THE CATEGORY `RELEVANCE' IN MENYA VERBAL MORPHOLOGY

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Abstract

This paper will examine the difference between two sets of subject cross-reference markers occurring on the verb in the Menya language of Papua New Guinea. It is proposed that the common element of meaning in all their uses is that one indicates a much higher degree of relevance of the marked clause relative to the matrix situation than does the other. The matrix situation is the speech act in some instances, and an adjacent clause in others.

0. Introduction

The Menya language is a member of the Angan Family of central Papua New Guinea and is spoken by between 13,000 and 15,000 people. The Angan Family is generally considered to be a stock-level family of the Trans-New Guinea Phylum. In common with most Papuan languages, Menya has `subject-object-verb' as its basic sentence-constituent order, and exhibits a morphological and semantic contrast between `final verbs' and `medial verbs'. Also typical of TNGP languages, the medial verbs indicate whether or not the subject of the following clause is the same as that of the marked clause.

On both morphological and semantic grounds, the final and medial verb forms can be classified as either realis or irrealis. Realis verb forms are used to encode events which are both non-future and definite, the latter term indicating that a specific, factual event or state is being predicated about a specific entity or group thereof. Irrealis verb forms, conversely, refer to events which are future or generic, where generic includes statements referring to events or states predicated of classes of entities whether timeless, or restricted to a specific time period.

The forms of the Menya verb can, therefore, be classified as in Table 1 in which one example of each is given. All examples are third person singular forms of the verb -p `come'; bold print

indicates the stressed syllable. (Stress is contrastive in Menya but not usually marked since it has a low functional load.)

	Final	Dr Medial	SR Medial
Realis	apa**qi**	pa**qaa**gi	a**pa**qe
Irrealis	**pa**tanqe	pa**qaa**gataqe	apa**ta**qe

Table 1. Basic Classification of Menya Verbs.[1]

Virtually all Menya verbs indicate the person and number of the actor/subject, using one or two of several sets of suffixes. All irrealis forms have in common a single set which is, therefore, called the irrealis person/number suffix. The most frequently occurring sets, however, are being called the associative and dissociative sets (Tables 2 and 3, respectively) and it is the purpose of this paper to differentiate between these two sets. It will be noted that, as is common in highlands Papuan languages, second and third person are not distinguished in the dual and plural.

	Singular	Dual	Plural
1person	-a	-ue	-u
2person	-n	-iny	-a
3person	-i/-a	-iny	-a

Table 2. Associative person/number suffixes.

	Singular	Dual	Plural
1person	-(qa)qa	-uea	-(qa)qu
2person	-nga	-iya	-uwa
3person	-(qa)qa	-iya	-uwa

Table 3. Dissociative person/number suffixes.

1. Realis Finals

The structure of the realis final verbs is as follows:

(assertion)-verb nucleus-tense/aspect-person/number-(mood)

It is only the associative and dissociative person/number sets which can occur in these verb forms.

The presence/absence of the assertion and mood markers is predictable, but the basis for this is beyond the scope of this paper. Tense is specified by the interaction of the person/number suffixes with the tense/aspect suffixes given in Table 4. The aspectual labels are used in accordance with the terminology established by Comrie (1976). The perfective views the event as a whole, regardless of its actual temporal complexity, whereas the imperfective focusses on internal temporal complexity. In forms using the present tense suffix (and also in different referent medials), the imperfective distinguishes between an event in progress and an unchanging state.

	Perfective	Imperfective	
		(Stative)	(Progressive)
Present	-q	-ng	-atag-ng
Past	-k	-ming	
Remote Past	-ang	-ming	

Table 4. Tense/Aspect Suffixes.

The associative suffixes, in combination with the present tense/aspect, indicate an actual situation at the same time as the speech act (i.e. proto-typical present tense) or immediately preceeding the speech act, (1) and (2) respectively. In contrast, the dissociative suffixes combine with the present tense/aspect to indicate a situation within the two or three days prior to the speech act, and with the past and remote past tense/aspects to indicate situations even more removed in time, (3) to (5).

