

A Grammar of the Skou language of Papua

Draft: comments welcome!

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3. Grammar summary

As discussed in the introduction, there are many features of Skou that are not typical of a ‘typical’ Papuan language. Nevertheless, there are many areal traits of the New Guinea region that are instantiated in the language, and these, along with some of the exceptions, will be briefly mentioned in this chapter. This chapter is intended as a ‘road map’ of the contents of the rest of the book: it provides directions to where more details on a given topic may be found, and, along with section 1.5, it serves as a typological ‘pit stop’, in the sense that a more complete inventory of the typological features that the language lacks is presented here than in the rest of the book, where the emphasis is describing the structures that the language does possess.

3.1 Word Order

Skou is typical of many Papuan languages in displaying a basic SOV word order, as can be seen in the following examples. The first sentence shows the normal order with subject preceding object, and the clause ending in a verb (the justification for the labels ‘subject’ and ‘object’ is given in chapter xx). The ungrammaticality of these nominals appearing in the reverse order is shown in (2). The appropriate sentences with the participants reversed in terms of syntactic roles are shown in (3) and (4).

(1) [A *Áì*] [P *yá-ne-nì=ne*] *ke=yú-yú*.
 father sister-1SG.DAT-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT 3SG.NF=search-RED
 ‘Father is looking for my sister.’

(2) * [P *yá ne nì ne*] [A *ái*] *ke yú-yú*

(3) [A *Yá-ne-nì=ne*] [A *ái*] *pe=yú-yú*.
 sister-1SG.DAT-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT father 3SG.F=search-RED
 ‘My sister is looking for father.’

(4) * [P *ái*] [A *yá ne nì ne*] *pe yúyú*

Oblique arguments generally appear following the verb, except time expressions, which are most unmarked in a clause-initial position (though they can sometimes, for pragmatic effect, be found post-verbally – see xx.xx):

(5) [S *Re-ké=ke*] *ke=ti* [OBL *Jáwung*].
 father-3SG.NF.GEN=3SG.NF.DAT 3SG.NF=3SG.NF.go Nyao
 ‘His father went to Nyao.’

(6) [A *Pe*] [P *hòe*] *pe=tue* [OBL *nè=ne*].
 3SG.F sago 3SG.F=3SG.F.do 1PL.GEN=1PL.DAT
 ‘She made sago for us.’

- (7) *Bàng* [P *hòe*] *pe=tue.*
 yesterday sago 3SG.F=3SG.F.do
 ‘She made sago yesterday.’

The only major exception to this principle of oblique occurring postverbally in positive clauses concerns the placement of an instrumental NP, which, perhaps by virtue of its having overt case marking. Case marking on instruments and other arguments of the verb is described in the following section.

The verbal auxiliary is another postverbal element (see 3.3), as is negation, both of which are exemplified in the following sentence. Here *ka* marks negation, and the auxiliary *li* ‘do’, in combination with reduplication on the verb, marks intention.

- (8) *Húhúfa* *ke=moeng-moeng* *ka* *li.*
 slow 3SG.NF=sit-RED NEG do
 ‘He doesn’t want to sit quietly.’

The other exception to postverbal position of obliques potentially affects all the elements in a clause, and involves topicalisation. When, for whatever pragmatic reason (involving both pragmatic prominence and the given-ness of information – see the following chapter for more discussion of the conditions and effects of topicalisation), a speaker wishes to highlight a particular section of a clause then, in addition to a rich variety of pragmatic force markers, it is also possible for one element to appear sentence-initially. There is no disruption to the order of the other elements of the clause, but the topic element is usually found bearing a pragmatic marker, typically the deictic =*ing*, but acceptable with many of the other markers. In addition, an intonation break is normal between the topic and the clause. Compare (1) and the ungrammatical (2) with the fully acceptable (9):

- (9) [TOP [P *Yá-ne-nì=ne=ra=ing a*], [A *ái*] *ke=yú-yú.*
 sister-1SG.DAT-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT=also=the father 3SG.NF=search-RED
 ‘Father is looking for my sister too.’

Not only objects, but also subjects, obliques and predicates may appear in this pre-clausal position. A subject can be seen to be in a topic position by:

- (a) an abundance of pragmatic clitics marking its status. In (9) the topic is marked by both =*ra* and =*ing a*, in contrast to the other nominal of the clause which has no special marking (for a discussion of which see chapter 6);
- (b) an intonation break separating it from the rest of the sentence (here indicated with a comma – see ‘Abbreviations and Glossing conventions’);
- (c) its appearance before a clause-initial time expression.

