

Concerning the status of locatives in Makalero

Makalero is a Papuan language spoken by approximately 8,000 people in East Timor. It has a largely isolating profile and SOV word order.

Spatial anchoring is a pervasive feature of Makalero discourse. In grammar, the importance of spatial anchoring is reflected by the fact that spatial specifications of a verb are not equal in status to other verbal complements. In fact, they appear to be in a closer connection to the verb than, for instance, direct objects are. Several grammatical phenomena give evidence of this: one of these is that there is a number of verbs which exhibit variation of the initial consonant, depending on the nature of the preceding phrase: for example, in the case of *heil* 'pull', there is a form *seil* which is restricted to contexts in which it is immediately preceded by a locative specification. In all other environments, *heil* is used.

Another feature that proves the existence of a very tight link between the verb and its preceding spatial specification comes from the position of the two most common TAM markers, *hai* (new situation) and *hau* (imperfective). Generally, these markers directly precede the verb, that is, stand between the verb's object and the verb itself, as shown in the schematic representation:

O – (aspect) – V

However, a locative phrase stands after the aspect marker, thus the order is as follows:

(aspect) – LOC – V

As such, locative specifications differ from direct objects, which precede the aspect marker. Similar evidence comes from the position of the negator *nomo*. Furthermore, it appears that no object NP can be present in a sentence with a preverbal locative.

In summary, there is a number of grammatical phenomena which all show clearly that locative specifications are very tightly linked to the verb; in fact more so than direct objects. There seems to be a preverbal slot reserved for locative specifications, which can be complex structures themselves.

The first part of the presentation will provide a selection of grammatical evidence for the idea that locatives are part of a verbal complex in Makalero. In a second part, I will attempt to place this phenomenon in a wider perspective by looking for comparable phenomena in the neighbouring languages of Timor as well as further away.