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MODIFIER INCORPORATION IN DARGWA NOMINALS

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: LINGUISTICS

WP BRP 12/LNG/2014

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Yury Lander¹

MODIFIER INCORPORATION IN DARGWA NOMINALS²

In Dargwa languages, which constitute a branch of the Northeast Caucasian language family, certain nominal attributes may be either marked with a dedicated attributive suffix or appear without it. While it is sometimes said that the short form of the modifier serves as a base for deriving the full form, I propose an alternative direction of derivation and present evidence for the idea that unmarked attributes are incorporated into the nominal head.

Keywords: Dargwa, Northeast Caucasian, attributive constructions, adjectives, relative clauses, incorporation, morphology-syntax interface

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² This paper is based on my talks at the Northeast Caucasian linguistic seminar (Russian State University for Humanities, Moscow) in March 2014 and at Syntax of the World’s Languages V (University of Pavia) in September 2014. The basic idea of the paper was introduced briefly in Lander 2012: 384–385 and is also discussed in Sumbatova and Lander, to appear. I am grateful to Magomed Mamaev for his invaluable help in the Tanti village as well as to Oleg Belyaev, Dmitry Ganenko, Elena Gruzdeva, Yuri Koryakov, Timur Maisak, Georgy Moroz, Irina Nikolaeva, and Nina Sumbatova for useful discussions and important references and to Michael Daniel for his comments on an earlier draft. This study (research grant No. 13-05-0007) was supported by The National Research University - Higher School of Economics’ Academic Fund Program in 2014.
1. Introduction

This paper considers an alternation between two types of attributive constructions present in many Dargwa languages, a branch of the Northeast Caucasian (alias Nakh-Daghestanian) family, spoken in the central part of Daghestan (an autonomous republic of the Russian Federation). In Dargwa, certain attributes, including adjectives and the predicates of relative clauses, may have two forms, traditionally called the full form and the short form (in Russian, полная форма and краткая форма respectively; cf., for example, Musaev 2002: 61, Gusejnova 2002). The two forms differ in the presence/absence of an attributive suffix and are shown in (1) from Standard Dargwa based on the Aqusha variety (van den Berg 2001: 26):

(1) a. aq dubura
   high mountain
   ‘a high mountain’

b. waj-si ḷabar
   bad-ATR:SG story
   ‘bad story’

The inventory of the attributive suffixes varies in the Dargwa branch. In Standard Dargwa, the basic attributive markers include -si and -(i)l (singular) and -ti (plural). Adjectives, relative clauses and some other modifiers, when marked with attributive suffixes, can appear without nominal heads and take case suffixes, as in (2) (also from van den Berg 2001: 26):

(2) aq-si-li-s
   high-ATR:SG-OBL-DAT
   ‘to the high one’

Not surprisingly, the forms with attributive suffixes are sometimes described as derived from short forms. For example, Gusejnova (2002) in her dissertation specifically devoted to attributive constructions states that marked/full adjectives can be derived from unmarked adjectives as well as from various other word classes including nouns and verbs. Similar views were expressed by Sumbatova and Mutalov (2003) in their description of the Itsari variety of Dargwa. In what follows, I suggest a different perspective on this alternation and provide evidence for the opposite direction of derivation.

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3 In general, Dargwa can be thought of as a dialect chain. Most of Dargwa idioms usually are not considered separate languages even though some of them can be recognized as such. Here I remain agnostic to the issue of the language/dialect distinction and use a neutral term ‘variety’.

4 Van den Berg’s examples are given in the transcription used in this paper.
The data I rely upon comes mostly from the Dargwa variety spoken in the village of Tanti. While differing from many other Dargwa varieties in a number of respects, in what concerns the distinction between marked and unmarked attributes Tanti Dargwa, I believe, shows the mechanism common for many of its sister languages.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 2 I describe the main characteristics of the marked and unmarked attributes in Tanti Dargwa. In sections 3–6 I give further details related to the contrast. In Section 7 I propose a treatment of unmarked attributes as incorporated. The last section contains conclusions but also discusses data which can be regarded as problematic for the proposal.

