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MEDIAL VERBS

by Donald R. Davis

"One of the characteristics of the languages of the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea is the distinction between utterance medial and utterance final forms of the verb (Wurm. 1962). Since the verb usually contains in its internal structure the obligatory clause level elements (subject and predicate), and because of the formal differences between the non-final and final verbs, it is possible to describe the various types of clauses in sequence by reference to the characteristics of the verb in each clause.

"The clauses in the sequence differ from each other depending first on whether the subject is the same for both clauses, or is different, and second on the kind of sequence involved. If different subjects are involved in the sequence, a morpheme is included in the verb of the first clause to anticipate the subject to come. The verb in such cases also contains a contrastive set of tense-aspect/person/number portmanteaus. This set of portmanteaus also occurs even if the subjects are the same if the non-final clause is dependent for its occurrence on another clause in the environment. Another set of tense-aspect/person/number affixes occurs with verbs which are in the final clause of the sequence."¹

1. This quote was taken from McKaughn, "Sequences of Clauses in Tairora", Oceanic Linguistics, Vol. V No 1. (1966).

McKaughn gives the following Tairora examples for clauses in series, same subject; clauses in series, different subject:

ne-ro	bi-ro
eat-3rd Anticipatory	go-3rd Subj.
"He ate and went."	
na-iba-ro	bi-ro
eat-3rd Subj.-3rd Anticip.	go-3rd Subj.
"He ate, and (another)	he went."

Other Tairora examples of clauses in sequential, inclusive, simultaneous, impending and other relations all have the same structure as the above examples. They differ only in the morphemes which indicate these various relations.

MV1

"A distinctive set of portmanteau suffixes indicate the tense, person and number of the medial verb. The tense-person-number suffix is followed by an anticipatory suffix which indicates a change of subject in the following construction. Medial forms are thus used whenever there is a change of subjects between constructions which are included within a larger construction. The subject anticipated by the medial verb is generally redundantly marked in the following verb which in turn may be medial in anticipation of a following construction with subject change."

"The anticipatory subject indicator occurring with medial verbs indicates the person and number of the subject to follow."²

2. This quote was taken from Vincent, "Tairora Verbs", Studies in New Guinea Linguistics, U.S. 1962.

Vincent gives the following examples, some of which do not show the same set of affixes for medial anticipatory subject as for final subject:

t-i-manta	ir-unara
speak-3rd Subj. past-1st S. Antic. Past	hear-1st Perf.
"He spoke, and I heard."	

t-ira- ² e	iri-rera
speak-1st Subj. Fut-1st S. Antic. Fut.	hear-1st Fut.
"He will speak, and I will hear."	

t-iba-ra	iri-ra
speak-3rd. Subj. past-2nd S. Anticip.	hear-2nd past.
"He spoke, and you heard."	

t-iba-ro	iri-ro
speak-3rd Subj. past-3rd S. Antic.	hear-3rd past.
"He spoke, and he (another) heard."	

A chart of the anticipatory subject suffixes in Tairora shows only five forms in all:

	past/far past	future
1st S.	-manta	- ² e
2nd S.		-ra
3rd S.		-ro
1st Pl.		
2nd Pl.	-manta	#
3rd Pl.		

Goddard³ refers to Agarabi medial verb "preview subject markers": "When the subject of the first clause is different from that of the next clause, there is some indication in the verb of the first clause to show both its subject and

3. Goddard, "Agarabi Narratives and Commentary", Pacific Linguistics, Series A - Occasional Papers No. 13, ANU (1967)

that of the following clause. If the subject of both clauses are the same, the verb of the first clause is not marked for its subject, but it has a "preview subject marker."

Tairora and Agarabi are two of many New Guinea languages which use some sort of anticipatory or preview subject marking device in dependent clauses. But this is not the only type of medial verb constructions which are found in New Guinea languages.

Deibler gives some examples of Gahuku medial dependent verbs which indicate simply "same actor in the next clause", or "different actor in the next clause", and distinguish between past and future tense.⁴

4. Deibler, "The Application of Matrix to Gahuku Verbs", Linguistic Circle of Canberra Publications, Series A - Occasional Papers No. 3, (1964)

huk-a-ke....
cut-he-when "After he cut it, (he)..." (same subject)
huk-a-go....
cut-he-then "After he cut it (someone else)..."
huk-o-ko
cut-he-and "After he cuts it (he will)..." (same subject)
huk-i-ko
cut-he-and "After he cuts it (someone else will)..."

In Gahuku there is no anticipatory subject; nothing but the subject of the first verb and an indication that the subject of the next verb is either the same or different.

This is essentially the system found in Wantoat where the term "medial verb" arises out of a contrast between those forms which constitute the nucleus of dependent clauses, and those which constitute the nucleus of independent clauses. Features of affixation as well as of location in the sentence distinguish "medial" verbs from "final" verbs.

