ORIGIN OF SWITCH-REFERENCE MARKERS IN MIAN

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0 INTRODUCTION

TOPIC: account of the unusual behaviour of switch reference (S/R) marking in the Papuan language Mian, origin of the S/R markers, which have ultimately been derived from tense, aspect, and mood markers

Mian: 2,500 speakers, Telefomin District, Sandaun Province, Papua New Guinea, Ok language, Trans New Guinea family (Healey, 1964; Wurm, 1982)

All data from the eastern dialect

S/R (Haiman and Munro, 1983; Roberts, 1997; Stirling, 1993):
- discourse tracking device
- monitor the subject, i.e. to indicate through verbal morphology whether the subject of some other clause is the same (SS) or different (DS)
- in Papuan languages, S/R typically in clause chaining constructions (Stirling, 1993: 16), calculated with respect to the subject of the succeeding clause (cf. Foley and Van Valin 1984, Foley 1986)

Terms: ‘marked clause’: medial clause in which the verb is marked for S/R, ‘reference clause’: succeeding medial or final clause in reference to which S/R is marked

1 SR SYSTEMS IN TNG HIGHLANDS LANGUAGES

difference in morphological complexity of medial verbs compared to sentence-final verbs (See Roberts (1997) for a typological survey of S/R systems in New Guinea languages.)

Simplest case: medial verbs only marked for co-reference of subject, not for tense or person/number of the subject. Example from Usan (Numugenan family, Madang Province) (Reesink, 1987) from Reesink (1983: 217 and pers. comm.):

1) USN ye nam su-ab is-omei
   I tree cut-ss go_down-1SG.FPST
   ‘I cut the tree and (I) went down.’

Often additional temporal meaning, e.g., sequential or simultaneous, as in Fasu (West Kutubuan family, Southern Highlands Province) (Loeweke and May, 1980) and Kalam (Kalam family, Madang Province) (Pawley, 1966; Pawley, 1987; Pawley, 1993). Example from Kalam (Pawley, 1993: 101):

2) KLM kwet d-y nwp pk-p-yn
   stick hold-SS.PRIOR him hit-PFV-2SG
   ‘You hit him with a stick.’ (lit. ‘You took a stick and hit him’)

DS-forms of medial verbs are usually more complex:
- can carry a subject marker, which indicates DS while the SS form is zero, e.g., in Fore (Gorokan family, Eastern Highlands) (Scott, 1978)
• can have an anticipatory subject marker which indicates person and number of the following subject, as in Hua (Gorokan family, Eastern Highlands) (Haiman, 1980).
• portmanteaux DS markers, e.g., in Kobon (Davies, 1981) and Usan (DS + subject person and number). Example from Usan (Reesink, 1983: 218 and pers. comm.):

\[(3) \text{USN} \quad \text{ye nam} \quad \text{su-ine} \quad \text{is-orei} \]
\[\text{I tree cut-1SG.DS go_down-3SG.FPST} \]
\[\text{‘I cut the tree (and it went) down.’} \]

• separate suffixes for disjoint reference and for subject person and number, e.g., Kalam (Pawley, 1993: 94):

\[(4) \text{KLM} \quad \text{an} \quad \text{ag-e-k} \quad \text{g-a-k?} \]
\[\text{who say-DSPRIOR-3SG do-3SG-PST} \]
\[\text{‘Who told him to do it?’ (lit. ‘Who said and he did it?’)} \]

Typical examples of S/R in Papuan languages:
• medial verbs are different from final verbs
• not all medial verbs are marked for subject person and/or subject number
• medial verbs often cannot be marked for various categories (irrealis mood or absolute tense (Comrie, 1985)
• formatives that medial and final verbs allow are formally and functionally distinct

2 S/R IN MIAN
In Mian we find a less grammaticalized S/R system, characteristic of languages of the West Papuan Highlands, e.g. Dani (Bromley, 1981) and Kapauku (Ekagi) (Foley, pers. comm.).

• frequent use of clause chaining in discourse
• But: medial verbs resemble final verbs much more than in the languages above
• a few differences: medial verbs cannot be marked for negative polarity nor the TAM categories irrealis, conditional, and hortative
• Similarities: all medial verbs (a) always mark their subject and any additional argument like final verbs, and (b) take a range of markers which convey information pertaining to S/R and the temporal structure of events. These latter suffixes occur in the slot before the subject marker and are homophonous with the TAM suffixes found in the same slot in final verbs.