2. Attributes in Tanti Dargwa

Unlike Standard Dargwa, Tanti Dargwa has an attributive suffix that appears with modifiers irrespectively of the number of their head, namely -se. Cf.:

(3) a hi.l xaladilnik bae’-se, se-k’al ak;ar-se xaladilnik

and this refrigerator empty-ATR what-INDEF NEG.COP-ATR refrigerator

‘And this refrigerator is a refrigerator which is empty, without anything.’

(4) nik’i-se maš:-urb-a-c:e-r-ka.le ca’hna—b-ič-ib-le=sa-b

small-ATR homestead-PL-OBL-INTER-EL-DOWN merge—N-LV.PF-PRET-CN=V=COP-N

‘[Our village] merged from small homesteads.’

There are also two other attributive suffixes, -il and -te, which are mostly used in contrastive contexts, the latter being strongly associated with plural (cf. Lander 2011a, Sumbatova and Lander, to appear). These suffixes are illustrated in (5) and (6).

(5) niš:ala š:i (...) ciq’wila b-ary:-ib-il š:i=sa-b

we:GEN village somewhat N-tangle.PF-PRET-CONTR village=COP-N

‘Our village is a village with somewhat complex history (in contrast with other villages).’

(6) χ,ala-te maš:-urbe nik’i-t-a-ja

big-ATR:PL homestead-PL small-ATR:PL-OBL-SUPER
če—d-ulq-un-ne...

PV—NPL-attack.IP=V=V

‘The BIG homesteads attacked the SMALL ones...’
The primary “hosts” of -se are adjectives and the predicates of relative clauses. In addition, the attributive suffix may attach to certain kinds of adverbials and possessors. As for adverbials, the attributive suffix makes it possible for them to function adnominally (7) or even as nominal heads (8). In both cases, the attributive suffix seems to be obligatory. As for possessive constructions, where the possessor is referential, the presence of -se has a curious semantic effect: the resulted form implies that the possessive relation does not hold anymore (9).

(7) χːala.ba urk’—r-uq-un-ne, sun-ni-la naʰ-q-c:e-b-se
grandmother heart—F-go.PF-PRET-CN¥ RFL-OBL-GEN hand-INTER-N(ESS)-ATR
buškala=ra lar—b-ač’-ib-le, r–ibšː-ib-le=sa-r
besom=ADD throw—N-LV.PF-PRET-CN¥ F-run.PF-PRET-CN¥=COP-F
tːura-da.le
outside(LAT)-THITHER
‘The grandmother winced, threw the besom that was in her hands and ran outside.’

(8) buretːa-li-cːele-se-li-sa-r w-ibšː-ib
axe-OBL-COM-ATR-OBL-ANTE-EL M-run.PF-PRET
‘He ran away from the one with an axe.’

(9) nišːala-se šːi-li-ja haːna se b-ik’-u-le-nne
weːGEN-ATR village-OBL-SUPER(LAT) now what N-say.IPF-PRS-CN¥-IQ
?aːc-b-alʔ-a-d
NEG-N-know.IPF-TH-1
‘I don’t know what is the name of our former village (i.e. the name of the village in Chechnya where Tanti people were exiled in 1944).’

In this paper, I do not discuss the attributive suffixes other than -se, neither I consider possessives and adverbials marked with -se (see Lander 2011a, 2011b, Sumbatova and Lander, to appear for discussion).

If an adjective or the predicate of a relative clause is unmarked, it should immediately precede the nominal head. In (10a) the unmarked attribute is adjacent to the nominal head, so the example is felicitous. The ungrammatical examples (10b) and (10c) contain an unmarked adjective separated from the head either with an adjective containing the attributive suffix or with another unmarked adjective.
Adjectives and relative clauses marked with -se are subject to less constraints. They can be separated from the modified noun (10a), sometimes follow it (11) or even show themselves without a modified nominal and take the case (12).

