Squibs, Notes and Discussion

Object Classifying Morphemes in Sudest

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1. Introduction

Like other languages in the Papuan Tip cluster, Sudest\(^1\) exhibits noun count classifiers (see Senft 1986 for a presentation of noun count classifiers in Kilivila). Sudest is unique among the languages of the Papuan Tip cluster, however, in that it includes a small number of morphemes which appear to be classifiers of objects which are moved or transferred. In section 2 of this paper, I briefly illustrate noun count classifiers. Then in section 3 I present a brief account of the object classifying morphemes.

2. Noun Count Classifiers

Most countable nouns in Sudest can be divided into 25 or more classes on the basis of the noun count classifier they take for the purposes of counting and forming number descriptions and questions. These groups are correlated more or less with semantic criteria. For example, the nouns representing the items in a bundle (any bundle), coral, things loosely

\(^1\) Sudest is spoken by the 2000 people living on Sudest (Tagula) Island in the southern part of Milne Bay Province in Papua New Guinea. Ross (1988:191-92) classifies Sudest as part of the Kilivila-Louisiades network of the Peripheral Papuan Tip network. Sudest and Nimoa are the only two languages in the Kilivila-Louisiades network not part of the Kilivila chain. There are several mutually intelligible dialects within the language area. The dialect discussed in this paper represents the central dialect as spoken in Pamela village on the south coast of Sudest Island. Data for this paper was collected between May 1986 and April 1991.

packed in bags, some loosely woven items, items with many parts, etc, all belong to the
counting class which utilizes the classifier mbamba.

Some nouns, because of different senses of meaning, can be associated with more than
one class. An example is the noun kunumwana ‘banana’. This same word is used to refer
to the individual banana, the plant or sucker, the hand, part of a hand, or a bundle. The use
of classifiers with various senses of the word kunumwana ‘banana’ is illustrated by the
examples in (1).

1) kunumwana umbo-lima
   kunumwana uye-ra
   kunumwana thara-e-iwo na thara-iwo
   kunumwana mbanggwa-to
   kunumwana mbamba-wona

   ‘five individual bananas’
   ‘one plant, sucker’
   ‘twenty-two hands’
   ‘three part-hands of bananas’
   ‘six bundles of plants’

Some countable nouns do not fall into one of the 25 generic count classes. Instead, the
noun itself is used where the count classifier would be found. Thus each of these nouns is
itself a specific counting classifier. There are far more specific counting classifiers than
generic counting classifiers.

The basic formula for noun classifiers in Sudest is:
(Noun) + Classifier + Number/Question word

Following are examples which show noun count classifiers in different environments.²

2) Ghen, len-kamwathi kamwathi-viye?
   2sPRN 2sPS3-road NC-how many
   ‘You, how many are your roads?’

3) I-dage-we, i-nga, “Kamwathi-yaworo.”
   3sS-say-to 3sS-say NC-ten
   ‘He said to him, “Ten.”’

²Abbreviations
2sPRN 2nd Sing Free Pronoun
1sS 1st Sing Subject Marker
2sS 2nd Sing Subject Marker
3sS 3rd Sing Subject Marker
1pxS 1st Plur Excl Subject Marker
3pS 3rd Plur Subject Marker
3sSIP 3rd Sing Subject Marker, Immed Past
1sO 1st Sing Object Marker
3sO 3rd Sing Object Marker
3pO 3rd Plur Object Marker
3sPS1 3rd Sing Poss Class 1 (inalienable)
3pPS1 3rd Plur Poss Class 1 (inalienable)
3sPS2 3rd Sing Poss Class 2 (food/clothing)
1sPS3 1st Sing Poss Class 3 (controllable)
2sPS3 2nd Sing Poss Class 3 (controllable)
1pxPS3 1st Plur Excl Poss Class 3 (controllable)
2Ref Deictic Reference Close to the Hearer
Ref Deictic Reference to Previous Known Info
?? Pointer (?) used with PS1
ACC Accompaniment
FP Far Past (before yesterday)
FUT Future
INSTR Instrument
LOC Locative morpheme
NC Noun Classifier
OC Object Classifier
OF Object (?) Focus
PL Plural
UNCER Uncertainty
4) *Kaero i-longwe eun-iwo-ko thi-vaviri.*
   already 3S-hear NC-two-that 3S-laugh
   'Then he heard those two (ladies) laugh.'

5) *Bwadībwadi voghi-vari thi-voro e-mbHwa-ma Ṛwata.*
   coconut NC-four 3S-move.up LOC-water-Ref top
   'Four coconuts came to the surface of the water.'

6) *Theghathegha mbe umbo-iwo-engge.*
   harvest still NC-two-just
   'For just two years.'

   April 3SPS2-week NC-one and NC-two-??-3PS1 LOC-inside
   'During the first and second weeks of April.'

8) *Jack mbe gougou-ra-engge i-ghambwera.*
   Jack still NC-one-just 3S-sick
   'Jack was sick just one (night).'

9) *i-voro i-ki-gana Raunji e-bwana-ma bwana-yaworo*  
   3S-move.up 3S-INST-fence Raunji LOC-shelf-Ref NC-ten
   na bwana-iwo-nil-nji.
   and NC-two-??-3PS1
   'He went up and closed Raunji in the twelfth shelf.'

