PROPERTY WORDS IN OCEANIC LANGUAGES

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Diversity Linguistics Leipzig 1-3 May 2015
Background

• Part of broader study on Oceanic word classes
• Oceanic property words: variation (Ross 1998) vs. coherence (Stassen 1997)
• Attributive/modifying vs. predicative function
• Balanced sample of 35 Oceanic languages (Bakker 2010)
Aims

• Diversity in Oceanic property word classes
  • Modification and predication

• Compare Oceanic languages with WALS data
  • WALS landmark of MPI-EVA
  • Generalizations about *predicative* ‘adjectives’ and other features:
    • Wetzer 1996 / Stassen 1997:
      Non-verbal adjectival predication ↔ Tense
      Verbal adjectival predication ↔ No tense
    • Dixon 2004:
      Non-verbal adjectival predication ↔ Dependent marking
      Verbal adjectival predication ↔ Head/zero marking
Diversity in Oceanic property words (Ross 1998)

- Function and morphological behavior
  - Modification
    - verbal (person/number indexing, TAM)
    - nominal (possessive indexing)
    - adjectival (unmarked)
  - Predication
    - verbal (person/number indexing, TAM)
    - non-verbal (either possessive indexing or unmarked)

- Often: two or more formally distinct classes of property words
Some examples (i)

- **Loniu** (Admiralty Islands; Hamel 1994: 112, 113, 181, 212)
  - Modification: some adjectival (unmarked), some nominal (poss.)

  \[ niw \quad \circk\ɛt \]
  coconut    black
  ‘black (ripe) coconut’

  \[ pw\text{a}h\text{a}\text{c}an \quad la\text{e}\text{e}\text{w}e-n \]
  road    long-3SG.POSS
  ‘long road’

- Predication: non-verbal (unmarked)

  \[ ma\text{a}-m \quad pi\text{e}n \quad cf. \quad iy \quad ilos \]
  skin-2SG.POSS white 3SG       3SG.fell
  ‘Your skin is white.’ ‘He fell.’
Some examples (ii)

- **Tawala** (Western Oceanic, Papuan Tip; Ezard 1997: 56, 28)
  - Modification: nominal (poss.)

  \[ bulumakau \text{ banei-}hi \]
  cows big-[3PL.POSS]
  ‘big cows’

  - Predication: non-verbal (poss.) or verbal (subclass)

  \[ A \text{ dewa dewadewa-na} / i\text{-dewadewa} \]
  his custom good-[3SG.POSS] 3SG.SBJ-good
  ‘His custom is good.’
Some examples (iii)

- **Kokota** (Western Oceanic, Meso-Melanesian; Palmer 2009: 94, 98)
  - Modification: mostly adjectival (unmarked), but a subclass nominal (poss.)

```
kaike namhari dou
one fish big
'a big fish'
```

```
kaike zora lehe=mu
one pig dead=2SG.POSS
'a dead pig'
```

- Predication: mostly verbal, but three items (‘wild’, ‘tame’, ‘old’) non-predicative

```
namhari ine n-e dou
fish this REAL-3SG big
'This fish is big.'
```
Some examples (iv)

- **Engdewu** (Temotu, Reefs Santa Cruz; Vaa 2013: 133, 273)

  - Modification: verbal

    \[\text{trak} \quad \text{ka}^{\text{i}} \quad \text{u-tapwa}^{\text{i}}\]
    \[\text{truck} \quad \text{REL} \quad \text{PFV.N3AUG.S/A-small}\]
    ‘a small truck’

  - Predication: verbal

    \[\text{mvatüti} \quad \text{tu-kotei-ü}^{\text{i}}\]
    \[\text{tomorrow} \quad \text{IPFV.N3AUG.S/A-good-1MIN.S/A}\]
    ‘Tomorrow I will be fine.’
Coherence in Oceanic adjectival predication (Stassen 1997: 4279f; Wetzer 1996: 276)

• “With only marginal exceptions, Austronesian [incl. Oceanic] languages can be shown to have verby encoding for predicative adjectives.”

• “The almost uniform verby nature of adjectival predicate encoding in Austronesian languages is matched by the non-tensed character of their verbal systems.”