(10)  
a. haq-se qːuʁa dubur  
      high-ATR beautiful mountain  
b. *haq qːuʁa-se dubur  
      high beautiful-ATR mountain  
c. *haq qːuʁa dubur  
      high beautiful mountain  
      ‘a beautiful high mountain’

Examples like (12) suggest that the attributive suffix is a kind of nominalization, which allows an adjective or a verb form to serve as the head of a nominal phrase. The absence of restrictions on the position of a marked attribute with respect to the modified noun could be explained, then, via postulating two noun phrases standing in a kind of apposition (cf. the discussion of similar constructions in Georgian in Testelec 1998 or in some other Northeast Caucasian languages in Lander 2010a).

Indeed, a treatment like this, arguing that the attributive function shifts the syntactic category, was proposed by Nina Sumbatova for several Dargwa varieties. As she puts it for Itsari Dargwa, the attributive suffixes “move the adjective into the syntactic class of free attributes, which prototypically function as headless modifiers and nominal predicates” (Sumbatova and Mutalov 2003). This treatment goes along with the idea that the full form is a product of derivation taking the short form as its base.

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5 In Dargwa, mass nouns normally control the plural agreement.
3. The attributive suffix is not nominalization

Actually, the distribution of the marked attribute is not the same as that of nouns. If a marked attribute appears together with an overtly case-marked nominal head, they clearly can form a single constituent. This is evidenced by the fact that the attribute usually does not take case marking:

(13) a. kam-se juldaš-a-cːele hi.t-i-li qali b-alaʁ-ib
    few-ATR friend-OBL.PL-COM that-OBL-ERG house N-repair.PF-PRET
    ‘He repaired the house together with a few friends (of his).’

It could be argued that the noun and the marked attribute constitute a kind of symmetrical appositive construction and the case suffix is added to the final constituent of the whole construction. Then the marked attribute would still have the distribution of a noun. Yet were the construction symmetrical, the noun would be able to appear before the attribute, with only the last element being marked. However, this is considered infelicitous (13b), and the noun, when preposed, must be marked for case (13c). Schematically, the patterns, which reflect the asymmetry between marked attributes and nouns, are shown in (14).

(13) b. *juldaš-e kam-se-li-cːele hi.t-i-li qali b-alaʁ-ib
    friend-PL few-ATR-OBL-COM that-OBL-ERG house N-repair.PF-PRET

c. juldaš-a-cːele kam-se hi.t-i-li qali b-alaʁ-ib
    friend-OBL.PL-COM few-ATR that-OBL-ERG house N-repair.PF-PRET
    ‘He repaired the house together with a few friends of his.’

(14) ATTRIBUTE NOUN-CASE
    NOUN-CASE ATTRIBUTE
    *NOUN ATTRIBUTE-CASE

A natural explanation for the patterns in (14) is that where a noun is present, it always heads the nominal constituent.

Of course, one could look for non-syntactic, functional explanations for the asymmetry described above. There is, however, another important difference in distribution between marked attributes and nouns. In particular, unlike nouns, marked attributes cannot be modified by unmarked attributes:
I conclude that attributive suffixes do not allow the attribute to fulfill the whole range of nominal functions and therefore cannot be considered nominalizers.

4. Functional markedness

While presuming that marked attributes are derived out of unmarked attributes, one would expect that marked attributes should be marked or equally unmarked functionally as well as formally, at least as far as they appear in contexts where unmarked attributes can appear as well.

These expectations are not borne out, though. This is reflected in a number of descriptions, where it is noticed that unmarked attributes are typical of poetry and bear additional expressive flavour (cf. Abdullaev 1954: 126–127; Gusejnova 2002 inter alia).

In Tanti texts, marked attributes are prevalent. The ratio of marked to unmarked forms in a few texts I have considered is 6:1; cf. Table 1. Of course, the numbers are too small to make statistical generalizations, but the impression is clear: unmarked attributes are less frequent than marked ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Unmarked</th>
<th>Marked with -se</th>
<th>Marked with contrastive suffixes</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicates of relative clauses</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbials</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Marked and unmarked attributes.

