



Online course on East Caucasian languages

East Caucasian postpositions

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Background

What is a postposition?

“Adpositions may be defined as grammatical tools which mark the relationship between two parts of a sentence: one is the element which an adposition governs. It is traditionally called its complement and is mostly represented by a noun or noun-like word or phrase[...] The other part is an entity which either functions as the predicate of this sentence, or is a non-predicative noun.”

(Hagège 2010:1)

Head-final (left-branching) languages typically have *postpositions*, i.e. adpositions that linearly follow their governed noun phrase (NP).

A quick reminder: nominal inflection in E-C

“Syntactic” cases*	Spatial “cases”**	
	Localization	Directionality
ABSOLUTIVE [bare form]	IN [obl. stem + suffix]	ESSIVE [localization (+class suffix)]
ERGATIVE [obl. stem (+ suffix)]	INTER [obl. stem + suffix]	LATIVE [localization + suffix]
GENITIVE [obl. stem (+ suffix)]	CONT [obl. stem + suffix]	ELATIVE [localization + suffix]
DATIVE [obl. stem + suffix]	SUPER [obl. stem + suffix]	TRANSLATIVE [localization + suffix]
INSTRUMENTAL [obl. stem + suffix]	SUB [obl. stem + suffix]	DIRECTIVE [localization + suffix]
...

*The split is not always as straightforward as one might expect (see M. Daniel’s lecture from Dec 1)

**Not all E-C languages have a bi-morphemic organization of spatial inflection (ibid.)

A quick reminder: nominal inflection in E-C

“Syntactic” cases	Spatial “cases”	
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ABSOLUTIVE [bare form]	IN [obl. stem + suffix]	ESSIVE [localization (+class suffix)]
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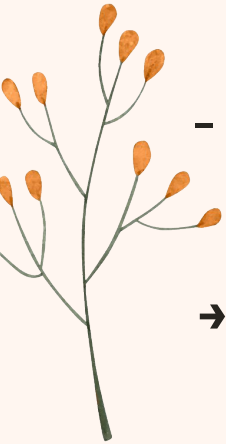
Note: a possible analysis of these systems is as bi-partite case systems distinguishing just direct (ABS) and oblique forms (all the rest), cf. Comrie & Polinsky 1998, Polinsky 2020, Testelec 2019, Lyutikova 2021 a.o. Under that view all suffixes attaching to the oblique stem are viewed as (clitic/incorporated) postpositions or relational nouns.

What we are discussing today are not these bound elements, but rather independent lexemes traditionally called postpositions in the grammars of E-C languages



E-C postpositions: key properties

- a relatively small class of lexemes, compared to Standard Average European *prepositions*
 - most postpositional lexemes can be used adverbially, i.e. without a dependent NP
 - many lexemes allow various forms of the dependent NP
 - most postpositions (spatial and some temporal ones) inflect for directionality (also called orientation)
- **E-C postpositions are atypical and worthy of special consideration.**



The top of the slide is decorated with several botanical illustrations. On the left, there is a light green line drawing of a flower. In the center and right, there are colorful illustrations of various plants, including green leaves with small orange berries, orange flowers, and orange seed pods. On the far right, there is a light green line drawing of a large, multi-petaled flower.

Morphological make-up

Attested etymological sources

Postpositions in E-C can be classified by origin as:

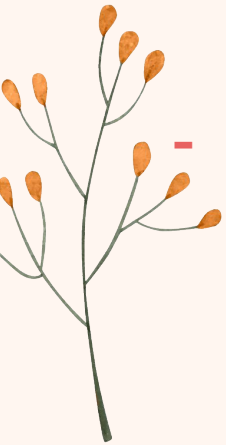
- (1) **Primary** (not derived from any other part of speech)
- (2) **Secondary**
 - derived from nouns (denominal)
 - derived from verb forms (deverbal)
 - cognate with (spatial and temporal) adverbs
- (3) **Borrowed** from other E-C or non-E-C languages