3. Object Classifying Morphemes

In addition to the noun count classifiers, Sudest includes a small number of object classifying morphemes. These appear in constructions in which the object classifier (OC) classifies or broadly describes the object which is transferred or moved according to the action of the following verbal component. The object may be overt or not. The form of the construction of the verb is:

Subject Marker + Object Classifier $\pm$ Verb $\pm$ Object Marker

In this formula the verb is also given as optional, since there are several examples where the verb is absent. The OC then acts like a verb.

The following are the commonly used OCs.

- *wo/-mban-* are used to indicate an object which refers to a solid, relatively heavy item like a pig, knife, sweet potato, fish, stick, or person. *wo-* marks a singular object, as illustrated in (12-13), while *mban-* marks a plural object, as illustrated in (14).
12) *I-wo-giya kaina laghiye we-nggo.*
\[3sS-OC-give knife big to-1sO\]
‘He gives me a big knife.’

13) *Kaero i-wo-beku levo e-nggolo tine.*
\[already 3sS-OC-bury his.wife LOC-house inside\]
‘He already buried his wife under the house.’

14) *Va i-mban-giya mbombo.*
\[FP 3sS-OC-give pig\]
‘He gave pigs.’

-li-/langa- are used to indicate an object which refers to a long, thin, light, or empty item like a cloth, a leaf, a paper, a string, or an empty basket. -li- marks a singular object, as illustrated in (15-16), while -langa- marks a plural object, as illustrated in (17).

15) *I-li-vairu nambo.*
\[3sS-OC-lift.up basket\]
‘He lifts up a basket.’

\[UNCER-FUT 1sS-OC-move.out-OF NC-one then 2sS-see\]
‘Sometime I will get one (paper money) out, then you will see.’

17) *Me-langa-rawe kwame e-nakanaka.*
\[3sSIP-OC-put cloth LOC-veranda\]
‘She put (the) clothes on the veranda.’

-thagha- is used to indicate an object which refers to a tool that is swung by a handle, like an axe, mattock, or adze, as illustrated in (18).

18) *Ya-thagha-ruwo lo-kelumo.*
\[1sS-OC-put.in 1sPS3-axe\]
‘He puts in my axe.’

-thim- is used to indicate an object which refers to an item which contains something, like a full basket, a deck of cards, a cup with water; or a single item made up of several parts, like a book or a table, as illustrated in (19).

19) *U-thim-men kofi.*
\[2sS-OC-come coffee\]
‘You bring coffee (in a cup).’

-bigi- is used to indicate an object which refers to a group of items, made up of several, usually different, parts, as illustrated in (20-22).
20) *Thi-bigini-njaniya* kaina, buk, na pensil.
3PS-OC-put.down knife book and pencil
‘They put down the book, knife and pencil.’

3sS-finish 1pxS-OC-move.back LOC-plane-the inside
‘(When that was) finished, we moved (them, the cargo) back into the
plane.’

22) *Ya-mena ya-ruku-bigigiya* Tagula e-station.
1sS-come 1sS-run-OC-give Tagula LOC-station
‘I came and ran and gave them to (the people at) Tagula station.’

*tako-* is used to indicate a plural object which refers to an item which is long, thin, contains
many pieces, or contains many parts but includes “take” in the meaning, as illustrated
in (23-24).

23) *I-tako-giya mbuhga-mbugha thi-waidi.*
3sS-OC-give PL-dog 3PS-hunt
‘He took the dogs and they went hunting.’

3sS-OC-move.across-3pO-OF children-Ref ACC-3PS1 mother-3PS1
‘It (the flood) carried the children with their mother away.’

*tara-* is used to indicate an object which refers to a mass or uncountable item, including
water, rice, food pieces or leftovers, etc, as illustrated in (25).

2sS-OC-throw leftover-2Ref
‘Throw out those leftovers.’

Some of these object classifying morphemes may well be verbs, as the following
examples appear to demonstrate. In these examples, the verbal meanings of the OCs are
given in parentheses in the gloss.

26) *Thi-gita kin-kin thi-wo-nggo na thi-wo-ra-nggo e-umbwa*
3PS-pull.out PL-spear 3PS-OC-1sO and 3PS-OC-put-1sO LOC-tree
mboro-wa-e.
trunk-??-3PS1
‘They pulled out the spears, they (carried) me and put me on the trunk.’
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   1pxS-OC-OF 1pxPS3-PL-thing 1pxS-fly-OC airstrip
   ‘We (got) our things and we quickly (carried them) to the airstrip.’
28) Ya-njogha ya-thīm lo-nambo.
   1sS-move.back 1sS-OC 1sPS3-basket
   ‘I went back and (got) my basket.’
29) I-voro i-wo gaeba na i-mban gha-nji we.
   3sS-move.up 3sS-OC dish and 3sS-OC food-3pPS1 there.
   ‘She went up, (got) a dish and (put) their food there.’

References

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A note on Hees’ ‘Tolai-Nakanai’ trade language

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In the 1915-16 volume of Anthropos Fr Friedrich Hees published a paper on myths and stories of the
Nakanai people of the north coast of New Britain. In a footnote to that paper (pp.48-49) Hees mentions
that the coastal inhabitants of the Gazelle Peninsua - speakers of what he calls ‘Tuna’, i.e. the Tolai - used a trade language1 in trading (mainly for sheMls)
with the Nakanai.

Although Hees gives examples of this trade language, his description of the socio-
linguistic situation obtaining between the parties is unclear. The reader cannot tell whether

1 Hees’ term for this was Mittelsprache, literally a ‘middle’ or go-between language.

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