

Nungon Switch-Reference: Processing and Acquisition

Hannah S. Sarvasy

The MARCS Institute for Brain, Behaviour and Development, Western Sydney University

Clause chains are a well-known feature of many Papuan languages. In this type of complex sentence, clauses are dependent but not embedded, and dozens of clauses can be combined into one morphologically-indicated syntactic unit. Clause chains in many Papuan languages require morphological switch-reference marking (Roberts 1997), in which speakers are obliged to announce in advance whether the subject of the following clause will differ from that of the current clause. While the question of how to fit switch-reference into various theoretical syntax frameworks has received a fair amount of attention (Finer 1985, Stirling 1993, Baker & Camargo Souza 2020, *inter alia*), there has been almost no interest in the phenomenon in other sub-disciplinary fields, such as psycholinguistics and language acquisition. Switch-reference marking would seem to represent a cognitively demanding type of long-distance dependency that requires speakers to plan their speech at least two clauses at a time (*contra*, perhaps, Pawley & Snyder 2000). Thus, Papuan switch-reference systems should bear on research into cognition—and the results of this research should further contribute to community decisions around language maintenance.

I first summarize the results of recent eye-tracking and electroencephalography (EEG) studies of switch-reference comprehension and production in the Finisterre-Huon Papuan language. Data from gaze during speech production, for instance, supports the notion that listeners plan Nungon switch-reference morphemes (and, by extension, at least the subject of the following clause) more than one clause in advance. In contrast, gaze during listening does not show that listeners use switch-reference markers as the primary cues to predict upcoming subject identities. This could be due, in part, to the fact that Nungon different-subject markers encode nothing about the identity of upcoming subjects—only that they will differ from current subjects.

- Roberts, John. 1997. Switch-reference in Papua New Guinea: A preliminary survey. In *Papers in Papuan Linguistics* No. 3, ed. Andrew Pawley. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics. 101-241.
- Rumsey, Alan, Reed Lauren W., and Merlan, Francesca. 2020. Ku Waru clause chaining and the acquisition of complex syntax. *Frontiers in Communication* 5:19.
- Sarvasy, Hannah. 2017. *A Grammar of Nungon: A Papuan Language of Northeast New Guinea*. Leiden: Brill.
- Sarvasy, Hannah. 2020. Acquisition of clause chains in Nungon. *Frontiers in Psychology* 11:1456.
- Sarvasy, Hannah S., Morgan, Adam M., Yu, Jenny, Ferreira, Victor S., and Momma, Shota. Under review.
- Cross-clause planning in Nungon: Evidence from eye-tracking. Stirling, Lesley. 1993. *Switch-reference and Discourse Representation*. Cambridge: CUP.

A new type of auxiliary: Evidence from Pahoturi River complex predicates
Kate L. Lindsey, Boston University Dineke Schokkin, University of Canterbury

This paper discusses complex predicates in Pahoturi River (PR), a family of six closely related varieties spoken in the South Fly of Papua New Guinea, particularly in Ende (kit; Limol village) and Idi (idi; Dimsisi village). We use the term “complex predicate” in the sense of Butt (2010: 2) to “[designate] a construction that involves two or more predicational elements (e.g., nouns, verbs, and adjectives) which predicate as a single unit, i.e., their arguments map onto a monoclausal syntactic structure.”

PR complex predicates (1, 2a) consist of a sequence of two elements. One element is essentially uninflected and provides the lexical-semantic information, and the other is a morphologically complex verb that only contributes inflectional information (e.g., TAM, valency, voice, argument person/number, etc.). Complex predicates contrast with simplex ones, which contain a single inflected lexical verb (2b).

With regards to the first element, we see two types of verbal elements in this position. First is a class of non-inflecting words that act as verbs in this construction (e.g., Idi *yndhpä* ‘see’ in [1]) but act as non-verbs elsewhere (*yndhpä* also means ‘eye’). This class of words must occur in a complex predicate when they are the predicate of the main clause. We also observe infinitival