In the following clause the fact that *Ánì nì ne fa wò* precedes *bàng* is evidence for it appearing in a position other than its normal clause-internal one.

- (10) [TOP [A *Ánì-nì=ne=fa=wò*], *bàng* [P *hòe*] *pe=tue.*
 mother-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT=only=EMPH yesterday sago
 3SG.F=3SG.F.do
 ‘It was my mum who made sago yesterday.’

Obliques in topic positions can be seen in the following:

- (11) *Te Jáwung=fue a=wò ne=ne-ne ti. Te Jáwung=a*
 Nyao=that=EMPH 1PL=1PL.go-RED 1PL.do 3PL=Nyao=PROM
te=bà héfèng.
 3PL=person good
 ‘Nyao, we want to go there. Nyaos are good people.’
- (12) *Ke=ing=ra=wò, e=moeng-moeng ka, jéng fèng.*
 3SG.NF=DEIC=also=EMPH 2PL=sit-RED NEG place bad
 ‘You lot shouldn’t sit there, it’s not a good place.’

A predicate may also be fronted, even if verbal. In this case there is usually some repetition of the predicate, or the light verb *li* ‘do’, inside the clause.

- (13) *Pe=w-á=ing a, rángleng=pa hòe pe=tue e.*
 3SG.F=3SG.F-pound=the afternoon=INSTR sago 3SG.F=3SG.F.do 3SG.F.be
 ‘She pounds it, until afternoon she works the sago.’
 (Literally, ‘The she-pounds-(it), having become afternoon she does it to the sago.’)

As mentioned earlier, further discussion of the role of pragmatic prominence in clausal and sentential syntax can be found in chapter 4.

3.1.1 WORD ORDER WITHIN THE NP

Within the NP the order follows the expected areal norm for New Guinea: despite being an SOV language, most modifiers follow the head in the NP. Most major modifiers are shown in the non-verbal clause in (99). The first NP, *pe angku nì ne bápáli fue a*, shows a post-nominal adjective, and an NP-final clitic demonstrative. The possessor of the head noun is shown by a set of suffix and enclitic on the noun. The pronominal clitic at the start of the phrase specifies the gender of the underspecified head noun. The second NP, *pe ku lóelóng lúe ka*, displays a relative clause, *lóelóng lúe ka* ‘ears don’t listen’, modifying the head noun *pe ku* ‘girl’.

- (14) *Pe=angku-nì=ne bápáli=fue a pe=ku lóe-lóng lúe ka.*
 3SG.F=child-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT big=that 3SG.F=child ear-hole hear
 NEG
 ‘That big girl of mine is a naughty one.’

Another relative clause type, in which the head of the relative clause occurs internally, is found with objects only. In addition to the possibility of a post-nominal relative clause, the object may also occur in its normal position in the clause. Both possibilities are shown in the following examples:

- (15) [_{RC} *Bàng pumà ke=ká*] =ing a ne=n-ang.
 yesterday wallaby 3SG.NF=hit=the 1PL=1PL-eat
 ‘We ate the wallaby that he shot yesterday.’
- (16) *Pumà* [_{RC} *bàng ke=ká*] =ing a ne=n-ang.
 wallaby yesterday 3SG.NF=hit=the 1PL=1PL-eat
 ‘We ate the wallaby that he shot yesterday.’

These different types of relative clauses are discussed in more detail in xx.xx.

In contrast to the predominantly post-verbal syntax of NPs, adverbs precede a main verb, more in keeping with the head-final order of verbal elements. Sentences with the adverb

following the verb are at best only marginally acceptable, and are judged outright ungrammatical if there is a post-verbal element, either an oblique nominal or an auxiliary.

Preverbal adverb

- (17) *Te=bà=fue a háháfa te=y-á.*
 3PL=person=that slowly 3PL=3PL-walk
 ‘Those people walked along slowly.’

Postverbal adverb

- (18) #/* *te=bà=fue a te=y-á háháfa.*
 3PL=person=that 3PL=3PL-walk slowly
 ‘Those people are walked along slowly.’

Postverbal adverb with auxiliary verbs

- (19) !* *te=bà=fue a te=y-á háháfa e ti.*
 3PL=person=that 3PL=3PL-walk slowly 3PL.be 3PL.do
 ‘Those people are walking along slowly.’