(1) i -quaa aanga a -mat -q -a
that 3P house ASS build PR:PFV 3P:ASOC
'They are building the house.'

(2) si suaqa a -t -q -n
2S what ASS say PR:PFV 2S:ASOC
'What did you say (just now)?'

(3) i -quaa aanga a -mat -q -uwa -i
that 3P house ASS build PR:PFV 3P:DSOC INDIC
'They built the house (within the last few days).'

(4) i -quaa aanga a -mat -k -uwa -i
that 3P house ASS build PA:PFV 3P:DSOC INDIC
'They built the house (within the last ten years).'

(5) i -quaa aanga a -mat -ang -uwa -i
that 3P house ASS build RPA:PFV 3P:DSOC INDIC
'They built the house (more than ten years ago).'

It would be tempting, on the basis of this data alone, to classify the two sets of subject suffixes as present and past respectively, rather than associative and dissociative. However, a further study of these affix sets in all their uses will demonstrate that, what at first glance appear to be present and past tense indicators, prove to have a more general meaning of association or dissociation with the speech-act/matrix-situation in any of several ways.

In elicitation, forms combining associative suffixes with past or remote past tense/aspect are not acceptable. They have, however, been recorded in the natural speech of some people, specifically when they interrupt to ask a question of the narrator (6) or to remind him of some omitted information which the interrupter considers to be important (7).

(6) i -qu hingua a -u-q -n -qaangi
that 3S eye ASS 3 rub REFL ?

a -k -imaa -k -i
ASS 2S come:upon PA:PFV 3S:ASOC
'When he had looked, did he meet you (again)?'

(7) i -qu aanga huanaaqa i -qi -taa kukunga
that 3S house road that LOC from talk

a -ma-u-t -k -i
ASS ? 3 say PA:PFV 3S:ASOC
`He spoke to her from the doorway.´

In both cases, the interrupter is implying that the information he is eliciting or supplying is important (highly relevant) to the current context of understanding the story.

It has already been pointed out that the forms used to refer to a situation in present tense are also used for events completed in the immediate past (e.g. What did you say just now?). The use of the associative suffixes to encode present-tense situations is not, therefore, due to present time reference being a part of their meaning but to the fact that present-tense situations are, by nature, highly relevant to the speech act situation.

2. Irrealis Finals

There are eight distinct sets of these forms which distinguish different modalities, somewhat comparable to those encoded by the English modal verbs `can, may, will, should, must, etc.´ Morphologically, they replace the `tense/aspect-person/number´ of the realis final verbs with one of several complexes of up to five morphemes. Examples (8) to (10) illustrate some of these.

VN SJ1 nga MD

(8) iqu wongua i -a(t) -nga -taa — Intentive
he work do 3S:IR GOAL POLQ
`Will he work (soon)?´

VN SJ1

(9) ne wongua i -aan — Immediate/Imperative
1P work do 1P:1R
`Let´s work!´

q SJ1 ni MD

(10) iqu wongua i -q -a(t) -ni-i — Contrary to Fact
he work do PFV 3S:IR ? INDIC
`He would have worked.´

Example (8) uses an intentive form. These are by far the most frequent of the irrealis forms, being used to express, among other concepts, intention for the immediate future (generally up to twenty-four hours).

The forms which are of interest here are the obligatives and the futures since these are marked with the associative and dissociative suffixes, respectively, in addition to the irrealis person/number suffix.

2.1. Obligatives

Structurally, the obligatives differ from the intentives in that they add the associative suffix, after the goal suffix -nga. Semantically, they indicate a high degree of necessity, almost to the point of inevitability. They differ from the imperative forms in that the necessity is reported rather than imposed by the speaker. Example (11) is the statement of one of the wives of a man whose newly bought piglet had died on the journey to the village. The other wife had just suggested (using a first person imperative) that they cook and eat it. The speaker is not issuing a counter order but referring to the danger of eating an animal that has died of non-natural causes.

