

# Ditransitive constructions in Akebu

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### 1. Akebu and the data

Akebu (Kebu)

- Ghana-Togo Mountain Kwa language of the group Kebu-Animere
- spoken mainly in the prefecture of Akebu of Togo by ca. 70000 people
- underdescribed
- ditransitives addressed only in (Adjeoda 2008: 43-44)

The data:

- fieldtrips in 2012, 2013 and 2016 – authors, Pasha Koval, Nikita Muraviev, Dasha Shavarina
- village of Djon and neighbouring villages of Kitora and Djitrane
- in the prefecture of Akebu
- mainly elicited data + data of ca. 3h of texts

### 2. Cross-linguistic and Kwa background

Typology of ditransitive alignment (Malchukov et al. 2010):

- comparing the P(atient) of monotransitives with the T(heme) and R(ecipient) of ditransitives
- indirective (P=T≠R) vs. secundative (P=R≠T) vs. neutral (P=T=R) alignment

Kwa languages have neutral alignment (see e.g. Lefebvre 1994; Osam 1996; Essegbey 2010; Creissels & Kouadio 2010) (1) and an alternative secundative construction based on ‘take’ serial verb constructions (see e.g. Lord 1982; Essegbey 1999; Shluinsky 2017) (2). Ditransitive verbs are a small class, ‘give’ serial verb constructions are used for other verbs.

- (1) howusu ó-tá asafo e-feshi LOGBA  
Howusu 3SG-give Asafo CL-sheep  
‘Howusu gave Asafo sheep.’ (Dorvlo 2008: 137)
- (2) esi de abofra no ma-a aberwa no AKAN  
Esi <take child DEF give-PST old\_woman DEF  
‘Esi gave the child to the old woman.’ (Osam 1994: 20)

Possessive-like ditransitive constructions:

- Recipient is coded like a possessor in a NP
- known, but marginal cross-linguistically (Creissels 1979: 567-574; Croft 1985)
- marginally known in West Africa, as well, but not typical for Kwa (cf. discussion for Baule by Creissels & Kouadio 1977: 245-254; 2010)

### 3. Overview of Akebu ditransitives

kūñ ‘give’, káj ‘show’, tíí ‘say’, cō ‘tell’, p̄ ‘ask’, ʔà ‘ask’, kpíí ‘put, serve’, t̄n̄ ‘put, serve’, túú ‘lend’

In contrast to other Kwa, three main strategies of alignment of ditransitive verbs (if both objects are expressed):

- neutral strategy
- possessive-like strategy
- strategy with a pronominal reprise

Their distribution is rather tricky.

Similarly to other Kwa, there are also

- ‘take’ SVCs with ditransitives functioning like secundative strategy
- ‘give’ SVCs introducing recipients with other verbs
- alternative prepositional alignment with verbs of asking

### 4. Neutral strategy

- Both Theme and Recipient have no overt marking.
- Thus both morphosyntactically are marked as direct objects.

This strategy is regularly used with:

- a pronominal Recipient of 1st or 2nd person (3)
- a full NP (4) or pronominal (5) Recipient of 3rd person if the Theme has a possessor

- (3) nó-kūñ là gà-kā  
1SG.PFV-give 2SG.O meat-KƏ  
‘I gave you the meat.’
- (4) né-tíí má è-píí-pá má díé-ʔá  
1SG.PFV-tell 1SG.POSS PƏ-child-PƏ 1SG.POSS speech-ʔƏ  
‘I told my children my secret.’
- (5) ná-káj ηò má ñàʔə-wā  
1SG.PFV-show NŪ.O 1SG.POSS house-WƏ  
‘I showed him my house.’

### 5. Possessive-like strategy

- Recipient is formally marked as a possessor of the Theme (6c)
- the most standard strategy
- used with a full NP (6a) or pronominal (6b) Recipient of 3rd person if the Theme has no possessor

- (6) a. nó-kūñ má kèè-yā lá cíkèè-yá  
1SG.PFV-give 1SG.POSS friend-NŪ POSS dog-NŪ  
‘I gave my friend the dog.’
- b. nó-kūñ nàá cíkèè-yá  
1SG.PFV-give NŪ.POSS dog-NŪ  
‘I gave him the dog.’
- c. má kèè-yā lá cíkèè-yá Ø-náán̄  
1SG.POSS friend-NŪ POSS dog-NŪ NŪ-be.big<sub>FCT</sub>  
‘My friend’s dog is big.’