Postverbal adverb with location nominal

- (20) !* *te=bà=fue a te=y-á háháfa bàme.*
 3PL=person=that 3PL=3PL-walk slowly village
 ‘Those people walked slowly in the village.’

Other means of marking adverbial notions include serialisation, for which see xx.xx.

3.2 Case marking

In addition to the use of word order to disambiguate sentences, there is also some use of case marking, as well as extensive agreement on the verb. The examples above show sentences without any case marking, but in addition to this it is possible for the appropriate pronoun to appear at the end of the NP referring to the subject of a bivalent verb, thus serving as an ergative case. The fact that the ergative is marked by means of pronominal forms means that the ergative option is only possible for third person non-pronominal subjects (a similar ergative marking system, though compulsory rather than optional, is found in Yawa and Saweru – Jones 1988, Donohue 2001).

The sentences below show alternatives to those in 3.1, but show the possibility of ergative marking on the subjects of bivalent clauses, but not on objects, or on the subjects of monovalent clauses.

- (21) [_A *Yá-ne-nì=ne* *pe*] *ái* *pe=yúyú.*
 sister-1SG.DAT-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT 3SG.F.ERG father She:search.for
 ‘My sister is looking for father.’

- (22) * *yá-ne-nì=ne* [_P *ái* *ke*] *pe=yúyú.*
 sister-1SG.DAT-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT father 3SG.NF.ERG She:search.for
 ‘My sister is looking for father.’

- (23) * [_S *ái* *ke*] *ke=ti* [_{OBL} *Jáwung*].
 father 3SG.NF.ERG 3SG.NF=3SG.NF.go Nyao
 ‘Father went to Nyao.’

Other case marking is present in the form of instrumental marking, with the clitic =*pa*, and benefactive marking, which is formed by using the possessive pronominal set. Both of these are shown in the following variants of the same sentence.

- (24) *Pe* [INSTR *ní=pa*] *hòe* *pe=tue*
 3SG.F stirring.spoon=INSTR sago she:do
 [BEN *âi-ké=ke*].
 father-3SG.NF.GEN=3SG.NF.DAT
 ‘She’s preparing sago for father with a stirring spoon.’

(25) *Pe hòe ní pa pe tue âi ké ke.*

(26) *Pe ní pa hòe pe tue âi ké ke.*

The instrumental appears before the verb and after the subject; the instrumental marker =*pa* is obligatory on any instrumental NP. In addition to the genitive and dative pronominal marking, the beneficiary is also marked by appearing following the verb. This is the typical position for oblique arguments to appear, as can be seen in the following example using a location:

- (27) *Pe hòe pe=tue* [LOC *pá*].
 3SG.F sago she:do house
 ‘She’s preparing sago in the house.’

Apart from the beneficiary, the post-verbal obliques, which include source, goal, and location (shown above) are not marked by any particular case, only by position. While this leaves the majority of different syntactic relations undifferentiated, verbal agreement provides the means to disambiguate

3.3 Verbal agreement

In the last two examples we can see that the clitic on the has the same shape and same meaning (in terms of specified features) as the free pronoun. Despite this, the sentence is ungrammatical without the proclitic, showing that clitics are fully grammaticalised in the role as agreement marker. The fact that it is an agreement marker, and not in fact a bound pronoun, can be judged from the following sentence (and see the more detailed discussion in xx.xx).

- (28) * *pe hòe tue pá*

In addition to the proclitic agreement that is obligatory on all verbs,¹ additional agreement is usually found on the verb in the form of consonantal changes to the onset of the verb. The conditions for the appearance of prefixal agreement are mainly, but not solely, phonologically determined: prefixal agreement is only found on verbs with an initial *w*, *l*, *r*, *k* or *h*, or a vowel (*i*, *e*, *a*, *o* and *oe*). On a verb that takes prefixal agreement, it is obligatory. Thus for the verb *ang* ‘eat’, both prefixal and proclitic agreement is obligatory. Further, they must agree in person, number and gender with the subject of the clause.

¹ The one major exception involves inanimate and indefinite subjects, such as ‘it rained’, expressed in Skou as *Fu ma* rain rain.falls. These same subjects do take proclitic agreement when the speaker wishes to emphasis the effects of the action: *Fu ke ma nì ke ká* ‘The rain fell on me (soaking me in the process). See xx.xx for more discussion.