---

6 I only counted the contexts with nominal heads. In all examples but one the attribute was adjacent to the head. Some clear non-compositional compounds like χalaːtːatːi ‘grandfather’ (lit., ‘big father’) were not counted.
The use of unmarked attributes is constrained. As the following example shows, only marked attributes can modify a definite pronoun and hence function as non-restrictive modifiers:

(16) q:uśa-*(se) haʔzi-ja li<b>il her—b-urk’-u-le
    beautiful-ATR you(SG):OBL-SUPER(LAT) all<HPL> look—HPL-LV.IPF-PRS-CN
    ‘Everybody looks at you the beauty.’

5. Stress shift

A further difference between marked and unmarked attributes, which is only observed in some relative constructions, concerns the stress.

It is usually said that Dargwa languages distinguish between finite verbs and participles (cf. Magomedova 2001). However, participles are normally identical to verb forms occurring in independent clauses, with the exception of the (optional) attributive suffix; cf.:

(17) a. dali durhā-li-ž čut:u b-ič:-ib=da
    I:ERG boy-OBL-DAT pie N-give.PF-PRET=1
    ‘I gave a pie to a boy.’

b. dali čut:u b-ič:-ib durhā
    I:ERG pie N-give.PF-PRET boy
    ‘the boy I gave a pie to’

Curiously, however, if the attributive suffix is absent, the finite form and the “participial” form may differ in stress: where the stress in a finite form falls on the stem (18), in an unmarked “participial” form it is shifted to the inflection (19a). This stress shift is not found if the predicate of the relative clause is a marked attribute (19b).

(18) murad-li q:arq:a ’ix-ub
    Murad-ERG stone throw.PF-PRET
    ‘Murad threw a stone.’

---

7 For some speakers, unmarked attributes cannot modify indefinite pronouns either:

(i) sakə-?7(se) se-ʔal as::ib=da
    new-ATR what-INDEF take.PF-PRET=1
    ‘I've bought something new.’

8 The 1st person marker in (17a) is a clitic and hence is not considered a verb inflection here.

9 There are finite forms such as imperfective preterit which already have the stress on inflection. When such forms are used as the predicates of relative clauses, no stress shift is observed.
However, for adjectives no stress shift is observed:

(20) 'č’uq’a-(se) admi
    thin-ATR person
    ‘a thin person’

Curiously, the stress shift is also found in some adverbials when they are used as unmarked attributes. For example, the locative adverbials derived with the suffix -aˤh attached to the essive form have the stress on the stem (21a). This stress is retained when they are marked with the attributive suffix (21b). Yet when these adverbials appear as unmarked attributes, the stress is shifted (21c).

(21) a. 'če-d-aˤh q:wa-se waw-ne č’e-d
    up-NPL(ESS)-ADV.LOC beautiful-ATR flower-PL EXST-NPL
    ‘There are beautiful flowers above.’

b. hi.t-i-ž 'če-d-aˤh-se waw-ne ?aˤɣ—d-ic:-ur
    that-OBL-DAT up-NPL(ESS)-ADV.LOC-ATR flower-PL like—NPL-LV:PF-PRET
    ‘She liked the flowers above.’

c. hi.t-i-ž če-'d-aˤh waw-ne ?aˤɣ—d-ic:-ur
    that-OBL-DAT up-NPL(ESS)-ADV.LOC flower-PL like—NPL-LV:PF-PRET
    ‘She liked the flowers above.’

This suggests that the stress in unmarked forms can only shift to the suffixes. With adjectives, the stress shift cannot be observed because of the absence of the inflectional morphology (except for attributive suffixes).

It is worth noting that the stress shift in unmarked attributes is only found in some Dargwa varieties. Besides Tanti Dargwa, it is also reported for the closely related Tsudakhar and Butri varieties (see Abdullaev 1954: 62; Shakhbanova 2007: 143–144).
6. Scope

Finally, an important difference between marked and unmarked attributes concerns their semantic scope. In particular, where there are several nouns that can be modified with the same attribute, only marked forms can do so, while short forms only modify the noun they are attached to.

