**Preverbal morphemes in Sudest, an Oceanic language of Papua New Guinea**

This study examines two classes of preverbal morphemes in Sudest (ISO 636-3 tgo), an Oceanic language of the Papuan Tip cluster. Sudest is unusual among the Papuan Tip group as one of the few languages to retain Oceanic SVO clause order and prepositions. There has been only limited linguistic research on Sudest to date, primarily for translation purposes (Anderson & Anderson 1991; Anderson and Ross 2002) or as part of areal surveys (Ray 1938; Henderson & Henderson 1974; Lithgow 1976).

Oceanic languages are known for the complexity of their verbal morphology (Lynch et al. 2002: 45). The verb phrase in Sudest is no exception with more than ten pre and postverbal slots. The current study examines two classes of preverbal morphemes found in Sudest based on text-data collected during recent fieldwork.

Classificatory prefixes have been attested in multiple Papuan Tip languages (Ezard 1978). Similar prefixes have also been documented in other Oceanic languages (Osumi 1995; Ozanne-Rivierre & Rivierre 2004). In Sudest, classificatory prefixes are used with transitive action verbs such as ‘hit’, ‘cut’ and ‘kill’ and denote the body part of instrument used to carry out an action (1). ‘Object classifying prefixes’ (following Anderson and Ross’ (2002) terminology), however, are unattested in other Papuan Tip languages. They are used with transitive verbs of motion and cross-reference number (singular or plural) and particular qualities of the referent of the object of the verb. Humans, animals, foods and other solid objects take one set of object classifiers (2), non-solid objects such as string, leaves and empty containers (3) another and full containers and multipart objects yet another (4). The classificatory prefixes and object classifiers can occur in the same verb phrase to specify the manner of causation and the referent of the object (5). The two classes of preverbal morphemes are of interest as they both reference properties of core and non-core arguments within the verb phrase. Both classes of morphemes were originally verbs in serial verbs constructions; Papuan Tip classificatory prefixes are fully grammaticalized prefixes (Lynch et al. 2002: 47), while the object classifiers appear to be less grammaticalized and can still function as the single verb of a verb phrase with the meaning ‘get’ (6).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (1) | karitau | i=rɨ-mbiye | le-nji | ela-ghɨ |
|  | tridacna.clam | 3SG=with.teeth-hold | POSS.CLF2-3PL.POSS | woman-old/esteemed |
|  | ‘the giant clam clasped their old woman (with its teeth)’  |

.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (2) | i=mban-kaivɨ | bwarogi=ma |  |  |  |
|  | 3SG=OBJ.CLF.PL-steal | fish=DEM |  |  |  |
|  | ‘he steals the fish’  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| (3) | thɨ=li-ranggi=ya | jin-ma |
|  | 3PL=OBJ.CLF.SG-come.out=FOC | flower=DEM |
|  | ‘they took the flower out’  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (4) | thɨ=thɨn-vatomwe=ya | iya |  |  |  |
|  | 3PL=OBJ.CLF.SG-show=FOC | DEM |  |  |  |
|  | ‘they are showing that (a full bottle)’  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (5) | amba | i=vo-thɨn-vairɨ=Ø |  |  |  |
|  | then | 3SG=with.instrument-OBJ.CLF.SG-up=3SG |  |  |
|  | ‘then it lifts him up (with sticks)’  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| (6) | wo=mban=ya | varɨvarɨ=ma |  |  |  |
|  | 1EXCL=get=FOC | red-stone=DEM |  |  |  |
|  | ‘we got the stones’  |

**References**

Anderson, M, Anderson, T, 1991, *Sudest Grammar Essentials*. Summer Institute of Linguistics, Milne Bay Province.

Anderson, M, Ross, M, 2002, ‘Sudest’, in J Lynch, M Ross, T Crowley (eds.), *The Oceanic Languages*, Curzon, Richmond, Surrey, pp. 322 – 346.

Henderson, J, Henderson A, 1974. ‘Three studies in languages of eastern Papua’, in *Workpapers in Papua in Papua New Guinea Languages*, SIL, Ukarumpa, pp. 39–61.

Lynch, J, Ross, M & Crowley, T (eds.) 2002, *The Oceanic languages*. Curzon, Richmond, Surrey.

Osumi, M. 1995. Tinrin Grammar. *Oceanic Linguistics Special Publications, No. 25*.

Ozanne-Rivierre, F, Rivierre, J-C, 2004. ‘Verbal compounds and lexical prefixes in the languages of New Caledonia, in I. Brille & F Ozanne-Rivierre (eds.) *Complex predicates in Oceanic languages: studies in the dynamics of binding and boundness*. De Gruyter Mouton: Berlin; New York, pp. 347 – 372.

Ray, S H, 1937, ‘The Languages of the Eastern Louisiade Archipelago’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 9(2), pp. 363–384.