Attested etymological sources



- **Primary:** Avar *ɟolo* ‘for the sake of’
- **Secondary**
 - denominal: Hinuq *moča*: ‘instead’ (*moč-a*: place.IN ‘in place’)
 - deverbal: Ingush *laecaa* ‘about, concerning’ (*laec-aa* catch-CVB ‘having caught’)
 - cognate with adverbs: Rutul *xura* ‘in front’ (adverb and postposition)
- **Borrowed** from other E-C or non-E-C languages:
 - Tsez *sadaq* ‘with’ < Avar *cadaq* ‘with’
 - Standard Dargwa *sababli* ‘for, because of’ < Arabic *sabab* ‘cause’



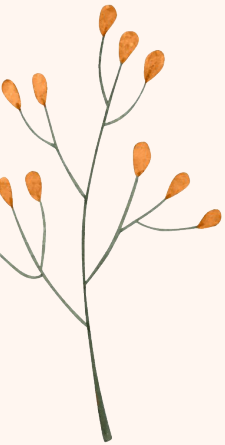
Inflectional morphology: directionality



Most spatial postpositions inflect for directionality and potentially encode all the oppositions that are found on other 'spatials' (in the sense of M. Daniel) in the language.

Minimally, they have 2 morphological forms: essive/lative vs. elative.

We consider these as variants of one lexeme unless they are significantly semantically distinct or have different government properties.



Inflectional morphology: directionality



Directional forms of the postposition 'under' in various languages

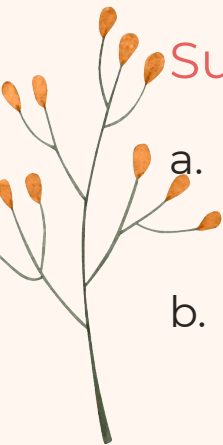
language	branch	directional forms	source
Hinuq	Tsezic	<i>geɫ</i> (ESS), <i>geɫ-es</i> (ABL1), <i>geɫ-zo</i> (ABL2), <i>geɫ-er</i> (LAT), <i>geɫ-edo</i> (DIR)	Forker 2013: 379
Mehweb	Dargic	<i>ʔu</i> (LAT), <i>ʔu-b</i> (ESS), <i>ʔu-b-adal</i> (EL)	Magometov 1982: 126
Bagvalal	Andic	<i>hiɫ'i</i> (ESS), <i>hiɫ'i-s:</i> (EL), <i>hiɫ'i-s:ini</i> (TRLAT)	Sosenskaja 2001: 170
Lezgian	Lezxic	<i>k'anik</i> (ESS), <i>k'anikaj</i> (EL)	Haspelmath 1993: 219-220





Inflectional morphology: agreement

A number of East-Caucasian languages have several adverbs and postpositions that contain an agreement slot (suffixal, prefixal or both): they agree in class (gender) with the absolutive argument (and their dependent).



Suffixal agreement with ABS (Avar, Rudnev 2020: 833)

- a. *škola**l*-*da* *ask'o-w* *ja**s**a**ł* *was* *w-u**x**a**na*
school.OBL-LOC near-M girl.ERG boy.ABS M-beat.PST
'The girl beat the boy up near the school.'
- b. *škola**l*-*da* *ask'o-r* *ja**s**a**ł* *wasal* *r-u**x**a**na*
school.OBL-LOC near-PL girl.ERG boys.ABS PL-beat.PST
'The girl beat the boys up near the school.'

Inflectional morphology: agreement



Prefix agrees with ABS (Godoberi, Kibrik et al. 1996: 88)

waša *hamaxi-č'u* *w=oxut'u* *wu=na*
boy donkey-CONT M=after M=go.PST

'The boy went after the donkey'

Prefix and suffix agrees with ABS (Sanzhi Dargwa, Forker 2020: 155)

qal-la *r-i-r=da*
house-GEN F-in-F=1

'I (fem.) am inside the house.'

