  
- Dem. ]

is realized as Ø; therefore, in sentence 10, after the incorporation of the Modality in the verb, the postposition follows the verb, since the Locative NP does not appear in the surface structure.

There is still another type of locative expressions in Awutu. These are sentences that contain 'sentence adverbials' (Chomsky 1965), i.e. locative expressions that apply to the whole sentence. Consider the following sentences:

11. ðhíkò fámò bò pábiè sò 'A certain man met him on the road'  
man certain met him road Def. Postp.
12. àm' mín'kò bò éyibiè áyinsè 'They did not fight under the tree'  
they did not fight tree Def. Postp. (under)
13. án'wírì ãtò sâ bò mò hêè 'Three goats have been stolen at his house'  
one has stolen goats three his house Def.

It seems that it is possible to analyze those sentences within the framework of Case Grammar in a manner resembling the one suggested in Fillmore 1971:49. For sentence 11 the following deep structure is proposed:

Thus the sentence *ðhíkò jamò* is embedded into the higher sentence which contains the verb *bò* and the Locative case realized by *pábi sò*. In the absence of the Agentive case it is the Objective that is moved to the front of the sentence. Modality of the underlying sentence is realized with the verb of the underlying sentence. This analysis is not very different from the one proposed by Lakoff 1970: 156. It supports the hypothesis that adverbs of place derive from sentences that have a deep structure Locative case.

### 3. LEXICAL SOURCE OF POSTPOSITIONS

So far postpositions have been derived from the deep structure Locative case. Consider, however, the following sentences:

- |     |   |                              |
|-----|---|------------------------------|
| 14. | <i>mòbbià mònábí tó ðé</i><br>he broke his leg Postp. yesterday | 'He broke his leg yesterday' |
| 15. | <i>mòfó pápáhùè ò</i><br>he washed towel Def. Postp.            | 'He washed the towel'        |
| 16. | <i>mòbúnki kènté, ò sò</i><br>he opened basket Def. Postp.      | 'He opened the basket'       |

This is the type of sentence which has prompted previous analysis in other Kwa languages of postpositions as simple lexical items meaning 'inside', 'top', 'bottom', etc. It seems to me that such an analysis is unsatisfactory. Although sentences 14-16 could be analyzed as containing phrases 'inside of the leg', 'top of the basket' and with a little more imagination 'body of the towel' we would have considerably more difficulty extending this type of analysis to the following sentences:

- |         |  |                                     |
|---------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 17.     | <i>mògólì mímfánòè ò</i><br>he broke my eggs Def. Postp.             | 'He cracked my eggs'                |
| but 18. | <i>mògólì mímfánòè</i>   | 'He broke my eggs'                  |
| 19.     | <i>jà ákútú ò òtá nè òdì</i><br>peel orange Postp. before you eat it | 'Peel the orange before you eat it' |
| 20.     | <i>kènté, ò bútó sò</i><br>basket covered Postp.                     | 'A basket covered it'               |

The postpositions in sentence 14 through 20 indicate in a general way which part of the object is affected by the action of the verb. By 'part' is meant one of the elements of its configuration: the surface, the outside part (-ò), the upper part (sò), the inside (tò). Lack of a postposition, as in sentence 18, indicates that the action is not specified from the point of view of this configuration.

Sentences 14-20 contain no verb of motion, hence, we cannot postulate that those sentences have a deep structure Locative case. The surface structure objects in those sentences do not undergo any movement, and they are not derived from the deep structure Objective case.

I propose to analyze these sentences as containing a spatial qualifier of the verb, different from the sentence adverbial, already described in this paper. Thus, it is proposed that the verbs be marked for the feature [spatial] together with the feature applicable to non-motion verbs. Whenever a verb is marked [+spatial] it has to be marked also for a configurational element, e.g. [surface], [interior], [top], etc. Such a segment will be realized by one of the postpositions, e.g.,

(a) fɔ 'wash'	(b) fofa 'polish'	(c) ɔɔli 'break'
—	—	—
—	—	—
+spatial	+spatial	—spatial
interior	surface	
(d) ɔɔli 'crack'	(e) fɛkt 'sweep'	
—	—	
—	—	
+spatial	+spatial	
surface	interior	

(a) is realized as fɔ tɔ, (b) as fofa ɔ, (c) as ɔɔli, (d) as ɔɔli ɔ and (e) as fɛkt tɔ. Each of these verbs can occur with other specification of the feature [+spatial], which will be reflected in the surface structure by another postposition. The choice of the postposition is determined, however, not only by the verb but by the spatial characteristics of the noun as well. So for instance, pápáhù 'towel' will select the feature [surface] with the verb fɔ 'to wash' rather than the feature [interior] or [top], while ɔpɩ́ 'table' will not select the feature [interior] with the verb fofa 'polish'. The surface structure position of postpositions derived from the lexical feature is the same as for postpositions derived from the deep structure Locative case, e.g.,

after the noun:

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 21. mɔfɔ sɔmpɔt tɔ          | 'He washed the pot' (inside) |
| he washed pot Def. Postp.   |                              |
| 22. mɔhwá mɔáni ɔ           | 'He brushed his teeth'       |
| he brushed his teeth Postp. |                              |

after the verb, when the affected object is Pr., i.e.