- (29) *Yá-ne-nì=ne* *ya* *pe=p-ang*.
 sister-1SG.DAT-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT thing 3SG.F=3SG.NF-eat
 ‘My sister ate.’
- (30) *Áì* *ya* *ke=k-ang*.
 father thing 3SG.NF=3SG.NF-eat
 ‘Father ate.’

Various sentences showing that both the clitic and the prefix are required for a grammatical sentence are shown in the following ungrammatical clauses (compare with (10), which has both clitic and prefix, and is grammatical).

- (31) * *yá ne nì ne ya pe ang*
 (32) * *yá ne nì ne ya pang*
 (33) * *yá ne nì ne ya ang*

The ungrammaticality of either a proclitic or a prefix that codes the wrong person, number, or gender feature is shown in (34).

- (34) * *yá ne nì ne ya (ke) (k)ang*

In these cases we can see that both the proclitic and the prefix mark the same pronominal features on the verb, doubling up on the informational coding. Some verbs do not exhibit changes in the onset of the verb, as seen with *yú* ‘search for’ and *hí* ‘wash’ above, in which case only one agreement marker is found. These, and other types of agreement marking, is discussed in detail in chapter 13. As is suggested by the forms of the prefixes in these examples, the prefixes are also derived from the pronominal stems. This is discussed in more detail in xx.xx, where both an overview of the agreement system and discussion of the different conjugations is presented.

3.4 Pronominal grammaticalisation

It will have become obvious from the previous sections that a lot of the morphology in Skou is transparently derived from the free pronouns: we have seen that the markers for ergative, genitive, and dative are all derived, with little change, from the free pronouns, as are the verbal proclitics. Some of these grammaticalisations are probably recent developments in Skou, this recent development evidenced by the very transparent relationship between the various pronominal forms and the free pronouns, and the fact that in many cases the pronominal marking shows a certain degree of redundancy. Comparative studies with other, more eastern, languages related to Skou also suggests that many of the patterns we can see in Skou are peculiar to Skou itself.

Table 66. Grammaticalisation of pronominal forms

Function	Phonological differences	Further discussion
free pronoun	(base form)	Chapter xx
ergative case marker	no change	Chapter xx
genitive pronoun	HL tone melody	Chapter xx
dative pronoun	L tone, <i>e</i> -vowel	Chapter xx
verbal proclitic	vowel optionally reduced to schwa	Chapter xx
verbal prefix	vowel lost, evidence of archaic forms	Chapter xx

Xxxxxxxx.

3.5 Serial verbs

Serialisation is a feature of verbal complexes in New Guinea, and is also found in Skou, though not as prominently or as pre-eminently as in other languages.

The main use of serialisation is with predicates involving motion. The following textual example shows a not atypical sequence of general motion verbs and direction of motion verbs.

xxxxxxxxxxxx re?

- (35) a. *te=r-í-rí=pa* *te=re* *tu* *me* *toe,*
3PL=3PL-get.PL-RED=INSTR 3PL=go return 3PL.return 3PL.come
'they get them and they go home, ...'
- b. *te=r-í* *hí-hí* *tí,*
3PL=3PL-get.PL go.down-RED salty.water
'they put them down in the salty water, ...'

Serial verb constructions are also found with events denoting transfer, either of goods or actions, such as 'getting', 'taking', 'acquiring' or 'bringing'. An example of these verbs in use is:

- (36) *Ne=r-oe* *na moe* *ne* *Te Jáwung=pa,*
1PL=1PL-get.PL or return 1PL.go Nyao=INSTR
'We got them all and then went back to Nyao, ...'

A more unusual example of a serial construction to denote 'getting' an action can be seen in the second example of the following pair. The first sentence is a typical bivalent construction, and the second shows the same event described in a serial construction:

- (37) *Naké=ing pe=w-á.*
dog=DEIC 3SG.F=3SG.F-hit
'She hit the dog.'
- (38) *Naké=ing pe=w-á* *mòng* *ke=wí.*
dog=DEIC 3SG.F=3SG.F-hit affect 3SG.NF=get.F
'She hit the dog and it was hit.'

Serial verbs are also prominent in the aspect system, where serialisations with 'be', 'do', 'come' and 'go' are used to mark many distinctions. The use of the semantically underspecified 'be' and 'do' is so common that they can better be termed auxiliaries.

