

Synchronic and diachronic aspects of verbal object representation in Amurdak

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Unlike most other Top End languages including its genetic relatives Iwaidja and Mawng, Amurdak does not cross-reference the verbal object in the verb prefix. It seems to have replaced this widespread feature by a variety of other object-marking strategies. First, an object can be realised purely externally (1). Second, an object marker *-rlu* is used, which is formally identical with the word denoting ‘body’. Particularly with animate objects the object marker is co-occurs with a possessive (usually prefixed), indicating the person (2). In addition to the possessive a *kV*-affix can precede the object marker, which is reminiscent of the *k*-reduplicative in Mawng (Singer 2006:59-60), see (3). Synchronically, this use of *-rlu* ‘body’ does not represent a case of incorporation but rather a grammaticalised object marker that probably has evolved from some kind of incorporation (compare the use of *kuk* ‘body’ in Kunwinjku, Evans 2003:462). Third, an oblique pronoun can be used, whose forms are largely cognate with those found in Mawng (4). But unlike their Mawng counterparts, Amurdak oblique pronouns always cliticise to the verb stem, suggesting a higher degree of grammaticalisation. Fourth, the applicative *-laj* (cf. Iw *ngalaj* ‘together’, M *alaj* ‘with’) is used to express an additional argument, either to transitive an otherwise intransitive verb (5) or in a ditransitive construction (6).

- (1) *andu- ran idali*
3plPFV- shoot magpie goose
‘They shot a magpie goose.’
- (2) *wara- wa- nu- rlu*
3sgPFV-punch- 2sgPOSS- obj.
‘S/he punched you’
- (3) *irran- mun-ku-rru- rlu-wurduk*
%irran-wun-ku-rru- rlu-wurduk%
3nsgFUT-kill?-nsg- obj-subj.dual
‘They (2) will kill them (du, tri or pl)’
- (4) *wa- muna-wu*
3sgPFV-say-3sgObj
‘S/he told him/her’
- (5) *jan- ja- laj* vs. *jan- jak*
away1sgFUT- go- APP 1sgFUT-go
‘I’ll get it’ (lit. ‘I’ll go for it.’) ‘I’ll go’
- (6) *yuban- ja- laj- nganu*
%yuban- yak- laj- nganu%
towards3sgFUT- go- APP- 1sgObj.
‘S/he will bring it to/for me.’

In the talk I will present a synchronic account of the formal characteristics and functional significance of these object marking strategies, focusing on the different uses of the oblique object pronoun (b) in contrast to the object maker (a). In addition, comparative and developmental aspects in the development of object realisation in Amurdak are pointed out and possible hypothesis are explored.

References

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Singer, R. (2006), *Agreement in Mawng: Productive and lexicalised uses of agreement in an Australian language*, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Linguistics, University of Melbourne