[— Anim.]  
[— Dem.]

when it is realized by Ø :

- |                         |                                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 23. ɔɔwè tɔ             | 'You have cleaned it' (e.g., a pipe) |
| you have cleaned Postp. |                                      |

The following sentence might seem an exception:

- |                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 24. ɔnintírí ɔ mbó fɛs           | 'Your head became nice' (said after a |
| your head Postp. has become nice | haircut)                              |



34. m̀ò ásémpè òsá fè ènúè ádá ò 'He has forgotten the name of the fishmonger'  
he has forgotten person sells fish Def. name Postp.
35. kè ǹkè ássésùsù èmáà ò ... 'But when one is discussing the town. ...'  
but when one Prog. discuss town Def. Postp.

In all the above sentences there are verbs meaning 'talk', 'discuss', 'think', 'describe' and 'forget'. The only postposition occurring in these sentences is ò. In order to derive this postposition it appears that we need to establish another case category, one which would cover the relationship between verbs related to 'mental' or 'verbal' activity and the subject of this activity, e.g., the topic of talk, thought, etc. Fillmore 1968 and 1971 does not postulate such a case, and neither is it postulated in the published literature on Case Grammar. One might argue that this category could be handled within the existing framework of Case Grammar without postulating a new case. A possible candidate for handling the 'topic' of the 'mental' verb would be the category of the Objective case. But there are sentences that contain both, the Objective case and the 'topic' of the 'mental' verb, and one of the assumptions of Case Grammar is that in the deep structure of a sentence each case category may be represented only once. An example of such a sentence in Awutu is:

36. m̀òd̀s̀ b̀èè òáyé m̀ò ámágá ò á̀s̀ òp̀l̀b̀b̀l̀  
he wants that you tell him statue Postp. history short  
'He wants you to tell him a short history of the statue'

In this sentence á̀s̀ òp̀l̀b̀b̀l̀ 'a short history' is derived from a different case category than ámágá ò 'about the statue'.

The fact that this category which can be tentatively labeled Topical occurs with a limited number of verbs should not be an argument against establishing it. None of the so far recognized case categories occurs with every verb of a language. This case category is not limited to Awutu and other Kwa languages, and in a great many languages it is marked in the surface structure.

In Awutu this Case category is marked by the postposition ò. While the choice of postpositions as the marker of the Locative case depended on the features of nouns and verbs, there is no choice as far as the Topical case marker is concerned. Postpositions as markers of the Locative case had a certain semantic load, but ò as the marker of the Topical case is semantically empty. As the marker of the Topical case, the postposition ò can occur after a place name, while it cannot occur after such a noun as the marker of the Locative case.

Otherwise the rules concerning the surface structure realization of the Topical case marker are the same as the rules outlined for the surface structure realization of the Locative case marker. The Topical case marker occurs after the Topical NP. If the Topical NP is an inanimate non-demonstrative pronoun, the postposition ò occurs after the verb, as in sentence 31.

## 5. SUMMARY

It has been shown in this paper that there are at least three sources of postpositions in Awutu.

1. The deep structure Locative case. Postpositions which serve as Locative case markers are semantically non-empty.
2. A lexical feature tentatively called Spatial which can occur with non-movement verbs. Postpositions with this origin are semantically non-empty.
3. The deep structure Topical case (the postposition *ò* only).

It is plausible that there is a relationship between the Locative case marker *ò* and the identical marker for the Topical case. There is also a relationship between the lexical items meaning 'top', 'body', 'inside' and the Locative case markers. However, the investigation of the historical processes which lead to the change of function from a lexical item to the Locative case marker and eventually to the Topical case marker lies outside the scope of this paper.

#### REFERENCES

- Chomsky, Noam (1965). *ASPECTS OF THE THEORY OF SYNTAX*. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press.
- Christaller, J. G. (1875). *A GRAMMAR OF THE ASANTE AND FANTE LANGUAGE CALLED TSHI*. Basel.
- Fillmore, Charles J. (1968). 'The Case for Case', in Emmon Bach and Robert T. Harms (eds.), *UNIVERSALS IN LINGUISTIC THEORY*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- (1971). 'Some problems for Case Grammar'. *REPORT OF THE 22ND ANNUAL ROUND TABLE MEETING ON LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS*, ed. by R. J. O'Brien, 35-56. Washington: Georgetown U. Press.
- Frajzyngier, Zygmunt (1973). 'Some problems in the Case Grammar of Awutu' (to appear).
- Lakoff, George (1970). 'Pronominalization, Negation, and the Analysis of Adverbs', in Roderick A. Jacobs and Peter S. Rosenbaum (eds.), *READINGS IN ENGLISH TRANSFORMATIONAL GRAMMAR*. Waltham, Mass.: Ginn and Company.
- Redden, J. E., Owusu N., and associates (1963). *TWL. BASIC COURSE*. Washington, D.C. Foreign Service Institute.
- Stewart, John M. (1963). 'Some restrictions on objects in Twi', *JOURNAL OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES*, Vol. 2, Part 2, pp. 145-149.
- (1970). 'Tongue root position in the Volta-Cornoe languages and its significance for the reconstruction of the original Bantu vowel sounds', *AFRICAN LANGUAGE STUDIES*, XI, pp. 340-350.
- Stockwell, Robert P., Paul Schachter and Barbara Hall Partee (1973). *THE MAJOR SYNTACTIC STRUCTURES OF ENGLISH*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Welmers, William Everett (1946). *A DESCRIPTIVE GRAMMAR OF FANTI*. Language Dissertation No. 39, Suppl. to Language, Vol. 22, No. 3.
- Westermann, Diedrich (1930). *A STUDY OF THE EWE LANGUAGE*. London: Oxford University Press.