3.6 Auxiliary verbs

The effect of serialisation can most clearly be seen with the auxiliary set *i* 'be' + *li* 'do'. These verbs, often used as a unit, follow the main verb, and must also both agree for the features of the subject. While following the main verb they precede a location, but follow a goal, as can be seen in the following near-minimal pair:

Auxiliary verbs precede nominal: locative interpretation of post-verbal nominal

- (39) *Ke=k-á* *i* *li* *báng.*
3SG.NF=3SG.NF-walk be do beach
'He's walking on the beach.'

Auxiliary verbs follow nominal: goal interpretation of post-verbal nominal

- (40) *Ke=k-á* *ti* *báng i li.*
 3SG.NF=3SG.NF-walk 3SG.NF.go beach be do
 ‘He’s walking to the beach.’

The use of both ‘be’ and ‘do’ together in the examples above shows a continuous, non-completed sense. The use of just *li* ‘do’ with a reduplicated verb gives a desiderative reading:

- (40) *Ke* *k-á-ká* *ti* *báng li.*
 3SG.NF 3SG.NF-walk 3SG.NF.go beach do
 ‘He’s wants to walk to the beach.’

In addition to the uses of auxiliaries described above, we also find examples of the use of just *i* ‘be’ on its own with a non-reduplicated verb. This is strongly proscribed by native speakers, but is nonetheless found in most people’s narrative style. It is associated with a generic and habitual meaning, in the past. The following example shows a typical example of the use of this construction.

- (1) *Lópa pìng* *te=ti* *e,* *hùng te=ti* *e.*
 earlier war 3PL=3PL.do 3PL.be battle 3PL=3PL.do 3PL.be
 ‘In the olden days they used to fight wars, they’d fight battles.’

More details on the auxiliaries can be found in xx.xx.

3.7 Interaction

One striking feature of Skou syntax (shared by other languages of North-central New Guinea) is the fact that, in addition to a strict order applying to most of the elements in the clause, the nodes are not iterative. It is impossible, for instance, for more than one object to appear in a clause (and hence there are no trivalent verbs); there cannot be two locational elements, say a source and a location, in the one clause; and if there are two morphemes required in a clause which occupy the same structural position, then one will have to be realised in an alternative, as each position can be filled only once. This restriction can be seen in the requirement that serial verb constructions or conjoined clauses must be used with many sentences expressing motion.

Serialisation with *ha* ‘from’

- (41) *Pe=w-á* *pá=ké-ke* *pe=moe* *w-atà*
 3SG.F-from house-3SG.F.GEN=3SG.F.DAT 3SG.F=return 3SG.F-run
te *pá-pè=pe=wò=we.*
 3SG.F.go house-3SG.F.GEN=3SG.F.DAT=EMPH=this
 ‘She ran from his house back here to her own house.’

Parenthetically we should note that it is extremely likely that *há* ‘from’ is etymologically related to *há* ‘walk’. Synchronically they have different inflections, but, based on observed patterns in other languages from the New Guinea region, we can presume that historically they were one and the same verb, which has split into two as part of the process of esoterogenisation that has affected the language to such a degree.

It is not possible for the source to appear without this serial verb construction, regardless of the position it occupies in the clause

- (42) * *pe moe watà te pá pè pe wò we pá ké ke*, * *pe moe watà te pá ké ke pá pè pe wò we*,
 * *pe moe watà pá ké ke te pá pè pe wò we*, * *pe moe pá ké ke watà te pá pè pe wò*
we, * *pá ké ke pe moe watà te pá pè pe wò we*.

The lack of trivalent verbs is similarly handled effectively by the grammar by serialising with *ké* ‘get’ (or *wí* ‘get (feminine object)’, *lòe* ‘get (plural object)’):

- (43) *Tà ke=wí leng wówo.*
 arrow 3SG.NF=get.F give uncle
 ‘He gave an arrow to his uncle.’

- (44) *móe ne=r-oe-roe=pa ne=n-a me toe-toe*
 fish 1PL=1PL-get.PL-RED=INSTR 1PL=1PL-walk return.PL 3.come-RED
bàme.
 village
 ‘...we take the fish and bring them back to the village.’

- (45) *Ráng hang=ing nì=k-ang.*
 sun coconut=the 1SG=1SG-eat
 ‘I ate a coconut earlier today.’