In order to clearly see this distinction between "medial" and "final" verbs some examples will first be given with the verb stem ku- "go" and representatives of all the affix sets which occur in Wantoat when the verb is in the utterance-final position.

ku-t go-1st S. Completed (same day) "I went."
ku-ga-t go-contin-1st S. Compl. (same day) "I am going."
ku-ku-m go-past-1st S. Compl. (same day) "I went."
ku-wi-t go-future-1st S. Compl. (same day) "I will go."
ku-wam go-1st S. subjunctive "I shall go."
ku-yat go-1st S. neg. subjunctive "I shouldn't go."
ku-ng go-2nd S. strong imperative "Go!"
ku-yo go-2nd S. request "Go"
ku-ya go-2nd S. interrogative. "Will you go?"

"Medial" verbs are affixed for sequential and/or causal types of relationships between the event referred to by the verb to which they are suffixed and the event referred to by the verb of the succeeding clause.

In Wantoat there are two types of affixes which occur in dependent clauses: one type indicates actor person and number, and signals that the actor person of the next clause will be someone else. These suffixes denote a causal relationship in certain contexts. In the following examples the verb stem ku- "go" will be used as in the previous examples with the "final" suffixes, and the verb stem na- "eat" will be shown with the set of "medial" verb suffixes described in this paragraph:

na-pa ku-k eat-I go-he "I ate, and he went." or
"Because I ate he went."

na-pi ku-k eat-you go-he "You ate, so he went."

na-wa ku-k eat-he go-he "He ate, so he(another)went."

na-ta ku-k eat-we(two) go-he "We two ate, so he went."

na-na ku-k eat-we(pl) go-he "We all ate, so he went."

Future tense in the independent clause is used to indicate a different kind of relation between the two clauses:

na-ta ku-wi-k eat-we (two) go-fut-he "Let's us two
eat so he'll go."

na-na ku-wi-k eat-we (pl) go-gut-he "Let's us all eat
causing him to go."

The second type of "medial" suffixes indicate various kinds of sequential relationships with the event of the succeeding clause, and they signal that the actor person is the same as of the next one. Examples will use the two stems na- "eat" and ku- "go".

na-yuk ku-k eat-simult. go-3rd S.
"As he was eating he went."

na-ku ku-k eat-immediate sequence go-3rd S.
"He ate and went."

na-ke ku-k eat-punct. sequence go-3rd S.
"He ate and (then) went."

na-sika ku-k eat-contin. sequence go-3rd S.
"He kept on eating and (then) he went."

The last two examples may be modified by the suffix -nga to indicate that the prior action was completed before the next one was begun.

na-ke-nga ku-k eat-punct. seq.-prior go-3rd S.
"After having eaten he went."

na-sika-nga ku-k eat-cont. seq.-prior go-3rd S.
"After having eaten for awhile he went."

This completive suffix also occurs with the first type of medial suffixes, as in na-wa-na ku-k eat-1st. S. change of actor-prior go-3rd S. "After I finished eating he went."

In running text the two types of medial verbs are used to avoid the redundant use of free subjects while not mixing up the identification of each verb's subject. In the following simplified excerpt from a Wantoat folk tale each medial suffix is underlined, and the subscripts "s" and "d" indicate whether the verb indicates that the next actor is same or different.

Wapu aminda umuke_s aipnage_s yawaking.
 Wapu people ambushing wanting-to-massacre they-followed-them.
 "Some Wapu people, wanting to ambush and massacre them followed them.

Yawaban_d kudu datakuwawa_d tapatusimu
 They-followed-them some they-kept-on-escaping one
 "As they followed them some were escaping, and one (of them)
 tawagawan_d kuwan_d tawagawan_d dame.....
 they-chased-him he-went they-chased-him cliff-face
 they chased him, and he went as they kept on chasing him, and
 pimakut.
 he fell Tapu_s tanguwand
 he fell down a cliff face. Taking-him they-hit-him and
 he took and hit him,
 kupan_d..... gwaamuke_s take_s kuking.
 he-died carrying-him-(on shoulders) taking-him they-went.
 and he died.... and they carried him away(on their shoulders).

In this text the first final verb yawaking is immediately followed by a medial form of the same verb, yawaban. This is a device for changing the actor allowing for no ambiguity. Some ambiguity is allowed for when the final verb is not thus repeated, as in the second final verb, pimakut. Here we find that the next verb is tapu a "same actor" medial form of a different stem. The one who fell (pimakut) is not the same one(s) who took (tapu), and the next verb after tapu has the same actor as tapu itself.

It is interesting to note that in the first line of this text the medial form datakuwawa "they were escaping" is followed by tapatusimu "one person" which is the object of the next verb, tawagawan "they chased him", and the subject of the verb after that, kuwan "he went". This is all handled by the use of the medial verbs in correct order.

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Tairora, Agarobi (Eastern Family) and Gahuku (East-Central Family) are spoken in the Eastern Highlands District of the Territory of New Guinea. Wantoat is spoken in the Morabe District, and belongs to the Kâte stock.