S/R formatives: co-reference or disjoint reference plus information about the temporal structure of events (sequential/simultaneous): \(\text{-n ‘(SS,) Sequential’,} \) \(\text{-s ‘DS, Sequential’ -b ‘DS, Simultaneous’, and auxiliary} \) \(+\text{biaan from the existential verbs for ‘SS, Simultaneous’}\)

\(-s \quad \text{‘DS, Sequential’}:\)

\[(5) \text{háangan-\(s\)-e=a} \quad \text{hâ-n-i=a} \]
\[\text{dry.VBLZ-DSSEQ-SG.N1.SBJ=MED} \quad \text{break.PFV-SSSEQ-1SG.SBJ=MED} \]
\[\text{‘it has dried so I break (it) and then I …’ [Rolling smokes]} \]
-b ‘DS, Simultaneous’:

(6) ngaan-*b-e=a
    call.IPFV-DS.SIM-3SG.M.SBJ=DECL

    naka=i wente”-n-ib=a
    man=PL.AN hear.PFV-SEQ-2/3PL.AN.SBJ=DECL

‘While he was calling, the men heard him, and then …’ [Origin of the Dafinau vine]

+biaan ‘SS, Simultaneous’:

(7) “ulenene ulenene” ga+biaan-*ib=a
    (ritual_language) SAY.IPFV+AUX.SS.SIM-2/3PL.AN.SBJ=DECL

    yē kekewân ol-ô-n-ib=a
    there stinging_nettle PL.RESID.O-take.PFV-SEQ-2/3PL.AN.SBJ=DECL

‘While they were saying “Ulenene ulenene”, they took stinging nettles and then…’ [The Ala ritual]

3 Unusual behaviour of -n

Typological quirk: -n only unequivocally marks SS and event sequentiality if the subject is 1st singular:

-n ‘SS, Sequential’:

(8) nē memâlo fút=e tob-ô-n-i=a
    I now tobacco=N1.SG 3SG.LONG.O-take.PFV-SS.SEQ-1SG.SBJ=DECL

    futâan=o om-onâ-n-i=a
    tobacco_paper=N2 3SG.FEM.O-take_too.PFV-SS.SEQ-1SG.SBJ=DECL

‘Now I take the tobacco, I also take the cigarette paper, and then I…’ [Rolling smokes]

In all other person-number combinations: indicator of event sequentiality

-n with co-referent non-1SG subjects:

(9) mēn=e dob-fâ-n-o=a
    child=SG.M 3SG.MASC.O-put.PFV-SEQ-3SG.F.SBJ=DECL

    me-b-o=be
cry.IPV-IPFV-3SG.F.SBJ=DECL

‘She gave birth to a boy and she is crying.’

-n with referentially disjoint non-1SG subjects:

(10) mēn=e dob-fâ-n-o=a
    child=SG.M 3SG.MASC.O-put.PFV-SEQ-3SG.F.SBJ=DECL
me-b-e=be
cry.IPFV-IPFV-3SG.M.SBJ=DECL
‘She gave birth to a boy and he is crying.’

-n with 1SG subject:

(11) mën=e dob-fâ-s-i=a
child=SG.M 3SG.MASC.O-put.PFV-DS.SEQ-1SG.SBJ=DECL
me-b-e=be / *me-b-i=be
cry.IPFV-IPFV-3SG.M.SBJ=DECL / cry.IPFV-IPFV-1SG.SBJ=DECL
‘I gave birth to a boy and he is crying.’

(12) mën=e dob-fâ-n-i=a
child=SG.M 3SG.MASC.O-put.PFV-SS.SEQ-1SG.SBJ=DECL
me-b-i=be / *me-b-e=be
cry.IPFV-IPFV-1SG.SBJ=DECL / cry.IPFV-IPFV-3SG.M.SBJ=DECL
‘I gave birth to a boy and I am crying.’

Tracking ‘topic’ rather than subject?

• SS marking can be apparently inconsistent (Stirling, 1993: 60-97):
  if reference clause is providing background information (e.g. temporal clauses, meteorological
  conditions, or physiological/psychological states)
• S/R marking proceeds with respect to topicality hierarchies (Reesink, 1983: 240)
• clause skipping (also cf. Farr, 1999: 228ff).

Mian however allows -n-marking before clauses providing background information, even if the topic of the
first clause is never mentioned again in the rest of the text (temporal clause in brackets):

(13) yoma-n-e=ta
beget.PFV-SEQ-3SG.M.SBJ=MED

[naka=i utl-Ø-ib=o
man=PL.AN come_up.PFV-REAL-2/3PL.AN.SBJ=ADV

ī ninin=Ø dol-fâ-n-ib=a
they name=N2 PL.FEM.O-put.PFV-SEQ-2/3PL.AN.SBJ=MED
‘he begot (children), when the people grew up, they assumed names and then…’ [Genesis of the
Mianmin people]

Topic is never mentioned again
-n-marking is still possible
→-n in medial verbs is a more general marker of sequentiality (except where the subject of the marked
clause is 1st singular)
**Functional paradox:** S/R marking is redundant if either of the subjects is first or second person because here disjoint reference is obvious to discourse participants (Haiman and Munro, 1983: ix)

In the third person, however, one would expect full functionality of the S/R system because here it is important for referent identification.

Gender helps disambiguating in many cases (example repeated from (9) above, subject markers also in boldface):

(14) mēn=e    dob-fâ-n-o=a
    child=SG.M 3SG.MASC.O-put.PFV-SEQ-3SG.F.SBJ=MED

    me-b-e=be
cry.IPFV-IPFV-3SG.M.SBJ=DECL
‘She gave birth to a boy and he is crying.’

