Neither real nor realis.

An alternative analysis of the Siar modality marker *k-*

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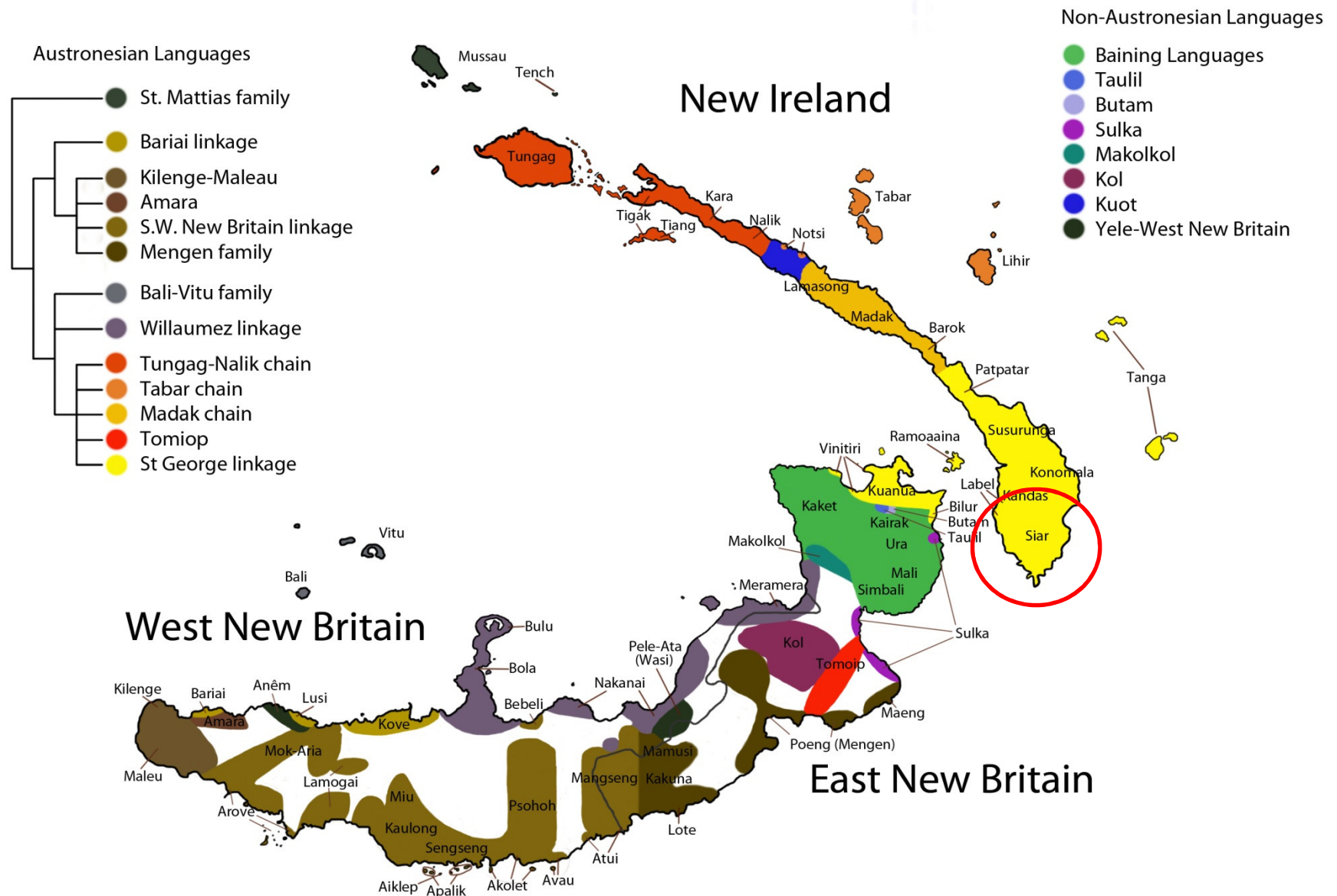Annual Conference 2012, Ukarumpa

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Overview

- 1. **The Siar language**

- 2. **Marking modality in Siar (with the "realis" prefix *k-*)**

- 3. **A critique of Erdman & Goring (1992)**

- 4. ***k-* as event focus marker**

Languages of New Ireland and New Britain, PNG

Van Der Mark (2009)

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Overview

- **3,500 speakers**
- **Austronesian**
  - **Western Oceanic**
    - **Meso-Melanesian linkage**
      - **Patpatar-Tolai subgroup**

- **Most isolated and inaccessible area in New Ireland Province (no roads, no cell phone coverage etc)**
- **Data based on fieldwork conducted between 2007 and 2010**

A definition of realis

"**realis** *adj*. A label occasionally employed to label a verb form typically used to refer to an event or a state perceived as actually occurring or having occurred, and contrasting with irrealis [...]"

