

Object marking in Yali

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Yali has two strategies to mark person and number of object participants. Both generally pertain only to human (and in certain cases animate non-human) object referents. The first way is to cross-reference the object participant is by means of a genitive prefix which attaches to the verb. This strategy is, however, restricted to three verbs only (*watuk* ‘to hit/kill’, *emberuk* ‘to put/leave’, and *noruk* ‘to eat’).

All other verbs cross-reference human (and animate) objects with the help of verbal **object stems**. The object stem follows the matrix verb and takes the pronominal object prefix as well as the tense/subject agreement suffix. Yali has three distinct object stem paradigms – for expository reasons called A, B, and C – which mark person and number, and to a certain extent also the semantic role of a human (or an animate) object participant. These kinds of object forms are common in all languages of the Dani subgroup (cf. Bromley 1981: 98ff.; Barclay 2008: 337ff.), but they are also reported for other Trans-New Guinea languages, such as, e.g. languages of the Huon family (cf. Suter 2012). Often, these forms correspond to (independent) matrix verbs. This also holds for the C-paradigm in Yali, which corresponds to the independent matrix verb *haruk* ‘to see’. Forms of the A and the B paradigms, however, do not occur as matrix verbs.

While the object paradigm B clearly marks the object referent as the benefactive (cf. (1)a.), the semantics of object paradigms A and C are not that easy to determine. Both can mark the affected patient of the construction, cf. (1)b. and (1)c. Furthermore, some of the object marked verbs have quite idiosyncratic meanings. Thus, e.g., *og naptuk* (carry 1s.OBJ:A-PROG) can either mean ‘to pick me up’ or ‘to bring for me’, the form *og nutuk* (carry 1s.OBJ:B-PROG) means ‘to give to me’.

- (1) a. *hat sual nutuk lamin*
hat sual **nut**-tuk lat-min
2s knit **1s.OBJ:B-PROG** stay-IMP
‘you knit (this) for me’ [APA making_net_bag 030]

- b. *isag hinabul*
isag **hinap**-ul
cook **2p.OBJ:A-1p.IM.FUT**
‘we will cook you’ [APA 1st_initiation 267]

- c. *nîknîyen fukfak nîyahek*
n-îknî=en fukfak **nîya**-ehk
1s.GEN-father=AGT push **1s.OBJ:C-3s.IM.PST**
‘my father pushed me around’ [ANG entry *fukfak-turuk*]

This paper describes the different ways of object marking in Yali and investigates the question whether and how generalisations about the semantics of the three different object paradigms (and especially paradigms A and C), can be drawn, and to what extent the semantics of an object marked verb is idiosyncratic.

References

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