• Universally:
  • Non-verbal adjectival predication ↔ tensed
  • Verbal adjectival predication ↔ non-tensed
  Due to time-stability (Givón 2001)

• “Tensedness”:
  • Grammatical (obligatory) category
  • Morphologically bound to main verb
  • Minimally past/non-past distinction
W/S’s generalization: WALS data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicative Adjectives</th>
<th>PAST TENSE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
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<td>Non-verbal encoding</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal encoding</td>
<td>35</td>
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</table>

- Mixed=
  - the same lexical item can “switch” between verbal and nonverbal encoding (*fluid*)
  - the set of property words is split into a subset with verbal encoding and a subset with nonverbal encoding (*split*)

→ Both occur in Oceanic languages
W/S’s generalization: WALS data PAST

Relationship between predicative adjectives and past tense

Significant correlation: p=6.508e-11 (N=127)
W/S’s generalization: Oceanic data

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W/S’s generalization: Oceanic data

Relationship between predicative adjectives and 'tensedness'

Not significant: $p=0.112$  
(N=35)
Oceanic counterexamples (i)

- Non-tensed & non-verbal adjectival prediction (N=3):
  - Hote (Western, North New Guinea; Muzzey 1979: 29, 62)
    
    \[
    \begin{align*}
    ho-yuv & \quad \text{2SG.ACT-blow} & \quad la & \quad \text{his.stomach} & \quad mavi & \quad \text{happy} \\
    \text{‘You blew/are blowing.’} & & \text{‘He is happy.’} & \text{‘You blew/are blowing.’} & \text{‘He is happy.’} & \text{‘You blew/are blowing.’} & \text{‘He is happy.’}
    \end{align*}
    \]

- Strictly: mixed languages (43%!) provide no evidence pro/con, but many non-tensed ones have a sub-class/type of non-verbal adjectival predicates:
  - e.g. Mato (Western, North New Guinea; Stober 2013: 49, 50)
    
    \[
    \begin{align*}
    long-a & \quad \ø-sabuxa & \quad haidanga=di & \quad gamata-\textbf{ding} \\
    \text{area-SPEC} & \quad 3\text{SG.S}-\text{red} & \quad \text{flower=PL} & \quad \text{green-3PL.POSS} \\
    \text{‘The area becomes red.’} & & \text{‘The flowers are green.’} & \text{‘The flowers are green.’}
    \end{align*}
    \]
Dixon’s generalization: WALS data

Dixon (2004: 33):

Non-verbal adjectival predication ↔ Dependent marking
Verbal adjectival predication ↔ Head/zero marking

Stassen 2013 (predicative adjectives) X Nichols & Bickel 2013 (locus of marking)
(N.B. = marking of nominal P, with priority for overt marking)

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<th>No marking</th>
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<td>Verbal encoding</td>
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Dixon’s generalization: WALS data

Relationship between predicative adjectives and locus of marking

Significant correlation: $p=0.004$  
(N=94)
Dixon’s generalization: Oceanic data

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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
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Dixon’s generalization: Oceanic data

Relationship between predicative adjectives and locus of marking

Not significant: p=0.299
(N=35)
Oceanic counterexamples (ii)

• Zero marking & non-verbal adjectival predication:
  • Hote again (Muzzey 1979: 35, 62)

  \[
  \text{ega} \quad \text{yanan} \quad \text{waba} \quad \text{la} \quad \text{mavi}
  \]

  3PL.carry my cargo \hspace{5em} \text{his.stomach} \hspace{5em} \text{happy}

  They carry my cargo.’ \hspace{15em} ‘He is happy.’

• Dependent marking & verbal adjectival predication:
  • North-East Ambae (Central-Eastern, Remote; Hyslop 2001: 123, 57)

  \[
  \text{Re} \quad \text{maresu} \quad \text{ra}=\text{mo} \quad \text{hua} \quad \text{na} \quad \text{mwerabuto} \quad \text{nhihie}
  \]

  PL \hspace{1em} child \hspace{1em} 3NSG=REAL \hspace{1em} find \hspace{1em} ACC \hspace{1em} devil \hspace{1em} that

  ‘The children found the devil.’

  \[
  \text{Netu-re} \quad \text{ra}=\text{u} \quad \text{biti}
  \]

  child-3SNG.POSS \hspace{1em} 3NSG=TEL \hspace{1em} small

  ‘Their children are small.’
Concluding remarks (i)

- Oceanic property words show a range of formal variation, both in modifying and in predicative function.

- Oceanic shows no direct reflection of the world-wide correlation between tensedness and adjectival predication.
  - Grammatical (non/past) tense is rare.
  - Various non-tensed languages have non-verbal adjectival predication or mixed strategies/classes.
  - Yet absence of tense ‘allows’ property words to behave verbally.
    - In some cases the same holds for even more time-stable object words (‘nouns’).
Concluding remarks (ii)

• Oceanic shows no direct reflection of the world-wide correlation between adjectival predication and locus of marking
  • Some languages with zero marking have non-verbal adjectival predication
  • Most languages with dependent marking have verbal adjectival predication

• Overall (in WALS and Oceanic) Wetzer/Stassen’s generalization receives more support than Dixon’s
  • What’s the functional motivation behind the latter?
References

• WALS chapters (Dryer, Matthew S. & M. Haspelmath (eds.), *The World Atlas of Language Structures Online*. Leipzig: Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology:

• Other references:
References to descriptive sources

- Muzzey, Marguerite. 1979. *Hote grammar essentials.* MS.