3.8 Noun classification

There is a simple division of the world into two morphosyntactically-monitored classes, animate and inanimate. Additionally, a gender system, feminine versus non-feminine, operates on all animate nominals, with biological sex determining the gender of some higher-animate nouns, and social and linguistic convention applying to others. Interestingly, the same markers are used to indicate the animate/inanimate distinction as are used for the feminine/non-feminine one. This is not necessarily marked on the noun or in the noun phrase, but is always present in the form of verbal agreement.

Formally there are different degrees to which a noun must be formally marked for its gender, with most nouns showing no overt marking on the nominal itself, but the gender becoming apparent only through any verbal agreement. Other nouns allow optional marking by pronominal proclitic: *naké* ‘dog’ does not have to appear with a proclitic, but *ke=naké* ‘male dog’, *pe=naké* ‘female dog’ and *te=naké* ‘dogs’ are all possible, and attested, forms. Yet other nouns must appear with overt proclitics: *pe=ueme* ‘woman’ must appear with the proclitic: **ueme*. This is described in more detail in xx.xx.

3.9 Adjunct nominals

Many verbal predicates appear with not just an inflecting verb, but also with a nominal that can in the main be thought of as semantically specifying the action denoted by the verb. This nominal is not a full NP, and does not bear the grammatical function subject, object, or oblique. Typically, such a nominal serves as an immediate-constituent ‘adjunct’ to the verb. In the following example *pìng* ‘bow’ is used with *lú* ‘release’ to specify the meaning ‘shoot’.

- (46) *Ke pále [ADJ.NOM pìng] ke=lú hápèng.*
 3SG.NF pig [ADJ.NOM bow] 3SG.NF=release bush
 ‘He shot a pig in the bush.’

Unlike objects, these adjunct nominals may not be separated from the verb by a case-marked instrument. In the example above the rather semantically ambiguous bivalent verb *lú* is further specified by the addition of the nominal *pìng* ‘bow’.

The position of the adjunct nominal is not completely predictable. In a clause such as that above we can spot a clear VP order as seen in (99);

(99) VP NP_{OBJ} ADJ.NOM proclitic_{SUBJ}=V

It is true that all adjunct nominals occur after a nominal object, and not before it. The position of the adjunct nominal with respect to proclitic agreement is not, however, so fixed. Compare (99) with (99), which shows an adjunct nominal following the proclitic agreement (but still preceding the verbal prefix).

(46) *Pe pìlang pe=[ADJ.NOM na] r-ùng.*
 3SG.F language 3SG.F= teaching 3SG.F-teach
 ‘He taught (them) the language.’

More details on the position and status of adjunct nominals can be found in xx.xx.

XX

We can also see, in the above examples, that the predicative verb has a pronoun cliticised to the front. This is obligatory with all verbal clauses, as can be judged by comparing the sentences above with the following ungrammatical sentences, which are based on the grammatical versions seen earlier

(1) * *ài ke yá-ne-nì=ne yúyú*

(8) * *pe hòe tue pá*

(9) * *ke pále pìng lú hápèng*

This case-marking pronoun is not found with monovalent predicates, as can be seen in the following example where the subject of ‘wash’ in a monovalent clause cannot be grammatically followed by a pronoun (the adjunct nominal *pa* ‘water’ does not ‘count’ as an argument, as it is part of the predicate – see xx.xx).

(5) *Yá-ne-nì=ne pa pe=hí-hí.*
 sister-1SG.DAT-1SG.GEN=1SG.DAT water 3SG.F=wash-RED
 ‘My sister is washing.’

(6) * *[s yá ne nì ne pe] pa pe hí-hí*

3.10 Medial forms

In common with many languages of New Guinea, though somewhat unusually for non-Trans New Guinea family languages, Skou possesses a set of medial verb forms. One major departure from the Trans New Guinea model is that the sentence-medial forms are simply added to the final verb forms: there is no loss in morphological material in a medial form compared to a final form.

The medial verbs are formed with the morphemes =*pa* (elsewhere used to mark instrumental nouns and to conjoin NPs) and =*ko* (not attested elsewhere in the grammar), as seen in the following examples:

(99) *Ke=toe=pa* *ke=ta k-ùng.*
 3SG.NF=3.come=INSTR 3SG.NF=sitting 3SG.NF-sit
 ‘He_i came and then he_i sat down.’

(99) *Ke=toe=ko* *ke=ta k-ùng.*
 3SG.NF=3.come=OBV 3SG.NF=sitting 3SG.NF-sit
 ‘He_i came and then he_i sat down.’