Prefix agrees with the dependent NP, suffix with ABS (Mehweb Dargwa, courtesy of M. Daniel)

heš šara=g^{wa} *ɬir-me-la* *d-ajcana-b*
this lake=PTCL rock-PL-GEN NPL-amidst-N

'This lake is amidst rocks.'



Inflectional morphology: agreement



Agreeing postpositions are found in languages of all branches of Nakh-Daghestanian except for Nakh and Khinalug.

- Avar-Andic: Avar (6)*, Rikvani Andi (1), Godoberi (4), Bagvalal (1)
- Dargwa:
 - suffixal: all
 - prefixal and suffixal: Sanzhi (2), Kubachi (2), Mehweb (?)
- Lezgetic: Tsakhur (2), Archi (1)
- Tsezic: Khwarshi (2), Bezhta (1), Hunzib (1)

* Numbers in parentheses refer to the number of agreeing adpositions in the language





Syntactic properties

Syntactic properties of E-C postpositions



The core problem is how to separate postpositions from adverbs.

Many grammars consider postpositions together with a considerable fraction of spatial adverbs, and often call the group *наречия-послелогои* ‘adverb-postpositions’

(see e.g. Zhirkov 1955 for Lak, Magometov 1965 for Tabasaran, Temirbulatova 2004 for Kajtak Dargwa, Saidova & Abusov 2012 for Botlikh)



Adverb-postpositions



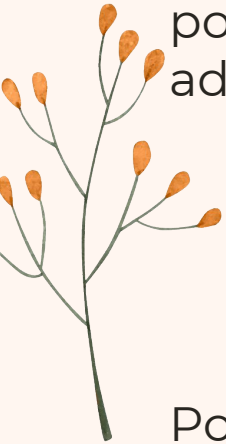
In most languages adpositions seem to be quite easily distinguishable from adverbs since the former but not the latter require an argument.

However, in E-C languages most lexemes described as postpositions may appear without an NP dependent, similarly to adverbs.

Hinuq (Forker 2013: 156)

nuš:a (*š:i-la*) *t:ura* *ag-ur=da*
IPL village-GEN outside go.PFV-PRET=1
'We went out (of the village).'

Postpositions that require a dependent are few or absent.



Adverb-postpositions



Should we then single out postpositions as a separate category in E-C? Or are they just being labelled as such due to some descriptive tradition?

We contend that it is only possible to posit a special category of postpositions if these lexemes have properties that are not characteristic of adverbs.

Let us see the possible structures behind linear strings of the form *NP + adverb-postposition* in E-C



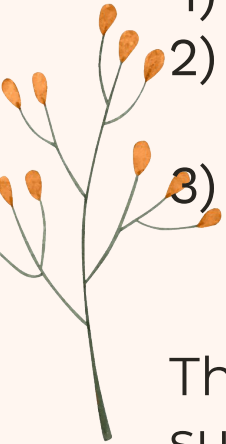


How do we deal with this issue?

Consider an utterance where we have a noun phrase in some form followed by an adverb that is claimed to have postpositional uses. Such a string may result from 3 different configurations:

- 1) accidental adjacency → **Adverb**
- 2) juxtaposition of an adverb and an NP in a spatial form, specifying the location → **Adverb**
- 3) the lexeme governing the form of the NP (requiring it to bear a specific case or localization marker) → **Postposition**

The availability of configuration 3 is the necessary and sufficient condition for postposition-hood.