### 6. Strategy with a pronominal reprise

- Recipient is expressed twice – by an object NP and as a possessive pronoun (7)
- the strategy is regular with pronominal 3rd person Recipients (7) and marginal with full NP Recipients (8)
- the strategy is less standard than the other two strategies

- (7) né-tíí ηò nàá díé-ʔá  
1SG.PFV-tell NŪ.O NŪ.POSS speech-ʔƏ  
‘I told him the news.’
- (8) nóó-kūñ vitorè nàá kə-fōēē-kā.  
1SG.HAB-give Victor NŪ.POSS KƏ-paper-KƏ  
‘I give to Victor the letter.’

#### Object pronouns and possessive pronouns

	object	possessive	object	possessive
1sg	má	má	NŪ	ηò / nŵ / nŵ
2sg	lá	lŵ (> lŵ)	PƏ	pā / lŵ
1pl	là	lŵ	YƏ	yā / yŵ
2pl	n̄	n̄	WƏ	wō / lŵ
			...	

### 7. Structure of possessive-like strategy

Sequence of a Recipient and a Theme in a possessive-like construction cannot be analyzed as a single NP (cf. Adjeoda 2008: 43):

- cannot be focalized in ditransitive, not possessive meaning (9)
- regularly used with pronominal Themes (10a), but a possessive NP headed by a pronoun is impossible (10b)

- (9) ñi-yā sā ló tù-wā sā wá nā-káj  
person-NŪ DEM POSS thing-WƏ DEM FOC NŪ.JNT.PFV-show  
\*‘He showed THIS MAN THIS THING.’  
OK ‘He showed THIS MAN’S THING.’
- (10) a. nó-kūñ nàá wō b. \*nàá wō  
1SG.PFV-give NŪ.POSS WƏ.O NŪ.POSS WƏ.O  
‘I gave him it [the house].’ exp. lit. ‘his it’

### 8. Monotransitive uses

- Both Theme (11) and Recipient (12) may be omitted in some pragmatic or syntactic contexts
- No overt marking (and thus behave as direct objects)

- (11) lā-p̄ è-ñi-pā (12) kūñ kòláátíá-yá!  
3.PFV-ask PƏ-person-PƏ give.IMP banana-NŪ  
‘He asked the people.’ ‘Give the banana!’

### 9. ‘Take’ serial verb construction

- Used for Theme with ditransitives as secundative strategy (13)
- The only possible structure for a pronominal Theme of 1-2 person (14)

- (13) fə kpáálá-wé ā-káj pā  
take.IMP lid-WƏ.DEM 2SG.SBJV-show PƏ.O  
‘Show them the lid!’
- (14) má tá-yá lā-fá má lā-káj nàá kèè-yā  
1SG.POSS father-NŪ 3.PFV-take 1SG.O 3.PFV-show NŪ.POSS friend-NŪ  
‘My father showed me to his friend.’

### 10. Conclusion

strategy	R 1-2 p.	T 1-2 p.	R&T 3 p.		
			T+poss.	T-poss,full R	T-poss,pron R
neutral	+	-	+	-	+/-
poss-like	-	-	+/-	+	+
reprise	-	-	?	(+)	+
‘take’ SVC	+	+	+	+	+

+/- marks dubious constructions, (+) marks marginal constructions, + marks most typical constructions, ? marks lack of data

#### Abbreviations

NŪ, PƏ, ʔƏ, WƏ, YƏ, KƏ, KPƏ – noun class markers; 1, 2, 3 – 1st, 2nd, 3rd person; CL – class marker; DEF – definite; DEM – demonstrative; FCT – factitive stem; FOC – focus marker; HAB – habitual; IMP – imperative; JNT – conjoint marker; O – object; PFV – perfective series; POSS – possessive; SG – singular; SBJV – subjunctive.

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