(11) yaaqueqa hakiya maa-n -qa i -aan -nqa -u -na
pig pot NEG eat NMSR do 1P:1R GOAL 1P:ASOC QT
quaa pate-aan -nqa -u -na
ground dig 1P:1R GOAL 1P:ASOC QT
'We can't cook and eat the pig. We must bury it.'

These forms are also used to encode inevitable consequences. In (12), the consequence arises from natural laws; in (13), the inevitability arises more from knowledge of human nature.

(12) bia a -n -m -aqe qeqa qui n -imak-a(t) -nqa
beer ASS eat 1S/1R SR liver bad 1S make 3S/1R GOAL
-i -ya
3S/ASOC QT
'If I drink beer, my liver will be destroyed.'

(13) "quaanqa t -a(t) -nqa -i -ya" a -t -q -i
lie say 3S:1R GOAL 3S:ASOC QT ASS say PR:PFV 3S:ASOC
`HE(i) said "He(j)'s sure to lie".'

In (13) the speaker is a local official who has just reported to `he(j)' an accusation of theft made by `he(i)' against him(j); `he(j)' has denied the charge and (13) is the official's response to the denial.

Consistently, when an associative person/number suffix is used in an irrealis form, the degree of probability for realisation of the situation is so high that it can be treated as certainty. By employing both the irrealis and associative person/number suffixes, Menya captures both the lack of actualisation and the inevitability of actualisation.

2.2. Futures

Two sets of future verb forms are presently treated simultaneously because it is difficult to distinguish between them semantically. Following the irrealis person/number suffixes, a suffix -ni and a second person/number suffix, the dissociative, occurs. The two sets differ in the presence and absence of the goal suffix -nqa following the dissociative suffix. (The -ni reduces to n before u and to zero before ng or after ny, but even then the forms are still distinct from other irrealis forms.) Both sets of forms indicate that the situation predicated is to occur beyond the immediate future.

(14) nyi hikua i -que tau-m -ni-qaqa -i -qa
1S lime that 3S cut 1S:1R ? 1s:DSOC INDIC QT
kangua u-i -qaag -i
thought 3 do DR:PFV 3S:ASOC
`Because he thinks "I will cut a lime tree",...'

(15) si qanaaki yaa-imaa-t -ni-nga -nqa
2S later 1D meet 2S:IR ? 2S:DSOC GOAL
ye aawingaa y -e -nqa -i
1D tomorrow go:up 1D:IR GOAL INDIC
`You will come to us later, we're going up tomorrow.'

(16) maataasinaqa, tanga yaaqa yaa-i -qaag -gaa -ngi
medicine pain sick 1D do DR:PFV time GVN
ye-na n -e -ni-uea -qa
1D FCS eat 1D:IR ? 1D:DSQC QT
'As for medicine, when we're in pain, we will take it.'

It is instructive to compare (16) with (12) since both are indefinite as to when in the future the events will take place. The inevitability of (12) overrides the temporal remoteness and, therefore, the associative suffix is used. (Associatives and dissociative are mutually exclusive.)

3. Different Referent Medials

The third and final use of the associative/dissociative distinction pertains to the different referent medials. Structurally, DR medials are very similar to realis finals, making the same aspectual distinctions with closely related forms, and using the same two sets of person/number suffixes. They differ from realis finals in that they do not make tense distinctions or indicate mood but do incorporate a marker of different referent medial (-aag).

The use of the associative/dissociative suffix sets on DR medials contrasts a close logical (eg. cause-effect) relationship between two clauses, with a strictly temporal (perhaps only by default) relationship between them. This difference parallels Jakobson's distinction (1971:141) between consequential and non-consequential 'taxis' which he elaborates as 'signalling an internal connection' as opposed to 'without implying internal connection'. This does not mean that no internal or non-temporal connection exists when the dissociative suffixes are used, but that such connection is not overtly signalled. Indeed, there are situations where either form is acceptable and there are instances of near 'minimal pairs' where it is difficult to assert on what basis the speaker chose the form to use.