This is well-seen in the following pair of examples. While (22a), where a marked attribute modifies two conjuncts, is felicitous, (22b), with a short form, is considered to sound somewhat awkward, because the attribute only modifies the first conjunct, which makes it semantically unnatural.\(^\text{10}\)

\[(22)\]

a. klas-le-he-b \textit{duż-u-se} durh-ne=ra rurs-be=ra le-b  
\hspace{1cm} class-OBL-IN-HPL(ESS) clever-ATR boy-PL=ADD girl-PL=ADD EXST-HPL  
\hspace{1cm} ‘There are clever [boys and girls] in the class.’

b. #klas-le-he-b \textit{duż-u} durh-ne=ra rurs-be=ra le-b  
\hspace{1cm} class-OBL-IN-HPL(ESS) clever boy-PL=ADD girl-PL=ADD EXST-HPL  
\hspace{1cm} ‘There are [clever boys] and girls in the class.’

*‘There are clever [boys and girls] in the class.’

The same effect appears even clearer in (23), where it is reflected on morphosyntax. Here we find a relative clause with the absolutive argument being relativized. The predicate of the relative clause contains the prefix agreeing with the absolutive argument in class and number. Since it is this argument that is relativized, these features should correspond to the head of the construction. As the examples demonstrate, the agreement features match those of the closest nominal:

\[(23)\]

a. \textit{če.t:i—w-ič-ib} durha=i=ra rurs-be=ra gap b-arq’-a  
\hspace{1cm} PV—M-win.PF-PRET boy=ADD girl-PL=ADD praise HPL-do.PF-IMP  
\hspace{1cm} ‘Praise the boy that won and the girls.’

b. *\textit{če.t:i—b-ič-ib} durha=i=ra rurs-be=ra gap b-arq’-a  
\hspace{1cm} PV—HPL-win.PF-PRET boy=ADD girl-PL=ADD praise HPL-do.PF-IMP  
\hspace{1cm} (Expected: ‘Praise [the boy and the girls] which won.’)

Thus a rule can be posited that the unmarked attribute (normally) only modifies the noun it precedes.

\(^{10}\) During the elicitation sessions some speakers did allow (22b) with the interpretation requiring the wide scope of the unmarked adjective. I assume, however, that this was a “last resort” effect.
7. Discussion

I propose that the differences between marked and unmarked attributes can be explained if we accept that it is unmarked attributes that represent the derived pattern. I suggest that in this pattern the attributive suffix is omitted because of incorporation of the attribute into the noun. Note that the term ‘incorporation’ is used here broadly, covering not only the prototypical noun-to-verb incorporation but also other cases where what is expected to represent several syntactic nodes appears as a contingent word-like unit.

As it turns out, the incorporation hypothesis may explain all of the properties described above.

First, the unmarked attribute cannot be separated from the head noun because they constitute a single word-like unit. The prohibition on multiple unmarked attributes may be due to the fact that a sequence of unmarked attributes would represent recursion, which is generally less favoured in morphology than in syntax.

Second, the construction with the unmarked attribute need not be functionally unmarked, since it is secondary as compared to the construction with the marked attribute.

Third, the incapability of unmarked attributes to modify pronouns is explained by the fact that incorporation within the noun phrase, often described as compound formation, is necessarily restrictive.

Fourth, the stress shift may be interpreted as reflecting formation of a single prosodic unit.

Fifth, the narrow semantic scope of the unmarked attribute is due to the fact that the composition of the construction involves the word level, hence the head of the construction cannot be phrasal.

The incorporation hypothesis goes along with speakers’ intuition, as suggested by the following quote from Abdullaev’s\textsuperscript{11} (1954) grammar:

\begin{quote}
Неоформленные прилагательные, являясь семантически самостоятельными словами с вещественным значением, формально приравниваются к служебным словам, они являются как бы определительными приставками. (...) Определяемое слово как бы восполняет недостаточность неоформленного прилагательного.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
[While semantically being autonomous words with substantial meaning, unmarked adjectives are formally equal to functional words, as if they were attributive prefixes. (...)]
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{11} Saygid Abdullaev originated from Mugi, a Dargwa village relatively close to Aqusha.
The modified word seems to be filling in the insufficiency of the unmarked adjective. –

*Translation is mine, Yu.L.*

One problem of the incorporation-based account is that it requires an assumption which is not commonly shared, namely that a part of a word (an incorporated item in our case) may have its own syntactic dependents:

(24) [du s:a sun-ne-he gu—r—is:-un]—q:at:a r-a’q’-en

I yesterday RFL-OBL-IN PV—F-lie.PF-PRET—ravine F-go.PF-IMP

‘Go to the ravine where I was hiding yesterday.’