Syntactic properties of E-C postpositions



1) Accidental adjacency

kura ruxa-d lec'-ur-da [la-? d-i?i-na]
Kura 4.say.IPFV river-OBL-APUD up-LAT HPL-go.IPFV-CVB
'They went up past the river named Kura.' (Kina Rutul, field data)

2) One constituent, no government

b-e:-r-tā-χ b-uk'-ur bes-ija-la
HPL-come-HPL-IPFV-CVB HPL-be-HPL mountain-OBL-SUP
č'ihī-s: *hiλ'i*
up-EL down
'We started to come down from the mountain.' (Bagvalal, Kibrik et al. 2001: 764)

3) Postpositional phrase

lamp:učk:a ust'u-la qari-b kemq-un ca-b
lamp table-GEN above-N hang-PRET COP-N
'The lamp hangs above the table.' (Sanzhi Dargwa, Forker 2020: 152)

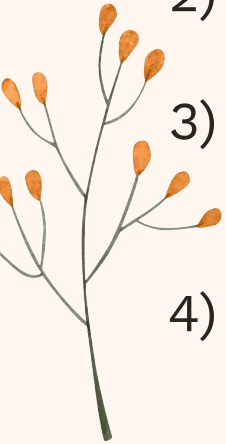


How to diagnose government?



One can apply several formal tests:

- 1) **omission of the adverb-postposition:** Does it affect grammaticality and interpretation?
- 2) **omission of the alleged dependent NP:** Does it affect grammaticality and interpretation?
- 3) **adjacency to NP requirement:** Is it possible to separate the adverb-postposition and the NP by elements not belonging to the alleged PP?
- 4) **linear order:** Is it strictly postpositional?



How to diagnose government?



test	yes	no
omission of the adverb-postposition	→ Adverb	→ Postposition
omission of the alleged dependent NP	→ Adverb	→ Postposition
adjacency to NP requirement	→ Postposition	→ Adverb
linear order: strictly postpositional?	→ Postposition	→ Adverb



Applying the tests to Kina Rutul lexemes



u: ‘above’ (suppletive lative form *la?*)

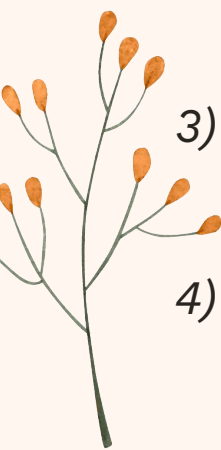
1) *čaška isk'am-a (u:) ka-ni i*
cup table-SUP above UP.be-CVB COP2
‘The cup is on the table.’

2) *(χuk-a:) u: ki-d eč-bir*
tree-SUP above CONT.be-ATTR apple-PL
‘Apples that were above (on the tree).’

3) *siw-a kɨʳč la-? l-o<w>či-r*
mountain-SUP deer up-LAT UP-<3>jump.PFV-CVB
‘Deer ran up the mountain.’

4) *u: gow-a žin-a-d ses ru?u-r=a*
above ceiling-SUP genie-OBL-ATTR voice 4.come.IPFV-CVB=be
‘Genie’s voice comes from the ceiling.’

(field data by the HSE Rutul research team)



Applying the tests to Kina Rutul lexemes



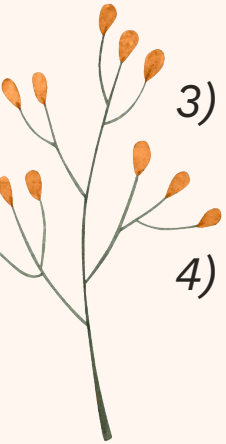
žibra ‘following, after’

1) *tɪla iz-di *(žibra) q-ixu-r=a*
dog I-ATTR after RE-<3>appear.PFV-CVB=be
‘The dog chased (lit. was after) me.’

2) *(ha-nuw-di) žibra wtaroj gruzin hixi-r=a*
that-OBL-ATTR after second Georgian I.go.PFV-CVB=be
‘After (him), the second went Georgian.’

3) *iz-di tɪla žibra q-ixu-r=a*
I-ATTR dog after RE-<3>appear.PFV-CVB=be
‘The dog chased (lit. was after) me.’

4) *#žibra [iz-di tɪla] q-ixu-r=a*
after I-ATTR dog RE-<3>appear.PFV-CVB=be
‘Then my dog returned.’