(Trask 1993)

"Realis expressions are typified by the following [...]

past states	*I had a toothache.*
past perfective events	*I got the car fixed.*
present states	*I've got a toothache.*
present imperfective events	*The car's getting fixed."*

Chafe (1995: 350)

"Reality [...] has been defined here as the formal classification of a proposition or grammatical category as either actual (realis) or unrealised (irrealis), a category which cross-cuts many areas of grammar."

(Bowern 1998)

Modality in Siar

	Subject		Predicate
	A		*inan.*

'I go.'

	Subject	Irrealis	Predicate
	A	*-l*	*inan.*

'I will go.'

Modality in Siar

"Realis"	Subject		Predicate
K-	*a*		*inan.*

≈ 'I am going.'

Modality in Siar

"Realis"	Subject	Irrealis	Predicate
K-	*a*	*-l*	*inan.*

'I am about go to.'
'I will certainly go.'

"Realis" and irrealis can co-occur (which seems to be problematic for some people)

Modality in Siar

"The modals are tentatively glossed as 'eventive' and 'potential', as these labels seem to cover their function more adequately than the traditional labels 'realis' and 'irrealis'. Certainly the fact that they can co-occur in one phrase argues against the use of these terms."

(Rowe 2005: 60)

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Modality in Siar

- **The use of the "realis" and the irrealis together would make perfect sense in Siar if one wants to express immediate or certain future**

- **No complementary distribution → no valid argument against the use of the term "realis" in the case of Siar**

- **There are other factors that contradict a realis analysis**

Counterevidence for a realis analysis

- **There seems to be no grammatical requirement for *k-* to be present.**

- **It can be left out in most instances without a loss of grammaticality**

A	rak	al		usrai	pas	i	tik	ép		taim	n'a
a	rak	a-l		usrai	pas	i	tik	ép		taim$_{TP}$	n(a)=a
1.SG	want	1.SG-IRR		story	PERV	3.SG	one	NPM:COMM		time	REL=1.SG
I	want	I-will		tell.story	finish	it	one	a		time	when=I

babait.
babait
fishing
fishing

No realis marking.

'I first want to talk about how I went fishing one day.'

Counterevidence for a realis analysis

- **There seems to be no grammatical requirement for *k-* to be present.**

- **It can be left out in most instances without a loss of grammaticality, although there is at least a slight change of meaning involved.**

Ka	rak	al	usrai	ép	farum
k-a	rak	a-l	usrai	ép	far-um
REAL-1.SG	want	1.SG-IRR	tell.story	NPM:COMM	REC-hit
I	*want*	*I-will*	*tell.story*	*the*	*war*

'I want to talk about the war.'

Counterevidence for a realis analysis

- **Similar observations can be made for statements that conclude a narrative.**
    - □ *Ap **i** róp.*

      'And it's finished.'
    - □ *I sa, **k**i róp.*

      'That's it, it's finished.'

- **The presence of *k-* is not required in typical realis contexts, such as past events.**

    - □ *Labòng **a** inan **a** amrai pòl.*

      'Yesterday I went hunting pigs.'

Counterevidence for a realis analysis

- **Siar is therefore not like languages such as Manam (Lichtenberk 1983) that require the presence of the realis in specific contexts (e.g. past tense, progressive aspect etc)**

- **The use of the "realis" prefix *k-* is much more pragmatically conditioned and hence less predictable**

Erdman & Goring (1992)

"Could it be that in Siar, and perhaps other related languages, 'realis' is a misnomer, and the particle actually marks emphasis or prominence?"

(ibid. 1)

"[Realis and irrealis] may have discourse functions that differ from those typically associated with them. In particular, our study found that a particle that was initially analyzed as marking realis, actually marks 'foreground' or 'mainline' in historical narrative. 'Off-mainline' clauses are irrealis (unmarked)."

