

## Multiple perspective: a view from New Guinea

The subjective, perspective-taking qualities of language have long been recognised, but until fairly recently it has been assumed that the utterances we produce stick to representing one point of view at a time. This assumption has been challenged by the recognition that languages frequently have ways of representing two or more different viewpoints concerning the same semantic domain within a single morpheme, word, or construction (Evans 2007).

Such ‘multiple perspective’ constructions may involve a relatively ‘direct’ calculation of viewpoint, as exemplified by demonstrative systems that explicitly encode the speaker’s and the addressee’s positions with regard to an object of reference, or be more ‘indirect’, e.g., encoding assumptions regarding the evaluative or epistemic stance of an addressee or a third party. The latter is illustrated in the following example from Duna (Duna-Bogaya, Trans New Guinea) where a speaker talks about the fact that it is raining:

- (1) *ketele yiao mia-mia-pa.*  
little nothing drizzle-drizzle-INDV  
‘[It is] drizzling just a little bit.’ (brushing own arms)
- ipa ralua mia-mia-na.*  
water rain drizzle-drizzle-SPEC  
‘The rain is drizzling.’ (pointing it out to addressee) (San Roque 2008: 341)

While the verbal inflection *-pa* marks a proposition that represents “a person’s individual point of view”, *-na* is used concerning events that are “assumed to be accessible to the addressee as well” (San Roque 2008: 341). This kind of ‘complex perspective’ is a testimony to our special human abilities for representing and comparing the mental states of ourselves and others.

Papuan languages have important contributions to make to our understanding of multiple perspective constructions in language, for example in ‘semi-indirect’ reported speech (see, e.g., Loughnane 2005, Evans 2007, Aikhenvald 2008), within evidential and possibly mirative systems (Sillitoe 2010, San Roque & Loughnane 2012, Mexas 2013), and through clause-level uses of demonstratives to mark stance (e.g., Tupper 2013, Schapper & San Roque 2011). In this talk we look at multiple perspective constructions that are grammatical expressions with propositional scope, at the level of the clause or higher, and which concern the distribution of knowledge between the speech participants (i.e., speaker and addressee) from the point of view of the speaker. We outline some attested instances of these expressions with a focus on languages of New Guinea, and discuss different analytical tools for identifying and analyzing such constructions both semantically and functionally.

## References

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