(field data by the HSE Rutul research team)

Applying the tests to Kina Rutul lexemes

ƚajire ‘except for’

1) *iz-di* *χizan* *šū-la* **(ƚajire)* *mu^ɕq^w-a* *d-i?i*
I-ATTR family brother-SUPEL except village-IN HPL-COPI
‘My family, except for my brother, is in the village.’

2) *iz-di* *χizan* **(šū-la)* *ƚajire* *mu^ɕq^w-a* *d-i?i*
I-ATTR family brother-SUPEL except village-IN HPL-COPI
‘My family, except for my brother, is in the village.’

3) **iz-di* *χizan* *šū-la* *mu^ɕq^w-a* *ƚajire* *d-i?i*
I-ATTR family brother-SUPEL village-IN except HPL-COPI

4) **iz-di* *χizan* *ƚajire* *šū-la* *mu^ɕq^w-a* *d-i?i*
I-ATTR family except brother-SUPEL village-IN HPL-COPI

(field data by the HSE Rutul research team)

Applying the tests to Kina Rutul lexemes

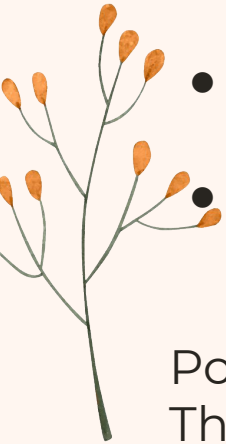
	<i>u:</i> 'above'	<i>žibra</i> 'after'	<i>kažire</i> 'except'
omission of the lexeme	yes	no	no
omission of the alleged dependent	yes	yes	no
must be adjacent to NP	no	no	yes
strictly postpositional linear order	no	yes	yes
result	adverb	adverb-postposition	postposition
20 lexemes	6	10	4

The case of Tsez



Polinsky (2015: 105-114) suggests the following tests to distinguish postpositions and adverbs:

- adjacency to NP requirement: Is it possible to separate the adverb-postposition and the NP by elements not belonging to the alleged PP?
- omission of the adverb-postposition: Does it affect grammaticality and interpretation?
- coordination (adverb coordination construction differs from the postposition coordination construction)



Polinsky systematically reports only on the results of the first test. The descriptions of other E-C languages contain even less data.

E-C postpositions: government properties

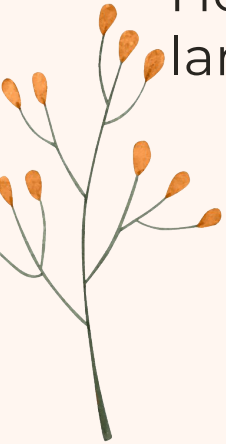
Across E-C grammatical descriptions we find items labelled as postpositions that take their dependent NP in all sorts of forms (some are said to govern some syntactic case, others to govern a spatial case form or several case forms).

“Syntactic” cases	Spatial “cases”	
	Localization	Directionality
ABSOLUTIVE [bare form]	IN [obl. stem + suffix]	ESSIVE [localization (+class suffix)]
ERGATIVE [obl. stem (+ suffix)]	INTER [obl. stem + suffix]	LATIVE [localization + suffix]
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INSTRUMENTAL [obl. stem + suffix]	SUB [obl. stem + suffix]	DIRECTIVE [localization + suffix]
...

E-C postpositions: government properties

In principle, we only need to consider the government of lexemes that behave as postpositions (and, possibly adverb-postpositions) on our tests.

However, there is typically no access to such data for most languages.

