

Applicative, malefactive, negation: Innovations of the Amurdak verb

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The verb system of Amurdak (Iwaidjan, Northern Arnhem Land) shows interesting deviations in comparison to the related languages, which may be regarded as innovations. These are the applicative *-(a)laj*, the malefactive suffix set and the negation prefix *ala-*. While the applicative has formal and functional parallels in Iwaidja and Mawng, the two others do not. Its main function is to add an argument to an intransitive verb, thereby effectively transforming it into transitive verb (1a, b), which is suggested by the fact that this transitive verb can then have another oblique clitic, filling the position of the indirect object as in (1c).

- (1) a. *Yuba-* *jak.*
1sg.towards.PFV.-go
'I have come (here)'.
b. *Yuba-* *jak-(a)laj.*
1sg.towards.PFV.-go-APP
'I have **brought it**'
c. *Yuba-* *jak-(a)laj-* *nu.*
1sg.towards.PFV.-go-APP- 2sg.O_{indir}
'I have **brought it for you**'

The forms of the malefactive set are apparently complex and seem to involve the object marker *-rlu* as well as the oblique clitic, which usually signifies possession in postposed position.

- (2) a. *Am-* *balkartan-murlu.*
1sg.PFV- spill_water-3sgMAL
'I spilt the water with undesirable consequences for him/her'
b. *Am-* *barlkartan-murlunu.*
1sg.PFV- spill_water-2sgMAL
'I spilt the water with undesirable consequences for you (sg.)'

Perhaps the most intriguing innovation is the negation prefix *ala-*. As (3) shows, it seems to be invariant with respect to TAM, i.e. the aspectual/temporal information has to be inferred from the context.

- (3) *Ala-* *miyardma.*
NEG want
1. I don't want (it).
2. I didn't want (it).

Handelsmann (1991: 80) asserts that this prefix is only found only in the first person singular and that the other persons express negation with a negative particle/adverb. However, the corpus contains instances of a 3sg *alu-* and a 1nsg *alarr-*, which, if correct, could indicate a paradigm of negation prefixes being TAM insensitive. Neither Iwaidja nor Mawng possesses anything of this kind.

In the talk I will present the characteristic features of these deviations, arguing that they are to be considered Amurdak innovations rather than relics. Moreover, I will point out some implications this has for the comparative-historical perspective.

Reference

Handelsmann, R. (1991), Towards a Description of Amurdak: A language of Northern Australia, Honours Thesis, University of Melbourne