(ibid. 1)

Erdman & Goring (1992)

According to Erdman & Goring, the Siar realis prefix *k-* is used in the following contexts:

- **Semantic quotatives**
- **Logical arrangements**
- **Reiterations**
- **Elaborations**
- **Transitions**

1. Semantic quotatives

"<u>All</u> semantic quotatives [...] in the text are marked with *k*. A quotative is one of two constituents of a semantic conversation block, the other being a quotation."

(ibid. 112)

1. Semantic quotatives

unmarked for realis

Ap	*i*	*warai,*	*"Góng*	*u*	*matutut."*
ap	i	war-ai	góng	u	matutut
and	3.SG	speak-TR	PROH	2.SG	afraid

'And he said, "Don't be afraid!" '

Quotation frames marked for realis	60
Unmarked quotation frames	25

2. Logical arrangements

"[...] one event follows logically from a preceding one. [The prior] condition is usually marked with *k* and the subsequent result is not. Instead, [it is] followed by *rakana* 'thus' or 'so'."

(ibid. 113)

2. Logical arrangements

Dit warai,   *"Kawas!"*

Prior condition not marked for realis.

dit	war-ai	kawas
3.PL	speak-TR	climb

'They said, "Get in (the canoe)!" '

Na   *i*   *kawas*   **rak'a'na** ...

na	i	kawas	**rak=(l)a(r)=na**
REL	3.SG	climb	**thus**

'Thus, when he climbed inside ... (the canoe)'

Subsequent result (unmarked) + *rakana*	50
Subsequent result (realis) + *rakana*	2

2. Logical arrangements

Ép   bat   ki   an   ap   ki   pung.

ép   bat   k-i   an   ap   k-i   pung

the   rain   REAL-3.SG   go   and   REAL-3.SG   fall

'Rain came up and (started to) fall.'

Subsequent result marked for realis.

*Ép   bat   ki   pung   **rak'a'na**   ap   a   angan.*

ép   bat   k-i   pung   **rak=(l)a(r)=na**   ap   a   angan

the   rain   REAL-3.SG   fall   **thus**   and   1.SG   eat

'Thus it was raining and I was eating.'

3. Reiterations

"A semantic reiteration restates known information [...] Reiterations have the first statement marked with k, and leave the repetitions unmarked."

3. Reiterations

Ap	*na*	*ki*	*rak*	*él*	*isis*	*rak'a'na*	*ap*
ap	na	k-i	rak	é-l	is-is	rak=(l)a(r)=n-a	ap
and	REL	REAL-3.SG	want	3.SG-IRR	RED-return	want=like=DEM.[-SG]-PROX	and
and	when	he	wanted	he-will	return	thus	and

ép	*taubar*	*ki*	*wuwut.*
ép	taubar	k-i	wu-wut
NPM:COMM	southeast.trade	REAL-3.SG	RED-blow.wind
the	southeast.trade	it	blew

'So when he wanted to return the trade wind was blowing.'

marked reiteration

Taubar	*ki*	*wuwut*	*rak'a'na*	*ap*	*i*	*sòi*
taubar	k-i	wu-wut	rak=(l)a(r)=n-a	ap	i	sòi
southeast.trade	REAL-3.SG	RED-blow	want=like=DEM.[-SG]-PROX	and	3.SG	away
southeast.trade	it	blew	thus	and	he	away

sòu	*tar*	*sa*	*an*	*lón.*
sòu	tar	sa	an	ló-n
off	PERF	RESTR	at	mouth-POSS
off	first	just	at	inside-of.it

'(The) trade wind was blowing like that and he just took off with it.'

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3. Reiterations

Matò		*inan*	*ap*	*matò*		*inan*	*ap*	*matò*		*inan ...*
matò	Ø	inan	ap	matò	Ø	inan	ap	matò	Ø	inan
1.PAU.EX		go	and	1.PAU.EX		go	and	1.PAU.EX		go

'We went and went and went ...'

But: multi-iterations disfavour *k-*.

4. Elaborations

"[...] elaborations have the elaborated statement marked [for realis] and leave the elaboration unmarked."

