

Possessors into beneficiaries: How indirect and predicative possessive constructions encode beneficiaries in Ata, a Papuan language of New Britain

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Abstract

The seminar will show how possessive structures in Ata can be analysed in terms of “possessive-benefactive connection” (Lichtenberk 2002, Margetts 2001). Constructions in concern are possessive, benefactive, applicative, prepositional phrase, and possessive-benefactive, which will be illustrated below:

- Possessive constructions:
 Ata has two types of direct possessive constructions (which I refer to as food and non-food possessives), as well as indirect possessive constructions (illustrated in 1, 2). Both constructions can be used predicatively (illustrated in 3).
- Post verbal constructions:
 - Benefactive clitics (illustrated in 4a, 4b)
 - Applicative clitics (illustrated in 4c)
 - Prepositional (illustrated in 4d)
- Possessive-benefactive constructions:
 Direct possessive constructions which are predicatively used (3a,3b) and indirect possessive construction (2a, 2b, 3c) can appear in verbal clauses to encode “new, intended, prospective possessors” (Lichtenberk 2002) or, equivalently, “future possession or benefaction” (Margetts 2001), as beneficiaries, if either possessor or possessum phrase is absent (illustrated in 5).

Possessive-benefactive constructions in post verbal position show a resemblance to structures in which benefactive, applicative and prepositional structures appear. This may indicate an ongoing change from possessive to benefactive.

- (1) Direct possessive construction:
- a. Food possessive:
sie +xo
 taro my
 “my taro” (for me to eat)
 - b. Non-food possessive:
sie +xeni
 taro my
 “my taro” (for me not to eat but to keep)

(2) Indirect possessive construction:

- a. *anu na -qu lauvi*
 he POSS his yam
 “his yam”
- b. *ia -u na -qu qolu*
 uncle his POSS his son
 “his uncle’s son” ([He₂ is] his₁ uncle’s son.)
- c. Prepositional:
tani no -xilo
 house PREP my
 “my house”

(3) Predicative use:

- a. Direct food possessive:
Eni xaiva +xo.
 I Malay apple my
 “It’s my Malay apple.” (The Malay apple is mine and I want to eat it.)
- b. Direct non-food possessive:
Eni mii +xeni.
 I thing my
 “It’s mine.” (I want to keep it.)
- c. Indirect possessive:
Eni naqa -xeni vuqa.
 I POSS my betel nut
 “I have betel nut.”

(4) Post verbal constructions:

- a. Food benefactive:
i- no -qu +xenixo sie o.
 3SG.F.A.IMPF get 3SG.M.O 1SG.FBEN taro EMPH
 “She gets taro for me (to eat).”
- b. Non-food benefactive:
a- no -qu +xenixeni kopu.
 1SG.A.IMPF get 3SG.M.O 1SG.NFBEN cucumber
 “I will get a cucumber for myself (to keep).”
- c. Applicative:
u- lutu +li +xe molosila.
 3SG.M.A.IMPF leave APPL 3SG.F.O spirit(f)
 “The boy leaves with the spirit.”

d. Prepositional:

la mi- iave mi- lai no -xou
 CC.CRN 3SG.F.S.PERF run 3SG.F.S.PERF go PREP 3SG.M.GEN
mulu -e.
 male 3SG.F.GEN
 “and she runs and goes to her husband.”

(5) Possessive-benefactive:

a. Direct possessive:

na- qele +sou eni+xo u-
 2SG.A.IMPF pick 3SG.M.O.ITERAT FOOD 3SG.M.S.IMPF
luqe.
 move down
 “Pick foodstuff and drop it down!”

b. Indirect possessive:

mi- lave +nu na -qa uaxa qo xe
 3NSG.A.PERF pull 3SG.M.O POSS 3NSG.GEN canoe PROX CC.SML
mi- lutu.
 3NSG.S.PERF leave
 “They launched their canoe and took off.”

References

- Lichtenberk, F. (2002). The possessive-benefactive connection. *Oceanic Linguistics*, 41(2):440–474.
- Margetts, A. (2001). From implicature to construction: grammaticalization from possession to benefaction in oceanic languages. Paper presented at the 15th International Conference on Historical Linguistics, 13-17 August, La Trobe University, Melbourne.