(17) yahinguata-ngi i -qu wongua-nqa yaa-t -qaag -i
morning GVN that LOC work GOAL 1D say DR:PFV 3S:ASOC

wongua-nqa a -p -y -k -uea -i
work GOAL ASS come go:up PA:PFV 1D:DSOC INDIC
'In the morning, he spoke to us about work so we went up to work.'

Here, the two events are in temporal sequence and the speaker could have used the form of the verb with the dissociative suffix -yaataqaagaqagaa, '1D-say-DR/PFV-3S/SDOC-time', 'after he had spoken to us'; however, the speaker is emphasizing the strong, though not binding, causal relationship between the two clauses. Contrast this with (18) where there is also a speech and a resultant action but in which the dissociative form is used.

(18) "eena!" naa-t -qaag -qaqa -gaa
come! 1P say DR:PFV 3S:DSOC time

ne qe a -timau -qaqu -i
1P CESS ASS come:to 1P:DSOC INDIC
'When he said "Come!" to us, we came (to him).'

Given that there is overlap where the speaker's choice of emphasis is the deciding factor, there are also cases where the semantic relationship dictates which form is used.

(19) napayaqa-i -u a -pamaa-k -uea -i
shade DEF LOC ASS be PA:PFV 1D:DSOC INDIC

i -que-qa suka suwa e -n -qaag -i
that 3S POSS foot shoe put REFL DR:PFV 3S:ASOC
'We stopped in the shade - for him to put his shoes on.'

In (19), the medial clause is right dislocated and is given as an afterthought explanation of their stopping. Though the right dislocation places the events in chronological order, this neither necessitates the construction nor is the motivation for choosing it. This is evidenced in (20) where the right dislocated clause does not refer to a subsequent event. Rather, it is the objective complement of the sensory verb. (For both these sentences, this ordering is marked, the norm being for the medial clause to precede the final.)

(20) hingua a -u-q -n -k -qaqa -i
eye ASS 3 strike REFL PA:PFV 3S:DSOC INDIC
baalusi yeya quyep -qaag -i
plane above descend DR/PFV 3S/ASOC
'He saw that the plane was descending from above.'

Whereas in (17) and (19) the relationship between the clauses is cause-effect, in (20) it is not clearly so. While one could argue that the plane's approaching caused the seeing, the internal association here is the fact of the plane's coming being the object of the 'seeing'.

In (21), the relationship is different again. Here, the two predications represent the parallel activities of two parts of a group that has been divided.

(21) amaaqa hun-quaa m -ngi taqau-ataag -a
man a 3P down LOC stand DR:IPFV 3P:ASOC
ne hun-quone qe a -p -y -q -qaqu -i
1P a 1P CESS ASS come go:up PR:PFV 1P:DSOC INDIC
'Some men went below and we others went up.'

Whereas different referent medials with associative subject suffixes encode a variety of close relationships between the marked clause and the one to which it is related, those with dissociative suffixes indicate a less integral relationship. They are the more frequent, being used to encode the normal sequence of events in a story whenever the topical entity changes. They cannot be moved out of chronological order; even if the two situations predicated overlap in time, the one which began first must precede.

(22) a -w-ima -qaag -uea -gaa i -qu
ASS 3 come:upon PFV:DR 1D:DSOC time that 3S
qaaqa a -yaa-taap-k -qaqa -i
taro ASS 1D give PA:PFV 3S:DSOC INDIC
'After we came upon him, he gave us some taro.'