However, such patterns are met in other languages as well (cf., for instance, Sadock 1991: 91ff for Greenlandic Eskimo), and sometimes they indeed involve relative clauses, as in Nivkh (cf. Mattisen 2003: 234–235 and Nedjalkov and Otaina 2013: 32–33) or in West Circassian (Adyghe) (cf. Lander 2010b: 79–80; 2012).

In fact, the examples like (24) always retain the syntactic structure of the relative clause, where the predicate cannot be separated from its dependents by any external material. Given this fact, I suggest that these patterns be described as constructions where morphology operates on complex constituents, as in other cases when complex syntactic structures “feed” the morphology, to use the wording of Lieber and Scalise (2007) (see also Booij 2009, among others). Alternatively, the pattern under discussion could be analyzed as instantiating a kind of mixed category (see Malouf 1999, Nikolaeva 2008 for approaches of this kind), with the head word having both nominal and verbal properties, but I see no specific evidence for this solution.

Interestingly, the presence of syntactic relations between a part of a word and syntactically autonomous elements is found in other domains of the Dargwa grammar. Cf. the following example, where the adjective can modify either the whole headless attribute or only its base (as is roughly reflected with brackets)\(^{12}\):

(25) a. [χ’.ala-se dubur-li-ja-b-se-li-cːe-b] tuk le-b

big-ATR mountain-OBL-SUPER-N(ESS)-ATR-OBL-INTER-N(ESS) current EXST-N

‘There is electricity in that big one on the mountain.’

b. [χ’.ala-se dubur-lij-ja-b]-se-li-cːe-b tuk le-b

big-ATR mountain-OBL-SUPER-N(ESS)-ATR-OBL-INTER-N(ESS) current EXST-N

‘There is electricity in the one which is on the big mountain.’

---

\(^{12}\) The precise bracketing depends on the assumptions concerning the structure of locative forms. Thus alternatively it can be proposed that in (25a), the adjective modifies the stem of the larger adverbial, i.e. the marked attribute, while in (25b) it modifies the stem of the embedded adverbial *dubur* ‘mountain’.
These examples show that if an adverbial-based headless attribute takes a syntactic modifier, it can relate to either the whole word or only to the adverbial serving as the base for derivation. This can be easily accounted for if we assume (as I did) that the attributive marker may attach to a complex syntactic constituent. This would be a direct parallel to the construction with the incorporation of relative clauses.

8. Conclusion and open ends

In this paper, I proposed that in Dargwa, an attribute – an adjective or the predicate of a relative clause – may form a word-like unit, which entails a number of specific properties of the unmarked modifier. This attributive construction is not cross-linguistically unique, but is often overlooked, probably due to the narrow understanding of incorporation, still quite widespread.

Yet this solution is not uncontroversial. Unmarked adjectives in Dargwa also occur in complex predicates:

(26) hi.t hint'in—b-іχ展演-аб, hi.ž šiniš—b-іχ展演-аб!

that red—N-become.PF-OPT that green—N-become.PF-OPT

‘Let that be red and that be green.’

This could also be considered incorporation, but Tanti Dargwa complex predicates pose another problem. In some contexts, Dargwa speakers allow deletion-under-identity of the verbal part of a complex predicate:

(27) hi.t hint'in, hi.ž šiniš—b-іχ展演-аб!

that red that green—N-become.PF-OPT

‘Let that be red and that be green.’

Such examples where an unmarked adjective is retained without the verbal head may be regarded as contradicting the incorporation-based analysis. Interpreting such examples presumably requires a deeper understanding of complex predicate formation and incorporation-like processes in Dargwa.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADD</td>
<td>additive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADV.LOC</td>
<td>locative adverb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANTE</td>
<td>localization Ante ‘in front of’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATR</td>
<td>attributive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAUS</td>
<td>causative</td>
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<td>converb</td>
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