In cases with disjoint subjects which have the same gender, -n-marking is still possible but the disjoint reference in only available if a free NP is used in the reference clause, e.g.:

(15) mēn=e    dob-fâ-n-o=a
    child=SG.M 3SG.MASC.O-put.PFV-SEQ-3SG.F.SBJ=MED

    unáng mak=o   me-b-o=be
woman another=SG.F cry.IPFV-IPFV-3SG.F.SBJ=DECL
‘She gave birth to a boy and another woman is crying.’

Without such an NP, subjects have to be construed as co-referent, thus:

(16) mēn=e    dob-fâ-n-o=a
    child=SG.M 3SG.MASC.O-put.PFV-SEQ-3SG.F.SBJ=MED

    me-b-o=be
cry.IPFV-IPFV-3SG.F.SBJ=DECL
‘She gave birth to a boy and is crying.’
*‘She gave birth to a boy and she is crying.’

**SUMMARY:** **FORM AND FUNCTION OF S/R MARKERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sequential</th>
<th>Simultaneous</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If SBJ 1SG</td>
<td>If SBJ not 1SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>-n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>-s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1: Mian S/R formatives
4 HOMOPHONOUS FORMATIVES IN FINAL VERBS

Mian SR markers and TAM markers are homophonous and occur in the same slot in the verb.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TAM markers</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>S/R markers</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-n</td>
<td>Realis</td>
<td>-n</td>
<td>(SS,) Sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-s</td>
<td>Remote past</td>
<td>-s</td>
<td>DS, Sequential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-b</td>
<td>Imperfective</td>
<td>-b</td>
<td>DS, Simultaneous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: TAM markers in final verbs and S/R markers in medial verbs

Function of the TAM markers in final verbs:

- **-n ‘Realis’**:

(17)  ilem=e tē=ta na+(u)b^ne-n-e=be

blood=SG.N1 come=MED make+give.PFV-1SG.REC-REAL-3SG.N1.SBJ=DECL

‘(Some) blood comes and does (this) to me.’ [Origin of the Afoksitgabaam fruit]

Default temporal interpretation of ‘present’ or ‘immediate past’, but also interspersed in discourse about various stages of the past

- **-s ‘Remote past’**:

(18)   yole éil=e a-na^-s-ib=e?

well pig=SG.M 3SG.M.O-kill.PFV-RPST-2/3PL.AN.SBJ=INT

‘Well, did they kill the pig?’ [History of Mianmin and Telefomin]

The suffix -s ‘Remote past’ locates events in the remote past, mainly in myths and stories about the past or in actual historical accounts

- **-b ‘Imperfective’**:

(19)   met tē yomin+am=o gen-b-io=be

upriver come.PFV initiate.VN+house=N2 build.IPV-IPFV-2/3PL.AN.SBJ=DECL

‘they came upriver and were building the initiation house’ [Initiation rituals]

Default temporal interpretation of ‘present’ but can also be used for events in the past

5 ORIGIN OF S/R MEANING

**Hypothesis:** S/R markers in medial verbs are derived from the TAM markers in final verbs

5.1 The suffix -n

- originates in the homophonous realis mood marker
- marks ‘real’ status (cf. Foley and Van Valin, 1984) of an event
- remains noncommittal with respect to conjoint or disjoint subject reference in the verb of the reference clause
5.2 The suffix -b


Semantic connection:
- in final verbs, -b ‘imperfective’ indicates that action is on-going at MoS
- in medial verbs, -b indicates that an action is on-going when the next takes place (two actions are overlapping and at least partially simultaneous)

→ strong association between Imperfective aspect and simultaneity of events

Naturalness assumption:

[...] we can normally expect that actions in succession are performed by the same person, while actions that overlap are performed by different people. (Longacre, 1983: 198)

- Simultaneous actions are expected to be performed by different individuals
- -b acquired DS as an additional meaning in medial verbs

5.3 The suffix -s

- derived from a deictic tense category, namely ‘Remote past’, temporal meaning of ‘sequential’

Two issues:
- -s as a S/R marker behaves contrary to the naturalness assumption
- S/R marker meaning ‘DS, Sequential’ derived from the Remote past tense suffix? But only other choice is -b ‘Non-Hodiernal past’, which is homophonous with -b ‘Imperfective’ in final verbs and ‘DS, Simultaneous’ in medial verbs

6 Conclusion

- In contrast to the strongly grammaticalized S/R systems of the PNG Highlands languages, the Mian S/R system is less strongly grammaticalized and reminiscent of the systems found in languages of the West Papuan Highlands.
- Medial verbs look pretty much like final verbs and the forms indicating S/R and temporal structure of events are homophonous with TAM suffixes found in the same slot in final verbs.
- Mian S/R markers show some unexpected behaviour. Tracing them back to their origin, namely the homophonous forms in final verbs, sheds light on the semantic development of the S/R markers within the Mian system.
- Semantics of the TAM markers help explain and understand the function of the S/R markers

REFERENCES