(23) i -quaaqu kukunga t -ataq-ataag -iya -gaa
that 3D talk say PRGV DR:IPFV 3D:DSOC time
nyi yuquaaya a -maa-w -m -at-m
1S baggage ASS get go 1S:IR ? 1S:IR
i -ming -qaqa -i
do PA:IPFV 1S:DSOC INDIC
'While they two were talking, I was going to bring the baggage.'

An alternative interpretation of the two medial forms under consideration here is that one (that employing the associatives suffixes) encodes coordination and the other subordination. The evidence in favour of this analysis comes largely from the fact that the latter are almost always further suffixed with the temporal clitic -gaa (cf. ta-gaa 'now/today') and this is, frequently, followed by the suffix -ngi which indicates givenness. Further investigation is needed to verify or negate this possibility.

Whichever analysis is correct, however, the overall category of 'relevance' still fits. If the syntactic distinction is correct, the associative is used for coordination - clearly a closer relationship. If the semantic distinction elaborated here is correct, then the associative marks the closer logical connection.

4. Conclusion

The varying uses of the associative and dissociative person/number suffixes have been described and explanations given for the analysis proposed. It remains to bring these various explanations together re-emphasising the common element while, at the same time, recognising the variations. This can, perhaps, best be presented in table form:

	Associative	Dissociative
Realis Final -present T/A	proposition at same time as or just before speech time	proposition up to 2 or 3 days before speech time
Realis Final -past T/A	high relevance of information; worthy of interruption	proposition more than 2 or 3 days before speech time
Irrealis Final	virtual inevitability or necessity of future proposition	proposition more than 24 hours later than speech time
DR Medial	logical (non-temporal) relationship between marked and matrix clauses either strong or worthy of special note in speaker's estimation	logical (non-temporal) relationship between marked and matrix clauses neither strong nor worthy of special note in speaker's estimation

Table 5. Summary of Uses of Relevance Suffixes.

Thus, while the basis for relevancy, and the matrix situation, vary from one context to another, in each case, the propositions encoded using the associative suffixes are more closely related, more highly relevant, to their matrix situation.

NOTES

1. Following is the key to the abbreviations used in this paper:

ASOC	associative	PA	past
ASS	assertion	PFV	perfective
CESS	cessative	POLQ	polar question marker
D	dual	POSS	possessive
DEF	definite	PR	present
DR	different referent	PRGV	progressive
DSOC	dissociative	QT	quote marker
FCS	focus	REFL	reflexive
GVN	given	RPA	remote past
INDIC	indicative	S	singular
IPFV	imperfective	SJ1	first subject cross reference
IR	irrealis	SR	same referent
LOC	locative	T/A	tense/aspect

MD	mood	VN	verb nucleus
NEG	negative	1	first person
NMSR	nominaliser	2	second person
P	plural	3	third person.

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VIEWPOINT IN OKSAPMIN

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0. Introduction.

Oksapmin[1] seems to go out of its way to mark viewpoint in certain narrative discourses. In these discourses the speaker actually marks from whose viewpoint or perspective a story is being told by the tense ending on sentence final verbs. In this paper I describe the morphological marking of viewpoint along with related considerations an Oksapmin speaker has to keep in mind when using it. Although viewpoint as described here has been discussed elsewhere (H. Lawrence 1972; M. Lawrence ms, 1972a, 1972b), it has not received the full treatment it deserves.

Before describing viewpoint in Oksapmin I will discuss two other aspects of Oksapmin grammar. The first of these is the distinction made between firsthand information and secondhand information. The second is the distinction made between perception by sight and perception through another sense. A brief description of these will provide a context in which to better understand viewpoint in Oksapmin.

1. Firsthand Information versus Secondhand Information.

Oksapmin distinguishes between information which originates with the speaker--information about things which he has experienced, observed, or thought out--(firsthand information) and information which he has received from someone else (secondhand information). Firsthand information is unmarked; secondhand information is marked by the clitic -ri attached to the end of each sentence. The clitic -ri comes from the verb ri `say' (but with no inflection) and carries the meaning "I am telling you something which has been told