(ibid. 115)

4. Elaborations

Uring	uring	sén	ting	ón	i	tik	ép
uring	uring	sén	t-ing	ó-n	i	tik	ép
ago	ago	EMPH	LOC-ANA	OBL-3.SG.POSS	3.SG	one	NPM:COMM
ago	ago	indeed	there	in-it	it	one	a

lakman	é		Roboam	i	kès	gau.
lakman	é		Roboam	i	kès	gau
lakman	NPM:PROP	PN		3.SG	sit	there
village	the		Roboam	he	lived	there

'Long long ago Roboam lived in a village.'

Ap	i	ding		ép	lakman	i	tik	sén	alò
ap	i	d-ing		ép	lakman	i	tik	sén	alò
and	3.SG	DEM.SG-ANA		NPM:COMM	village	3.SG	one	EMPH	again
and	it	that		the	village	it	one	yet	also

ép		bòròi	adi'gau,		ap	i	ding
ép		bòròi	a-d-i(ng)=gau		ap	i	d-ing
NPM:COMM		pig	DEX-DEM.SG-ANA=(t)here		and	3.SG	DEM.SG-ANA
a		pig	was-there=there		and	it	that

ép	lakman	i	tik	sén	alò	ép	bòròi	i	rèrè
ép	lakman	i	tik	sén	alò	ép	bòròi	i	[rèrè
NPM:COMM	village	3.SG	one	EMPH	again	NPM:COMM	pig	3.SG	HAB
the	village	it	one	yet	also	a	pig	it	used.to

yanyan	ép	tarai.
yan-yan]SVC	ép	tarai
RED-eat	NPM:COMM	men
eat	the	people

'And there was also a pig in that village, and the pig in that village used to eat the people.'

Elaborated statement
(unmarked!)

Elaboration

5. Transitions

"In a few cases, *k* seems to mark transition from one activity to another."

(ibid. 116)

5. Transitions

_N'é_	_Nelson_	_i_	_wòt_	_lar_	_na_	_ap_	_matò_
n(a)=é	Nelson	i	wòt	lar	n-a	ap	matò
REL=NPM:PROP	PN	3.SG	come	like	DEM.[-SG]-PROX	and	1.PAU.EX
when=the	_Nelson_	_he_	_came_	_like_	_this_	_and_	_we_

tutun	_pas._
tu-tun	pas
RED-cook	PERV
cooked	_first_

'When Nelson had come we finished cooking.'

Erdman & Goring (1992)

The Siar "realis" prefix *k-* is used in the following contexts:

Our findings:

- **Semantic quotatives**   - presence of *k-* seems to be <u>favoured</u>   (☑)

- **Logical arrangements**   - *rak'a'na* 'thus' disfavours *k-*   (☑)

- **Reiterations**   - single reiterations can be marked with *k-*   (☑)
       - multiple iterations disfavour *k-*

- **Elaborations**   - little effect on the presence of *k-*   ☒

- **Transitions**   - little effect on the presence of *k-*   ☒

Conclusions

"[...] it appears that the realis marker *k* indicates the outline of the story, elements that the narrator considers salient. This corresponds roughly to what has been called the "backbone" [...], "event-line" [...], "communicat[ive?] situation mainline" [...], or "foreground" [...] of the narrative. Propositions not marked with *k* are off-mainline, and elaborate the sali[ent] propositions or are predictable from them to some degree. Whether the *k* actually marks realis in other contexts, or is always a prominence marker (which may share so[me] characteristics of realis) remains to be explored."

(Erdman & Goring 1992: 117)

"The function of *k* REALIS is unclear. Erdman and Goring (n.d.) suggest that it marks verbs denoting events that belong to the event line of a narrative, but its functions must extend beyond this. In the future, it seems to mark certainty."

(Ross 2002: 421)

k- as event focus marker

- **A major critique of Erdman & Goring is that they only take narratives into consideration**

- **However, the "realis" occurs equally often (if not more often) in casual speech**

- **We should aim to find a label that covers all uses of the prefix *k-***

- **It is here proposed that *k-* puts a general pragmatic focus on the marked event/state**

k- as event focus marker

- marking "backbone events" of the narrative is then "only" a result of the more general event focus
- *k-* as an event focus marker could also explain the common use for stative verbs

  - *Ép fók k-i óngrón.*
    'I felt weak.' (lit. *My skin was lazy*.)

  - *Matò k-i bòrbòr.*
    'We were sleeping.'

k- as event focus marker

- **Or could it be something else…?**

  Your input is much appreciated!

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