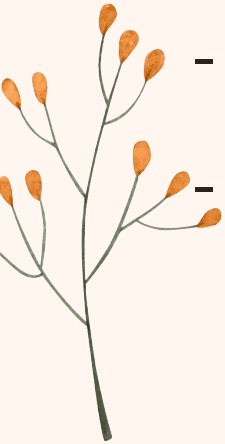


E-C postpositions: government properties



Our guiding principles:

- if a lexeme is described as occurring with NPs bearing several different cases → not government, probably an adverb
- if a lexeme is said to require an NP in a particular 'syntactic' case → likely, government
- if a lexeme is said to require an NP in a particular 'spatial' case (localization form) → not government, unless the form in question may be viewed as a **default case**



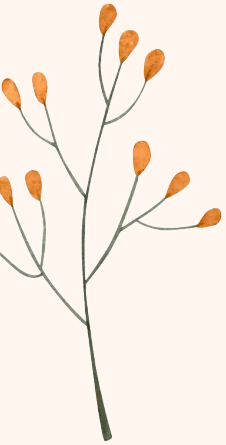


E-C postpositions: default case

A case form may be considered a default/dedicated postpositional case if the majority of postpositions in a language require it on their nominal dependent.

In some E-C languages postpositions tend to govern a 'syntactic' case (e.g. DAT in Nakh, GEN in Lak, Kwarshi, Khinalug and several Lezgetic and Dargic languages; possibly, ABS in Bagvalal and Itsari Dargwa).

In others we find a particular spatial 'case' form that co-occurs with postpositions of different semantics (e.g., SUPER and CONT in Avar-Andic).



Properties of postpositions proper



- not numerous (max 29% of all postposition-like lexemes, in Kina Rutul)
- borrowed lexemes (if present) tend to fall into this group
- these lexemes tend to have non-spatial meanings

→ Postpositions proper are apparently not characteristic of E-C languages



Properties of postpositions proper



language	branch	n of postp.	% of borrowings	governed cases	default case
Batsbi	Nakh	6	0%	Gen, All, Dat	Dat
Avar	Avar-Andic	1	0%	Dat	Super
Avar (Zaqatala)	Avar-Andic	2	0%	Super	Super
Hinuq	Tsezic	2	100%	Abs, abstract suffix	Loc
Khwarshi	Tsezic	2	100%	Super, Abs	Gen
Kina Rutul	Lezxic	4	100%	Gen, Dat, SupEl	Gen





Conclusions

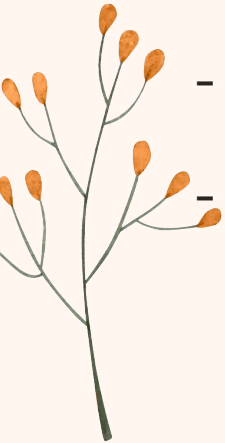


Postpositions in E-C are a separate category



However, one has to bear in mind that

- not everything that is described as a postposition in E-C grammatical descriptions qualifies as such; at the same time, lexemes described as adverbs might behave as postpositions on the tests introduced above;
- this category is rather small (especially if adverb-postpositions are excluded), much smaller than that of SAE prepositions
- it should probably only be compared to secondary prepositions of SAE, the function of primary SAE prepositions being fulfilled by case morphology in East Caucasian
 - it is not surprising that some generative linguists consider suffixes that attach to oblique stems to be postpositions (P-heads)



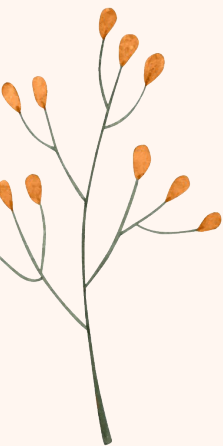
Comparing adpositions across languages



A more general point emerging from the above:

Whenever comparing adpositions across languages, one should also take the case system into account.

That is, the term *adposition* corresponds to members of language-specific categories which may not enable direct comparison.



Instead, one should either take a formal approach and compare the systems of **flagging** (that Haspelmath 2019 seems to advocate for) or more of a **semantically driven approach**, whereby what's compared is the encoding of localization and directionality meanings (similar in spirit to Kibrik 1970) or yet **develop a combination** of the two.



Thank you!



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