The translations given are the most ‘unmarked’ readings of the sentences; that given for (99) is the only likely reading. (99), however, can also be construed with the reading ‘He_i came and then he_i sat down.’ if there has been a sufficient lapse of time between the coming event and the sitting down event. For this reason it is better not to refer to the switch reference system encoded in Skou as involving same versus different subject, but rather as involving same versus different reference (or either subject or temporal setting).

Another major departure from the canonical Papuan model of medial verbs and final verbs taking different inflectional possibilities is the widely heard possibility that a non-final verb can appear without the ‘medial’ forms.

3.11 Distinguishing syntactic relations and obliques

The two arguments may be distinguished morphosyntactically on the basis of their behaviour along the following lines: xxxargument?xxx

- S and A are regularly indexed on the verb by means of prefixes and/or proclitics, whereas P is never marked in this way;
- S and A are treated as a single unit for the purposes of determining the choice of obviation marking at the end of a clause in a string of clauses;
- A is optionally marked by an ergative summation pronoun final in the nominal phrase that indicates this argument, whereas this strategy is not possible for an S or a P;
- a possessed P may mark its possessor’s gender or number features on the verb, which is not possible for an S or an A;
- S and P may be under the scope of a post-verbal floating quantifier *fátà*, whereas this is not possible for an A;²
- A, S or P may be indicated on the verb by means of vowel alternations;
- A, S or P may show raising when the clause they are in is the complement of a psych or perception verb.

None of these properties are grammatical with arguments other than A, S and P, and so we may talk of a set of core arguments, defined both positionally (pre-verbal position only) and morphosyntactically.

² The semantically apparently identical quantifier *nawò* may not float. See xx.xx.

In addition to the core arguments A and P, or S, of which there are never more than two for a given verb,³ various extra arguments may appear in a clause. We can identify five categories based on morphosyntactic criteria:

- post-verbal, unmarked
- post-verbal, genitive marking
- pre-verbal, instrumental marking
- pre-verbal, unmarked temporal
- strictly adjacent to verb, unmarked

In a strong sense these are not a unified group in the sense that A, S and P can be thought of as commonly sharing properties, but they are rather the group of nominals which are not core. Examples of each of these categories are given in the following sentences:

Post-verbal location

- (14) *Ke ke=ti bàme.*
 3SG.NF 3SG.NF=3SG.NF.go village
 ‘He went to the village.’

Post-verbal beneficiary

- (15) *Ke ke=ti te=bà-tè=te.*
 3SG.NF 3SG.NF=3SG.NF.go 3PL=person-3PL.GEN=3PL.DAT
 ‘He went for the people.’

Pre-verbal instrument

- (16) *Ke tang=pa ke=ti.*
 3SG.NF canoe=INSTR 3SG.NF=3SG.NF.go
 ‘He went by a vehicle.’

Temporal

- (17) *Fé-ung ke ke=ti-ti.*
 morning-now 3SG.NF 3SG.NF=3SG.NF.go-RED
 ‘He’ll go tomorrow.’

Adjunct to the verb

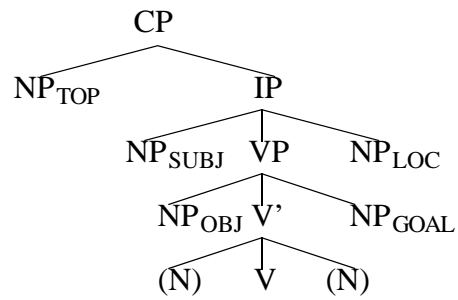
- (18) *Ke kúhe ke=ti.*
 3SG.NF fall 3SG.NF=3SG.NF.go
 ‘He fell over.’

3.12 Summary

We can compare the broad morphosyntactic criteria as they apply to the different argument types in Skou. Table xx presents an overview of the position, nominal marking, and verbal agreement possibilities as they apply to the different types of participants in the clause.

³ For strategies involved in translations of verbs which would be treated as ditransitive in other languages, see xx.xx.

(21)



Justification for these different levels can be found in the following facts:

- time expressions are left-adjoined to the S-level; they are not commonly found in a sentence that additionally has a topicalised nominal
- instrumentals may appear left-adjoined to either the VP or the V' level;
- serialisation occurs with coordinate VPs, and allows only object NPs and goal NPs to intrude between the constituent Vs.